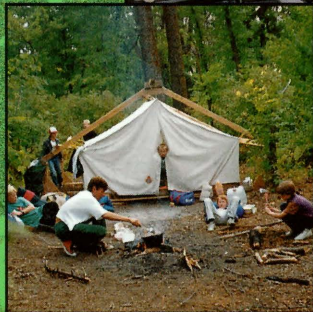


IN SEARCH OF
UNITY

STORY OF THE
CONFERENCE
OF MENNONITES
IN MANITOBA



BY
ANNA ENS

I N S E A R C H O F
U N I T Y

STORY OF THE
CONFERENCE
OF MENNONITES
IN MANITOBA

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*With appreciation
Anna*

Published by
CMBC Publications
1996

CMBC Publications
600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg Manitoba
R3P 0M4

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Cover: Gerald Loewen

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Ens, Anna Epp, 1931–

In search of unity

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN: 0-920718-54-X

1. Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba – History. 2. Mennonites – Manitoba – History. I. Title.

BX8118.6.M3E55 1996 289.7'7127 C96-920072-2

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Printed in Canada
by
Friesen Printers

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GLOSSARY

Ältester — elder or bishop
Bruderschaft — brotherhood meeting
Einheimische — native, aboriginal
Frohe Botschaft (FB) — good news
Gemeinde — a multi-congregational church, parish
Jugendverein — Christian Endeavour
kirchliche — of General Conference persuasion
Nähverein — sewing circle
Privilegium — privileges
Versammlungshaus — meeting place
Wort des Lebens (WL) — word of life

AL — Abundant Life
AMMC — Assiniboine Mennonite Mission Camp
CHH — Christian Home Hour
CMBC — Canadian Mennonite Bible College
CMM — Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba, Manitoba Conference
CMC — Conference of Mennonites in Canada, Canadian Conference
CO — conscientious objector
DVBS — Daily Vacation Bible School
EMB — Evangelical Mennonite Brethren
EMC — Evangelical Mennonite Conference
EMMC — Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference/Church
FLC — Faith and Life Communications
GC, GCMC — General Conference Mennonite Church
KMM — *Konferenz der Mennonitengemeinden von Manitoba*
KMMC — *Konferenz der Mennoniten des mittleren Canada*
MB — Mennonite Brethren
MCC — Mennonite Central Committee
MCI — Mennonite Collegiate Institute
MJO — *Manitoba Jugendorganisation*
MMK — Manitoba Mennoniten Konferenz
MMYO — Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization
MPM — Mennonite Pioneer Mission
VS — Voluntary service
ZMIK — *Zentrales Mennoniten Immigrantenkomitee*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many persons have given generous assistance and support to this book project. To all I express sincere appreciation and regret that only a few can be mentioned by name. Included are:

- staff members of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives (MHCA) and CMBC Library; Conrad Grebel College Archives, Waterloo, Ontario; and Mennonite Historical Library and Archives, Bethel College, Newton, Kansas
- CMM office staff
- MHCA volunteers, Jake Wiens and Ed Enns
- the History Project Advisory Committee members
- the Readers' Committee
- Betty Dyck, special reader
- John Dyck, research assistant
- researchers on other topics who shared information
- all the persons who were interviewed
- the respondents to the 1993 questionnaire
- those who contributed documents and provided photos
- many who responded to queries on the telephone or in person
- numerous others who showed interest and gave encouragement
- my family, Adolf, Anita, Jonathan, Martin and Jan
- CMBC Publications, Margaret Franz, Adolf Ens, Ron Loepky
- Weldon Hiebert, cartographer
- Gerald Loewen, cover design
- the Gerhard Lorenz Foundation, the Heritage Grants Program (Government of Manitoba), and the Friesen Foundation for financial assistance.

FOREWORD

In the spring of 1947 during my first teaching year at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) in Gretna, Manitoba, I received an interesting request. The MCI was in possession of one of the very few *Gestetner* mimeographing machines among our congregations and institutions, so I was asked to make a small number of copies of the minutes of a conference of delegates of Manitoba *Gemeinden* and congregations (the subtle difference between these two terms will be clarified in the text later on) which belonged to the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. These minutes also contained a draft constitution of a reorganized “Konferenz der Mennoniten in Manitoba”—KMM for short. The purpose of this revamped conference (which used to be called the “Manitoba Mennonitenkonferenz” or MMK in the mid- and later 1930s) was to facilitate and carry out the programs of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada as they affected the Manitoba churches. Since then some have tended to look on 1947 as a kind of a founding date of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba (CMM), although the writer of this monograph and her supporting committee were acutely aware of the existence of a prior Manitoba Conference. To unearth and to reconstruct this pre-history was quite a chore.

In the years since this “second coming” in 1947, many things have happened. The “superchurches,” called *Gemeinden* in the context of this history, the Bergthaler Mennonite, the Whitewater Mennonite, the Blumenorter Mennonite and the Schönwieser Mennonite Churches have decentralized into individual local congregations. With only one exception all the member congregations and *Gemeinden* were completely German-speaking in the early years. Today in a greatly enlarged conference this situation is exactly reversed. The reorganization took place under the shadow of a most unfortunate schism between the Schönwieser *Gemeinde* and the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. It took more than two decades for this schism to heal in Manitoba, but in 1968 the by then renamed First Mennonite Church of Winnipeg became part of the Manitoba Conference again. Two programs hardly dreamed of in earlier years today form the bulk of the Conference budget—the radio and camping programs, appropriately named Faith and Life Communications and Camps with Meaning.

When I first typed the minutes and draft constitution of the CMM I used a tiny Remington portable typewriter and the MCI's ancient hand cranked Gestetner. The Conference treasury generously supplied the paper for this operation. Today the Conference offices occupy the entire second floor of the CMC building on 600 Shaftesbury Boulevard in Winnipeg, complete with state-of-the-art recording studios for its three regular radio programs aired in four provinces in Canada as well as in Paraguay and Mexico.

This history of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba has been painstakingly researched and recorded by Anna Epp Ens. Nobody has been as aware of this monumental task than her readers' committee. We are grateful for her work, often above and beyond the call of duty. Above all, we are grateful to God who made the work of the Conference possible.

Soli Deo Gloria!

By request of the Readers' Committee
Gerhard Ens

INTRODUCTION

It seems appropriate that 500 years after the birth of Menno Simons, the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba (CMM), as one minuscule segment of the Dutch-Prussian Anabaptist descendants, celebrate its past and present. The idea of a story of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba originated with Frank J. Neufeld, who was very active in the youth organization, various music endeavours, on the personnel committee and as moderator 1988–1990.

Since no funding was in place, it took a lot of discussion before the project was initiated by the CMM Executive Committee in 1989. Initially, Victor Kliever, Elim Education Centre principal, was hired part-time as assistant to the executive to gather CMM materials. An Advisory Committee consisting of Gerhard Ens, Henry J. Gerbrandt, Lawrence Klippenstein, Frank J. Neufeld, Anne Unruh, and Victor Kliever began meeting in 1989. Betty Dyck and Peter Rempel replaced Unruh and Kliever after a while. In 1990 Henry Loewen, CMM Executive Secretary, joined the Committee. From this group, Gerhard Ens, Henry J. Gerbrandt and Henry Loewen accepted responsibility to be the Readers' Committee. It provided helpful critique of the manuscript for content, balance and accuracy of data. Henry Poettcker joined the Readers' Committee for the reading and evaluating of the second draft.

For me research began in the fall of 1992. Lawrence Klippenstein and Peter Rempel had already written earlier useful articles on CMMs beginning. Nevertheless, the origins of the Conference remained somewhat obscure. Rempel's record of many of the earliest provincial ministers' conferences of the 1920s immigrants was particularly helpful as an introduction to some of the original sources.

Early leaders, J.H. Enns and G.G. Neufeld, considered the Conference to have begun in 1936, the first time a delegate body adopted a constitution. Others suggested 1947 when a major reorganization took place. Indeed, the Conference numbers its annual sessions from this latter date and celebrated a twenty-fifth anniversary in 1971 on this basis. Records from earlier years, however, indicate considerable continuity between 1936 and 1947 bodies and even with various types of conferences prior to 1936.

Early on in the Committee's discussion it was agreed to write this story as much as possible in chronological order. It then made sense to divide the history at those dates where significant structural changes occurred. In other ways too I attempted to take the story's direction from the information found. Many strands waited to be explored and no doubt, another researcher-writer may have given more emphasis to themes barely alluded to here. Every historical record, influenced by the writer's inevitable selectivity and subjectivity has its imperfections. This one is no exception. I regret any errors, inaccuracies or gaps that will surely be found in this account. Like for many other CMMers, my heritage and that of both my immediate and extended family, is tied up in several ways in this story. Because it was my grandmother, Anna Duerksen Enns, who spent many lonely hours waiting and keeping the home fires burning while grandfather, Franz F. Enns, went hither and yon ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of the many in the early CMM constituency, this story is of particular interest to me. For seventeen years, too, my father, Heinrich M. Epp, was one of the Lena-Whitewater ministers. For these and other reasons I am grateful for the opportunity to work on this project.

The account is based primarily on minutes, reports, correspondence of leaders, and other documents produced by the various committees of the Conference over the years. The end notes and list of sources make reference to some of these. Researchers looking for more detailed documentation of sources should consult a working draft manuscript at the Mennonite Heritage Centre. Sources not endnoted in this volume include the bulk of CMM minutes and reports, ministers' conference minutes, minutes of CMM program committees, *Der Bote* reports, *Mennonite Encyclopedia* articles, CMBC student and other unpublished papers from the vertical file at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, interviews, and many conversations. Availability, quality, contrast, balance, among other things, determined the selection of photos. Those not acknowledged in the text come from CMM offices or myself.

In the process of researching and writing, significant information became available that could not be incorporated into the book. This includes lists of CMM-related workers, such as ministers, MPM-NM, COM, and MCC VS. Contact persons from CMM congregations submitted a good portion of this information in responses to a 1993 CMM history project questionnaire. This information will be kept on file.

Regardless of what year is chosen as the beginning of CMM, the Conference is here due to the ceaseless efforts and untiring commitment

of the early conference pioneers. They did what was in their strength to do and what was possible under the circumstances. That they and the many who followed them walked on feet of clay as they sought oneness with each other is plain. God's mercy and faithfulness accompanied every generation in spite of failures. I regret that as the story progressed it was impossible to acknowledge by name all the innumerable persons involved wholeheartedly and faithfully in leadership, administration, committees, programs and ministries of the Conference and its congregations which make up this story.

The strides of the Conference, though sometimes faltering and leaving things to be desired, were enormous. In the process the Conference changed from the assembling of perhaps 15 ministers in 1927 to approximately 450 participants (ministers and laypersons, men, women and youth) in the 1990s; from a Conference of six initial Gemeinden to one of 52 congregations with an approximate membership of 11,000; from needed interdependency of congregations to greater independence; from a budget of less than a few hundred dollars to one of \$1,442,276; from involvement of only male members in the public aspects of the Conference to a greater openness and incorporation of women in these; from a largely agricultural and geographically rural conference constituency to a predominantly urban one; and from ministry to only one's own people to service to many people groups through radio, camps, schools, hospitals and voluntary service. This book is one story of how some of this came to be.

Anna Epp Ens

Winnipeg, Manitoba

May 1996

CHAPTER 1

MANITOBA, ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND MENNONITES

Each history tells of its people. Each people seeks to rediscover its roots. . . . New men and new women bring new visions for the future. . . . the history will go on.—Menno Wiebe¹

. . . to this prairie we all belong together and the prairie belongs to us. We love the prairie and the prairie loves us; we are her children whom she nourishes at her breast. O that we may long yet live here in peace!—Peter H. Enns²

The name Manitoba is of Indian origin and means “the place where the Great Spirit whispers.”³ When Manitoba became a province of the Dominion of Canada in 1870 it was considerably smaller than in the 1990s and known as “the postage stamp province.” It was an uncultivated prairie with large herds of buffalo grazing only about 60 miles west of Winnipeg. The province was enlarged to its present size in 1912.

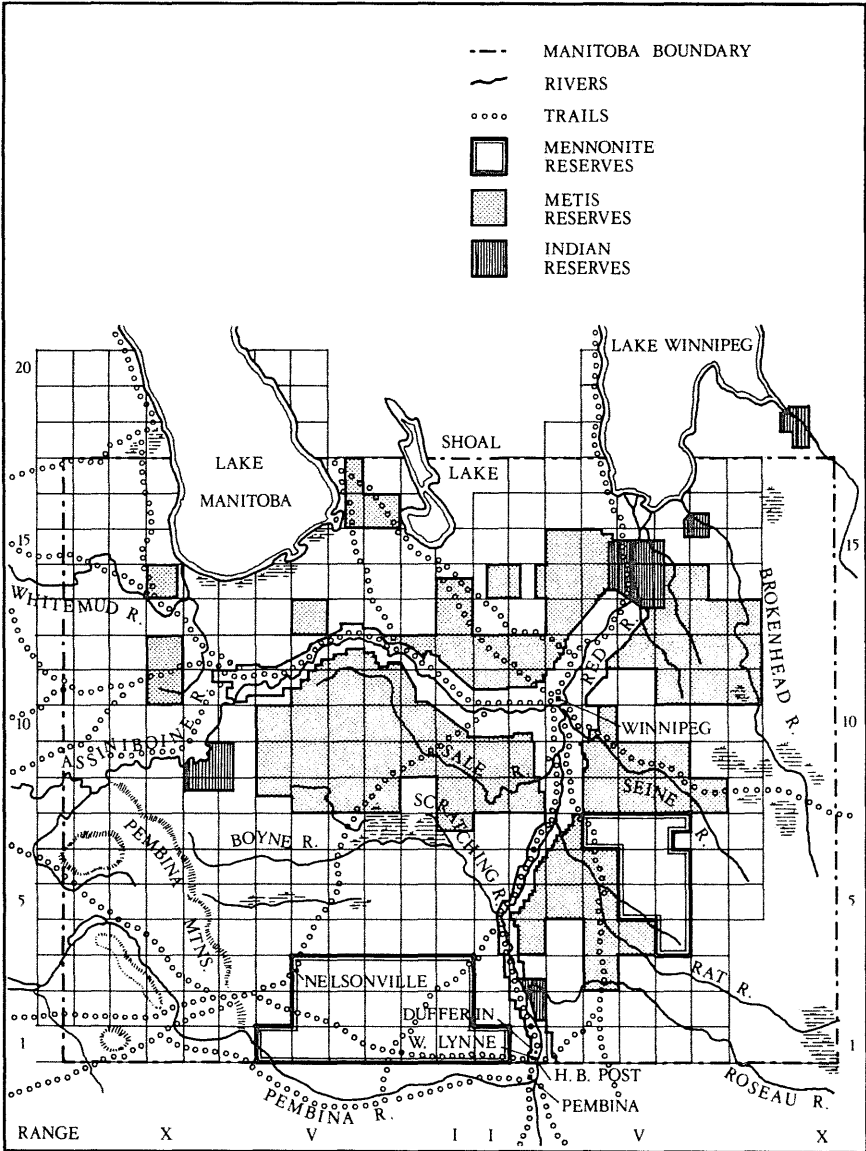
Beginnings of settlement in Manitoba

When Mennonites first arrived in Manitoba, the province was already inhabited. Aboriginal people lived on the land for thousands of years before French and British traders and missionaries appeared in the seventeenth century. Anglicans, Catholics, Lutherans and Presbyterians were represented before Mennonites came.⁴ In 1812 Scottish agricultural immigrants settled near Selkirk on the west side of the Red River. Several decades later British settlers from Ontario made Manitoba their home. By 1871 the population of the province approached 12,000 with Métis and English half-breeds in the majority. Native people and whites numbered 558 and 1,565, respectively.⁵

For approximately 200 years the main economic base for the expanding population lay in fur trading, buffalo hunting and fishing. Monopoly of the fur trade and the land was held by the British Hudson’s Bay Company from whom the Canadian government bought the land rights. Settlement drove the fur-bearing animals away and des-

Map 1

Province of Manitoba 1875 showing rivers, trails and reserves



Map: Gerhard John Ens, *Volost and Municipality: The Rural Municipality of Rhineland, 1884-1984* (Altona: R.M. of Rhineland, 1984). Used by permission.

troyed the buffalo, threatening the very livelihood of the people who lived on the plains.⁶ By 1868 income from the buffalo hunts, the fisheries and a few other crops was dwindling. Consequently, hunger and famine set in. Government officials felt that the destiny of the Red River Valley lay in settling the prairie with agriculturalists. That meant clearing away the hunters, trappers and food gatherers to make room for the food growers. The original inhabitants surrendered their land to the Dominion government for such settlement, although not without resistance. The native people and Métis would never have agreed to the government-negotiated treaties, which reduced their land to small reserves (see Map 1) of marginally productive land, if they had not had the apprehension that shortly the buffalo would be no more.

When in June of 1873 Mennonite delegates from Russia inspected Manitoba land they followed Indian trails in their travels. They could not help but notice the presence of native people and Métis whose former land the government was now offering to Mennonites.⁷ The (Winnipeg to) St. Paul Trail skirted the immigrant sheds near Niverville, in which the first Mennonite arrivals were accommodated in 1874, and crossed some of the best farmland in the northwest corner of the Mennonite East Reserve. In part due to Mennonite pressure the government closed the trail soon after they arrived. Many of the West Reserve Mennonite immigrants of the 1870s arrived at their destination via the Post Road Trail known also as the Boundary Commission Trail. It was one of the first transportation arteries connecting the villages of this reserve with the outside world.⁸ Other trails served visiting and trading purposes. When trails fell into disuse they were plowed and covered with vegetation. In later years, Mennonite farmers occasionally discovered arrowheads and hammerheads, reminders of another people and another history.

In the first years of settlement Mennonites had frequent contact with both Anglo-Saxon and Métis squatters on their reserves. A few Mennonite settlers in 1875 bought horses from Métis of nearby Walhalla. Métis asked the government for compensation for the lands they “gave up with the coming of the Mennonites.” Many never received a reply since the federal government felt that “they were claims which would be absolutely impossible to take up.”⁹

Mennonites were not the first nor the only agricultural settlers who came to the Red River Valley. French Canadians from New England arrived also in 1874, Icelanders in 1875.¹⁰ However, Mennonites were the first significant and permanent agricultural settlers who “demonstrated the practicality of farming the open prairie and thus effectively

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opened much of western Canada to settlement.” As early as 1877 the Mennonite reserves were looked upon “as show places for what could and should be done with” what to Europeans seemed like an “untamed west.”¹¹

Throughout the years Mennonites tried to come to terms with the implications of the early intersecting of their history with that of aboriginal people. George Groening, member of the Canadian Conference Home Mission Committee, speaking in the interest of missions to native people, suggested to delegates at 1957 annual sessions of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba (henceforth referred to also as CMM or Manitoba Conference) that Mennonites were debtor “to all who had not yet heard the Gospel . . . but doubly debtor to the Indians in Canada, whose land and livelihood we have taken.” According to the Chief of the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, for aboriginal people the Manitoba centennial year 1971 commemorated “100 years of unremitting struggle against oppression . . . and . . . the survival of a people.”¹² The year before, Mennonites meeting in Winkler as a Canadian Conference celebrated a 25-year history of mission outreach to the aboriginal and Métis people in northern Manitoba communities. In the presence of Cree and Ojibway representatives from Cross Lake and Pauingassi, respectively, Mennonites acknowledged that they had contributed to the wrongs experienced by the aboriginal people. Among other things the Litany of Confession said,

We have tried to be helpers without first becoming acquainted with you, the native people of Canada. . . . We are guilty of tracing America’s history back no farther than 1492. . . . We have erred . . . Forgive us, Lord.

This first church confession ever made to native people in all of North America was followed by numerous others by more denominations.¹³

As Mennonites prepared to celebrate the centennial of their coming to Manitoba and the resulting good life, however, they seldom referred to the native people and their assistance to Mennonites in 1874 and subsequent years. One son of 1920s immigrants wrote: “We forget these former residents and owners of lands we have come to call our own, though we have but recently been deprived of land and home ourselves in Russia.”¹⁴ Long-time educator, minister and historian, Gerhard Ens, commenting on Deuteronomy 26:5ff in connection with the 1874–1974 centennial, called the Manitoba Conference delegate body to “remember those disadvantaged by our coming to Manitoba—the Indians and Métis.”



Elna Neufeld and aboriginal women at Pauingassi dialoguing and quilting the pieces into one whole. Photo: Henry Neufeld

For decades the two histories ran parallel to each other. “There are many ugly things standing in the way barring a fruitful interaction of the two peoples,” wrote Menno Wiebe, Mennonite Central Committee’s (MCC’s) advocate for native people, in 1974.¹⁵ The dialogue of two peoples continued.

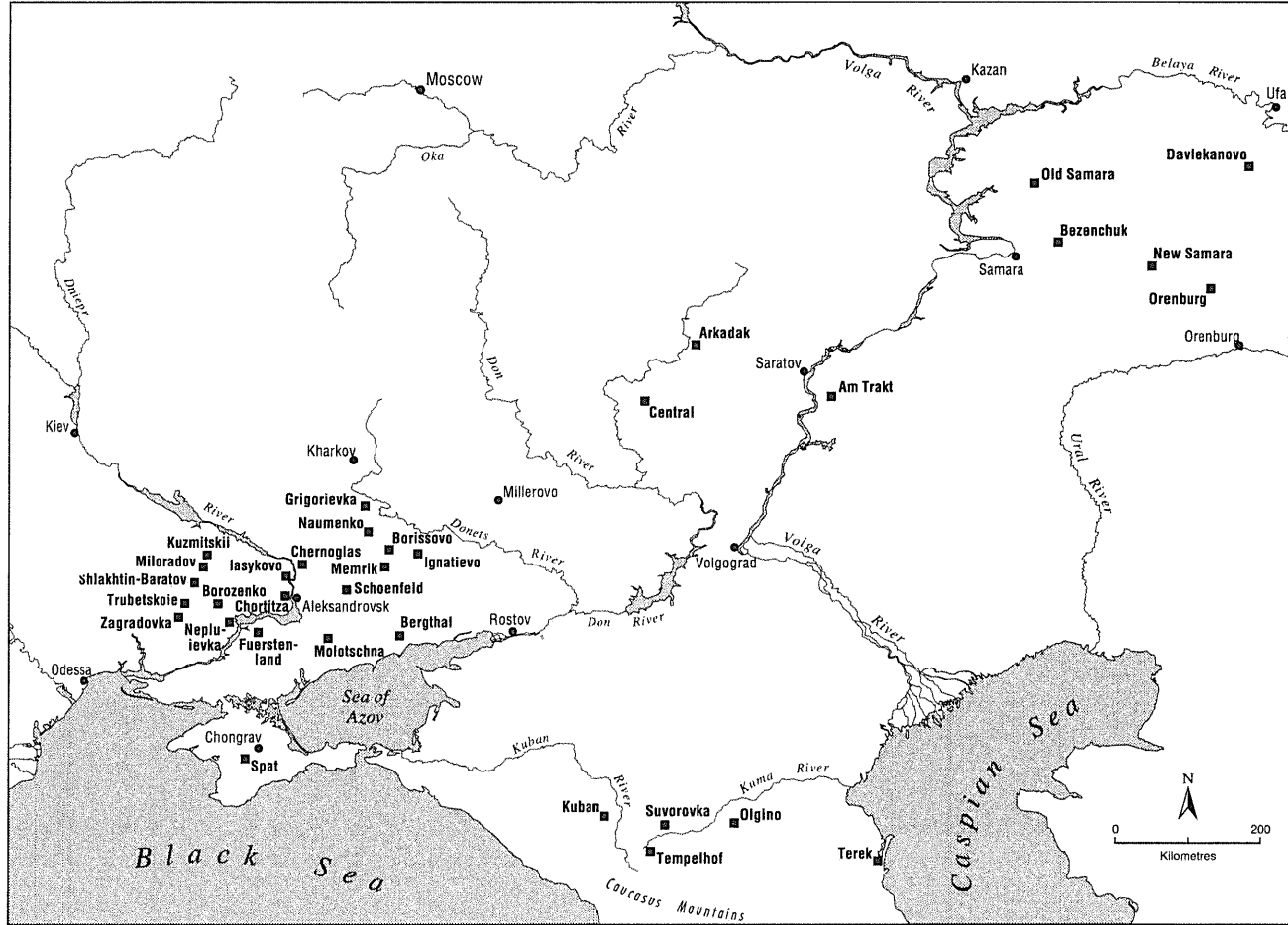
Origin of the Mennonites

Mennonites are one of the groups descended from sixteenth-century Anabaptists, the first of which emerged in Zurich, Switzerland, in the 1520s. Anabaptists rejected state control of the church and the baptism of infants as practised in the Catholic and Protestant Reformation state churches. Because they baptized adults (earlier baptized as infants) they received the name rebaptizers or Anabaptists.

As persecution forced early Anabaptists to flee, the movement spread to other countries. Within a few years similar movements appeared in Moravia to the east and in the Low Countries (*Nederlands*) to the northwest. Among the latter a former Catholic priest, Menno Simons, was ordained as an Anabaptist leader in 1537. It is from him that the Mennonites derive their name.

In the sixteenth century Mennonites from the Netherlands migrated to the Vistula Delta of Poland, Prussia, and the free city of Danzig. Beginning in 1788 descendants of these Dutch Mennonites moved east-

Map 2
Mennonite Settlements in European Russia



ward from Prussia and settled along the Dniepr River in New Russia. Groups represented in the Manitoba Conference originate mainly from this stream of Dutch-Prussian-Russian Mennonites. They came to Manitoba in several waves of immigration.

Immigration of the 1870s

Mennonites began to leave Russia for North America in 1874 because they feared that they would lose their military exemption and that the Russian government would take control of their education and the local administration of their colonies. Many landless emigrants left for economic reasons. Of the approximately 16,500 who emigrated, more than 9,500 went to places like Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska and the Dakotas in the United States in spite of the uncertainty of military exemption and other cherished freedoms. A smaller group of 6,940 came to Manitoba between 1874 and 1880.

The delegates who had investigated the Manitoba territory in 1873 had obtained what they thought was a written *Privilegium* (assurance of privileges) which guaranteed Mennonites absolute exemption from military service, entitlement to a reserve of eight townships of land, full freedom to exercise their religious principles and educate their children in their own schools, and the privilege of affirming instead of swearing of oaths. To make block settlement possible, the lands in adjoining lots were free or could be purchased on easy terms and at nominal prices.

The three major groupings among those coming to Manitoba were: the 696-member Kleine Gemeinde from the Borosenko and Molotschna Colony (see Map 2), the 2,833-member Bergthal settlement which reportedly emigrated almost in its entirety and the 3,411-member Old Colony Chortitza-Fuerstenland group. In 1875 and 1876 Mennonites comprised more than a quarter of all immigrants to Manitoba. In the decade between 1871–1881 the Manitoba population more than quintupled to a total of 65,954, with Mennonites accounting for slightly more than 10 percent.¹⁶

The eight-township East Reserve became available to Mennonites for settlement upon arrival.¹⁷ Government agents and representatives from the Swiss Mennonites in Ontario received and assisted them. The Bergthal and the Kleine Gemeinde groups settled on the East Reserve; the latter also established two villages at Scratching River near Morris.¹⁸ However, a sizeable portion of the East Reserve turned out to be unsuitable for grain farming. Consequently, in 1878 some of the Bergthal group moved to the West Reserve.

The West Reserve with 17 townships was created after the arrival of

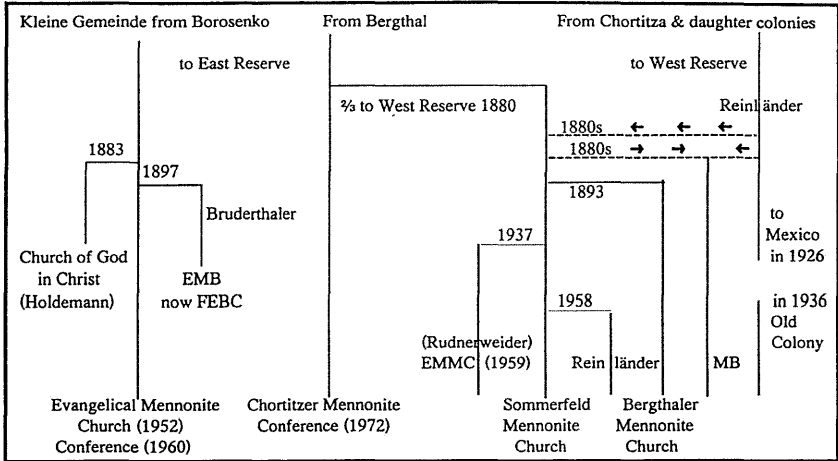


In August 1994 Manitoba Mennonites celebrated the 120th anniversary of the coming of the first Russian Mennonites by erecting a cairn at the landing site at the junction of the Rat and the Red Rivers. (L to r): Orlando Hiebert, an 1870s Chortitzer descendant; Ed Schreyer, former Manitoba premier and governor-general of Canada; Laura Shantz and Milo Shantz, descendant of Jacob Shantz who, on behalf of the Ontario Mennonites helped the 1870s immigrants upon their arrival. Photo: MHCA

the first immigrants and officially established in 1876. It was chosen in 1875 by the immigrants from Chortitza and its daughter colonies: Fuerstenland, Borosenko, Nepluievka and Baratov. With these Chortitza immigrants were also a few Molotschna persons or families. Although from different areas in Russia, on arrival at West Lynn (Emerson) and before proceeding to their settlement, these Old Colony settlers agreed to form one *Gemeinde* (a multi-congregation church) with Johann Wiebe as *Ältester* (bishop, elder). This *Gemeinde* took the name Reinländer.

The relocation of some of the East Reserve Bergthal settlers to the eastern part of the West Reserve after 1876 divided the Manitoba Bergthal group into two. Those remaining on the East Reserve came to be known as the Chortitzer after the village in which their *Ältester* Gerhard Wiebe lived. The West Reserve group under the leadership of Johann Funk (ordained 1882) retained the name Bergthaler.

Table 1
Origin and Division of Mennonite Groups
Immigrating to Manitoba in the 1870s



Splintering of the three distinct groups of the 1870s Mennonite immigrants happened very soon (see Table 1). On the East Reserve, the formation of the Church of God in Christ, Holdeman, resulted when representatives from Kansas and other places came to minister in the *Kleine Gemeinde*. The Ältester and almost half of the latter group joined the new denomination. At the turn of the century, emissaries from the *Brudertaler* (Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, EMB) church from Henderson, Nebraska, and Mountain Lake, Minnesota, attracted a further segment from the *Kleine Gemeinde*.

Mennonite Brethren from the United States came to evangelize on the West Reserve in the 1880s. Outstanding among them was Heinrich Voth from Mountain Lake who gathered converts from the Mennonite settlers into a first Canadian Mennonite Brethren (MB) congregation in the Burwalde (Winkler) area.

Immigration of the late 1880s–1920

Scattered Mennonite persons and families from Russia, Prussia and the United States emigrated to Canada from 1890 to 1920. The U.S. immigrants included from Kansas the families of Prussian-born educators and ministers H.H. Ewert and Benjamin Ewert who settled in Gretna and became influential leaders in the *Bergthaler Gemeinde*. These immigrants, referred to as later Kanadier (to differentiate from

1870s immigrants who were identified as earlier Kanadier), were considered to be closer in their cultural orientation to the immigrants of the 1920s than to those of the 1870s. The numbers and the influence of these later Kanadier is hardly known.

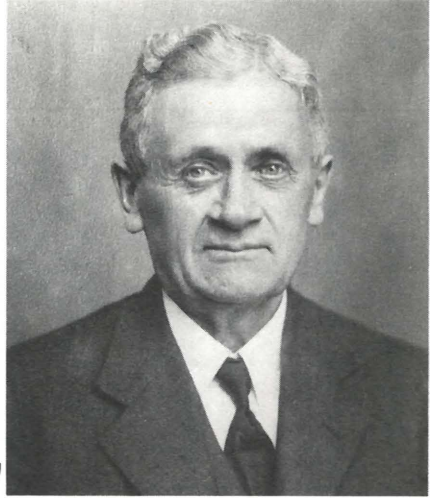
Immigration of the 1920s

Mennonite immigrants of the 1920s, descendants of those who had remained behind in Russia in the 1870s, were victims of World War I, the Communist Revolution, civil war and anarchy in the new Soviet Union. Many had experienced abuse, mistreatment, famine and disease. Most, once rich, were now totally impoverished. The Mennonites of Manitoba, together with others across the country, were asked to help with the receiving and care of the new immigrants, their own people. They feared the destitution with which the potential immigrants might come and the material sacrifices that might be needed on their behalf.

Canadian immigration doors were open. The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was willing to transport the immigrants on credit. In addition to the contract that the CPR asked to be signed, shelter and support were required as well as a guarantee that none of the immigrants would become a public liability. Who would sign the contract, underwrite the cost of transportation?



Immigrants arrive at Altona, August 1923. Photo: Zacharias, Footprints of a Pilgrim People



David Toews (1870–1947)

The *Konferenz der Mennoniten des mittleren Kanada* (Conference of Mennonites of Central Canada, the later Conference of Mennonites in Canada [CMC or Canadian Conference]) of which the Bergthaler Gemeinde of Manitoba was a charter member, was unwilling to assume this responsibility. Protest and opposition were voiced by Mennonites both in Canada and the United States. On behalf of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization and many individuals who supported the difficult but decisive moves, the Board's leader, David Toews, signed the CPR contract on July 21, 1922.

Approximately 20,000 Mennonites came to Canada, beginning in 1923 and continuing until 1929. As they came public opinion changed and the reception was warmer than expected by those who worked so hard to clear the way. The rescue operation was never regretted, but the indebtedness which accompanied this dramatic exodus remained with Manitoba Mennonites until the debt was liquidated in the late 1940s.

Immigrations of 1947–1960

While liquidation of the debt from the 1920s immigration continued, a new relief effort evolved to receive the displaced Mennonites of World War II. This immigration differed from the two earlier ones, not only in the circumstances surrounding those emigrating, but also in the reception and resettlement of the refugees. Many were relatives of the 1920s immigrants. Economically, the arrangements did not place the burden on the Mennonite Gemeinden or conferences. The transportation



Danziger newcomers celebrate Christmas 1950 together. Most were members of First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at one time or another. Photo: George Braun

loan, negotiated with the Canadian Pacific Railway by the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization and MCC, was a personal matter between immigrant and sponsor (relatives, friends or employers). While some of these so-called DPs (displaced persons) initially went to live with rural relatives, the majority took up residence in the city of Winnipeg. Compared to earlier emigration periods, new and varied job opportunities contributed to relatively rapid economic well-being.

Some of the World War II refugees from Russia came to Canada via Paraguay. Both these and those coming directly from Europe largely identified with the 1920s Russländer immigrant communities that absorbed them. In Winnipeg the largest number of the initial refugees made their homes in the German-speaking Schönwieser, Sargent and North Kildonan churches. Many of the so-called Paraguayer and other South American immigrants later congregated in the developing congregations of Springfield Heights, Douglas and River East Menno Gemeinde. Emigration from Paraguay with a sprinkling from Uruguay, Argentina and Mexico continued in the following years.

A further group of post-World War II immigrants came to Canada from Prussia. Upon returning from a two-year refugee stay in Denmark they saw no future for themselves in their Prussian homeland or in Germany, according to Hans-Reinhard Entz, a Danziger from First

Mennonite Church. The majority of Danziger who came to Winnipeg decided to make First Mennonite their church home. They were influenced by the warm reception of Ältester J.H. Enns who met some of them at the railway station. Largely as a result of the heavy influx of immigrants, First Mennonite's membership doubled from 514 in 1948 to 1,037 in 1957.¹⁹

Altogether Manitoba received 4,092 of the 12,071 Mennonites who came to Canada from 1947 to 1961.²⁰

Other immigrations

In the later 1960s Kanadier Mennonites who had gone to Mexico began to "return" to Manitoba in considerable numbers. Most of these identified with the Old Colony, Reinländer, Sommerfelder or Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference (EMMC). A few found their way into Manitoba Conference congregations. Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian refugees, often referred to as the "boat people," started arriving in Manitoba in 1975. Many Manitoba Conference congregations received families from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

The Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba began with the first three waves of immigrants: the earlier and the later Kanadier and the Russländer.



Tu My and To Ha Tran arrived in Winnipeg from Vietnam, with their baby daughter Judy born enroute, in 1979.

Kanadier and Russländer²¹

The 1870s and 1920s groups of immigrants used these terms to refer to each other. The time lapse between the 1870s and 1920s migrations, as well as the very different experiences the two groups had, created many distinctions between them. Both those remaining in Russia and those emigrating to America in the 1870s had seen themselves as making the right decision. Those who came to Canada had serious reservations about the orthodoxy of those who had remained behind. Had they not compromised the principle of nonresistance when they accepted alternative service in forestry work or the Red Cross? Or worse yet, had they not abandoned it when they resorted to a self-defence militia (the *Selbstschutz*) in 1918? Accepting the teaching of Russian in their schools indicated another compromise. Before the Revolution many Mennonites in Russia became educated and prosperous. In addition to numerous churches, they boasted other educational, health and social welfare institutions.

In contrast, the Mennonites already in Manitoba experienced the hardships and poverty of pioneer life, remained uninvolved in World War I, feared the effects of a post-war recession and resisted government introduction of public schools. The latter resulted in the loss of their private elementary schools and in a consequent massive Reinländer emigration to Mexico in the early 1920s.

The labels, Kanadier and Russländer, which resulted from the differing perspectives, were initially not all that respectful and occasionally loaded with contempt or suspicion. Speaking generally,

for the early Kanadier especially, the Russländer were too proud, too aggressive, too enthusiastic about higher education, too anxious to exercise leadership, too ready to compromise with the state, too ready to move to the cities, and too unappreciative of the pioneering done by the Kanadier. As far as the Russländer were concerned, the Kanadier were too withdrawn, too simple-minded, too uncultured, too weak in their High German because of their excessive dependence on Low German, too afraid of schools and education, and too satisfied to follow traditions, social or liturgical.²²

Illustrations could easily be found. For instance, one of the leaders wrote: "On December 28 I began with [catechism] instruction in our group. To date eight children are participating. Of these three are native (*Einheimische*) who cannot read and understand little High German."²³

There were other designations. The 1920s immigrants frequently referred to the 1870 people as natives or aboriginals (*Einheimische*).

Minutes of the 1940 November ministers' conference (*Predigerkonferenz*) differentiated the two groups by referring to the Kanadier as Mennonites of the first category ("Mennoniten erster Kategorie") and to the Russländer as Mennonites of the second category ("Mennoniten zweiter Kategorie"). Of the various designations the Kanadier-Russländer one endured.

The commonalities

The strongest tie which bound the various immigrant groups was the common background of the Anabaptist-Mennonite faith. Born in the sixteenth-century Church Reformation period, this faith based itself on the New Testament teachings of Jesus. Anabaptists understood the church to be made up of voluntary believers committed to following Jesus Christ obediently in life. Discipleship included not taking the sword or participating in war (nonresistance), refusal to swear the civil oath, and adherence to an ethical life based on the Sermon of the Mount.

The separation of church and state was essential. Anabaptists contended that the state did not have the authority to decide how mass should be conducted or who should be baptized. The church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, should determine such matters. Still, Anabaptists affirmed that the office of government is ordained of God to protect the good and punish the evil according to Romans 13. As long as the state's demands did not conflict with the obedience owed to God, Christians should obey the government.

Baptism took place on the confession of personal faith. Therefore, infant baptism was rejected and adult baptism practised. In baptism candidates covenanted themselves to each other and to live according to their confession. Studying the Word together, preaching and living out the precepts of the Gospel, thereby drawing others to its transforming and liberating message, were among the distinguishing marks of the Anabaptist movement.

In addition to a common understanding of the Christian faith, as found in the confessions of faith of Mennonites in Prussia and Russia, similarities in church structures and practices were observed. Each organized grouping was known as a Gemeinde which implied community or corporate body as over against an individual entity. Usually a Gemeinde consisted of two or more congregations under the leadership of an Ältester. Various such a Gemeinde was referred to as a one-central-church entity, a larger congregation with local bodies belonging to it, a bishop-oriented church, a multi-branch congregation or a multi-congregational church.²⁴

Every Gemeinde maintained autonomy in its internal governance. As a minimum its administrative structures consisted of the *Bruderschaft* (brotherhood meeting), an Ältester (elder or bishop) and several lay ministers and deacons. Beyond that these local groups were given the freedom to develop their own distinctiveness in church affairs. Theoretically, the *Bruderschaft* included baptized men and women; practically, it consisted only of the brethren of the Gemeinde—the sisters could participate in the election of workers. Ideally the *Bruderschaft* provided the highest and final authority in all matters concerning the Gemeinde.

The Ältesten were elected for life from among the most reputable men in the Gemeinde, following as much as possible the requirements of 1 Timothy 3:2–7. Ordination bestowed on them responsibility and accountability, privilege and power. It was seen to confer on them a special measure of God's grace for their tasks, a special anointing and empowerment to preach the Word of the Lord in season and out of season and a wisdom and discernment that was decisive. The Ältester, who held the highest and most responsible office, shepherded the flock and gave spiritual leadership to the Gemeinde. Through ordination he received the authority to baptize, accept people into membership, exercise church discipline, serve communion and ordain. These acts, with exceptions, were all performed on the recommendation or decision of the *Bruderschaft*. An Ältester was frequently called upon to officiate at marriages and burials and to give spiritual counsel and comfort. This high calling demanded total dedication and often denial of self and family. Such a shepherd was expected to be faithful to his flock come what may.

General geographical origins and cultural distinctives provided a further commonality for the Mennonite immigrants who came to Manitoba. Whether directly or via many detours, with a few exceptions, all immigrant Mennonite groups that became part of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba were of the Dutch-Prussian-Russian tradition. Most came from Russia; a few from Prussia. As such they had the German language (High, Low or both) and other common cultural traditions. Recipe books frequently designated dishes such as *Borscht*, *Zwieback*, *Glomms Wrenikje*, *Pflaumenmoos*, *Kjielkje mett Schmauntfatt*, and others as "Mennonite." All groups, whether Kanadier, Russländer or later arrivals, observed customary days such as birthday gatherings, the pre-wedding *Pultaowend* or the Sunday *Faspa/Vesper*.

CHAPTER 2

THE BERGTHALER AND HEROLD GEMEINDEN

No history of the church is always glorious. The Bergthaler Mennonite Church had its mountain tops and its valleys. . . . a reading of the foibles of the church should not make us cynical, nor should a reading of its glorious moments make us proud.—Cornelius J. Dyck.¹

The West Reserve context

In the first few years of settlement on the West Reserve one large Gemeinde embraced the Mennonite people with its Ältester Johann Wiebe. The village of Reinland, where the first church building was erected, gave the group its name, Reinländer Mennonitengemeinde. Settlers introduced the village pattern, their private schools and self-government as they had known these in Russia. Besides the regular Sunday worship services, Bible study groups soon emerged in a few places. Hoffnungsfeld's group existed before 1880. Separated from the world the Reinländer wished to live simply and to be left alone.

The province of Manitoba was young when Mennonite life began on the reserves. Before the turn of the century developments included the coming of the railroads, the introduction of municipal government and public schools, the breakdown of the village commune and a variety of legal options available to settlers. New possibilities and freedoms complicated the maintenance of order and solidarity in church and community. Differing interpretations and expressions of faith created tensions which became more pronounced with the move of the Bergthaler group to the West Reserve. Earlier the Gemeinde could correct members through admonition, excommunication or even confiscating of farmstead and fields if they disobeyed any church or village regulations. However, soon such discipline became ineffective when members had the option to move into another Gemeinde.

Reinländer membership rules were very strict. Henry Gerbrandt, author of the history of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church, *Adventure in Faith*, summarized them as follows:

No one was to send his children to the public school. No one was to take part in civic elections. No buggies, bicycles, phonographs or sleigh bells

were to be used. No one was to have his house insured in the Bergthaler insurance and no one was to attend Bergthaler church functions. The only area that was left open was intermarriage. A Reinländer member could marry a Bergthaler without being banned. If he joined the Bergthaler group because of other reasons he would be banned and given no transfer.²

West Reserve Bergthaler beginnings

The Bergthal group that settled in the eastern part of the West Reserve became an alternative to the Reinländer Gemeinde option. Like the Reinländer, the Bergthal people had roots in the Old Colony in Russia. However, the Bergthal settlement was quite isolated from the Old Colony and by the time of emigration had become more conservative than its parent colony. Bergthal leaders, for example, showed little interest in (Johann Cornies') agricultural and educational reforms which spread from Molotschna to other settlements. Nevertheless, compared to the Reinländer in Manitoba some of the Bergthal people were more open and progressive.

This was noticeable particularly in the area of education which became the point of contention within the Bergthal community as well. A few members and their Ältester Johann Funk (1836–1917) were convinced that better schools and training of teachers were of utmost importance for the survival of the community. Two-thirds of the members did not agree and in 1892 formed a Gemeinde with Abraham Doerksen who became their Ältester. This segment took the name Sommerfelder Gemeinde after the village Sommerfeld in which Doerksen lived.

The smaller group of about 57 families retained the name Bergthaler although by now few of its members came from the original Bergthal Colony in Russia. Bergthaler were spread throughout the West Reserve. Many former Reinländer became part of the Bergthaler Gemeinde, especially after 1890. Members came from the later Kanadier who did not feel very much at home with the Reinländer. A Fuerstenland cluster living near Rosenfeld as well as a few Molotschna immigrants joined the Bergthaler.

Ältester Johann Funk set the direction for this heterogeneous Bergthaler Gemeinde in 1892. His vision, shared at Edenburg, Rudnerweide and Hoffnungsfeld, included: "affirmation of the 'old and tried foundation which is Jesus Christ,' obedient discipleship, spiritual renewal, training of teachers, progressive schools, fellowship with other believers, the opening of the pulpits to ministers of other churches, and

the preaching of the Gospel to the ‘heathen.’”³

Teacher training

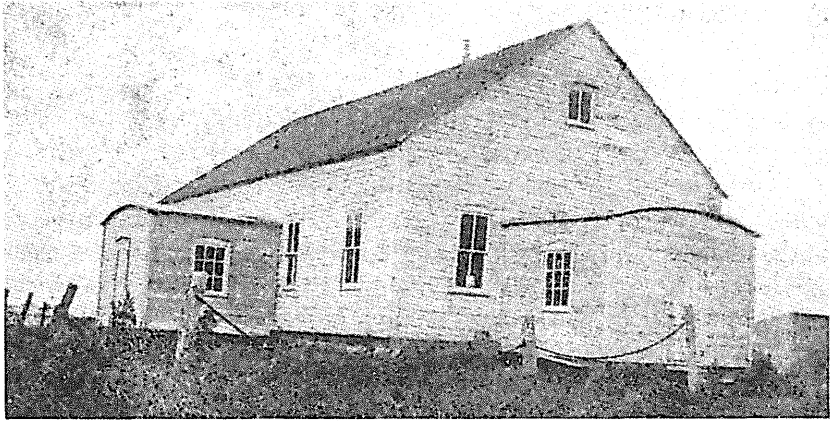
In 1889 under the leadership of Funk, and again in 1891 together with Principal H.H. Ewert from Kansas, the Bergthaler Gemeinde spearheaded the establishment and development of the teacher training school in Gretna. When a new building was needed in Gretna, disagreements over the location of the school led to much disunity in Bergthaler ranks and within the sponsoring society. Two institutions resulted in 1908. The society rebuilt the original (Gretna) Mennonite Education Institute in Altona. A new society established the Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) in Gretna. Both schools prepared teachers for the Mennonite private elementary schools and later for the public schools. H.H. Ewert, although initially endorsing the move to Altona, later joined the Gretna supporters. When fire destroyed the Altona facilities in 1926 the school was not reopened.

The life of the Gemeinde

Renewal in the life of the church came in several ways. H.H. Ewert, a charismatic leader within and outside the school, contributed in far-reaching ways to cultural, educational and spiritual revitalization. He boosted the growth of Sunday schools and choirs wherever he could. In spite of strong opposition both activities were gradually welcomed and introduced in many places. The Sunday schools, open to young and old, met mainly in the afternoons. Telling Bible stories and singing filled the hour. Ewert introduced Sunday school conferences and mission festivals. The former took place in the village of Hoffnungsfeld in 1893 and 1894 with a choir being part of the program. Prayer weeks began. The first missions festival was celebrated at Edenburg in 1893. Beginning in 1913 these mission celebrations became an annual event associated with Pentecost.

The *Jugendverein* (Christian Endeavour) introduced at the turn of the century was geared toward young people and held on Sunday evenings. Initially these evenings were non-denominational, often evangelistic in nature and served an important social function as well. The first Bergthaler church building was erected in Edenburg, just east of Gretna, in 1883.

The first women’s charitable organization originated in Gretna in 1889. It adopted the name *Wohltätigkeitsverein* in 1892. Although a community endeavour, it had an impact on the Bergthaler local through its members. Several women, Sara (Abrams) Rempel, Maria (Eitzen)

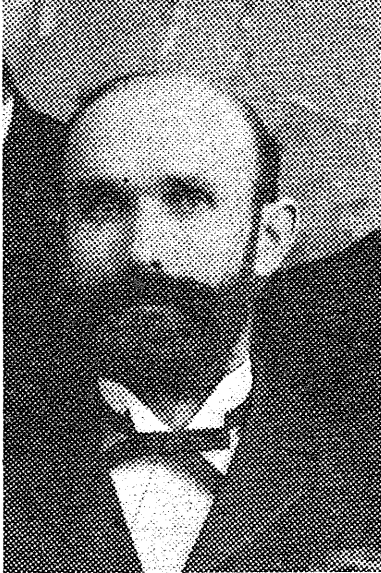


The first Bergthaler church building erected at Edenburg in 1883. Photo: Novokampus, Kanadische Mennoniten

Penner, Susanna (Rempel) Abrahams, Anna Kehler and Elisabeth (Baer) Ewert were instrumental in its beginnings. Their husbands were Wilhelm Rempel, the first principal of Mennonite Education Institute; Erdman Penner and Peter Abrahams, local store owners; Kehler, not further identified; and H.H. Ewert, principal of MCI.⁴ Women's groups were not a Russian tradition and more than likely originated through influence from the United States. In the 1890s the *Christlicher Bundesbote* gave a reason for women to engage in missions and other benevolent work as follows. Had not Christianity given woman a new status? No longer was she the slave of her husband; she was now a respected helpmeet. But there were many in the world who were in positions of slavery and oppression. What better reason than to help those still suppressed?⁵

In possibly the earliest note regarding the Gretna women's organization, H.H. Ewert reported in 1907: "To also receive guidance in practical Christianity, the female members meet weekly as a sewing and reading society. Until now they have sewn articles for poor local families."⁶ Very soon the support of the Gretna school (MCI) and missions became chief concerns for the women. In 1913–1914 they purchased books (1,000 volumes) and a piano for the MCI. Later the group's name changed to Gretna First Mennonite Mission Aid. This was the only women's group dating its beginning prior to the 1920s that related to the 1990s Women in Mission.

In 1918 the Bergthaler Gemeinde established a home for the aged (*Altenheim*) in Gretna, employing the Jacob B. Hooges from Winkler as



Heinrich H. Ewert (1853–1934)



Benjamin Ewert (1870–1958)

its first house parents.⁷ This home operated for 20 years and then the building became a girls' dormitory for the MCI. Other social and welfare needs were met through institutions known in Russia such as the *Armenkasse* (a fund for the poor), the *Brandordnung* (fire insurance) and the *Waisenamt* which looked after the needs of orphans and widows as well as functioning as a credit union.

The General Conference Mennonite Church

The Ewert brothers constituted links to the General Conference but there were other connections as well. Mennonites in Manitoba were akin to the 1870s immigrants who became part of the General Conference congregations in the United States. On the one hand, the “opening of pulpits” to others could not exclude workers from the General Conference when they came to Manitoba. On the other hand, it was not easy for Manitoba leaders to look kindly on General Conference efforts to minister to them when they believed that those who had gone to the United States (and were now part of the General Conference) had compromised their faith by doing so.

Manitoba Bergthaler had close connections with the 30 Bergthal families who settled in Mountain Lake and Butterfield, Minnesota, instead of going to the West Reserve. (Among these was the family of



David Toews and H.H. Ewert initially co-edited Der Mitarbeiter, founded by the KMMC (CMC) in 1906. Ewert carried on until 1934, from 1925 under the sponsorship of a private group. One year after Der Mitarbeiter discontinued, the Bergthaler introduced their own paper.

P.A. Penner, later missionary to India.) The Manitoba group considered these families as disobedient since they had gone against the agreement of the Bergthaler group to settle in Manitoba.

In the 1880s the General Conference's first home missionary and field secretary, J.B. Baer, included Manitoba in his contacts with outlying Mennonite congregations. Baer spent two months in Manitoba in 1887. He reported that he "found an open door, [and that he] was enabled by the Lord's aid to make the beginning for the revival of spiritual life in that extensive settlement."⁷³ In 1890, the General Conference Home Mission Board sent Russian Mennonite N.F. Toews from Bethel Mennonite Church in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, to serve

the Manitoba people for a number of years. Toews was strongly influenced by dispensationalist theology and the D.L. Moody revival movement. He was very popular in Manitoba, probably in part because he was less educated than, for example, H.H. Ewert but also because he spoke Low German (*Plautdietsch*). Stationed in Gretna, Toews ministered with the agreement of the Bergthaler Gemeinde. His work, like that of other Bergthaler ministers, consisted of preaching (Sunday mornings and many evenings), participating in evening prayer meetings and doing home visitation. Disagreement among leaders over schools, an appropriate age for baptism and fear of evangelistic efforts of the Mennonite Brethren, Baptists and Adventists in "sheep-stealing" caused a lot of tension.⁹

Home Mission Board correspondence reflected the struggle between whether its worker should continue under the umbrella of the Bergthaler Gemeinde or whether an independent General Conference church should be opened. To the Home Mission Board it seemed that people's spiritual needs were not being met, hence they were being easily attracted to other options. The very thought that southern Manitoba was considered a mission field and the possibility that an independent General Conference church would be established upset Bergthaler leaders. As late as 1935 a report of the Home Mission Board stated: "The Great Canadian field, covering an extent of territory of about three thousand miles east and west, is still our greatest mission field and needs our constant and most substantial support."¹⁰ Others from the Mountain Lake Mennonite Church, mainly itinerant ministers, followed N.F. Toews. In the end, the Home Mission Board decided that more damage might be done to the existing Gemeinden and the relationship with the Bergthaler leaders if an independent work was launched.

The Bergthaler always remained in touch with the General Conference Mennonite Church and welcomed its missionaries, P.A. Penner, H.J. Brown and others. They saw the General Conference mission as theirs and supported it. Coupled with that, however, the Gemeinde maintained a cautious attitude toward things American. In part this was due to the Bergthalers' early, strong allegiance to the Canadian Conference which they formed in partnership with the Saskatchewan Rosenorter Gemeinde in 1903.

Heinrich Voth (1851–1918), noted Mennonite Brethren leader from Bingham Lake, Minnesota, evangelized among Reinländer, Sommerfelder and Bergthaler on the West Reserve concurrently with N.F. Toews. As early as 1884 the Hoffnungsfeld Bible study group provided a forum for the first U.S. Mennonite Brethren ministers.¹¹ Unlike the

General Conference, the Mennonite Brethren virtually disregarded the leadership of the existing Gemeinden. Gerbrandt described the situation as follows:

Toews and Heinrich Voth preached the same messages and placed the same emphasis on crisis, radical conversion experiences. Voth's converts were baptized immediately and accepted into a developing Mennonite Brethren group. Toews' converts were asked to wait for baptism until next Pentecost, following catechism instruction. In one year the Mennonite Brethren mission worker baptized twenty-one of Toews' converts, many of whom were either members of Funk's church or children of members.¹²

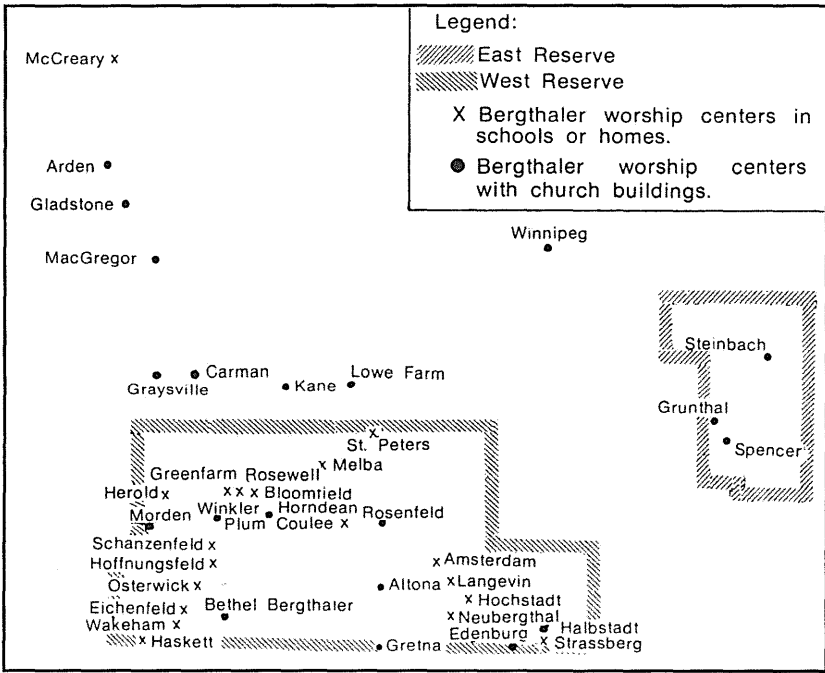
Leadership

By the mid-1920s, under the leadership first of Ältester Johann Funk (1892–1917) and then of Jakob Hoepfner (1910–1936) the Bergthaler Gemeinde grew to an approximate membership of 700 in three places of worship: Winkler, Altona and Edenburg.¹³ In 1925 the vote for a new Ältester selected David Schulz, a teacher turned farmer and a young minister in the congregation. Ältester Jakob Hoepfner ordained Schulz as minister at Winkler in 1921 and as Ältester at Altona in 1926.¹⁴ Schulz led the Gemeinde in the beginnings of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba and into the 1960s.

By 1950 the Bergthaler Gemeinde was too large to be adequately served by one Ältester (see Map 3). Accordingly, J.M. Pauls was ordained as assistant in 1950. Three others, D.D. Klassen, J.F. Pauls and Ernest Wiebe, were elected in 1961. Upon Schulz's resignation in 1964 Jacob F. Pauls and Ernest Wiebe served as leading Ältesten from 1964–1967 and 1967–1972, respectively. At its peak, the Bergthaler Gemeinde numbered 44 lay ministers and 35 deacons. By 1972, the official year of its dissolution, the Bergthaler Gemeinde had grown to 3,500 members worshipping in 20 centres.

Among the lay ministers in the earlier years was the Prussian-born Benjamin Ewert. Ewert came to Canada from the United States in 1892 and was ordained as minister of the Bergthaler Gemeinde in 1895. After teaching, running a bookstore and printing business and serving the Mennonite people in a variety of ways (for example, statistician and reporter), Ewert moved his family to Winnipeg in 1921. From there he served under the Canadian Conference as itinerant minister visiting congregations in the prairie provinces from 1921 to 1938. He was ordained as itinerant minister Ältester in Winnipeg in 1926.

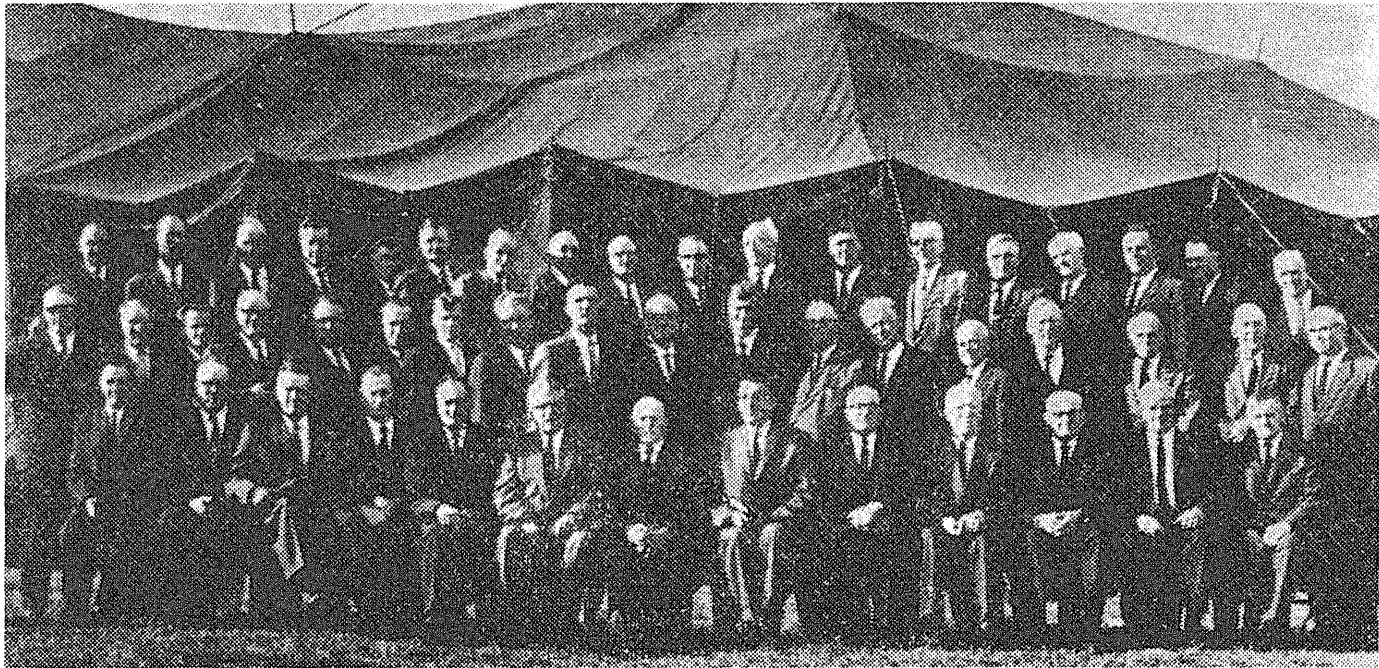
Map 3. Bergthaler Worship Centres



The unity of all Mennonites

Having witnessed the gathering of persons of a variety of backgrounds into one Bergthaler Gemeinde, early leaders like Jakob Hoepfner had the larger vision of uniting all Mennonites in Manitoba and in Canada. Could the cooperation in Bible conferences or the joint efforts related to educational needs be broadened? Could war unite Mennonites? World War I plunged Mennonites into holding inter-Mennonite meetings and sending delegations to government regarding its privileges of military exemption. All groups held firmly to the principle of non-participation in war for which they had left Russia in the first place.

H.H. Ewert, who had the General Conference as an example of unification of diverse Mennonite groups, repeatedly advocated unity in *Der Mitarbeiter*, the Canadian Conference publication which he edited. In a March 1915 editorial he asked, "How can a brotherly relationship between the various Mennonite groups be cultivated?" In 1917 Ewert addressed Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, Mennonite Brethren and Bergthaler at the January Bible conference held in the Evangelical Men-



The Ältesten, ministers and deacons of the Bergthaler Gemeinde at the 125th Bergthal anniversary, September 17, 1961. First row (l to r): Benno Schroeder, Peter Klassen, P.U. Giesbrecht, Ernest Wiebe, J.F. Pauls, J.M. Pauls, J.J. Hooge, David Schulz, D.D. Klassen, Peter J. Loewen, C.H. Friesen, B.P. Wiebe, Franz Letkeman. Second row: Jacob Epp, J.W. Schmidt, John Hoepfner, Wm. J. Peters, D.K. Friesen, David Hildebrandt, Jake Letkeman, A.H. Born, David Wiebe, P.G. Dueck, Abram Funk, Johann Epp, H.J. Gerbrandt, J.J. Loewen, Joh. H. Janzen, Bill Funk, David Klassen, J.E. Stobbe. Third row: J.B. Braun, J.R. Esau, William Enns, J.J. Sawatzky, Frank Letkeman, John J. Siemens, J.J. Wiens, Johann D. Driedger, D.B. Friesen, H. Pauls, D.H. Loewen, Edwin Plett, Abram J. Wiebe, H. Esau, Isaak Loewen, Frank Eidse, Abram Suderman, Abram Doell. Photo: Bergthaler Gemeindeblatt, September 1961



Aganetha (Dueck) & Jacob Hoepfner (1850–1936).
Photo: MHCA



The Katharina and Michael Klaassen family, fall 1934. Photo: Esther Klaassen Bergen

nonite Brethren church in Steinbach on the topic: “Why Mennonites were separated and what could perhaps unite them again.”¹⁵ Ewert wished that the Manitoba Reinländer, Kleine Gemeinde, Sommerfelder and Bergthaler [would] unite and also bring the Old Mennonites of Ontario into the union.”¹⁶ Other Bergthaler, including Johann Funk and Benjamin Ewert, joined H.H. Ewert in this vision for unity. At the 1918 Canadian Conference at Langham, Bergthaler Dietrich Loeppky called for more united endeavours with other Christian denominations.

Bible conferences

In 1914 a succession of Bergthaler ministers’ meetings (*Predigerkonferenzen*) were held in Winkler, Altona and Edenburg. Beginning in 1916 the Mennonite Brethren and Evangelical Mennonite Brethren responded to the Bergthaler invitation to join them for biannual inter-Mennonite ministers’ conferences. Renamed Bible conferences in 1918, in order to open them up for greater public participation, they were in turn held in Altona, Gretna, Kronsgart, Morden, Steinbach, Winkler and Winnipeg. Presenters came from the different groups, as did members of the program committee. Topics included: law and grace, Hebrews, resurrection of the dead, socialism in light of the gospel, the seven seals, hell and the lot of the godless, the apostle Paul, the hope of the Gemeinde, the church at Corinth and at Ephesus, blessings in ministerial home visitation, secret sins and how to deal with them. W.J. Bestvater of the Mennonite Brethren and Benjamin Ewert of the Bergthaler presided as the most frequent chair of the gatherings.

Recurrent presenters from the Bergthaler were P.P. Epp, Benjamin Ewert, Jakob Hoepfner and, from the Herold congregation, Michael Klaassen. The last of these inter-Mennonite Bible conferences took place in May 1927 at Altona.

The Herold congregation¹⁷

The Herold congregation began as a small group of believers of six to eight families from Herold, Oklahoma, who settled north of Morden in 1919. The story is tied very much to that of its leader, Michael Klaassen. Klaassen's roots like those of many other Russian Mennonites lay in Prussia and the Netherlands. His parents were members of the Am Trakt settlement and participated in the Claasz Epp trek to Central Asia. From Khiva the Klaassens and other families emigrated to Nebraska in 1884–1885. When free land became available in the 1890s "Oklahoma Run," Michael Klaassen and a brother Jacob moved their families to the Shelly area near a General Conference mission station. In Oklahoma Klaassen was drawn into church leadership, first as deacon, then as minister. He was ordained as Ältester in 1901 and served three other groups besides his own Herold congregation.

When the United States declared war against Germany in 1917, Klaassen's son Johannes, among others, registered as prescribed by the government. Four Mennonite delegations to Oklahoma City to acquire conscientious objector status for their young men proved futile. Johannes and other conscientious objectors were taken to the military Camp Travis in Texas and were commanded to put on the uniform, to work and to join the army. Those who refused were sentenced to 25 years imprisonment. Johannes refused. In the Leavenworth prison in Kansas, Johannes took ill with pneumonia and died. When the coffin was returned home and opened for viewing the family was stunned to see Johannes in military uniform. His father requested that the uniform be removed and exchanged for his own clothes. This act stirred up hatred of U.S. government officials against the German-speaking Mennonites. Deacons from his congregation advised Klaassen to flee to Canada for "they were after his life." The same night, without farewells, Michael Klaassen left for Saskatchewan where a brother resided. Klaassen's family and close to 20 other families followed. Some of them returned to the States the next year. Six to eight joined the Michael Klaassen family and moved to Manitoba.

The group was heartily welcomed by Bergthaler groups of the Winkler, Altona and Gretna areas where they worshipped for the first months. Klaassen immediately participated in ministry. Soon the Herold

group met in homes for Sunday services, organized a Sunday school and a Jugendverein near Morden. A spirit of cooperation with other Gemeinden developed strongly in various ways. During a discussion of the (Herold) church building project, seven Herold members, two Bergthaler and three Sommerfelder attended. In addition the Bergthaler and Sommerfelder actively solicited funds for the Herold church from their constituencies. Pulpit exchange, combined youth ventures and other activities took place. Mennonites in the community not part of another Gemeinde were invited to become involved with the Herold group. In 1934 the membership had grown to 34.

Klaassen died in October 1934. Services continued in the Herold church with the help of Bergthaler ministers until the early 1940s. As a result of a 1939 Herold brotherhood meeting decision under the leadership of Benjamin Ewert the majority of the group joined the Morden Bergthaler.

Until the mid-1920s the Herold congregation and the Bergthaler Gemeinde were most progressive among Mennonite groups in Manitoba. Yet, compared with the 1920s immigrants from Russia, the Bergthaler appeared more cautious and conservative.

CHAPTER 3

1920s IMMIGRANT GEMEINDEN

The widely scattered settlements of the immigrants . . . reinforced their traditional dependence on the Gemeinde . . . as the ongoing source of that faith and culture without which they saw no meaningful future for themselves or for their children. . . . Where there was no local congregation there was no Mennonite community.—Frank H. Epp¹

Settlement

The Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization had promised the Canadian government that it would settle the Russian immigrants on the land. A Mennonite Land Settlement Board with David Toews as chair gave full attention to this matter beginning in mid-1924. Three options became available: to settle within the existing Mennonite communities, on large farms or on individual homesteads. The lands and homes vacated by the West Reserve emigration to Mexico furnished the first option. With help from the Board immigrant families negotiated the purchase of Reinländer lands in various villages. Some families banded together. Some borrowed money from Kanadier. By November 1924 they had bought 15,000 acres. A similar opportunity arose in 1926 when more than 1,700 Chortitzer and Sommerfeld Mennonites, mostly from the Grunthal, Steinbach, Niverville and Arnaud areas, emigrated to the Paraguayan Chaco. Very soon village lands of “43,998 acres were sold on long-term credit to some 300 Russländer families.”²

Further settlement took place on large, equipped farms whose rich owners no longer found them profitable and were glad to get rid of them. The Russländer considered the availability of these farms as an answer to prayer. Many were bought without a downpayment. One of the (Arnaud) Lyman Farm settlers described sale conditions (which became known as Mennonite terms) as follows:

Sixty dollars per acre to be paid with half the crop for 15 years and 5 percent interest beginning April 1, 1925. All movable and immovable inventory is included: 25 tractors, 4 threshing machines, 36 binders, 110 horses, 176 cows, 22 beef cattle, 44 hogs (for slaughtering) and 44 rood sows. There are virtually no horned cattle (*Rindvieh*) for the purchase

of which the seller is extending \$15,000 credit in the bank and a further \$5,000 to cover costs such as tractor fuel, binder twine, etc. Seed for the first planting will also be provided by the vendor. Two hundred forty acres are considered for every farmer. The entire parcel of land comprises 1,800 acres of uncultivated bushland, most of which can be broken with large tractor plows. There are no stones. The land is very even. Drainage canals are still needed. The five ranches are massively covered with buildings. Nothing has been planted.³

Groups of families initially bought and operated farms together. As alternative solutions became practical farms were divided into smaller units.

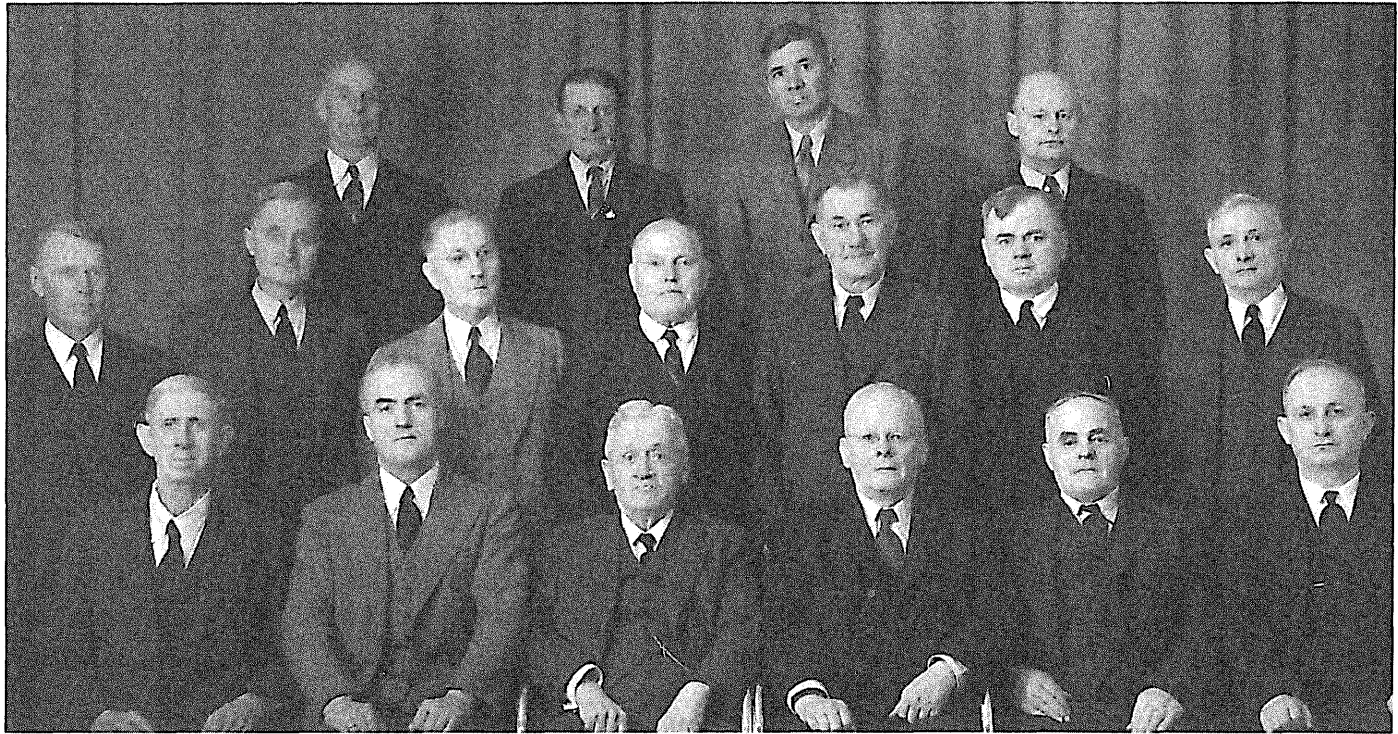
In addition to the economic factor, decisions on settlement were influenced by extended family, Gemeinde and region of origin in the old country. Keeping the group together was important. For example, settlement of the Baratov-Shlakhtin Russländer in southern Manitoba provided a nucleus for the Blumenort Gemeinde.⁴

A central inter-Mennonite immigrant committee, ZMIK (*Zentrales Mennonitisches Immigrantenkomitee*, 1926–1934), with its regional and district chapters, gave attention to the needs and interests of the newcomers. Help with clothing and money for medical expenses (e.g., general hospitalization, tuberculosis and mental illnesses) initially came from the U.S. Mennonites in collaboration with David Toews or via Johann Siemens, Altona.⁵ Gradually, mutual aid organizations of various kinds came into being to meet medical and social needs. The weekly immigrant newspaper, *Der Bote*, published by the ZMIK and edited by Russländer Dietrich H. Epp, became the connecting link for the various groups. It provided news, suggestions and edification.

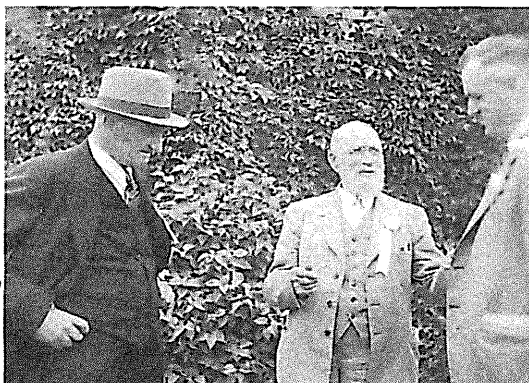
Innumerable adjustments lay ahead for the settlers. Living patterns, agricultural methods, social customs, business procedures, marketing, language and much more needed to be learned. Some immigrants never became proficient in the English language. Ältester Franz F. Enns, for example, became a man without earthly citizenship because in 1931 his language facility was inadequate for the Canadian citizenship test.

Transportation debt (*Reiseschuld*)

According to the Board of Colonization's plan, immigrants were to work in the harvest fields on arrival. They received going wages and were expected to pay all or most of their earnings toward the transportation debt. Their hosts or employers freely provided food and shelter. Next to survival the transportation debt was high priority for the conscientious. One adult ticket purchased on CPR credit cost \$164.



The Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization. Front row (l to r): B.B. Janz, C.F. Klassen, David Toews, D.P. Enns, Alvah S. Bowman, J.J. Thiessen. Second row: A.H. Harder, J.H. Enns, C.A. DeFehr, G.J. Derksen, D.H. Epp, J.G. Rempel, J. Gerbrandt. Third row: Wm. Hildebrand, D.J. Janzen, D.D. Rempel, J.N. Hoepfner. Photo: MHCA



Peter Enns, a friend and C.F. Klassen reflect on the Reiseschuld. Photo: Elizabeth P. Enns

Many immigrants cleared their bill in one year. In 1925, 42 families had completely paid up; 654 were owing a total of \$199,340.⁶

For many families the debt was a real burden. “How happy I am that we have no transportation debt anymore. Oh, that travel debt!” wrote Franz F. Enns to David Toews in 1931. Some felt disillusioned and thought insufficient attention was given to the effects of the Depression on the ability to pay. Some refused to accept responsibility for the debt. As a result, it became an ongoing concern at the ZMIK and Board level as well as for church leaders and the Manitoba ministers’ conference. Leaders saw the inability to pay not only as an economic problem but also as a spiritual attitude of unwillingness and irresponsibility. They looked on neglect to pay as a sin subject to disciplinary action like any other sin.

In July 1945 Manitoba’s debt to the CPR stood at \$109,755, to Mennonite leaders at \$13,269, totalling \$123,024. The final payment was made in November 1946 clearing the total credits of \$1,924,727 advanced by the CPR to the 1920s immigrants to Canada.⁷

Eben Ezer Girls’ Home (*Mädchenheim*)

To address the burden of the transportation debt, immigrant families sent their daughters, as young as 13 and up to age 30, to work as live-in maids or nursemaids for wealthy Anglo-Saxon or Jewish families in Winnipeg.⁸ The idea of providing a home away from home for these girls, who often knew little English, were strange to the city and had no place to spend their time off, came from minister Gerhard A. Peters.⁹ Peters came to Winnipeg from Ladekopp, Molotschna, via Herbert, Saskatchewan, initially serving as one of two “editors” of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. When he discovered that women of kirchliche back-



Women of the Eben Ezer Home with houseparents Selinde and Alexander Fast, their girls and Ältester J.P. and Helene Klassen in the front row. Photo: Helene Becker

ground who boarded in the Mennonite Brethren girls' home were being baptized in the Mennonite Brethren Gemeinde, he recommended that a home to serve kirchliche girls be opened in Winnipeg. Peters' idea found a great deal of support from the General Conference Home Mission Board and with its help a home was opened at 458 McDermot in October 1926. The board appointed Peters as its administrator. Somewhat later, when the Peters moved to 392 Alexander, the girls' home moved with them to the parsonage and the adjacent church building. This arrangement became unsuitable and a larger place, strictly for this Home's purposes, was rented at 412 Bannatyne. About 1943 the Home Mission Board decided that instead of paying expensive rent it would buy the 605 Bannatyne house for the home.

When the 1930s Depression set in, clientele of the home increased because families of the 1870s immigrants began sending their daughters to the city to earn money. Another change came when post-World War II DP girls came to the home for help. Assisting these different groups of girls to find work were the houseparents Gerhard and Helena Peters (1926–1930), Alexander J. and Selinde Fast (1930–1933) and matron Helen Epp (1933–1959). Epp was assisted at various times by one of her three sisters, Ida, Martha or Aganetha, the latter filling that role for 25 years. Responsible for the spiritual nurture were the houseparents for the years 1926–1933, more specifically the housefathers, Gerhard Peters and Alexander Fast. When Helen Epp became matron, the Home Mission Board hired J.H. Enns for this position from 1933 to 1947, followed by Benjamin Ewert to 1949. Jacob Toews succeeded Ewert and stayed until the home closed.

The full impact of Eben Ezer's young women, beyond the labour expected of a maid, will never be fully known other than the economic contribution made toward eliminating the transportation debt. Earnings were anywhere from a monthly low of five dollars for the inexperienced during the Depression to 25 dollars or more depending on experience and the economic times. It was not compulsory, but some of the women brought about half of their salary to the home. There, on behalf of the Board of Colonization and Immigration, C.F. Klassen collected the money and forwarded it to Rosthern where it was credited to the respective family's account. Sometimes girls could not marry before their family's or their fiancé's debt was paid.¹⁰ Economically, the girls also helped their families with cash which enabled them to stay on the farm and to make ends meet. Often they spent their after-hours sitting alone in their maid's room doing handwork for fund-raising auctions for the home.¹¹

To Winnipeg society people the girls exemplified the Mennonite lifestyle. Mennonite girls had a reputation for honesty, conscientiousness and high moral standards. Girls from Eben Ezer, and similarly from the Mary-Martha Home of the Mennonite Brethren, were much in demand. Like the conscientious objectors (COs) of later years, these women brought home new perspectives and experiences that in subtle ways affected families and congregations. A 1936 ministers' conference recognized the importance of the ministry of Eben Ezer by agreeing to support the work as much as possible.

Long after World War II, when economic circumstances had improved enormously, when membership in the Winnipeg GC Mennonite churches had risen from 254 in 1935 to nearly 2,352 and other supports were available, the Eben Ezer Home disbanded in 1959.¹²

Gathering the settlers into Gemeinden

Immigrant families or groups met in homes, district schools or church buildings of other denominations for worship and nurture. If the group included an ordained minister he assumed leadership. Alternatively, assigned brethren read sermons or led Bible studies. H.H. Ewert and others provided teaching and sermon resources. Distributed were Langemann and Wiedemann Bible story books and C.H. Spurgeon's *Evangelium für allerlei Volk* (The Gospel for Various Peoples) from the German *Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland* (Society for Germanism Abroad).¹³ A number of places established local libraries.

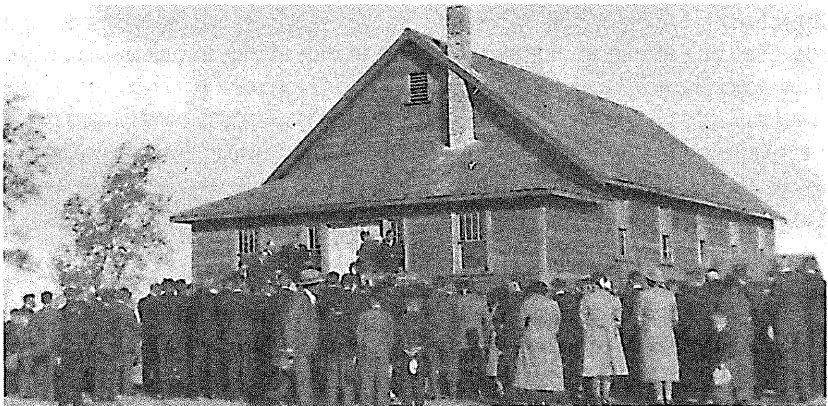
The first known initiative to gather the groups into some kind of Gemeinde came from the first immigrant Ältester, Johann P. Klassen. The Klassen family which arrived in Canada in the fall of 1923 spent the first six months in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, and approximately half a year each at Altona and Dominion City in Manitoba before settling at Starbuck in 1925. On June 28 that year Klassen initiated and led a consultation of Manitoba Mennonite immigrants regarding the founding of a Gemeinde organization. Klassen addressed those gathered with words from Philippians 2:2 (RSV): "complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." According to the minutes of the meeting the immigrants unquestionably needed such an organization because they were spread far and wide and susceptible to the danger of going "in different directions and entirely straying from the right way." Those gathered voted "to unite all newly immigrated Mennonites in one large Gemeinde in which specific localities could have branch Gemeinden."¹⁴ The assembly elected J.P. Klassen to lead this collective Gemeinde.



*Dedication of the first 1920s immigrant church at St. Elizabeth, 1930.
Photo: Of Days Gone By*

The localities identified were Rosenort, Niverville, Arnaud, Starbuck, Westbourne, Crystal City, Meadows and Whitewater. Of these, only Westbourne, represented by J.J. Enns, later leading minister and Ältester of Elim at Grunthal, had already organized. Each branch was considered autonomous in establishing itself and was encouraged to start a church register. Serving the groups would be local and guest ministers. Youth and children's ministries needed to be emphasized.

Representatives of this large Gemeinde met again in Winnipeg September 29, 1925 and March 10, 1926. At the September meeting



*Dedication of the first local Whitewater church building, October 1939.
Photo: G.G. Neufeld family*

Table 2
Manitoba Gemeinden and their participation
at the 2-4 July 1928 KMMC/CMC

Gemeinde Name	Joined KMMC	Delegates and No. of Votes
Bergthaler	1903	P.P. Epp, J.J. Loeppky, H. Born, K. Bergmann, J. Buhr, J. Driediger, J. Martens, D. Berg, J. Sawatzky, A. Friesen - 40
Blumenorter	1926	Peter P. Penner - 6
Lichtenauer (Arnaud)	1926	Abram H. Harder - 5
Schoenwieser	1926	Joh. P. Klassen, G. A. Peters, D. Koop - 17
Whitewater	1927	Franz F. Enns - 6

Sources: J. G. Rempel, *Konferenz Bericht 1928-1934*, 4, and other sources.

they reported on the situation in their respective groups and addressed concerns such as the election of church workers, baptismal instruction and communion. Besides continuing discussions surrounding baptism, the 1926 gathering asked: Shall we join the Canadian Conference? If yes, as one large body or as smaller independent groups? The meeting decided that those groups which were organized by the time of the July 1926 Canadian Conference sessions and wanted to join should do so on their own (see Table 2). The remainder would continue in the large Manitoba Gemeinde organization that formed in 1925.¹⁵ Only two members present at the meetings, J.J. Siemens of Winkler and Cornelius Krahn of Reinland, were of groups who did not become part of the Schönwieser Gemeinde. Siemens joined the Bergthaler and Krahn the Blumenorter.

J.P. Klassen continued to call meetings but they went in two directions. One invited ministers of the various settlements to get together in Winnipeg October 28, 1926 to talk about common concerns. The other requested those who considered themselves to be part of the Starbuck group to meet the day after.¹⁶ H.H. Ewert had envisioned three immigrant Gemeinden: Whitewater in the west, Schönwieser in Winnipeg and surrounding area, and the Blumenorter in the central part. But that as well as the all-Manitoba one-large-Gemeinde idea was short-lived.

The second initiative to assist the groups to form Gemeinden (see Table 3) came from the General Conference Home Mission Board. Canadian board member, David Toews, had the responsibility of overseeing the spiritual nurture of the impoverished and scattered immigrants. He established contact with the two immigrant Ältesten up-

Table 3
The 1920s *Kirchliche* Immigrant Gemeinden
and their Settlement Groups

(with the number of families in some of the locations)

Blumenorter Gemeinde

Blumenort 28, Blumenfeld, Chortitz 14, Eichenfeld 9, Gnadenthal 34, Hochfeld 19, Neuenburg 6, Neuhorst 2, Reinland 17, Rosenort 12, Schönwiese 11; Elm Creek, Wingham; Fork River, Winnipegosis 36; McCreary 8.

Elim Gemeinde

Grunthal 43, Spencer 13, Rosengard 2, New Barkfield 18, Chortitz 53.

Lichtenauer Gemeinde

Arnaud, Dominion City 85; St. Elizabeth 31, Langside District (along Rouseau River) 10, Timlick District 14.

Schönwieser Gemeinde

northwest region

Culross, Elm Creek, Fannystelle 31; Starbuck 6, Springstein 25, Oak Bluff 13.

near west region

Pigeon Lake 19, Headingly 9, Elie 11, Meadows 7, Marquette, High Bluff, Westbourne 2,

far west region

Foxwarren 25, Birtle, MacAuley 23, Willen, Manson, Fleming, Kirkella 13, Elkhorn, Routledge; Virden, Oak Lake, Griswold, Kenton 35; Alexander 25, Rivers 13, Wheatland.

southern region

Sperling 18, Graysville 3, Miami, Stephenfield, Roseisle, Glenlea, St. Adolphe 24, Morris 16; Stuartburn, Gardenton 8.

southeastern region

Steinbach 61, Niverville 72, St. Anne 17, Prairie Rose, Lorette (Grand Point) 7.

Winnipeg region

Central Winnipeg 280, North Kildonan 79, Brooklands, Kirkfield Park.

north region

Stonewall, Petersfield.

Whitewater Gemeinde

Boissevain 32, Brandon 9; Clearwater, Crystal City 16; Killarney 10, Lena 29, Manitou 59, Margaret, Mather 9, Mountain Side 48, Ninga 3; Souris 16, Whitewater.

Notes: 1. Compiled from Epp, *Mennonites in Canada II*, Table 21, 208 and other sources. 2. Listed in some sources for Schönwieser are also Balmoral, Beulah, Brandon, Rosser, Holland, Newton Siding.

on their arrival, J.P. Klassen in 1923 and F.F. Enns in 1926, and encouraged them not to tie themselves down to farming. Promising them a modest remuneration from the Home Mission Board he enlisted them for ministry to the dispersed immigrants. Ältester Johann P. Klassen of Starbuck came from the Kronsweider (Frisian) Gemeinde in the Old Colony, Ältester Franz F. Enns of Lena from the Tereker (Flemish) Gemeinde in the Caucasus although he had served other Molotschna groups as well.¹⁷ Klassen became Ältester of the Schönwieser and Enns of the Whitewater Gemeinde.

Itinerant ministry (*Reisepredigtarbeit*)

Klassen's and Enns' tasks as itinerant ministers were to gather the immigrants, help with the organization of groups and ordain leadership. Wherever they went they preached and taught the Word, baptized and served communion, counselled, comforted and admonished. This overwhelming and arduous task demanded perseverance and sacrifice. Together they served a large number of groups, both those of their own Gemeinden and those who did not yet have an Ältester (see Table 4). Enns was assigned primarily to the areas southwest and south of the CPR line to the United States border, Klassen around Winnipeg, then west and immediately north along the CPR to the Saskatchewan border.

Table 4
Earliest Immigrant Gemeinden and their Ältesten

Gemeinde	Organized	Visiting Ältester	Own Ältester - year ordained
Blumenorter	1925	J. P. Klassen, Franz F. Enns	Joh. P. Bueckert - 1928
Elim	1927	Franz F. Enns, J. H. Enns	Johann J. Enns - 1943
Lichtenauer	1927	J. P. Klassen	Peter H. Enns - 1934
Nordheimer	1933	J. P. Bueckert	Cornelius C. Janzen - 1953
Schönwieser	1926		Joh. P. Klassen - 1906
Whitewater	1925	J. P. Klassen	Franz F. Enns - 1906

In general, the itinerant ministers followed the Home Mission Board directive. They also went where "their" members settled and where there were no ministers. As a result the territories of Klassen and Enns occasionally overlapped. Sometimes two or three Gemeinden had members in one area, as occurred in Rivers where four of the original families were Whitewater, three Schönwieser. When Klassen baptized

the sons of one of the Whitewater families, Enns entered their names into the Whitewater Gemeinde record. Klassen did not like that. After a number of years the entire Rivers group joined the Whitewater Gemeinde.

The Home Mission Board supported both Enns and Klassen with monthly payments of \$45 or \$50. Included in that were contributions from the groups visited. Over an eight-year period (1927–1934), for example, the 26-member group at Crystal City-Mather paid \$84.40 toward travel costs for 31 visits.¹⁸

Itinerant ministers travelled by train at half-fare clergy rates and by boxwagon or sleigh which were provided by the groups concerned. Ministers endured strenuous and taxing winter travel, jolting along in the sleigh over long distances of frozen terrain, poor roads or deep snow. During a 14-month period, November 1927 to December 1928, Enns travelled 5,832 miles by train and 1,596 miles by sleigh or wagon. He preached 192 times, visited 424 families at 69 places, served communion to 1,267 persons at 16 locations, baptized 32 persons at four sites, ordained three ministers and one deacon, conducted elections for five ministers and one Ältester, married four couples, worked away from home 206 days and distributed medicine to 273 persons.¹⁹

A January 26, 1928 report to David Toews gives a sense of an itinerary for Enns:

I am going to the group at La-Riviere and from there to Manitou, where on Sunday the 29th I will serve communion. From there I will visit the groups along the railroad as far as Morris. From there, on Sunday February 5, I will continue to Grunthal on the East Reserve where I am to officiate at communion, the ordination of a deacon and a minister. From there I will proceed to the various scattered families. If I endure physically, then I will not be home until the 25th of February.²⁰

In addition to Starbuck and Winnipeg, Klassen served a large number of other groups. He did not always visit the groups alone. A.H. Harder of Arnaud, who on occasion accompanied him, saw this as following true New Testament form. “Didn’t the Apostle Paul often take along a companion?” he wrote to David Toews.²¹

Both Enns and Klassen had their distinct giftedness. Enns was self-educated. Klassen had formal teacher training in Russia. He was unique among immigrant ministers for his oratorical gifts, his ability to inspire and win people and also, in many respects, his liberalism which rose in part from his emphasis on the “the spirit of the Bible” as distinct from the dependence on the biblical letter. To some degree the latter was true



Franz F. Enns and his itinerant ministry gear: Bible, his record of meetings and texts, a supply of hand-written neatly labelled sermons, the Dreiband hymnbook and more sermons in the black case.

of Enns as well, in addition to his admirable leadership qualities and his ability to relate favourably to people. Enns sometimes feared that Klassen would be drawn elsewhere (e.g., to Ontario) and could not imagine the work in Manitoba without him. In February 1929 Klassen was the main speaker at the Bible conference (*Bibelbesprechung*) in the Whitewater Gemeinde. Enns wrote: "The Whitewater group was fully excited about Br. Klassen, and I was happy for his achievement in my Gemeinde."²²

Sometimes sensitive situations arose. For example, initially the Blumenorter invited Klassen, until then the only Ältester among the immigrants, to be their visiting Ältester. Klassen had Arkadak connections in common with some of the charter members. Regardless, in spring of 1927 F.F. Enns, with whom some Memrik Colony members had association, was asked to serve the Gemeinde. However, the reason for the change was not so much the particular association of origins but the fact that the Blumenorter did not appreciate J.P. Klassen's smoking.²³ When the Blumenorter chose their own Ältester, Enns led the election but Ältester David Toews was asked to officiate at the ordination of J.P. Bueckert to avoid hurting either Enns or Klassen. Both participated in the service in other ways.²⁴

Klassen and Enns were not alone in the itinerant ministry for too

long. Benjamin Ewert, itinerant minister-at-large in the Canadian Conference, assisted. In 1928 ministers D.H. Koop of Niverville and Gerhard Rempel of Altona helped on a part-time basis. David Toews urged this group to coordinate its work to minimize overlap and help the work to prosper.²⁵

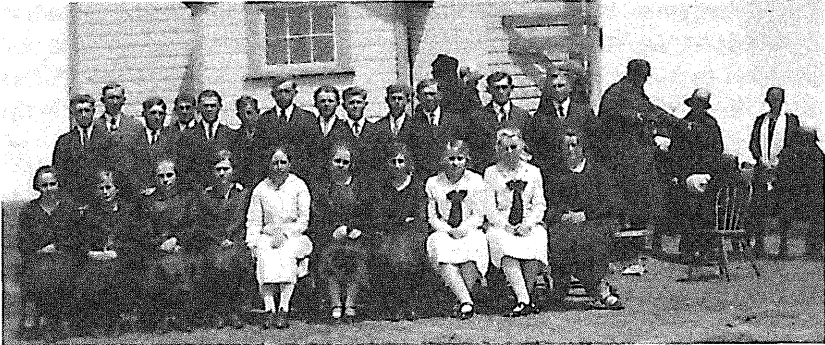
Kirchliche and Mennonite Brethren

The Bergthaler, like many immigrant Gemeinden, were also kirchliche but found the label strange and even offensive. Until the Russländer came it had been sufficient to be known as Mennonite without an additional tag. However, in Russia the designation was given to mainstream Mennonites to distinguish them from the Mennonite Brethren. The latter called their meeting place *Versammlungshaus* but they were never called *Versammlungshaus* Mennonites, reasoned H.H. Ewert in a *Mitarbeiter* editorial. Neither were Mennonites in Prussia called school Mennonites because they met in schools, nor Mennonites in America shed Mennonites because they met in sheds. So why should those who met in churches (*Kirchen*) be called *kirchliche* Mennonites?²⁶ Nevertheless, kirchliche was used frequently and came to identify Canadian Mennonites of General Conference persuasion.

In many of the settlements Mennonite Brethren and kirchliche worked and worshipped together amicably and leaders from both groups served. But eventually when it came to affiliating with one or the other or to building a church their ways parted. According to Mennonite Brethren historian A.H. Unruh, Mennonite Brethren members longed to maintain and express their style of worship, their Gemeinde organization and emphasis on evangelism. This hindered the development of public worship with other Gemeinden. Unruh suggested that there was little inclination to move closer to the kirchliche Gemeinden.²⁷

Unruh identified the Mennonite Brethren emphasis on personal conversion and revival meetings as being the point of friction. However, the tone of the early records of the immigrant Gemeinden do not entirely bear this out. Manitoba-born historian Frank H. Epp concluded that:

By and large, the Conference churches . . . had no quarrel with the insistence of the Brethren on the faith of members being very personal and the experience of the new birth being very real. But most of the Conference church ministers would also have argued that the new birth and personal faith could be arrived at just as well via education and the catechism as through the evangelistic meeting and the altar call.²⁸



The kirchliche and Mennonite Brethren choir at Lena with J.A. Neufeld (back left) conductor, c.1928. Photo: Margaret Friesen

Nonetheless, some of the kirchliche brethren were less rigid than others or than the Mennonite Brethren as to who could be baptized and how. Franz F. Enns at a January ministers' conference in 1932 advocated that one not be narrow in this matter. He said:

We want to work with our baptismal candidates so faithfully and thoroughly that even before the baptism with water they are born again to a living hope, having received through the Holy Spirit the assurance that they are children of God. . . . Those who unfortunately are not at the stage yet, but are sincere and are longingly reaching out after the salvation which Christ gives, . . . those too need not be set back.

That is how our fathers had it and God has honoured this through the centuries and that is how we want to keep it, and the holy Scriptures are on our side.²⁹

The most straining factor in the relationships remained the fact that for the Brethren baptism by immersion was the only biblical and acceptable form and on that there could be no compromise.

In some contexts kirchliche Gemeinden found the proselytizing and inflexibility of some Mennonite Brethren distressing. For example, F.F. Enns wrote to David Toews in 1929: "Because of the *propagandist* work of the Brethren Gemeinde I am forced in the next while to devote myself more to the group at Whitewater."³⁰ Later attempts at forming a united congregation with the Mennonite Brethren at St. Elizabeth failed. Peter H. Enns reported to his brother Johann in 1934 that:

nothing is coming of joining together. In order to recognize us fully they have to give up rebaptizing those who have already been baptized by us

and may not refuse anyone their communion fellowship. They do not let go of their position. Tolerance is with us; they are intolerant.³¹

Cooperation took place in some areas of work. A.H. Unruh acknowledged these ways as service to the hungry through MCC and mutual edification through Bible conferences. The *Mennonitengemeinden*, as the kirchliche were most frequently designated, felt quite free to invite Mennonite Brethren ministers to serve at their Bible conferences. A.H. Unruh was one of the much appreciated speakers. However, with few exceptions, this was very much a one-way street, say leaders who remember those early years.³² The discontinuation of the Bergthaler-MB-EMB Bible conferences coincided with the discontent of the Kanadier and Russländer kirchliche regarding the unfolding events surrounding baptism and the Winkler Bible School.

The Winkler Bible School

This was the first Mennonite Bible school in Manitoba. In the beginning it was neither a church- nor a society-sponsored school. It served no one church in particular but was committed to teaching “basic principles of the Scriptures to which all [Mennonites] could subscribe.”³³ With the blessing of the local Mennonite Brethren leadership, the school, known as Peniel in its early years, was founded in 1925 as a private undertaking under the directorship of Mennonite Brethren minister and teacher Abraham H. Unruh, former teacher of the Chongrav Bible School (1918–1924) in Crimea, Russia.³⁴

The local Bergthaler, Blumenorter and other kirchliche groups were very sympathetic to this undertaking. Ältester Jakob Hoepfner thought it was possible to have one Mennonite Bible school. In fact, it was Hoepfner who “donated a lot of his land for this purpose. Later, he accepted a small sum of money for it, to allow legal transaction of the lot.”³⁵ Most of the financial support came from the Mennonite Brethren. The 1920s immigrants provided largely moral support.

Students came from the different Mennonite groups. David Schulz was one of the first Bergthaler to attend in 1926–1927. Other Manitoba Conference ministers, who spent shorter or longer periods at Peniel prior to 1950, included from the Bergthaler Harry S. Friesen, William J. Peters; from the Blumenorter Heinrich Albrecht, Peter P. Fehr, J.K. Klassen, P.A. Rempel, A.A. Teichroeb; from Whitewater Heinrich Born, Abram G. Neufeld; from McCreary Peter J. Froese.

However, on the whole, the kirchliche did not continue with the Winkler Bible School. Mistrust arose when students from kirchliche

Gemeinden were baptized by the Mennonite Brethren. “Wiebes, Redekops, Schellenbergs were among those baptized in the hollow at the Hutterite colony,” recalled one earlier very active Manitoba Conference old-timer. “The thing was like this,” he explained. “When the students repented they also needed to be baptized.” J.P. Bueckert expanded on that when he wrote to one of Peniel’s teachers:

... it did our hearts good when you called us “brothers.” But when we then became aware that you do not take heed how we are being despised, that the minimal formalities integral for order are ignored, that when members of our Gemeinde turn to the Mennonite Brethren Gemeinde the question is not asked whether they have severed their relationship with their former Gemeinde amiably/orderly, then we cannot do otherwise but hold you as teachers of the Bible school responsible as well, if things don’t get better. I don’t like to write this, but I want you to know how we feel and what the reasons are that we cannot be as open with you as has been possible until now.

I don’t want to be misunderstood, as if we are angry that you have baptized our members. Not at all, but that this is taken so lightly without informing us in the least [perturbs us].³⁶

More Russländer diversities

Besides the kirchliche-Mennonite Brethren there were also the Frisian-Flemish distinctions. These dated back to a sixteenth-century split in the Netherlands which was carried into Prussia and Russia. While this split was not consciously perpetuated in Canada its sway was felt in Manitoba. In the Netherlands the Frisians considered the Flemish too worldly in their dress and manners; the Flemish thought the Frisians were not sober enough in the furnishing of their homes. With time variant practices in the observance of communion and baptism developed: in the Frisian Gemeinde members filed past the Ältester who put bread on the handkerchief of the member; in the Flemish Gemeinde the Ältester distributed the bread to the members who remained seated. Frisians baptized by sprinkling, the Flemish by pouring. In later years the Frisians became known as *Yaps Menisten* (cupped hand Mennonites) and the Flemish as *Schmaundkauntji Menisten* (cream pitcher

Mennonites). The disagreements in the Netherlands became so strong that for a time marrying into each other's groups was forbidden and one needed to be rebaptized to join the other group.

In Poland-Prussia these differences gradually disappeared. At the time of the first emigration to Russia in the 1780s, hopes were high that only one Gemeinde would be founded in their new home. However, the Frisians organized as the Kronsweide Gemeinde and the Flemish as the Chortitza Gemeinde. The former were more tolerant and open to new experiences and change. The Schönwieser Gemeinde in Manitoba inherited this reputation of less restrictive theological interpretations and a more lenient practice of the faith, since both its first Ältester as well as some of its charter members were Kronsweider.³⁷

In Russia regional differences influenced the immigrants as well. These developed between Chortitza and Molotschna and among their daughter colonies. The original settlers of the Chortitza colony were poorer, less educated and more conservative than those who went to Molotschna approximately 25 years later. Old Colony Mennonites were more likely to look for ways to safeguard their traditional life, the Molotschna folk more willing to adjust to the environment of their new country. In the 1870s the Old Colony Mennonites preferred Canada, the Molotschna the United States. Pietism influenced Molotschna communities more than it did the Chortitza church.

The biases and prejudices which different immigrant groups brought with them worked themselves out in Manitoba as people tried to get along. Few settlements were spared such tensions. For example, the local Whitewater Gemeinde group consisted of settlers from Memrik, Molotschna, Terek and Grigorievka. The first three were of Molotschna extraction, Grigorievka of Chortitza background. With one exception, ministerial leadership positions in the very first years were held by men from Molotschna who "were more educated and brought the religious life."³⁸ The Molotschna people settled on the Wilson farm, the Tereker on the Jones farm. They referred to each other as the *Wilsona* and the *Jonsa*. Some members remember the tensions between the two groups and Ältester Enns weeping at a brotherhood meeting saying: "Let's have peace." It was said that the only neutral territory were women's



The Zionskirche on Alexander Avenue where the provincial ministers' conferences and many other meetings were held until 1945. Photo: Jubilate

birthday parties.

Some of the earliest Russländer came to Canada on group passports. They had been carefully selected to make a good impression and establish a good reputation so that more immigrants could follow. A few of those emigrating in 1925 and later could liquidate their property and bring some money and goods. Other 1920s immigrants, like Henry Albrecht, long-time church secretary and first Sunday school superintendent at Boissevain, paid their trip in advance and therefore had no transportation debt.³⁹ Later immigrants experienced more of the terror of the Soviet regime than those who left earlier.

Ministers' conferences (*Predigerkonferenzen*)

The 1925–1926 J.P. Klassen-initiated meetings of representatives from the 1920s immigrant Gemeinden were followed by two ministers' consultations. Little is known about the first one, October 28, 1926. The second was held in Morris on August 3, 1927 and functioned like the many ministers' conferences that followed annually or biannually.⁴⁰ According to J.P. Klassen, who was elected chair for the day, the purpose of the Morris meeting was to get to know each other better and to pursue brotherly counsel on all church-related questions. Franz F. Enns made the opening based on Jeremiah 51:50: "Remember the Lord from afar, and let Jerusalem come into your mind" (RSV).⁴¹

Questions at this one-day consultation, which was attended by 30–40 workers, concerned the keeping of the church's holy days, support of the Gretna school, and the organization of Sunday schools and Jugendvereine in the Gemeinden. Those gathered made three decisions. Firstly, they would celebrate Christmas, Easter and Pentecost two days each and also observe Good Friday and Ascension Day. Secondly, since the school in Gretna met the religious and German language needs of immigrant students, the ministers' conference committed itself to support this school morally and materially as far as possible. Thirdly, after completion of the fall field work they would meet again.

One day proved too brief. The next meeting, the first designated as a ministers' conference, took place March 6–7, 1928 in Winnipeg in the Schönwieser Zionskirche, till noon the second day. Twenty-four ministers attended. Franz F. Enns chaired the sessions and Dietrich H. Koop recorded the minutes. A working pattern, which was more or less followed for two decades, was developed. Different ministers opened and closed the approximately two-hour morning and afternoon sessions with Scripture, comments, often a hymn and prayer. Between the opening and closing volunteers or assigned persons presented topical papers (*Referate*) for discussion.

The evening worship service was open to the public. At the 1928 conference the three ministers, Johann Martens of Graysville, J. Bueckert of Gretna and P. Penner of Hochfeld, preached at the 8 o'clock evening service. Current concerns (*Laufende Fragen*) always comprised

from enticements was seen as an option. Some of the data sought to address the dangers inherent in the city were depicted in the following questions:

How many of our young men and women from the rural areas are in the city? How many of them have already been touched by the Jewish culture? How much lipstick and powder is being used daily? How many of them have paired off with English, French or other nationalities and thereby committed the desecration of the races?⁴

The presence of Mennonite inmates at Headingly was ascribed to neglect and omission on the part of leaders. The conclusion in seeking solutions was the same: not merely forbid and condemn but rather offer some viable alternatives to questionable involvements. Any necessary discipline should be administered with gentleness.

In several Canadian provinces the ministers' conference developed into the provincial delegate conference. Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan made this transition in 1929. Manitoba could not go that route as easily since two of its partners-to-be, the Bergthaler and Herold, were not officially part of the provincial ministers' conferences at first and became so only gradually. The lone Winkler Bergthaler recorded at the first two provincial ministers' conferences of immigrant Gemeinden was 1920s immigrant minister J.J. Siemens (ordained 1922) from Dolinovka in southern Russia. In 1929 Michael Klaassen from the Herold congregation and P.P. Epp and H. Born from the Morden Bergthaler were part of the program. The latter two were elected to the program committee for 1930. David Schulz first appeared on the program in 1933.

Alongside these provincial ministers' conferences came the Bergthaler invitation to the province-wide Bible conference after Pentecost in 1928. In principle, Bible conferences had been open to everyone. In reality only local folk could take advantage of them. A provincial Bible conference to which all the immigrant Gemeinden were invited meant that the Ältester and several ministers participated. Delegate conferences, as the Bergthaler had already experienced them in the Canadian Conference since 1903, were a new idea for these immigrants.⁵ Aside from that, economic circumstances, difficult travel, farm and family responsibilities allowed for limited participation. The program was publicized in advance in *Der Bote*. That the conference was scheduled to be held in the Bergthaler tent suggested the expectation of a goodly crowd.⁶



David Schulz (1897–1976)



J.P. Bueckert (1879–1958)

Two sessions of each of the following were planned: topical papers in the mornings, Bible discussions in the afternoons, and preaching or worship services in the evenings. Themes of the papers presented by P.P. Epp of Morden, Benjamin Ewert of Winnipeg and G. Rempel of Altona included: the purpose of the gathering, fellowship of the Spirit and blessings of the fellowship of believers, and our common ministry. J.P. Klassen led the Bible exegesis and discussions on John chapters 3 and 4. G. Doerksen of Meadows and Michael Klaassen of Morden preached the first evening, Abram Harder and Franz F. Enns, the second. Different leaders opened and closed each session.

The 1929 [Bible] conference took place in Arnaud. Papers by J.P. Bueckert and P.P. Epp concerned themselves with: When may or should a minister of the gospel give up his vocation or leave his Gemeinde? and false teachings, respectively.⁷ Ältester Franz F. Enns invited the Bible conference to Whitewater for June 17–19, 1930. It took place on the Peter Engbrechts' barnloft. The aim, Enns said, was rapprochement.⁸ Twenty-two ministers attended from the Bergthaler, Blumenorter, Elim, Herold, Schönwieser and Whitewater Gemeinden. Local people participated with interest.⁹

A month later, toward the close of the July 1930 Canadian Conference sessions, the Manitoba Bible conference idea took a decisive twist.

H.H. Ewert explored dividing the Canadian Conference into two parts, a Manitoba conference and a Saskatchewan conference. The separation could be made with the understanding to meet jointly periodically. Whether Ewert spoke for more than only himself is not clear. The Canadian Conference in session, recognized that the implications could not be explored fully at the time, hence agreed that a commission bring a recommendation to the next conference. The appointed commission, H.H. Ewert of Gretna, Johann Gerbrandt of Drake and Johann Rempel of Langham, reported at the 1931 Canadian Conference sessions in Langham, Saskatchewan, that they did not agree on a proposal regarding the suggested division of the Canadian Conference. According to David Toews, chair of the conference, the delegates then voted by secret ballot and decided by a large majority not to separate.¹⁰ But in Manitoba the notion did not die. It now became the concern of the broader Bergthaler leadership. After testing it with the brotherhood the Bergthaler ministerial presented its conclusion to the June 1932 Bible conference in Altona where the Blumenorter, Schönwieser and Whitewater Gemeinden were represented. It read:

The ministerial of the Bergthaler Gemeinde believes that the home mission work in Manitoba should be led by a local organization and recommends that the ordering and leadership of the mission workers in Manitoba be assigned to the existing annual Bible conference in which representatives from all the Manitoba Conference Gemeinden participate, and that this [Bible conference] be developed to an annual Manitoba district conference of the general conference [*Allgemeine Konferenz-Canadian*] for the purpose stated.¹¹

The Bible conference concurred in principle but did not want this Manitoba agenda to become a divisive factor. Continuing fellowship and joint work with the Canadian Conference remained important. Representatives presented a reworded resolution to the Canadian Conference sessions meeting in Laird in July of the same year. It concluded:

we could better satisfy the [Manitoba] demands if we organized a local conference . . . but still keep the present connections and continue in peaceful cooperation [with the Canadian Conference]. We therefore ask the worthy conference for its agreement to this recommended new relationship.

Considerable debate ensued. In the end the Canadian Conference

recognized that the Gemeinden in Manitoba were intent on forming a separate provincial conference. True to its constitution the Canadian Conference remained an advisory rather than a binding body. It wished the Manitoba Gemeinden God's blessing and hoped that they might support the broader work of the Canadian Conference all the more. Underlying concerns and feelings had to be dealt with. How would a new provincial body which wanted to address the spiritual needs that had heretofore been dealt with by workers of the General Conference Home Mission Board relate to the latter? Would this new arrangement mar the peaceful and cooperative relationship with the Canadian Conference or with the General Conference and specifically with David Toews?¹²

David Schulz, J.J. Siemens, J.P. Bueckert, J.P. Klassen, P.P. Epp, H.H. Ewert and F.F. Enns were the elected committee to prepare the 1933 Manitoba provincial conference program. Upon Schulz's recommendation Siemens became chairman and Bueckert secretary.

The 1933 and 1934 provincial conferences

The 1933 provincial conference sessions, although not well attended, took place on June 7–8 at Plum Coulee in spite of Bergthaler protests that the upcoming Canadian Conference sessions in Gnadenthal would already provide enough work. Ältester David Schulz welcomed the assembly briefly. Peter P. Epp of Morden Bergthaler preached the conference sermon on Psalm 86:11a. The conference elected J.J. Siemens chairman and J.M. Pauls and Abram Bueckert secretaries. According to the minutes, the presentations and discussions focused on a proposed provincial Bible school and its location. Johann H. Enns preached on the unity of spirit according to Amos 3:3, Daniel Loewen on John 15:1. Heinrich Born reported on mission work in Manitoba. Benjamin Ewert drew attention to government elections. One of the main items of business was the consideration of a constitution for a Manitoba Conference. After discussing the pros and cons of a draft document the assembly accepted the following resolution:

The ministers recognize the significance of a provincial conference as we have it [until now the June Bible conference] and consider it an important factor toward achieving the full unity of the spirit and toward a working together in the building of the kingdom of God in our Gemeinden. For that reason we agree to maintain the conference without a specific constitution and we ask the executive to initiate the conference again for next year.

Was this the official beginning of the Manitoba provincial Conference? *Der Mitarbeiter* referred to it as “die Provinziale Konferenz der Mennoniten von Manitoba.”¹³ Or was it but one faltering step in its development? If it was the beginning, H.H. Ewert, who was annoyed at D. Schulz for submitting a Canadian Conference Home Mission Committee financial report to the *Mennonitische Rundschau* for publication,¹⁴ reflected some of the frustrations floating around when he wrote to his brother Benjamin early in 1934:

In the next days you will be having a larger meeting. Couldn't you take that opportunity to draw to the attention of the brethren that they must begin to ponder how they should care for their latest born child, the Manitoba Conference? What was brought to life in Plum Coulee last year was truly a congenital abnormality [*Missgeburt*]. No delegates had been elected to the conference. Perhaps some envisioned a kind of ministers' conference. Everything was so unplanned. The conference was scheduled for a date when the teacher-ministers are tied to their schools. No understanding was achieved as to how the Conference should continue. The worst mistake was that the organization of the Conference was left to the Bergthaler Gemeinde, and it knows well how to ruin and destroy but not to build. Oh, one could despair, when one sees what should and could be done, but realizes that there is no motivation to pursue the matter energetically.¹⁵

Whatever happened in the interim, in the June 13 issue of *Der Bote Ältester David Schulz* extended an invitation to the June 19, 1934 *Manitoba Mennoniten Konferenz* in Altona. The program appeared in *Der Mitarbeiter*:

1. Opening — David Schulz
2. Conference sermon — chairman J. Siemens
3. Reading of the minutes — secretary J. Pauls
4. Representation of the Gemeinden
5. Election of a chairman and secretary
6. Paper: “The nature of a conference.” Daniel Loewen. Discussion
7. Closing of morning session by David Loewen

Noon break

1. Opening — Johann P. Bueckert
2. Paper: “How could a more brotherly relationship be built between the various Mennonite Gemeinden?” H.H. Ewert. Discussion.
3. Reports: Concordia, Girls' Home, Bible School and itinerant ministry
4. Paper: “Is it desirable to teach church and Mennonite history in the district schools?” P.A Rempel. Discussion
5. Current concerns (*Laufende Fragen*)

6. Election of one member for the Program Committee
7. Closing by J.P. Klassen¹⁶

The ministers' conference continued to provide a forum for discussion of concerns regarding the provincial conference. To achieve unity of spirit and purpose remained high on the agenda. At the January 22–24, 1935 ministers' conference the brethren responded favourably to a constitution for the Manitoba Conference suggested by the Schönwieser and decided to present the draft to the *next* provincial conference. The draft constitution stated two goals for a Manitoba Conference: to unite all Mennonite Gemeinden of General Conference persuasion; to draw near to and where possible unite with other Mennonite Gemeinden. Regretfully, the final adopted constitution dropped both of these larger goals.

The next ministers' conference gave attention to the theme of unifying work in the Gemeinden. Participants acknowledged that two conditions were necessary to achieve a satisfactory working relationship: in all things there would need to be understanding from one Gemeinde to another and general guiding principles would need to be defined by the Manitoba Conference. Adequate provincial conference working ties developed slowly. Economic depression and disharmony among leaders and in the Gemeinden retarded the developments of the Manitoba Conference.

The Depression and its implications

The Depression of the 1930s affected the ability of 1920s immigrants to pay the transportation debt and to keep up land payments. For some new settlers the payments were reduced. Others had to give up the farms they had acquired and move to another locality where terms were less demanding (e.g., McCreary and the Niagara Peninsula). The unsettling effect which economic hardships had on local groups and the burden it placed on the itinerant ministers to gather individuals and families into existing or new groups were immeasurable. "The constant moving around makes the building of the congregation so much more difficult and the wide scattering of the individual families greatly hinders any ordered fellowship," lamented J.P. Bueckert to David Toews in December 1934. Only those few ministers who could be assured an income aside from farming could actually take the time and energy to devote themselves more fully to ministry on the provincial or regional scale. The economic situation restricted the itinerant ministry. F.F. Enns wrote to David Toews in May 1931, "Many [people] are

without comfort and courage. If these conditions continue for another year it spells economic ruin for many. There it is really difficult to encourage and to console.” Enns felt that if he was to attend the Canadian Conference sessions that year, he would need to cover expenses out of his own pocket because his Gemeinde would not be able to do that for him.¹⁷

The troublesome conditions continued. In the Whitewater area in the winter of 1932 horses and cows were lost because of lack of fodder; horses could no longer move at a trot, and drivers providing transportation for itinerant ministers were poorly clad for the extreme winter temperatures. It was feared that not enough horses would be available for spring seeding. For some families, including those of ministers, daily needs remained unmet. The Home Mission Committee experienced a dearth of contributions, but David Toews assured F.F. Enns that he would try to find assistance for destitute families if they could not be helped locally. So F.F. Enns wrote:

At a number of places I have found poverty among our immigrants. This is especially severe at [one of our ministers]. Of his very meagre crop his hard landlord has taken half and the rest was not enough to pay the thresher wages. The family has been without bread for about two weeks. Compassionate neighbours have helped. The family is without a cow, meat and fuel. They drive 10–15 miles and gather brush because they do not have money for wood and coal. Sad!¹⁸

A little money was sent for flour and fuel, enough for immediate relief.

Crop failures, due to grasshoppers and lack of rain, often affected one or several parts of the province more severely than others. Resources were mobilized as well as possible, whenever and wherever viable, but mostly groups needed to fend for themselves. When in 1935 most of the harvest (including that of vegetable gardens) for the Fork River and McCreary groups was destroyed by excessive rains, a spontaneous relief effort went into operation. Contributed by Mennonites in southern Manitoba and transported courtesy of the provincial government, one large boxcar consisting of animal fodder, flour, potatoes and other vegetables was sent to Fork River and half a train carload to McCreary for distribution.¹⁹

The Depression touched both immigrant and Kanadier Gemeinden. The weather was not the only reason for difficult conditions. Reliance on a single crop, wheat, and the disappearance of a market for it affected farmers.²⁰ Bergthaler leader, Ältester David Schulz, recalled these times in his autobiography.

The years 1929–1937 were very hard years. We always had enough to eat well but we had virtually no money and were often at a loss how to pay our bills. However, spiritually, we had good times. We conducted Bible study and prayer meetings in homes and in the neighbourhood. During this time we were often drawn to the Lord. Since 1937 things became much easier economically. The boys grew, prices improved and everything was simpler.²¹

Gathering of the groups, moulding of the Gemeinden and joining into a Manitoba conference took place in this tough economic context. That leaders did not succumb to despair or even defeat in the many-faceted struggle attests to their courage and endurance. Their implicit confidence that God was with them carried them as they sought to work together.

Disharmony in various places and contexts

In the process of Gemeinde formation conflicts arose in numerous places, especially where members of a group came from different backgrounds. There was virtually no homogenous Russländer Gemeinde. Working to resolve the differences was one of the most time-consuming and thankless tasks of early itinerant ministers and other leaders.

A case in point was the Steinbach situation. After separating from the Mennonite Brethren in the 1920s, the group still consisted of members from the Schönwieser, Elim-Grunthaler, Chortitzer and Bergthaler Gemeinden. At first some members did not want to sever connections with their Gemeinde of origin but then gradually submitted to the majority group, the Schönwieser. Difficulties arose when they tried to resolve whether to remain Schönwieser or whether to become independent. The leading minister, Peter Reimer, initially from the Schönwieser, favoured independence. Even though the Schönwieser Gemeinde brotherhood meeting decided not to allow the Steinbach group to separate, the Steinbach people moved to become independent.

Besides at Steinbach, disharmony festered in the groups at Elm Creek-Wingham, Elim-Grunthal, McCreary, Morris, Oak Lake, St. Elizabeth, Whitewater, Winnipeg and perhaps others. Of these, McCreary's story was one of the more complex, and dissension between its various parties continued for more than a decade. Here the Bergthaler, Blumenorter, Mennonite Brethren, Schönwieser, Sommerfelder and Whitewater Gemeinden all had members. All the Manitoba Ältesten as well as David Toews from Rosthern (representing the Home Mission Board) and other ministers in turn visited this outlying group to seek a

solution to the rancour.²²

Theological disagreements did not always fall entirely along partisan lines. In several groups of various Gemeinden there were strong feelings about what could be required of church members, what constituted spiritual life, what reflected worldliness, what behaviour could be tolerated, or for what sins members needed to be disciplined. For some among the immigrant Gemeinden as well as for the Bergthaler dancing, theatre, movies, smoking and drinking were clearly works of the flesh and not fruits of the Spirit or evidence of a regenerate life. Others tolerated these if done in moderation. This caused friction, for example, between the Lena-Whitewater leadership even though the background of members was similar.²³

The Schönwieser

The Schönwieser, named after one of the two villages of the Kronsweide Gemeinde in the Chortitza colony of Russia, were a diverse group but distinct from others in Manitoba in several ways. The most obvious divergence was that the Schönwieser were both rural and urban. While about four-fifths of the 2,000 Manitoba families of the 1923–1930 immigration settled in rural areas, one-fifth located in Winnipeg. Added to these were the many daughters who went to the city to do housework to help families pay the transportation debt or other living costs on the farm. But before them, Kanadier Mennonite sons, against the advice of their church, had been trickling from the prairies to the city. Rural fears of the city unconsciously translated to fear of the urban Schönwieser. The Mennonite Gemeinden would soon lose their character in the city, wrote H.H. Ewert in 1934. Moreover,

the spirit given to our people simply does not harmonize with . . . the spirit of the world which rules city life. We want to be a peaceable people and have quiet to collect our thoughts; in the city there is hurrying and scurrying. We love a serious and sedate existence; in the city one goes after entertainment.²⁴

While the city was viewed with misgiving, as early as 1909 H.H. Ewert was assigned to make contact with those first ones moving into Winnipeg. His brother, itinerant minister Benjamin, began meeting with them in 1917. This became more regular after 1921 when he moved to Winnipeg. At the first baptism of seven persons in 1925, Ältester J.P. Klassen officiated, with Bergthaler minister Heinrich Born from Winkler and Benjamin Ewert preaching the Word. When Molotschna

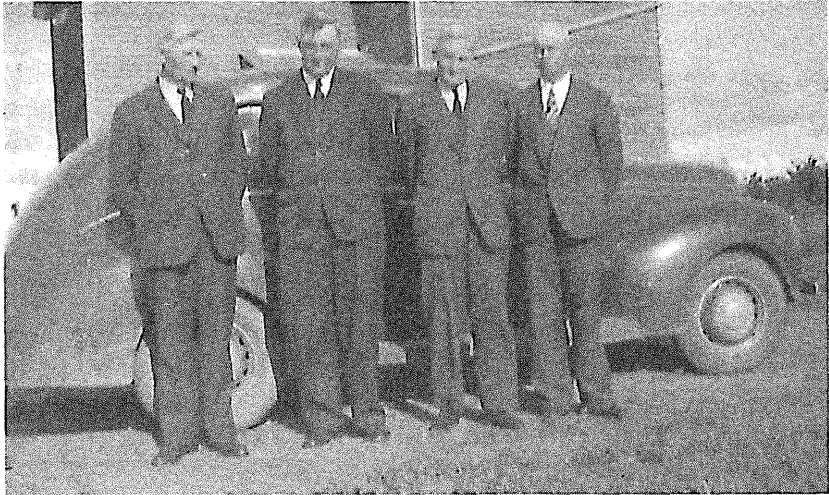
Russländer Gerhard A. Peters came to Winnipeg that same year, the Home Mission Board appointed him to serve Ewert's fledgling group. With the coming of 1920s immigrants the group became more Russländer oriented. In 1928 it called Ältester J.P. Klassen to serve it as part of the larger Schönwieser Gemeinde. Disagreements between Gerhard Peters and the Gemeinde and Peters and Klassen resulted in Peters' resignation and move to Ontario.

Press coverage of a public Mennonite social evening, later identified as a dance, in a large hall of the German Society, aggravated the tensions in 1929. While the initiators probably were not members of the Schönwieser Gemeinde, some members participated and the event reflected on the image of the Schönwieser.²⁵ Attitudes developed that affected relationships within the Schönwieser Gemeinde, within the ministers' conference and beyond. For example, relationships with the General Conference Home Mission Board, which partly supported two of the Schönwieser workers, and with the Mennonite Board of Colonization (in both cases via David Toews) were sometimes severely tested. Writing to Toews, Klassen said, "Both you as well as I would do our work with much greater joy if we would once give up the shared mistrust and in its place make room for confidence in one another. The angels in heaven would rejoice."²⁶

Klassen could have written that to several other leaders and other leaders could have written the same to each other. Gemeinden almost invariably reflected the attitudes of their leaders.

Schönwieser and Bergthaler and others

According to Henry Becker (1908–1993), Pigeon Lake's longtime leader, there were always tensions between the Bergthaler and Schönwieser Gemeinden, between Kanadier and Russländer. The Schönwieser leaders were more educated; the Bergthaler had been in Manitoba longer. Bergthaler leaders seemed to be concerned about the dominance of some Schönwieser people because of their better education and discussion skills. Still, each Gemeinde thought it should have the leadership in various arenas. Nervousness was felt, for example, in the consideration of the MCI, a provincial Bible school and the matter of the Manitoba Conference constitution. The Schönwieser's interest seemingly lay in a ministers' and provincial conference of kirchliche Gemeinden ("Gemeinden unserer Richtung") whose aim it should be to take on the governing and support of the MCI. However, the Blumenorter (and Whitewater) wanted the native Bergthaler to be part of the conferences and the Gretna school's sponsoring body. Despite uneasy



Schönwieser leaders confer with their counterparts at Whitewater (l to r): Jacob Born, G.G. Neufeld, J.H. Enns and Daniel H. Loewen. Photo: G.G. Neufeld family

Gemeinde to Gemeinde relationships, the leaders pressed on. While guarded and careful not to enter into binding relationships they continued to seek fellowship with one another and to address the misunderstandings and anxieties that stood between them.

Some of the dissatisfaction from both sides was inevitably directed at the General Conference Home Mission Board, specifically at David Toews, who it seemed could invariably be blamed for many things. His recommendation at the August 1923 General Conference sessions in Freeman, South Dakota, had been that the Home Mission Board agree to give financial assistance to a few of the immigrant ministers so that they could care for their people in a special way. The Bergthaler, represented by H.H. Ewert, felt this Home Mission Board effort was unnecessary. The immigrants would move into the existing Gemeinden and their ministers would take care of them. According to Toews' perception, this ministry needed leaders who had experienced the same tribulation. The Conference voted unanimously to give monthly support of \$200 to itinerant ministers.²⁷ While in years to come immigrant Gemeinden on the whole were extremely grateful for this provision, it did not seem to sit well with the Bergthaler.

For more than a decade cautious Bergthaler attitudes toward the immigrant Gemeinden and toward the Home Mission Board were strong. One expression of this attitude was the practice of considering

members who married non-Bergthaler persons as automatically removed from membership in the Bergthaler Gemeinde.²⁸

The 1936 Manitoba Conference

The Manitoba Conference did not meet in 1935. The costs of hosting the Canadian Conference sessions in Altona that year prohibited a provincial meeting. On April 23, 1936 three Bergthaler and three Schönwieser ministers—D. Schulz, J.N. Hoepfner, J.J. Siemens, J.P. Klassen, J.H. Enns and J. Schulz—met as program committee of the ministers' conference to plan the coming June Manitoba Conference. J.H. Enns drafted a constitution for the Conference; David Schulz, D.D. Klassen and P.A. Rempel prepared the program. The determination of these leaders to work together brought results. The 1936 Manitoba Conference met June 21–23 in Winkler. After the pattern of the Canadian Conference, the first day was a missions festival followed by two days of papers and business.

J.H. Enns emphasized in the planning that this was not to be a ministers' conference. The ministers should come without being elected as delegates. Gemeinden were represented with the following number of votes: Bergthaler–60, Blumenorter–9, Elim–6, Herold–1, Lichtenauer–5, Schönwieser–25, Whitewater–13. Immigrant Bergthaler minister, J.J. Siemens, “a man of strong convictions and an attractive, powerful speaker,” challenged delegates through his presentation on serving the scattered brothers and sisters.²⁹ He said,

A proper central organization is needed for the ministry. . . . It can only become reality if harmony and like-mindedness in cooperation are present in the Gemeinden of our denomination. To achieve this harmony and spirit of working together in our Gemeinden the ministers will first of all need to ask themselves whether they are of one mind and of one spirit according to Ephesians 4:3.

Siemens' presentation was discussed vigorously. Delegates acknowledged the need to organize into a workers' conference (*Arbeiterkonferenz*). The first question to be addressed was: Did the Gemeinden represented here *want* to join together in such a conference? A great majority of the delegates voted “yes.” The Whitewater and Elim delegates wanted first to take the matter back to their Gemeinden for consideration. “We believed we needed to wait and see how things would work out,” clarified Whitewater's longtime Ältester G.G. Neufeld in 1993.³⁰

A constitution was accepted (see Appendix 1). The name of the



The Lichtenauer Gemeinde Bible School with Peter H. Enns, teacher (centre front). Photo: Of Days Gone By

Conference would remain the *Manitoba Mennoniten Konferenz (MMK)*. Its purposes and structure were clarified. Every 20 Gemeinde members or portion thereof constituted one vote. Six members making up the executive organized among themselves. The executive elected comprised only ministers, two each from the Bergthaler, Blumenorter and Schönwieser Gemeinden. In the order of the number of votes received the men chosen were D. Schulz, P.A. Rempel, D. Klassen, J.H. Enns, J.P. Bueckert, J.J. Schulz. In principle, the delegates emphasized the prayerful pursuit and strengthening of the unity of spirit. They supported taking on the provincial home mission work but only upon careful negotiations with the Canadian Conference Home Mission Committee. Home mission work included itinerant ministry, development of Bible schools and ministers' courses.

Gemeinde Bible schools sprang up in various places partly because of the loss of German and religion instruction in the public schools. Gemeinden looked for Bible knowledge, Sunday school teacher training, instruction in other church ministries and a safeguarding of the peculiarities of the Mennonite faith for their young people. Boarding schools and transportation were often unaffordable. Leaders noted that attendance of more and more youth at non-Mennonite Bible schools alienated young people from Mennonite society.³¹

By 1936 the Canadian Conference recommended that every province establish a four-year program Bible school, every larger Gemeinde a two-year program. The Schönwieser, Lichtenauer, Whitewater, Blumenorter and Elim Gemeinden attempted local Bible schools.



The Schönwieser Mennonitische Religionsschule (Bible school) 1945–1946. Standing (l to r): Peter Friesen, Sara Janzen, Margarete Penner, Helene Letkeman, Maria Neufeld, Margarete Wiens, Gerhard Penner. Sitting: Louise Letkeman, J.J. Schulz and J.H. Enns, teachers, and Louise Epp. The school discontinued when CMBC opened. Photo: Jubilate

Johann H. Enns, together with either Daniel Loewen or J.J. Schulz, taught in the Schönwieser school (1932–1947), Peter H. Enns in the Lichtenauer (1937–1941), Peter Janzen (1937) and C.C. Matthies (Rabbit Lake, Saskatchewan, 1943–1945) in Whitewater, A.A. Teichroeb in Schönwiese for the Blumenorter (winter of 1937) and H.A. Warkentin in Elim (1950).

Students in the Schönwieser school came mostly from among the working young people of rural Manitoba Gemeinden. The Schönwieser felt that “rightfully the Bible school should not be a child of the Schönwieser, but a child of the Conference of Manitoba.”³² A resolution adopted at the November 1935 provincial ministers’ conference assured moral support for the Winnipeg Bible school and that at the next sessions of the Manitoba Conference the school should be transferred to the Conference. However, at the 1936 sessions the governance of the Gretna high school became a charge of the Manitoba Conference and nothing came of the Winnipeg Bible school becoming a provincial conference responsibility. That same fall the Bergthaler-initiated Bible school in Gretna reopened its doors with P.P. Tschetter from Freeman, South Dakota, as teacher. The Bergthaler and Blumenorter again joined together to operate the school and moved it to Altona in 1940.³³

Some saw the 1936 Winkler delegate sessions as the founding of the Manitoba Conference.³⁴ “Finally,” according to J.P. Bueckert, the



The first Schönfelder women's sewing society (Nähverein) at Pigeon Lake organized in 1932. Photo: Chronik der Schönfelder Gemeinde

Conference had made the teacher training institute in Gretna its concern. For many this school was of uppermost importance. Families and Gemeinden should send their students so that with time a harmonious leadership could be achieved in the Gemeinden. However, the Bergthaler could not wholeheartedly support the MCI becoming a Manitoba Conference school.

On the last day of the conference, chairman Benjamin Ewert admonished the delegates to support each other in brotherly love, to leave personal grievances behind and to place common concerns in the foreground. Equally compelling were P.A. Rempel's words introducing his presentation on the Gretna school: "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all" (Romans 10:12). Similarly, said Rempel,

as such who are of one blood and one faith, we should make no difference between old and new immigrants since we have common interests in all spheres of work, especially in the area of education. This principle should not only be recognized but should be translated into action.

Could it be that some day the Manitoba Conference would continue the removal of barriers according to Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus?"

Where were the women in those early years of the Manitoba Conference? References are scant but they recited poems at mission conferences, sang in choirs, cooked and served meals and provided lodging. A few attended the Gretna teacher training school or the Gretna and Winnipeg Bible schools. As city workers they helped pay the transportation debt and farm mortgages. Women constituted the sewing circles and mission societies and in some Gemeinden participated in the election of Ältesten, ministers and deacons. Together with many male lay members of the Gemeinden they formed the supportive grassroots.

Toward unity

“We are going to [a celebration] of unity” (*Wie gaone too Eenigheid*), were the words from the “elders” that Ältester J.P. Klassen quoted when the organized Winnipeg Schönwieser group celebrated its first communion. Its natural corollary, “they are coming from being united” (*De kaome von Eenigheid*), symbolized the unity which comes in and through Jesus Christ, the unity with God and with other human beings.³⁵

With the June 1936 Manitoba Conference sessions Ältester J.P. Klassen’s dreams (and those of others) were beginning to be realized in the broader provincial context. It was a first step in a yet larger vision that Klassen, although he knew little English, beheld on his stopover in Southampton, England, enroute to Canada in 1923:

Sunday . . . [after service with the immigrants] . . . I was also in four (city) churches, . . . I heard in all sermons the biggest unification word found in the world, the name of Jesus Christ. I thought of Paul’s words: if only the crucified Christ is preached. That is the essential, the foundation of Christianity. At the cross all true believers . . . come together, whether they speak English, German or any other language. At the cross all confessions and sects pause; there all fences made by humans must collapse; there all who want to partake of the love and grace of the crucified One must extend hands to each other . . . [and] draw nearer to that great ideal of one flock and one shepherd, all one in Christ Jesus.³⁶

CHAPTER 5

THE CONFERENCE INTERRUPTED

1937–1946

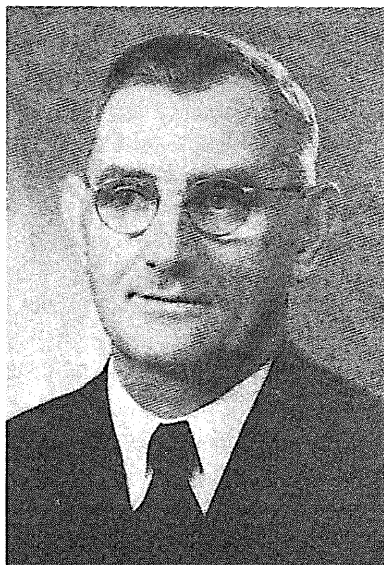
It is always better to uncover symptoms of disease with ruthless sobriety than to be concerned about making or seeing our Mennonite community . . . better than it is in reality.—J.P. Claszen¹

The adoption of a Manitoba Conference constitution in 1936 more formally united Bergthaler, Schönwieser, Blumenorter, Lichtenauer and Herold Gemeinden for common tasks. The first major one, sponsoring the Gretna school, did not receive wholehearted Bergthaler support which contributed to a fragile union. The coming of the Russländer in the 1920s gave Mennonite Collegiate Institute new hope when its continued existence seemed so uncertain. Their long tradition of maintaining good schools and their commitment to Mennonite education and the German language made Russländer staunch supporters of the MCI. By 1925 only 27 of 74 students were Canadian born. Russländer dominated the student body for the next 25 years and, with time, also the teaching staff and board of directors, thus determining the direction of the school. However, the guardianship which the Manitoba Conference undertook in 1936 did not resolve the MCI's financial predicaments and created other potential problems. As a result, in 1939 the Conference relinquished the sponsorship to a special school conference.²

The Manitoba Conference met at Pigeon Lake in 1937, at Lowe Farm in 1938 and at Morden in 1939. Besides the Gretna school, the main agenda items focused on itinerant ministry, youth and Sunday school work. Although Ältester David Schulz was a dominant figure of the Conference, presiding officers were duly elected at each annual session. Of particular interest at the 1939 sessions, held in conjunction with the Canadian Conference, was the participation of a variety of singing groups. Five choirs (from Morden Bergthaler, Herold and Mennonite Brethren, Winkler and Plum Coulee) as well as three male quartets (Altona, Hochstadt and Bergfeld) took part.



Wilhelm H. Enns (1895–1974)



G.G. Neufeld (1902–)

The 1940 sessions announced for St. Elizabeth were postponed indefinitely. Under war-time conditions, where anything German was suspect, the St. Elizabeth brethren did not want to risk drawing attention to a three-day celebration with a tent and many cars. “It has become too dark in the world,” explained St. Elizabeth’s Ältester Peter H. Enns.³ Perhaps there was also little reason for the Conference to continue when its governance of the MCI ended.

Changes in leadership, World War II and the so-called Winnipeg controversy profoundly affected the development of the Manitoba Conference, the Gemeinden and their leaders from 1937 to 1946. The Manitoba youth and women’s organizations and the senior citizens’ and personal care home, Bethania (1945), began during this era.

Changes in leadership

At the time of the arrival of the Russländer, Ältester Jakob Hoepfner, educator and minister, H.H. Ewert, and minister and immigrant representative P.P. Epp gave strongest leadership to the Kanadier Bergthaler Gemeinde. Hoepfner died in 1936 but had handed the reins over to the young David Schulz ten years earlier. H.H. Ewert inspired many areas of Mennonite life through his involvement on Canadian Conference committees, the editing of *Der Mitarbeiter* and

through the Gretna school. When Ewert died in 1934 the immigrant teacher G.H. Peters was chosen as his successor. Ättester Michael Klaassen of the Herold congregation, very active in the Canadian Conference's immigration and program committees and in the Manitoba Bible conferences, died in 1934.

Among the 1920s immigrants the Ättesten J.P. Klassen, F.F. Enns and J.P. Bueckert gathered and organized their respective Gemeinden, the Schönwieser, Whitewater and Blumenorter. Enns and Klassen, whose ministry extended well beyond their own Gemeinden, resigned in 1938 and 1939, respectively. P.H. Enns, Ättester since 1932 of the independently organized Lichtenauer Gemeinde, died in 1942. These were the leaders whom David Schulz and J.P. Bueckert conferred with and leaned on. Now new relationships of trust needed to be developed. Additionally, David Toews, spiritual advisor and "father," especially of the Russländer, died in 1947. In many areas his wisdom, counsel and authority were sorely missed. In the later 1930s and early 1940s emerging leaders, J.H. Enns of Schönwieser and G.G. Neufeld of Whitewater, took on responsibility. With the development of new, independent congregations the circle enlarged to include the Ättesten Wilhelm Enns of Springstein, J.J. Enns of Grunthal, David Abrahams of Pigeon Lake, Daniel H. Loewen of Schönwieser, Winnipeg and I.I. Friesen of Bethel Mission, Winnipeg.

World War II implications for the Conference

Peace has come to St. Elizabeth. That is good. Also, peace between Rosthern and the Bergthal Gemeinde; peace between brother Peter and his colleagues. What is still lacking is full peace between *Ohm* Johann and Glenlea. And peace in the whole wide world.⁴

That is how it seemed to J.H. Enns as leaders monitored the developing conflict in Europe. Manitoba Mennonites realized that they were not prepared for yet another war. The nurture of the Manitoba Conference inadvertently went on hold as the ramifications of World War II absorbed the energies of leaders and churches.

The Bergthaler, who had been exempted from military duty and from any alternative service during World War I by the *Privilegium* granted to Mennonite immigrants in 1873 by the Canadian government, clung to this promise for World War II as well. Like the Swiss Mennonites in Ontario they could not in good conscience consider alternative service related to any aspect of war. Because of this the Bergthaler felt insecure with the Russländer who had served in forestry

programs and the medical corps in Russia and would likely suggest a similar response in Canada.⁵ This misgiving was not ill-founded because the Russländer did just that. They believed in nonresistance as strongly as did their Kanadier counterparts but exemption from military service was not automatic for their young men. They were prepared to accept alternative service, be it in forestry, agriculture or medical work. Moreover, rather than wait until the government prescribed action, they wanted to present an alternative service plan that would be of benefit to the whole country, hopefully not violate anyone's conscience yet challenge Mennonite young men and pacify the non-Mennonite population.

Canada entered the War on September 10, 1939, a week after Britain. The government was not ready for war. Initially Prime Minister McKenzie King was able to keep his election promise of no conscription. When compulsory military service (for home service only) was introduced in fall of 1940, the government had no plans in place for conscientious objectors or alternative service. That gave Mennonites and other groups opposed to war some months to get together to arrive at a common position and to strategize. Prominent leaders felt strongly that a united Mennonite representation before the government was crucial.

Both before and during the War, many provincial and inter-provincial meetings were held to discuss the "peace problem."⁶ The earliest was a David Toews-initiated inter-provincial, inter-Mennonite gathering in Winkler on May 15, 1939 to report, inform and test the common ground. It was an historic event but did not meet the needs of all the provinces and their churches. For one, the Manitoba Kanadier were not represented on the elected executive committee (David Toews, B.B. Janz, S.F. Coffman) which represented the three largest Canadian conference groups (GC, MB, OM, respectively). The formation of the Mennonite Central Relief Committee (MCRC) with its executive David Toews, B.B. Janz and C.F. Klassen also failed to unite all Mennonites. The Kanadier felt that the MCRC did not represent them fairly in Ottawa and organized their own relief committee, the Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee (CMRC). In spite of many meetings, the issue of nonresistance remained a divided cause.⁷

Eight of Manitoba's Mennonite denominations met at Lowe Farm on September 7, 1940 to discuss the National Resources Mobilization Act and to prepare for a possible united presentation to the federal government regarding exemption. Ältesten of the different groups comprised the committee for this purpose and consequently became known as the

Ältestenrat (council of elders). David Schulz represented the Bergthaler and Johann P. Bueckert the Blumenorter—the other immigrant Gemeinden had not been invited. At this meeting Bueckert made an attempt to clarify the World War I experience of Russländer and their strong nonresistance stance but that did not satisfy the Kanadier. They saw inherent dangers in the alternative service route and felt that a proposition to the government should not be made before called upon. “We would be ashamed before our fathers if we deliberately gave up that for which they endured and suffered and which they won through prayer and supplication,” David Schulz deplored in one context.⁸ Russländer leaders felt that the Kanadier rejection of possible alternative service could force Mennonite young men into the military.

Disclosures at the November 1940 provincial ministers’ conference put in question the possibility of future partnership in the Manitoba Conference. Bergthaler Benjamin Ewert elaborated on Bueckert’s report of the September *Ältestenrat* meeting and divulged that *Ältester* D. Schulz told him that “the Bergthaler could not be in fellowship with the new immigrants” any more.⁹ It must be recognized that Schulz found himself between a rock and a hard place. In order to gain exemption for his young men he needed to be in solidarity with his Kanadier brothers to whom the *Privilegium* had been granted in 1873. J.J. Siemens, a Winkler Bergthaler minister and a 1920s immigrant, regretted that the Kanadier rejected fellowship with the more recent immigrants. In spite of that, he said, the Manitoba Conference should not be dissolved. However, St. Elizabeth’s Peter H. Enns advocated that the Manitoba Conference be terminated and that the immigrant Gemeinden band together to form their own conference. Some of the Schönwieser leaned in that direction as well. Where to go from here? A resolution, proposed by J.H. Enns, relieved some of the immediate tension. It read in part:

[we] recognize with regret that . . . monumental differences . . . exist between . . . the old native Gemeinden and those of the more recent immigrants and that as a result of these disparities the old Gemeinden withdraw from us. It is a painful reality. We do not want to break fellowship with the Bergthaler and the Rudnerweider Gemeinden, even more so since we have dear brothers from the former in our midst today. Should a possibility be found to work together, we would welcome that with joy. Regardless, we ministers of the new immigrants want to exert all our influence in our Gemeinden toward a working together in all aspects of building our Gemeinden in Canada.

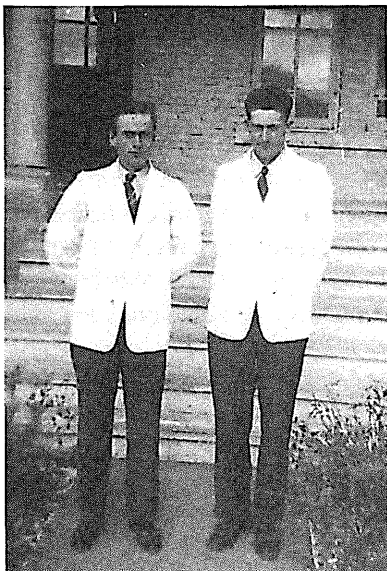
Attempts to heal the split continued. For example, J.P. Bueckert

reported to his Blumenorter colleagues that a May 15, 1941 meeting of representatives from Lichtenau, Elim, Schönwieser, Springsteiner, Schönfelder, Whitewater, Nordheimer and Blumenorter Gemeinden asked the brethren J.H. Enns, G.G. Neufeld and him to approach the Kanadier Ältestenkomitee once more to seek unity of mind. Telephone contact was made that same night with David Schulz and the committee's chairman Peter Toews. Next morning found the entire Ältestenrat assembled in Altona. The three-man delegation received a friendly reception. The group agreed that a united representation before the government was preferable. The alternative service question, however, could not be resolved.

As the War progressed differences between types of Mennonites became blurred and the government expected alternative service from both Russländer and Kanadier men. The Ältestenkomitee did not gain the absolute exemption which Kanadier enjoyed in World War I and "had to accept a government policy it had no voice in making."¹⁰ Soon Kanadier young men, as all other Mennonite men of military age, individually appeared before the stern Mobilization Board and were placed in alternative service forestry and road camps, in select hospitals, on farms and in essential industry. In these settings the distinctions among Mennonites became insignificant. "Only years after it was all over did we discover that this compulsory service had been for most of us a blessing in disguise," wrote Gerhard Ens, one of World War II's alternative service men prominent in the Manitoba Conference in the



COs at Clear Lake in the forestry camp. J.N. Hoepfner and family spent time with them in the summer of 1941. Photo: Susan Hoepfner



*Henry Funk and Gerhard Ens as COs
at the then known as Portage School
for Mentally Defective Persons.
Photo: W.J. Kehler*

1950s and 1960s.¹¹ The reasons for a schism within the Manitoba Conference became blurred as well. In the camps and prisons the denominational barriers gradually broke down and Kanadier-Russländer distinctions could be tolerated if not fully ignored. Mennonite Brethren historian J.A. Toews wrote: “Through discussion and observation these men had a wonderful opportunity to free themselves of denominational bigotry.”¹² Professing nonresistance and living it needed to be in agreement. This renewal could not help but have an impact on the congregations and the Manitoba Conference. This was indeed a blessing in disguise.

On the whole, Mennonite men in the different camps, hospitals and prisons appreciated pastoral visits from ministers of the several denominations. Similarly, they lauded gestures which promoted solidarity among congregations. The gift of writing paper and envelopes from southern Manitoba womens’ sewing circles was accepted by men in the camps as a practical expression of love. They acknowledged that such a token was made possible “by the cooperation of numerous sewing clubs and expresses the interest for unity of all denominations: the unity of men in camps and groups at home.”¹³

The Manitoba Conference and its congregations would never be the same again. Alternative service broadened the horizons not only of the men but of all persons and institutions connected to them. The War had

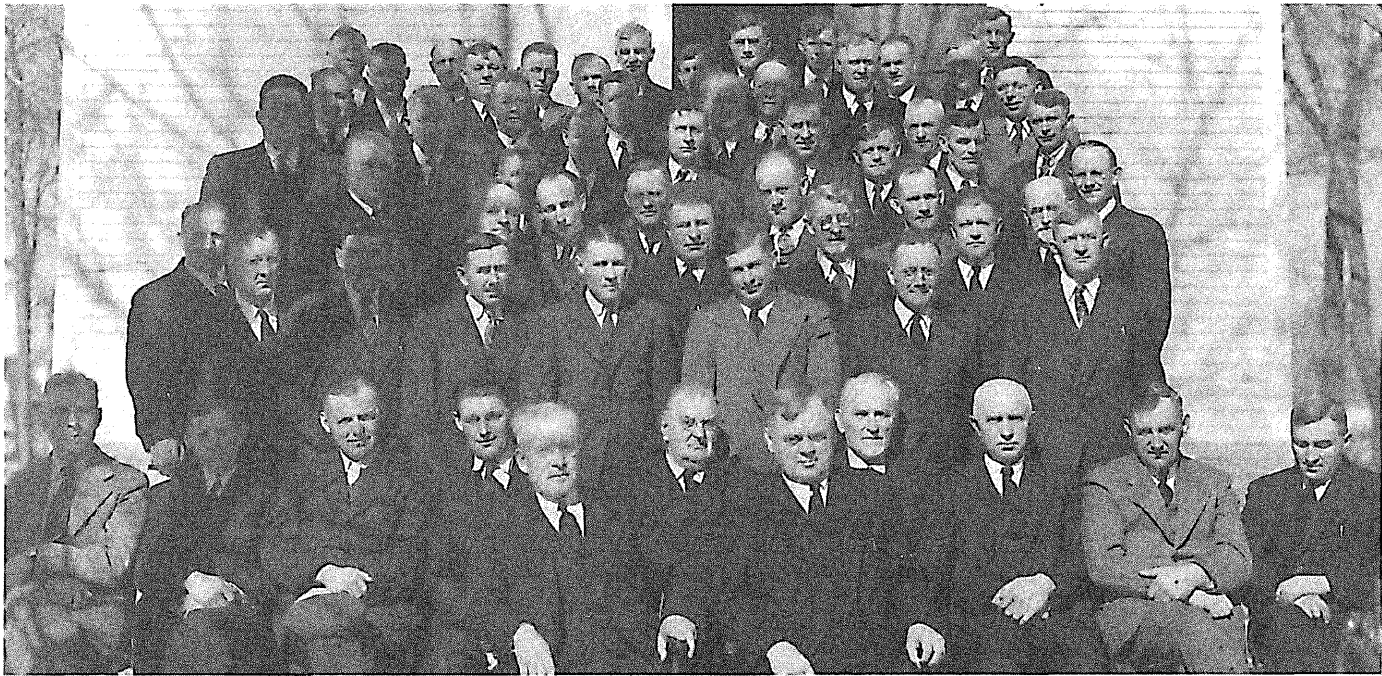
thrust men into the world and the previous isolated church life was no longer possible. The War forced the men and the church itself to review their stance on nonresistance. Circumstances also pushed many men, their congregations and conferences to relate more to their neighbours and the larger Canadian community. The COs asked many questions pointing to new directions. Most of the men did not return to farm life. The rural-urban migration accelerated. A new service consciousness manifested itself. While much was gained, there were also grave concerns for the churches, the rural-urban shift being only one of them.

Parallel to the alternative service program stood the estimated 2,000 Manitoba men who joined the armed forces, most of them voluntarily. Many served with military distinction. Some 50 young Manitoba Mennonite men fell during the War, “a pain which crystal-clear gorgeous northern Manitoba lakes will magnify rather than wash away,” wrote Whitewater’s Peter Lorenz Neufeld.¹⁴ In 1992 the Canadian government honoured a number of these Mennonite men killed in action by naming northern Manitoba waterways after them. For example, one finds a Penner Lake named after Boissevain’s Bernhard Penner of the Armed Forces or an Epp Lake celebrating Jacob Alexander Epp, RCAF pilot from Manitou who was killed in England in 1942.¹⁵ Numerous men who returned felt strong rejection from their congregations. Consequently, they found their home in non-Mennonite denominations or never returned to the church. According to Ted Regehr, their searching questions were not satisfactorily addressed in the church, little support and spiritual nurture were available to them and the principle of nonresistance was not balanced by a spirit of love, forgiveness and reconciliation.¹⁶

The divisions and infighting among Mennonites did not escape the eyes of the government and the non-Mennonite community. “The way things are going . . . is really a dishonour for us as Mennonites,” wrote David Toews concerning one of the Manitoba congregations but which could have been said in other contexts as well. “There we go before the Boards and want to present our men as nonresistant. . . . [Here] hate of the brother is nurtured in the worst way.”¹⁷

Rethinking the Conference

At a meeting on October 2, 1940 regarding the implications of World War II and their differences with the Bergthaler, leaders of immigrant Gemeinden agreed not to dissolve the Manitoba Conference even though it had not met that summer.¹⁸ The continuation of the Manitoba Conference became the first agenda item at a further meeting



Manitoba ministers and deacons meeting for Bible courses at Morden, March 11–14, 1946. Seated (l to r): I.I. Friesen, J.J. Enns, W.H. Falk, David Schulz, J.J. Nickel (guest speaker), J.P. Bueckert, Johann G. Rempel (guest speaker), Benjamin Ewert, David Abrahams, G.G. Neufeld, W.H. Enns. Standing, first row: A.A. Teichroeb, ? , J. Friesen, P.P. Heinrichs, A.G. Teichroeb, J.W. Schmidt, Henry Becker, Jacob Loewen, Abram Bueckert; second(double) row: D.D. Klassen, Harry Friesen, John Wiens, J.M. Pauls, William Peters, John D. Loepky, Jacob H. Friesen, Jacob Toews, John Hooge, David J. Fast; third (combined) row: Abram G. Neufeld, Jacob J. Siemens, G.G. Neufeld, Sr., Heinrich G. Ens, Jacob Warkentin, Nick Janz, Franz Letkeman, Erdman Rempel, J. Braun, C.C. Rempel; last (combined) rows: J.D. Peters, Joh. Janzen, F.F. Sawatzky, ? , G.G. Neufeld (Manitou), Wm. Loewen, Jacob Voth, Peter S. Zacharias, Jacob H. Klassen, Isaak Hoepfner, John Poetker, W.S. Buhr, G.H. Penner, Cornelius Krahn, Bernhard P. Wiebe, ? , ? , Cornelius G. Stoesz, Bernhard Neufeld, ? .

in Winnipeg on January 31, 1941. Representatives came from the Blumenorter, Whitewater, Lichtenauer, Elim, Schönfelder, Springsteiner, Schönwieser and Nordheim (through J.P. Bueckert) Gemeinden. An appointed committee of David Abrahams, G.G. Neufeld, Peter H. Enns and J.H. Enns recommended reorganizing the Manitoba Conference. The Bergthaler, one of the significant groups of the 1936 formation, had broken ties with the immigrant groups. Furthermore, not all the immigrant Gemeinden had become part of the 1936 organization. The resolution suggested using the name *Konferenz der Mennonitengemeinden von Manitoba* (KMM, Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba, CMM). Leaders of the Gemeinden that joined the conference comprised its leadership. They elected a three-person executive from their midst: J.P. Bueckert, chair; G.G. Neufeld, vice-chair; J.H. Enns, secretary. This revised conference differed from the 1936 configuration in that now the Bergthaler were out and the Whitewater and Elim Gemeinden possibly in the conference. The tentative decision awaited approval from the Gemeinden. David Toews saw this proposed reorganization as a mistake in that it acknowledged the separation from the Bergthaler as something that could not be changed. He doubted that the majority of Bergthaler wanted separation and felt that the immigrant Gemeinden should be more patient. Fragmentation instead of unity could surely not be according to the Lord's will.¹⁹

On August 30, 1941 J.H. Enns reported to his council that the Blumenorter and Whitewater Gemeinden had decided not to participate in the reorganization of the Manitoba Conference. Did that mean the Manitoba Conference was dead? Its annual sessions had been interrupted but a formal decision to dissolve or terminate the conference has not been found in the documents.²⁰ Moreover, fellowship and cooperation at the provincial as well as some of the regional ministers' conferences continued uninterrupted. Bergthaler J.J. Siemens was on the program committee of the provincial ministers' conference and Benjamin Ewert, D.D. Klassen and D. Schulz occasionally participated. According to located records, only 1942 found the Bergthaler conspicuously absent from the program. As late as November 14 that year J.H. Enns wrote to David Toews: "The representatives of the old Gemeinden of Manitoba clearly want no fellowship with us."

Interestingly, a Bergthaler-initiated provincial ministers' meeting took place in Altona on June 17–18, 1943, the time of the earlier Bible and provincial conferences. All kirchliche immigrant Gemeinden seemed to be involved. Three sessions focused on the theme, "the evangelical minister." The fourth concentrated on a paper by J.J.

Siemens on “the present problems of the Mennonite churches in Manitoba and their solutions.” The program included two Winkler Mennonite Brethren speakers, J.G. Wiens and G.D. Pries, and Rudnerweider Ältester Wilhelm H. Falk. A note accompanying the invitation suggested that the Bergthaler ministerial intended to extend this invitation annually. However, the 1944 meeting, which focused on Mennonites and nonresistance with Dr. H.A. Fast from Newton, Kansas, as speaker, was the last one.²¹

At the 1944 provincial ministers’ conference Benjamin Ewert advanced 12 points emphasizing the necessity of the Manitoba Conference. Again the matter was to be discussed in the Gemeinden and the results forwarded to vice-chair Ältester D. Loewen. David Schulz, who preached on Matthew 5:19–34 in the evening service, was elected chair for the next ministers’ conference. Clearly, the alternative service issue, which had divided the Manitoba Conference in 1940, had dissipated. J.H. Enns, seemingly unaware of a brewing storm, reported to his Gemeinde in December 1944 of a renewed interest in the continuation of a Manitoba Conference.

The Winnipeg controversy (*Winnipeg Angelegenheit*)²²

At the September 16, 1944 regional Schönfelder-Schönwieser-Springsteiner ministers’ conference held at Springstein, J.H. Enns presented a study paper on the sixteenth-century Anabaptist leader, Hans Denk. Enns was very excited about Denk’s intense life of study, his three years of public ministry and the relentless persecution which followed him. In the intimate company of respected and beloved colleagues, so Enns thought, he shared his impressions of Denk’s teachings. As summarized in the minutes Denk believed:

- 1) in God the Creator of the world and gracious Father of humankind;
- 2) in Jesus Christ the Son of God and his role as mediator; 3) in the grace of redemption for those who want to follow the inner voice; 4) in the absolute necessity to follow Jesus in holy living if one wants to be saved; 5) in the freedom of the human will; 6) in a core of goodness in the human being; 7) in the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God, but it must be rightly understood; 8) in an eventual pardon for all.²³

It was the last point that proved unsettling at that ministers’ meeting. A suspicion of Enns and his Schönwieser Gemeinde, which had been growing for some time, now erupted. From the presentation at that ministers’ conference and from his later numerous defenses Enns alone was seen as holding to Denk’s teaching. In one such defense Enns wrote

to J.G. Rempel, secretary of the Canadian Conference:

In the wonderful first chapter of the letter to the Ephesians . . . God, the eternal, almighty, holy, good one decides before laying the foundation of the world to fashion people who will become something to the praise of his glory. Slowly God the Lord leads his creatures on a holy path toward this goal. Jesus Christ, God's only Son, had to come, to minister and suffer and die for the salvation of humankind, all humankind. No soul for whom he died may legitimately be missing. God has a right to the free-will allegiance of his creatures, and in his will leads them all to this blessed end. All of God's judgements, even the hardest hell punishments, are . . . instructive purifying measures. . . .

Has he perchance ever given up his purpose? Does he not love his creation? No devil will frustrate his plans. The end of God's way with us is a . . . saved humanity in a transformed nature. In spite of all the uncertainties and difficulties on earth, that is still my joyous Christian faith. In this faith I greet you as co-redeemed and as brother.²⁴

Concern about Enns' position became a Canadian Conference issue.²⁵ For many of the leaders pure biblical teaching was at stake.²⁶ Like his predecessor Johann P. Klassen, Enns was seen as being modernistic, rationalistic and too critical of the Bible. For Enns and his colleagues the maxim was: in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, but in all things love. For the majority of the ministers, both in the Manitoba and the Canadian Conference, this disagreement was on a point of essentials in doctrine and teaching and there could be no compromises.

This became one of the saddest and most ugly episodes in the story of the Manitoba and Canadian Conferences. Some felt that it could and should have been avoided. Others felt that a showdown had to come at some point and that this was the time for Conference leaders to be confrontative and firm. Some were caught in between. While the specific teaching was made the issue, other complaints surfaced which prolonged the period of disunity and open hostility. Grievances against Enns and the Schönwieser included the following:

1) There was the feeling that Enns often avoided basic issues or reduced them to non-essentials. For example, he suggested that matters concerning eternity were a big mystery; could one not just leave the discussion on universalism at that? The other side felt this was ignoring the two eternity options which the Bible speaks about, namely that of eternal bliss in heaven or endless destruction in hell. Not acknowledging these was not being true to Scripture.

2) Enns' critical approach to the Scriptures as deduced from

comments he had made at various times about the flood and even about New Testament miracles, including the birth of Christ, was seen as dangerous.

3) That Enns accepted some of the hymns of the church to be as divinely inspired as the Scriptures did not sit well.

4) True spiritual life was judged to be lacking in large segments of his congregation as evidenced in practices such as dancing, use of alcohol (involving even members of the council) and other “evils.” It was thought this resulted from an emphasis on preaching the love rather than the holiness of God.

5) There was concern about the influence of Enns on the youth to whom he ministered throughout the province. The advice on lifestyle issues that Enns was alleged to be giving was: just don’t overdo it.

6) While Enns himself was seen as meek, loving, honest and sincere, his well educated and capable colleagues were regarded as dictatorial, intolerant, manipulative and harsh, with whom cooperation was impossible. Moreover, wrote one: “the Schönwieser Church, perhaps because it is located in the city of Winnipeg, seems to consider itself as a sort of Rome and thus shows a domineering attitude.”²⁷

Although not all Schönwieser members were in agreement with Enns in all matters, his Gemeinde, especially the church council, stood with him through thick and thin. From their point of view the first intention of conference leaders was to discredit and soil the Schönwieser name. The reason for this, they felt, was that the bold front of the Schönwieser made leaders uncomfortable. One described the conflict as a battle between the temperate Schönwieser and the superficial, fanatical “holyrollertum” which was infesting the congregations more and more. Hypocrisy, nothing but hypocrisy, characterized conference leaders.²⁸

Both sides considered the other tactless and unloving and themselves as objective and positive. J.H. Enns felt condemned and painfully betrayed by colleagues. Sorrowfully he confided to David Toews that

. . . brothers, who for years were my true and faithful friends, have left me. I am turning more and more to my congregation which especially in these days is showing me much love. And I find here a large field of work. Already earlier there was always more work than we could handle. Now a number of young men have returned from service; we are making efforts to win them for the church. Our Jugendverein is more active this winter than previously. I have introduced a weekly religious hour for the youth of our congregation and also for youth who are temporarily in our city and am very happy that more and more are attending. Our Bible school also is continuing its work.²⁹

The Schönwieser extended hands in other ways. In the midst of this explosion of theological controversy, they proceeded with explorations for the personal care home, Bethania.³⁰

How was it possible that J.H. Enns, this man of noble character as both sides described him, could be conceived as so dangerous, so wrong? One of his former students attributed to him more spiritual sons and daughters than to any other Canadian or Manitoba conference leader. He ranked him highest in areas of pastoral care and preaching of evangelistic sermons. David Schroeder, pastor at Bethel Mennonite Mission in 1953, when he was laid up with polio at the King George Hospital, testified to Enns' caring ministry. Recalled Schroeder in essence:

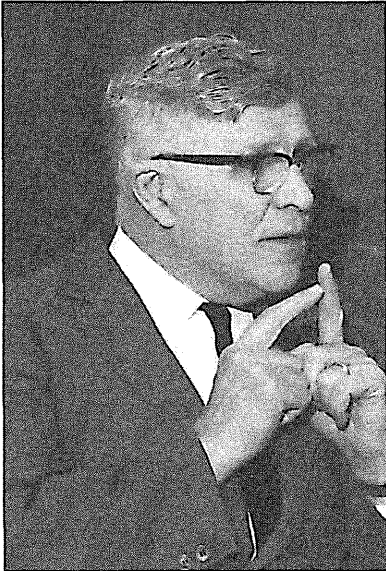
he was the only one of the ministers who brought comfort. He lifted everybody's spirits. Just by his coming into the door one already felt comforted, accepted and loved. It felt very good and genuinely Christian. I felt badly that he was treated "that way."

But even though it was said that Enns was love personified, the Conference executive was advised to be careful and firm.³¹

Had Conference colleagues forgotten Enns' involvement and leadership in the many areas of local, regional and provincial conference work? He was the first Bible school teacher among the Manitoba Conference churches and continued to promote the Bible school concept wherever there was an openness to it. He gave leadership in the ministers' conference and Manitoba Conference, in the Eben Ezer Home for Girls, in sorting out World War II issues and being available for the COs, in the Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization, in hospital visitation and more—all this in addition to ministry to the groups of his far-flung Gemeinde.

At the 1941 Canadian Conference sessions Enns had answered the question of his paper "How can we maintain the unity of Spirit?" as follows: "by firmly aiming at becoming people of God whose life is pleasing to God, by realizing this through a genuine surrender to Jesus, our Saviour, and by recognizing each other in respect and love both in our daily living and in our work.

In the Canadian Conference Enns' popularity had steadily increased. He was first elected to the School Committee on which he served for 15 years. From 1941 to 1944 he was simultaneously a member on four committees at any given time: Sunday School and Jugendverein Committee (seven years), the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization (five years), the *Erweiterte Bibelschulkomitee* (advanced Bible



P.J. Schaefer (1899–1969)



J.H. Enns (1889–1974)

school, three years), the Resolutions Committee and the Program Committee (two years). He was on the latter and on the School Committee in 1945 when the axe fell.

Some believe that personal ambition and jealousy were part of the scandal—certain leaders felt they were being overlooked in the Conference, others sought to gain stature for defending pure doctrine. On the other side, Enns was suspected of having ambitions to become the successor to David Toews or president of the proposed new college. Both were seen to include a transition of the centre for Canadian Mennonite leadership from Rosthern to Winnipeg. By December 1945, the polemic over universal reconciliation had escalated to such a point that the Schönwieser Gemeinde felt it could no longer remain within the Canadian Conference or the Manitoba Conference. It withdrew from both but remained in the General Conference of North America.

Wounds were deep, positions hardened. Brother to brother relationships had been torn, both in the conferences and in the biological family. Wilhelm Enns, Springstein, was among those who could not share his brother Hans' views. Loyalties were tested. Groups, formerly part of the Schönwieser Gemeinde and still participating in their ministers' conferences, now separated themselves from them entirely.³²

That this Winnipeg controversy was primarily a rural-urban struggle

is difficult to substantiate. There were misunderstandings and prejudices on the part of rural groups toward the city, and perhaps vice versa, of which education and different lifestyles were factors. For Winnipeg ministers it was hard to choose sides. Although they had their theological differences, Benjamin Ewert and I.I. Friesen worked in fellowship with J.H. Enns. They respected him highly.³³ In the rural constituency, individuals like Bergthaler ministers Wilhelm Buhr and D.D. Klassen and others like Peter Heinrichs sided with Enns theologically.

The Manitoba body of ministers was embarrassed and felt it had lost widespread respect. Could it be regained? Both sides talked reconciliation. Many meetings at all levels and many rewordings of positions took place. But resolution of the division did not come within this decade nor the next. “There . . . cannot be peace among us unless Christ’s love triumphs,” confessed J.H. Enns in his 1945 Christmas greeting to David Toews. The Manitoba Conference would not be the same.

The Manitoba Youth Organization (*Jugendorganization*)

In the 1930s provincial members on the Canadian Conference Sunday School and Jugendvereinskomitee addressed youth concerns in Manitoba. Some programs that developed in Manitoba had already begun in Saskatchewan. One province influenced the other and benefitted from Canadian Conference initiatives such as the German children’s songbook and the *Kinderbote* (children’s messenger). The Manitoba *Jugendorganization* (MJO) was organized in 1942 at a meeting of Jugendverein representatives at Lowe Farm. Paul J. Schaefer, who was elected to the Canadian committee in July of that year, together with a few others prepared a constitution that was accepted at the October Lowe Farm meeting. Schaefer wanted the organization to be a youth worker conference (*Jugendarbeiter-konferenz*) but then agreed to calling it the MJO. However, his intentions explain why the first all-minister MJO committee elected consisted of men in their thirties or older, namely: H.S. Friesen of Winkler; Jacob N. Hoepfner of Altona; D.D. Klassen of Homewood; P.A. Rempel of Schönwiese (secretary); Paul Schaefer of Gnadenthal (chair); Jacob Toews of Glenlea.

With the Manitoba Conference being immobilized during the War, the MJO organized and upgraded young people in Sunday school teaching through conferences and resources, initiated Daily Vacation Bible Schools (DVBS), resourced the Jugendvereine, promoted local choir singing and song festivals and pioneered Christian camping and radio broadcasting. To facilitate the work with Sunday school teachers,



A Sunday School teachers' conference in the Whitewater Gemeinde with J.D. Adrian, teacher. Photo: Margaret Friesen

in 1944 the MJO divided Manitoba into five Sunday school districts: the Whitewater Gemeinde, Winkler (including Plum Coulee, Reinland, Elm Creek, Homewood), Lowe Farm (Rosenfeld, Altona, Gretna, Kane, Blumenort), Springstein (Pigeon Lake, Niverville, Arnaud, Grunthal, St. Elizabeth, Steinbach) and Fork River with McCreary. As it was, Winnipeg was omitted from the MJO Committee. Each district was asked to hold an annual Sunday school conference. Also a provincial conference met annually, alternating in the various districts and replacing the district conference for that particular year. The regional conferences gradually phased out because of low attendance or lack of expertise. As roads improved and more people purchased cars, provincial conferences became more accessible and popular. Resource persons, like teacher-ministers J.D. Adrian and J.H. Enns, visited and served groups in assigned districts. On request of the MJO committee, H.J. Gerbrandt organized and involved youth in DVBS programs.

DVBS attracted many young women into voluntary service through which they ministered to children, parents and the community. Agatha Schellenberg of Altona and Mary Penner of Plum Coulee, were happy for the opportunity to serve and wrote in 1941:

Monday, July 7 we drove with sister Susanna Peters to the school assigned to us, Lister East. We left our baggage at P. Unraus who gave us a friendly reception during our stay. From there it was three miles to

school. At first this seemed like a problem, but we discovered later that it was not as bad as we had thought it might be. The first morning sister Peters took us to school, but we couldn't begin the lessons because we had only one pupil, Irwin Unrau. We spent the morning at school in prayer, Bible reading and discussion of the lesson. We liked this so much that we decided always to prepare our lessons together in this manner.

In the afternoon we set out to visit the people and canvass for students. Almost everywhere we found a very friendly reception. While the older children had to work on the beet fields, the younger ones were very interested and willing to come. On Tuesday we began instruction with five pupils. In the afternoon we visited eight homes, covering about ten miles. That evening we came home very tired since we were not used to walking. The next morning we were still very tired, but after taking everything to the Lord he gave us new energy and courage. The second morning we had 17 pupils already; this number grew daily until at the end of two weeks 48 pupils were registered. Unfortunately, not all pupils attended regularly.

In this way we continued our visits and instruction and it was a good experience. In all we visited 26 homes. Because we began instruction a day late we taught Saturday morning as well and, on the wish of the parents, also Sunday school.

In most homes which we visited we found only the mother and the little ones at home. We introduced ourselves to them and usually talked about our work and the Lord Jesus. Before we left we read the Word of God and prayed with them. The children loved the Bible stories and choruses very much. Our instruction was largely in Low German because the younger children could not understand High German. Every morning we sang "Give me the Bible." Our Bible motto was Psalm 119:11: "I have laid up thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Our aim in everything was that they should learn to know the Saviour and accept him. A large number of the parents came to the evening closing celebration on the 17th and we rejoiced to see how they were moved by the children's presentations. We sang the songs which we had taught them and those they had learned earlier. The children told three stories, recited verses and two of the older girls gave an object lesson. Two pupils had memorized the names [of the books of the Bible]. We gave prizes, the best for the most memorized verses.

The parents were very grateful for that which their children had learned in this brief period and the children wished we would come again next summer.

We praise the Lord that he helped us.³⁴

teaching in a dozen two-week schools.

The basic activity of Jugendvereine was preparing and presenting monthly or bimonthly worship programs for the local congregation or the village. In some places like Lena these took the place of a regular Sunday morning service, in others they were held Sunday evenings. The MJO's main contribution to Jugendvereine were the preparation, duplication and distribution of programs. Most of the orders for these materials came from Manitoba, but requests came as well from groups in Ontario to British Columbia, from the United States and from Paraguay.

Most congregations cultivated singing and music-making for and among youth right from the beginning. In some of the Whitewater groups this emphasis began with mixed choirs of adults and their junior and senior youth. Until their voices changed the junior members simply sang soprano or alto with mothers or other women. The most gifted, knowledgeable and willing men who were asked to be conductors responded with enthusiasm, a tuning fork and a baton. A few of the active conductors in the earliest years were Johann B. Epp of Whitewater, J.A. Neufeld of Lena, G.G.H. Ens of Blumenort, John Enns of Schönwieser, J.M. Pauls of Morden, P. Krahn of Niverville, Jacob H. Block of Grunthal Elim. The faithfulness and thorough work of these men, together with the support of those who had chosen them, resulted in an enjoyment and love of singing for years to come. MJO appointed two music specialists, conductors John Konrad, Winnipeg, and Kornelius H. Neufeld, Winkler, to inspire and promote this ministry through conductors' courses and song festivals (*Sängerfeste*).³⁵ Other conductors who participated in the MJO programming included J.N. Hoepfner and Jake Wiebe from Altona and Peter Harder from Arnaud.

Another concern for Manitoba leaders were the young people, especially the young men, who were in the city for work or study purposes. Winnipeg had its Girls' Home. Schönwieser leaders repeatedly requested funding from the Home Mission Boards of the Canadian and General Conferences for a similar home for young men. The boards never approved such funding, so in 1935 the Schönwieser purchased a building on Elgin Avenue from the Salvation Army for \$1,000.³⁶ They broadened the intent from a home for men to a home for youth, particularly the Schönwieser youth. Unfortunately, due to lack of finances, it closed by 1939. In 1943 the MJO acknowledged the need and in spite of little support promoted the idea of a youth home (*Jugendheim*).

However, the youth retreat and camps movement modified MJO



Top: K.H. Neufeld performs his cantata, "Nach Bethlehem" with the Winkler Berghaler choir, 1944. Photo: Henry H. Janzen. Bottom: John Konrad and the Oratorio Choir with orchestral accompaniment perform "Das Sühnopfer," late 1940s. Photo: MHCA

thinking on this. The idea of youth retreats came from the United States. The Saskatchewan youth organization first tested it at Rosthern in 1941. J.N. Hoepfner participated in the 1944 Saskatchewan retreat and brought back a positive and encouraging report. Some of Manitoba's leaders cautioned against too hasty decisions to acquire camp property.

In the later 1940s decisions were influenced by the availability of suitable property and by the feeling in parts of the constituency that the Canadian Sunday School Mission would take over the children unless the churches owned their own Sunday school camp.

The Manitoba Women's Conference (*Frauenkonferenz*)

Women's sewing circles existed in the Bergthaler Gemeinde and began in some immigrant Gemeinden almost as soon as a group of immigrants settled in a locality. Tabitha in the book of Acts was one of the role models. She was full of good works and alms, making clothes and handing them out. However, in Manitoba in the late 1920s, early 1930s, women's groups were not just women's concern. Some, like at Crystal City and Oak Lake, met under the leadership or suggestion of ministers. At Springstein the women's meeting included a Bible study hour which was led by local ministers. Through provision of transportation and other assistance but particularly through participation in auction sales and miscellaneous fund-raising events as well as through the distribution of funds raised, the women's work was seen as part of the congregation, not something independent and outside of it.³⁷

In 1942 J.J. Thiessen of Saskatoon asked Maria Siemens at the Canadian Conference sessions in Winkler whether Manitoba women's groups would want to honour the memory of Margarethe Toews (the deceased wife of David Toews) through an annual loan scholarship of \$100 for capable but destitute girls who wanted to attend MCI. That would enable such girls to study to serve "our people."³⁸ The women's groups of Altona, Winkler, Gnadenthal, Lena, Springstein, First Mennonite Winnipeg, Gretna, St. Elizabeth, Morden and Whitewater responded to the project. Forty women from these groups met together for the first time in 1942 at Lowe Farm under the leadership of Maria Siemens and Helena Siemens. Their theme became 1 Corinthians 3:9: "We are labourers together with God." The official organization of the Manitoba Provincial Women's Conference took place in 1944.³⁹ The first recipient of the scholarship was Margaret Bergen. By 1977, twenty girls had been the beneficiaries of this help. The scholarship discontinued soon after.

From this first project the women's united efforts multiplied in contributions to the Manitoba and Canadian conferences, MCC, radio programs, Mennonite schools, non-Mennonite institutions, homes for children, personal care homes, Bible societies, foreign missions and more. Locally as well as globally, many needs could not be met "should women here fail to respond," said Maria Siemens. The women's

reputation was such that, when pleas for particular help were made at a conference, one leader simply said: “I think I can promise the money for our congregation. The ladies’ aid will not leave me in the lurch.”⁴⁰

“In the course of time,” wrote Justina Baerg, Women in Mission’s chair from 1970–1973, the women’s conference “became an important part of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba.”

CHAPTER 6

ADOPTING PROGRAMS

1947–1956

Therefore brethren, to work!—David Schulz¹

Another beginning?

The Winnipeg controversy and the Conference were intertwined and the attempts at reconciliation at a stalemate. At the November 1946 provincial ministers' conference Ältester David Schulz reported on the impasse and emphasized the need for a Manitoba Conference. The meeting agreed to [re]organize the Manitoba Conference in November of 1947. In the meantime, the 1946 ministers' conference continued to function as the Manitoba Conference in that it heard reports and discussed issues related to the schools—Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Elim Bible Institute in Altona and the planned Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg—home missions, the Manitoba Jugendorganization, the men in service camps and ministers' courses.

The Depression of the 1930s had faded from memory. World War II was over. Conscientious objectors had become part of the city population. This was a time of increasing prosperity, mobility, educational and professional opportunities. Theological differences emerged in new contexts and were difficult to sort out. City youth, who had been irritated by language restrictions in the rural setting, wanted to do things in English. At the same time German-speaking immigrants, displaced by World War II, were arriving. With the Schönwieser out of the Conference, the young Bethel Mennonite Mission faced these urban challenges alone.

Reorganization and the acceptance of a constitution took place in Altona on October 28, 1947. The name changed to *Konferenz der Mennoniten in Manitoba* as proposed earlier (see Appendix 2). The most obvious difference from rapprochement conferences in 1925, 1928, 1933, 1936, 1941 was the absence of the Schönwieser (see Table 5). Three Gemeinden and ten congregations registered with membership as follows: Bergthaler 3,427 (representing 67 percent of the Conference), Blumenorter 230 and Whitewater 375; Arnaud 89, Bethel Mission 126, Elim 199, Glenlea 45, Lichtenauer 103, Niverville 70,

Table 5
Membership Composition - MMK/CMM

Gemeinden	1928/33	1936	1941	1947	1968
Bergthaler	x	x		x	x
Herold	x	x ¹			
Blumenorter	x	x		x	x
Whitewater	x			x	x
Schönwieser	x	x	x		x
Lichtenauer	x	x	x	x	x
Elim	x		x	x	x
Schönfelder			x	x	x
Springstein			x	x	x
Nordheimer			x	x	x
Bethel Menn.				x	x
Steinbach				x	x
Niverville				x	x
Arnaud				x	x
Glenlea				x	x
Sargent					x
North Kild.					x
Sterling					x
Grace Brdn					x
Burrows Beth.					x
Altona Menn.					x
Charleswood					x

¹ Joined Bergthaler in 1939.

Nordheim 96, Schönfelder 131, Springstein 142 and Steinbach 85. Now a delegate carried one vote for every 30 members compared with 20 in the earlier 1936 constitution.² New applicants for membership needed either to be a member of the Canadian Conference or to be recommended for acceptance by the Manitoba Conference leadership.

The purpose of the Conference remained essentially that of the earlier loose union of the Bible conference and the more intentional 1936 MMK. It would work at those things that individual congregations could not attempt on their own and at fellowship in the Spirit. “The unity we seek,” said G.G. Neufeld at the annual 1949 Manitoba Conference sessions in Whitewater, “is the unity created by Christ as described in Ephesians 4:1–16. It is our responsibility to maintain and to strengthen it.” At Morden the following year he exhorted delegates to use their gifts to serve one another (1 Peter 4:10). Opening the 1953 sessions in Grunthal, David Schulz elaborated on Ephesians 4. “We need to respect the gifts God has given to us,” he said. “They should encourage humility in us; not cause division among us but bring us together.”

Then to work!

It was not as if work hadn’t been happening in the first decades. But now, it was as if to say, let’s leave the disagreements behind; let’s look ahead at what needs doing and press forward. Once more the Conference assumed overall responsibility for the work that the ministers’ conference had watched over and that which the MJO had shouldered since 1942. This included home and foreign missions, concerns related to war and peace, settlement, relief, physical and mental health, and a variety of programs and institutions relating to children, youth and the elderly.

The spirit to work was nurtured in numerous ways at conference sessions. Bible meditations and conference sermons often inspired and motivated individuals and congregations. “But you, take courage!” J.M. Pauls proclaimed from 2 Chronicles 15:7 in 1952. “Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.” The memorial services remembered and honoured those who had worked and gone to their reward. The topical papers focused issues that needed to be addressed. The committee reports of the various phases of work (see Table 6) and the opportunity for delegates to give direction increased interest and ownership. Choir singing often reinforced biblical truths and contributed toward the upbuilding of the whole assembled body. The rarely failing opening and closing hymns, Scriptures, comments

Table 6
CMM Committees 1947-1956

Year	Executive	Program	Missions	Peace Com
1947	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz D. I. Fast	J. P. Bueckert Wm. Enns D. D. Klassen	Benj. Ewert	
1948	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz D. I. Fast	J. P. Bueckert Wm. Enns D. D. Klassen	Benj. Ewert	
1949	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz J. Toews	J. P. Bueckert Wm. Enns D. D. Klassen	Benj Ewert (H.M.) G. G. Neufeld David Schulz A. G. Teichroeb	
1950	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz J. Toews	J. P. Bueckert Wm. Enns D. D. Klassen	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz A. G. Teichroeb	D. D. Klassen G. G. Neufeld David Schulz
1951	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz J. Toews	J. P. Bueckert J. M. Pauls D. D. Klassen	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz A. G. Teichroeb	D. D. Klassen G. G. Neufeld David Schulz
1952	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz P. R. Harder	Wm. Enns J. M. Pauls D. D. Klassen	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz A. G. Teichroeb	D. D. Klassen Wm. Enns David Schulz
1953	David Schulz J. M. Pauls P. R. Harder	Wm. Enns J. M. Pauls D. D. Klassen	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz A. G. Teichroeb Jakob Klassen	D. D. Klassen Wm. Enns David Schulz
1954	David Schulz G. Lohrenz J. Toews	Wm. Enns A. A. Teichroeb D. D. Klassen	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz A. G. Teichroeb Jakob Klassen	D. D. Klassen Wm. Enns David Schulz
1955	David Schulz G. Lohrenz J. Toews	Wm. Enns A. A. Teichroeb D. D. Klassen	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz A. G. Teichroeb	D. D. Klassen Wm. Enns David Schulz
1956	David Schulz G. Lohrenz J. Toews	Wm. Enns A. A. Teichroeb D. D. Klassen	G. G. Neufeld David Schulz D. J. Fast B. P. Wiebe	D. D. Klassen Wm. Enns David Schulz

and prayers often set the stage or tied things together and reminded the assembly that all being and work was dependent on God's blessing.

"We are bearers of God's truth and fighters for the maintenance of the purity of the Gemeinde (1 Timothy 3:14–16)," challenged A.A. Teichroeb in 1949. Pure and holy unto the Lord (Exodus 28:36, Zechariah 14:20) was generally understood to be different and separated from the world (Romans 12:2). Practically, this meant avoiding such things as movies, mixed public swimming, Sunday sports, sleeveless dresses, lipstick, excessive jewelry, eccentric beards, the English language, competitive sports and new ideas such as group study and discussion. Different and separate included segregation from people whose practices did not agree with Mennonite beliefs and values. It was understood that the church was meant to be a strong moral community. The way to avert immorality and worldliness was to "guard what has been entrusted to you" (1 Timothy 6:20).

Camp

The realization of a camp program for children and youth was hastened by the availability of a property which seemed very suitable for a *Jugendheim* (home for youth) or camp, as the MJO now thought of it. In principle, the brotherhood had at various times affirmed the idea of a place for youth. "For such an undertaking," wrote P.A. Rempel, secretary of the MJO, "we would also then need to have a kind of a 'father' who would be the heart and soul of this mission."³ On the south side of the Assiniboine River, three miles north of Springstein, was Sunnyside Beach, a resort-dance hall owned by an elderly woman. She was not always happy with the goings-on there. Legend has it that she had a vision that some Christian organization would buy it. The Beach consisted of approximately 150 acres, including woods and buildings, valued at \$15,000. The owner, not interested in renting it out, asked for a down payment of \$1,500 with the remainder to be paid over ten years at 6 percent interest. The Manitoba Conference could not agree to buy the property, but at its 1948 sessions gave Ältester Wilhelm Enns from the Springstein congregation the moral support to organize a society that would facilitate the purchase of Sunnyside Beach. Enns went to work. In his passionate introductory information sheet he wrote:

For a long time already the Lord has laid on my heart to acquire a place for our young people where they can meet socially in a Christian setting for spiritual and intellectual edification, in order to influence and encourage each other in all good things.

Aside from that we have the experience every year that almost 200 of our Mennonite children participate in the Canadian Sunday School Mission summer Bible school and camping.

Is it right that we just let this happen without even making the least effort to minister to our own children in this way? I am told that about 90 percent of the children that are involved there are Mennonite children.

I know well that they receive excellent care there. An absolutely Christian spirit prevails. But who will give attention to our heritage and faith distinctives for which we have sacrificed our goods and lives so often? . . .

We owe it to our children to acquire a place for them where they can get this kind of summer Bible school.⁴

A society was organized on May 21, 1948 and three days later took possession of the Beach which Enns named Mennonite Youth and Sunday School Park. By September 1949, 98 society members had paid \$25 each toward its purchase and renamed it Assiniboine Mennonite Mission Camp (AMMC). At its dedication, P.J. Schaefer, who with his MJO had struggled in vain for five years to acquire a camp, gave recognition to Wilhelm Enns who with his energetic Springstein group provided leadership to this cause.⁵ In its first decade Enns was the driving force behind the camp although he was not chairman of the camp committee nor director of programs. His letters and reports were occasionally signed with the title: minister responsible for the camp.

A youth retreat and two children's camps were conducted in the summer of 1949. Campers slept on the floor at one end of the hall with the dining room and kitchen at the other end. Other events celebrated on the newly acquired site were the local school festivity, the closing exercises of CMBC, the Springstein *Gemeindefest*, and a concert under the leadership of John Konrad and Herman Enns. The MJO retreat committee (Gerhard Ens, P.R. Harder and Henry Funk) planned the first youth retreat from July 8–10. Workers included: Ältesten J.J. Wichert and Wilhelm Enns; ministers B.W. Sawatzky, Jacob Stobbe, G. Lohrenz and P. Harder with F.F. Sawatzky camp evangelist; and laymen Menno Klassen, Kenneth Bauman (U.S.) and Gerhard Ens. They instructed the approximately 150 young people in German in the areas of Bible, Mennonite history, literature and missions. At the fifth retreat in 1953, Dr. Erland Waltner of Kansas, taught Bible and Dr. Harvey Bauman of Bluffton missions; minister J.K. Klassen of Reinland evangelized and teacher Franz Neufeld from Arnaud led the singing. Minister Henry Funk of Carman directed the retreat.



The first camp, 1949. Photo: Susan Hoepfner

About 288 children registered for the first two camps which were planned and conducted by the committee consisting of Henry H. Goertzen, Jake Wiebe and J.N. Hoepfner. Goertzen, together with his wife Anne, served as organizer and business manager (or overall director), Wiebe led the music and Hoepfner directed the (Bible) program. The latter came with significant experience in Canadian Sunday School Mission camps, which thus ironically became a model for early Conference camps, even though they were begun as an alternative to the Sunday School Mission. Following its pattern, the children earned their place at camp by memorizing certain passages of Scripture. These passages changed slightly from year to year, seemingly becoming less demanding as the years went by. In the first years 9–11 year-olds had to recite the names of the 27 books of the New Testament and the words of the song: “Lieber Vater, hoch im Himmel” (Dear Father, high in heaven) in addition to their verses. The 12–15 year-olds added new Scripture passages as well as the names of the 39 books of the Old Testament, the names of the apostles according to Matthew 10:2–4 and the names of the sons of Jacob. The memory work had to be completed by mid-May and recited for H.H. Goertzen at Plum Coulee on an agreed date. Children memorized in the language of their Sunday school or home. Memorization challenged children for months as they looked forward to summer camp with a sense of accomplishment and excitement.

A host of volunteers, both in camp program and development,

brought enthusiasm and dedication. For example, in 1950 approximately 18 men worked 22 days, almost day after day, without any remuneration, to erect a dormitory for the girls. In other tasks, volunteers gathered roots after land was broken, seeded and harvested about 30 acres of wheat or flax to help meet the camp's budget, provided wood and water, made and packed ice in winter for summer usage and made the swimming area safe. The nearby Springstein congregation provided many of the needed implements and most of the volunteer labour. Glenlea, Homewood and others participated and contributed toward making ends meet.

Financial support came from camper fees, church member fees (in the latter 1950s at \$1.00 per member), offerings raised at concerts, special offerings in congregations, contributions from individuals, *Nähvereine* (women's groups) and *Jugendvereine*, and itinerant collecting in the constituency. In 1952–1953 eight of 13 Conference churches contributed financial support to the camp in one way or another. Unfortunately, everything put together was seldom enough. With reference to the need to hire a fundraiser to collect for a boys' dormitory in June 1952 Wilhelm Enns wrote:

When I speak of that, they say there is no money. Well, if there isn't any, it has to be collected. Has our dear God not said: silver and gold are mine? The dorm is God's and so all that is needed is to collect his money among our people. They won't bring it to us; that's just how things are.⁶

Ernest Wiebe was hired for this purpose for a three-month summer stint.

Enthusiasm and strong support were mingled with unfounded suspicions and objections in the constituency. At a ministers' conference one voiced his dissatisfaction: "I get angry every time I read that in the forenoon the young people are converted and in the afternoon they play ball and swim and things like that." Wilhelm Enns responded privately: "I can't quite see what there is to be vexed about. May a converted young person not play ball or swim? Or should he not be converted? Wherein lies the offence?"⁷

Enns felt the MJO's sense of ownership and obligation waned with the shift of much responsibility to the AMMC. The work at the camp and with the MJO must be one and in harmony, said Enns. The MJO saw the camp association responsible for the financial and physical aspects of camp, the MJO through its appointed committees responsible for the programming of youth and children's camps. The MCI, Elim and CMBC gave strong support through their involvement in the youth



Swimming in the Assiniboine River. Photo: Susan Hoepfner

retreat, children's camps and fund-raising programs. "That gives us courage to believe that this camp is a good thing," concluded Wilhelm Enns at the 1952 Conference sessions.

Although there were pockets of wariness in the constituency, the Manitoba Conference affirmed and encouraged the camp work because of its largely positive influence. "We rejoice," read the resolution at the 1953 sessions in Steinbach, "that the camp association through the grace of Jesus Christ managed to destroy a work of the powers of darkness and in its place build up a work of the Lord." More and more the conference could see itself accepting the AMMC as its project.

Some external factors, like the polio epidemic of 1952, affected some decisions. The threat of flooding in 1950 and the actual destructive floods in 1954, 1955 and 1956 made an ongoing viable camp program debatable. At the end of its first decade the camp's location became unsettling. The 1956 Manitoba Conference sessions in Altona assigned a commission to study this problem and make recommendations. Appointed were Menno Klassen of Gretna and P.W. Enns of Winkler, representing the conference; D.D. Klassen of Homewood and Jacob Martens of Sanford the camp association; and Ernest Wiebe of Lowe Farm and Frank H. Epp of Altona, the MJO.⁸ Just before year end the study commission distributed its initial report considering further options at Assiniboine as well as in places like Morden, Roseisle, Rock Lake, Moose Lake, Whiteshell district and Williams Lake. Its nine multi-faceted recommendations encouraged development of the AMMC. Since the government was willing to invest up to \$5,000 in the

construction of a dike to prevent further flooding, then surely the location was worthy of being further developed, reasoned the commission. Needed particularly would be more cabins and an appropriate swimming place. The report encouraged the Conference to proceed immediately with planning for a minimum of two additional camps, one in the western and one in the eastern part of the province in order to meet the needs of all honourably.⁹ AMMC is *our camp*, charged Wilhelm Enns in July 1956. “What we make of it is what it will be; either it becomes a well from which future generations will draw (Psalm 84) or a sign of our failure. The latter may not be.”¹⁰

Radio

In connection with a 1949 Manitoba Conference discussion on itinerant ministry a CMM delegate expressed the wish to do a trial run of German radio broadcasts. This could be an effective way of evangelizing, teaching and nurturing individuals, families and groups throughout Manitoba, seemed to be the implicit rationale. The missions committee explored possibilities with radio stations in Winnipeg. The prospects were encouraging and discouraging in turn. Reports and renewed mandates to try again came annually at the Manitoba Conference sessions. Concurrently, the MJO explored possibilities. At the 1953 CMC sessions Gerhard Ens reported that the radio work was already somewhat organized and waiting. Six hundred and fifty dollars worth of recording equipment had been ordered. However, contrary to earlier hopes, by 1954 nothing had materialized with CKY Radio in Winnipeg. Both the MJO and the missions committee kept trying. To facilitate their working together the 1955 Manitoba Conference sessions elected a radio committee: A.J. Thiessen, J. Stobbe, R. Goerzen, G. Ens, B. Loepky and F.F. Enns.

Persistence paid off. Sponsored jointly by the MJO and the Conference, a 15-minute Sunday English program, “Mennonite Devotional”, led by Henry Funk, began airing regularly on CKY in February 1956. A half-hour Sunday German program, *Frohe Botschaft* (Good News), led by Gerhard Ens, broadcast regularly on the Christian station KFNW from Fargo, North Dakota, began at Easter the same year. Although the time slots were not the most suitable, the programs received encouraging and adequate support from listeners.

The 1956 founding of the Southern Manitoba Broadcasting Company with initial board representation from 28 separate Mennonite groups had an impact on radio developments for the Conference. The company’s chair was Altona Bergthaler A.J. Thiessen. The station’s

purpose was to serve God and the Mennonite people. For many the opening of CFAM in Altona, although fully commercial and with no ties to the Conference, represented a great opportunity for mission work. Some wanted immediately to appoint a full-time conference worker to radio ministry.

Home Mission Work (*Innere Missionsarbeit*)

While the need to do home mission work better in Manitoba was the primary reason given for wanting to form a provincial conference, Manitoba projects rarely remained strictly Manitoban. Almost invariably the CMC or GC mission boards paid the mission workers or gave financial assistance for buildings. In that sense, any story of home mission work in Manitoba is also the story of the Canadian and General conferences and the cooperation that made things possible.

Itinerant ministry continued to be significant and became the umbrella for a number of things. From visiting scattered families and gathering the people (e.g., at Haywood, Wingham, Portage la Prairie) it moved more and more to meeting the needs of specific groups such as those without a minister at Arden and Gretna, young men in the bush camps, Mennonite men in prisons, Mennonite patients in general and mental hospitals and the tuberculosis sanatorium in Ninette. In 1944 three ministers, Peter J. Born of McCreary, David J. Fast of Elim Grunthal and Jacob Toews of Glenlea, became involved in itinerant ministry. In 1948 Fast and Toews together with ministers Jacob J. Loewen of McCreary-MacGregor and Wilhelm Heinrichs of Grunthal visited 30 groups. In 1950 seventeen ministers, in addition to responsibilities in their own congregation, served part-time in 14 places, often without remuneration.

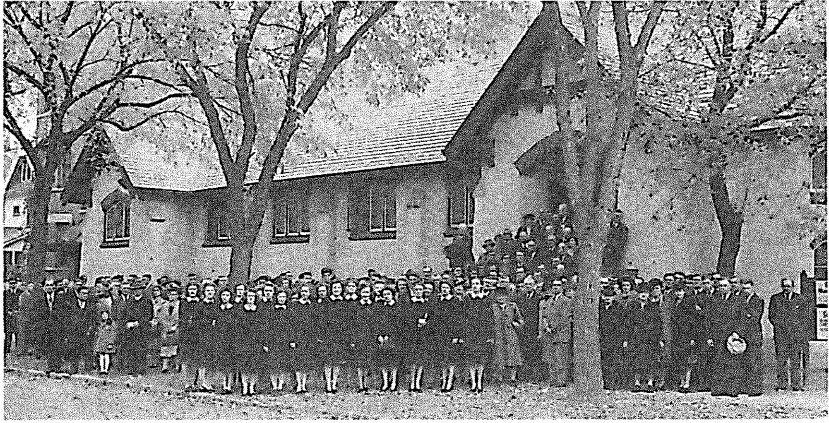
At various times leaders identified Winnipeg as a mission station for all Manitoba churches. Since the mid-1920s Schönwieser ministers and Benjamin Ewert, veteran itinerant minister for the Canadian Conference, attended to hospital visitation and other needs in Winnipeg. Ewert often felt lonely and defeated in his ministry because the monetary and moral support for mission or church work in the city did not keep pace with the growth of the Mennonite population and the accompanying needs. In the first years immigrants of the 1920s did not integrate well with Canadian-born descendants of the 1870s immigration or vice versa. The first attempt to gather Canadian-born Mennonites developed into the Russländer-oriented Schönwieser congregation.

In a second attempt in 1935 Ewert gathered Canadian-born Mennonites in St. Vital homes. Peter Unger of Prairie Rose and Henry Reimer

of Beausejour held meetings there in 1943. An average of eight to ten families attended. These meetings discontinued, as those of Ewert's earlier, but the need for a viable group remained.¹¹ From 1947 onward some form of work continued with CMBC students playing a key role. In 1948–1949 Peter Falk from Crystal City and Morden, later missionary in Congo, began Sunday school in homes. Other future missionaries involved were two Saskatchewan students, Esther Patkau (Japan) and Herbert Peters (Arizona). In 1951 CMBC students Jack Wall, John Wiens and Jake Friesen participated in the fellowship groups which met in the homes of Corny and Helen Derksen and Jake Derksens, the parents of Corny. Soon the Greendale Hall in St. Vital was rented for worship services and David Schulz and D.D. Klassen, on behalf of the Manitoba Conference home mission committee, met with local representatives in June 1952 to organize the group under its auspices. It designated a committee to work with the acute local tensions and prepared a preaching schedule for Sunday mornings. The same year CMBC student Frank Dyck, later mission worker in Paraguay, gave leadership to the group. He was followed by Frank H. Epp, during whose time possible church sites were investigated and a location on 18 Sterling Avenue chosen, and then by Jake Letkemann. Brethren from the Bergthaler and Rudnerweider (EMMC) participated in preaching and other ministries from time to time and Bethel Mission members taught Sunday school.

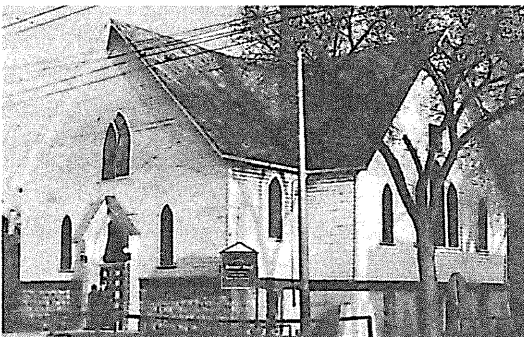
When Henry Funk of Carman returned to CMBC to study he was called to give leadership to the group on a half-time basis. During this time the discord that had been present between the Bergthaler and the EMMC members was resolved. Under Funk's direction, in 1956 the organizational meeting of the group took place. When the decision was made to join the Manitoba Conference that year the EMMC leader and seven families left to join their own conference. After meeting in a church basement for some time, the building at 18 Sterling Avenue was completed in the summer and dedicated in November 1956. St. Vital Mennonite Mission was renamed Sterling Avenue Mennonite Church in 1958 during H.T. Klassen's leadership (1958–1962). Since then the congregation moved twice: first to a new building at St. Mary's and Marion Place in 1970; from there as Sterling Mennonite Fellowship to 1008 Dakota Street at Nova Vista Drive in 1980.

Bethel Mennonite Mission, organized in 1937 under Benjamin Ewert with an aim to minister specifically to Canadian-born Mennonites, used English as well as German in order to nurture a younger generation.¹² For several years Jacob Toews from Glenlea, well known in the



Bethel Mission congregation, Furby and Westminster, on dedication Sunday, November 11, 1945. Photo: MHCA

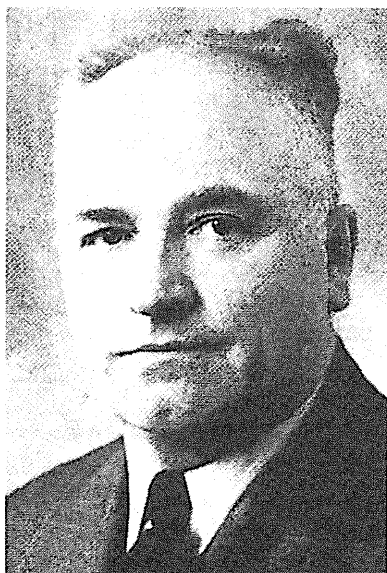
Conference for his itinerant, evangelistic and girls' home ministry, assisted Ewert. In 1948 the Manitoba Conference appointed Toews as city missionary, especially for scattered German-speaking working families and the many post-World War II newcomers. This was not without some opposition from Bethel, the Schönwieser (who had no voice in the decisions) and congregations sympathetic to the Schönwieser. Bethel felt it was ministering to both German- and English-speaking Mennonites. Sunday services which developed out of the Bethel German service, choir practices and Jugendverein were organized that fall and held at CMBC which was also the home of Bethel Mission Church on Furby and Westminster. A membership of 43 organized in June of 1950 and took the name Winnipeg Mennonitengemeinde (Winnipeg Mennonite Church). A year later the Canadian



Sargent Avenue Church's first building at Sargent Avenue and Furby Street. Photo: MHCA



Jacob J. Toews (1903–)



D.D. Klassen (1902–1985)

Conference helped purchase a church building on Sargent Avenue and Furby Street. In 1956, less than a decade after its inception, this group had more than 240 baptized members, the majority of these having come from Russia via Germany or Paraguay after World War II. The name changed to Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in 1955 and relocated to Sargent and Garfield by January 1961.

A further group formed in Brandon during this era. As early as 1927 the Whitewater Gemeinde gave Ältester F.F. Enns the freedom to accept scattered families into its membership. In the fall of 1954 a cluster of about five such families living in Brandon explored the possibility of local German services with Ältester G.G. Neufeld of Whitewater. Beginning in November ministers from Whitewater, Rivers and Oak Lake alternated to meet bimonthly with approximately 14 families.

All the while leaders were concerned that younger people were being lost to the church because there were no possibilities for group settlement any more. From 1951 to 1963 a Settlement Committee—J. Janzen of Arnaud, J. Neufeld of Lena, J. Stobbe of Winkler and later Frank Blatz of Kane—worked at this and found only land for individual purchase.

Peace and service

During World War II considerable concern was generated to work at alternatives to war and questions of peace on an ongoing basis. Together with others, Ältester David Schulz, a strong peace advocate, kept the subject alive in the Manitoba Conference. Inter-Mennonite peace conferences took place almost every year with one in the west and one in the east. Participating in these conferences were the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, Rudnerweider, Mennonite Brethren and General Conference with Old Colony and Sommerfelder as observers. In 1950 the CMM elected a peace committee—David Schulz, G.G. Neufeld and D.D. Klassen—to give the matter more attention. From the experiences of World War II the committee saw the need for an inter-Mennonite organization to address the issues. But in 1951 the groups were not yet sufficiently united on some points to make such an organization possible. By 1956 considerable group study material had been gathered by the peace committee. D.D. Klassen found so much to report on the subject that he justified going beyond his allotted five minutes by saying that peace efforts should be the most important part of the Conference. For too long, Klassen maintained, non-participation in war, the negative side of the teaching of nonresistance, had received emphasis. The positive side, seeking peace and pursuing it, according to 1 Peter 3:10–11, needed consideration.

To give expression to the positive, MCC established the PAX (meaning peace, which provided volunteers for European reconstruction after the War) and Voluntary Service (VS) programs. At the 1958 conference Klassen related the beginnings of Voluntary Service as follows:

... young men were called to perform civil service. . . . It happened that young wives of serving men and also other women, who wanted to demonstrate the principle of nonresistance, were looking for an opportunity whereby they could render a public and positive witness. Thus in 1944 MCC made plans for women to perform a similar service as the men in mental institutions. In 1944 sixty-one women voluntarily entered such service in two mental institutions.

When the War was over and the COs discharged, some of the young men were convinced that service was a Christian obligation at all times and should not happen only in times of war. They extended their terms beyond alternative service duty. Long and short term voluntary service programs were born out of these faith expressions of women and men.

In the 1950s the CMM aimed to woo one VSer a year from every congregation. In 1956 and in 1958 Klassen listed 27 and 51, respectively, who were involved in this peace witness through VS assignments at home or overseas.

The impact of these programs could not be measured. One high-ranking American military official was heard to say that the PAX-men did more to improve relationships among nations than the United Nations. Other spin-offs occurred. Through VS young people found direction for their occupational lives. Mission work in places like Taiwan and Mexico emerged as a result of VS witness. Peace teams organized by CMBC for visits in the congregations found encouragement. All young people of CMC congregations were registered and received peace mailings. Related topics, such as church-state relationships and civil defence, were explored. Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS), whose constitution was adopted by CMM in 1958, became popular. Observance of an annual Peace Sunday was encouraged and the peace theme was to be stressed in sermons and in evangelism. In a lengthy historical and biblically-grounded presentation, D.D. Klassen instructed CMM delegates in 1958:

The biblical peace principle is not only a teaching; it is a way of life for all of the Christian's life, both in times of peace and in times of war. Consequently, our position regarding this principle in times of peace will determine how firmly we are grounded in nonresistance when a war is upon us. . . . Whoever teaches the whole Bible faithfully, will teach nonresistance.

The Manitoba *Jugend*/ Youth Organization (MJO)

During this period the MJO's momentum of enthusiasm and conviction continued zealously. Emphasis on provincial conductors' courses, song festivals, youth days and Jugendvereine remained strong. The MJO took major responsibility for camp, retreat and radio programming. Nurturing the Sunday school and DVBS ministries constituted another of its growing edges.

The growth of the DVBS program in the 1950s can be ascribed to the leadership of Henry Gerbrandt, who was hired during Elim's off-season, and the innumerable volunteer teachers, many of them women. The availability of the Herald Press curriculum, first used in 1953, contributed significantly. In 1956 Gerbrandt reported targeting three fields: the congregations (not including those who organized their own DVBS programs), other Mennonite districts and non-Mennonite districts. Schools in congregational contexts were held at Steinbach,



Henry Gerbrandt with one of his classes at Elim Bible School, 1955. Photo: Susan and Henry Gerbrandt

Morris, Arnaud, Graysville, Lowe Farm, Morden, Winkler, Plum Coulee, Rosenfeld and Altona. The seven other Mennonite districts were Osterwick, Chortitz, Eigenhof, Arden, Carman, Roseisle and Haskett. The five schools in non-Mennonite territory embraced Thornhill, Deer Creek, Bloodvein Indian Reserve, Loon Straits and Matheson Island. From 19 schools with about 550 children in 1949 to 22 schools with over 1,700 children in 1956 represented more than a three-fold increase in less than a decade.

The “biggest” provincial Sunday school conference under MJO sponsorship took place at Whitewater on October 10, 1948. In 1953 the MJO transferred Sunday school responsibilities to the Manitoba Conference. The committee assigned to carry on was P.R. Harder, P.A. Rempel, G. Lohrenz with Johann Adrian as advisor. In 1956 the Manitoba Conference voted to support the translation into German of the General Conference graded Sunday school lessons. Doing so made them more expensive than the English lessons but it was seen as a necessary step toward maintaining the German language.

MJO activities generated occasional rumblings. The group study (*Gruppenstudium*) learning approach was slow in gaining full acceptance. David Schulz and Paul J. Schaefer were not in agreement on this matter. In spite of that, the MJO prepared resources for winter group study. In 1955, three series of lessons focused on Acts, mission history and themes from life. To some in the Conference new approaches

suggested that youth were becoming too independent of the older generation. In 1951 P.A. Rempel of the MJO executive drew the delegates' attention to the fact that several younger brothers had been elected to the MJO executive. Delegates accepted this with general goodwill but hoped there would always be an older brother in the committee. Youth wanted to use the English language and discuss topics of immediate importance instead of following agenda set by the older generation. Some of this came out rather forcefully, especially in the urban setting. Incidents in the development of the Bethel Mennonite (Mission) Church were a prime example.¹³

There was another dimension. Not everyone in the Conference was happy with the influence of the General Conference youth organization, the Young People's Union (YPU), which had been influential in the development of the Canadian Mennonite Youth Organization and its provincial chapters. Some suspected that the greater part of the MJO's budget was directed to the United States for its organization.

So there were two sides to this story. On the one hand, the Manitoba Conference acknowledged the MJO's extensive work as foundational for the future of the congregations. On the other hand, it had concern for the ongoing harmony between congregations and the MJO. For that reason it supported fully the hiring of older trusted Bible school teachers for various MJO-related endeavours, costs of which were covered by the home mission fund.

After 12 years of dynamic MJO leadership, P.J. Schaefer resigned in 1954. It was difficult for both youth and the Manitoba Conference to think of the MJO without him. In 1955 the Conference elected him as the organization's advisor. The MJO assured the Manitoba Conference that, as heretofore, it wanted to continue according to its aims and objectives. Would or could the MJO keep up the momentum of its first 14 years? At the 1956 CMM sessions, teacher and minister Frank F. Enns, MJO's new chairman, asked: "Do we want to become an ever bigger organization with a huge budget and many projects, or is our interest still primarily to help and stand by the ministry to youth in the local congregations?"

Evangelism, personal work and deeper life

During the first two decades of the Manitoba Conference, church development was characterized by much preaching, Bible study, Bible conferences and devotional hours. The late 1940s and 1950s, while not eliminating these methods, saw the tone and emphasis shifting. Evangelism, deeper life services and personal work became the CMM



Gnadenthal became a meeting place on many occasions. Twice, in 1933 and 1948, the Canadian Conference assembled there. A large tent accommodated conference guests in 1948. Photo: Henry Ens

vocabulary. Not that evangelism had not been part of the experience and dialogue earlier. Two predominant evangelistic thrusts had a profound impact on southern Manitoba in 1928 and 1934. In the first, the ministry of Arnaud's Mennonite Brethren evangelist Abram Nachtigal brought



Marie (Cornelius) Peters and Margaretha (Paul) Peters of Gnadenthal prepare coffee for Canadian conference participants, 1948. Photo: Henry Ens

dramatic renewal and strength, but it also increased tension for kirchliche people in the village of Gnadenthal and surrounding areas. Several prominent workers in the CMM, including evangelist F.F. Sawatzky from Gnadenthal, missions committee chair A.G. Teichroeb, and Bible school teacher A.A. Teichroeb (father and son) ascribed their spiritual renewal to this revival.¹⁴ In the second thrust, “a moving of the Holy Spirit such as . . . Southern Manitoba had never before seen nor experienced” resulted through the preaching of Isaac P. Friesen from Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Friesen came to the village of Reinfeld on the invitation of teacher-minister John D. Adrian and stayed several weeks. He ended the meetings in the Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church, the largest in the community. Many new things happened during and after this revival including the eventual formation of the Rudnerweider Mennonite Church (EMMC) in 1937.¹⁵

It was out of this milieu that an intense discussion followed the presentation of a paper on revival sermons by Franz F. Enns at the November 1936 ministers’ conference. Enns wrote:

Revival sermons, prepared conscientiously and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are acceptable. The minister should always be aware that the largest part of the congregation consists of members who have been baptized on their faith and must therefore be treated with great prudence.

Consequently, the debate concluded, the work toward perfecting the inner person must still be first priority.

Ten to twenty years later reports and minutes of ministers’ and Manitoba conferences reflected an overlap in theological cliches as well as notable differences. From expressions like “a decision to follow the Lord” the language increasingly moved to “having found or received the Lord” or being converted. Evangelism was happening everywhere. There were evangelistic services in private schools, in congregations, in mission churches, at youth retreats, at childrens’ camps and at conferences. Evangelistic tent crusades silhouetted the Manitoba horizon. Summing up the work of the home mission committee at the 1952 Manitoba Conference sessions, the resolutions committee concluded that one of its most important tasks was that of saving souls. Reports frequently indicated how many persons had been saved or had found peace with God. In 1954, for example, the MJO reported 333 children “reached” through DVBS with 15 or 16 conversions taking place.

Personal work and deeper life emphases followed alongside. Of the

latter, A.G. Teichroeb, long-time chairman of the home mission committee, said he believed that this work was as important as evangelism. Visitation in homes, hospitals and prisons, Sunday school, DVBS, camp work, all included personal work. At its best, this meant confronting a person with the question about personal salvation. For some it was a timely question and prompted a response to the Gospel invitation. For others it was a time to put up the guards if not to turn away from the message. Leaders were aware of some of the pitfalls. For instance, A.A. Teichroeb, director of the children's camp program in 1956, reported to the Manitoba Conference:

I feel that it is my responsibility every year to alert the teachers to the fact that we do not want to have coerced conversions. However, where the bud opens itself to the light there we want to be ready to point the way to the Saviour.

Some leaders in the Conference feared non-Mennonite influences from the Canadian Sunday School Mission, the Dalzell revival meetings and other sources. To avert this the Canadian Conference discerned and appointed its own gifted men as evangelists. First mentioned at the Manitoba Conference were Blumenorter F.F. Sawatzky and White-water's A.G. Neufeld who were conducting evangelistic services upon the invitation of congregations. By 1954 J.M. Pauls, J.K. Klassen and Peter Harms engaged in this ministry. Several of these men were themselves the product of evangelistic meetings, and a crisis conversion was the anticipated result in their work. Texts chosen by evangelists focused heavily on a person's sinful condition and guilt, the need for repentance, salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ, the need to be saved from sin, fire, destruction and hell, the options for eternity, the seriousness and urgency of the hour lest quite unexpectedly it may be too late. Christ could come at any time. Would one be ready? In retrospect, some said, the emphasis on personal conversion and commitment lacked an integration of social consciousness.

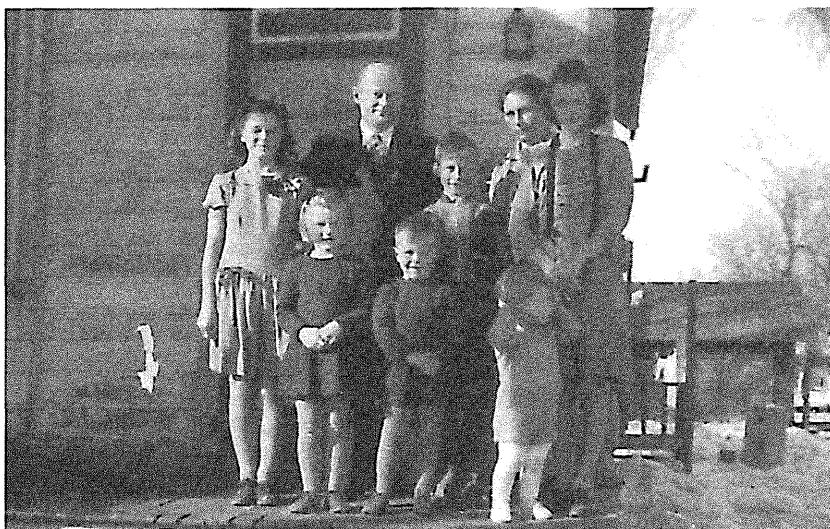
A few of the evangelists spent weeks away from home, mostly during the winter months, moving from one setting to another for preaching and personal work. They served selflessly and sacrificially not only in Manitoba but also in other provinces. A.G. Neufeld's ministry extended into South America and Mexico. Largely unmentioned were the spouses of these men (and those of the itinerant ministers and others) who took over sole management of farm and family when their husbands were away. Was it not too hard? Did they feel used? Did they object? Did they hold a grudge against the confer-

ence or even become bitter? For F.F. Sawatzky's widow, Anna, the overriding memories are fond and gratifying. Objections?

No, one even gave a bit of a shove yet. When the Lord called, then one surely had to respond. I enjoyed taking care of the farm. Then I felt I had a part in the kingdom work as well.

To the same question Margaretha Peters, whose husband served on numerous committees and boards, responded: "Of course it was too hard. But everybody did it." That seemed to have made it easier for some.

But not for all. Susan Hoepfner, wife of teacher and minister J.N. Hoepfner, said sadly: "Things were hard." She did not want J.N. to be a preacher because preachers had no income and he couldn't do both, teach and preach. But he could not say "no" (he did not like it when others did). No remuneration was available for much of J.N.'s work in the church and the conference. The Hoepfners had nine children. Susan was always at home. To get things done she would sew at night, often laying down her head to sleep. She could not keep up with the mending, patch on patch (including J.N.'s pants) until there was nothing left of the garment. Still, J.N. was always friendly in public, always had nice things to say about people and "no one knew how hard it was."



The J.N. and Susan Hoepfner family in Altona, 1943 (l to r): Doreen, Marie, J.N., Ron, Jake, Susan, David, Kathleen. Photo: Susan Hoepfner

Whenever Susan would say to someone, “Everyone knew my husband but not the family,” the conversation would end.

In spite of the strong winds of emancipation in the larger society after World War I, and the occasional challenge that women could do some things that men could do, very few women could consider any other calling but that of wife and mother.¹⁶

Foreign missions (*Äussere Mission*)

Foreign missions encompassed work with people groups who were non-Mennonite, both in North America and across the oceans. The General and Canadian Conferences administered this work. Listening to mission sermons, missionaries and board workers and providing financial and prayer support characterized foreign missions for the congregations from the 1920s to the early 1940s. The aftermath of World War II opened up new possibilities. Toward the end of the 1937–1946 period, reports about the General Conference Overseas Mission (COM) and the Bergthaler’s Mennonite Pioneer Mission (MPM) became a part of Manitoba Conference agenda for ongoing participation and support. The year 1946 marked the sending of Manitoba’s first overseas missionary, Bergthaler Anne Penner, to India. In 1948 the first couple, Elim Bible School graduates Jake and Trudy Unrau, went to live and work among Native people on Matheson Island in northern Manitoba. Beginning in 1949 more individuals and families followed to other places.

From 1957 to 1960 the administration of MPM transferred to the Canadian Conference Mission Board (*Missionsbehörde*). The name changed from MPM to Native Ministries in 1975. Although Native Ministries was now CMC-directed it remained one way through which the Manitoba Conference could respond to injustices which native people had experienced since the 1870s. The 1980s revised statement of mission had that in mind by emphasizing:

sharing of the Christian Gospel in word and deed with Canadians of native ancestry to the end that caring and responsible fellowship of believers be established and nurtured and that native and non-native persons live together as brothers and sisters in Christ. Included in this is a sincere effort to assist native and non-native people in bringing about justice for native people.

The Manitoba Conference’s continuing role was to provide Board representation, finances, workers, prayer and to give understanding and encouragement, particularly to workers in Manitoba.



J.M. Pauls (1903–1961)



Anne Penner (1916–)

Institutions and organizations

Much thinking and work went on in other areas during the 1947–1956 era. Some of it resulted in institutions and organizations whose stories were part of the Manitoba Conference story but also stories in themselves and those of other Mennonite conferences. To these belonged the idea of an advanced Bible school which the Schönwieser, among others, particularly promoted. This became reality in fall 1947 when the Canadian Conference opened Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) in Winnipeg in Bethel Mennonite Mission's basement on the corner of Furby Street and Westminster Avenue. Because of inadequate facilities to accommodate the rapid growth, CMBC moved from Furby to 515 Wellington Crescent in 1949, and from there to its permanent location at 600 Shaftesbury Boulevard in 1956. Many Manitobans were involved in this institution as board and faculty members, support and maintenance staff and as students. Board member Wilhelm Enns, for example, was said to be among those "who gave blood, sweat, and tears into the founding of this institution."¹⁷ For students before and after him, Bergthaler leader Ernest Wiebe, who studied at CMBC at age 40, testified: "CMBC is good for me. CMBC is not liberal nor conservative, but tries to give an honest biblical position, relevant to our world today."¹⁸

The idea of a home for the aged, which resulted in the Winkler Salem Home dedicated in 1955, was first raised at the Manitoba Conference in 1950 with J.M. Pauls giving significant leadership in its founding. Manitoba Conference Salem board members in 1951 included Is. Loewen, D.P. Peters (33 years and chair for some of these), J.C. Friesen, W. Loewen, J. Wiens, J.B. Braun, D. Fast and J. Dyck. Besides the CMM, the EMMC, Old Colony Church and Mennonite Brethren participated on the board.¹⁹

W. Enns raised the question of a mental institution for Mennonites at the 1955 Manitoba Conference in Winkler. Eden Mental Health Centre opened in 1967, J.M. Pauls again giving initial leadership. Others who represented CMM on the board early on were J.K. Klassen, A.G. Neufeld, P.W. Enns, Gerhard Rempel, Ben Braun, Gerhard Lohrenz, Cornie Thiessen and Jac. I. Warkentin.

Churches became heavily involved in the two Mennonite relief organizations, Mennonite Central Relief Committee and Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee. The former had its clothing depots in Winkler and Winnipeg, the latter in Altona and Steinbach. Blumenorter G.G.H. Ens and Bergthaler Ted Friesen, representing CMM on MCRC and CMRC, respectively, reported annually until MCC Manitoba absorbed both organizations in 1964.

CHAPTER 7

TRANSITIONS AND TURNING POINTS

1957–1972

If the younger generation could . . .
If the older generation would . . .
If both just tried . . . —Ernest Wiebe¹

The 1958 Manitoba Conference sessions in Arnaud focused on Revelation 3:11b: “hold fast what you have.” For chairman G.G. Neufeld and others, what needed to be held fast were the leadership pattern of Ältesten and lay ministers and the German *Muttersprache* (mother tongue). These were seen to be intrinsically necessary to keep out alien ideas or forces and to keep Gemeinden intact for work of the kingdom.

In Russia, the colony, the village, the community organization and the schools had served as protective boundaries for the Mennonite way of life. In Manitoba, urbanization, higher education, new occupations, the electronic media, as well as increasing affluence eroded the borders between the church and the world. Former ideas of separation no longer worked. Transitions in language, leadership, relationships to non-Mennonite Christians and to the outside world, all affected the Conference. Nor could the church escape the influence of encroaching secularism and individualism and the tendency to resist authority.² The 1960s challenged all kinds of authority and structures on the national scene, on university campuses and in society at large. North America witnessed the Beatles, hippies, flower children and the civil rights movement. Canada established its own flag in 1966 while the African independence movement broke up the European colonial empires.

Among students at Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, including returned missionaries, pulpit leadership became controversial. Students challenged things hierarchical and explored group dynamics and cell movements. Structure, tradition and the status quo were not only disputed at places like the seminary; the “rebel” spirit was everywhere. The growing independence of congregations, withholding of funds and breakdown of church discipline reached unprecedented proportions in this 1957–1972 decade and a half. All interrelated, these factors shaped the transitions and programs of this era within the Conference.

Language transition—from German to English

Somehow it was thought that by teaching and learning the German language it should be possible to keep linguistically and ethnically separated from the world. Not preserving the language

meant to forfeit one's roots and to cut oneself off from the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual treasures of a people. . . . Loss of the language would mean a substantial loss of the Christian spirit and of the Mennonite faith.³

While some argued that this type of loss need not occur, in actuality the increasing use of English opened the doors to influences, schools, organizations, literature of the world and the theology of other Christian orientations.

As early as 1929 the ministers' conference emphasized that next to the nurture of religious life, the cultivation of the German language among children and youth would be of singular significance. In ensuing years, as circumstances allowed, organized and concerted efforts to maintain German were undertaken in many homes, through church and conference programs, in private schools, and through after-hour religious and German instruction in public schools or half-day Saturday schools. Sensing that all of this was still not enough, G.H. Peters organized the *Verein zur Erhaltung der deutschen Sprache* (Association for Maintenance of the German Language). The Association concerned itself particularly with the preservation of German and religion in public schools. Because the language was considered important for the faith and with several members on the board, the CMM heard the Association's reports annually for a number of years and gave moral and financial support.

That English increasingly was becoming the first language for Canadian-born and Canadian-educated generations was evident in homes, Sunday schools, young people's activities and congregational life. Of the 1990s CMM congregations, 12 never used the German language and most of the others made the transition to English in the 1960s. Several continued bilingual. Probably the most difficult change for the older generation to accept was the incorporation of English into the Sunday morning worship service. To have the choir sing an occasional English anthem was one thing. But to have an opening meditation or sermon or the Bible reading in English felt threatening. Inter-marriage with non-German-speaking partners hastened the process.

In spite of the passionate counsel to “hold fast,” the Conference could not help but go along with the movement in congregations. The 1963 minutes of the CMM sessions were the last ones completely written in German. By 1969 they were entirely in English. Reporting and discussions followed a similar pattern. The language change liberated those who did not have command of the German or who suspected leadership of resisting the use of English in order to hold on to power. Those who were not comfortable in their use of English were now unable to participate fully in conferences.

Leadership transition

It seems from the Conference leadership complexion of the 1947–1956 decade that the CMM, albeit through the election process, had come to be dominated by a small group of influential Ältesten and ministers. For a generation of church members, including a number of well-educated leaders who “accepted the democratic ideal as a godly ideal,” this concentration of authority in the hands of a few leaders caused some concern.⁴

Most Ältesten (see Appendix 3), men like J.P. Bueckert, G.G. Neufeld, Wilhelm Enns and J.H. Enns, were persons of charisma, credibility and authority, said George Groening, a former Manitoban and himself an Ältester. He continued,



Rural and urban leaders with spouses visit in Boissevain (l to r): G.G. Neufeld, Helena Neufeld, Anna Lohrenz, Gerhard Lohrenz. Photo: G.G. Neufeld family

Often they were good men, wise, the best and most capable. . . . They were respected and men of stature with more strengths than weakness. . . . The only sad thing was that they were unprepared to change and had no intention of doing so though change was already happening.

These men lived for the church and the source of their livelihood made no difference.⁵

Over time the Ältester, through his presence and administration of baptism, communion and ordination as well as by presiding over the ministerial and brotherhood meetings, had acquired an aura of authority that commanded respect and trust on the one hand and gave rise to dissatisfaction on the other. At meetings his was not mainly a moderator's role. Rather, his allowed privilege was to set the agenda and to influence the direction of discussions and decisions. Of one it was said that he simply neglected to act upon those decisions with which he disagreed. This quality of authority, partly conferred, partly assumed, gave the Ältester a power, often a veto power, which was difficult to challenge yet sometimes hard to accept.

In solidarity, several Ältesten sometimes met together as an ad hoc council (Ältestenrat) to discuss common issues. This happened in 1957 when the teaching position of David Janzen at CMBC was put in question because of distrust of his theology. The April 8 Ältestenforum of G.G. Neufeld, Paul Schaefer, W.H. Enns, J.M. Pauls and J.J. Toews (with D. Schulz being polled by telephone) expressed, through its resolution to the College Board's enlarged executive meeting the next day, that Janzen should not be hired for the next school year.⁶

A December 1958 meeting, which was expanded to include leading ministers, addressed Schaefer's presentation regarding the relationship to the GC congregations in the United States. All were convinced that the CMC should not merely be a district conference of the North American General Conference. "We want to be independent" was the emphatic conclusion. But what would be needed to remain independent? David Schulz, I.I. Friesen, G. Groening, Wm. Enns and J.M. Pauls, elected to bring practical suggestions to the 1959 CMM sessions, recommended the maintenance of the lay minister system with the support of the Ältestensystem "as the Scriptures teach it." However, the recommendations also said that city or mission congregations, which due to circumstances preferred the pastoral system, could accept it. Conference schools should strive to train workers who understood and appreciated the Mennonite heritage.

The ferment was Canada wide. The alleged authoritarianism of the Ältestensystem came under severest attack at the 1962 CMC ministers'



Another generation of leaders at a CMM marriage counselling workshop clockwise (from left front): Clarence Epp, Henry H. Epp, Frank J. Dyck, Peter G. Sawatzky, Howard Clinebell (guest resource), Ernest Wiebe.

and deacons' conference in St. Catharines, Ontario. H.T. Klaassen of Eigenheim, Saskatchewan, presented a paper on "the problem of the ordination and function of the Ältesten office in our conference." The paper identified the Scriptural background and possible divergent interpretations, the role of tradition in one's understanding, and the difference of a developed hierarchical power structure versus the early believers' church model where the relationship among members distinguished itself only according to function, not office. The discussion emboldened some present to challenge the control of domineering Ältesten rather ruthlessly. Reflecting on the occasion Frank Isaac confessed:

We did wrong in the way we attacked the Ältesten. . . . I have repented of that many times. . . . The time had come for change but we should have said things differently, should have done things in a loving way.

A CMC-appointed study commission, in which almost half of the participants were Manitoba Ältesten or ministers, met twice in Winnipeg in 1963 to address the tension that had been aired at St. Catharines. Representing Manitoba were J.F. Pauls, J.H. Enns, G. Lohrenz, P.J. Schaefer at both sessions and P.R. Harder, G.G. Neufeld and G. Groening at one session each. The commission's recommendations, as in 1958, emphasized holding fast the tradition and did not address the concerns that needed to be resolved to make this tradition a viable option for the future.

In the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition Ältesten and leading ministers did not receive a salary. Salaried clergy were part of state church polity, a system vulnerable to corruption. For Anabaptist Mennonites, not being paid meant that they were more independent than any hired person could be. They received small honoraria, some goods in kind, and reimbursement for transportation and other church- and conference-related expenses. In the Whitewater Gemeinde by 1971 the honorarium had gradually increased over the years to \$2,000 a year for each, the retired and the acting Ältester. This was still far from a living wage, but groups were reluctant to support a non-resident Ältester, especially when they did not pay their local lay ministers. There were exceptions. J.P. Klassen in Winnipeg received \$600 annually from his Gemeinde in 1930 and \$50 monthly from the Home Mission Boards. In 1933 his Gemeinde increased the salary to \$720 but that from the Mission Board was reduced to \$23. Of the Gemeinde salary 40 percent was contributed by the Winnipeg group, 60 percent expected from the rural groups.⁷ David Schulz was said to have received a teacher's salary annually from his Gemeinde.

P.J. Schaefer saw the issue as a choice between the Canadian lay minister system and the professional pastor system common in the United States. At the 1958 CMM sessions he said,

Many of our educated young people do not understand the needs and interests of our Gemeinden any more. They believe that the development of our Gemeinden has to be shaped like that of the U.S. congregations. . . . They say that, in a time where . . . so many church members have acquired a higher education, we must of necessity also have better educated ministers.

True, argued Schaefer, but education is not everything, and "not every seminary graduate can offer satisfactory spiritual nourishment to a congregation just as not every university or normal school trained teacher is a proficient teacher." The 1961 CMC ministers' conference noted that educated ministers often had not won the trust of congregations and that the integration of secular and religious knowledge was lacking. It suggested working toward a combination of the lay minister system and the professional pastor system.

The limited religious education in Manitoba public schools did not prepare one for a preaching ministry as the Russian Mennonite *Zentralschule* had. Centralization virtually eliminated the teaching of religion in larger consolidated schools. At the same time needs in the congregations seemed to become more complex and the volume of

work to be done too much for farmer-teacher-ministers or Ältesten on an honorarium. Few men were willing to make the kind of commitment needed to meet the expectations and demands placed upon Ältesten and lay ministers. Some farmer-ministers were able to delegate farm responsibilities to their sons in winter and thus to a greater extent prepare for and meet the congregational responsibilities. For ministers in other professions this was impossible. For a number of years Paul J. Schaefer tried to do justice to both jobs before giving up his beloved teaching profession to accept a salaried ministerial position in order to meet the needs of his congregation. For 400 years unsalaried leaders kept the Anabaptist faith, observed Schaefer at one point. Will the salaried people keep it 50 years, he asked? In the 1960s few Manitoba congregations were ready to consider salaried pastors.

In the Whitewater and Bergthaler Gemeinden, phasing out the Ältestensystem resulted in decentralization of the once vital multi-congregational Gemeinde structures. This process was officially completed in 1971 and 1972, respectively. For the Blumenorter it meant consolidation in 1969. The Schönwieser were left as a single urban congregation in 1974 when Oak Lake officially went on its own.

With the fast diminishing role of the Ältester, the official functions of baptizing, serving communion and ordaining were assigned to the leading ministers of the now fully independent congregations. In some places leading ministers were ordained a second time to equip them for that task; in others the mandate and authority were conferred by the congregation without a second ordination. These changes meant that the Ältester was not necessarily the leader of even his local congregation any longer. At most, in many instances he led the ministerial, and another person, frequently a layman, became chairman of the business meeting. By 1966 fifty congregations had congregational chairpersons in place. Many of the Ältesten, notably younger men like Jake Harms, Ernest Wiebe and J.F. Pauls, accepted what they saw as inevitable changes and were in agreement with the movement. Others, especially older men like David Schulz, Wilhelm Enns and G.G. Neufeld, who had given a life of conviction and dedication to their calling, found the disintegration process of the traditional Gemeinden and systems deeply painful.

“One has to know when to stay at home and let others step into leadership,” one Canadian Ältester wisely remarked. Some knew and some did not know when to do this. A few could not retire even if they would have wanted. There was no ministers’ nor any other pension. In pondering this transition, George Groening concluded, “One of the

saddest things was to see leaders pass off the scene heartbroken.”

G.G. Neufeld and Paul J. Schaefer warned the CMM and its congregations that there would be losses. And losses there were, the realization of which was as gradual and as ongoing as the transition itself. Formerly, what the Ältester said carried. The earlier strong sense of his being the voice of God in and through the church did not transfer with the changes. “The congregation expected God to use the person whom they chose because they believed that God led them to that choice” and through ordination they had “granted that person the authority to be their leader for life.”⁸ A void was created when that position was eliminated. Nobody’s voice, not the leading minister’s nor even a pastor’s, had that authority. Employing a pastor from the outside and placing on him the sole responsibility for spiritual nurture did not allow for the respect and intimate relationships that earlier had been built up during a lifetime. The continuity provided by the Ältester became impossible to establish for pastors who served only one or two terms. “To this day,” says Frank Isaac, “we don’t have real leaders who are willing to stick out their necks and say where they stand; we have drifted leaderless.”

Structural transitions

The CMM continued to elect only Ältesten as its moderators until in 1969 the young leading minister of North Kildonan, Abram E. Rempel, was nominated from the floor and elected. From a 1936 Manitoba Conference executive of six persons, each elected for a three-year term, in 1959 the CMM moved to electing its executive officers annually, limiting the re-election of the same officers to two



The CMM offices were located in the MCC building at 1483 Pembina Highway, Winnipeg, from 1969 to 1989. Photo: Victor Kliewer

consecutive years. A further provision stipulated that no person could be elected to more than one of the standing committees. This protected against a possible power bloc and allowed for more persons to become involved. For example, in 1947–1956 (see Table 6) 15 persons comprised the main committees. Of these, eight were Ältesten (53 percent), six ministers (40 percent) and one a layman (7 percent). In a similar ten-year span (1959–1968) involvement on these particular committees more than tripled. Whether continuity of vision and its implementation were sacrificed in the process was more difficult to assess. The arrangement remained unchanged in the revised 1970 constitution.

Women

Integration of laity, and specifically of women, accompanied the transitions in leadership, language and congregational independence. According to the Crystal City story “the position or place of women in the . . . Church is as emotional as the language issue was.”⁹ The move of men and women sitting together in pews in some of the churches was symbolic of changes to come. No longer were there necessarily only two sections in the church building, the left pews for women, the right for men. Often now there was also a middle section where it was acceptable for men and women or families to sit together.

In schools women were equal with their male counterparts in the education they received, in challenges heard and in participation in school committees and functions. Like men, women Bible school or high school students looked for opportunities to serve in Daily Vacation Bible Schools and other contexts. “Our Louise even preaches,” stated former Gnadenthaler 92-year-old Margaretha Peters matter-of-factly when asked whether all this involvement of women in careers and church leadership wasn’t going too far. “For that we blame Schaefer,” both she and her husband Dietrich agreed. “He came during seeding time, when Dietrich was working on the drill, to woo our children for the MCI.” Margaretha and Dietrich were convinced: education did it for their girls. Education did it for many other women as well. Coupled with the 1960s feminist movement and the use of birth control, education opened up limitless possibilities beyond the family hearth and the sewing circle.¹⁰

In some groups women theoretically always had the freedom to be part of the congregational meetings and to vote. Practically, that freedom was exercised very gradually. Most older CMM congregations granted franchise to women in the 1957–1972 era with the last

decision to do so recorded in 1988. Still others have no record of “exactly when [women] were given or took the right to speak and vote at meetings.”¹¹ In congregations founded after 1957 women’s suffrage was never an issue. For some congregations the women’s vote was a genuine problem. When a motion to give women the right to vote in the Morden Bergthaler congregation failed to receive the required two-thirds majority, Marie Funk from Steinbach responded as follows:

The fact that these meetings are still termed “brotherhoods” implies that women, though they are members of the church, are not welcome at the meetings.

Some of our women are quite content with this decision for they are probably not willing to take the responsibility of voting on important matters or taking part in discussions on important church questions. However, . . . I am inclined to believe that the vast majority feel that we are shirking our responsibility toward the spiritual welfare of our families by not expressing our opinions in the form of a vote. . . .

When it comes to teaching Sunday School or Vacation Bible School, our dedicated, Christian women are right there—capably giving of their ambition, time and talent in helping to mould the spiritual character of our small children and our young people. . . .

The Lord seems to have endowed our church women with a special quality of love, patience and dedication. Surely he has also given them the attribute of spiritual intelligence and wisdom needed in the consideration of church policy.

Perhaps each local congregation has been called upon to set the right example by giving their women the right to vote in their own local membership meetings. Thus, perhaps, we, as women, will eventually be allowed to work more effectively in our churches.¹²

Even though Marie Funk thought she was speaking for the majority of women, this was not always clear. Home Street’s constitution allowed women to be represented on the church council. The intention was to integrate them, to give them opportunity to speak there, to give counsel and to receive counsel. Lawrence Klippenstein, one of Home Street’s leaders, had the impression that

the Women’s Auxiliary developed as a parallel independent organization. They felt quite happy running this thing by themselves. There were those hung up on not receiving counsel. The first to be appointed to Council refused to attend. Had the question been asked, did they want to be integrated?

There were other ambiguities. Allowing women to vote was one

thing. Allowing them significant responsibilities did not necessarily follow. At Altona Bergthaler, for instance, David F. Friesen recommended to the annual meeting in 1967

that two women be installed as deacons for three-year terms. The motion passed by a narrow margin of fifty-eight to forty-six on the first day of the meeting, but it caused such concern that it was rescinded on the second day.¹³

Other honest attempts were made to extend equality beyond voting privileges. Women could not always respond easily. Olga (Dalke) Dyck of Carman shared her struggle with Ernest Wiebe in this way:

I was a reluctant female delegate to the Financial Brotherhood Meeting held February 26, 1968 at Winkler. I was unaware of what was involved when I was nominated a delegate for this meeting. When my senses came to me after that first shock, I could think of every possible reason why I couldn't go to that meeting and no sound reason why I should go. Then Saturday when my head ached from frustration and pressure I phoned Rev. Isaak and told him that it was too much. He asked me to think it over and then my husband came home and told me I was going, that I couldn't let the church down.

Thus I agreed, with hesitation, to go.

Now I praise God for his abundant blessings he showered on me. First He sent a lady with me to that meeting so I wasn't the only lady there; then after the qualms of curious looks from the men, that didn't expect to see women at the meeting, and your cordial welcome that made the rest aware of our presence, after all that, God gave me peace of mind such as I would never have believed possible. Soon I was only partially aware of the *men* and became absorbed in the business at hand. I marvelled at the talent God had given you as chairman making it possible to smile in spite of difference of opinion. The high calibre of deliberations also were a real inspiration. The message as well as the reports made me think that many more of us should have been there so we could encourage our husband intelligently in doing the work of the Lord.

Summing it up I felt that I had been a busy Martha instead of an attentive Mary sitting at Jesus' feet and listening and then responding as I am sure Mary must have done.¹⁴

Were such struggles really worth it? The traditional way seemed to be more effortless and some would insist more biblical. The following observation was made at the Crystal City church's 40th anniversary in July 1988:



The Homewood women serve coffee and pastry, 1972.



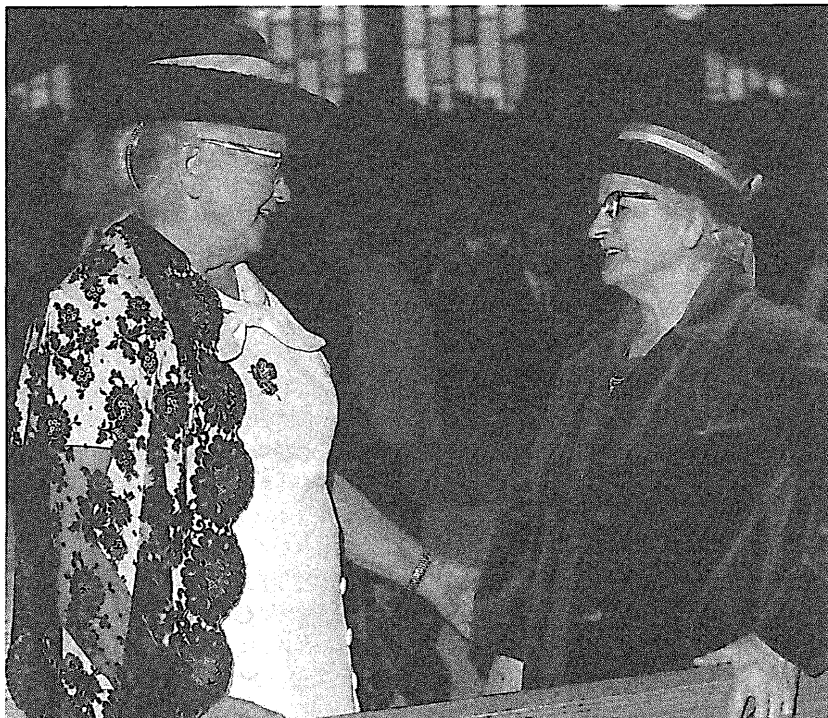
Bergthaler men enjoy the service. Photos: Bergthaler Gemeindeblatt

Maybe the best way to understand the relationship between men and women and the position of women in the C.C. Mennonite Church is to say that there was men's work and there was women's work. There was a lilt, a sense of acceptance and satisfaction to it when the women said, "My husband is out in the field, or at a meeting, or in the coffee shop," or the men said, "My wife is in the kitchen, in the garden, at 'Naverein' or at the M.C.C. zeich store in Winkler." It meant that this was the way the work got done, another unique way of understanding the original plan—a plan that was divinely ordained and supported by an ideological model based on Judaic-Christian values.¹⁵

Changes at the Conference level were few but significant. The Women's Mission Conference was included as subsidiary organization in the 1959, 1961 and 1963 versions of the CMM constitution. Like the Youth Organization, they were allowed their own constitution but it was to be in harmony with the constitution and activities of the Conference. A second change was that the annual minutes recorded various recognitions accorded to women. In 1958, for example, acknowledgment was given to Mrs. Teichroeb, chief cook at AMMC. Thirdly, toward the end of the era women's names began to appear on committees.¹⁶ It was the beginning of a new era for women. Still, after the so-called 25th anniversary celebration of CMM in 1971, Maria Siemens, founder of the Manitoba Ladies' Conference, said "she was hurt to tears that the ladies' involvement in a 25-year history had been programmed down to a 5-minute talk in a panel discussion."¹⁷

The Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization (MMYO)

The Manitoba Jugendorganization had been founded as an independent organization in 1942 when CMM was in limbo. When the latter regrouped five years later, the two operated as parallel organizations until the 1959 constitution placed the MJO under the Education Com-



Maria Siemens and Susan Klassen at the 1971 CMM celebration. Photo: Betty Wiebe

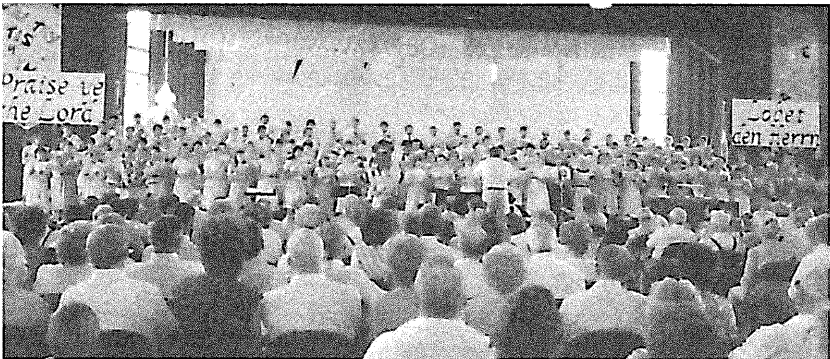
mittee of the Conference. The name change from the German MJO to the English MMYO came in 1961–1962. Sunday schools, DVBS and youth work as well as the emerging radio and camp programs were gradually turned over to CMM. By 1957, with the transfer of DVBS and camp work, the MJO was left to concentrate solely on activating and nurturing youth. Even that work changed rapidly. The traditional Jugendverein was largely replaced by the new three-pronged young people's program promoted by the General Conference which alternated evenings devoted to faith and life, service and fellowship.

Retreats. When the MJO phased out of preparing Jugendverein materials for use in local settings in 1957, it turned its attention to organizing centralized youth rallies. As an annual weekend event, planned either regionally or as a province-wide meeting, large numbers turned out for nurture and inspiration through featured speakers, films, singing and fellowship. Themes like personal witness-

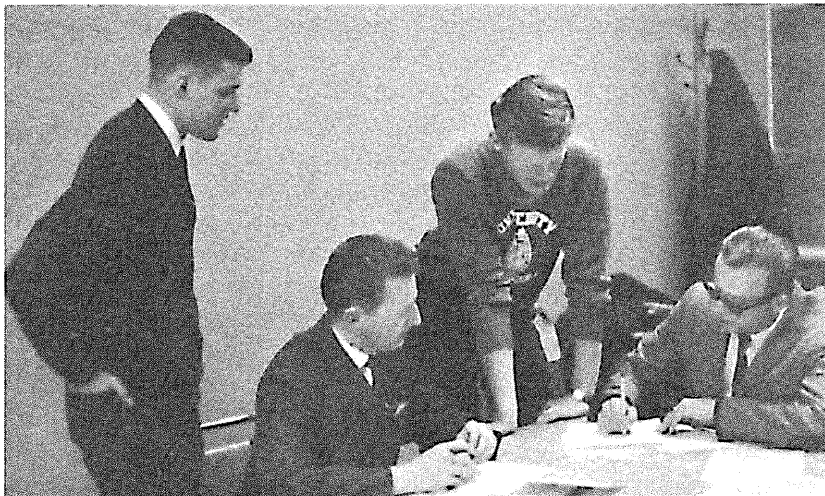
ing in 1960 and discipleship in 1961 gave focus to the rally. Gradually these rallies gave way to weekend youth retreats which were conducted at the same time. The focus and content of the two were quite similar, but the camp setting of the retreats added a strong attraction. For example, the 1961 retreat, which featured missionary nurse Tina Fehr from Mexico, peace promoter Hedy Sawadsky from Ontario and local minister Bernie Loepky, had 48 pre-registered participants but 100 youth showing up the first night. That kind of response encouraged the MJO to urge CMM to approve and support a second campsite in 1963.

Music. A valiant attempt was made to promote choir festivals (*Sängerfeste*) to upgrade congregational and choral singing. Beginning in 1960 special conductors were appointed for short stints of rehearsing local and mass choirs and holding workshops for conductors.¹⁸ By 1964 this resulted in nine choir festivals held across the province during the summer under the leadership of George Wiebe and Henry Engbrecht. However, this success was short lived. After 1966 choirfests continued only at local or regional initiative.

Workshops for choir conductors continued to make a valuable contribution.¹⁹ While First Mennonite in Winnipeg was shunned in many areas of Conference and youth work, the combination of its strong musical program and the greater tolerance of youth led to cooperation in this area. To help choirs broaden their repertoire the Music Committee established a choral lending library from which local choirs could borrow the scores of cantatas, oratorios and other choral



Henry Engbrecht conducts the mass choir at the 50th annual Sängerfest at the Peace Garden. Participating were choirs from Whitewater-Boissevain, Crystal City, Trinity-Mather and choir members from the former Lena and Rivers congregations. Photo: Henry Albrecht



MMYO officers in 1965 (l to r): Victor Sawatzky, Herb Warkentin, Ken Loewen and Ted Klassen (chair). Photo: Education Committee Report

works for a fee. To pass on the musical legacy of an earlier era, the MJO published K.H. Neufeld's collection of choral music and a handbook for songleaders on which he was still working on his deathbed.

Retaining youth for the church. Already in 1960 the MJO committee regretted that only a small percentage of youth were reached by some of its programs. Realistically, contended Gerhard Lohrenz in a 1961 CMM address, under the circumstances it would be impossible to keep all young people in the congregations.²⁰ Circumstances in the 1960s differed considerably from those in the 1930s and 1940s. One of the major differences lay in the expectations and interests of youth themselves. Enthusiasm for raising funds or supporting other projects waned. Youth wanted to manage their own groups and not have older people running their programs. In the 1930s and 1940s youth included ages 12 to 30, sometimes 35; in the 1960s youth were ages 14 to 19. Many of the older ones attended college or university and dropped out of youth groups. Leadership adapted accordingly in the MMYO.

Competing with the church for youth's loyalty was the high school and, unlike in earlier decades, MMYO's activities were only one of many social events to consider. Youth resented being dominated or ignored but wanted to be heard and be a vital part of the church. The first youth worker, Jake I. Pauls (1966–1969), and the MMYO leadership struggled with the needs and direction of congregational

youth fellowships and the Manitoba organization. Through worship, a lot of talking, sharing of program ideas, organizing workcamps and retreats, participation in the Estes Park GC youth gathering and many other ways leaders sought to make the Christian faith understandable and relevant to youth. Still, according to one assessment, more and more youth were unwilling to identify with the Mennonite church. For many it was intellectual rejection of a church founded on culture and tradition rather than on principles of faith. Bethel Mennonite in Winnipeg, it is said, had no youth group during the latter 1960s.

By 1971 the complex structure of the MMYO was acknowledged to be unwieldy. Attendance at MMYO retreats dropped steadily and the very existence of the organization was in question. An MMYO seminar at Camp Arnes met to try to discern the organization's direction. A resulting reduced structure freed the committee to make new beginnings, set new goals and find new roles. According to Randy Hildebrand, who was on the MMYO committee 1983–1985, "MMYO had survived its worst crisis and was now ready to move forward."

Reuniting with the Schönwieser

An official reconciliation of the Canadian Conference with J.H. Enns and reacceptance of the Schönwieser into the CMC took place at Greendale, British Columbia, in 1949. However, almost four years of intermittent meetings of confrontation, confession, compromise and prayer did not restore the former stature and involvement both of Enns' personally or of his congregation. Although Manitoba represented a sizeable portion of the CMC, for Manitoba leaders the acceptance at Greendale left something to be desired. Among them a small vocal minority felt that the reconciliation process, initiated by CMC and directed by the GC church unity committee, was dominated too much by one member and did not address Manitoba concerns. Common ground and agreement in all points was not achieved nor relationships restored. Reacceptance into the CMM was not realized that year—not until 1968.

Thus for over two decades the Schönwieser Gemeinde was not part of the CMM, the Conference in which its Ältester J.H. Enns had been a prime mover in the 1930s and 1940s. It was therefore ironical that this congregation now needed to apply to the CMM for acceptance. On this Ernest Enns of First Mennonite wrote:

There was probably blame on both sides. Following the reinstatement into the Canadian Conference, the Manitoba Conference extended no

invitation for the congregation to apply for admission. Nor did the congregation of its own initiative seek admission.²¹

Many things were painful for the Schönwieser. Among them was the fact that rural church leaders did not encourage their young people going to the city to attend First Mennonite. And circumstances changed during the intervening years. In the 1960s the Schönwieser group became First Mennonite and was reduced to a solely urban entity (except for Oak Lake). While strong protest elements to the Schönwieser presence in the CMM still existed, 1960s leadership made overtures. On the Schönwieser side, in early September 1963 J.H. Enns, with his council's approval, responded by letter to the prompting of P.J. Schaefer (or the CMM executive), requesting acceptance into the CMM.²² However, discussions in the four-year process that followed were carried on by leaders on both sides who had not been involved in the fallout of the 1940s. Hence, the particular universal reconciliation teaching remained virtually unmentioned,²³ while the broader doctrinal issues (authority of the Bible, conversion) and specific lifestyle issues (dancing, drinking at weddings) as well as First Mennonite's influence because of its overwhelming numbers and educated members, became the focus.

Whether in anticipation of the First Mennonite request or out of the experience with new congregations wanting to join CMM, the executive committee (P.J. Schaefer, H.P. Friesen, H.J. Gerbrandt) and heads of the various program committees appointed an investigation committee of "reputable ministers" (A.J. Neufeld of Killarney, P.G. Dueck of Lowe Farm and J.W. Schmidt of Altona) to meet with First Mennonite's church council. Questions the committee explored with First Mennonite included: Why was it seeking to join the Conference now? What was its position on social questions like weddings, smoking, dancing and drinking? What was its view on conversion?²⁴

Satisfied after two such meetings, the appointed committee recommended First Mennonite's acceptance at the next CMM sessions in 1965. Not all of the Executive Committee accepted that. In addition to reservations and cautions someone suggested that we "declare to them [First Mennonite] that we are ready to humble ourselves where we have done wrong or where our actions have been pharisaical. We should try to fellowship with them and invite them to work together with us in projects like evangelism."²⁵ H.J. Gerbrandt, CMM secretary at the time, later wrote:

. . . we discovered that more work still needed to be done. A Winnipeg-based storm of protest led by Gerhard Lohrenz of Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church developed. It threatened to bring to the conference floor issues which had been dealt with previously. Our Executive Committee, not wanting a rerun of the accusations and hurts of the past, even reaching into Russia, moved forward slowly.²⁶

In all of this a growing realization developed that in microcosm First Mennonite represented the Manitoba Conference. Recognition that faith and lifestyle issues were not only First Mennonite or urban struggles affected the tone of the discussions that were carried on under P.J. Schaefer's skillful leadership between the CMM executive and the First Mennonite representatives. Henry Gerbrandt, who counts the interchange with First Mennonite as his most interesting experience in the Manitoba Conference, wrote to First Mennonite in 1965:

We don't come as those who want to examine you. We are looking for a way whereby we together can surmount the large problems that loom before us. Our entire doctrinal beliefs stand to be overturned. In how far can we go along? Even if we as younger ministers find our way, where does the current theology take us? I believe many of these questions are also such with which you are concerned.²⁷

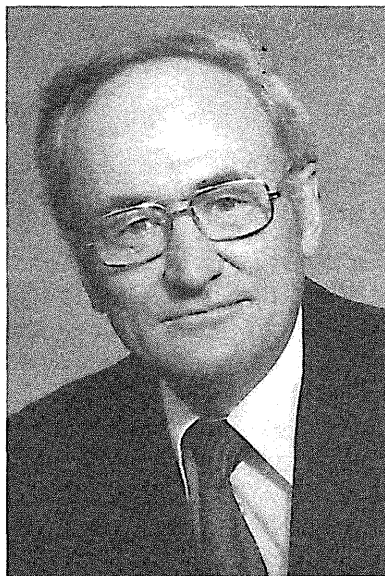
For First Mennonite leaders, although sensing no ill-will on the part of individuals, the meetings evoked mixed responses with some gratification, but also uneasy reservations: "Were we (our church) being investigated? Was it our duty to persuade the Manitoba Conference representatives of our Christianity?" They found the "aims of the Conference of Manitoba," to which they were asked to agree, narrow and unsatisfactory. Not all their members were convinced that being part of the Manitoba Conference was desirable.²⁸

According to the records, First Mennonite's position throughout this time remained one of not wanting to cause division. "If we are accepted as we are, if we are accepted unconditionally, then we want to join [the Conference]," was its resolution in 1963 and in the years that followed. Based on some people's sense that they were not wanted in the Conference, Jacob Wiebe, earlier minister in Morris who was elected First Mennonite's Ältester after J.H. Enns retired in 1965, said they "would not want to pressure their way into the Conference and would prefer acceptance through discussion, mutual agreement and oneness in spirit, rather than by a hard fought vote."²⁹

Within the Conference the executive had to consider the whole



Jake Harms (1926–)



Jake F. Pauls (1928–)

range of opinion from those of the protest movement to those who were cautious to those pushing for “immediate and decisive action.”³⁰ At several points both sides agreed that the time was not yet ready for First Mennonite to join the Conference. That time came in 1968 and CMM accepted First Mennonite without protest or debate. Jake Harms, who succeeded P.J. Schaefer as moderator, chose Philippians 1:3–6 to welcome First Mennonite into CMM. It read:

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

“While that officially ended the rift that had commenced shortly after World War II, the whole sad episode affected many individual Mennonites adversely,” concluded Ernest Enns in his account of First Mennonite.³¹ Suspicion and prejudice on the one hand, rejection and pain on the other, were not eradicated overnight. Franz Wiebe, leading minister of First Mennonite since 1986, sensed a lot of emotion and heard painful memories particularly from members 60 years and older. Even in 1996, when First Mennonite’s ongoing under-representation

on Conference committees was noted, the perception still was that “the conference is treating us at arm’s length.” While for younger people this part of history was not an issue and on the whole perspectives were quite a bit more positive, Wiebe suggested that changing attitudes and more involvement and visibility would bring a sense of full acceptance and mutuality.³²

Camps

The era began with the Assiniboine Mennonite Mission Camp Association turning over its duties, worries and the camp’s debt of \$4,750 to the new CMM camp committee—Frank K. Isaac, A.A. Teichroeb, Ernest Wiebe, William Loewen and Menno Klassen—in April 1957. The Camp Committee became a sub-committee of the Education Committee later. The two major concerns that absorbed the conference discussions and decisions during this period were the expansion and development of campsites and camp philosophy and programming.

Expansion and development. There were CMM constituents who believed one well developed campsite, Assiniboine Mennonite Mission Camp, was sufficient. Others held that the AMMC had its limitations and that a lakeshore site was desirable to meet the needs of youth and the perceived increasing child population of the constituency. Factors influencing the thinking were the broader camp literature which advocated smaller camps as preferable to larger ones, the concern to meet the needs of all congregations and the interest to maximize the opportunity for mission.

Explorations to establish a site in the west, which would be more accessible to the Whitewater Gemeinde groups, initially proved unsuccessful. In contrast, beautiful, attractive Moose Lake in the east, recommended by the Department of Natural Resources, seemed to have all that was desirable in a campsite. This site, like that of AMMC earlier, captured the interest of a particular group, Christian business people from the Gretna-Altona-Plum Coulee area. By February 1958 at least 37 had bought lots on the shores of Moose Lake with the hope of having a camp for their children right next door. They organized as the Moose Lake (lot holders) Fellowship (MLF) with the willingness to make their cottages available for campers and to contribute financial resources, advice and involvement.

For a variety of reasons, at the 1957 CMM sessions more than half of the delegates resisted developing a second camp on a lakeshore site.



Youth group at the first chapel at Moose Lake Camp. Photo: Anne Goertzen

However, with a vote of 41 to 15 (out of 160 eligible ballots) a 10-acre property at Moose Lake was secured for \$100 and slowly developed. For much of the time, the MLF took full responsibility, initially under the leadership of Menno Klassen of Gretna who was also on the Camp Committee. Major investments of time, labour and money toward site clearance and toward facilities—building a dock, a large combination kitchen-dining-assembly hall and cabins—came first of all from the MLF and from friends and volunteers from Gretna, Halbstadt, Altona, Plum Coulee, Rosenfeld, Winkler, Morden, Lowe Farm, Morris and communities east of the Red River. CMM, whose support was off again, on again for a number of years, contributed sums of \$300 in 1959, \$500 in 1960, \$1,000 in 1964. The first public function, a young married couples' retreat in 1959, while very meaningful for participants, drew severe criticism from several leaders because of the mixed swimming. This had been one of the things so condemned at Sunnyside Beach before it became AMMC. How could it be condoned here?

In 1964, based on investigations by the Whitewater Gemeinde and the joint MJO-Education study committee, CMM approved the beginning of a "second" camp at Lake Max and taking responsibility for Moose Lake as a "third" camp. This meant that CMM accepted the

administration of three campsites, albeit reluctantly on the part of some. Many CMM members on the Camp Committee and the umbrella Education Committee, as well as study commissions, local grounds' committees, architect Harold Funk and others contributed sacrificially to the development of the three campsites. After gradual Conference approval, at least 2,653 volunteer hours of labour from people at Crystal City, Mather, Brandon, Boissevain and Oak Lake and a cost of \$14,000 for materials and \$800 for labour, the first main structure at Camp Koinonia was dedicated on June 20, 1971.

In 1968 the names of the camps changed from AMMC to Camp Assiniboia, from Camp Lake Max to Camp Koinonia (Greek, meaning fellowship), from Moose Lake to Moose Lake Mennonite Camp. A revised and more independent Camp Committee structure freed the Education Committee in 1969 to focus on other responsibilities. In 1970 CMM approved the hiring of a full-time, year-round camp director. As the sites and programs developed it became readily apparent that Assiniboia served the majority of children as well as weekend and day groups, Koinonia attracted teenagers and Moose Lake emphasized family camping. After five years of summer directorship at Camp Assiniboia and in the wake of CMM's financial crisis, Jim Reimer emphasized the need in 1969

to make a decision as to whether we want to develop all three camps or sell some and develop one or two. After making such a decision we need to deliberately and consciously develop a long-range . . . plan to develop the program and the site of these camp(s).



Wiener roast at camp. Photo: Anne Goertzen

Retrenchment came in 1970 at the Brandon sessions where CMM asked H.H. Goertzen, who together with his wife Anne had given leadership at Moose Lake early on and took charge where Menno Klassen and others left off, to form a Moose Lake Camp Association to operate the camp for a period of three years. In 1972 Camp Assiniboia was diagnosed to be in “spiritual doldrums” and the Camp Committee asked, “Why should we stay at Camp Assiniboia, if we do? What should be done . . . if we stay? What other possibilities are there?”

Camp philosophy and programming. Operating AMMC with a Sunday-school-under-the-trees approach or required memorization of Bible verses and recreation seemingly had run its course. A change was as inescapable as the shift in language and leadership. By 1964 strong apprehension surrounding the evangelism of children became apparent. The encouragement found in the study of students at Seminary in Elkhart which indicated that many of them had been converted to Christ at camp or the fact that Manitoba’s first overseas mission worker, Anne Penner, made her decision for missions at the Canadian Sunday School Mission camp did not sufficiently answer the questions confronting camp workers. Whereas conversion had perhaps not been stressed enough in the past, now “there is the danger that this could be emphasized too strongly,” read the minutes of one camp workers’ meeting. For some campers the personal talk and evening devotions with the counsellor or the Saturday evening testimony time were occasions of anxiety. One 1960s camper wrote years later:

. . . the Talk with the counselor this caught me by complete surprise i was sitting at the blue picnic table under the trees one afternoon with my counselor . . . i had just finished reciting the entire lot of verses from Abraham & Isaac to *In the beginning was the Word* feeling relieved & not a little proud when . . . asked . . . quite suddenly was i a Christian yes i answered quickly startled at the question & when did you become one . . . i don’t know i said i can’t remember but you’re sure you’re saved . . . doubtfully pencil poised above my card . . . they’re keeping a file on us i thought & i don’t have a date from that day for many years I worried about the problem of my conversion which came to a head every summer at Bible camp some years i felt miserable & dark despair about my inevitable damnation other years i cited some uplifting religious experience or another & thus located my salvation temporarily on the calendar.³³

Many campers recall similar feelings but they lived with the pressures

and gladly returned to the camp summer after summer to experience the enjoyment of swimming and friendships.

By the end of the camp's first decade, 87 children had experienced conversion at camp, 25 of these in 1958. At the 1962 CMM sessions it was noted that of that summer's 424 campers by far the majority of the children indicated that they were converted.

Throughout the years the purpose of camps was reviewed many times. A modification or shift often came with a change in committee or staff.³⁴ Very soon camp philosophy took on what was suggested to be a more holistic direction than what to some seemed like a convert-the-child-at-all-costs approach. The main setting for Christian education of children would continue to be the home and the congregation. At camp children should hear the gospel in a new way and have opportunity to experience the love of God and the relevance of Christianity to all of life through a week of peer group living under dedicated Christian leadership and an integrated camp program. This shift unsettled and distressed some in the constituency who expressed concern that not enough emphasis was placed on evangelism and spiritual growth at camp. A study conference at Whitewater in November 1970 dealt with the topics of conversion and camp philosophy. Papers presented by John Neufeld and Bill Kruger generated intense discussion and hinted at crises that needed to be addressed.³⁵

By the end of the era the purpose of camp was described as evangelism that cares for our children, mission outreach for inner city children and others, and education for all. Integration of the spiritual, emotional, physical, social and intellectual aspects was emphasized. New activities such as horseback riding, archery, camp and nature crafts, and nature lore were added. Only Bible sessions and camp crafts were compulsory. Singing remained an important part of every camp week but the style of song changed from hymns to camp songs such as "It's a long road to freedom," "The wedding banquet" and "They'll know we are Christians by our love." At Koinonia and Moose Lake the changes were less dramatic. Both camps accommodated considerably fewer campers in two or three weeks of the summer.

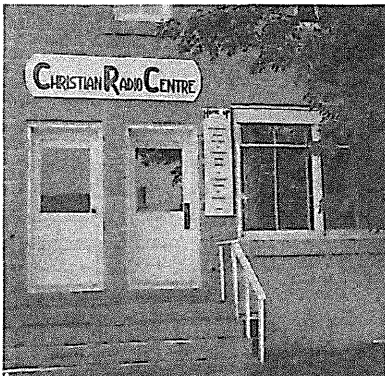
The debates about sites and philosophy did not end with this era. In the midst of dramatic developments and changes, countless volunteer cooks, counsellors, nurses, kitchen and other staff came to love camp ministry, bringing enthusiasm and dedication to the task. CMM moved from one campsite with one building to three campsites with many

buildings and a multi-faceted program, from an adopted philosophy of Bible camps to gradually developing its own Anabaptist-Mennonite understandings, and from ministry to only Mennonite campers to including those of non-Mennonite background.

Radio

Two years after it began, the Mennonite Radio Mission work was described as huge, almost impossible to oversee, with apprehension that it could grow beyond the Conference's capabilities. In 1969 it was renamed Faith and Life Communications (FLC). The Missions Committee, under whose umbrella it had operated, was freed for other outreach. The 1956 MJO-sponsored broadcasts on CKY and Fargo were phased out while airing on CFAM began in 1957. Frank H. Epp and Anita Epp became the first half-time director and secretary, respectively, for the radio work located in Altona. Initially, Epp took care of the work from the offices of *The Canadian Mennonite*. The Christian Radio Centre, a building on Main Street purchased from the Red River Valley Mutual Insurance Co. at the generous price of \$4,000, was dedicated in 1959. By 1962 the Centre served as "central office for the Manitoba Conference."³⁶

The three programs, *Frohe Botschaft* (Good News), *Wort des Lebens* (Word of Life) and Abundant Life (AL), developed in 1957 by Frank H. Epp, were still on the air in the 1990s. *Frohe Botschaft*, which kept its Sunday 7:30 a.m. time slot throughout the years even though that was not the most suitable time for farm people, had more



The Christian Radio Centre which also housed the first CMM offices in Altona.



MRM directors Frank H. Epp and J.K. Klassen with D.D. Klassen, Wort des Lebens speaker.

Table 7
Faith & Life Radio Broadcasts

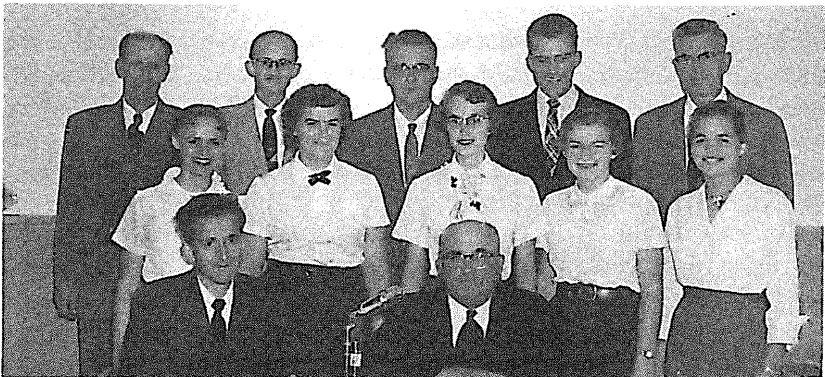
Showing years in which three programs aired
AL = Abundant Life; FB = Frohe Botschaft; WL = Wort des Lebens

Province/Town	Call Letters	Program	Years							Funded by
			60	65	70	75	80	85	90	
MB, Altona	CFAM	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							CMM
		FB	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							CMM
		WL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							CMM
MB, Steinbach	CHSM	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							CMM
		FB	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							CMM
		WL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							CMM
MB, Boissevain	CJRB	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							CMM
		FB	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							CMM
		WL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							CMM
MB, Dauphin	CKDM	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							Winnipegosis; Grace-Brdn
MB, Flin Flon	CFAR	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							
MB, Thompson	CHTM	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							
MB, Winnipeg	CKY	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							
SK, SK	CFAG	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							Saskatchewan listeners
SK, Melfort	CJVR	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							Saskatchewan listeners
SK, Swift Current	CKSW	FB	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							Saskatchewan listeners
SK, Swift Current	CKSW	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							Saskatchewan listeners
SK, Shaunavon	CJSM	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							
AB, Calgary	CHQR	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							A businessman, later listeners
AB, Calgary	CFAC	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							
AB, High River	CHRB	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							Alberta listeners
BC, Abbotsford	CFVR	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							
BC, Kelowna		AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							
BC, Quesnel	CKCQ	WL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							BC Women's Organization
BC, Vancouver	CJOR	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							Much from BC
ON, Hamilton	CHAM	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							
ON, Niagara	CHVC	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							4 businessmen, later churches
PA, Lonsdale	WNPV	AL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							Local Mennonite businessmen
Paraguay, Chaco	ZP30	FB	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							CMM
Manilla		FB	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							Man. Women's Missionary Soc
Mexico		WL	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							Mexico Com & Grunthal Berg.
Equador, Quito	HCJB	FB	[Bar from 1960 to 1995]							CMM (one airing)

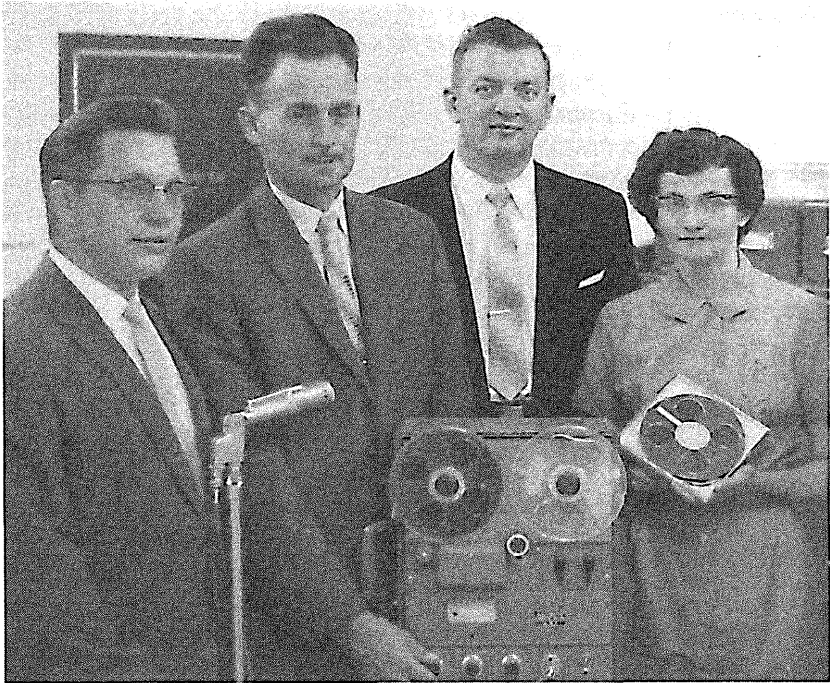
1. CHVC Niagara includes WDCX-FM Buffalo; CFAC Calgary includes CJOV Drumheller; CJOR Vancouver includes CKIG. 2. Frohe Botschaft (adapted) was used on Wings of the Morning on CFQC, Saskatoon, from 1976-1981, then on Wings of the Evening on CKFW, Swift Current, 1981-1991. In 1991 FB began airing on its own on CKSW. 3. Prior to 1994 WL messages were sent to Mexico and used in their own programming. 4. In 1970 a broadcast entitled *Gemeinschaft* (fellowship) was aired on CFAM but was discontinued due to minimal listener response. 5. On an adhoc basis Faith and Life's AL aired in the Turks and Caicos Islands in the Caribbean in the 1990s.

Manitoba listeners than the other two programs in the early 1960s. In 1964 shortwave mission station HCJB in Quito, Ecuador, chose *Frohe Botschaft* with its practice of different speakers to be beamed three times a week to Europe and the Americas. *Wort des Lebens'* longtime speaker and unaccompanied soloist, D.D. Klassen, gave it a teaching and nurture emphasis. Klassen, fondly known as D.D. because of his empathetic, warm and uninhibited manner, called the program a house or pastoral visit. Sometimes it meant entering “closed doors” to help “shut-outs,” those who had broken contact with the church but were listening to the radio. Other times it meant ministering to “shut-ins,” those who were friends or members of the church but excluded from participation by age or illness. Around 1964 the program’s character changed to more Bible expository messages as J.W. Schmidt (mid-1960s) and A.H. Born (early 1970s) joined Klassen in sharing the speaking load.

The Abundant Life program won the most widespread appeal and relevance. By 1961 it aired in all four western provinces (see Table 7).³⁷ On CJOR in Vancouver it had the highest rating of any Sunday program and jumped from 2,500 to 7,100 homes tuning in to the station just for the AL. Many letters from listeners made reference to the unique format of the “pithy and spiritually sound program.” After the opening theme song, “O for a thousand tongues to sing,” and introduction by director and speaker Frank H. Epp, the program flowed with the message interspersed by singing groups. Framed by a short prayer and the closing hymn, “Take my heart, O Father, take it,” came the regular concluding challenge:



Wort des Lebens radio choir with conductor Henry G. Ens and speaker D.D. Klassen.



Mennonite Radio Mission personnel with recording equipment (l to r): Frank H. Epp, Abundant Life speaker; Peter Funk, technician; J.K. Klassen, director; and Helen Heinrichs, secretary.

To live abundantly you must give abundantly. Give of yourself. Give of your time and your talent without reservation to the Lord, to the work of the Lord. Abundant living means abundant giving.³⁸

People appreciated the freshness, clarity and vigorous approach of the messages which dealt with various subjects of practical Christianity, social issues and evangelism. Titles such as “The crowd can be wrong,” “Your turn to die,” “I want to be happy,” “Left out, left over and lonely” or “Your life can be changed” were sent out on request for distribution in many places.

Despite strong support in the constituency some questioned the validity and stewardship of broadcasting programs similar to others on the air. Were the themes on the AL sufficiently evangelistic? Was the outlay for radio work not rather high compared to other efforts of the Conference? In 1964, with a deficit and contributions waning, 76 delegates voted to expand the radio work, 73 leave as is, 14 reduce, with 55 votes not cast.

Directors changed, times changed and Mennonite Radio Mission also faced transition. According to one interpretation, “the ’50s model of Gospel broadcasting with its predictable half-hour chunks of speaking and traditional familiar music was not working any more. Money was not coming in and the ratings as far as the station was concerned were not good.” The AL became a 15-minute program in an attempt to reach the uncommitted listeners, ages 15 to 30, in a contemporary way. The two- to three-part sermon approach was modified to include unpredictable conversation or comment and “a brand new approach to music” by the Faith and Life Singers with Jim Reimer. Bernie Wiebe, half-time director in 1966, recalled:

It took off like you wouldn’t believe. . . . The group had a tremendous youth following. Songs were biblical texts, tame Medical Mission Sisters kind of stuff; guitars were brought to church. . . . The Singers couldn’t respond to all the invitations. . . . But it was not all glory. Parents were upset with guitars, banjos, drums and jeans.

Initially, listener contributions largely carried program costs. In 1962 the Radio Mission budget was \$35,000; by 1970 it totalled \$46,700, largest item in the CMM budget followed by camps with \$32,400. When a deficit of \$3,241 had accumulated by 1967, CMM adopted a policy which invited individuals or groups to sponsor broadcasts as memorials to departed loved ones. Toward the end of the era programs were cut on some stations, but new opportunities presented themselves and again decisions needed to be made on priorities and what the Conference could afford.

The radio work generated letters, correspondence courses, literature distribution and church visitation. In letters people spoke of having found peace with God or the assurance of eternal life, and requested literature on the Mennonites and their faith, a few expressing the desire to join a Mennonite church. While some letters brought criticism, many expressed encouragement and supported the work with prayer and contributions. Bible correspondence courses, obtained from the Mennonite Hour in Harrisonburg, Virginia, were translated into German by P.A. Rempel of Altona and offered free to listeners. Volunteer P.B. Krahn of Winkler, a teacher for more than 30 years, followed by P.M. Hamm of Winnipeg marked the lessons. Volunteer young women prepared mailings of lessons, the bilingual *Radio Messenger* or AL sermons. In 1967 they mailed approximately 30,000 German and English sermons. The AL series “Living with sex” broke all previous records in 1968 with 4,000 copies sent out upon request.

Another dimension came in 1970 when the Bergthaler-sponsored Christian Home Hour (CHH), under Bernie Wiebe's directorship, amalgamated with Faith and Life Communications. Counselling and family life education became part of FLC. In 1969 the Church School Hour, prepared by the MCI and Elim schools, merged into FLC.

Inter-Mennonite attempts at cooperative broadcasting during the 1957-1972 era included discussions with Mennonite Broadcasts of Harrisonburg, Virginia, and with the Manitoba EMMC and EMC; involvement in the Council of Mass Communications with the MCs, GCs and Mennonite Brethren Gospel Light Hour; and association with the GC Faith and Life Radio and TV and Mennonite Broadcasts. For the latter, FLC, which had in the meantime moved its offices to Winnipeg (1968), became responsible for all GC radio and TV ministries with Bernie Wiebe as its director. By arrangement with Mennonite Broadcasts, FLC became the sole distributor of CHOICE, inter-Mennonite TV spots and special broadcasts. CHOICE, a daily 3½-minute religious broadcast for secular men, designed by Mennonite Broadcasts with a specifically Canadian version by FLC, first aired in Manitoba in April 1969 and by June was heard on 10 Canadian stations. In 1971 Bernie Wiebe accepted the 6th annual Gabriel Award at the Catholic Broadcasters Association of America banquet in Hollywood on behalf of CHOICE II.³⁹

Toward the end of the era CMM supported the forming of a five-denomination (MC, GC, Mennonite Brethren-US, Church of the Brethren and United Church in Christ) Mennonite Radio and Television Council for coordination of radio and TV efforts. During this time television spots, 30- to 60-second programs which shared important Christian truths related to life and family, became popular. Some 40 to 50 denominations used them as models of how to do spots. Hundreds of TV stations in Canada, including the CBC and CTV networks, used these public service spots with titles such as "Resolving family conflict," "Marriage is for love" and "Peacemaking." One won the World Association of Christian Communicators award as the best religious TV spot. As a result of the exposure, FLC appeared in a series of five programs on Winnipeg's CJAY-TV program "Today's World" hosted by Ray Torgrud.⁴⁰

Missions

David Schulz gave the final documented report on itinerant ministry for the Missions Committee at the conference sessions in Morden in 1959. Appropriately, the 1959 CMM Yearbook was dedicated to two

of Manitoba's itinerant ministers, Benjamin Ewert and Johann P. Bueckert, who both died in 1958.

Mission stations. The work in St. Vital and Brandon continued with significant help from both CMM and CMC for workers and buildings. At Brandon, for example, by November 1959 the CMC had paid \$23,300, CMM \$4,000, the local group approximately \$2,000 toward the church building with about \$3,000 more needed for completion. Pastor Henry Isaac (1957–1961) received a monthly salary of \$75 from CMM and additional help from CMC. The missions committees had no regular salary scale and the support level for different workers varied.

In 1959 CMM delegates urged the committee to minister to GC persons and families moving into towns. According to D.D. Klassen, the Bergthaler Gemeinde, for example, numbered 2,784 but *could* number 5,000—Klassen was talking about potential members of Bergthaler background who had joined non-Mennonite churches, who did not care about any church or had fallen prey to some false teaching.⁴¹ Follow-up exploratory work in Portage la Prairie and Flin Flon found the Mennonite Brethren and EMCs active in Portage and the latter present in Flin Flon as well. To avoid confusion the Missions Committee chose to abandon its plans for work there.

At the 1960 annual sessions delegates voted to expand mission work to non-Mennonites. The Missions Committee considered Brooklands, Dauphin, Clarkleigh-Oak Point, The Pas, Swan Plain, Selkirk, Thompson and Winnipegosis as possible locations for work. The concern not to create rivalry with other conferences which were already involved in a community remained. Three mission stations, Oak Point, The Pas and Thompson, which drew both Mennonites and non-Mennonites, were established in 1961.

*Oak Point, Bethel Gospel Church (Mennonite).*⁴² In 1955 Mary Penner from Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg taught at Radway School, eight miles east of Oak Point. She suggested to her home congregation that they take an interest in this little community. As a result, Bethel volunteers began a ministry there. In the early 1960s services were moved to Oak Point. Volunteers built a basement and moved over the former Morris Bergthaler church building which had been bought for this group.⁴³ The CMC Missions Committee supported the following workers at Oak Point: Ken Buller 1962–1967; Peter Buhler and other CMBC students 1967–1974; Costus and Lorraine

Yphantides 1974–1976. The work prospered and drew persons of Mennonite, Irish and Scandanavian background who worshipped together and functioned as a congregation with regular services, Sunday school, DVBS, youth work, baptisms, communion service and child dedication. Workers grappled with the cross-cultural dimensions of their ministry. Buller wrote:

We . . . struggle with the problem of relating ourselves and our faith to non-Mennonite people of our community. It seems that our conservative ways build a wall between us and we do not reach into their lives.

Costus Yphantides of Greek Evangelical background, who felt very close to Mennonites including their pacifist and other Anabaptist emphases, asked,

But what/who is a Mennonite? Is it one who believes . . . or is it a matter of culture? Will the one who was born an outsider ever be considered a *true* Mennonite?

In his own congregation at Oak Point, Costus did not feel ill at ease but at conferences, for example, he felt Mennonites turned away when they heard a non-Mennonite name.

Termination of the work came in 1977 as a result of a gradual exodus of young people and families from the church community. The EMMCs, engaged in a growing ministry just seven miles away at St. Laurent, were encouraged to absorb Oak Point's Sunday school children in their program. Before terminating, the work continued for a short while under the coordination of Jim Penner of Bethel Mennonite. The church building was eventually sold in 1992.

The Pas. The CMM Missions Committee assigned David and Anne Braun from Alberta to The Pas in 1961 to serve the people in the town as well as the many Indians and Métis in the area. David graduated from CMBC in 1956. The north was young and expansion was sure to come, suggesting a good reason to be there. In the early and mid-1960s the non-transient population of the town numbered less than 5,000.

A building, which was dedicated on September 23, 1962 served the small group in the process of formation and doubled as the Brauns' residence. Work was difficult but DVBS, Bible colportage, Bible study, Sunday school, establishment of a kindergarten, and many

contacts helped to gather and nurture a small group. Before the Brauns left for further studies at Bethel College in August 1964, Braun reported:

The foundation has been laid and can now be built on. The name Mennonite is quite well accepted. . . . Several people have been reached for Christ including children and adults. . . . We will never be able to establish a mission here again if we pull out now.

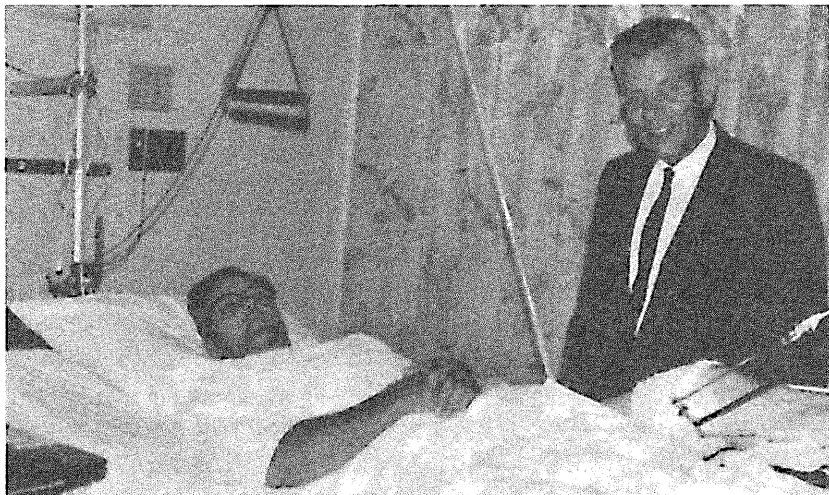
Followed by interim and short-term workers, social worker John Kroeker and Dave and Phyllis Wiebe (recently returned from ministry with the Janz team in Europe) and affected by the transiency of the group's members, the work terminated in early 1968.

St. Vital, Grace Brandon and Thompson prospered with the help of the missions committees; The Pas and Oak Point folded.

Hospital Chaplaincy. At the annual CMM sessions in Altona in 1960 the Missions Committee announced its plan to expand the hospital visitation work formerly handled by J.P. Klassen, J.H. Enns, Benjamin Ewert, Jacob Toews and other ministers. It hired H.T. Klassen half-time to visit Mennonite patients in Winnipeg hospitals beginning July 1962. Covering eleven hospitals and making an average of nine visits per afternoon, Klassen reported in November that "most of our Mennonite patients are quite open to God's Word; in fact, most are genuinely converted." In 1963 Klassen counted a total of 341 visits with 1,329 patients leaving literature or Scripture cards wherever possible. At the Municipal Hospitals Klassen began a regular Bible study with a group of polio patients and preached occasionally. After Klassen began full-time work in 1966, delegates suggested he visit the congregations more and share of his work so he would more easily connect with rural patients. Klassen and the Missions Committee encouraged young people, both for their own awareness and experience and for patients' sakes, to be involved in worship programs in hospitals.

Further extension of the hospital ministry came with the hiring full-time of P.K. Raman, formerly from India, for visitation at the Municipal Hospitals in about 1966. Raman, ecumenicity personified, visited patients of different denominations and faiths. When the financial crunch hit CMM in 1971 the Municipal Hospitals kept Raman as their employee.

Visitation of Mennonite patients in the T.B. Sanatorium at Ninette and in the Brandon Mental Hospital was continued by Whitewater,



Chaplain H. T. Klassen visits the sick.

Oak Lake and Brandon churches. They also held monthly services at the Mental Hospital. In 1963 Brandon's pastor, Peter A. Unger, reported ministering to 33 Mennonite patients at the latter. Under the leadership of Abe L. Goertzen from the Winnipeg Bergthaler, Plum Coulee and Winnipeg Bergthaler as well as Sargent and Sterling churches conducted regular services at the Selkirk Mental Hospital after mid-April 1963.

Prison chaplaincy. In 1957 Peter Klassen, on his own initiative, visited prisoners on a monthly basis. C.H. Friesen of Spencer-Grunthal Bergthaler, also began on his own before he became CMM's staff member from 1959 to the 1970s. After his appointment he visited eleven "Mennonite" prisoners, four at Stony Mountain Prison, seven at Headingly Jail. In 1963 the number increased to 40 men from Mennonite homes (out of 57 prisoners visited). Friesen reported that there were several conversions and that few of the "Mennonite" prisoners were church members. Others involved in prisoner visitation or rehabilitation work included Jim Penner of Bethel Mennonite in the late 1960s and David Braun, earlier The Pas, as staff member from 1971–1972. Further cutbacks effected C.H. Friesen's going on half-time in conjunction with his retirement plans.

Twice a year CMM congregations—Altona, Morden and Winkler Bergthaler, Blumenort, Bethel Mennonite and Springstein—



David Braun (1931–1993), prison chaplain, in conversation. Photo: MHCA

conducted morning services at Stony Mountain on the second Sunday of the month. Others—Elmwood Bethel, Spencer, Steinbach and Winnipeg Berghaler—served similarly at Falcon Lake and Bannock Point prison camps.

Other concerns. Toward the end of the 1957–1972 period several other considerations surfaced. One was the Mennonite emigration from Mexico and Paraguay and the accompanying concern that these immigrants become established and integrated into Manitoba churches. A second was the discussion on the advantages of CMM being on the Manitoba Interfaith Council.

Peace and service

The earlier Peace Committee and its issues were placed under the Service Committee which was created in 1958. This committee functioned largely as an umbrella and coordinating body and, for a decade, cooperated with parallel Canadian and GC committees and with the two Mennonite relief committees supported by CMM congregations. Like the two relief committees, promotion of peace and justice issues gradually became part of MCC's mandate. Other considerations affected the Service Committee in its decade of operation. A number of CMM projects could not be lodged only with the Service Committee but called for involvement of the Missions Committee as well. For that reason, and because "word and deed are indivisible in our Christian witness," the Service and Missions Committees amalgamated in 1969–1971. Among the many Service Committee projects were prison ministry, which later merged with MCC's Open Circle program; the publication of a deacons' manual,

Others; work on a theology of service; and awareness raising and statements on issues like abortion, capital punishment and pornographic literature.

Education (*Erziehung*)

The Education Committee first appeared in the 1959 constitution. Its 1960 report identified three areas of work: Sunday school, DVBS and children's camps. By the end of the 1957–1972 era it was responsible for coordinating and monitoring all Conference educational concerns including private schools, ministers' courses and youth work. Its task was to study and determine the needs of congregations, work toward meeting those needs and serve as a link to parallel CMC and GC committees. During the 1957–1972 era CMM sponsorship of the DVBS program and some of the Sunday school emphases discontinued as congregations took full responsibility for them. Inter-campus ministries (spearheaded by the MMYO) and the exploration of a residential liberal arts college came on the agenda in the latter half of this era.

Ministers' courses. In the 1940s and 1950s Ältester Wilhelm Enns promoted ministers' courses at conference sessions with considerable regularity. Courses were almost always scheduled biannually, at first in various locations and then at Elim or CMBC, where they were offered by the respective faculties. CMBC's 12-day courses usually followed the annual spring Bible lectures and were part of a three-year plan. In February 1960, for example, they included homiletics by J.D. Adrian, God's plan of salvation by I.I. Friesen, a study of the prophet Ezekiel by Waldemar Janzen, church history by Gerhard Lohrenz, a word study based on Galatians by David Schroeder, hymnology by George Wiebe and a study of the sermons in Acts by Henry Poettcker. Of a different nature were the occasional ministers' retreats at Assiniboine Camp usually scheduled for August. After 1965 they phased out because of low attendance.

In the early decades the character of a minister, Bible exegesis and practice preaching for sermon content and delivery were the themes of ministers' conferences. According to J.H. Enns proclamation of the Word of God held first place in congregational ministry.⁴⁴ David F. Friesen, chair of the Education Committee in 1969, indicated a shift in emphasis when he said to the delegate body:

I do not believe that . . . renewal will come by preaching more and better sermons on Sunday morning. . . . The Sunday morning service

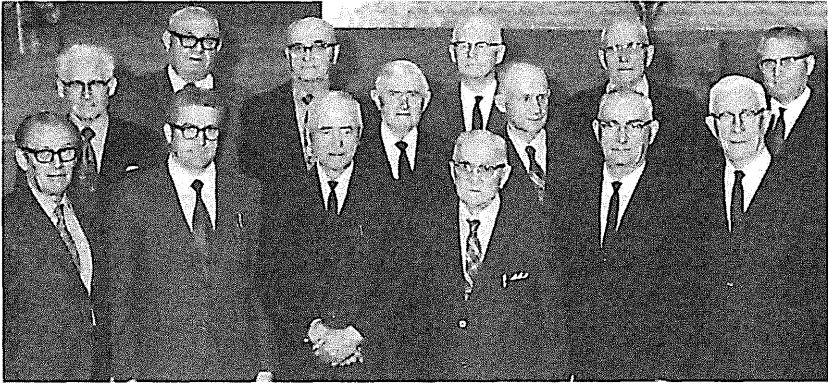
[is] very important. But I think renewal will come through the meeting together in small groups for Bible study, prayer and the sharing of experiences.

Other shifts became noticeable. Until 1970 ministers generally had been elected largely from within the local congregation. In 1971, for the first time, new ministers to Manitoba were introduced to the delegate body. That year they were Ron Hunsicker (Ohio) at Charleswood, Paul Dyck (India) at Altona Mennonite, Peter Sawatzky (MCC in Zaire, earlier from Saskatchewan) at Grace Mennonite in Steinbach and Bob Peters (Montana, Mennonite Brethren) at Elmwood Bethel Mennonite in Winnipeg.

Sunday school. “This is one of the most important areas of mission work and so close at hand,” read one of the 1957 delegate conference resolutions. “Our children and the future of the church are at stake.” The Education Committee promoted a number of practices: that the entire family attend Sunday school, that all families conduct devotions, that the congregations use the Conference Sunday school curriculum, that all congregations conduct teachers’ courses, that teachers change as little as possible, that they meet approximately every two weeks to discuss their work and that they call parent-teacher meetings at least once annually. Statistics gathered by the Sunday School Committee until the mid-1960s gave the Education Committee an ongoing insight into the educational situation in the congregations. In 1967 the annual provincial Sunday School Conference was renamed the Provincial Education Conference.

Daily Vacation Bible School (DVBS). Henry Gerbrandt surveyed the province, established where help should be given with DVBS and organized the placement of volunteer teachers until 1959. That year a total of 50 weeks were spent in summer Bible schools with 375–400 children enrolled. Bernie Wiebe continued the work in 1960 and Egon Enns, originally from Oak Lake, from 1961–1964. Although many congregations were organizing their own DVBS, 23 places were served by 35 teachers in 1962.

“Persuading children is easy,” suggested public school teacher Ernie Dyck from Boissevain who followed Enns 1964–1966, “teacher recruitment is the main concern.” In 1964 he enlisted 44 teachers, all women. Starting DVBS in new areas, Ernie contended, was too frustrating in part because of competition from other denominations. The DVBS program was last mentioned at CMM sessions in 1967.



Leaders present at the 1971 anniversary who were also at the reorganization of the Conference in 1947. Front row (l to r): P.R. Harder, Gerhard Ens, Gerhard Bock, A.D. Friesen, G.G. Neufeld, Gerhard Lohrenz; back row: Henry Gerbrandt, G.G. Neufeld (Manitou), D.D. Klassen, Isaac Loewen, J.P. Dyck, W. Peters, Heinrich P. Heinrichs, A.A. Teichroeb. Photo: MHCA

Things were changing. As programs scaled down or phased out and a new generation moved into leadership, the Education Committee wrestled with its mandate. It seemed like a multitude of needs and opportunities were calling to be addressed. There was the concern that private schools not close for lack of funding. The large university student population begged the exploration of a liberal arts residential college. Workshops and conferences with qualified resource persons addressed specific issues such as peace, the GC stewardship in mission thrust, human sexuality, drug problems, pastoral care and counselling. Together with the MMYO a university campus ministry developed. In cooperation with the Camp Committee, the Education Committee worked on camp philosophy and the meaning of conversion.

In times of frustration the Education Committee looked for more support from the constituency. On its behalf David F. Friesen identified a sensitive area in this way in 1968: "This board is asked to do a great deal of work with a small sum of money. In practice people find it much easier to designate funds to missions and relief than to a Conference Education program." While CMM struggled with this and related questions, the Education Committee evaluated all its efforts by the objectives set for the congregations, namely to:

help all persons to know God . . .
become aware of who they are

what their human situation is
of their alienation
to the end that they must
repent of their sin
respond to God's redeeming love in faith
become members of the body of Christ
grow in Christ within the community of believers
walk in the Spirit in every relationship
fulfil the call to discipleship in the world [and]
abide in the hope.

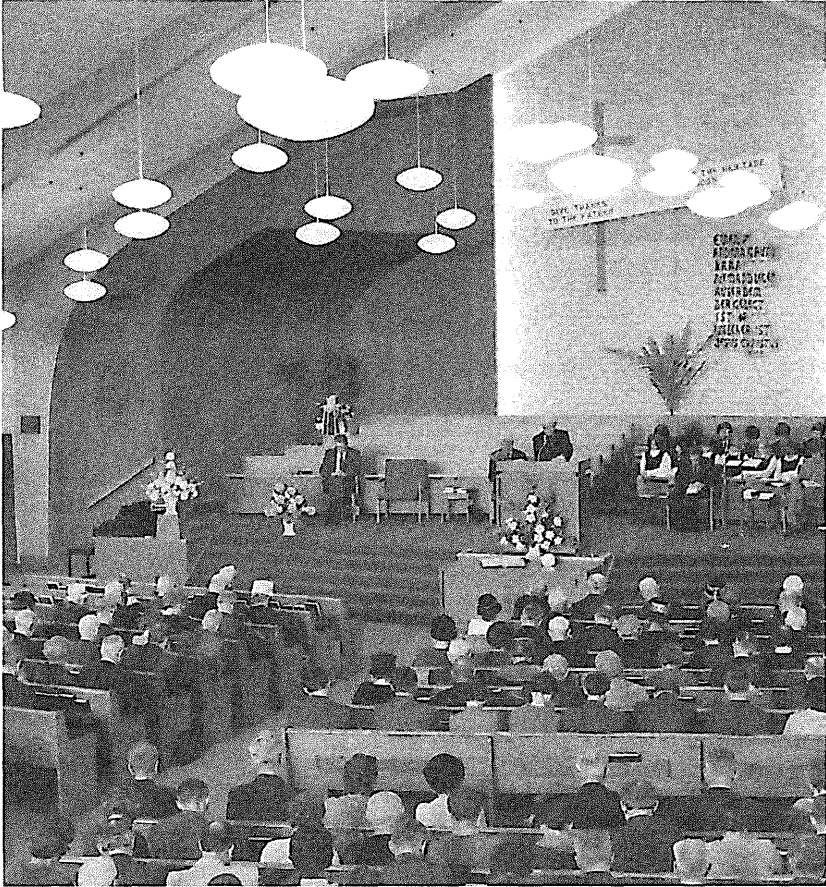
Finances

For decades each committee or program handled its own finances. Resources came from offerings, contributions and levies. In 1959 CMM established a central treasury and a unified budget. Part-time staff did the bookkeeping and the Conference treasurer served on a volunteer basis like other committee members did. When the CMM office moved to Winnipeg in 1968 Ernest Wiebe was hired as conference treasurer. The Finance Committee's main responsibilities were to set the budget (in consultation with the program committees) and to oversee the finances.

The 1957–1972 years marked a difficult financial period for CMM. Needs often exceeded financial support. Springstein's leader Wilhelm Enns, speaking on "How do we solve the financial problems in our conference?" at the beginning of the era, maintained that "all expenses could easily be met if people would give the tenth." In reality, in spite of the promises made on joining the conference and the faithfulness of a number of congregations, some paid very little toward the budget either because of negligence or in subtle but powerful protest of conference projects or procedure. Giving to institutions, as for example to Eden Mental Health Centre which demanded extraordinary commitment, affected CMM as well. Combined with a downturn in the economy in the late 1960s and early 1970s meant deficits for almost all CMM programs. George Groening, sizing up the situation already in 1964, noted:

we have probably come to a crisis because we have taken on greater obligations than we can carry presently. We have moved ahead too quickly and we have to stop for a bit and give our supporters an opportunity to adjust their thinking to such high expenditures. . . . We should be more deliberate in planning.

By 1970 the cumulative deficit had risen to \$27,426, due not to



CMM celebrates 25 years under the banner: "Give thanks to the Father—share the heritage of God' people." Photo: MHCA

overspending but to “the failure of congregations to meet their share of the budget.”⁴⁵ Wrestling with the financial, communication and confidence crises at Brandon in 1971 brought consideration of cutbacks and renewed commitment. The next few years generated optimism again and CMM looked to the future with confidence. Alf Loewen, Finance Committee chair 1969–1974, reminded delegates in 1971:

The Mennonite Church has a history of paying bills and keeping their credit in good shape. I'm sure that everyone of us wants to pass that legacy unto his children. So, let us not relax in our giving.

Celebration 1971

Toward the end of the 1957–1972 era D.D. Klassen wrote: “No one can surmise what our Manitoba churches would be like if there had been no Manitoba Conference of Mennonites. Each smaller or larger congregation would have developed one-sidedly.”⁴⁶ For 25 years *Russländer* and *Kanadier*, at least one branch of them, had met and worked together without interruption. The day chosen to pause and celebrate at the Winkler Bergthaler Church was Remembrance Day, November 11, 1971. This “anniversary day was like a pebble thrown into the centre of a pond,” reflected one observer. “It sent waves rolling into all directions.”⁴⁷ Thus, the era of major transitions and turning points ended on an upbeat note. G.G. Neufeld, one of CMM’s pillars of these 25 years, with gratefulness gave his blessing to move into a new era when he wrote: “A new generation steps onto the stage of the Conference. They are the children and grandchildren of the fathers who half a century ago sought to gather and unite the congregations in Manitoba.”⁴⁸

CHAPTER 8

CMM CONGREGATIONS

PAST AND PRESENT

The church is not a static architectural structure but rather a growing living body of people. . . . It must be willing to accommodate new ideas but it must also respect the old values that have made it what it is.—David Wiens¹

With the ending of the multi-branch Gemeinden in 1972 the CMM was no longer a conference of Gemeinden but a conference of individual congregations. The former Gemeinde-nurtured congregations constituted one part of the CMM family (see Table 8 and Map 4). Comprising the other part were congregations which emerged in new ways and were never part of a larger Gemeinde. These congregations grew out of efforts by GC-CMC-CMM Home Mission committees, began as so-called daughter congregations or had independent beginnings. Daughter congregations included both those birthed intentionally and peacefully and those resulting from schism. Regardless of the beginning, new congregations frequently drew members from the parent and other churches. Background experiences, resulting theological bent and mind-set and the peculiarities of each congregation contributed to the conference makeup. Understanding and accepting the diversities of these congregations, even if only in a broad way, was crucial to the pursuit of unity.

Generally accepted in theory was the premise that a congregation is its people and not any particular leader. However, as in decades past the Gemeinde was often personified by its Ältester, so in modern times this image was often transferred to the leading minister or pastor. For this reason, sketches of congregations mention numerous ministerial leaders in addition to data on beginnings, buildings and other historical details. It is left to congregational histories to depict more fully the significance of peoplehood and the tasks of the many: deacons, musicians, choir leaders, financial administrators, Sunday school superintendents, teachers, youth leaders, sponsors and others.

While leadership systems changed and most congregations in the 1990s had at least two leaders, a minister/pastor and a congregational chairperson, many congregations were still first known by their pastor.

Minister and pastor equally tried to encompass the earlier specialty functions of both the *Prediger* (preaching and teaching) and *Ältester* (caring, counselling and officiating). The term pastor was thought to set apart more than minister, since all are to be ministers but not all can be pastors (shepherds). The Schleithem Confession, the first known Anabaptist Confession of Faith, mentioned only one church officer, the *Hirt* (shepherd, pastor), whose duties it was “to read, admonish, teach, warn, discipline, excommunicate, to lead in prayer, to administer the Lord’s Supper and to undertake the general oversight of the congregation.”² A number of CMM congregations adopted the term pastor because of its shepherding connotation and its flexibility as title of respect. For example, it was uncommon to address a person as Minister Dave, but Pastor Dave became acceptable and was preferred to the former commonly used term Reverend. For some, however, pastor carried a presumptuous quality. For others, Reverend was an abominable term, worldly and a sign of false pride. The congregational stories below reflect some of this diversity.³

For congregations originating in the Bergthaler Gemeinde it is important to remember that membership was in a central registry, not in the local group. In earlier years the multi-branch Gemeinde elected the ministers and the general brotherhood made all the major decisions. A preaching schedule rotating the ministers in the various so-called “locals” was set up by the ministerial (*Lehrdienst*). The minister living closest to a particular group usually led local activities. Church buildings were approved and built or bought by the whole Gemeinde for the local, the latter raising funds for only a small portion of the amount needed. A central treasury took care of central costs, including conference levies, while local offerings went toward local expenses such as heating and lighting. Much of this general pattern held for the Blumenorter Gemeinde as well except that its locals did not become independent congregations but consolidated into one. The system dates back to Russia and Prussia and was still used by Old Colony and Sommerfelder churches in the 1990s.

The Whitewater Gemeinde with Molotschna origins differed from the Bergthaler and Blumenorter Gemeinden in that each local congregation had its own membership list and treasury, elected its own ministers and made decisions for its group. Ministers visited each other’s groups upon invitation, mainly on special occasions like Thanksgiving. Gemeinde decisions included support of the *Ältester*, schedules for baptism, communion and ordination services, and plans for united endeavours like the regional ministers’ conferences and itin-

Table 8
CMM Congregations

Gemde	Congrgtion	Startd	Membership			Original Composition or Makeup	1995	Joined Conferences			
			Start ²	Peak	1995			Staff ³	CMM ⁴	CMC	GC
Berg thaler	Halbstadt ⁵	1890/37	fam.	57	82	70	East Reserve people of 1878-87	PP	1936/47		1968
	Gretna	1891/01		139	120	East & West Reserve Man people incl Mol, Prussian	PP/LM	1936/47		1968	
	Winkler	1892/95		980	871	77 Chortitz, 5 Bergt.Col, 2 Frstnlnd, 6 Prussia, 6 Mol.	MS/LM	1936/47		1974	
	Altona	1895		637	526	Bergthaler people from the East Reserve	MS/LM	1936/47		1968	
	Plum Coulee	/1897		292	212	Bergthaler	PP/LM	1936/47		⁶	
	Lowe Farm	1900/05		148	90	Bergthaler, Cdn born	PP/LM	1936/47		1968	
	Rosenfeld	1906/37		100	85	Bergthaler of Chortitza & Bergthal Colony	LM	1936/47		1968	
	Morden	1921/30	24	431	368	Fürstenland, Bergthaler	MS/LM	1936/47		1968	
	Carman	1933/45		200	200	Mostly descendants of 1870s immigrants	PP	1936/47		1968	
	Grunthal/Spen	/1936		162	160	West Reserve Bergthaler & Chortitzer Gemeinde	PP	1947	⁶	⁶	
	Homewood	1938		70	50	GC, Bergthaler, Sommerfelder, MBs, Pentecostal	PP	1947		1968	
	Gladstone ⁵	1947	30	117		Sommerfelder from Saskatchewan mostly	-	1947		⁶	
	MacGregor	1949/50	30	218	150	18 Bergt, 8 EMMC, 4 GC from MB & SK	PP/LM	1947		⁶	
	Graysville	1925/27	25	82	60	Schönwieser, Bergthaler	PP	1936/47		1968	
Home Street	1957	37	277	140	84% Kanadier rural Bergt, 12% Russländer, 4% other	PP	1971		1968		
Blumen orter	Blumenort	1923/25		414	229	34% Shlackhtin Baratov, 27% Chortitza, Chortitza daughter settlements 25%, Molotschna 7%, other 7%.	PP/LM	1936/47	1926	1926	
	Gnadenthal	1923									
	Reinland	1923									
	Rosenort	1923									

	Wingham	1933/39	37	47	46	mixture of 1920s immigrants	PP	1947	⁶	⁶
Elim	Grunthal	1926/27	35+	250	194	Orenburg, Samara, Terek, Mol, Chort, 35 fdg. fam.	PP/LM	1947	1927	1929
Lichten	Arnaud	1925/44	111 ⁷	111	95	56% Mol, 24% Chort, 20% mixed other Russländer	MS	1947	1945	1947
auer	St Elizabeth	1925/27	79 ⁷	190	-	from 11 Gemeinden in Russia	-	1936/47	1926	1938
Nordheim	Winnpgosis	1930/33	38	125	95	5 Memrik, 4 Chort, 27 Grigoriewka	PP/LM	1936/47		1945
Schön	First Menn	1919/25	19	1490	1306	Schönwieser from Chortitza, others from Molotschna	MS	1936/68	1926/49	1929
wieser	Niverville	1924/44	65 ⁸	187	160	Schönwieser	PP	1936/47	1945	1953
	Springstein	1924/38	38	203	181	Grigoriewka, Samoilowka, Charkow, Ekaterinoslaw	MS	1936/47	1939	1947
	Pigeon Lke ⁹	1924/27		179	123	Molotschna, Schönfeld	LM	1936/47	1939	1945
	Glenlea	1925/45	47	134	133	18 families from Schönfeld & Steinbach, Molotschna	MS/LM	1936/47	1945	1947
	Oak Lake	1927/29	33	73	58	Arkadak, Molotschna	LM	1936/68	1926/49	1929
	North Kild	1929/35		561	457	1920s & 1940s imm., Para & Argentine, non-Menn.	MS	1936/57	1957	1959
	Steinbach	1923/36	39	466	401	Schönw & other Russl. from Grunthal, St. Elizabeth,	MS	1947	1942	1945
White	Whitewtr/B	1925/27	52	286	191	1920s imm. from Terek, Molotschna, Chortitza	PP/LM	1947	1927	1929
water	Crystal City	1924/27	24	230	201	1920s Russländer	PP/LM	1947	1927	1929
	Trinity Mather ¹⁰	197/69	39	75	65	original Mather Russländer and some Kanadier	PP	1978	1978	1971
Daughters of some of the above Gemeinden										
Wklr B	Grace	1961/61	32	374	374	mostly Bergthaler	MS	1990	1963	⁶
	Covenant	1981/82	27	46	27	23 GC, 2 MB, 2 Un. Church (from BC, SK, ON)	PP	1983	1982	1983
	Emmanuel	1984/86	70	195	95	'86: 69 Wklr Berg, 26 oth GC, 2 EMMC, 5 non-Menn	MS	1987	1988	⁶
Alt B	Altona Menn	1962	22	120	104	18 GC, 2 MB, 2 EMC	PP	1962	1963	1965
Wpg B	FGMF	1966/67	32	168	165	Wpg Bergthaler, Sargent, etc.	SH/LM	1969	1969	1971

CMM Congregations (continued)

NK	Springfield Ht	1964	192	658	524	Russ, Germ, SA post-WWII, Sargent/ Luth Cath MB	MS	1972	1975	1983
Spr Ht	Douglas	1979/80	218	329	329	Orenburg, CH, E Pr via Spr Hts; Germ/ Para, Boiss.	PP/LM	1980	1980	⁶
Spr Ht/NK	Northdale/Jubi	1972	40	87	87	Springfield Hts, NK, etc	PP	1975	1975	⁶
Stbch M.	Grace Stbch	1961	43	227	227	5 fam StbM, 4 Bergt, 7 EMB, 2 First Menn & others	PP	1967	1963	1965
Mission Efforts	Bethel Menn	1937/37	21	588	588	Kanadier	MS	1947	1946	1947
	Sterling ¹¹	1943/58	16	114	113	8 Bergthaler, 4 Sommerfelder, 2 GC, 2 Chortitzer	PP	1959	1959	1986
	Sargent	1948/50	38	501	461	Post WWII imm. & other GC, few MB & Lutheran	MS/LM	1950	1950	1956
	Grace Brdn	/1954	25	113	64	Whitewater area families & individuals	PP/LM	1961	1961	1962
Daughters of Bethel	Burrows Bth	1961	51	175	137	24 families & 3 individuals from existing congreg.	PP	1962	1962	⁶
	Charleswood	1963	31	198	193	largely transfers from Bethel & Sargent	PP	1963	1964	1965
Mennonite	Hope	1986/88	47	55	55	22 GC, 4MB, 4Somm., 5 Berg, 4MC, 3 UnCh, 5 other	SH	1992	1990	1992
Independnt or mixed	Thompson	1958/63	13	39	39	mixed Mennonite & non-Mennonite backgrounds	PP	1985	1968	1977
	Portage la P	1976/77	26	40	23	GC, MB, EMC & non-Mennonite	SH	1983	1983	1986
	Wpg Chinese	1973/74	15 fm	120	80	Mandarin Chinese from various countries	MS	1979	1979	⁶
	Minnewasta			24	24	GCs, a few Lutherans	PP	1991		
beginnings	River East	1987/89	44	156	145	Menno Colony, Paraguay - new & earlier immigrants	LM	1993	⁶	⁶
	Vietnamese	1981		40	40	Vietnamese immigrants	PP	1996	⁶	⁶
	Good Shepherd	1995		7	7	MCs, Lutherans, GC	SH	1996	⁶	⁶

1. The first date is the approximate date they started meeting for services, Bible study or Sunday School; the second date is the organizational date. 2. Beginning memberships are hard to establish for churches part of a larger Gemeinde. 3. The code for Staff is as follows: MS - Multiple Staff; PP - Paid Pastor (one); LM - Lay Ministry (one or more); SHM - Shared Ministry. 4. Some Gemeinden joined each time the conference reorganized. 5. Withdrew in 1995 and 1994, respectively. 6. Not members. 7. These are 1944 figures. 8. In 1936. 8. Also known as Schönfelder Gemeinde. 9. The mother church, Mather Mennonite, closed in 1981. 11. In 1954-55, they were listed with the Bergthaler churches as St. Vital Mennonite.

Map 4 CMM Congregations



eration of evangelists or missionaries.

The Schönwieser Gemeinde moved between these two patterns. It had a strong central council, brotherhood and treasury. Local ministerial elections were encouraged and visitation from “outside” scheduled as needed or agreed upon. The search for balance between rural and urban needs and costs was peculiar to the Schönwieser Gemeinde.

In all Gemeinden, the smaller preaching stations gradually phased out in the late 1930s or 1940s. Several of the smaller churches, like the Lichtenauer at St. Elizabeth or Elim at Grunthal, functioned like centralized independent congregations while retaining some of the features or practices (for example, the Ältester) of the multi-congregational Whitewater, Blumenorter and Bergthaler Gemeinden.

Bergthaler Gemeinde

Halbstadt Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Formal worship services began in 1892. Local school teachers played a significant role in church and community efforts. Helen Wieler (of Molotschna descent), for example, introduced Sunday school to Halbstadt and also led the congregational singing. In 1937 the Halbstadt group acquired a church building together with the newly organized Rudnerweider group which helped with construction and financial support. The latter used the building for services one Sunday a month. By 1969 its dwindling membership had integrated into the Bergthaler congregation. Diedrich Loeppky was the first minister to be elected in the Halbstadt area in 1906; he served until 1933. He was succeeded by D.D. Klassen 1928–1938. The first hired part-time minister was Bernie Wiebe in 1963. Ray Wahl was the last minister ordained by the Bergthaler Gemeinde in 1972. Under the leadership of Harry Siemens, who came to Halbstadt from Plum Coulee in 1992, the congregation withdrew from CMM in 1996.⁴

Gretna Bergthaler Mennonite Church. H.H. Ewert began services at the Gretna school (MCI) in 1891. Prior to that some Gretna Bergthaler members met at Edenburg. Wilhem S. Buhr, who at various times reported to CMM on behalf of the British and Foreign Bible Society, was ordained by David Schulz in Edenburg in 1929. The first church building was erected in 1958. Manitoba’s first Ladies’ Aid in Gretna celebrated its centennial in 1992. As the only remaining church in Gretna in the 1990s, it was in a unique position to reach out into the community. Rudy Franz, originally from Boissevain, began as pastor of the church in 1989 after schooling at Elim, CMBC, University of

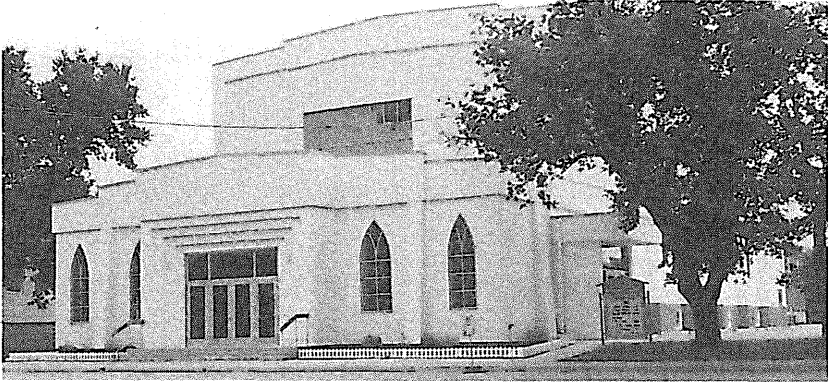


Conference delegates and guests in a small group discussion at the 1991 sessions hosted by the Gretna Bergthaler Church.

Manitoba and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS).

Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church. This congregation, a continuation of part of the Hoffnungsfeld Fuerstenländer group which left the Reinländer Gemeinde in the 1880s, shared a building and Sunday services with the Sommerfelder for some time.⁵ The move to Winkler resulted when a separate building became necessary for Bergthaler people in the Hoffnungsfeld area. The first church building was dedicated in 1895. Ältester Jakob Hoepfner served Winkler 1903–1936. In the 1930s immigrant minister J.J. Siemens led the group for several years. Leadership became somewhat problematic until J.M. Pauls took over in 1951. In the 1990s the Winkler congregation continued full German and English worship services with separate choirs in each language. It attracted newcomers from the town and its surrounding areas. By the end of 1992 its membership together with its four daughter congregations totalled 1,702. Lay ministers complemented its salaried staff which in 1996 was comprised of John Klassen (lead pastor, educated at Winnipeg's universities, CMBC and AMBS), Ben Pauls (assistant), Menno Janzen (associate) and Darlene Derksen (youth).

Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church. The work was begun in Alt Altona in 1885 with the school serving as one of the preaching centres for Chortitzer ministers from the East Reserve. In 1892 the group became Bergthaler under Johann Funk who resided in nearby Alt Bergthal. When a school was built in Altona in 1895 it became a centre for Bergthaler services. However, in keeping with the policy of the time, a church building was not erected in town but at Hochstadt,



Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 1989. Photo: Victor Kliewer

several miles east of Altona, and dedicated in 1898. After the move of the Mennonite Educational Institute to Altona in 1908 services were regularly conducted in that building. The pressure continued and in 1912 Altona Bergthaler (including Alt Altona, Alt Bergthal and Hochstadt, the latter contributing the majority of members) got its own new church building. David Schulz served this congregation as leader 1926–1950 (and the larger Bergthaler Gemeinde until 1964), Henry Gerbrandt 1950–1971, Walter Franz 1979–1991. Other prominent Altona ministers included J.N. Hoepfner, P.P. Kehler and D.F. Friesen. In 1996 the ministerial leadership included pastor Randy Klaassen (trained at Columbia Bible Institute, Okanagan College, CMBC and University of Manitoba), three salaried assistant pastors—Peter Bartel, Darlene Enns Dyck, Ted Enns Dyck—and three retired ministers.

Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Services in Plum Coulee can be traced back to 1897 although some may have been held earlier. For some time attendance was sporadic and around 1913 word was sent out that services would be discontinued unless attendance became more regular. The work continued and in 1925 the Plum Coulee Baptist church building was bought. It was the only Bergthaler church building with a bell. Johann J. Hooze, the earliest lay minister, served 58 years beginning in 1912. Although a member of CMM and CMC, in the 1990s the congregation considered itself rather individualistic and quite independent in spirit. In 1993 Glen Siemens, a Providence Bible College graduate, began as pastor and Henry Neufeld, formerly of Boissevain, as lay minister.



1993 baptismal group at Lowe Farm with pastor Henry Patkau (left) and lay minister Art Hiebert (right). Photo: Henry Patkau

Lowe Farm Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Services were conducted by Bergthaler ministers in the Lowe Farm school in the early 1900s. The group related to the Methodist Church (of Morris) in its work, occasionally heard a German Baptist preacher and in many ways had an ecumenical flavour. The first church building was dedicated in December 1928. Throughout the years a number of Sommerfelder, even though they did not transfer membership, considered the Lowe Farm Bergthaler Mennonite Church to be their church home. Several factors led to the formation of a break-away group named Emmanuel Mission Church in 1954: pressure from the central ministerial (*Lehrdienst*) of the Bergthaler Gemeinde to conform and to enforce a strictly German language program, influence of the non-denominational Winnipeg Bible Institute and discontent strengthened by the Erickson revival. The church steadfastly supported Native Ministries (formerly Mennonite Pioneer Mission) as well as interchurch DVBS and club programs. About eight lay ministers served this congregation for various terms; one of them, Peter P. Heinrichs, for 28 years. Serving as pastors were Peter H. Nickel 1975–1983, Glenn Nickerson 1984–1990 and Henry H. Patkau 1990–1994. Glen Klassen, educated at CMBC, began as pastor in the summer of 1995.

Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Work was begun in 1906 after the Reinländer Gemeinde discontinued services. Relationships with the central Bergthaler Church were not always the best and developments were slow in the struggle to get a building. As early as the 1950s, Rosenfeld was similar to Lowe Farm in wanting more local independence. The church always functioned quite well with lay ministers; many members in the congregation shared assignments and responsibilities. John D. Loeppky served longest in this role from



Commissioning lay minister Herman Kuhl at Rosenfeld, February 17, 1980 (l to r): John Doell, deacon; Ed Enns, CMC representative; Herman Kuhl; John Wiebe, CMM conference minister; Helen Kuhl; Ed Peters, congregational chair; David F. Friesen officiated. Photo: Herman Kuhl

1915–1947, D.L.D. Hildebrandt 1958–1979 and John P. Heinrichs 1944–1956. Herman Kuhl, who studied at the University of Manitoba and CMBC, began to lead the congregation in 1980.

Morden Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Michael Klaassen of the Herold congregation conducted services in Morden from about 1919–1927. Simultaneously, Bergthaler-ordained evangelist C.C. Bergmann, who trained at Moody Bible Institute, was sent to gather the congregation in 1921. He withdrew around 1926. From about 1926–1931 Peter P. Epp served the group jointly with leaders from the Mennonite Brethren, Bergthaler and Herold churches. Although there were seemingly no apparent difficulties in working together, P.P.Epp



Morden Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 1968. Photo: MHCA

and others thought that the group could better be served if it became a Bergthaler entity, which it did in 1931. While P.P. Epp was the official leader until 1935, tension developed and that position was filled by Russian immigrant J.M. Pauls until 1951. Early lay ministers served as follows: J.H. Janzen 1938–1953, W.S. Buhr 1938–1953 and A.H. Born 1954–1967. J.F. Pauls gave leadership 1954–1969, John Friesen 1969–1977, William Block 1979–1985 and Abe Hiebert 1985–1991. Walter Braun (trained at MBBC and Tabor College) and Rick Neufeld (CMBC and University of Manitoba) began serving in 1991 and 1993, respectively.

Carman Mennonite Church. From approximately 1933–1954 the Bergthaler and the Canadian Home Mission Committee were in intense dialogue regarding starting a new church in Carman. Meetings were held sporadically in homes. In 1945 Benjamin Ewert visited the group which reportedly was comprised of people from ten different backgrounds. Henry Funk, employee of the Home Mission Committee, gave leadership 1948–1954. Carman officially became a Bergthaler congregation in 1954 but tension with the central Bergthaler leadership continued virtually until Carman became independent. Dedication of a new church building in May 1982 was a highlight for the approximately 140 members. From 1990 to 1996 six men pastored the congregation beginning with John Krahn 1983–1991 and ending with Marvin Friesen, trained at CMBC and AMBS, 1993–1996.

Grunthal Bergthaler Mennonite Church. When the Chortitzer from East Reserve villages left for Mexico, West Reserve Bergthaler who needed land moved in and began to meet occasionally. A congregation began to form when minister William P. Heinrichs from Lowe Farm moved there in 1936. David D. Klassen moved from Rosenfeld to Spencer-Grunthal in 1939, the year the group got its first



Singing at the delegate sessions in the Grunthal Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 1995.

building, and assisted with the work. A building erected in the town of Grunthal in 1970 received a new addition to the sanctuary in 1983. Ministers Cornelius H. Friesen and Peter A. Dyck served 1950–1970 and 1956–1974, respectively. John B. Wiebe, graduate of MBBC and Providence Theological Seminary, began as leader in 1974.

Homewood Mennonite Church. This group dates the beginning of its work to 1938 after the D.D. Klassen family moved to the area and regular services were begun. However, there had been Mennonites in the area since the 1920s with some of them attending services in Winkler or occasionally meeting in homes. Homewood acquired its first building in 1941 and officially joined the Bergthaler Gemeinde in 1942. D.D. Klassen, farmer and self-educated theologian from Halbstadt, ministered in this congregation for 47 years until 1985. Homewood's pastor in 1996 was Martin Sawatzky, who trained in seminaries in Montevideo, Uruguay and New York and had pastoral experience in Argentina and Ontario before coming to Manitoba.

Gladstone Mennonite Church. This church was an effort by the community and Canadian Home Mission Committee to meet the needs of mostly Sommerfelder settlers who came to the area from the Saskatchewan dust bowl regions during the 1930s Depression. Its beginning was connected to the building of a church in 1947. Gladstone experienced a number of upheavals and not always did all of its members consider the congregation to be Bergthaler. Its ministers—Jacob J. Loewen, Abram C. Funk, Cornelius C. Martens, Randy Fehr, Jacob Friesen and Darrel Teichrib—were elected from within the congregation. Friesen served 36 years from 1955–1991. The congregation withdrew from CMM in 1994.

MacGregor Bergthaler Mennonite Church. From the 1930s to 1950 ministers from the Sommerfelder, Rudnerweider, Bergthaler and Kleine Gemeinde served Saskatchewan and southern Manitoba settlers there as one group. Soon, however, separate congregations, including a Bergthaler group, developed. MacGregor's relationship to the Bergthaler Gemeinde was rather nebulous. Throughout its history the church was blessed with active and dedicated youth groups. Jacob J. Loewen served there, at Gladstone and at Arden for many years. The congregation's latest pastors, Glenn Loewen 1985–1990 and Glenn Nickerson 1991–1994, both studied at Briercrest. While the search for a new minister continued, Victor Funk did much of the pastoral work with the church council taking responsibility for some aspects.

Graysville Mennonite Church. Abe Dahl, who together with

approximately 12 other families settled at Graysville in 1925, organized the first formal worship services in the Orr United Church building. Mennonites met in the morning, the United Church congregation in the afternoon. The Mennonite immigrant group, with a Schönwieser majority, joined the Schönwieser Gemeinde in 1927. After some families moved away and half of the remainder (Schönwieser, Rudnerweider, Sommerfelder, Mennonite Brethren, Bergthaler) were Bergthaler, the group decided to join the Bergthaler Gemeinde in 1953 and to purchase the Orr building with Bergthaler Gemeinde help. Graysville's first minister, Jacob J. Martens, who was ordained by J.P. Klassen in 1929, moved to Winnipegosis in 1930. The next minister to be elected was Franz Letkemann in 1945 who served the congregation faithfully until 1960. Lay ministers Abram H. Born and Johann H. Janzen, as well as pastors Frank Letkemann, Edward Funk and Gerald Neufeld, ministered for shorter terms. Neil Funk, an MBBC graduate, led the congregation since 1987.

Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. This was the sixth GC Mennonite congregation to form in the city but the first and only one to be planned directly by one of the rural Gemeinden. Even though Bethel Mennonite and later St. Vital-Sterling gathered Bergthaler and other Kanadier, that did not seem to meet Bergthaler needs in the city. After initial exploratory work, about 60 Bergthaler people of Winnipeg



A group from Home Street serves at Banrock Point, 1965. Photo: D. Stoesz, Story of Home Street Mennonite Church

met with the Bergthaler Gemeinde ministerial for the first time in July 1957. The group first rented the former Mennonite Brethren church on Edison, then purchased church buildings on Simcoe and St. Matthew 1958–1962, Sherbrook and Ross 1962–1973 and Home Street since 1973. Ernest Wiebe gave significant leadership to the congregation beginning as leading minister at the end of 1957, as part-time salaried minister in 1961, and as Ältester 1962–1966. Following him as pastors were Clarence Epp 1967–1972, David Wiebe 1972–1977, John R. Friesen 1978–1983 and Robert Pauls who studied at CMBC and University of Winnipeg since 1984. In 1995 a group, accompanied by minister Trevor Hutchins, left Home Street, for theological and other reasons, to form the Good News Mennonite Church.

Several other groups with Bergthaler members among them were part of CMM in 1972. Groups in Kane, Arden and Steinbach either dissolved or changed affiliation within the 1957–1972 era.

Kane Bergthaler Mennonite Church. From 1952–1973 the congregation met in the historic church building erected in Edenburg in 1902 and moved to Kane in 1952. Prior to that the group worshipped in a Morden church building moved to Kane in 1948 (later to Lowe Farm) and in a local school house. Isaac Krahn, minister from Winkler, led the congregation from approximately 1951–1962, and Ed Groening as a lay leader for a number of years. The congregation held its last Sunday service, combined with the baptism of six young people, on April 29, 1973. Kane's members transferred to Lowe Farm Bergthaler, to the Free Church and the Rosefarm EMMC church.

Arden Bergthaler Mennonite Church. In 1932 four Mennonite families settled at Arden followed by others coming from various districts in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. For a time the Home Mission Committee was involved, numerous elders and ministers from different Gemeinden served there, and the leadership changed frequently. In 1946 eleven persons were baptized by Ältester David Schulz after which the group claimed Bergthaler affiliation. In 1964 the membership count was eight Bergthaler, four EMMC, six Sommerfelder and four CMC from Saskatchewan. Several leaders, including those of the local EMC congregation, worked diligently to keep the congregation together and the church open. The Arden doors closed in late 1967 or early 1968 and people went their own ways.

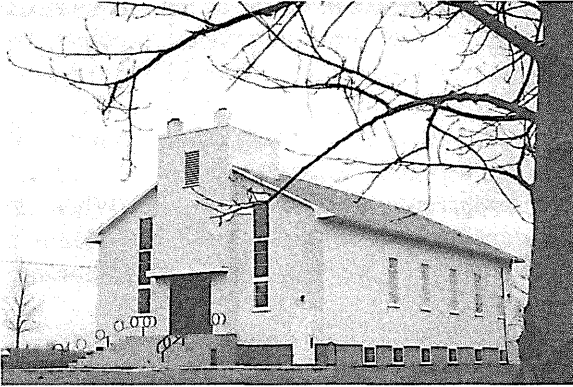
Steinbach Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Like Grunthal, Steinbach attracted people from the West Reserve but they were not a homogeneous core group. Repeatedly they discussed the question of

becoming part of the Bergthaler Gemeinde. Some of the members did not like the idea of being part of the conferences to which the Bergthaler belonged, feeling that it would be too costly. Nevertheless, an independent group formed and eventually became part of the larger Bergthaler structure and conference work. Among others, Wilhelm P. Heinrichs, Peter J. Loewen, David D. Klassen, Abe W. Hiebert and Otto Hamm served the congregation at various times. When the congregation became independent it withdrew from the Manitoba Conference and changed its name to Steinbach Christian Fellowship.

Whitewater Gemeinde

Whitewater Mennonite Church, Boissevain. Thirty men at the organizational brotherhood meeting represented 22 founding families. The first constitution was based on that of the Schönwieser Gemeinde in Winnipeg. Ältester J.P. Klassen led the group at its first Thanksgiving service in 1925. Ältester Franz F. Enns served at the first baptismal service in 1926. When Enns moved to Lena that fall he also became Ältester of Whitewater Gemeinde. The group grew and was so spread out that morning services were held in two places. In 1939 these two units joined to build a church at Whitewater. The congregation located to Boissevain in 1960. In the course of 45 years, three Ältesten served the Whitewater Gemeinde and led the local congregation: Franz F. Enns 1926–1938, G.G. Neufeld 1933–1967 and Jacob P. Harms 1957–1971. The latter two were farmers. Of the more than a dozen and a half lay ministers and pastors who served the congregation, a number became leaders on CMM committees, institutions and elsewhere. Examples include Peter Peters on the Finance Committee; Ed Cornelson, teacher at Elim; Jake Neufeld and Wanda, Koinonia camp managers; Peter P. Harms, conference evangelist and leader of the independent Killarney Mennonite Church. Three members became moderators of the Manitoba Conference: G.G. Neufeld 1947–1952, 1958–1960; Jacob P. Harms 1966–1969; Werner Neufeld 1975–1978. The latest pastors, Valery Izbicki 1987–1990 and Jake Neufeld 1990–1995, were followed by Al Rempel who studied at Winnipeg Bible College and various universities.

Crystal City Mennonite Church. Twelve 1920s immigrant families arrived in the fall of 1924, six moved elsewhere the following year and the remainder began to meet for fellowship in private homes. The group grew to 20 families by 1930 with additions also coming from Sommerfelder and other Kanadier groups which moved into the area. Lay member Peter Hildebrand donated an acre of land for a church



Crystal City Mennonite Church, 1963.
Photo: MHCA

building in spring 1948. In a decade this new building, dedicated in May 1949, was no longer adequate. In 1958 the congregation divided into the Mather group and the Crystal City group with a church building in each location. Crystal City's local leadership included lay ministers Heinrich H. Janzen 1928–1929, Gerhard Bock 1940–1958, Peter G. Harms 1954–1966, Abram Reimer 1954–1989 and Allen Harms beginning in 1991. Abe Buhler 1981–1983, the first salaried pastor, was followed by Gary Giesbrecht 1984–1988 and George Derksen, who studied at Briercrest, 1989–1994.

Mather Mennonite Church. Thirty families, including minister Gerhard H. Bock, transferred from Crystal City in 1958 to form the Mather Mennonite Church. Although the discussions and negotiations leading to the 1958 separation were not harmonious, efforts were made to heal the breach. Serving the Mather congregation were Gerhard H. Bock 1958–1973, Johann H. Warkentin 1959–1966 and Alvin Peters 1966–1972. Two issues caused much friction in the Mather setting: changing structures that came with the move away from the Ältesten and Gemeinde system to a hired pastor and the new constitution that gave women voting rights which they had not had until 1971. Sharing a pastor with the Mather-Cartwright United churches and working together with them in areas of mutual concern were seen by some as progressive and acceptable, to others again it threatened their concept of what was Mennonite tradition and practise. Peter Buhler, pastor 1973–1976, resigned and the church divided. Norman Friesen served the Mather congregation until it dissolved in approximately 1980.

Trinity Mennonite Fellowship. This group formed in 1976 out of the split from Mather Mennonite Church. The congregation drew its membership from the local communities of Mather, Clearwater and



J.M. Pauls (1903–1961)



Anne Penner (1916–)

Institutions and organizations

Much thinking and work went on in other areas during the 1947–1956 era. Some of it resulted in institutions and organizations whose stories were part of the Manitoba Conference story but also stories in themselves and those of other Mennonite conferences. To these belonged the idea of an advanced Bible school which the Schönwieser, among others, particularly promoted. This became reality in fall 1947 when the Canadian Conference opened Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) in Winnipeg in Bethel Mennonite Mission's basement on the corner of Furby Street and Westminster Avenue. Because of inadequate facilities to accommodate the rapid growth, CMBC moved from Furby to 515 Wellington Crescent in 1949, and from there to its permanent location at 600 Shaftesbury Boulevard in 1956. Many Manitobans were involved in this institution as board and faculty members, support and maintenance staff and as students. Board member Wilhelm Enns, for example, was said to be among those "who gave blood, sweat, and tears into the founding of this institution."¹⁷ For students before and after him, Bergthaler leader Ernest Wiebe, who studied at CMBC at age 40, testified: "CMBC is good for me. CMBC is not liberal nor conservative, but tries to give an honest biblical position, relevant to our world today."¹⁸

The idea of a home for the aged, which resulted in the Winkler Salem Home dedicated in 1955, was first raised at the Manitoba Conference in 1950 with J.M. Pauls giving significant leadership in its founding. Manitoba Conference Salem board members in 1951 included Is. Loewen, D.P. Peters (33 years and chair for some of these), J.C. Friesen, W. Loewen, J. Wiens, J.B. Braun, D. Fast and J. Dyck. Besides the CMM, the EMMC, Old Colony Church and Mennonite Brethren participated on the board.¹⁹

W. Enns raised the question of a mental institution for Mennonites at the 1955 Manitoba Conference in Winkler. Eden Mental Health Centre opened in 1967, J.M. Pauls again giving initial leadership. Others who represented CMM on the board early on were J.K. Klassen, A.G. Neufeld, P.W. Enns, Gerhard Rempel, Ben Braun, Gerhard Lohrenz, Cornie Thiessen and Jac. I. Warkentin.

Churches became heavily involved in the two Mennonite relief organizations, Mennonite Central Relief Committee and Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee. The former had its clothing depots in Winkler and Winnipeg, the latter in Altona and Steinbach. Blumenorter G.G.H. Ens and Bergthaler Ted Friesen, representing CMM on MCRC and CMRC, respectively, reported annually until MCC Manitoba absorbed both organizations in 1964.

CHAPTER 7

TRANSITIONS AND TURNING POINTS

1957–1972

If the younger generation could . . .
If the older generation would . . .
If both just tried . . . —Ernest Wiebe¹

The 1958 Manitoba Conference sessions in Arnaud focused on Revelation 3:11b: “hold fast what you have.” For chairman G.G. Neufeld and others, what needed to be held fast were the leadership pattern of Ältesten and lay ministers and the German *Muttersprache* (mother tongue). These were seen to be intrinsically necessary to keep out alien ideas or forces and to keep Gemeinden intact for work of the kingdom.

In Russia, the colony, the village, the community organization and the schools had served as protective boundaries for the Mennonite way of life. In Manitoba, urbanization, higher education, new occupations, the electronic media, as well as increasing affluence eroded the borders between the church and the world. Former ideas of separation no longer worked. Transitions in language, leadership, relationships to non-Mennonite Christians and to the outside world, all affected the Conference. Nor could the church escape the influence of encroaching secularism and individualism and the tendency to resist authority.² The 1960s challenged all kinds of authority and structures on the national scene, on university campuses and in society at large. North America witnessed the Beatles, hippies, flower children and the civil rights movement. Canada established its own flag in 1966 while the African independence movement broke up the European colonial empires.

Among students at Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, including returned missionaries, pulpit leadership became controversial. Students challenged things hierarchical and explored group dynamics and cell movements. Structure, tradition and the status quo were not only disputed at places like the seminary; the “rebel” spirit was everywhere. The growing independence of congregations, withholding of funds and breakdown of church discipline reached unprecedented proportions in this 1957–1972 decade and a half. All interrelated, these factors shaped the transitions and programs of this era within the Conference.

Language transition—from German to English

Somehow it was thought that by teaching and learning the German language it should be possible to keep linguistically and ethnically separated from the world. Not preserving the language

meant to forfeit one's roots and to cut oneself off from the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual treasures of a people. . . . Loss of the language would mean a substantial loss of the Christian spirit and of the Mennonite faith.³

While some argued that this type of loss need not occur, in actuality the increasing use of English opened the doors to influences, schools, organizations, literature of the world and the theology of other Christian orientations.

As early as 1929 the ministers' conference emphasized that next to the nurture of religious life, the cultivation of the German language among children and youth would be of singular significance. In ensuing years, as circumstances allowed, organized and concerted efforts to maintain German were undertaken in many homes, through church and conference programs, in private schools, and through after-hour religious and German instruction in public schools or half-day Saturday schools. Sensing that all of this was still not enough, G.H. Peters organized the *Verein zur Erhaltung der deutschen Sprache* (Association for Maintenance of the German Language). The Association concerned itself particularly with the preservation of German and religion in public schools. Because the language was considered important for the faith and with several members on the board, the CMM heard the Association's reports annually for a number of years and gave moral and financial support.

That English increasingly was becoming the first language for Canadian-born and Canadian-educated generations was evident in homes, Sunday schools, young people's activities and congregational life. Of the 1990s CMM congregations, 12 never used the German language and most of the others made the transition to English in the 1960s. Several continued bilingual. Probably the most difficult change for the older generation to accept was the incorporation of English into the Sunday morning worship service. To have the choir sing an occasional English anthem was one thing. But to have an opening meditation or sermon or the Bible reading in English felt threatening. Inter-marriage with non-German-speaking partners hastened the process.

In spite of the passionate counsel to “hold fast,” the Conference could not help but go along with the movement in congregations. The 1963 minutes of the CMM sessions were the last ones completely written in German. By 1969 they were entirely in English. Reporting and discussions followed a similar pattern. The language change liberated those who did not have command of the German or who suspected leadership of resisting the use of English in order to hold on to power. Those who were not comfortable in their use of English were now unable to participate fully in conferences.

Leadership transition

It seems from the Conference leadership complexion of the 1947–1956 decade that the CMM, albeit through the election process, had come to be dominated by a small group of influential Ältesten and ministers. For a generation of church members, including a number of well-educated leaders who “accepted the democratic ideal as a godly ideal,” this concentration of authority in the hands of a few leaders caused some concern.⁴

Most Ältesten (see Appendix 3), men like J.P. Bueckert, G.G. Neufeld, Wilhelm Enns and J.H. Enns, were persons of charisma, credibility and authority, said George Groening, a former Manitoban and himself an Ältester. He continued,



Rural and urban leaders with spouses visit in Boissevain (l to r): G.G. Neufeld, Helena Neufeld, Anna Lohrenz, Gerhard Lohrenz. Photo: G.G. Neufeld family

Often they were good men, wise, the best and most capable. . . . They were respected and men of stature with more strengths than weakness. . . . The only sad thing was that they were unprepared to change and had no intention of doing so though change was already happening.

These men lived for the church and the source of their livelihood made no difference.⁵

Over time the Ältester, through his presence and administration of baptism, communion and ordination as well as by presiding over the ministerial and brotherhood meetings, had acquired an aura of authority that commanded respect and trust on the one hand and gave rise to dissatisfaction on the other. At meetings his was not mainly a moderator's role. Rather, his allowed privilege was to set the agenda and to influence the direction of discussions and decisions. Of one it was said that he simply neglected to act upon those decisions with which he disagreed. This quality of authority, partly conferred, partly assumed, gave the Ältester a power, often a veto power, which was difficult to challenge yet sometimes hard to accept.

In solidarity, several Ältesten sometimes met together as an ad hoc council (Ältestenrat) to discuss common issues. This happened in 1957 when the teaching position of David Janzen at CMBC was put in question because of distrust of his theology. The April 8 Ältestenforum of G.G. Neufeld, Paul Schaefer, W.H. Enns, J.M. Pauls and J.J. Toews (with D. Schulz being polled by telephone) expressed, through its resolution to the College Board's enlarged executive meeting the next day, that Janzen should not be hired for the next school year.⁶

A December 1958 meeting, which was expanded to include leading ministers, addressed Schaefer's presentation regarding the relationship to the GC congregations in the United States. All were convinced that the CMC should not merely be a district conference of the North American General Conference. "We want to be independent" was the emphatic conclusion. But what would be needed to remain independent? David Schulz, I.I. Friesen, G. Groening, Wm. Enns and J.M. Pauls, elected to bring practical suggestions to the 1959 CMM sessions, recommended the maintenance of the lay minister system with the support of the Ältestensystem "as the Scriptures teach it." However, the recommendations also said that city or mission congregations, which due to circumstances preferred the pastoral system, could accept it. Conference schools should strive to train workers who understood and appreciated the Mennonite heritage.

The ferment was Canada wide. The alleged authoritarianism of the Ältestensystem came under severest attack at the 1962 CMC ministers'



Another generation of leaders at a CMM marriage counselling workshop clockwise (from left front): Clarence Epp, Henry H. Epp, Frank J. Dyck, Peter G. Sawatzky, Howard Clinebell (guest resource), Ernest Wiebe.

and deacons' conference in St. Catharines, Ontario. H.T. Klaassen of Eigenheim, Saskatchewan, presented a paper on "the problem of the ordination and function of the Ältesten office in our conference." The paper identified the Scriptural background and possible divergent interpretations, the role of tradition in one's understanding, and the difference of a developed hierarchical power structure versus the early believers' church model where the relationship among members distinguished itself only according to function, not office. The discussion emboldened some present to challenge the control of domineering Ältesten rather ruthlessly. Reflecting on the occasion Frank Isaac confessed:

We did wrong in the way we attacked the Ältesten. . . . I have repented of that many times. . . . The time had come for change but we should have said things differently, should have done things in a loving way.

A CMC-appointed study commission, in which almost half of the participants were Manitoba Ältesten or ministers, met twice in Winnipeg in 1963 to address the tension that had been aired at St. Catharines. Representing Manitoba were J.F. Pauls, J.H. Enns, G. Lohrenz, P.J. Schaefer at both sessions and P.R. Harder, G.G. Neufeld and G. Groening at one session each. The commission's recommendations, as in 1958, emphasized holding fast the tradition and did not address the concerns that needed to be resolved to make this tradition a viable option for the future.

In the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition Ältesten and leading ministers did not receive a salary. Salaried clergy were part of state church polity, a system vulnerable to corruption. For Anabaptist Mennonites, not being paid meant that they were more independent than any hired person could be. They received small honoraria, some goods in kind, and reimbursement for transportation and other church- and conference-related expenses. In the Whitewater Gemeinde by 1971 the honorarium had gradually increased over the years to \$2,000 a year for each, the retired and the acting Ältester. This was still far from a living wage, but groups were reluctant to support a non-resident Ältester, especially when they did not pay their local lay ministers. There were exceptions. J.P. Klassen in Winnipeg received \$600 annually from his Gemeinde in 1930 and \$50 monthly from the Home Mission Boards. In 1933 his Gemeinde increased the salary to \$720 but that from the Mission Board was reduced to \$23. Of the Gemeinde salary 40 percent was contributed by the Winnipeg group, 60 percent expected from the rural groups.⁷ David Schulz was said to have received a teacher's salary annually from his Gemeinde.

P.J. Schaefer saw the issue as a choice between the Canadian lay minister system and the professional pastor system common in the United States. At the 1958 CMM sessions he said,

Many of our educated young people do not understand the needs and interests of our Gemeinden any more. They believe that the development of our Gemeinden has to be shaped like that of the U.S. congregations. . . . They say that, in a time where . . . so many church members have acquired a higher education, we must of necessity also have better educated ministers.

True, argued Schaefer, but education is not everything, and "not every seminary graduate can offer satisfactory spiritual nourishment to a congregation just as not every university or normal school trained teacher is a proficient teacher." The 1961 CMC ministers' conference noted that educated ministers often had not won the trust of congregations and that the integration of secular and religious knowledge was lacking. It suggested working toward a combination of the lay minister system and the professional pastor system.

The limited religious education in Manitoba public schools did not prepare one for a preaching ministry as the Russian Mennonite *Zentralschule* had. Centralization virtually eliminated the teaching of religion in larger consolidated schools. At the same time needs in the congregations seemed to become more complex and the volume of

work to be done too much for farmer-teacher-ministers or Ältesten on an honorarium. Few men were willing to make the kind of commitment needed to meet the expectations and demands placed upon Ältesten and lay ministers. Some farmer-ministers were able to delegate farm responsibilities to their sons in winter and thus to a greater extent prepare for and meet the congregational responsibilities. For ministers in other professions this was impossible. For a number of years Paul J. Schaefer tried to do justice to both jobs before giving up his beloved teaching profession to accept a salaried ministerial position in order to meet the needs of his congregation. For 400 years unsalaried leaders kept the Anabaptist faith, observed Schaefer at one point. Will the salaried people keep it 50 years, he asked? In the 1960s few Manitoba congregations were ready to consider salaried pastors.

In the Whitewater and Bergthaler Gemeinden, phasing out the Ältestensystem resulted in decentralization of the once vital multi-congregational Gemeinde structures. This process was officially completed in 1971 and 1972, respectively. For the Blumenort it meant consolidation in 1969. The Schönwieser were left as a single urban congregation in 1974 when Oak Lake officially went on its own.

With the fast diminishing role of the Ältester, the official functions of baptizing, serving communion and ordaining were assigned to the leading ministers of the now fully independent congregations. In some places leading ministers were ordained a second time to equip them for that task; in others the mandate and authority were conferred by the congregation without a second ordination. These changes meant that the Ältester was not necessarily the leader of even his local congregation any longer. At most, in many instances he led the ministerial, and another person, frequently a layman, became chairman of the business meeting. By 1966 fifty congregations had congregational chairpersons in place. Many of the Ältesten, notably younger men like Jake Harms, Ernest Wiebe and J.F. Pauls, accepted what they saw as inevitable changes and were in agreement with the movement. Others, especially older men like David Schulz, Wilhelm Enns and G.G. Neufeld, who had given a life of conviction and dedication to their calling, found the disintegration process of the traditional Gemeinden and systems deeply painful.

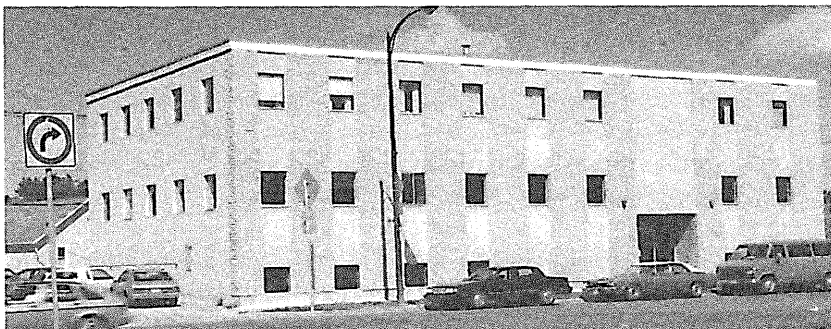
"One has to know when to stay at home and let others step into leadership," one Canadian Ältester wisely remarked. Some knew and some did not know when to do this. A few could not retire even if they would have wanted. There was no ministers' nor any other pension. In pondering this transition, George Groening concluded, "One of the

saddest things was to see leaders pass off the scene heartbroken.”

G.G. Neufeld and Paul J. Schaefer warned the CMM and its congregations that there would be losses. And losses there were, the realization of which was as gradual and as ongoing as the transition itself. Formerly, what the Ältester said carried. The earlier strong sense of his being the voice of God in and through the church did not transfer with the changes. “The congregation expected God to use the person whom they chose because they believed that God led them to that choice” and through ordination they had “granted that person the authority to be their leader for life.”⁸ A void was created when that position was eliminated. Nobody’s voice, not the leading minister’s nor even a pastor’s, had that authority. Employing a pastor from the outside and placing on him the sole responsibility for spiritual nurture did not allow for the respect and intimate relationships that earlier had been built up during a lifetime. The continuity provided by the Ältester became impossible to establish for pastors who served only one or two terms. “To this day,” says Frank Isaac, “we don’t have real leaders who are willing to stick out their necks and say where they stand; we have drifted leaderless.”

Structural transitions

The CMM continued to elect only Ältesten as its moderators until in 1969 the young leading minister of North Kildonan, Abram E. Rempel, was nominated from the floor and elected. From a 1936 Manitoba Conference executive of six persons, each elected for a three-year term, in 1959 the CMM moved to electing its executive officers annually, limiting the re-election of the same officers to two



The CMM offices were located in the MCC building at 1483 Pembina Highway, Winnipeg, from 1969 to 1989. Photo: Victor Kliewer

consecutive years. A further provision stipulated that no person could be elected to more than one of the standing committees. This protected against a possible power bloc and allowed for more persons to become involved. For example, in 1947–1956 (see Table 6) 15 persons comprised the main committees. Of these, eight were Ältesten (53 percent), six ministers (40 percent) and one a layman (7 percent). In a similar ten-year span (1959–1968) involvement on these particular committees more than tripled. Whether continuity of vision and its implementation were sacrificed in the process was more difficult to assess. The arrangement remained unchanged in the revised 1970 constitution.

Women

Integration of laity, and specifically of women, accompanied the transitions in leadership, language and congregational independence. According to the Crystal City story “the position or place of women in the . . . Church is as emotional as the language issue was.”⁹ The move of men and women sitting together in pews in some of the churches was symbolic of changes to come. No longer were there necessarily only two sections in the church building, the left pews for women, the right for men. Often now there was also a middle section where it was acceptable for men and women or families to sit together.

In schools women were equal with their male counterparts in the education they received, in challenges heard and in participation in school committees and functions. Like men, women Bible school or high school students looked for opportunities to serve in Daily Vacation Bible Schools and other contexts. “Our Louise even preaches,” stated former Gnadenthaler 92-year-old Margaretha Peters matter-of-factly when asked whether all this involvement of women in careers and church leadership wasn’t going too far. “For that we blame Schaefer,” both she and her husband Dietrich agreed. “He came during seeding time, when Dietrich was working on the drill, to woo our children for the MCI.” Margaretha and Dietrich were convinced: education did it for their girls. Education did it for many other women as well. Coupled with the 1960s feminist movement and the use of birth control, education opened up limitless possibilities beyond the family hearth and the sewing circle.¹⁰

In some groups women theoretically always had the freedom to be part of the congregational meetings and to vote. Practically, that freedom was exercised very gradually. Most older CMM congregations granted franchise to women in the 1957–1972 era with the last

decision to do so recorded in 1988. Still others have no record of “exactly when [women] were given or took the right to speak and vote at meetings.”¹¹ In congregations founded after 1957 women’s suffrage was never an issue. For some congregations the women’s vote was a genuine problem. When a motion to give women the right to vote in the Morden Bergthaler congregation failed to receive the required two-thirds majority, Marie Funk from Steinbach responded as follows:

The fact that these meetings are still termed “brotherhoods” implies that women, though they are members of the church, are not welcome at the meetings.

Some of our women are quite content with this decision for they are probably not willing to take the responsibility of voting on important matters or taking part in discussions on important church questions. However, . . . I am inclined to believe that the vast majority feel that we are shirking our responsibility toward the spiritual welfare of our families by not expressing our opinions in the form of a vote. . . .

When it comes to teaching Sunday School or Vacation Bible School, our dedicated, Christian women are right there—capably giving of their ambition, time and talent in helping to mould the spiritual character of our small children and our young people. . . .

The Lord seems to have endowed our church women with a special quality of love, patience and dedication. Surely he has also given them the attribute of spiritual intelligence and wisdom needed in the consideration of church policy.

Perhaps each local congregation has been called upon to set the right example by giving their women the right to vote in their own local membership meetings. Thus, perhaps, we, as women, will eventually be allowed to work more effectively in our churches.¹²

Even though Marie Funk thought she was speaking for the majority of women, this was not always clear. Home Street’s constitution allowed women to be represented on the church council. The intention was to integrate them, to give them opportunity to speak there, to give counsel and to receive counsel. Lawrence Klippenstein, one of Home Street’s leaders, had the impression that

the Women’s Auxiliary developed as a parallel independent organization. They felt quite happy running this thing by themselves. There were those hung up on not receiving counsel. The first to be appointed to Council refused to attend. Had the question been asked, did they want to be integrated?

There were other ambiguities. Allowing women to vote was one

thing. Allowing them significant responsibilities did not necessarily follow. At Altona Berghaler, for instance, David F. Friesen recommended to the annual meeting in 1967

that two women be installed as deacons for three-year terms. The motion passed by a narrow margin of fifty-eight to forty-six on the first day of the meeting, but it caused such concern that it was rescinded on the second day.¹³

Other honest attempts were made to extend equality beyond voting privileges. Women could not always respond easily. Olga (Dalke) Dyck of Carman shared her struggle with Ernest Wiebe in this way:

I was a reluctant female delegate to the Financial Brotherhood Meeting held February 26, 1968 at Winkler. I was unaware of what was involved when I was nominated a delegate for this meeting. When my senses came to me after that first shock, I could think of every possible reason why I couldn't go to that meeting and no sound reason why I should go. Then Saturday when my head ached from frustration and pressure I phoned Rev. Isaak and told him that it was too much. He asked me to think it over and then my husband came home and told me I was going, that I couldn't let the church down.

Thus I agreed, with hesitation, to go.

Now I praise God for his abundant blessings he showered on me. First He sent a lady with me to that meeting so I wasn't the only lady there; then after the qualms of curious looks from the men, that didn't expect to see women at the meeting, and your cordial welcome that made the rest aware of our presence, after all that, God gave me peace of mind such as I would never have believed possible. Soon I was only partially aware of the *men* and became absorbed in the business at hand. I marvelled at the talent God had given you as chairman making it possible to smile in spite of difference of opinion. The high calibre of deliberations also were a real inspiration. The message as well as the reports made me think that many more of us should have been there so we could encourage our husband intelligently in doing the work of the Lord.

Summing it up I felt that I had been a busy Martha instead of an attentive Mary sitting at Jesus' feet and listening and then responding as I am sure Mary must have done.¹⁴

Were such struggles really worth it? The traditional way seemed to be more effortless and some would insist more biblical. The following observation was made at the Crystal City church's 40th anniversary in July 1988:



The Homewood women serve coffee and pastry, 1972.



Bergthaler men enjoy the service. Photos: Bergthaler Gemeindeblatt

Maybe the best way to understand the relationship between men and women and the position of women in the C.C. Mennonite Church is to say that there was men's work and there was women's work. There was a lilt, a sense of acceptance and satisfaction to it when the women said, "My husband is out in the field, or at a meeting, or in the coffee shop," or the men said, "My wife is in the kitchen, in the garden, at 'Naverin' or at the M.C.C. zeich store in Winkler." It meant that this was the way the work got done, another unique way of understanding the original plan—a plan that was divinely ordained and supported by an ideological model based on Judaic-Christian values.¹⁵

Changes at the Conference level were few but significant. The Women's Mission Conference was included as subsidiary organization in the 1959, 1961 and 1963 versions of the CMM constitution. Like the Youth Organization, they were allowed their own constitution but it was to be in harmony with the constitution and activities of the Conference. A second change was that the annual minutes recorded various recognitions accorded to women. In 1958, for example, acknowledgment was given to Mrs. Teichroeb, chief cook at AMMC. Thirdly, toward the end of the era women's names began to appear on committees.¹⁶ It was the beginning of a new era for women. Still, after the so-called 25th anniversary celebration of CMM in 1971, Maria Siemens, founder of the Manitoba Ladies' Conference, said "she was hurt to tears that the ladies' involvement in a 25-year history had been programmed down to a 5-minute talk in a panel discussion."¹⁷

The Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization (MMYO)

The Manitoba Jugendorganization had been founded as an independent organization in 1942 when CMM was in limbo. When the latter regrouped five years later, the two operated as parallel organizations until the 1959 constitution placed the MJO under the Education Com-



Maria Siemens and Susan Klassen at the 1971 CMM celebration. Photo: Betty Wiebe

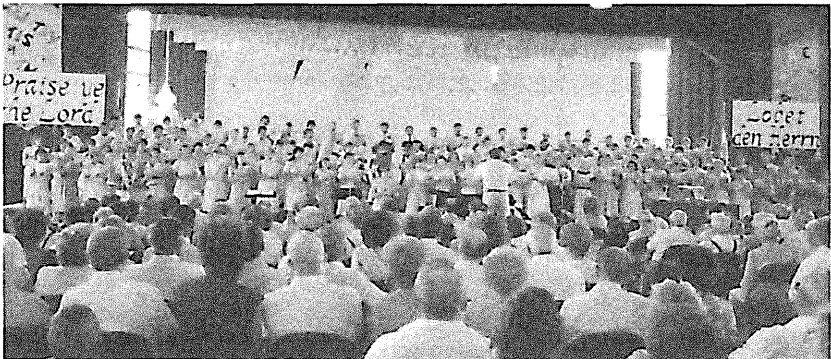
mittee of the Conference. The name change from the German MJO to the English MMYO came in 1961–1962. Sunday schools, DVBS and youth work as well as the emerging radio and camp programs were gradually turned over to CMM. By 1957, with the transfer of DVBS and camp work, the MJO was left to concentrate solely on activating and nurturing youth. Even that work changed rapidly. The traditional Jugendverein was largely replaced by the new three-pronged young people's program promoted by the General Conference which alternated evenings devoted to faith and life, service and fellowship.

Retreats. When the MJO phased out of preparing Jugendverein materials for use in local settings in 1957, it turned its attention to organizing centralized youth rallies. As an annual weekend event, planned either regionally or as a province-wide meeting, large numbers turned out for nurture and inspiration through featured speakers, films, singing and fellowship. Themes like personal witness-

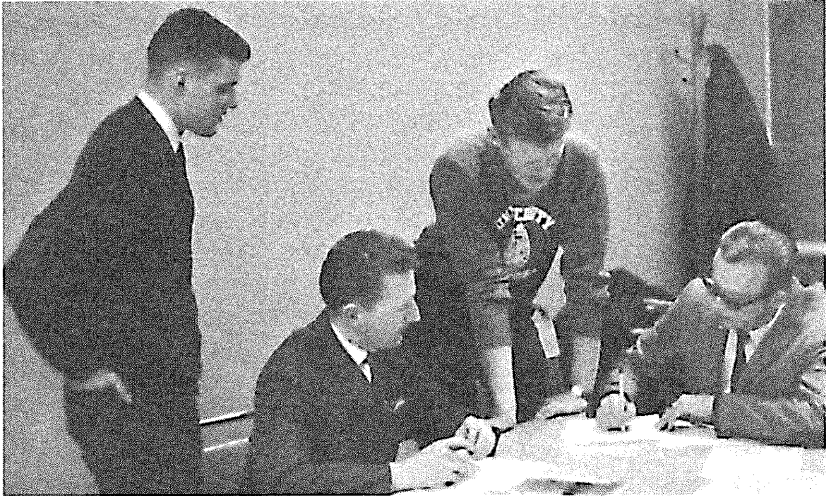
ing in 1960 and discipleship in 1961 gave focus to the rally. Gradually these rallies gave way to weekend youth retreats which were conducted at the same time. The focus and content of the two were quite similar, but the camp setting of the retreats added a strong attraction. For example, the 1961 retreat, which featured missionary nurse Tina Fehr from Mexico, peace promoter Hedy Sawadsky from Ontario and local minister Bernie Loeppky, had 48 pre-registered participants but 100 youth showing up the first night. That kind of response encouraged the MJO to urge CMM to approve and support a second campsite in 1963.

Music. A valiant attempt was made to promote choir festivals (*Sängerfeste*) to upgrade congregational and choral singing. Beginning in 1960 special conductors were appointed for short stints of rehearsing local and mass choirs and holding workshops for conductors.¹⁸ By 1964 this resulted in nine choir festivals held across the province during the summer under the leadership of George Wiebe and Henry Engbrecht. However, this success was short lived. After 1966 choirfests continued only at local or regional initiative.

Workshops for choir conductors continued to make a valuable contribution.¹⁹ While First Mennonite in Winnipeg was shunned in many areas of Conference and youth work, the combination of its strong musical program and the greater tolerance of youth led to cooperation in this area. To help choirs broaden their repertoire the Music Committee established a choral lending library from which local choirs could borrow the scores of cantatas, oratorios and other choral



Henry Engbrecht conducts the mass choir at the 50th annual *Sängerfest* at the Peace Garden. Participating were choirs from Whitewater-Boissevain, Crystal City, Trinity-Mather and choir members from the former Lena and Rivers congregations. Photo: Henry Albrecht



MMYO officers in 1965 (l to r): Victor Sawatzky, Herb Warkentin, Ken Loewen and Ted Klassen (chair). Photo: Education Committee Report

works for a fee. To pass on the musical legacy of an earlier era, the MJO published K.H. Neufeld's collection of choral music and a handbook for songleaders on which he was still working on his deathbed.

Retaining youth for the church. Already in 1960 the MJO committee regretted that only a small percentage of youth were reached by some of its programs. Realistically, contended Gerhard Lohrenz in a 1961 CMM address, under the circumstances it would be impossible to keep all young people in the congregations.²⁰ Circumstances in the 1960s differed considerably from those in the 1930s and 1940s. One of the major differences lay in the expectations and interests of youth themselves. Enthusiasm for raising funds or supporting other projects waned. Youth wanted to manage their own groups and not have older people running their programs. In the 1930s and 1940s youth included ages 12 to 30, sometimes 35; in the 1960s youth were ages 14 to 19. Many of the older ones attended college or university and dropped out of youth groups. Leadership adapted accordingly in the MMYO.

Competing with the church for youth's loyalty was the high school and, unlike in earlier decades, MMYO's activities were only one of many social events to consider. Youth resented being dominated or ignored but wanted to be heard and be a vital part of the church. The first youth worker, Jake I. Pauls (1966–1969), and the MMYO leadership struggled with the needs and direction of congregational

youth fellowships and the Manitoba organization. Through worship, a lot of talking, sharing of program ideas, organizing workcamps and retreats, participation in the Estes Park GC youth gathering and many other ways leaders sought to make the Christian faith understandable and relevant to youth. Still, according to one assessment, more and more youth were unwilling to identify with the Mennonite church. For many it was intellectual rejection of a church founded on culture and tradition rather than on principles of faith. Bethel Mennonite in Winnipeg, it is said, had no youth group during the latter 1960s.

By 1971 the complex structure of the MMYO was acknowledged to be unwieldy. Attendance at MMYO retreats dropped steadily and the very existence of the organization was in question. An MMYO seminar at Camp Arnes met to try to discern the organization's direction. A resulting reduced structure freed the committee to make new beginnings, set new goals and find new roles. According to Randy Hildebrand, who was on the MMYO committee 1983–1985, "MMYO had survived its worst crisis and was now ready to move forward."

Reuniting with the Schönwieser

An official reconciliation of the Canadian Conference with J.H. Enns and reacceptance of the Schönwieser into the CMC took place at Greendale, British Columbia, in 1949. However, almost four years of intermittent meetings of confrontation, confession, compromise and prayer did not restore the former stature and involvement both of Enns' personally or of his congregation. Although Manitoba represented a sizeable portion of the CMC, for Manitoba leaders the acceptance at Greendale left something to be desired. Among them a small vocal minority felt that the reconciliation process, initiated by CMC and directed by the GC church unity committee, was dominated too much by one member and did not address Manitoba concerns. Common ground and agreement in all points was not achieved nor relationships restored. Reacceptance into the CMM was not realized that year—not until 1968.

Thus for over two decades the Schönwieser Gemeinde was not part of the CMM, the Conference in which its Ältester J.H. Enns had been a prime mover in the 1930s and 1940s. It was therefore ironical that this congregation now needed to apply to the CMM for acceptance. On this Ernest Enns of First Mennonite wrote:

There was probably blame on both sides. Following the reinstatement into the Canadian Conference, the Manitoba Conference extended no

invitation for the congregation to apply for admission. Nor did the congregation of its own initiative seek admission.²¹

Many things were painful for the Schönwieser. Among them was the fact that rural church leaders did not encourage their young people going to the city to attend First Mennonite. And circumstances changed during the intervening years. In the 1960s the Schönwieser group became First Mennonite and was reduced to a solely urban entity (except for Oak Lake). While strong protest elements to the Schönwieser presence in the CMM still existed, 1960s leadership made overtures. On the Schönwieser side, in early September 1963 J.H. Enns, with his council's approval, responded by letter to the prompting of P.J. Schaefer (or the CMM executive), requesting acceptance into the CMM.²² However, discussions in the four-year process that followed were carried on by leaders on both sides who had not been involved in the fallout of the 1940s. Hence, the particular universal reconciliation teaching remained virtually unmentioned,²³ while the broader doctrinal issues (authority of the Bible, conversion) and specific lifestyle issues (dancing, drinking at weddings) as well as First Mennonite's influence because of its overwhelming numbers and educated members, became the focus.

Whether in anticipation of the First Mennonite request or out of the experience with new congregations wanting to join CMM, the executive committee (P.J. Schaefer, H.P. Friesen, H.J. Gerbrandt) and heads of the various program committees appointed an investigation committee of "reputable ministers" (A.J. Neufeld of Killarney, P.G. Dueck of Lowe Farm and J.W. Schmidt of Altona) to meet with First Mennonite's church council. Questions the committee explored with First Mennonite included: Why was it seeking to join the Conference now? What was its position on social questions like weddings, smoking, dancing and drinking? What was its view on conversion?²⁴

Satisfied after two such meetings, the appointed committee recommended First Mennonite's acceptance at the next CMM sessions in 1965. Not all of the Executive Committee accepted that. In addition to reservations and cautions someone suggested that we "declare to them [First Mennonite] that we are ready to humble ourselves where we have done wrong or where our actions have been pharisaical. We should try to fellowship with them and invite them to work together with us in projects like evangelism."²⁵ H.J. Gerbrandt, CMM secretary at the time, later wrote:

. . . we discovered that more work still needed to be done. A Winnipeg-based storm of protest led by Gerhard Lohrenz of Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church developed. It threatened to bring to the conference floor issues which had been dealt with previously. Our Executive Committee, not wanting a rerun of the accusations and hurts of the past, even reaching into Russia, moved forward slowly.²⁶

In all of this a growing realization developed that in microcosm First Mennonite represented the Manitoba Conference. Recognition that faith and lifestyle issues were not only First Mennonite or urban struggles affected the tone of the discussions that were carried on under P.J. Schaefer's skillful leadership between the CMM executive and the First Mennonite representatives. Henry Gerbrandt, who counts the interchange with First Mennonite as his most interesting experience in the Manitoba Conference, wrote to First Mennonite in 1965:

We don't come as those who want to examine you. We are looking for a way whereby we together can surmount the large problems that loom before us. Our entire doctrinal beliefs stand to be overturned. In how far can we go along? Even if we as younger ministers find our way, where does the current theology take us? I believe many of these questions are also such with which you are concerned.²⁷

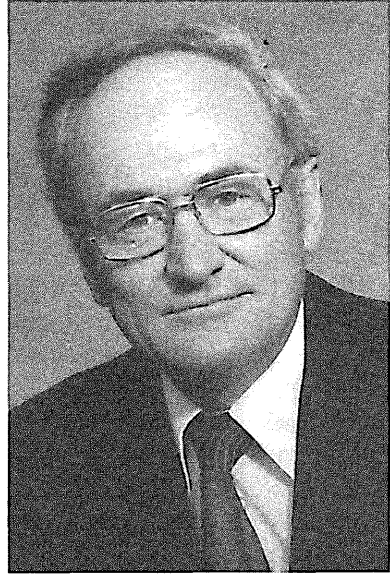
For First Mennonite leaders, although sensing no ill-will on the part of individuals, the meetings evoked mixed responses with some gratification, but also uneasy reservations: "Were we (our church) being investigated? Was it our duty to persuade the Manitoba Conference representatives of our Christianity?" They found the "aims of the Conference of Manitoba," to which they were asked to agree, narrow and unsatisfactory. Not all their members were convinced that being part of the Manitoba Conference was desirable.²⁸

According to the records, First Mennonite's position throughout this time remained one of not wanting to cause division. "If we are accepted as we are, if we are accepted unconditionally, then we want to join [the Conference]," was its resolution in 1963 and in the years that followed. Based on some people's sense that they were not wanted in the Conference, Jacob Wiebe, earlier minister in Morris who was elected First Mennonite's Ältester after J.H. Enns retired in 1965, said they "would not want to pressure their way into the Conference and would prefer acceptance through discussion, mutual agreement and oneness in spirit, rather than by a hard fought vote."²⁹

Within the Conference the executive had to consider the whole



Jake Harms (1926–)



Jake F. Pauls (1928–)

range of opinion from those of the protest movement to those who were cautious to those pushing for “immediate and decisive action.”³⁰ At several points both sides agreed that the time was not yet ready for First Mennonite to join the Conference. That time came in 1968 and CMM accepted First Mennonite without protest or debate. Jake Harms, who succeeded P.J. Schaefer as moderator, chose Philippians 1:3–6 to welcome First Mennonite into CMM. It read:

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

“While that officially ended the rift that had commenced shortly after World War II, the whole sad episode affected many individual Mennonites adversely,” concluded Ernest Enns in his account of First Mennonite.³¹ Suspicion and prejudice on the one hand, rejection and pain on the other, were not eradicated overnight. Franz Wiebe, leading minister of First Mennonite since 1986, sensed a lot of emotion and heard painful memories particularly from members 60 years and older. Even in 1996, when First Mennonite’s ongoing under-representation

on Conference committees was noted, the perception still was that “the conference is treating us at arm’s length.” While for younger people this part of history was not an issue and on the whole perspectives were quite a bit more positive, Wiebe suggested that changing attitudes and more involvement and visibility would bring a sense of full acceptance and mutuality.³²

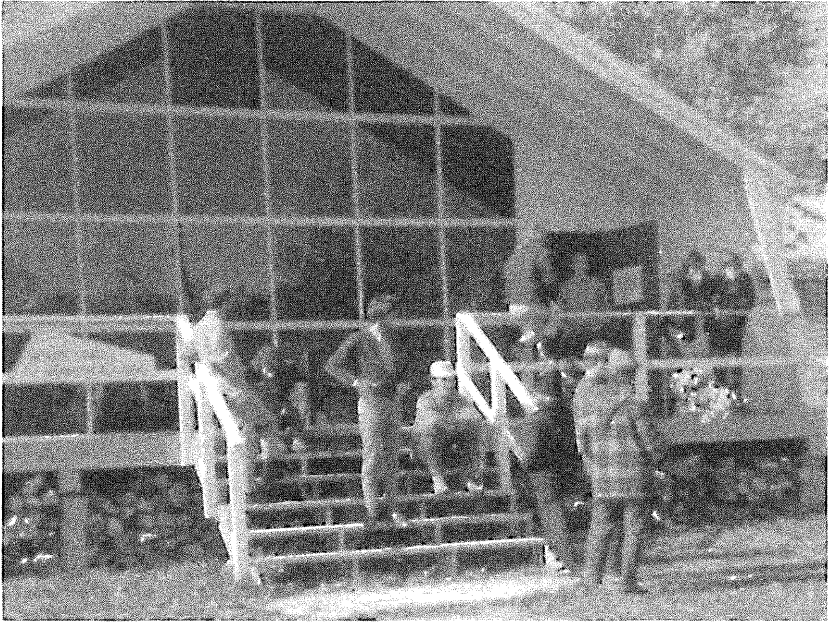
Camps

The era began with the Assiniboine Mennonite Mission Camp Association turning over its duties, worries and the camp’s debt of \$4,750 to the new CMM camp committee—Frank K. Isaac, A.A. Teichroeb, Ernest Wiebe, William Loewen and Menno Klassen—in April 1957. The Camp Committee became a sub-committee of the Education Committee later. The two major concerns that absorbed the conference discussions and decisions during this period were the expansion and development of campsites and camp philosophy and programming.

Expansion and development. There were CMM constituents who believed one well developed campsite, Assiniboine Mennonite Mission Camp, was sufficient. Others held that the AMMC had its limitations and that a lakeshore site was desirable to meet the needs of youth and the perceived increasing child population of the constituency. Factors influencing the thinking were the broader camp literature which advocated smaller camps as preferable to larger ones, the concern to meet the needs of all congregations and the interest to maximize the opportunity for mission.

Explorations to establish a site in the west, which would be more accessible to the Whitewater Gemeinde groups, initially proved unsuccessful. In contrast, beautiful, attractive Moose Lake in the east, recommended by the Department of Natural Resources, seemed to have all that was desirable in a campsite. This site, like that of AMMC earlier, captured the interest of a particular group, Christian business people from the Gretna-Altona-Plum Coulee area. By February 1958 at least 37 had bought lots on the shores of Moose Lake with the hope of having a camp for their children right next door. They organized as the Moose Lake (lot holders) Fellowship (MLF) with the willingness to make their cottages available for campers and to contribute financial resources, advice and involvement.

For a variety of reasons, at the 1957 CMM sessions more than half of the delegates resisted developing a second camp on a lakeshore site.



Youth group at the first chapel at Moose Lake Camp. Photo: Anne Goertzen

However, with a vote of 41 to 15 (out of 160 eligible ballots) a 10-acre property at Moose Lake was secured for \$100 and slowly developed. For much of the time, the MLF took full responsibility, initially under the leadership of Menno Klassen of Gretna who was also on the Camp Committee. Major investments of time, labour and money toward site clearance and toward facilities—building a dock, a large combination kitchen-dining-assembly hall and cabins—came first of all from the MLF and from friends and volunteers from Gretna, Halbstadt, Altona, Plum Coulee, Rosenfeld, Winkler, Morden, Lowe Farm, Morris and communities east of the Red River. CMM, whose support was off again, on again for a number of years, contributed sums of \$300 in 1959, \$500 in 1960, \$1,000 in 1964. The first public function, a young married couples' retreat in 1959, while very meaningful for participants, drew severe criticism from several leaders because of the mixed swimming. This had been one of the things so condemned at Sunnyside Beach before it became AMMC. How could it be condoned here?

In 1964, based on investigations by the Whitewater Gemeinde and the joint MJO-Education study committee, CMM approved the beginning of a “second” camp at Lake Max and taking responsibility for Moose Lake as a “third” camp. This meant that CMM accepted the

administration of three campsites, albeit reluctantly on the part of some. Many CMM members on the Camp Committee and the umbrella Education Committee, as well as study commissions, local grounds' committees, architect Harold Funk and others contributed sacrificially to the development of the three campsites. After gradual Conference approval, at least 2,653 volunteer hours of labour from people at Crystal City, Mather, Brandon, Boissevain and Oak Lake and a cost of \$14,000 for materials and \$800 for labour, the first main structure at Camp Koinonia was dedicated on June 20, 1971.

In 1968 the names of the camps changed from AMMC to Camp Assiniboia, from Camp Lake Max to Camp Koinonia (Greek, meaning fellowship), from Moose Lake to Moose Lake Mennonite Camp. A revised and more independent Camp Committee structure freed the Education Committee in 1969 to focus on other responsibilities. In 1970 CMM approved the hiring of a full-time, year-round camp director. As the sites and programs developed it became readily apparent that Assiniboia served the majority of children as well as weekend and day groups, Koinonia attracted teenagers and Moose Lake emphasized family camping. After five years of summer directorship at Camp Assiniboia and in the wake of CMM's financial crisis, Jim Reimer emphasized the need in 1969

to make a decision as to whether we want to develop all three camps or sell some and develop one or two. After making such a decision we need to deliberately and consciously develop a long-range . . . plan to develop the program and the site of these camp(s).



Wiener roast at camp. Photo: Anne Goertzen

Retrenchment came in 1970 at the Brandon sessions where CMM asked H.H. Goertzen, who together with his wife Anne had given leadership at Moose Lake early on and took charge where Menno Klassen and others left off, to form a Moose Lake Camp Association to operate the camp for a period of three years. In 1972 Camp Assiniboia was diagnosed to be in “spiritual doldrums” and the Camp Committee asked, “Why should we stay at Camp Assiniboia, if we do? What should be done . . . if we stay? What other possibilities are there?”

Camp philosophy and programming. Operating AMMC with a Sunday-school-under-the-trees approach or required memorization of Bible verses and recreation seemingly had run its course. A change was as inescapable as the shift in language and leadership. By 1964 strong apprehension surrounding the evangelism of children became apparent. The encouragement found in the study of students at Seminary in Elkhart which indicated that many of them had been converted to Christ at camp or the fact that Manitoba’s first overseas mission worker, Anne Penner, made her decision for missions at the Canadian Sunday School Mission camp did not sufficiently answer the questions confronting camp workers. Whereas conversion had perhaps not been stressed enough in the past, now “there is the danger that this could be emphasized too strongly,” read the minutes of one camp workers’ meeting. For some campers the personal talk and evening devotions with the counsellor or the Saturday evening testimony time were occasions of anxiety. One 1960s camper wrote years later:

. . . the Talk with the counselor this caught me by complete surprise i was sitting at the blue picnic table under the trees one afternoon with my counselor . . . i had just finished reciting the entire lot of verses from Abraham & Isaac to *In the beginning was the Word* feeling relieved & not a little proud when . . . asked . . . quite suddenly was i a Christian yes i answered quickly startled at the question & when did you become one . . . i don’t know i said i can’t remember but you’re sure you’re saved . . . doubtfully pencil poised above my card . . . they’re keeping a file on us i thought & i don’t have a date from that day for many years I worried about the problem of my conversion which came to a head every summer at Bible camp some years i felt miserable & dark despair about my inevitable damnation other years i cited some uplifting religious experience or another & thus located my salvation temporarily on the calendar.³³

Many campers recall similar feelings but they lived with the pressures

and gladly returned to the camp summer after summer to experience the enjoyment of swimming and friendships.

By the end of the camp's first decade, 87 children had experienced conversion at camp, 25 of these in 1958. At the 1962 CMM sessions it was noted that of that summer's 424 campers by far the majority of the children indicated that they were converted.

Throughout the years the purpose of camps was reviewed many times. A modification or shift often came with a change in committee or staff.³⁴ Very soon camp philosophy took on what was suggested to be a more holistic direction than what to some seemed like a convert-the-child-at-all-costs approach. The main setting for Christian education of children would continue to be the home and the congregation. At camp children should hear the gospel in a new way and have opportunity to experience the love of God and the relevance of Christianity to all of life through a week of peer group living under dedicated Christian leadership and an integrated camp program. This shift unsettled and distressed some in the constituency who expressed concern that not enough emphasis was placed on evangelism and spiritual growth at camp. A study conference at Whitewater in November 1970 dealt with the topics of conversion and camp philosophy. Papers presented by John Neufeld and Bill Kruger generated intense discussion and hinted at crises that needed to be addressed.³⁵

By the end of the era the purpose of camp was described as evangelism that cares for our children, mission outreach for inner city children and others, and education for all. Integration of the spiritual, emotional, physical, social and intellectual aspects was emphasized. New activities such as horseback riding, archery, camp and nature crafts, and nature lore were added. Only Bible sessions and camp crafts were compulsory. Singing remained an important part of every camp week but the style of song changed from hymns to camp songs such as "It's a long road to freedom," "The wedding banquet" and "They'll know we are Christians by our love." At Koinonia and Moose Lake the changes were less dramatic. Both camps accommodated considerably fewer campers in two or three weeks of the summer.

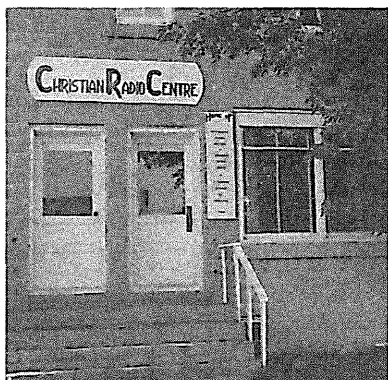
The debates about sites and philosophy did not end with this era. In the midst of dramatic developments and changes, countless volunteer cooks, counsellors, nurses, kitchen and other staff came to love camp ministry, bringing enthusiasm and dedication to the task. CMM moved from one campsite with one building to three campsites with many

buildings and a multi-faceted program, from an adopted philosophy of Bible camps to gradually developing its own Anabaptist-Mennonite understandings, and from ministry to only Mennonite campers to including those of non-Mennonite background.

Radio

Two years after it began, the Mennonite Radio Mission work was described as huge, almost impossible to oversee, with apprehension that it could grow beyond the Conference's capabilities. In 1969 it was renamed Faith and Life Communications (FLC). The Missions Committee, under whose umbrella it had operated, was freed for other outreach. The 1956 MJO-sponsored broadcasts on CKY and Fargo were phased out while airing on CFAM began in 1957. Frank H. Epp and Anita Epp became the first half-time director and secretary, respectively, for the radio work located in Altona. Initially, Epp took care of the work from the offices of *The Canadian Mennonite*. The Christian Radio Centre, a building on Main Street purchased from the Red River Valley Mutual Insurance Co. at the generous price of \$4,000, was dedicated in 1959. By 1962 the Centre served as "central office for the Manitoba Conference."³⁶

The three programs, *Frohe Botschaft* (Good News), *Wort des Lebens* (Word of Life) and Abundant Life (AL), developed in 1957 by Frank H. Epp, were still on the air in the 1990s. *Frohe Botschaft*, which kept its Sunday 7:30 a.m. time slot throughout the years even though that was not the most suitable time for farm people, had more



The Christian Radio Centre which also housed the first CMM offices in Altona.



MRM directors Frank H. Epp and J.K. Klassen with D.D. Klassen, Wort des Lebens speaker.

Table 7
Faith & Life Radio Broadcasts

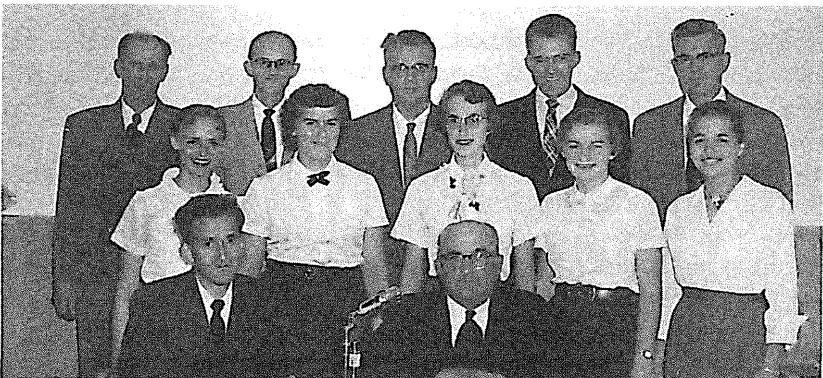
Showing years in which three programs aired
AL = Abundant Life; FB = Frohe Botschaft; WL = Wort des Lebens

Province/Town	Call Letters	Pro grm	Years										Funded by
			60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95			
MB, Altona	CFAM	AL	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	CMM
		FB	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	CMM
		WL	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	CMM
MB, Steinbach	CHSM	AL			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	CMM
		FB			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	CMM
		WL			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	CMM
MB, Boissevain	CJRB	AL			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	CMM
		FB			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
		WL			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
MB, Dauphin	CKDM	AL				█	█					Winnipegosis; Grace-Brdn	
MB, Flin Flon	CFAR	AL			█	█	█						
MB, Thompson	CHTM	AL			█	█	█						
MB, Winnipeg	CKY	AL			█	█	█						
SK, SK, Melfort	CFAG	AL	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	Saskatchewan listeners	
SK, Swift Current	CKSW	FB				█	█	█	█	█	█	Saskatchewan listeners	
SK, Swift Current	CKSW	AL						█	█	█	█	Saskatchewan listeners	
SK, Shaunavon	CJSM	AL						█	█	█	█		
AB, Calgary	CHQR	AL									█	A businessman, later listeners	
AB, Calgary	CFAC	AL		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
AB, High River	CHRB	AL						█	█	█	█	Alberta listeners	
BC, Abbotsford	CFVR	AL									█		
BC, Kelowna		AL		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
BC, Quesnel	KCKQ	WL	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	BC Women's Organization	
BC, Vancouver	CJOR	AL	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	Much from BC	
ON, Hamilton	CHAM	AL									█		
ON, Niagara	CHVC	AL		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	4 businessmen, later churches	
PA, Lonsdale	WNPV	AL				█	█	█	█	█	█	Local Mennonite businessmen	
Paraguay, Chaco	ZP30	FB						█	█	█	█	CMM	
Manilla		FB					█	█	█	█	█	Man. Women's Missionary Soc	
Mexico		WL									█	Mexico Com & Grunthal Berg.	
Equador, Quito	HCJB	FB		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	CMM (one airing)	

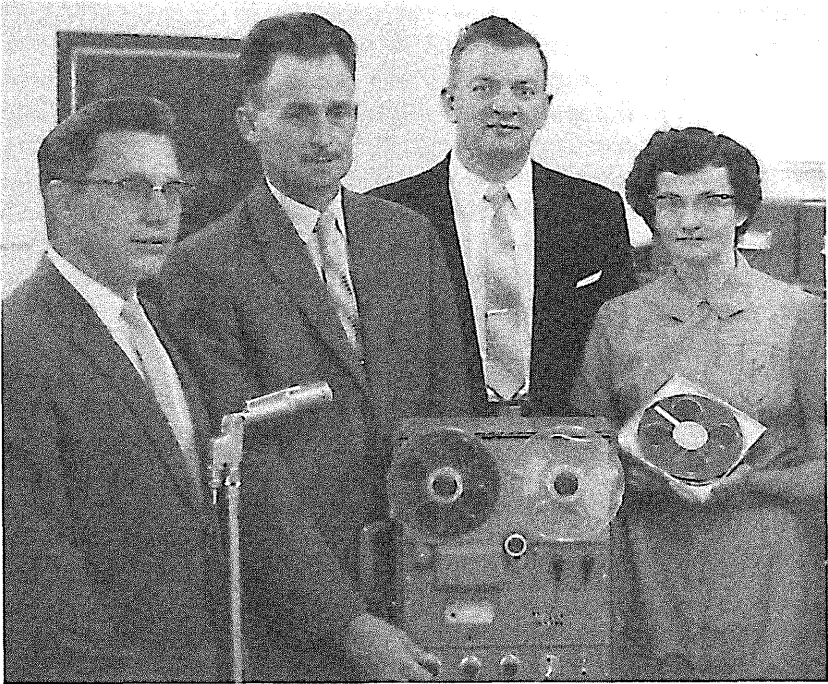
1. CHVC Niagara includes WDCX-FM Buffalo; CFAC Calgary includes CJOV Drumheller; CJOR Vancouver includes CKIG. 2. Frohe Botschaft (adapted) was used on Wings of the Morning on CFQC, Saskatoon, from 1976-1981, then on Wings of the Evening on CKFW, Swift Current, 1981-1991. In 1991 FB began airing on its own on CKSW. 3. Prior to 1994 WL messages were sent to Mexico and used in their own programming. 4. In 1970 a broadcast entitled *Gemeinschaft* (fellowship) was tried on CFAM but was discontinued due to minimal listener response. 5. On an adhoc basis Faith and Life's AL aired in the Turks and Caicos Islands in the Caribbean in the 1990s.

Manitoba listeners than the other two programs in the early 1960s. In 1964 shortwave mission station HCJB in Quito, Ecuador, chose *Frohe Botschaft* with its practice of different speakers to be beamed three times a week to Europe and the Americas. *Wort des Lebens'* longtime speaker and unaccompanied soloist, D.D. Klassen, gave it a teaching and nurture emphasis. Klassen, fondly known as D.D. because of his empathetic, warm and uninhibited manner, called the program a house or pastoral visit. Sometimes it meant entering “closed doors” to help “shut-outs,” those who had broken contact with the church but were listening to the radio. Other times it meant ministering to “shut-ins,” those who were friends or members of the church but excluded from participation by age or illness. Around 1964 the program’s character changed to more Bible expository messages as J.W. Schmidt (mid-1960s) and A.H. Born (early 1970s) joined Klassen in sharing the speaking load.

The Abundant Life program won the most widespread appeal and relevance. By 1961 it aired in all four western provinces (see Table 7).³⁷ On CJOR in Vancouver it had the highest rating of any Sunday program and jumped from 2,500 to 7,100 homes tuning in to the station just for the AL. Many letters from listeners made reference to the unique format of the “pithy and spiritually sound program.” After the opening theme song, “O for a thousand tongues to sing,” and introduction by director and speaker Frank H. Epp, the program flowed with the message interspersed by singing groups. Framed by a short prayer and the closing hymn, “Take my heart, O Father, take it,” came the regular concluding challenge:



Wort des Lebens radio choir with conductor Henry G. Ens and speaker D.D. Klassen.



Mennonite Radio Mission personnel with recording equipment (l to r): Frank H. Epp, Abundant Life speaker; Peter Funk, technician; J.K. Klassen, director; and Helen Heinrichs, secretary.

To live abundantly you must give abundantly. Give of yourself. Give of your time and your talent without reservation to the Lord, to the work of the Lord. Abundant living means abundant giving.³⁸

People appreciated the freshness, clarity and vigorous approach of the messages which dealt with various subjects of practical Christianity, social issues and evangelism. Titles such as “The crowd can be wrong,” “Your turn to die,” “I want to be happy,” “Left out, left over and lonely” or “Your life can be changed” were sent out on request for distribution in many places.

Despite strong support in the constituency some questioned the validity and stewardship of broadcasting programs similar to others on the air. Were the themes on the AL sufficiently evangelistic? Was the outlay for radio work not rather high compared to other efforts of the Conference? In 1964, with a deficit and contributions waning, 76 delegates voted to expand the radio work, 73 leave as is, 14 reduce, with 55 votes not cast.

Directors changed, times changed and Mennonite Radio Mission also faced transition. According to one interpretation, “the ’50s model of Gospel broadcasting with its predictable half-hour chunks of speaking and traditional familiar music was not working any more. Money was not coming in and the ratings as far as the station was concerned were not good.” The AL became a 15-minute program in an attempt to reach the uncommitted listeners, ages 15 to 30, in a contemporary way. The two- to three-part sermon approach was modified to include unpredictable conversation or comment and “a brand new approach to music” by the Faith and Life Singers with Jim Reimer. Bernie Wiebe, half-time director in 1966, recalled:

It took off like you wouldn’t believe. . . . The group had a tremendous youth following. Songs were biblical texts, tame Medical Mission Sisters kind of stuff; guitars were brought to church. . . . The Singers couldn’t respond to all the invitations. . . . But it was not all glory. Parents were upset with guitars, banjos, drums and jeans.

Initially, listener contributions largely carried program costs. In 1962 the Radio Mission budget was \$35,000; by 1970 it totalled \$46,700, largest item in the CMM budget followed by camps with \$32,400. When a deficit of \$3,241 had accumulated by 1967, CMM adopted a policy which invited individuals or groups to sponsor broadcasts as memorials to departed loved ones. Toward the end of the era programs were cut on some stations, but new opportunities presented themselves and again decisions needed to be made on priorities and what the Conference could afford.

The radio work generated letters, correspondence courses, literature distribution and church visitation. In letters people spoke of having found peace with God or the assurance of eternal life, and requested literature on the Mennonites and their faith, a few expressing the desire to join a Mennonite church. While some letters brought criticism, many expressed encouragement and supported the work with prayer and contributions. Bible correspondence courses, obtained from the Mennonite Hour in Harrisonburg, Virginia, were translated into German by P.A. Rempel of Altona and offered free to listeners. Volunteer P.B. Krahn of Winkler, a teacher for more than 30 years, followed by P.M. Hamm of Winnipeg marked the lessons. Volunteer young women prepared mailings of lessons, the bilingual *Radio Messenger* or AL sermons. In 1967 they mailed approximately 30,000 German and English sermons. The AL series “Living with sex” broke all previous records in 1968 with 4,000 copies sent out upon request.

Another dimension came in 1970 when the Bergthaler-sponsored Christian Home Hour (CHH), under Bernie Wiebe's directorship, amalgamated with Faith and Life Communications. Counselling and family life education became part of FLC. In 1969 the Church School Hour, prepared by the MCI and Elim schools, merged into FLC.

Inter-Mennonite attempts at cooperative broadcasting during the 1957-1972 era included discussions with Mennonite Broadcasts of Harrisonburg, Virginia, and with the Manitoba EMMC and EMC; involvement in the Council of Mass Communications with the MCs, GCs and Mennonite Brethren Gospel Light Hour; and association with the GC Faith and Life Radio and TV and Mennonite Broadcasts. For the latter, FLC, which had in the meantime moved its offices to Winnipeg (1968), became responsible for all GC radio and TV ministries with Bernie Wiebe as its director. By arrangement with Mennonite Broadcasts, FLC became the sole distributor of CHOICE, inter-Mennonite TV spots and special broadcasts. CHOICE, a daily 3½-minute religious broadcast for secular men, designed by Mennonite Broadcasts with a specifically Canadian version by FLC, first aired in Manitoba in April 1969 and by June was heard on 10 Canadian stations. In 1971 Bernie Wiebe accepted the 6th annual Gabriel Award at the Catholic Broadcasters Association of America banquet in Hollywood on behalf of CHOICE II.³⁹

Toward the end of the era CMM supported the forming of a five-denomination (MC, GC, Mennonite Brethren-US, Church of the Brethren and United Church in Christ) Mennonite Radio and Television Council for coordination of radio and TV efforts. During this time television spots, 30- to 60-second programs which shared important Christian truths related to life and family, became popular. Some 40 to 50 denominations used them as models of how to do spots. Hundreds of TV stations in Canada, including the CBC and CTV networks, used these public service spots with titles such as "Resolving family conflict," "Marriage is for love" and "Peacemaking." One won the World Association of Christian Communicators award as the best religious TV spot. As a result of the exposure, FLC appeared in a series of five programs on Winnipeg's CJAY-TV program "Today's World" hosted by Ray Torgrud.⁴⁰

Missions

David Schulz gave the final documented report on itinerant ministry for the Missions Committee at the conference sessions in Morden in 1959. Appropriately, the 1959 CMM Yearbook was dedicated to two

of Manitoba's itinerant ministers, Benjamin Ewert and Johann P. Bueckert, who both died in 1958.

Mission stations. The work in St. Vital and Brandon continued with significant help from both CMM and CMC for workers and buildings. At Brandon, for example, by November 1959 the CMC had paid \$23,300, CMM \$4,000, the local group approximately \$2,000 toward the church building with about \$3,000 more needed for completion. Pastor Henry Isaac (1957–1961) received a monthly salary of \$75 from CMM and additional help from CMC. The missions committees had no regular salary scale and the support level for different workers varied.

In 1959 CMM delegates urged the committee to minister to GC persons and families moving into towns. According to D.D. Klassen, the Bergthaler Gemeinde, for example, numbered 2,784 but *could* number 5,000—Klassen was talking about potential members of Bergthaler background who had joined non-Mennonite churches, who did not care about any church or had fallen prey to some false teaching.⁴¹ Follow-up exploratory work in Portage la Prairie and Flin Flon found the Mennonite Brethren and EMCs active in Portage and the latter present in Flin Flon as well. To avoid confusion the Missions Committee chose to abandon its plans for work there.

At the 1960 annual sessions delegates voted to expand mission work to non-Mennonites. The Missions Committee considered Brooklands, Dauphin, Clarkleigh-Oak Point, The Pas, Swan Plain, Selkirk, Thompson and Winnipegosis as possible locations for work. The concern not to create rivalry with other conferences which were already involved in a community remained. Three mission stations, Oak Point, The Pas and Thompson, which drew both Mennonites and non-Mennonites, were established in 1961.

*Oak Point, Bethel Gospel Church (Mennonite).*⁴² In 1955 Mary Penner from Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg taught at Radway School, eight miles east of Oak Point. She suggested to her home congregation that they take an interest in this little community. As a result, Bethel volunteers began a ministry there. In the early 1960s services were moved to Oak Point. Volunteers built a basement and moved over the former Morris Bergthaler church building which had been bought for this group.⁴³ The CMC Missions Committee supported the following workers at Oak Point: Ken Buller 1962–1967; Peter Buhler and other CMBC students 1967–1974; Costus and Lorraine

Yphantides 1974–1976. The work prospered and drew persons of Mennonite, Irish and Scandanavian background who worshipped together and functioned as a congregation with regular services, Sunday school, DVBS, youth work, baptisms, communion service and child dedication. Workers grappled with the cross-cultural dimensions of their ministry. Buller wrote:

We . . . struggle with the problem of relating ourselves and our faith to non-Mennonite people of our community. It seems that our conservative ways build a wall between us and we do not reach into their lives.

Costus Yphantides of Greek Evangelical background, who felt very close to Mennonites including their pacifist and other Anabaptist emphases, asked,

But what/who is a Mennonite? Is it one who believes . . . or is it a matter of culture? Will the one who was born an outsider ever be considered a *true* Mennonite?

In his own congregation at Oak Point, Costus did not feel ill at ease but at conferences, for example, he felt Mennonites turned away when they heard a non-Mennonite name.

Termination of the work came in 1977 as a result of a gradual exodus of young people and families from the church community. The EMMCs, engaged in a growing ministry just seven miles away at St. Laurent, were encouraged to absorb Oak Point's Sunday school children in their program. Before terminating, the work continued for a short while under the coordination of Jim Penner of Bethel Mennonite. The church building was eventually sold in 1992.

The Pas. The CMM Missions Committee assigned David and Anne Braun from Alberta to The Pas in 1961 to serve the people in the town as well as the many Indians and Métis in the area. David graduated from CMBC in 1956. The north was young and expansion was sure to come, suggesting a good reason to be there. In the early and mid-1960s the non-transient population of the town numbered less than 5,000.

A building, which was dedicated on September 23, 1962 served the small group in the process of formation and doubled as the Brauns' residence. Work was difficult but DVBS, Bible colportage, Bible study, Sunday school, establishment of a kindergarten, and many

contacts helped to gather and nurture a small group. Before the Brauns left for further studies at Bethel College in August 1964, Braun reported:

The foundation has been laid and can now be built on. The name Mennonite is quite well accepted. . . . Several people have been reached for Christ including children and adults. . . . We will never be able to establish a mission here again if we pull out now.

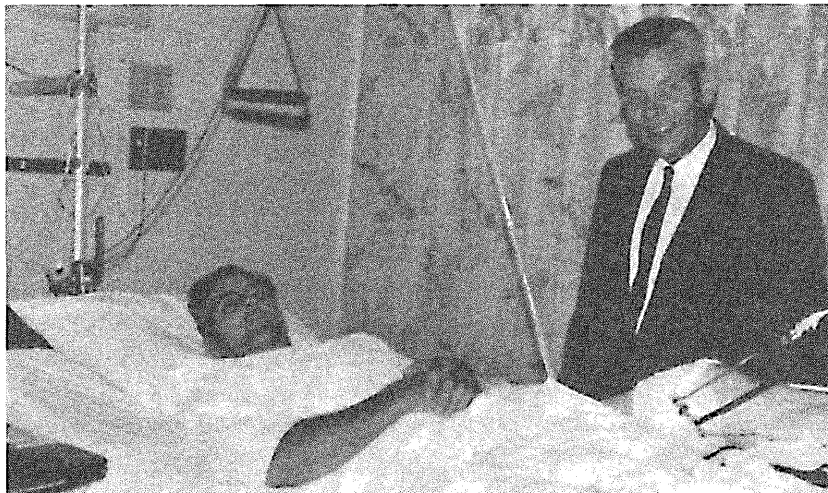
Followed by interim and short-term workers, social worker John Kroeker and Dave and Phyllis Wiebe (recently returned from ministry with the Janz team in Europe) and affected by the transiency of the group's members, the work terminated in early 1968.

St. Vital, Grace Brandon and Thompson prospered with the help of the missions committees; The Pas and Oak Point folded.

Hospital Chaplaincy. At the annual CMM sessions in Altona in 1960 the Missions Committee announced its plan to expand the hospital visitation work formerly handled by J.P. Klassen, J.H. Enns, Benjamin Ewert, Jacob Toews and other ministers. It hired H.T. Klassen half-time to visit Mennonite patients in Winnipeg hospitals beginning July 1962. Covering eleven hospitals and making an average of nine visits per afternoon, Klassen reported in November that "most of our Mennonite patients are quite open to God's Word; in fact, most are genuinely converted." In 1963 Klassen counted a total of 341 visits with 1,329 patients leaving literature or Scripture cards wherever possible. At the Municipal Hospitals Klassen began a regular Bible study with a group of polio patients and preached occasionally. After Klassen began full-time work in 1966, delegates suggested he visit the congregations more and share of his work so he would more easily connect with rural patients. Klassen and the Missions Committee encouraged young people, both for their own awareness and experience and for patients' sakes, to be involved in worship programs in hospitals.

Further extension of the hospital ministry came with the hiring full-time of P.K. Raman, formerly from India, for visitation at the Municipal Hospitals in about 1966. Raman, ecumenicity personified, visited patients of different denominations and faiths. When the financial crunch hit CMM in 1971 the Municipal Hospitals kept Raman as their employee.

Visitation of Mennonite patients in the T.B. Sanatorium at Ninette and in the Brandon Mental Hospital was continued by Whitewater,



Chaplain H.T. Klassen visits the sick.

Oak Lake and Brandon churches. They also held monthly services at the Mental Hospital. In 1963 Brandon's pastor, Peter A. Unger, reported ministering to 33 Mennonite patients at the latter. Under the leadership of Abe L. Goertzen from the Winnipeg Bergthaler, Plum Coulee and Winnipeg Bergthaler as well as Sargent and Sterling churches conducted regular services at the Selkirk Mental Hospital after mid-April 1963.

Prison chaplaincy. In 1957 Peter Klassen, on his own initiative, visited prisoners on a monthly basis. C.H. Friesen of Spencer-Grunthal Bergthaler, also began on his own before he became CMM's staff member from 1959 to the 1970s. After his appointment he visited eleven "Mennonite" prisoners, four at Stony Mountain Prison, seven at Headingly Jail. In 1963 the number increased to 40 men from Mennonite homes (out of 57 prisoners visited). Friesen reported that there were several conversions and that few of the "Mennonite" prisoners were church members. Others involved in prisoner visitation or rehabilitation work included Jim Penner of Bethel Mennonite in the late 1960s and David Braun, earlier The Pas, as staff member from 1971–1972. Further cutbacks effected C.H. Friesen's going on half-time in conjunction with his retirement plans.

Twice a year CMM congregations—Altona, Morden and Winkler Bergthaler, Blumenort, Bethel Mennonite and Springstein—



David Braun (1931–1993), prison chaplain, in conversation. Photo: MHCA

conducted morning services at Stony Mountain on the second Sunday of the month. Others—Elmwood Bethel, Spencer, Steinbach and Winnipeg Bergthaler—served similarly at Falcon Lake and Bannock Point prison camps.

Other concerns. Toward the end of the 1957–1972 period several other considerations surfaced. One was the Mennonite emigration from Mexico and Paraguay and the accompanying concern that these immigrants become established and integrated into Manitoba churches. A second was the discussion on the advantages of CMM being on the Manitoba Interfaith Council.

Peace and service

The earlier Peace Committee and its issues were placed under the Service Committee which was created in 1958. This committee functioned largely as an umbrella and coordinating body and, for a decade, cooperated with parallel Canadian and GC committees and with the two Mennonite relief committees supported by CMM congregations. Like the two relief committees, promotion of peace and justice issues gradually became part of MCC's mandate. Other considerations affected the Service Committee in its decade of operation. A number of CMM projects could not be lodged only with the Service Committee but called for involvement of the Missions Committee as well. For that reason, and because "word and deed are indivisible in our Christian witness," the Service and Missions Committees amalgamated in 1969–1971. Among the many Service Committee projects were prison ministry, which later merged with MCC's Open Circle program; the publication of a deacons' manual,

Others; work on a theology of service; and awareness raising and statements on issues like abortion, capital punishment and pornographic literature.

Education (*Erziehung*)

The Education Committee first appeared in the 1959 constitution. Its 1960 report identified three areas of work: Sunday school, DVBS and children's camps. By the end of the 1957–1972 era it was responsible for coordinating and monitoring all Conference educational concerns including private schools, ministers' courses and youth work. Its task was to study and determine the needs of congregations, work toward meeting those needs and serve as a link to parallel CMC and GC committees. During the 1957–1972 era CMM sponsorship of the DVBS program and some of the Sunday school emphases discontinued as congregations took full responsibility for them. Inter-campus ministries (spearheaded by the MMYO) and the exploration of a residential liberal arts college came on the agenda in the latter half of this era.

Ministers' courses. In the 1940s and 1950s Ältester Wilhelm Enns promoted ministers' courses at conference sessions with considerable regularity. Courses were almost always scheduled biannually, at first in various locations and then at Elim or CMBC, where they were offered by the respective faculties. CMBC's 12-day courses usually followed the annual spring Bible lectures and were part of a three-year plan. In February 1960, for example, they included homiletics by J.D. Adrian, God's plan of salvation by I.I. Friesen, a study of the prophet Ezekiel by Waldemar Janzen, church history by Gerhard Lohrenz, a word study based on Galatians by David Schroeder, hymnology by George Wiebe and a study of the sermons in Acts by Henry Poettcker. Of a different nature were the occasional ministers' retreats at Assiniboine Camp usually scheduled for August. After 1965 they phased out because of low attendance.

In the early decades the character of a minister, Bible exegesis and practice preaching for sermon content and delivery were the themes of ministers' conferences. According to J.H. Enns proclamation of the Word of God held first place in congregational ministry.⁴⁴ David F. Friesen, chair of the Education Committee in 1969, indicated a shift in emphasis when he said to the delegate body:

I do not believe that . . . renewal will come by preaching more and better sermons on Sunday morning. . . . The Sunday morning service

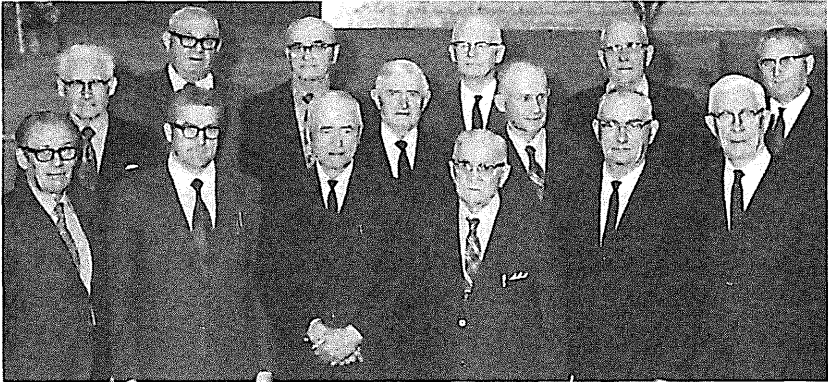
[is] very important. But I think renewal will come through the meeting together in small groups for Bible study, prayer and the sharing of experiences.

Other shifts became noticeable. Until 1970 ministers generally had been elected largely from within the local congregation. In 1971, for the first time, new ministers to Manitoba were introduced to the delegate body. That year they were Ron Hunsicker (Ohio) at Charleswood, Paul Dyck (India) at Altona Mennonite, Peter Sawatzky (MCC in Zaire, earlier from Saskatchewan) at Grace Mennonite in Steinbach and Bob Peters (Montana, Mennonite Brethren) at Elmwood Bethel Mennonite in Winnipeg.

Sunday school. “This is one of the most important areas of mission work and so close at hand,” read one of the 1957 delegate conference resolutions. “Our children and the future of the church are at stake.” The Education Committee promoted a number of practices: that the entire family attend Sunday school, that all families conduct devotions, that the congregations use the Conference Sunday school curriculum, that all congregations conduct teachers’ courses, that teachers change as little as possible, that they meet approximately every two weeks to discuss their work and that they call parent-teacher meetings at least once annually. Statistics gathered by the Sunday School Committee until the mid-1960s gave the Education Committee an ongoing insight into the educational situation in the congregations. In 1967 the annual provincial Sunday School Conference was renamed the Provincial Education Conference.

Daily Vacation Bible School (DVBS). Henry Gerbrandt surveyed the province, established where help should be given with DVBS and organized the placement of volunteer teachers until 1959. That year a total of 50 weeks were spent in summer Bible schools with 375–400 children enrolled. Bernie Wiebe continued the work in 1960 and Egon Enns, originally from Oak Lake, from 1961–1964. Although many congregations were organizing their own DVBS, 23 places were served by 35 teachers in 1962.

“Persuading children is easy,” suggested public school teacher Ernie Dyck from Boissevain who followed Enns 1964–1966, “teacher recruitment is the main concern.” In 1964 he enlisted 44 teachers, all women. Starting DVBS in new areas, Ernie contended, was too frustrating in part because of competition from other denominations. The DVBS program was last mentioned at CMM sessions in 1967.



Leaders present at the 1971 anniversary who were also at the reorganization of the Conference in 1947. Front row (l to r): P.R. Harder, Gerhard Ens, Gerhard Bock, A.D. Friesen, G.G. Neufeld, Gerhard Lohrenz; back row: Henry Gerbrandt, G.G. Neufeld (Manitou), D.D. Klassen, Isaac Loewen, J.P. Dyck, W. Peters, Heinrich P. Heinrichs, A.A. Teichroeb. Photo: MHCA

Things were changing. As programs scaled down or phased out and a new generation moved into leadership, the Education Committee wrestled with its mandate. It seemed like a multitude of needs and opportunities were calling to be addressed. There was the concern that private schools not close for lack of funding. The large university student population begged the exploration of a liberal arts residential college. Workshops and conferences with qualified resource persons addressed specific issues such as peace, the GC stewardship in mission thrust, human sexuality, drug problems, pastoral care and counselling. Together with the MMYO a university campus ministry developed. In cooperation with the Camp Committee, the Education Committee worked on camp philosophy and the meaning of conversion.

In times of frustration the Education Committee looked for more support from the constituency. On its behalf David F. Friesen identified a sensitive area in this way in 1968: "This board is asked to do a great deal of work with a small sum of money. In practice people find it much easier to designate funds to missions and relief than to a Conference Education program." While CMM struggled with this and related questions, the Education Committee evaluated all its efforts by the objectives set for the congregations, namely to:

help all persons to know God . . .
become aware of who they are

what their human situation is
of their alienation
to the end that they must
repent of their sin
respond to God's redeeming love in faith
become members of the body of Christ
grow in Christ within the community of believers
walk in the Spirit in every relationship
fulfil the call to discipleship in the world [and]
abide in the hope.

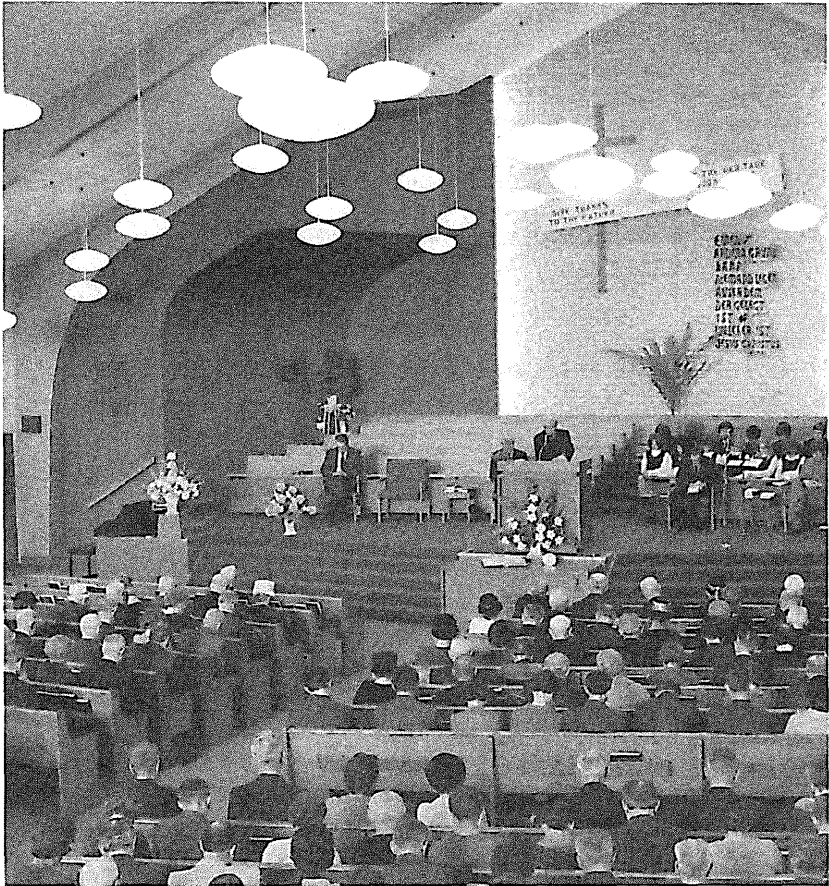
Finances

For decades each committee or program handled its own finances. Resources came from offerings, contributions and levies. In 1959 CMM established a central treasury and a unified budget. Part-time staff did the bookkeeping and the Conference treasurer served on a volunteer basis like other committee members did. When the CMM office moved to Winnipeg in 1968 Ernest Wiebe was hired as conference treasurer. The Finance Committee's main responsibilities were to set the budget (in consultation with the program committees) and to oversee the finances.

The 1957–1972 years marked a difficult financial period for CMM. Needs often exceeded financial support. Springstein's leader Wilhelm Enns, speaking on "How do we solve the financial problems in our conference?" at the beginning of the era, maintained that "all expenses could easily be met if people would give the tenth." In reality, in spite of the promises made on joining the conference and the faithfulness of a number of congregations, some paid very little toward the budget either because of negligence or in subtle but powerful protest of conference projects or procedure. Giving to institutions, as for example to Eden Mental Health Centre which demanded extraordinary commitment, affected CMM as well. Combined with a downturn in the economy in the late 1960s and early 1970s meant deficits for almost all CMM programs. George Groening, sizing up the situation already in 1964, noted:

we have probably come to a crisis because we have taken on greater obligations than we can carry presently. We have moved ahead too quickly and we have to stop for a bit and give our supporters an opportunity to adjust their thinking to such high expenditures. . . . We should be more deliberate in planning.

By 1970 the cumulative deficit had risen to \$27,426, due not to



CMM celebrates 25 years under the banner: "Give thanks to the Father—share the heritage of God' people." Photo: MHCA

overspending but to "the failure of congregations to meet their share of the budget."⁴⁵ Wrestling with the financial, communication and confidence crises at Brandon in 1971 brought consideration of cutbacks and renewed commitment. The next few years generated optimism again and CMM looked to the future with confidence. Alf Loewen, Finance Committee chair 1969–1974, reminded delegates in 1971:

The Mennonite Church has a history of paying bills and keeping their credit in good shape. I'm sure that everyone of us wants to pass that legacy unto his children. So, let us not relax in our giving.

Celebration 1971

Toward the end of the 1957–1972 era D.D. Klassen wrote: “No one can surmise what our Manitoba churches would be like if there had been no Manitoba Conference of Mennonites. Each smaller or larger congregation would have developed one-sidedly.”⁴⁶ For 25 years *Russländer* and *Kanadier*, at least one branch of them, had met and worked together without interruption. The day chosen to pause and celebrate at the Winkler Bergthaler Church was Remembrance Day, November 11, 1971. This “anniversary day was like a pebble thrown into the centre of a pond,” reflected one observer. “It sent waves rolling into all directions.”⁴⁷ Thus, the era of major transitions and turning points ended on an upbeat note. G.G. Neufeld, one of CMM’s pillars of these 25 years, with gratefulness gave his blessing to move into a new era when he wrote: “A new generation steps onto the stage of the Conference. They are the children and grandchildren of the fathers who half a century ago sought to gather and unite the congregations in Manitoba.”⁴⁸

CHAPTER 8

CMM CONGREGATIONS

PAST AND PRESENT

The church is not a static architectural structure but rather a growing living body of people. . . . It must be willing to accommodate new ideas but it must also respect the old values that have made it what it is.—David Wiens¹

With the ending of the multi-branch Gemeinden in 1972 the CMM was no longer a conference of Gemeinden but a conference of individual congregations. The former Gemeinde-nurtured congregations constituted one part of the CMM family (see Table 8 and Map 4). Comprising the other part were congregations which emerged in new ways and were never part of a larger Gemeinde. These congregations grew out of efforts by GC-CMC-CMM Home Mission committees, began as so-called daughter congregations or had independent beginnings. Daughter congregations included both those birthed intentionally and peacefully and those resulting from schism. Regardless of the beginning, new congregations frequently drew members from the parent and other churches. Background experiences, resulting theological bent and mind-set and the peculiarities of each congregation contributed to the conference makeup. Understanding and accepting the diversities of these congregations, even if only in a broad way, was crucial to the pursuit of unity.

Generally accepted in theory was the premise that a congregation is its people and not any particular leader. However, as in decades past the Gemeinde was often personified by its Ältester, so in modern times this image was often transferred to the leading minister or pastor. For this reason, sketches of congregations mention numerous ministerial leaders in addition to data on beginnings, buildings and other historical details. It is left to congregational histories to depict more fully the significance of peoplehood and the tasks of the many: deacons, musicians, choir leaders, financial administrators, Sunday school superintendents, teachers, youth leaders, sponsors and others.

While leadership systems changed and most congregations in the 1990s had at least two leaders, a minister/pastor and a congregational chairperson, many congregations were still first known by their pastor.

Minister and pastor equally tried to encompass the earlier specialty functions of both the *Prediger* (preaching and teaching) and *Ältester* (caring, counselling and officiating). The term pastor was thought to set apart more than minister, since all are to be ministers but not all can be pastors (shepherds). The Schleithem Confession, the first known Anabaptist Confession of Faith, mentioned only one church officer, the *Hirt* (shepherd, pastor), whose duties it was “to read, admonish, teach, warn, discipline, excommunicate, to lead in prayer, to administer the Lord’s Supper and to undertake the general oversight of the congregation.”² A number of CMM congregations adopted the term pastor because of its shepherding connotation and its flexibility as title of respect. For example, it was uncommon to address a person as Minister Dave, but Pastor Dave became acceptable and was preferred to the former commonly used term Reverend. For some, however, pastor carried a presumptuous quality. For others, Reverend was an abominable term, worldly and a sign of false pride. The congregational stories below reflect some of this diversity.³

For congregations originating in the Bergthaler Gemeinde it is important to remember that membership was in a central registry, not in the local group. In earlier years the multi-branch Gemeinde elected the ministers and the general brotherhood made all the major decisions. A preaching schedule rotating the ministers in the various so-called “locals” was set up by the ministerial (*Lehrdienst*). The minister living closest to a particular group usually led local activities. Church buildings were approved and built or bought by the whole Gemeinde for the local, the latter raising funds for only a small portion of the amount needed. A central treasury took care of central costs, including conference levies, while local offerings went toward local expenses such as heating and lighting. Much of this general pattern held for the Blumenorter Gemeinde as well except that its locals did not become independent congregations but consolidated into one. The system dates back to Russia and Prussia and was still used by Old Colony and Sommerfelder churches in the 1990s.

The Whitewater Gemeinde with Molotschna origins differed from the Bergthaler and Blumenorter Gemeinden in that each local congregation had its own membership list and treasury, elected its own ministers and made decisions for its group. Ministers visited each other’s groups upon invitation, mainly on special occasions like Thanksgiving. Gemeinde decisions included support of the *Ältester*, schedules for baptism, communion and ordination services, and plans for united endeavours like the regional ministers’ conferences and itin-

**Table 8
CMM Congregations**

Gemde	Congrgtion	Startd	Membership			Original Composition or Makeup	1995	Joined Conferences			
			Start ²	Peak	1995			Staff ³	CMM ⁴	CMC	GC
Berg thaler	Halbstadt ⁵	1890/37	57 fam.	82	70	East Reserve people of 1878-87	PP	1936/47		1968	
	Gretna	1891/01		139	120	East & West Reserve Man people incl Mol, Prussian	PP/LM	1936/47		1968	
	Winkler	1892/95		980	871	77 Chortitz, 5 Bergt.Col, 2 FrstnInd, 6 Prussia, 6 Mol.	MS/LM	1936/47		1974	
	Altona	1895		637	526	Bergthal people from the East Reserve	MS/LM	1936/47		1968	
	Plum Coulee	/1897		292	212	Bergthaler	PP/LM	1936/47		⁶	
	Lowe Farm	1900/05		148	90	Bergthaler, Cdn born	PP/LM	1936/47		1968	
	Rosenfeld	1906/37		100	85	Bergthaler of Chortitza & Bergthal Colony	LM	1936/47		1968	
	Morden	1921/30	24	431	368	Fürstenland, Bergthaler	MS/LM	1936/47		1968	
	Carman	1933/45		200	200	Mostly descendants of 1870s immigrants	PP	1936/47		1968	
	Grunthal/Spen	/1936		162	160	West Reserve Bergthaler & Chortitzer Gemeinde	PP	1947	⁶	⁶	
	Homewood	1938		70	50	GC, Bergthaler, Sommerfelder, MBs, Pentecostal	PP	1947		1968	
	Gladstone ⁵	1947	30	117		Sommerfelder from Saskatchewan mostly	-	1947		⁶	
	MacGregor	1949/50	30	218	150	18 Bergt, 8 EMMC, 4 GC from MB & SK	PP/LM	1947		⁶	
	Graysville	1925/27	25	82	60	Schönwieser, Bergthaler	PP	1936/47		1968	
Home Street	1957	37	277	140	84% Kanadier rural Bergt, 12% Russländer, 4% other	PP	1971		1968		
Blumen orter	Blumenort	1923/25		414	229	34% Shlackhtin Baratov, 27% Chortitza,	PP/LM	1936/47	1926	1926	
	Gnadenenthal	1923				Chortitza daughter settlements 25%,					
	Reinland	1923				Molotschna 7%, other 7%.					
	Rosenort	1923									

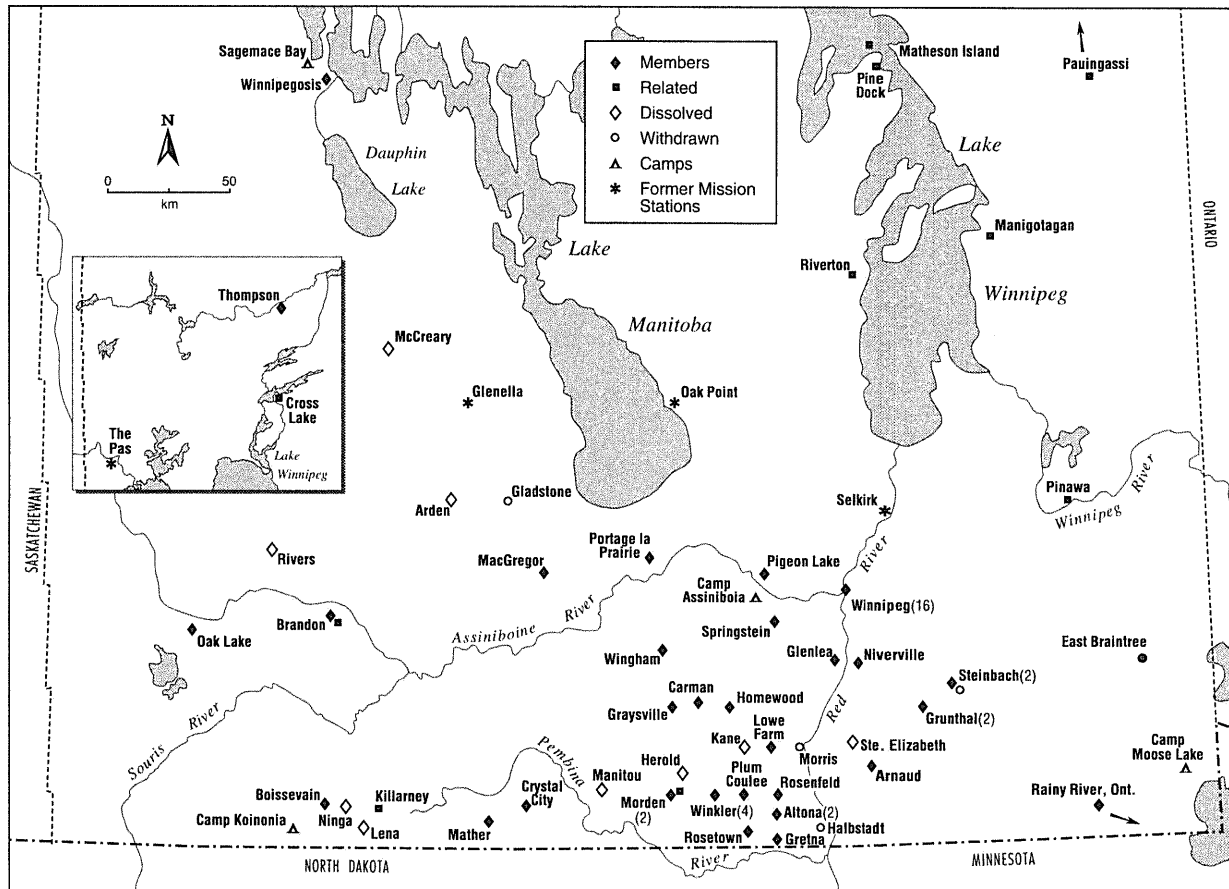
	Wingham	1933/39	37	47	46	mixture of 1920s immigrants	PP	1947	⁶	⁶
Elim	Grunthal	1926/27	35+	250	194	Orenburg, Samara, Terek, Mol, Chort, 35 fdg. fam.	PP/LM	1947	1927	1929
Lichten	Arnaud	1925/44	111 ⁷	111	95	56% Mol, 24% Chort, 20% mixed other Russländer	MS	1947	1945	1947
auer	St Elizabeth	1925/27	79 ⁷	190	-	from 11 Gemeinden in Russia	-	1936/47	1926	1938
Nordheim	Winnpgosis	1930/33	38	125	95	5 Memrik, 4 Chort, 27 Grigoriewka	PP/LM	1936/47		1945
Schönwieser	First Menn	1919/25	19	1490	1306	Schönwieser from Chortitza, others from Molotschna	MS	1936/68	1926/49	1929
	Niverville	1924/44	65 ⁸	187	160	Schönwieser	PP	1936/47	1945	1953
	Springstein	1924/38	38	203	181	Grigoriewka, Samoilowka, Charkow, Ekaterinoslaw	MS	1936/47	1939	1947
	Pigeon Lke ⁹	1924/27		179	123	Molotschna, Schönfeld	LM	1936/47	1939	1945
	Glenlea	1925/45	47	134	133	18 families from Schönfeld & Steinbach, Molotschna	MS/LM	1936/47	1945	1947
	Oak Lake	1927/29	33	73	58	Arkadak, Molotschna	LM	1936/68	1926/49	1929
	North Kild	1929/35		561	457	1920s & 1940s imm., Para & Argentine, non-Menn.	MS	1936/57	1957	1959
	Steinbach	1923/36	39	466	401	Schönw & other Russl. from Grunthal, St. Elizabeth,	MS	1947	1942	1945
White	Whitewtr/B	1925/27	52	286	191	1920s imm. from Terek, Molotschna, Chortitza	PP/LM	1947	1927	1929
water	Crystal City	1924/27	24	230	201	1920s Russländer	PP/LM	1947	1927	1929
	Trinity Mather ¹⁰	197/69	39	75	65	original Mather Russländer and some Kanadier	PP	1978	1978	1971
						Daughters of some of the above Gemeinden				
Wklr B	Grace	1961/61	32	374	374	mostly Bergthaler	MS	1990	1963	⁶
	Covenant	1981/82	27	46	27	23 GC, 2 MB, 2 Un. Church (from BC, SK, ON)	PP	1983	1982	1983
	Emmanuel	1984/86	70	195	95	'86: 69 Wklr Berg, 26 oth GC, 2 EMMC, 5 non-Menn	MS	1987	1988	⁶
Alt B	Altona Menn	1962	22	120	104	18 GC, 2 MB, 2 EMC	PP	1962	1963	1965
Wpg B	FGMF	1966/67	32	168	165	Wpg Bergthaler, Sargent, etc.	SH/LM	1969	1969	1971

CMM Congregations (continued)

NK	Springfield Ht	1964	192	658	524	Russ, Germ, SA post-WWII, Sargent/ Luth Cath MB	MS	1972	1975	1983
Spr Ht	Douglas	1979/80	218	329	329	Orenburg, CH, E Pr via Spr Hts; Germ/ Para, Boiss.	PP/LM	1980	1980	⁶
Spr Ht/NK	Northdale/Jubi	1972	40	87	87	Springfield Hts, NK, etc	PP	1975	1975	⁶
Stbch M.	Grace Stbch	1961	43	227	227	5 fam StbM, 4 Bergt, 7 EMB, 2 First Menn & others	PP	1967	1963	1965
Mission Efforts	Bethel Menn	1937/37	21	588	588	Kanadier	MS	1947	1946	1947
	Sterling ¹¹	1943/58	16	114	113	8 Bergthaler, 4 Sommerfelder, 2 GC, 2 Chortitzer	PP	1959	1959	1986
	Sargent	1948/50	38	501	461	Post WWII imm. & other GC, few MB & Lutheran	MS/LM	1950	1950	1956
	Grace Brdn	/1954	25	113	64	Whitewater area families & individuals	PP/LM	1961	1961	1962
Daughters of Bethel	Burrows Bth	1961	51	175	137	24 families & 3 individuals from existing congreg.	PP	1962	1962	⁶
	Charleswood	1963	31	198	193	largely transfers from Bethel & Sargent	PP	1963	1964	1965
Mennonite	Hope	1986/88	47	55	55	22 GC, 4MB, 4Somm., 5 Berg, 4MC, 3 UnCh, 5 other	SH	1992	1990	1992
Indepndnt or mixed beginnings	Thompson	1958/63	13	39	39	mixed Mennonite & non-Mennonite backgrounds	PP	1985	1968	1977
	Portage la P	1976/77	26	40	23	GC, MB, EMC & non-Mennonite	SH	1983	1983	1986
	Wpg Chinese	1973/74	15 fm	120	80	Mandarin Chinese from various countries	MS	1979	1979	⁶
	Minnewasta			24	24	GCs, a few Lutherans	PP	1991		
	River East	1987/89	44	156	145	Menno Colony, Paraguay - new & earlier immigrants	LM	1993	⁶	⁶
	Vietnamese	1981		40	40	Vietnamese immigrants	PP	1996	⁶	⁶
	Good Shepherd	1995		7	7	MCs, Lutherans, GC	SH	1996	⁶	⁶

1. The first date is the approximate date they started meeting for services, Bible study or Sunday School; the second date is the organizational date. 2. Beginning memberships are hard to establish for churches part of a larger Gemeinde. 3. The code for Staff is as follows: MS - Multiple Staff; PP - Paid Pastor (one); LM - Lay Ministry (one or more); SHM - Shared Ministry. 4. Some Gemeinden joined each time the conference reorganized. 5. Withdrew in 1995 and 1994, respectively. 6. Not members. 7. These are 1944 figures. 8. In 1936. 8. Also known as Schönfelder Gemeinde. 9. The mother church, Mather Mennonite, closed in 1981. 11. In 1954-55, they were listed with the Bergthaler churches as St. Vital Mennonite.

Map 4 CMM Congregations



eration of evangelists or missionaries.

The Schönwieser Gemeinde moved between these two patterns. It had a strong central council, brotherhood and treasury. Local ministerial elections were encouraged and visitation from “outside” scheduled as needed or agreed upon. The search for balance between rural and urban needs and costs was peculiar to the Schönwieser Gemeinde.

In all Gemeinden, the smaller preaching stations gradually phased out in the late 1930s or 1940s. Several of the smaller churches, like the Lichtenauer at St. Elizabeth or Elim at Grunthal, functioned like centralized independent congregations while retaining some of the features or practices (for example, the Ältester) of the multi-congregational Whitewater, Blumenorter and Bergthaler Gemeinden.

Bergthaler Gemeinde

Halbstadt Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Formal worship services began in 1892. Local school teachers played a significant role in church and community efforts. Helen Wieler (of Molotschna descent), for example, introduced Sunday school to Halbstadt and also led the congregational singing. In 1937 the Halbstadt group acquired a church building together with the newly organized Rudnerweider group which helped with construction and financial support. The latter used the building for services one Sunday a month. By 1969 its dwindling membership had integrated into the Bergthaler congregation. Diedrich Loepky was the first minister to be elected in the Halbstadt area in 1906; he served until 1933. He was succeeded by D.D. Klassen 1928–1938. The first hired part-time minister was Bernie Wiebe in 1963. Ray Wahl was the last minister ordained by the Bergthaler Gemeinde in 1972. Under the leadership of Harry Siemens, who came to Halbstadt from Plum Coulee in 1992, the congregation withdrew from CMM in 1996.⁴

Gretna Bergthaler Mennonite Church. H.H. Ewert began services at the Gretna school (MCI) in 1891. Prior to that some Gretna Bergthaler members met at Edenburg. Wilhem S. Buhr, who at various times reported to CMM on behalf of the British and Foreign Bible Society, was ordained by David Schulz in Edenburg in 1929. The first church building was erected in 1958. Manitoba’s first Ladies’ Aid in Gretna celebrated its centennial in 1992. As the only remaining church in Gretna in the 1990s, it was in a unique position to reach out into the community. Rudy Franz, originally from Boissevain, began as pastor of the church in 1989 after schooling at Elim, CMBC, University of



Conference delegates and guests in a small group discussion at the 1991 sessions hosted by the Gretna Bergthaler Church.

Manitoba and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS).

Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church. This congregation, a continuation of part of the Hoffnungsfeld Fuerstenländer group which left the Reinländer Gemeinde in the 1880s, shared a building and Sunday services with the Sommerfelder for some time.⁵ The move to Winkler resulted when a separate building became necessary for Bergthaler people in the Hoffnungsfeld area. The first church building was dedicated in 1895. Ältester Jakb Hoepfner served Winkler 1903–1936. In the 1930s immigrant minister J.J. Siemens led the group for several years. Leadership became somewhat problematic until J.M. Pauls took over in 1951. In the 1990s the Winkler congregation continued full German and English worship services with separate choirs in each language. It attracted newcomers from the town and its surrounding areas. By the end of 1992 its membership together with its four daughter congregations totalled 1,702. Lay ministers complemented its salaried staff which in 1996 was comprised of John Klassen (lead pastor, educated at Winnipeg's universities, CMBC and AMBS), Ben Pauls (assistant), Menno Janzen (associate) and Darlene Derksen (youth).

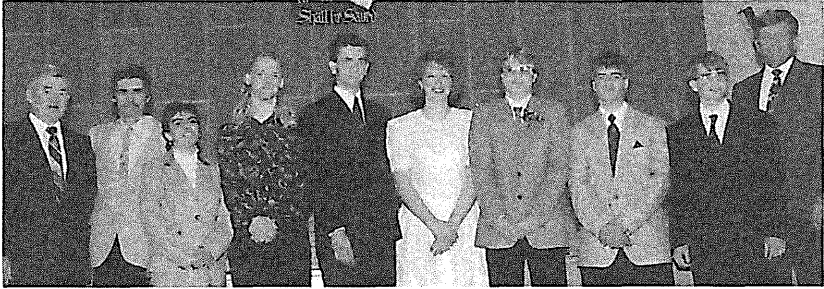
Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church. The work was begun in Alt Altona in 1885 with the school serving as one of the preaching centres for Chortitzer ministers from the East Reserve. In 1892 the group became Bergthaler under Johann Funk who resided in nearby Alt Bergthal. When a school was built in Altona in 1895 it became a centre for Bergthaler services. However, in keeping with the policy of the time, a church building was not erected in town but at Hochstadt,



Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 1989. Photo: Victor Kliewer

several miles east of Altona, and dedicated in 1898. After the move of the Mennonite Educational Institute to Altona in 1908 services were regularly conducted in that building. The pressure continued and in 1912 Altona Bergthaler (including Alt Altona, Alt Bergthal and Hochstadt, the latter contributing the majority of members) got its own new church building. David Schulz served this congregation as leader 1926–1950 (and the larger Bergthaler Gemeinde until 1964), Henry Gerbrandt 1950–1971, Walter Franz 1979–1991. Other prominent Altona ministers included J.N. Hoepfner, P.P. Kehler and D.F. Friesen. In 1996 the ministerial leadership included pastor Randy Klaassen (trained at Columbia Bible Institute, Okanagan College, CMBC and University of Manitoba), three salaried assistant pastors—Peter Bartel, Darlene Enns Dyck, Ted Enns Dyck—and three retired ministers.

Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Services in Plum Coulee can be traced back to 1897 although some may have been held earlier. For some time attendance was sporadic and around 1913 word was sent out that services would be discontinued unless attendance became more regular. The work continued and in 1925 the Plum Coulee Baptist church building was bought. It was the only Bergthaler church building with a bell. Johann J. Hooze, the earliest lay minister, served 58 years beginning in 1912. Although a member of CMM and CMC, in the 1990s the congregation considered itself rather individualistic and quite independent in spirit. In 1993 Glen Siemens, a Providence Bible College graduate, began as pastor and Henry Neufeld, formerly of Boissevain, as lay minister.



1993 baptismal group at Lowe Farm with pastor Henry Patkau (left) and lay minister Art Hiebert (right). Photo: Henry Patkau

Lowe Farm Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Services were conducted by Bergthaler ministers in the Lowe Farm school in the early 1900s. The group related to the Methodist Church (of Morris) in its work, occasionally heard a German Baptist preacher and in many ways had an ecumenical flavour. The first church building was dedicated in December 1928. Throughout the years a number of Sommerfelder, even though they did not transfer membership, considered the Lowe Farm Bergthaler Mennonite Church to be their church home. Several factors led to the formation of a break-away group named Emmanuel Mission Church in 1954: pressure from the central ministerial (*Lehrdienst*) of the Bergthaler Gemeinde to conform and to enforce a strictly German language program, influence of the non-denominational Winnipeg Bible Institute and discontent strengthened by the Erickson revival. The church steadfastly supported Native Ministries (formerly Mennonite Pioneer Mission) as well as interchurch DVBS and club programs. About eight lay ministers served this congregation for various terms; one of them, Peter P. Heinrichs, for 28 years. Serving as pastors were Peter H. Nickel 1975–1983, Glenn Nickerson 1984–1990 and Henry H. Patkau 1990–1994. Glen Klassen, educated at CMBC, began as pastor in the summer of 1995.

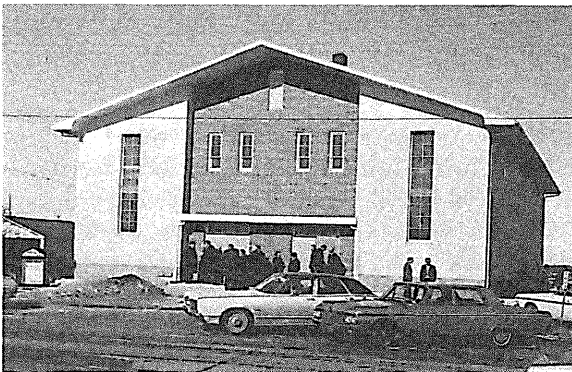
Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Work was begun in 1906 after the Reinländer Gemeinde discontinued services. Relationships with the central Bergthaler Church were not always the best and developments were slow in the struggle to get a building. As early as the 1950s, Rosenfeld was similar to Lowe Farm in wanting more local independence. The church always functioned quite well with lay ministers; many members in the congregation shared assignments and responsibilities. John D. Loeppky served longest in this role from



Commissioning lay minister Herman Kuhl at Rosenfeld, February 17, 1980 (l to r): John Doell, deacon; Ed Enns, CMC representative; Herman Kuhl; John Wiebe, CMM conference minister; Helen Kuhl; Ed Peters, congregational chair; David F. Friesen officiated. Photo: Herman Kuhl

1915–1947, D.L.D. Hildebrandt 1958–1979 and John P. Heinrichs 1944–1956. Herman Kuhl, who studied at the University of Manitoba and CMBC, began to lead the congregation in 1980.

Morden Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Michael Klaassen of the Herold congregation conducted services in Morden from about 1919–1927. Simultaneously, Bergthaler-ordained evangelist C.C. Bergmann, who trained at Moody Bible Institute, was sent to gather the congregation in 1921. He withdrew around 1926. From about 1926–1931 Peter P. Epp served the group jointly with leaders from the Mennonite Brethren, Bergthaler and Herold churches. Although there were seemingly no apparent difficulties in working together, P.P.Epp



Morden Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 1968. Photo: MHCA

and others thought that the group could better be served if it became a Bergthaler entity, which it did in 1931. While P.P. Epp was the official leader until 1935, tension developed and that position was filled by Russian immigrant J.M. Pauls until 1951. Early lay ministers served as follows: J.H. Janzen 1938–1953, W.S. Buhr 1938–1953 and A.H. Born 1954–1967. J.F. Pauls gave leadership 1954–1969, John Friesen 1969–1977, William Block 1979–1985 and Abe Hiebert 1985–1991. Walter Braun (trained at MBBC and Tabor College) and Rick Neufeld (CMBC and University of Manitoba) began serving in 1991 and 1993, respectively.

Carman Mennonite Church. From approximately 1933–1954 the Bergthaler and the Canadian Home Mission Committee were in intense dialogue regarding starting a new church in Carman. Meetings were held sporadically in homes. In 1945 Benjamin Ewert visited the group which reportedly was comprised of people from ten different backgrounds. Henry Funk, employee of the Home Mission Committee, gave leadership 1948–1954. Carman officially became a Bergthaler congregation in 1954 but tension with the central Bergthaler leadership continued virtually until Carman became independent. Dedication of a new church building in May 1982 was a highlight for the approximately 140 members. From 1990 to 1996 six men pastored the congregation beginning with John Krahn 1983–1991 and ending with Marvin Friesen, trained at CMBC and AMBS, 1993–1996.

Grunthal Bergthaler Mennonite Church. When the Chortitzer from East Reserve villages left for Mexico, West Reserve Bergthaler who needed land moved in and began to meet occasionally. A congregation began to form when minister William P. Heinrichs from Lowe Farm moved there in 1936. David D. Klassen moved from Rosenfeld to Spencer-Grunthal in 1939, the year the group got its first



Singing at the delegate sessions in the Grunthal Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 1995.

building, and assisted with the work. A building erected in the town of Grunthal in 1970 received a new addition to the sanctuary in 1983. Ministers Cornelius H. Friesen and Peter A. Dyck served 1950–1970 and 1956–1974, respectively. John B. Wiebe, graduate of MBBC and Providence Theological Seminary, began as leader in 1974.

Homewood Mennonite Church. This group dates the beginning of its work to 1938 after the D.D. Klassen family moved to the area and regular services were begun. However, there had been Mennonites in the area since the 1920s with some of them attending services in Winkler or occasionally meeting in homes. Homewood acquired its first building in 1941 and officially joined the Bergthaler Gemeinde in 1942. D.D. Klassen, farmer and self-educated theologian from Halbstadt, ministered in this congregation for 47 years until 1985. Homewood's pastor in 1996 was Martin Sawatzky, who trained in seminaries in Montevideo, Uruguay and New York and had pastoral experience in Argentina and Ontario before coming to Manitoba.

Gladstone Mennonite Church. This church was an effort by the community and Canadian Home Mission Committee to meet the needs of mostly Sommerfelder settlers who came to the area from the Saskatchewan dust bowl regions during the 1930s Depression. Its beginning was connected to the building of a church in 1947. Gladstone experienced a number of upheavals and not always did all of its members consider the congregation to be Bergthaler. Its ministers—Jacob J. Loewen, Abram C. Funk, Cornelius C. Martens, Randy Fehr, Jacob Friesen and Darrel Teichrib—were elected from within the congregation. Friesen served 36 years from 1955–1991. The congregation withdrew from CMM in 1994.

MacGregor Bergthaler Mennonite Church. From the 1930s to 1950 ministers from the Sommerfelder, Rudnerweider, Bergthaler and Kleine Gemeinde served Saskatchewan and southern Manitoba settlers there as one group. Soon, however, separate congregations, including a Bergthaler group, developed. MacGregor's relationship to the Bergthaler Gemeinde was rather nebulous. Throughout its history the church was blessed with active and dedicated youth groups. Jacob J. Loewen served there, at Gladstone and at Arden for many years. The congregation's latest pastors, Glenn Loewen 1985–1990 and Glenn Nickerson 1991–1994, both studied at Briercrest. While the search for a new minister continued, Victor Funk did much of the pastoral work with the church council taking responsibility for some aspects.

Graysville Mennonite Church. Abe Dahl, who together with

approximately 12 other families settled at Graysville in 1925, organized the first formal worship services in the Orr United Church building. Mennonites met in the morning, the United Church congregation in the afternoon. The Mennonite immigrant group, with a Schönwieser majority, joined the Schönwieser Gemeinde in 1927. After some families moved away and half of the remainder (Schönwieser, Rudnerweider, Sommerfelder, Mennonite Brethren, Bergthaler) were Bergthaler, the group decided to join the Bergthaler Gemeinde in 1953 and to purchase the Orr building with Bergthaler Gemeinde help. Graysville's first minister, Jacob J. Martens, who was ordained by J.P. Klassen in 1929, moved to Winnipegosis in 1930. The next minister to be elected was Franz Letkemann in 1945 who served the congregation faithfully until 1960. Lay ministers Abram H. Born and Johann H. Janzen, as well as pastors Frank Letkemann, Edward Funk and Gerald Neufeld, ministered for shorter terms. Neil Funk, an MBBC graduate, led the congregation since 1987.

Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. This was the sixth GC Mennonite congregation to form in the city but the first and only one to be planned directly by one of the rural Gemeinden. Even though Bethel Mennonite and later St. Vital-Sterling gathered Bergthaler and other Kanadier, that did not seem to meet Bergthaler needs in the city. After initial exploratory work, about 60 Bergthaler people of Winnipeg



A group from Home Street serves at Banrock Point, 1965. Photo: D. Stoesz, Story of Home Street Mennonite Church

met with the Bergthaler Gemeinde ministerial for the first time in July 1957. The group first rented the former Mennonite Brethren church on Edison, then purchased church buildings on Simcoe and St. Matthew 1958–1962, Sherbrook and Ross 1962–1973 and Home Street since 1973. Ernest Wiebe gave significant leadership to the congregation beginning as leading minister at the end of 1957, as part-time salaried minister in 1961, and as Ältester 1962–1966. Following him as pastors were Clarence Epp 1967–1972, David Wiebe 1972–1977, John R. Friesen 1978–1983 and Robert Pauls who studied at CMBC and University of Winnipeg since 1984. In 1995 a group, accompanied by minister Trevor Hutchins, left Home Street, for theological and other reasons, to form the Good News Mennonite Church.

Several other groups with Bergthaler members among them were part of CMM in 1972. Groups in Kane, Arden and Steinbach either dissolved or changed affiliation within the 1957–1972 era.

Kane Bergthaler Mennonite Church. From 1952–1973 the congregation met in the historic church building erected in Edenburg in 1902 and moved to Kane in 1952. Prior to that the group worshipped in a Morden church building moved to Kane in 1948 (later to Lowe Farm) and in a local school house. Isaac Krahn, minister from Winkler, led the congregation from approximately 1951–1962, and Ed Groening as a lay leader for a number of years. The congregation held its last Sunday service, combined with the baptism of six young people, on April 29, 1973. Kane's members transferred to Lowe Farm Bergthaler, to the Free Church and the Rosefarm EMMC church.

Arden Bergthaler Mennonite Church. In 1932 four Mennonite families settled at Arden followed by others coming from various districts in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. For a time the Home Mission Committee was involved, numerous elders and ministers from different Gemeinden served there, and the leadership changed frequently. In 1946 eleven persons were baptized by Ältester David Schulz after which the group claimed Bergthaler affiliation. In 1964 the membership count was eight Bergthaler, four EMMC, six Sommerfelder and four CMC from Saskatchewan. Several leaders, including those of the local EMC congregation, worked diligently to keep the congregation together and the church open. The Arden doors closed in late 1967 or early 1968 and people went their own ways.

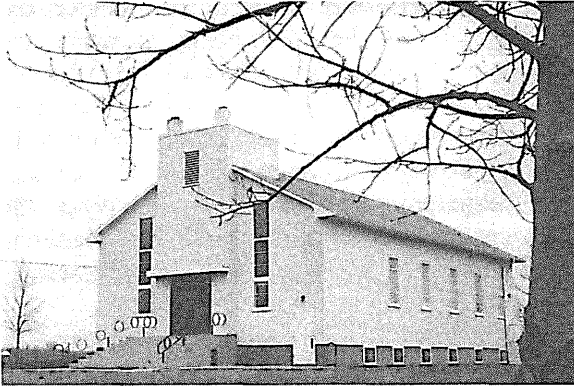
Steinbach Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Like Grunthal, Steinbach attracted people from the West Reserve but they were not a homogeneous core group. Repeatedly they discussed the question of

becoming part of the Bergthaler Gemeinde. Some of the members did not like the idea of being part of the conferences to which the Bergthaler belonged, feeling that it would be too costly. Nevertheless, an independent group formed and eventually became part of the larger Bergthaler structure and conference work. Among others, Wilhelm P. Heinrichs, Peter J. Loewen, David D. Klassen, Abe W. Hiebert and Otto Hamm served the congregation at various times. When the congregation became independent it withdrew from the Manitoba Conference and changed its name to Steinbach Christian Fellowship.

Whitewater Gemeinde

Whitewater Mennonite Church, Boissevain. Thirty men at the organizational brotherhood meeting represented 22 founding families. The first constitution was based on that of the Schönwieser Gemeinde in Winnipeg. Ältester J.P. Klassen led the group at its first Thanksgiving service in 1925. Ältester Franz F. Enns served at the first baptismal service in 1926. When Enns moved to Lena that fall he also became Ältester of Whitewater Gemeinde. The group grew and was so spread out that morning services were held in two places. In 1939 these two units joined to build a church at Whitewater. The congregation located to Boissevain in 1960. In the course of 45 years, three Ältesten served the Whitewater Gemeinde and led the local congregation: Franz F. Enns 1926–1938, G.G. Neufeld 1933–1967 and Jacob P. Harms 1957–1971. The latter two were farmers. Of the more than a dozen and a half lay ministers and pastors who served the congregation, a number became leaders on CMM committees, institutions and elsewhere. Examples include Peter Peters on the Finance Committee; Ed Cornelson, teacher at Elim; Jake Neufeld and Wanda, Koinonia camp managers; Peter P. Harms, conference evangelist and leader of the independent Killarney Mennonite Church. Three members became moderators of the Manitoba Conference: G.G. Neufeld 1947–1952, 1958–1960; Jacob P. Harms 1966–1969; Werner Neufeld 1975–1978. The latest pastors, Valery Izbicki 1987–1990 and Jake Neufeld 1990–1995, were followed by Al Rempel who studied at Winnipeg Bible College and various universities.

Crystal City Mennonite Church. Twelve 1920s immigrant families arrived in the fall of 1924, six moved elsewhere the following year and the remainder began to meet for fellowship in private homes. The group grew to 20 families by 1930 with additions also coming from Sommerfelder and other Kanadier groups which moved into the area. Lay member Peter Hildebrand donated an acre of land for a church



Crystal City Mennonite Church, 1963.
Photo: MHCA

building in spring 1948. In a decade this new building, dedicated in May 1949, was no longer adequate. In 1958 the congregation divided into the Mather group and the Crystal City group with a church building in each location. Crystal City's local leadership included lay ministers Heinrich H. Janzen 1928–1929, Gerhard Bock 1940–1958, Peter G. Harms 1954–1966, Abram Reimer 1954–1989 and Allen Harms beginning in 1991. Abe Buhler 1981–1983, the first salaried pastor, was followed by Gary Giesbrecht 1984–1988 and George Derksen, who studied at Briercrest, 1989–1994.

Mather Mennonite Church. Thirty families, including minister Gerhard H. Bock, transferred from Crystal City in 1958 to form the Mather Mennonite Church. Although the discussions and negotiations leading to the 1958 separation were not harmonious, efforts were made to heal the breach. Serving the Mather congregation were Gerhard H. Bock 1958–1973, Johann H. Warkentin 1959–1966 and Alvin Peters 1966–1972. Two issues caused much friction in the Mather setting: changing structures that came with the move away from the Ältesten and Gemeinde system to a hired pastor and the new constitution that gave women voting rights which they had not had until 1971. Sharing a pastor with the Mather-Cartwright United churches and working together with them in areas of mutual concern were seen by some as progressive and acceptable, to others again it threatened their concept of what was Mennonite tradition and practise. Peter Buhler, pastor 1973–1976, resigned and the church divided. Norman Friesen served the Mather congregation until it dissolved in approximately 1980.

Trinity Mennonite Fellowship. This group formed in 1976 out of the split from Mather Mennonite Church. The congregation drew its membership from the local communities of Mather, Clearwater and

Cartwright, and that influenced the choice of the name, Trinity Mennonite Fellowship. Pastors who served the group were Clare Neufeld 1976–1981, George Toews 1981–1987, Gordon Janzen 1987–1991, Linda Enns 1990–1991, Gary Daught 1991–1994 and Ernie Hildebrand since 1994. Hildebrand received his training at CMBC and Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon.

Rivers. In 1928 this group of three or four Fuerstenländer and four Whitewater families joined the Schönwieser Gemeinde. When a nearby Wheatland group began services in 1928 the Rivers' families joined them. During the 1930s Depression, families left again. Of the nine that remained, seven were Schönwieser and two Whitewater. Interestingly, the group joined the Whitewater Gemeinde in 1939. How could that happen when the Schönwieser were in the majority? According to (Schönwieser) deacon Abram Krahn, still resident in Rivers in 1994: "Wie boage bie" (we submitted to remain together in peace). The way some of them coped with that move was that the Winnipeg ministers would let them know when they were coming by on their way to Oak Lake. Then they would stop at Rivers to get together. In 1950 a building was dedicated on land donated by member Heinrich P. Lepp. Ministers who served the congregation included A. Paetkau, Johann H. Tiessen, A.J. Isaak and A.J. Martens. Toward the end of 1964, 27 families (as compared to 42 about ten years earlier) were part of Rivers. As elsewhere young people took up jobs in the cities, Brandon or Winnipeg. Some of the younger farming families wanted English services and started attending Grace Mennonite in Brandon. Some older people, like the congregation's long-time leader Abram J. Isaak (1930–1961), moved to Brandon as well. The remaining families met and continued services in German. These petered out and the group dissolved in 1989.

Three Whitewater Gemeinde groups closed their doors prior to 1972. They were Ninga, Manitou and Lena.

Ninga Mennonite Church. Ältester Franz F. Enns visited individual families in the Ninga, Killarney and Holmfield areas as early as 1931. Services in school and in homes as well as participation in the Whitewater group were all tried. In 1951 the group organized, held a first baptismal service and gradually the membership multiplied. Evangelist Abram G. Neufeld gave leadership to the group. When the Whitewater contingent of the Gemeinde moved into Boissevain, the Ninga group asked to join them and received a warm welcome. The last Sunday morning service was held at Ninga on December 4, 1960



Margaretha and A. G. Neufeld, 1963. Photo: Neufeld, Whitewater Gemeinde

and the group dissolved. The larger majority of its members joined Whitewater. Some families participated at Lena but soon joined a new group in Killarney.

Manitou Mennonite Church. The mixed Russländer and Bergthaler membership in the Manitou Mennoniten Gemeinde, as it named itself in 1927, joined the General Conference of North America in that year but postponed a decision to join an existing Gemeinde until the 1930s. The decade 1949 to 1959 included the most fruitful years for the congregation. After that several members left because of the continued use of the German language. Young people took jobs in the city. The group kept declining until it dissolved in April 1967. For 25 years of that time G.G. Neufeld, “big Abe’s” brother, who was elected in 1933 and ordained the following year, led the congregation until its dissolution. For those years he was its only minister.

Lena Mennonite Church. This group, which produced numerous church and conference leaders for later decades, began under the leadership of Ältesten Franz F. Enns. Leading ministers at Lena were Franz F. Enns 1926–1931, Hermann Sawatzky 1933–1934, Heinrich M. Epp 1934–1945, Jacob D. Peters 1946–1956 and Abram J. Neufeld 1956–1968. One of the factors in Lena’s dissolution was the changing Mennonite landscape in the surrounding area. When in 1960 the Ninga group terminated, a few families joined Lena rather than Whitewater at Boissevain. However, for some of the families which earlier had participated at Ninga the distance both to Lena and to Boissevain was restraining. New families moved into the Killarney area as well. As a

result a group in Killarney emerged, drawing members from the Lena group. Peter P. Harms, formerly Whitewater and Lena, became Killarney's leader. Lena finalized its closure in 1968.

Blumenorter Gemeinde

This Gemeinde, with local worshipping groups at *Blumenort*, *Gnadenthal*, *Reinland* and *Rosenort*, centralized to form one congregation in 1985 with Rosenort (renamed Rosetown) as the meeting place. Reinland, reluctant to give up the good inter-Mennonite village Sunday school and services, continued these for another ten years while simultaneously remaining part of the Blumenorter congregation. The Blumenorter church was able to absorb people from a variety of Mennonite backgrounds, adapting without causing division. Blumenorter ministers, influential beyond the Gemeinde, included J.P. Bueckert as one of the Manitoba Ältesten of the 1920s and 1930s and educators Johann D. Adrian (MCI, CMBC), P.A. Rempel (Elim), P.J. Schaefer (MCI), A.A. Teichroeb (Elim) and Gerhard Ens (MCI). Rempel and Schaefer wrote Sunday school and Mennonite history texts; Ens was a long-time broadcaster and served as editor of *Der Bote* 1977–1991; and J.K. Klassen was director of Mennonite Radio Mission, leading pastor at Vineland, Ontario, and Winkler Bergthaler congregations and on the CMM Pastoral Leadership Commission. Following A.A. Teichroeb 1969–1975 and C.C. Thiessen 1976–1982, Peter D. Zacharias gave ministerial leadership to the congregation. He received training at the Manitoba Teachers' College and Winnipeg's universities.

Wingham Mennonite Church was the only Blumenorter affiliate which was not within West Reserve boundaries. Thirty-one of its 38 charter members came from the Blumenorter Gemeinde, mostly from the Hochfeld local comprised of former Gruenfelder in Russia. They settled in the Elm Creek-Wingham area during the Depression and affiliated with the Blumenorter in 1938. A church building, which was erected and dedicated in 1939, was located on land donated by a participating family. When this building became inadequate in spite of an addition in the 1940s, a second one was erected 1960–1961. In 1970 a group left to form an English-language EMMC church which later dissolved. The remaining members had strong Blumenorter ties and in 1982 Wingham became fully autonomous. In its first 50 years, 1933–1983, Wingham counted five ordained ministers in its midst at various times. They were Peter Fehr 1946–1965, Abram Epp 1965–1969, Johan Giesbrecht, Isaak Penner and Jakob Nikkel. Lay



Blumenorter Lehrdienst (ministerial, 1960s (l to r): F.F. Sawatzky, Dietrich Peters (deacon), C.B. Krahn, H.G. Ens, A.A. Teichroeb, J.K. Klassen, Paul J. Schaefer, J.H. Klassen, A.G. Teichroeb (deacon), A.P. Bueckert, P.A. Rempel, Gerhard Ens, Peter Fehr (Wingham). Missing: I.H. Tiessen. Photo: Ens family

leadership and outside help served the congregation at various times. Daniel D. Peters, former Blumenorter and COM worker in Mexico, ministered at Wingham for nine years, followed in 1994 by Edward Funk on an interim basis. In the mid-1990s attendance on a Sunday morning numbered about 35 and young people returned from Winnipeg on weekends to keep the church open.

Lichtenauer Gemeinde

St. Elizabeth and Arnaud with members also from Dominion City and surrounding districts formed one *Russländer Gemeinde* at first with the name *Arnaud Mennoniten Gemeinde*. While initially wooed to become part of the *Schönwieser Gemeinde*, the groups chose to organize independently. When the first church was built at St. Elizabeth in 1929 the name was changed to the *Lichtenau Mennoniten Gemeinde* reflecting the origin of some of its members in Russia. It was known to be the first church building in Manitoba of 1920s kirchliche immigrants. Abram Harder was the first *Gemeinde* leader, Peter H. Enns its first *Ältester*. It is from this *Gemeinde* that Johann H. Enns, who was its first choir conductor, was called to teach in the *Gretna Bible School*; then, when he was serving as leader of the *Lichtenauer Gemeinde*, to the *Schönwieser Gemeinde* in Winnipeg in 1932. Ministerial leaders of the congregation after Peter H. Enns included Heinrich Warkentin, Heinrich Friesen and Nicholas Unruh who was ordained as *Ältester* in 1959. When families (including minister families) left to retire or establish new homes in Winnipeg or elsewhere, the *Lichtenauer* congregation began to dwindle. With attendance having shrunk to 10 or 12 people it held its last service in December 1989. With one minister, a song leader in his 80s, no pianist, no choir, no Sunday school and no youth, the remaining members agreed to close the church. The church building was donated to the Mennonite Heritage Village at Steinbach in 1994–1995.

Arnaud Mennonite Church. Because of the distance to St. Elizabeth the people who lived closer to Arnaud organized to form a separate congregation in June 1944 when economic circumstances made this possible. They immediately began to build a new church and dedicated it on December 10, 1944. The parting with St. Elizabeth was not entirely amiable since Arnaud wanted to relate to St. Elizabeth as a sister congregation while St. Elizabeth wanted to be the main church with Arnaud as its branch. However, the tension resolved itself. Until the early 1960s Arnaud turned to the *Blumenorter Ältesten* to officiate at baptism and communion. Arnaud's leading ministers were Abram



Baptism at Arnaud Mennonite Church, 1949 (seated, l to r): John Poetker, J.P. Bueckert (Blumenortler), Abram Warkentin. Photo: Elizabeth P. Enns

Warkentin, Johann Poetker and John Krueger until 1977, after which no local ministerial candidates accepted ordination. This forced the congregation to look to a salaried ministry with persons hired from outside the congregation. David Wiebe served the congregation for nine years, Jacob Funk four years, Abe Neufeld interim and Byron Rempel-Burkholder from 1991 to 1993. Since then Lynell Bergen and Brian Dyck co-pastored the Arnaud Mennonite Church. One of the best known Arnaud leaders in the Manitoba and Canadian conferences was P.R. Harder who was elected as minister in Arnaud and ordained at Sargent Mennonite Church. He first served with the Manitoba Youth Organization, as CMC secretary 1955–1959, on CMM’s program committee 1958–1964 and as CMBC business manager 1961–1974.

Elim Gemeinde

Elim Mennonite Church, Grunthal. Early worship places of the 1920s Russländer who took over farms vacated by Mennonites going to Mexico included Grunthal, Rosengard School, New Barkfield and private homes in other districts. These gradually all centralized in Grunthal. Forming a Gemeinde with the Chortitzer Church or the Spencer Berghthaler group did not work. The name Elim was “chosen according to Exodus 15:27 for we had truly wandered through the wilderness and wished to be refreshed at the well of the Word of God

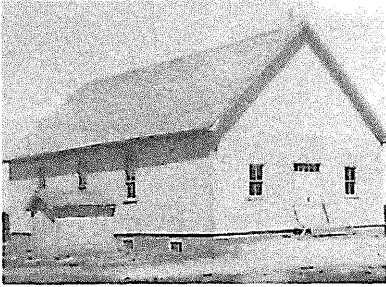


Drama group at Elim Grunthal. Photo: Elim Gemeinde

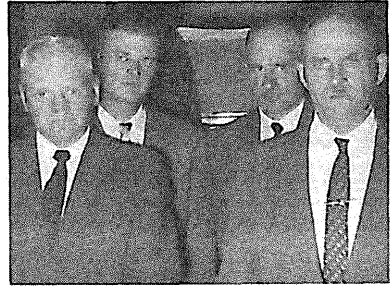
and to rest in the shadow of his grace.”⁶ The first newly constructed church building was dedicated in 1939. Serving the congregation in lay ministry for more than ten years were its only Ältester Johann J. Enns (39 years), Nick A. Janz (32), Abram H. Froese (27), Frank J. Klassen (25), Cornelius M. Froese (23), David Fast (19) and Henry D. Warkentin (18). David Fast, who transferred to Steinbach Mennonite Church in the 1950s, served CMM as secretary 1947–1948, 1958–1960 and on the *Altenheimkomitee* (Old Folks’ Home) for a number of years beginning in 1951. CMBC graduate Diedrich J. Gerbrandt became Elim’s first salaried pastor 1985–1990 followed in 1991 by Herb Franz, graduate of Winnipeg Bible College.

Nordheimer Gemeinde

Nordheim Mennonite Church, Winnipegosis. The 1920s immigrants in Winnipegosis and Fork River organized into the Nordheimer Gemeinde in 1933. In 1935 a 30 feet by 40 feet meeting house was built by voluntary labour by the men. The women plastered and whitewashed the building. Some of the first five families to comprise the group were previously members of the Blumenorter Gemeinde; therefore, J.P. Bueckert was asked to serve as Ältester 1933–1953. More families of various backgrounds, including several Mennonite Brethren, were added in later years. In 1953 the congregation ordained its own Ältester, C.C. Janzen, who served until 1967. Janzen was active in both the Canadian and Manitoba conferences. Three lay ministers, Abram G. Bergen, Henry Klassen and Jake Wiebe, served the congregation alongside C.C. Janzen for more than three decades. Two others, Gerhard P. Goertzen and Jacob J. Martens, who came



The Nordheim Mennonite Church in the country, Winnipegosis. Photos: Nettie and Jake Wiebe



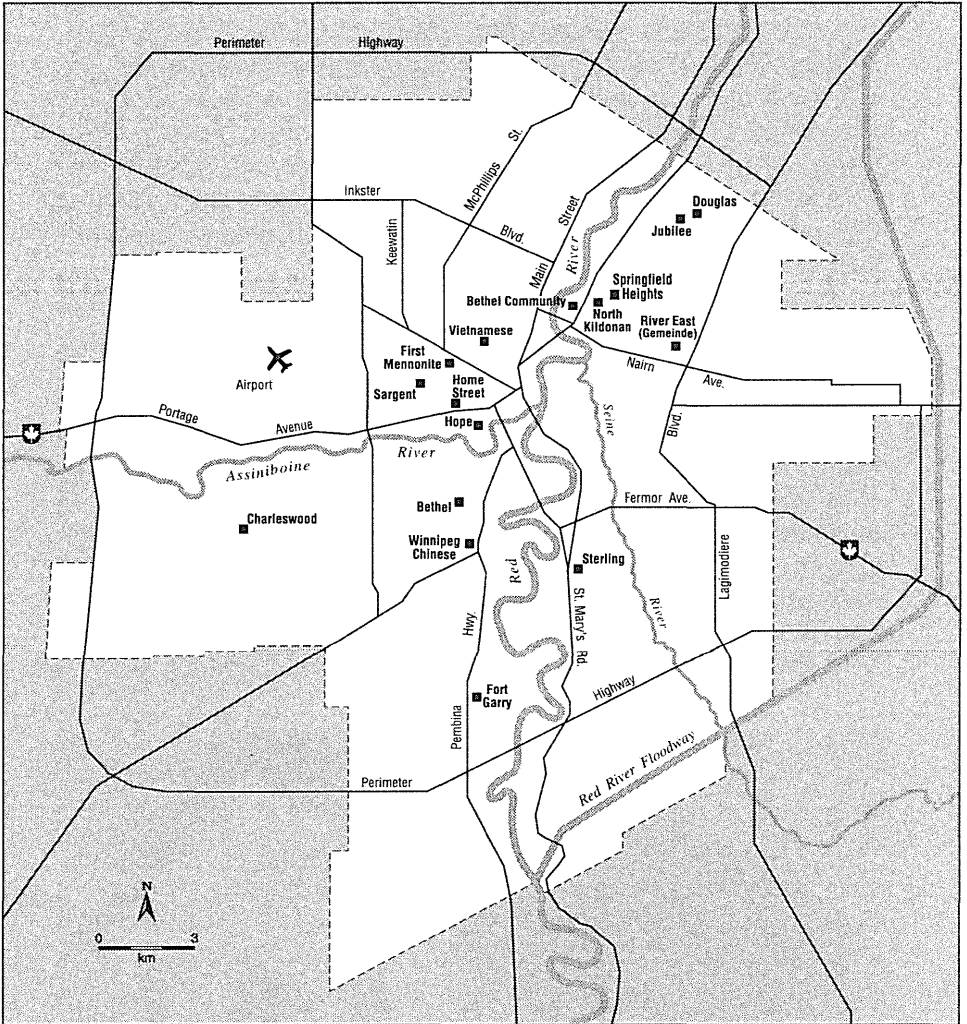
Lay ministerial team, 1959 (l to r): C.C. Janzen, Henry Klassen, Jake Wiebe, Abram Bergen

from Manitou and Graysville in 1933, served less than a decade. The first salaried pastor, Baptist Glenn Nickerson (trained at Briercrest), was hired in 1981. He was followed by D. Daniel Rempel (trained at Biola College) in 1984 and Dutch Reformed George Oosterveld in 1990. Don Read (Ontario Bible College) served the congregation since 1994. Because of its geographical location the congregation was never very involved in Conference programs but a number of its young people attended MCI and CMBC. The congregation focused on witness and service to its surrounding community, particularly through its project, the Sagemace Bible Camp. The camp, located northwest of town on Lake Winnipegosis, was operated largely by volunteers from the congregation with often a guest teacher assisting. It served Ukrainian, Icelandic, Native and Mennonite children several weeks every summer.

Schönwieser Gemeinde

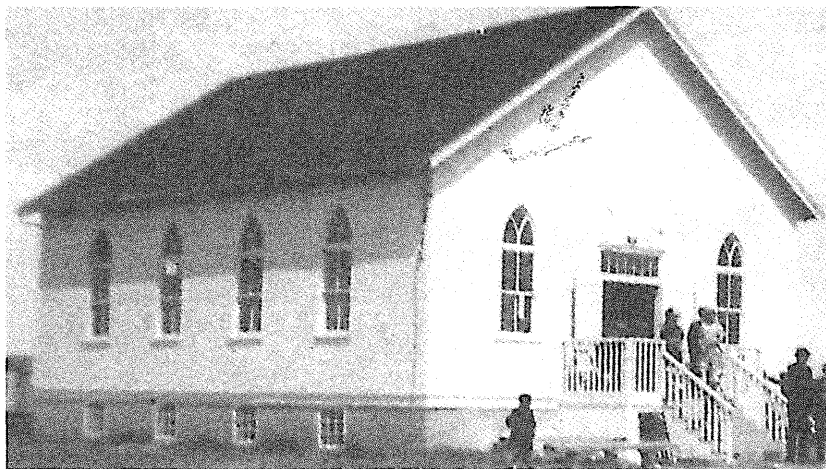
First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. This was Winnipeg's first and always Manitoba's largest GC Mennonite congregation (see Map 5). The greatest influx of members probably came in 1949 when of 154 members received (62 by baptism and 92 by transfer) 119 were post-World War II arrivals.⁷ The congregation's first meeting place was the *Zionskirche* at 394 Alexander Avenue. The building at 922 Notre Dame Avenue was started in 1947 and after two major additions completed in 1983. First Mennonite's leading ministers were always salaried. After J.P. Klassen 1928–1939 and J.H. Enns 1939–1965, these leaders were Jacob H. Wiebe 1965–1969, John H. Neufeld 1969–1984, Jacob Krause acting 1978, Victor Kliever interim 1984–1986 and Franz Wiebe since 1986. Assisting in various capaci-

Map 5
CMM Congregations in Winnipeg



ties and for longer and shorter periods of time were J.J. Schulz, Isaak Klassen, Victor Schroeder, Peter Dirks, Daniel Loewen, Wilhelm Martens, Jacob Sawatzky, Heinrich Goerz, Johann Schroeder, Roy Vogt, Alfred Schroeder, Harold Peters-Fransen, Waldemar Janzen, Peter Bartel, Ralph Wischnewski, Mark von Kampen and John R. Friesen. First Mennonite's ministers and choirs were bilingual, English and German, for a number of decades. The church always had a large percentage of seniors for whom it provided three senior citizen homes—Sunset, Arlington and Autumn Houses—sponsored by the First Mennonite Senior Citizens' Home, Inc., the Manitoba Housing Corporation (with provincial and federal funding) and the Mennonite Benevolent Society, respectively.⁸

Niverville Mennonite Church. Niverville, comprised largely of 1920s immigrants who moved into Mennonite vacated farmyards, affiliated with the Schönwieser Gemeinde. They chose to form an independent congregation in 1944. That year they also bought a small church building. A new sanctuary was built and dedicated in 1958, a Sunday school house in 1967 and further expansion undertaken in 1976. Disunity in the early 1960s led to an eventual departure of 47 members in 1967 who later formed the EMMC Elim Mennonite Church. Johann Braun and Jacob Klassen were leaders in Niverville's early development stages, followed by John Krahn, Albert Leppky and Peter Janzen. Niverville's first full-time salaried pastor, John Siemens from Herbert, Saskatchewan, served 1971–1981, Del Epp of Iowa



Niverville Mennonite Church. Photo: *Jubilate*

1982–1986, Clarence Epp 1986–1990, Abe Neufeld 1992–1993 and John Lenshyn of Calgary beginning in 1993. Lenshyn studied at University of Western Ontario and AMBS.

Springstein Mennonite Church. Of Springstein's 38 founding members 16 lived in Oak Bluff, 18 in Springstein and four in the Starbuck area. Springstein built its church in 1938 and became independent of the Schönwieser Gemeinde in 1939. Wilhelm Enns, ordained as Ältester in 1941, led the congregation until 1965. Rudy Goerzen, partially salaried, carried on until part-time workers were hired: Gerhard I. Peters 1968–1971, Henry Neufeld 1971–1973 and Ervin Siemens 1973–1974. These were followed by full-time ministers: Bruno Epp 1974–1977, Ernest Wiebe 1977–1981, M. Albert Durksen 1981–1990, Ernie Hildebrand 1990–1994, and co-pastors Don Plett and Elizabeth Plett beginning in 1994. Springstein was probably best known for its leadership in the founding and development of Camp Assiniboia. In 1977 Springstein's leading minister, Bruno Epp, ordained Camps with Meaning's first full-time director, Terry Burkhalter, to that ministry. Herman Enns was ordained by his father, Wilhelm Enns, at Springstein in 1962, to ministry in Hamilton, Ontario. Wilhelm Enns, particularly, but also other Springstein members were active on committees in the CMM and CMC.

Schönfelder Mennonite Church, Pigeon Lake. Members from the scattered groups living in the Headingly, Meadows, Pigeon Lake and



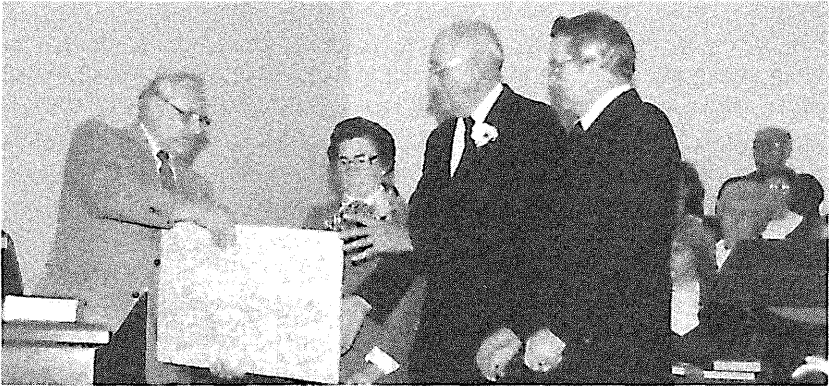
Visiting at Springstein Mennonite Church. Photo: Springstein Mennonite Church: Memories

Marquette areas left the Schönwieser Gemeinde in 1939 and organized as the Schönfelder congregation with David Abrahams, a teacher from Schönfeld, Molotschna, as Ältester. A building was first acquired in 1929. The year Abrahams was ordained (1931), Henry J. Becker was elected to the ministry. In the very first years at Pigeon Lake four ministers ordained in Russia served the groups as well. They were Jacob J. Braun (who moved to Ontario in 1928), Johan Wall, Johann A. Driedger and Gerhard Doerksen. The congregation always had lay ministers only. Besides Henry Becker, whose interest and involvement in theological and other issues was evident at conference sessions and CMBC annual lectures, Jacob B. Voth and Jacob Warkentin served the congregation 1941–1991. Since then Arnold Voth and Robert Warkentin were leading and assistant minister, respectively.

Glenlea Mennonite Church. This small Russländer group affiliated with the Schönwieser in 1928 and chose independence in 1945. J.P. Klassen ordained four ministers—Jacob J. Pankratz, Cornelius G. Peters, Johann C. Friesen and Johann J. Rogalsky—in 1930–1931 to serve Glenlea in the early years. Two later ministers had origins in the Whitewater Gemeinde, namely, Jacob J. Toews who settled at Glenlea in 1937 and Frank F. Enns who joined in 1969. Glenlea was the last Manitoba congregation to ordain an Ältester, F.F. Enns in 1977, who served as leading minister until 1989. Other lay ministers, like Jacob A. Friesen and John Friesen, served as well. In 1990 the congregation hired its first half-time pastor, Delvyn Epp, assisted by Ernie Wiens, lay minister.

Oak Lake Mennonite Church. This group, farthest west in the province and dating its beginnings to 1929, was the last group to separate from the Schönwieser Gemeinde in 1974.⁹ Peter C. Penner was the first minister in charge of the local group and served 1929–1945. In 1932 several families left the Oak Lake Schönwieser to join the Whitewater Gemeinde. A church building was first erected in 1949. Forty years later, helped along by plans of Manitoba's Highways Department, the congregation relocated to the town of Oak Lake and dedicated a new building in 1990. Following the traditional shared lay ministry pattern, Jacob Sawatsky served longest as leader, and that since 1952. Several other lay ministers served for shorter periods of time alongside Penner and Sawatsky. Jacob and Rosie Sawatsky's sons, Dan and David, served as such beginning in 1988.

North Kildonan Mennonite Church. North Kildonan, which in the early years was on the outskirts of Winnipeg and had land available for



Recognition of the long and faithful service of lay minister Jakob Wiebe and his wife Anna. The engraved plaque is presented by Frank J. Neufeld, congregational chair, with David Epp, leading minister, looking on. Photo: Eileen Peters

homes and gardens, began with services in 1929. Its original members were Russländer of both urban and rural origins. In 1948 and the years following, post-World War II immigrants arrived from Europe, Paraguay and Argentina. The congregation was located at two sites: from 1935–1951 at 256 Devon Avenue (an MB church building) and since then at 1131 Roch Street. Daniel H. Loewen served North Kildonan as first Schönwieser Ältester. After independence from the Schönwieser in 1956, Viktor J. Schroeder served as Ältester until 1969. Two other leading ministers, Abram E. Rempel 1967–1978 and Edward Enns 1985–1990, were well known beyond North Kildonan. Rempel served as CMM moderator 1969–1972 and in Mexico with COM; Enns served congregations from British Columbia to Ontario, was ordained as Ältester in Saskatoon and was moderator of the CMC 1969–1971. Of the numerous other lay and salaried ministers Jacob Wiebe and David Epp served the congregation longest, 1957–1990s and 1971–1991, respectively. Additionally, a number of lay members participated regularly in the pulpit ministry. North Kildonan's latest ministerial leaders, M. Albert Durksen, studied at MBBC and at AMBS, and Ferdinand Funk at CMBC and University of Winnipeg.

Steinbach Mennonite Church. Although the first Russländer Mennonites settled in Steinbach in 1923, the congregation dates its beginnings to 1936 when Isaak Warkentin began organizing the kirchliche group locally. Until well into the 1930s the Schönwieser minister came every third Sunday of the month. On other Sundays

people went to Mennonite Brethren services or elsewhere. The first of the four places of worship the congregation built was dedicated in 1942, the year the separation from the Schönwieser Gemeinde took place. Membership increased with the arrival of post-World War II immigrants, 1960s and 1970s immigrants from Paraguay (grandchildren of the original 1870s Bergthal immigrants), a few Danziger, Mennonites from Mexico and the joining of several non-Mennonites. Besides the lay ministers active in the 1990s—Peter Harms, Abe Wiebe, Isbrand Hiebert—at least eight other ministers served the congregation in various ways. Leading ministers were Isaac Warkentin 1938–1942, Peter Reimer 1942–1957, Henry P. Friesen 1956–1962, Frank K. Isaac (the first salaried minister with the authority to perform the earlier functions of the Ältester) 1962–1975, Abe Neufeld 1976–1989 and Paul Dyck, who studied at University of Manitoba and AMBS, since then. In 1989 the congregation moved to a second salaried full-time (assistant) pastor by hiring Craig Friesen who terminated in 1995; he was followed by Randy Hildebrand, both CMBC graduates.

Several congregations were owned by more than one Gemeinde because each had members living there. On the one hand, there was a feeling of responsibility toward these members with often a petition



Steinbach Mennonite Church volunteers split wood at Moose Lake Camp.

from the latter for help. On the other hand, there was sometimes the inability the members to let go of their Gemeinde of origin and of the leaders to release their members. Some congregations, like Rivers, Oak Lake, Steinbach and Graysville, which had similar situations, came to some kind of resolution. In McCreary and Morris things turned out differently.

McCreary. In August 1934, 12 Kanadier and eight Russländer at McCreary represented the Bergthaler, Mennonite Brethren, Sommerfelder, Schönwieser, Blumenorter and Whitewater Gemeinden. Parts of the group were organized by the Bergthaler and the Blumenorter, respectively,¹⁰ and at various times also ministered to by Ältesten from the Schönwieser, Whitewater and other Gemeinden as well as by the Home Mission Committee. Complicating relationships were intense individuals who could not seem to fit in anywhere. Over the years countless efforts were made to unify the various factions. By 1947, when members began to move out of the area to British Columbia and elsewhere, the opportunities for a united congregation diminished. Ten years later only three Mennonite families and a modest deserted church building remained.

Morris. The Morris group had eight Bergthaler families and seven Schönwieser families in 1940. The leading minister of the group was Jacob H. Wiebe who later became leading minister of First Mennonite in Winnipeg. Worshipping with this group were Sommerfelder and other Kanadier. From 1937 to 1944 the Bergthaler leadership encouraged the people to find a solution to their needs by getting together with the Schönwieser and other Russländer. From the Schönwieser J.H. Enns wrote in 1940 that they were “making efforts to come to an understanding with the Bergthaler.”¹¹ For a time Bergthaler workers, among them D.H. Loewen, were placed in Morris on an ongoing basis to nurture the group. Jacob Wiebe gave leadership from the Schönwieser, D.K. Friesen for the Evangelical Mennonite Conference. Partly because members moved out of the area, different alignments emerged, and in June 1969 the church’s Conference affiliation was on the agenda. The congregation asked to be released from the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba in favour of joining the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Conference in April 1972.¹²

Mission Congregations

Sterling Mennonite Fellowship, Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church, Grace Mennonite Church, Brandon were introduced earlier



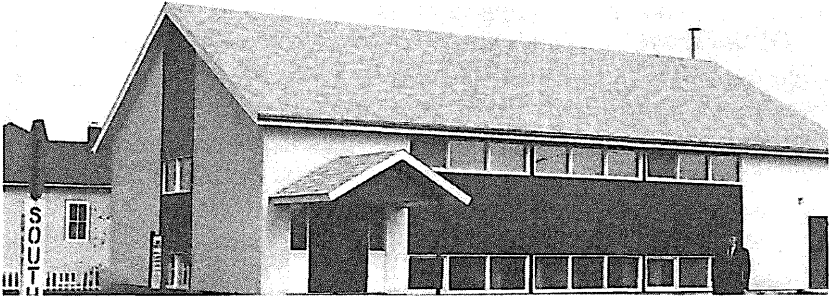
Sunday morning worship service at Sterling Mennonite Church. Photo: MHCA

(see chapter 6). All three grew and developed their own distinctiveness. Many leaders came and went within these congregations.

Sterling Mennonite Fellowship. H.T. Klassen served 1958–1963. He was followed by Jacob W. Schmidt 1963–1968, David Letkeman 1968–1969, John F. Wiebe 1969–1975, Helmut Rauser 1975–1976, Gary Loewen 1977–1979, Don MacBurney 1979–1980, Gary Martens 1979–1984, Erwin Wiebe 1984–1986 and Norm Voth since 1988.

Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church. Due to “constitutional differences,” Sargent’s first worker and Ältester, Jacob Toews, resigned in 1958 and, together with 84 members, left the church.¹³ The congregation elected Gerhard Lohrenz as its leading minister and ordained him as Ältester. He was succeeded in 1971 by Jake Harms, whose service until 1986 concluded Sargent’s leadership by Ältesten. Martin Sawatzky led the congregation 1987–1990, Isaac Block 1991–1995. Interim leadership was provided a number of times by Art Fast, John Dyck, Gary Schapansky and Bernie Neufeld 1986–1987, Ben Sawatzky 1990–1991 and Jake F. Pauls since 1995. Assisting regular and interim leaders from 1988 were Rhonda Wiebe Warkentin until 1994 and Ken Warkentin until 1996. Numerous lay ministers were always part of the Sargent ministerial leadership as well.

Grace Mennonite Church, Brandon. After Henry Isaac 1957–1961, the following led the congregation: Peter A. Unger 1961–1967, David W. Braun 1969–1971, Reynold Kipfer 1971–1974, Peter Bartel 1977–1983, Henry Patkau 1983–1989, Darrel Thiessen 1990–1992, David Wiebe (interim) 1993–1994, George Derksen since 1994. In 1993 the group divided because of theological differences.



Grace Mennonite Church in Brandon, 1962. Photo: MHCA

The smaller group formed the Jubilee Mennonite Church.

Bethel Mennonite Church. When the Kanadier group led by Benjamin Ewert was taken over by Russländer in the 1920s and voted to be Schönwieser, Kanadier again felt they had no place. They had less interest in maintaining German language services and sometimes their commitment was still to their rural Gemeinden. Their participation was renewed when they reorganized in 1937 with about 21 people meeting on Sunday afternoons at the Emmanuel Baptist Church on Sargent Avenue. After two or three years the group, with help from the GC Home Mission Board, rented an old church on the corner of Sargent and Sherbrook. The CMC Home Mission Committee paid Benjamin Ewert's salary. In 1943 I.I. Friesen succeeded Ewert. From all-German services the group changed in 1940 to morning worship in German and evening services in English. According to Edward Enns, it is almost certain that the first week-day Young People's meetings in Manitoba were begun by Bethel Mission. With Conference support the group bought a church building on Westminster and Furby in 1945. After becoming self-supporting and dropping the "Mission" from its name, Bethel dedicated a newly constructed building on Stafford and Carter in 1955 in an effort to meet the needs of the growing congregation. Bethel's leading ministers since I.I. Friesen, who served 1943–1951, were David Schroeder 1951–1954, George Groening 1954–1966, William Block 1967–1976, Jake F. Pauls 1977–1994 and Peter Janzen 1994–1996. Assistant (salaried) ministers began during I.I. Friesen's term as follows: Hugo Hildebrand, Abe Bergen, Don Friesen, Werner Wiens, Dave Tiessen, Irma Fast Dueck, David Bergen, Ruth E. Boehm and Jonathan Neufeld. Besides its leading and associate ministers (a new term as of 1995), Bethel became the home of more than a dozen lay and retired ministers. David Epp-Stobbe was

scheduled to begin as leading minister in summer 1996.

Of the above so-called mission congregations, only Bethel multiplied not only in membership but also by birthing other congregations. For all of them Bethel Mennonite provided initial leadership and funding. They were Burrows Bethel Mennonite Church 1961 (originally located in Elmwood and named Elmwood Bethel), Charleswood Mennonite Church 1963 and Hope Mennonite Church 1986. The reasons for their formation varied and the locations chosen accordingly (see Daughter Churches below).

Independent or Mixed Beginnings

Six congregations belonged to this category: Thompson United Mennonite Church, Portage la Prairie Mennonite Church, Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite Church, River East Menno Gemeinde, Vietnamese Mennonite Church and Good Shepherd Mennonite Church of Rainy River, Ontario.

Thompson United Mennonite Church. Thompson, the home of INCO (International Nickel Company), the world's second largest nickel-producing operation, drew numerous religious denominations and ethnic groups to its area in the late 1950s. Summer job opportunities attracted male students from CMBC, Seminary and elsewhere in 1958, 1959 and 1961. With the encouragement of the GC Board of Christian Service the 1959 group organized an interdenominational Mennonite summer unit to minister in Thompson. They conducted Sunday school, placed Bibles in the homes of their pupils, formed a unit quartet and showed Moody Science films. According to I.P.



United Mennonite Church at Thompson. Photo: MHCA

Klassen, who moved to Thompson in 1960 and was called the main promoter of building a Mennonite church there, these groups of men established a fine reputation for Mennonites in the community.

On behalf of Mennonite Pioneer Mission, George Groening wrote the city of Thompson for permission to obtain a lot and to construct a church in order to look after the spiritual welfare of Indians and people of mixed blood. Among the Mennonite families that moved to Thompson were school teacher Henry Letkemann and family and the Peter Peters from Steinbach. The latter built a house to be used as a chapel. Both the CMC and CMM Missions Committees provided funds in the early 1960s and John F. and Jane Wiebe were asked to be leaders of the work. Originally the GCs and the Mennonite Brethren worshipped together and the name Thompson United Mennonite Church was particularly appropriate as they tried to unite all Mennonites in the town. However, when the group applied for dual Conference membership, the Mennonite Brethren turned them down which resulted in a split with the Mennonite Brethren starting their own congregation. In 1963 the Mennonite and non-Mennonite participants organized and, having outgrown the first chapel, built a new one. For much of its history, the congregation was without ministers. Leading ministers/pastors served mostly three-year terms or less and included John Harder, Archie Jantzen, Tom Neufeld, Vern Redekop and Gloria Redekop, Allan R. Froese, and Don Read. Joan Blatz began ministerial leadership in the congregation in 1994. All persons attending were invited to participate in church positions regardless of age, race or gender. A heavy emphasis on the inclusion of children extended to their participation in communion and all aspects of worship. Adult Day Care, dialogue and community groups used the church building during the week.

Portage Mennonite Church. The earliest membership of this congregation came from GC, Mennonite Brethren and EMC backgrounds. Some of the members had been part of the mid-1960s Mennonite Brethren church planting effort. That group dissolved in 1973 due to conflict within the group and in the Conference over the status of those who were not Mennonite Brethren. As a result some members moved away and the remaining ones scattered to other churches. In September 1977 Henry and Tena Neufeld initiated interest in a new group. Plans were made to set up a loose relationship with the Canadian Conference. A constitution was formulated in October 1977 and a working relationship established with Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg in spring 1978. One of the main parts of the

agreement was for Charleswood to supply a speaker every month, if possible. Over the years Portage had part-time pastors (for example, Kenneth Klassen, Jake Schmidt, Ed Cornelson) for shorter periods. For most of its time a committee fulfilled the duties of a minister. In 1980, 14 adults signed a membership commitment to the Portage Mennonite Church. Church membership was renewed annually. A building was purchased in 1985.

Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite Church. This congregation began as a Bible study group comprised of Southeast Asian Mandarin-speaking immigrants. They met in homes under the leadership of Elisha Woo. As the group steadily increased within the first year it considered the formation of a church, adopted a constitution and registered as the Winnipeg Mandarin Church in 1975. The congregation had various pastors—Jonathan Chen, Francis Tung, Barclay Chong, David Tam—and met in several locations. After meeting in a Lutheran Church it moved to the University of Manitoba student centre and developed a student ministry. However, the campus location was less than ideal in many ways, so Bethel Mennonite Church, specifically through Jim Penner, made arrangements for the Mandarin congregation to meet in its facilities on Sunday afternoons. It was during its stay at Bethel Mennonite that the congregation changed its name to Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite Church and joined the CMC and CMM. After assembling in Bethel the group met in a house at 600 Dalhousie, which had been bought as an investment toward a church building, and since 1983 at 1010 Riverwood. In 1989 plans were made to build on a lot on Waverly Street which had been purchased in 1980. In the



Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite Church choir. Photo: Susan Rempel Letkeman (MHCA)

1990s, under the leadership of Wan King-Hung, the congregation continued its ministry to Chinese immigrants (including those student immigrants who stayed in Winnipeg after the Tiannamen Square massacre in China), to a new generation of Canadian-born Chinese and to foreign students who planned to return to their home countries (Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan) as ambassadors for Christ and the Church.

River East Menno Gemeinde.¹⁴ This congregation formed in the late 1980s by the banding together of people who came from the Menno Colony in Paraguay. Some of them were part of established congregations in Winnipeg; others had more recently emigrated to Canada. Except for some youth group activities this congregation functioned in the German language. It owned its first building in 1993 and built a new sanctuary at 825 Panet Road in 1995. Two of its four lay ministers, Abram Unrau and Abram Froese, were elected and ordained in 1989 and 1992, respectively, since the congregation organized. The other two, Peter Klassen and Gerhard Hiebert, were ordained and served in the Menno Colony prior to coming to Springfield Heights.

Vietnamese Mennonite Church. At one time there were approximately 8,000 “boat people” from Southeast Asia in Winnipeg but about 70 percent moved to other cities, primarily Toronto and Vancouver. As a result of its missionary activity in Vietnam, the



Celebrating at the Vietnamese Mennonite Church. On the far left is Hoa Van Chau, congregational chair. Than Pham, pastor, cuts the cake. On the right are visiting ministers Abe Neufeld and Norm Voth.

Alliance Church of Canada was part of the background of members of the Vietnamese Mennonite Church who came to Winnipeg beginning in 1975. Since there was no Vietnamese Alliance Church in Winnipeg, the group found association with the Mennonites through MCC connections. At first Chinese and Vietnamese met together to worship. However, when it became necessary to have two separate congregations the Chinese chose to affiliate with the Mennonite Brethren Conference and the Vietnamese with CMM. The members meeting in their (renovated) building at 333 Alexander Avenue, dedicated in 1995, were South Vietnamese. North Vietnamese congregated in the Lutheran Vietnamese Church because the differences generated by the Vietnam conflict and cultural issues (language, for example) had not yet been resolved satisfactorily. Thanh Pham, serving as pastor, suggested that the Mennonite position on nonresistance was good and possible for congregations in Canada but would be harder to adhere to in Vietnam. Otherwise he found little difference between Christian teaching among Mennonites and the Alliance. The Vietnamese Mennonite Church became a member of CMM in 1996.

Good Shepherd Mennonite Church, Rainy River, Ontario. This small group shared leadership roles in church life, worship and ministry. Decisions were made by consensus. They met in a Senior Drop-in Centre located in an old Canadian National Railway station. Contact persons for the group were Hal and Jill Wilhite. Hal, of Lutheran background, found nonresistance and believers' baptism major factors in his wanting to affiliate with Mennonites. Because of its closer proximity to Manitoba Mennonite congregations than most of those in Ontario, the congregation joined CMM in 1996.

Daughter Congregations

The mother-daughter image is most common for this group of congregations, although other descriptive categories could be used. Not all the congregations included here were birthed voluntarily or intentionally by the so-called mother congregation.

The Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church was the original home of small groups of members who left to form the Bethel Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Grace Mennonite Church, Covenant Mennonite Church and Emmanuel Mennonite Church. The latter three became members of CMM.

Grace Mennonite Church, Winkler. Grace, autonomous from its



Frank Neufeld, Conference moderator, welcomes Grace Mennonite Church, Winkler, into CMM, 1990.

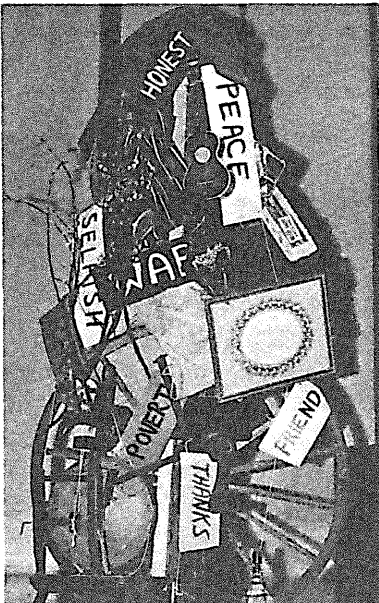
start in 1961, had no formal ties to the Winkler Bergthaler although most of its charter members came from there—a few came from Morden. The separation because of disagreement over language created much tension and many hard feelings. A service of reconciliation between the two congregations in 1963, with several outside ministers attending, helped begin the healing process. Grace's intention to organize was to accommodate children who knew little German and non-German-speaking people moving into Winkler. Bernie Loeppky, Grace's first minister, was followed by eight others with Arnie Neufeld and John C. Peters serving since the early 1990s. Neufeld received his training at MBBC, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary and several universities, Peters at Winkler Bible Institute. In its 35-year history Grace outgrew several buildings and its membership continued to increase. Its church sign and weekly bulletins listed the pastors and the congregation as its ministers.

Covenant Mennonite Church. Twenty years after Grace was founded, a group of Bergthaler members, with the agreement of the mother church, formed a congregation which emphasized a covenant relationship with one another, a shared ministry and outreach into the community. A few non-Bergthaler people shared this vision and became part of the group which met in Winkler Bible Institute facilities. In 12 years the membership almost doubled. However, it became an ongoing struggle for the group to keep up the commitment to an alternative church leadership model with families responsible for the worship services. In 1992 Covenant called a part-time pastor, Barry Lesser, a CMBC graduate formerly from Saskatchewan. A number of earlier members left Covenant because of the leadership changes.

Emmanuel Mennonite Church. The sanctuary was overcrowded at the 1984 baptismal Sunday at Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite

Church. That afternoon pastor J.K. Klassen met with the church council chairman H.F. Wiebe and said: "We must enlarge or start a daughter church." Thus Emmanuel was planted very deliberately by the Winkler Bergthaler Church with 69 members transferring to become charter members. Thirty-three persons joined from other congregations at the membership service in October 1986. In six years Emmanuel almost tripled its charter membership. One of the interesting things in its membership profile was the one-to-one ratio of children and youth (ages 18 and under) to persons 18 and over. John P. Klassen was Emmanuel's first pastor 1986-1994, Marvin Koop since then. The latter received his training at Steinbach Bible Institute, MBBC, Winnipeg universities and AMBS. Two couples served as assistants: Paul Kroeker and Arlene Kroeker 1990-1993, Kevin Drudge and Rochelle Drudge since 1993.

Altona Mennonite Church. The largest group of members who joined to form the Altona Mennonite Church in 1962 came from the local Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church. The vision for it emerged in the context of Altona Bergthaler's need for more space, especially to accommodate the Sunday school program. As an extension of the mother church, its intention was to address not only the space concern but also other needs such as language, outreach and contemporary



A sculpture created by artist Ken Loewen for Thanksgiving 1972 at Altona Mennonite Church. Photo: Friesen, Altona Mennonite Church

culture. The decision to form a fellowship resulted in a great deal of pain but also encouragement from Bergthaler and community people to move ahead. At its dedication service in 1964 its 44 members represented six different Mennonite groups and five non-Mennonite groups. Leaders of the church included Frank H. Epp 1962–1965, Henry V. Friesen 1965–1970, Paul I. Dyck 1970–1973, Lawrence Klippenstein 1973–1975, Ed Cornelson 1976–1982, David Regehr 1982–1985. Marilyn Houser Hamm, who graduated from Goshen (Indiana) College, and Ray Hamm, who studied at University of Manitoba and briefly at CMBC and AMBS, served since 1985.¹⁵

Minnewasta Mennonite Fellowship was assisted by Morden Bergthaler Mennonite Church in its beginnings. The group met occasionally prior to 1990 when regular services began. Its building, which was originally constructed for the Presbyterian Church at Nelson a few kilometres west of Morden, dates back to 1880. The congregation sought to combine both a peace and outreach focus. Anyone who participated could become a member; baptism was not necessarily a prerequisite. Membership was renewed annually. Minnewasta's first pastor was Tym Elias (in the 1990s executive secretary for CMC's Resources Commission) followed by Jake Bergman (half-time) who studied at CMBC for a year.

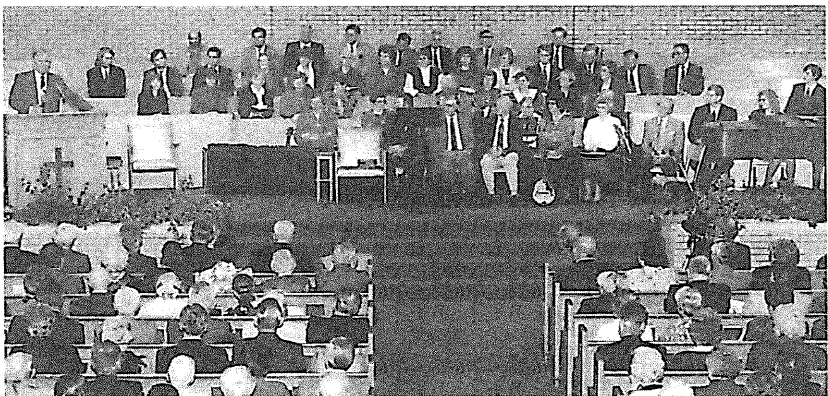
Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship. The initiative to establish a congregation in the south side of Winnipeg came in 1966 from the Bergthaler Mennonite Church at Sherbrook and Ross (now Home Street). It authorized one of its ministers, Lawrence Klippenstein, to work with the interested group in exploring options. Charter members included a few from Sargent and elsewhere. One of Fort Garry Fellowship's earliest understandings was not to hire someone to do what members could do for each other and for the group. This repeatedly led to voting not to hire a worker since the group was always blessed with qualified members who could lead worship, preach, teach and give leadership in other ways. The emphasis on the giftedness of all members, both men and women, and a ministry that was shared by all according to the congregation's discernment were reaffirmed again and again. Working at providing care and nurture to each other were committees, K-groups (or other sub-groups) and several lay ministers. Meeting in rented facilities for its first 17 years contributed to the fact that 60 percent of members' financial contributions could be directed toward other than local Fellowship needs. The



Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, 1989. Photo: Victor Kliever

congregation moved into its own building in Fort Richmond in December 1984. The Fellowship's statement of commitment is found in a document entitled the Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship Covenant. Its commitment to ministry in the world found expression at the members' daily workplace, in involvement of members on various Mennonite and non-Mennonite community and conference boards or committees as well as in numerous VS-related assignments.

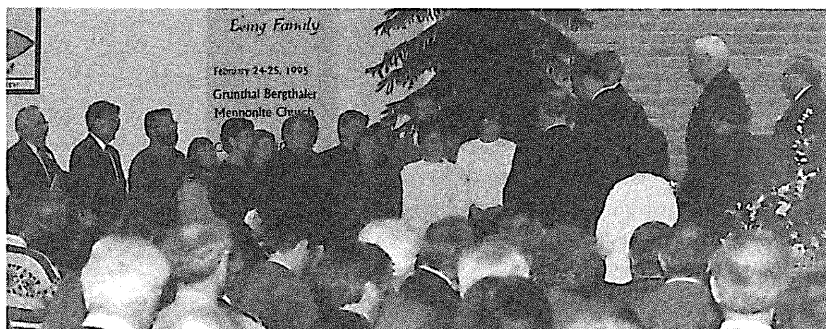
Springfield Heights Mennonite Church. Springfield Heights is an offshoot of the North Kildonan Mennonite Church. Located in one of the earliest residential concentrations of Winnipeg's Mennonite population, North Kildonan grew even more through the influx of



In October 1993 Springfield Heights Mennonite Church hosted a thanksgiving service celebrating the immigrations from Russia, 1923–1993. Photo: Jakob Pries

Mennonite refugees and immigrants from Europe and South America after World War II. Russian Mennonites of the late 1940s and 1950s were as different from the 1920s immigrants as the latter from the 1870s Kanadier. The matter of room, varying opinions on the leadership of the congregation, and the proclamation and application of the Gospel in daily living suggested that a new grouping was needed. From the initial 13 men the new group grew very quickly to 192 persons when the official transfer from North Kildonan occurred in February 1964. Less than a year later the register included 277 members, 34 from Sargent Mennonite, newly arrived immigrants from Paraguay (specifically the Menno Colony) and Brazil as well as those added through baptism. Ältester Bruno Ensz served the group in its first years and helped in its formative stages. Springfield Heights differed from other urban congregations in that many of its members lived in close proximity to the church. Like Winnipeg's First Mennonite or Winkler's Bergthaler Mennonite, Springfield continued to be bilingual. Its leading ministers were Bruno Ensz 1964–1967, Frank J. Dyck 1968–1974, Frank K. Isaac 1975–1988, Johannes Stolz 1988–1991, Jacob P. Harms (interim) 1992–1994, Henry Kliever since 1994. Kliever, assisted by Heinrich Koop and others, studied at CMBC and AMBS. Among Springfield's retired ministers were George K. Epp, Karl Fast and Frank K. Isaac.

Northdale Mennonite Fellowship. This small congregation, whose membership initially came from Springfield Heights and North Kildonan, desired more English for children and youth. Determination, freedom to experiment with worship styles and eligibility of women and men to all offices gave strength and credibility to the congrega-



Reception of Jubilee Mennonite, Winnipeg, at the 1995 CMM sessions held at the Grunthal Bergthaler Mennonite Church.

tion's ventures. However, the group always remained small. Lay ministers who served a decade or more were Frank J. Dyck, Abram E. Rempel and Gerry Strempler. Two CMBC graduates, Les Hamm and Rick Neufeld, were hired for shorter periods. In 1994 discussions with a Mennonite Brethren group in the area resulted in merger to become the Jubilee Mennonite Church. It was the first CMM congregation (as of 1995) to have dual provincial Conference affiliation, namely GC and Mennonite Brethren.

Douglas Mennonite Church. Douglas was Springfield Heights' planned daughter church. The seven men who drew up the plans for it were born in Boissevain (2), East Prussia (1), Old Colony in Russia (2), Orenburg USSR (1) and Germany (1). Some of them returned to Springfield Heights later. One of Douglas's strengths was its strong team of lay ministers, including young men, who worked with the pastor and later became ministers elsewhere in Canada. Lay ministers included Erwin Strempler, Guenter Strempler, John Sawatzky, James Schellenberg and Jake Harms. From 1993–1996 Hugo Janz, who studied at MBBC, Tabor College and Western Washington College of Education and served in Mennonite Brethren churches and with MCC, was the pastor, with Gerhard Epp assistant pastor.

Grace Mennonite Church, Steinbach. Members that united to form Grace Mennonite came from a number of Steinbach congregations including Steinbach Mennonite. Some congregations had grievances with members—for using TV, not demonstrating enough evidence of renewal, not being willing to be disciplined—who left to form Grace. Those who joined did so for a variety of reasons. Former Schönwieser members found themselves not being accepted at par at Steinbach Mennonite Church since the Schönwieser were not part of the CMM at that time. Bergthaler members left their congregation because it was moving out of CMM and they did not appreciate that severance. Some members had not found a niche in any Steinbach congregation or had just moved into town. They found Grace, which was using the English language, most helpful. Through mission conferences in the 1970s, joint communion service in the early 1980s and the bridge-building and conference-minded leadership of men like Peter G. Sawatzky and John Braun at Grace and Abe Neufeld at Steinbach Mennonite, relationships could be restored. Grace's beginning was very much a grassroots movement. Flexibility and bilingual fluency contributed to its growth. G.S. Rempel, Leonard Epp, Peter G. Sawatzky, John P. Braun and Dave Bergen served the congregation as ministers/pastors. The congregation purchased its first church building in 1962, the second in 1989.

Bethel Mennonite's daughter congregations were Burrows Bethel Mennonite Church, Charleswood Mennonite Church and Hope Mennonite Church.

Burrows Bethel Mennonite Church. For a little more than its first decade this was Elmwood Bethel Church. Bethel was included in its name because of its biblical significance (see Genesis 28:19) and to show appreciation to Bethel Mennonite Church. It was the first GC English-language congregation in the Kildonans and drew from the already existing congregations in the area. It saw itself as a model in church planting. With its move to Burrows Avenue and Charles Street in Winnipeg's north end, the name changed in 1972. Largely a suburban congregation, Burrows was known for its periodic aggressive community outreach and its numerous long- and short-term missionaries overseas, in Canada and the United States. Peter Schmidt, Burrows' first and only non-student lay minister, served the congregation for 16 years, often alongside the regular pastor. The first full-time pastor was Henry P. Friesen, followed (for periods anywhere from ten months to nine years) by Abe Regier, Bob Peters, Walter Braun, Kenneth Heppner and Keith Poysti. In 1995 the congregation struggled with its identity, lost a fair number of its members, relocated to Elmwood area in 1996 and changed its name to Bethel Community Church (Mennonite).

Charleswood Mennonite Church. Charleswood's starting membership drew 18 from Bethel Mennonite and 13 from other Mennonite churches. While not as successful in community outreach as it had planned, Charleswood drew interest and participation from younger Mennonite singles and couples in Winnipeg. It chose a woman, Helen Janzen, as deaconess in 1964, the first to hold such a position both in CMM and CMC. Charleswood was one of the sponsoring congregations in establishing Crossroads, the inner city drop-in centre, in 1970 and the Sargent MCC Thrift Shop in 1973. It joined Home Street and Fort Garry Fellowship in 1977 for a joint Good Friday Service, a tradition which came to include Sterling and Hope Mennonite. The late 1970s marked the beginning of association with the Portage Mennonite Church and, together with Bethel, Sterling, Fort Garry and Home Street, development of the senior citizens' complex, Bethel Place. Charleswood's salaried ministerial leadership (some part-time) was comprised of Cornel Rempel 1964–1970, Ron Hunsicker 1970–1975, Larry Kehler 1976–1980, Dan Epp-Tiessen and Esther



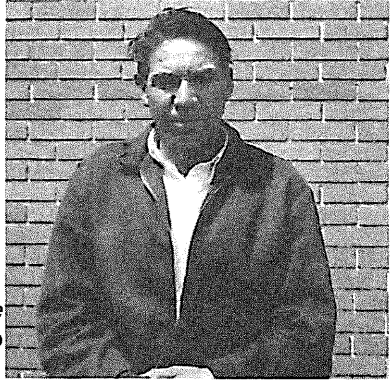
Adult education hour at Charleswood Mennonite Church led by William Klassen, 1972. Photo: Rudy A. Regehr

Epp-Tiessen 1980–1982, Jessie Kehler 1981–1982, Elsa Barg 1982–1983, Henry Dueck and Helen Dueck 1983–1985, Fred Unruh 1985–1993, Lisa Carr Pries and Carolyne Epp-Fransen 1993–1994, John P. Braun and Lisa Carr Pries since 1994. Both Braun and Carr Pries graduated from CMBC; Braun also studied one year each at Lutheran Theological Seminary and AMBS.

Hope Mennonite Church. Hope, located in downtown Winnipeg, grew out of the need for more room at Bethel Mennonite. The latter appointed seven members (who committed themselves for two years to spearhead the development of a new church) and gave financial support the first years. The emerging group, initially meeting at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, was comprised largely of young adults, a number of whom had attended CMBC, various universities and AMBS. Hope's congregational decision-making process requires that all major issues be discussed in its small groups, refined by the steering committee (church council) and then brought to the membership for a final decision. The congregation functioned without a hired pastor and since 1993 shared a church facility, known as Crossways in Common, with Young United Church at 222 Furby Street.

Churches related to CMM

Congregations relating to CMM consisted of two groupings, the



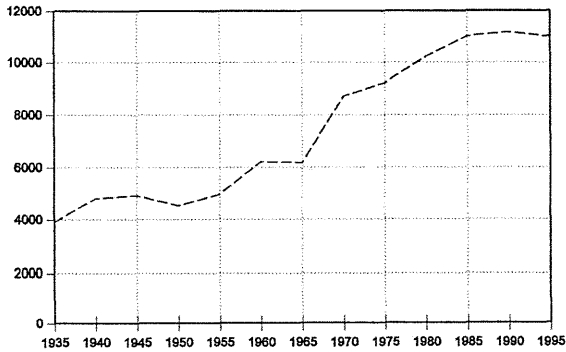
Jeremiah Ross, Cree Mennonite minister, Cross Lake. Photo: Menno Wiebe

first largely made up of members from the traditional Mennonite churches or communities, the other drawing members from Saulteaux, Cree and other Native peoples with a sprinkling of workers from CMM congregations. In 1996 the first group included the Killarney Mennonite Church, Pembina Mennonite Fellowship near Morden, Pinawa Christian Fellowship and Jubilee Mennonite Church in Brandon. The second cluster included Elim Christian Fellowship at Cross Lake, Manigotagan Community Chapel, Matheson Island Mennonite Church, Pauingassi, Pine Dock Fellowship and Riverton Fellowship. In all instances, the relationship was mostly one of dialogue, remaining informed and receiving CMM mailings. Financial contributions to CMM programs were made by a few of these congregations.



Part of the congregation at Pauingassi. Mennonite ministers in back row are (l to r): Jacob Owen, Spoot Owen, St. John Owen, David Owen; front row: Augusta Owen, Annette Owen, Elizabeth Pascal, Lucy Owen, child (unidentified). Photo: Menno Wiebe

Table 9
CMM Membership 1935–1995



Figures for 1965-1995 are from CMM Yearbooks. Earlier years are from CMC Yearbooks with adjustments for Schönwieser membership during years when they were not members of CMM.

Congregation-Conference relationships

When Bethel Mennonite Church joined CMM someone asked Wilhelm Enns of Springstein: “When did you join?” Wilhelm Enns responded: “We? We *are* the Conference!”¹⁶ That kind of identification and ownership represented the position of the pioneers, who were saying, “We are bound together in community in the conference; its programs are our programs, the decisions are binding; we pay the dues to implement our decisions.” The whole intention of joining together was to nurture each other spiritually as *Gemeinden* and to help each other overcome the spiritual and material difficulties so that work could happen. Although written from the *Gemeinde* context, Oak Lake’s history reflected the Conference situation fittingly when it said, “For the time being we had to make it work; we needed each other in those early years; and we did the best we could to make it work.”¹⁷ The questions of later years were not there: “Is the Conference there to help the congregations or are the congregations there to help the Conference operate its programs?”

In light of the above, the section in the 1947 constitution, which suggested that the “Conference may not intrude on internal *Gemeinde* matters if not requested to do so by the same . . . [but be] only an advisory body,” seemed somewhat puzzling. This statement must be understood in the context of the *Gemeinden*, who in some ways functioned like the CMM of independent congregations years later, and did not need the provincial body to take on some of these roles.

The question of church-conference relationships came to the conference floor through the question box in 1957. Its concern was not with the internal affairs of a congregation and the Conference relationship to it, but with the decisions at the conference sessions as they related to the churches. The question in 1957 read: "Are the Gemeinden/congregations obligated to execute the decisions made at the conference? Or can the Gemeinde/congregation later decide differently at home?"

The shift from the understanding "we are the conference" to "we, the congregations" and "it, the Conference" was subtle but sure, sharpened by some of the language in the various constitutions, the perception of the committees' tasks and by the increasing appointment of staff. It was not hard to move from "our decisions" to "their decisions." The whole thing came to a head at the 1971 conference sessions in Brandon. According to Gerhard Ens, many members were seriously questioning the premise that a Conference decision was binding on an individual congregation. There were rumblings at the grassroots level, complaining about too much administration, over-staffing and the nature of certain programs. Ens heard exasperated and frustrated church members say something like:

There isn't a thing we can do about the direction in which certain committees and boards are going. . . . The only way in which we can express our discontent is to withhold our budget contributions. Since we cannot hold back our contributions from those aspects of Conference work with which we do not agree we must withhold our contributions from all of the boards!¹⁸

The matter came to a head again in 1995. The General Board of CMM was authorized to set up a process to resolve some of the issues and to bring a recommendation that would clarify the relationship and the responsibilities between the CMM and its member churches. In 1996 the delegates accepted a statement on "The Relationship and Responsibilities of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba and its Member Churches" and voted to affix it to the CMM constitution. At the 1996 sessions, delegates also accepted the new *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* which had been adopted by General Conference and Mennonite Church delegates at their respective conference sessions in summer 1995.

CHAPTER 9

STRUGGLING WITH PROGRAMS

1973–1982

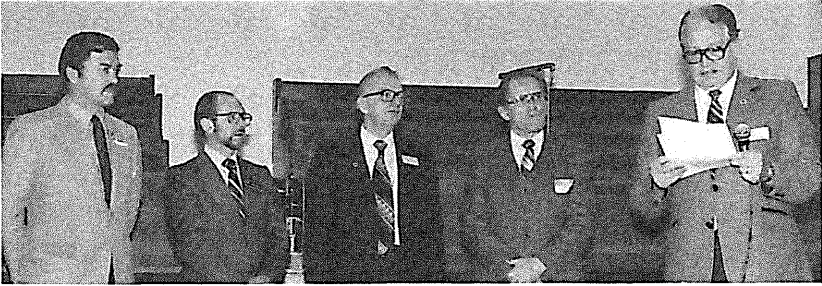
Dreams of moving ahead in the work of God are being dreamed once again.—Lawrence Klippenstein.¹

The euphoria of the so-called 25th anniversary of CMM in late 1971 gave way to the down-to-earth realities of the 1970s. Changes of the 1950s and 1960s had been dramatic and continued to happen with unprecedented speed. Tradition proved changeable and many things were no longer the way they had been. According to Frank K. Isaac, the critical times were not over. In 1973 he told delegates:

the Church is under attack . . . from within and from without. There are those who recommend, yes even demand, the destruction of all traditional forms of the Church. Others say that the Church is completely irrelevant in our secular society. Still others go as far as to say that the age of the Church is past.

The challenge for the church was to be credible and relevant. The emphasis of the Conference from the beginning was the gathering and building up of its own congregations. In this decade more than before CMM also focused on proclaiming, teaching and relating the faith to the non-Christian world.

Together with fears of nuclear war and Communist domination the western world's staggering technological advances and massive affluence unquestionably implicated the church. The global disparity between the haves and the have-nots beamed into living rooms through the medium of satellite communication and television. The majority of the immigrant generation of Mennonites had come to Canada as have-nots. By the 1970s most CMMers were among the haves. In the opening meditation for the centennial commemoration of the coming of Mennonites to Manitoba at the 1974 CMM sessions held at the Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Gerhard Ens urged delegates to remember that prosperity is not our own doing, that we are stewards. In his 1975 conference sermon at Home Street, Jake F. Pauls reminded delegates that "the earth is the Lord's . . ." (Psalm 24:1) and



Installation of the CMM executive, 1982, by Bernie Wiebe, outgoing moderator (l to r): Neil Heinrichs, secretary; John Neufeld, moderator; J.K. Klassen, vice-moderator; John Dyck, personnel chair.

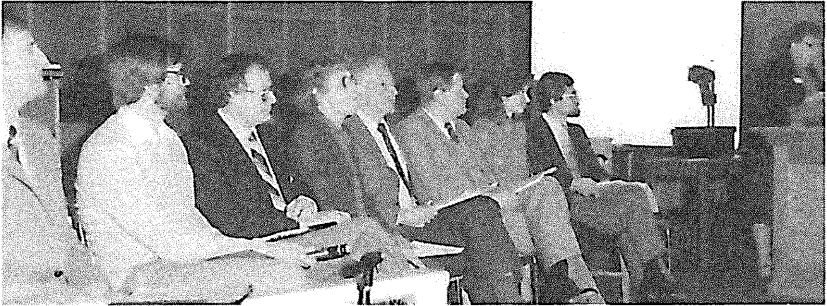
described the 1970s as:

a time of opportunity [with] greater assets than ever before—gifts, money— . . . faced with a decision regarding priorities, [the] need to strengthen relationships, . . . to move out in confidence, . . . to remember the needs in the world, . . . to be faithful in our witness.

Answers to growing materialism and secularism were sought in spiritual and lifestyle renewal through continent-wide evangelistic efforts initiated by Probe '72 and Key '73, charismatic movements and a turning to global issues. A new generation asked questions regarding rights and equality and wrestled with concerns such as divorce, remarriage, war, capital punishment, abortion and drugs.

Continuity in the implementation of CMM objectives depended on the ever changing complexion of leadership and committees but also on the entire conference body. The transfer from experiencing the Conference as a Gemeinde to encountering it as individual congregations proved more unsettling than had been anticipated, especially for Bergthaler. When the Conference did not become the nurturing place which particularly their ministers and deacons had hoped for, Bergthaler never felt the Conference was “us.” Bernie Wiebe, moderator from 1979–1982, felt CMM still consisted of individual congregations who never totally merged but needed to be brought together.

The Conference’s growing programs demanded more and more time and, since volunteer help became harder and harder to find, reorganization and staff increases became necessary. With this trend some saw the agenda preparation, program planning and consequent future direction moving more and more into the hands of central staff and their committees. The call for a stronger delegate voice in



Educational Resources presentation, 1982 (l to r): Bernie Neufeld, Abe Bergen (youth worker), Erwin Strempler (Westgate principal), Nettie Neufeld, Elbert Toews, Ken Loewen (MCI principal), Charlotte Rempel (MMYO chair), Victor Kliever with Helen Unrau (committee chair) at the microphone.

planning and decision making came early on in the era. One of the ways in which leaders invited input was through the 1973 polling of delegates on where they would like to see the emphasis in CMM programming. Together with other factors its results became one indicator in deciding what programs to make priority. Rudy Regehr and Ernest Wiebe concluded their evaluation of the poll by reminding delegates that “the spirit of God will speak through polls, but . . . there is no substitute for discussion and prayer for discerning the will of God.”²

In spite of good intentions to heed the delegate voice, by 1981 the CMM work agenda in developing and improving programs had increased to the point where people felt that there was not enough time for dialogue and interaction. Delegates perceived that decision-making responsibility had transferred more and more to the executive and other committees which was not in keeping with Anabaptist tradition and Mennonite polity. Already in 1971 Jake Harms cautioned that when structures begin to dominate, to exercise authority, to lead out into unprecedented areas which require a certain amount of risk, the human instinct of reaction surfaces.

Moderators Jake Pauls, Werner Neufeld and Bernie Wiebe, each for three one-year terms, promoted unity with all their strength. The early church was “one heart and soul,” Jake Pauls reminded conference participants in 1973. A lot of reorganization had taken place in the Conference in the previous era. However, being of one heart and soul was more than all that organized strength; it was being “a real brotherhood,” Pauls suggested. But what was a real brotherhood?

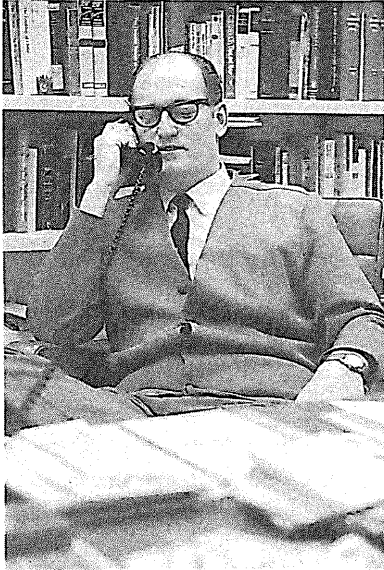
Christian education

Christian education continued to be fundamental to growth and nurture in the congregations. However, although central, it was irrelevant and not meeting the needs of real people facing real situations, according to John Neufeld, chair of the Education Committee in 1973. What was, was not good enough when there were glimpses of what could be. “No longer is it good enough to instruct the young to live in the parents’ world,” suggested Committee chair Victor Epp from Springstein the following year.

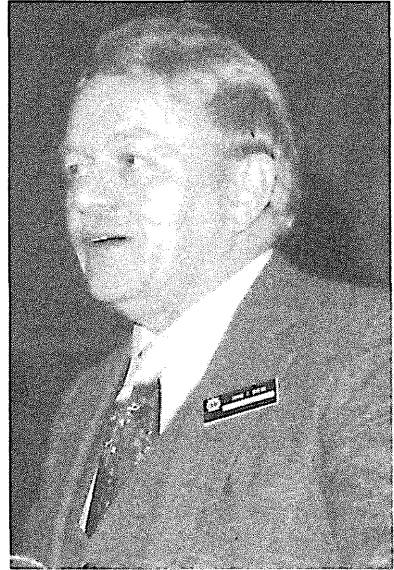
A 1973–1975 Education Task Force—Helmut Harder, Abe Rempel, Guenter Strempler, John I. Friesen, Ruth Enns, John B. Wiebe—recommended expanded resources for workers in the local congregations, establishment of a CMM Bible school, promotion and financial support for MCI and Westgate Mennonite Collegiate and restructuring where needed. In its resourcing the committee focused on several major areas, namely, the annual Sunday school convention, counselling through marriage enrichment seminars, the ministers’ and deacons’ conferences and related concerns. All the while leadership changes happened but did not proceed in the same way in all congregations. Whatever pattern was followed, the network that existed in the earlier larger Gemeinde context where the Ältester cared for his often scattered ministerial team or the team cared for each other, had not been replaced with anything. Counselling needs in the congregations had increased.

Deacons, who earlier were elected for life to look after the needs of poor and sick members, to bake the bread and prepare the communion table and to assist the Ältester wherever necessary, were now elected to term positions like members on committees. Newly elected deacons were not willing to make long-term commitments. About 20 percent of the congregations began listing couples as deacons during this period although mostly it was the male that was ordained to the ministry.³ Some congregations, like First Mennonite, discovered that women made good deaconesses. Spouses of ministers and deacons were first included at ministers’ and deacons’ conferences in 1981.

Ministers were encouraged to avail themselves of educational opportunities at CMBC, the universities and in counselling, particularly at the Interfaith Pastoral Institute. CMM staff counsellors served two purposes. For one, they acted as a liaison between pastors and the Pastoral Institute when expertise was needed. Largely, however, their



Ernest Wiebe (1927–1991)



John F. Wiebe (1930–)

clients were non-Mennonite in background and their ministry thus represented a community outreach. When Faith and Life Communications (FLC) moved out of counselling in 1977 the relationship with the Pastoral Institute and the counselling ministry was transferred to the Education Committee.

Because of the alarming rate of marriage breakdown the Education Committee encouraged marriage preparation courses and counselling, which leaders in some congregations had already emphasized more strongly since the early 1960s. Not always were CMM delegates happy with the Pastoral Institute approach in this matter. As one observer put it: the counselling seemed to encourage marriage partners to separate and divorce rather than to stay together. A pre-marital course, designed by John Neufeld and Ron Hunsicker, was distributed to assist leaders in the task of preparing couples adequately for marriage.

Development of the conference minister's office can be ascribed to this period. Ernest Wiebe, part-time CMM treasurer and office manager, and Bernie Wiebe, FLC director, both involved in counselling services, were both referred to as conference ministers in the early 1970s. Ernest Wiebe was assigned to give more time specifically to the needs of ministerial leaders and their congregations in 1975. He terminated as CMM staff person in 1976 and John F. Wiebe replaced

him as administrator, accountable to the Finance Committee. Thus, CMM was without a conference minister until it appointed John F. Wiebe as acting conference minister part-time in 1979 and full-time in 1981.

The needs were extraordinary. A few congregations were hiring a pastor for the first time. Others were experiencing considerable turnover of pastors. In any given year up to 15 pastors were coming and going in Manitoba. The average stay of pastors was less than five, mostly three years. Some of them were just out of college with no work experience. A sense of accountability and how to relate to people could not always be assumed. In some instances termination had nothing to do with youthfulness or inexperience. Expectations were not spelled out sufficiently. Evaluation, accountability and support structures were not in place. Personality clashes or disagreements in theology or procedure were sometimes factors. The conference minister's role became that of consultant, mediator, spiritual advisor and support to pastors and congregations.

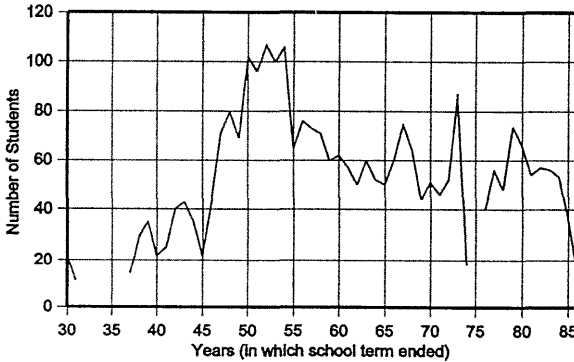
Elim

A society with representation from CMM congregations and the EMMC (Rudnerweider) operated Elim Bible School in Altona. The school years 1939–1964, with A.A. Teichroeb as principal, were referred to as years of stability.⁴ The following years under principals George Neufeld and Henry Dueck, saw changing circumstances and needs, students and teachers with more education, innovations and adaptations in curriculum and student life. Something must have been done right for students who attended in the early 1970s. For example, Ontario-born Nancy Dorries, now a social worker and widowed mother of two teen-age children, who graduated from Elim said:

I don't know where I would be if it hadn't been for Elim. My parents were Brethren in Christ but I grew up in the Alliance Church. Being introduced freshly to Anabaptist thinking and history did something for me. The whole Elim experience was really affirming and growth promoting. Not only through teaching but through interaction staff practised what they preached. Now, 20 years later I remember . . .⁵

In spite of the good things that happened, various factors contributed to uncertainties in the constituency and development of non-confidence in the staff, its consequent resignation and the school's closure 1974–1975. Elim lost much support from the EMMC constituency during that time although theological conflicts in their own ranks

Table 10
Enrolment at Elim Bible School 1929–1986



also affected their withdrawal. The resolution to close Elim for one year included the election of a new board and the intention to reopen the institution as a CMM school. Alumni particularly dreamed new dreams. There was a lot of enthusiasm and hope for the new Elim. It included a new student body with a new faculty under principals Victor Kliewer and Phil Bender and by 1977 a new campus site on the west side of the town of Altona. However, the climbing enrolment of 1975–1978 began spiralling downward (see Table 10) so that the residential program terminated in 1988. An alternate Continuing Education Program, introduced in 1986, was carried on under Victor Kliewer’s leadership until 1989.

Elim’s alumni attest to the tremendous influence the school had on



Elim Bible School graduation, 1966. Staff seated in front (l to r): Jim Reimer, Henry Gerbrandt, George Neufeld, Henry Dueck, Helen Dyck. Photo:MHCA

the Conference. For some years, the majority of delegates on the conference floor were former Elim students. They kept the school going during difficult times. Many MPM workers and a number of ministers were Elim alumni. Jacob M. Unrau, a former student and MPM worker, wrote:

It [Elim] picked me up where I was and encouraged me to go on. It was the place where I found my life partner. . . . It was a place that sent us out to teach D.V.B.S. It encouraged us in church planting.⁶

Camps

The priority poll administered by the Executive Committee in 1973 suggested camp work to be near the top. While there seemed to be consensus on the importance of camps for the congregations and CMM, the number of camps and their location remained an issue, especially for the first ears of the 1973–1982 era. Camp Koinonia was never in question but Moose Lake and Assiniboia were on the weigh scale.

The anticipated three years of Moose Lake's administration by an Association were rudely interrupted by the ill-fated burning of the chapel there on April 17, 1973. The fire provided an occasion to reevaluate whether it was possible to part with Moose Lake (or with Camp Assiniboia, as some people were suggesting). For the Association's members it was important to maintain a place of worship for people who came to the lake. After considerable negotiation in a very short period of time, a special June 16, 1973 CMM session grudgingly approved release of insurance funds for rebuilding the chapel. It was not easily accepted when the Camp Development Committee, newly appointed by the CMM executive, simply reported to the annual delegate session in 1974 that, in the absence of action to the contrary, Moose Lake Camp had reverted back to the Conference and was now an integral part of the Conference family of camps. Among other things, a letter by moderator Werner Neufeld, which encouraged congregations to make peace with the camps, seemed to help things go more smoothly.

The possibility of a fourth alternative in the Whiteshell came with the Development Committee's dream for developing a model campsite for outdoor education in a prime wilderness setting. However, the majority of delegates, unhappy with three campsites, voted against a lease for yet another one. That was not the end of the possibility for a fourth option. In 1979 CMM received an offer of a gift of a 100-acre

tract of land adjacent to East Braintree a few miles south of the Trans-Canada Highway for the development of a retreat centre. The vote to authorize \$10,000 for preliminary architectural drawings and for water and soil tests resulted in 238 delegates saying “no,” 56 “yes.” Programs envisioned for a retreat centre could be implemented at Elim, at one of the three camps or at the private schools, said the delegate voice.

Major physical developments at the three existing camps, to which the Camp Development Committee then gave its full attention, consisted of the completion or building of central winterized lodges with kitchen, dining and meeting room facilities, resident director quarters and other staff and camper accommodations. The Camp Committee hired architect Harold Funk to design the main buildings of all three camps. Some folk had their own views on what camps should be and were not necessarily appreciative of the “theologically symbolic (i.e., integrating nature with faith) and aesthetically designed, sophisticated structures of the architect,” observed the Camp Committee’s chair George Neufeld in retrospect. Hence, the roof of one was changed to look more like a church with a steeple on it (to witness to the community); chip board was used instead of cedar (it was cheaper); a square wall was built instead of a diagonal one (the latter was harder to do and seen unnecessary though it would have added more space for the fireplace). “If you had 20 volunteers you also had 20 contractors,” chuckled Neufeld. Herb Warkentin,

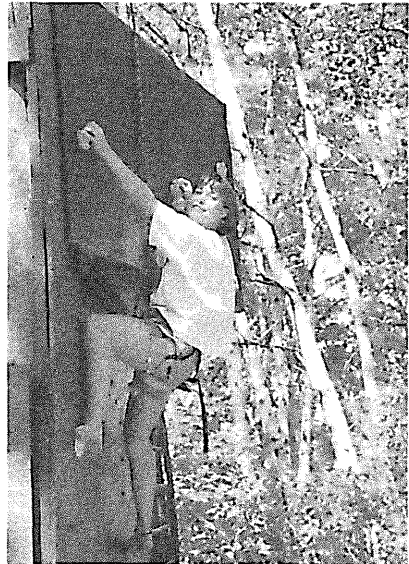


Regional volunteers at work at Moose Lake Camp.

Koinonia Camp director in 1971, summed it up this way: “One wanted to be unique and creative, the other to make it functional.”

Regional committees, like the earlier Grounds Committees, worked in cooperation with the Development Committee and contributed significantly to the efficient functioning, maintenance and a sense of camp ownership. In addition to the 96 men and six women, who freely gave of their time and energy to work on the respective camp grounds or regional committees, countless others in this and other eras, unlisted anywhere, helped in different ways. Henry Albrecht, regional committee member, no doubt spoke for many others when he reflected on his involvements, saying simply, “I enjoyed it.”

Trends in camp programming emphasized year-round camping and outdoor education. Increasing numbers of campers came via referral agencies and from special needs’ groups. In 1975 CMM delegates resolved to open the doors wide to all children who applied to camp. Among Camp Assiniboia’s unique offerings were horsemanship, ropes course and trampoline. Koinonia emphasized intentional wilderness camps (with the first for 12-to-14-year-old boys and girls on Lake Lulu Island led by Herb and Micki Warkentin in the early 1970s) as well as mountain biking and sport climbing. Moose Lake, often under the directorship of Henry and Anne Goertzen, emphasized family pro-



Mastering ropes at Camp Assiniboia. Sport climbing at Camp Koinonia.

grams and camps for the Association for Mentally Retarded. Most enduring of the family camps were the father-son, mother-daughter and 55+ weekend retreats. Archery, nature and swimming activities constituted part of all camps, as well as attention to special needs groups. The major feature uniting all camps was the Bible program (see Table 11). In 1983 camps across Canada and the U.S. were reported to be picking up on Manitoba's excellent Bible curriculum.

The first full-time overall camp program director, Terry Burkhalter from Laurelville Church Center in Pennsylvania (see Table 12), saw camp as an extension of congregational life. For Burkhalter, camp needed to be innovative, imaginative, sensitive, visionary, prophetic and biblical. In line with this broader vision, committees worked at possibilities and accommodations beyond those for children and youth campers to increase options for different groups of adults and entire congregations. From an earlier all volunteer staff, salaried staff now included camp managers, summer directors, nurses, head cooks and lifeguards. Beginning in 1977 counsellors were remunerated by their

Table 11
Camp's Bible Curriculum Themes 1971–1995

Year	Theme	Author
1971	Life of Paul	
1972	Studies in the Psalms	
1973	Life is worth living - Gospel of John	
1974	Becoming and being a follower of Jesus	
1975	The kingdom of God - Parables of Jesus	
1976	The prophets	
1978	The Jubilee (incorporating a native view on land)	Gwen Schlichting
1979, 1980	Personalities around Jesus (John's Gospel)	Terry Burkhalter
1982	Freed by the Spirit	Brenda Suderman
1983	Teachings of Jesus in the outdoors	Elsie Harder
1984, 1989	A journey with Jesus: the life of Christ	Tim Wiebe
1985, 1992	Learning from Jesus (the 'I Am' sayings) (1977)	Monica Wiebe
1986	Becoming God's Family - the grace of God revealed in relationships	Dave Bergen
1987	Jesus the Saviour	
1988	Jesus gives me peace (study of peace)	Irma Fast Dueck
1990	Becoming God's people (the church)	Irma Fast Dueck
1991	Heroes needed - Is God calling you? - models of faithfulness from the OT	Linda Dyck
1993	I've been to the mountaintop! Knowing God	Mary Lou Driedger
1994	It's awesome: stewardship of creation	Jason Dyck
1995	Share the freedom: living as Christians...	Heather Campbell Enns



Terry Burkhalter with camp managers Wanda & Jake Neufeld (Koinonia), Essie & David Bergen (Assiniboia), Helen & John Doell (Moose Lake), 1981.

congregations with \$55 a week, by 1982 up to \$130 a week. Volunteers included kitchen helpers and others.

Radio

Attempts at contemporary broadcasting with the Abundant Life program continued to bring severe criticism from the constituency in the early 1970s. Changes in directorship (see Table 13), an unusual turnover on the committee, experimentation with new techniques, and inadequate facilities placed added strain on staff members and others concerned. In spite of difficulties, the Abundant Life continued to air with directors Waldo Neufeld and Ronn Klassen giving their best to make the program what FLC had envisaged it to be. Besides that, together with Ernest Wiebe and others, they carried on the counselling,

Table 12	Table 13
Camps with Meaning	Faith & Life
Executive* Directors	Communications Directors
1976-1996	1968-1996
Terry Burkhalter 1976-1985	Frank H. Epp 1957-1959
Monica Wiebe 1986-1987	J. K. Klassen 1959-1965
Cliff Doerksen 1989-1991	Bernie Wiebe 1965-1970
Bob Wiebe 1991-	Waldo Neufeld 1970-1972
* Full-time	Ronn Klassen 1974-1976
	Vic Sawatzky 1976-



Betty Wiebe, producer of Wort des Lebens.

relationships with the Interfaith Pastoral Institute, talks with Mennonite Brethren regarding merger of German broadcasts, appearances on Sundayscope (a half-hour, CKY television program available to various denominations) as well as the required correspondence and administration.

The German broadcasts, *Frohe Botschaft* and *Wort des Lebens*, provided a measure of stability for FLC and carried on effectively. After Victor Sawatzky's resignation as director and speaker of *Frohe Botschaft* in 1974, the FLC director took responsibility for its production and drew in a variety of ministers to serve as guest speakers. These included Erwin Cornelsen of North Kildonan, Gerhard Ens of the Blumenortler, P.J. Froese of MacGregor, Guenter Strempler of Springfield Heights, H.J. Gerbrandt of Bethel Winnipeg, J.K. Klassen of Mennonite Foundation in Winnipeg, Bruno Epp of Springstein. *Wort des Lebens*, hosted by Ernest Wiebe in the early 1970s, involved Betty Wiebe who became its regular host in 1975 and its producer in 1976. She put heart and soul into the ministry and, according to Victor Sawatzky, was extremely well accepted, anchoring the program into the 1990s.

The second half of the 1973–1982 era brought strength through a totally new committee with most of the members staying on for two terms. The hiring of a new director, Victor Sawatzky who had been involved with FLC off and on, contributed to confidence. A philosophy emerged, based on the call of the 1976 delegates, that the

Abundant Life be revamped as a broadcast for the congregations. FLC recognized the potential of radio teaching, specifically that of Radio Southern Manitoba, which affected attitudes and loyalties of many Manitoba Mennonites. The FLC committee set as its aim to complement the Bible teaching in churches and private schools. This direction brought the most noticeable change in the Abundant Life format and target audience. Using the interfaith Uniform Sunday School lessons as a basis, the Abundant Life became a teaching program with its Bible teachers of the best in CMM: Frank Dyck, Vern Ratzlaff (minister in Saskatoon, but prior to that member at Charleswood), John H. Neufeld and other CMBC faculty. Their teaching soon gained appreciation beyond Mennonite circles.

More supportive ministries for congregations became possible as the expansion of equipment and facilities progressed. From two recorders and a few smaller items worth about \$600, in two years it moved to a talk booth, where messages were recorded, and by 1982 (with the contributions of Henry Loewen, carpenter, and Rudy Dahl, technician) to a recording studio valued at approximately \$45,000.

Mission & service

Hospital chaplaincy remained a vital ministry for CMM (see Table 14). Additionally, through representation on boards and financial



CMM staff and spouses, 1975 (l to r): Clara Klassen, H.T. Klassen, Betty Wiebe, Margaret Fast, Judy Schulz, Ernest Wiebe, Ronn Klassen, Margaret Thiessen, Mary Friesen, John Friesen, Dorothy Rempel, Norman Rempel.

Table 14
CMM-Employed Hospital Chaplains*

H. T. Klassen	1973-1977
George Neufeld	1977-1981
Margarete Martens	1978-1981
Jake Wiebe	1980
Ernest Wiebe	1981-1982
Pete Peters	1982-1987
Mary Dyck	1986-1992
Willy Guenther	1991-
Abe Hiebert	1992-1993
Orletta Wiebe	1992-1993

Notes: * Full- or part-time chaplains. Volunteer chaplains began serving around 1987. They included Dan Peters, Katherine Klassen, Menno Bergen, Esther Bergen, Bill Stoesz, Jake Hoeppner, Frank F. Enns, Susann Enns, Jessie Kehler, Clara K. Dyck, Orletta Wiebe, Robb Nickel, Hilda Epp, Ben Sawatzky, Justina Baerg and Verna Hiebert.

assistance the Conference continued to support a variety of ministries administered by other groups such as the Church for the Deaf, Choice Books (bookrack evangelism) and camperships for children referred by the Children's Aid Society or Big Brothers. The Missions and Service Committee cooperated with COM staff and mission personnel in missionary itineration. Earlier Gemeinde-wide mission fests were replaced by regional or local mission celebrations initiated by CMM committees or congregations. Participants greatly appreciated the 1976 CMM-organized celebration at Camp Assiniboia and the 1977 Koinonia festival with six resource centres which displayed the mission outreach of CMM, MCC, Native Ministries and Camps with Meaning.

Several projects phased out or were terminated. Prison chaplaincy ended as a CMM program in 1973 when MCC Manitoba became involved in prison ministry. When the latter introduced the Open Circle program, C.N. Friesen became part of it. Several new outreach endeavours invited CMM support. One was the multi-faceted program in Selkirk. Local churches there together with the CMM committee and several congregations made ministries possible at the Selkirk Psychiatric Centre, to the aged under the leadership of Malcolm Wengers and through preaching and community work by Jake and Helen Wiebe. By 1981 a Selkirk Community Services Board created

a local base for the work and CMM began reducing its financial commitments by 20 percent annually. A second venture to which CMM gave support was at Glenella, about 40 kilometres north of Gladstone. With a vision of establishing a congregation, Gladstone Mennonite Church conducted services there for a number of years, but any attempts to form a group failed.⁷

The City Missioner program, begun in the mid-70s by Winnipeg congregations—Bethel, Douglas, Fort Garry, Home Street, North Kildonan, Sargent and Springfield Heights—aimed to reach out to those of Mennonite background who had lost or never had any connection with a Mennonite church in the city. Frank J. Dyck, hired as city missioner, entered into relationship and dialogue with people whose names he obtained through pastoral referral and other ways. Because of the rural-urban dimensions, CMM agreed in 1980 to phase in to full responsibility for this mission. On closer study, the need for a bridge-building program between country and city congregations to address the needs of inactive resident and non-resident members became evident. However, although seen as important and necessary, no obvious handles emerged. Of nine resolutions at the 1983 CMM sessions, none addressed this concern and the work discontinued.

Women in Mission and other women

In society at large women were educators, teachers at all levels, principals, head librarians, social workers, psychologists or nurses. However, in the church the firm conviction of many women and men was that women should not be in leadership over men, although a few served on committees and councils here and there. At the Conference level Women in Mission was recognized as the official voice of women and its first report was heard in 1971. The 1972 CMM constitution gave the Women's Mission Association the freedom to determine "its relationship to the Conference at its own discretion." Women were pleased to find that the Conference constitution welcomed them to have two members on the Missions and Service Committee. That gave Women in Mission a place to be heard but the discussions about relationship to Conference never went beyond that. For the first time, in 1973 Justina Baerg, president of the Women's Missionary Association, reported at the conference under the umbrella of the Missions and Service Committee. At the next year's sessions a panel led by freelance writer LaVerna Klippenstein from Home Street explored the role of the Women's Association, how the church helped women develop



Kay Friesen, former MCC worker in Korea and Indonesia, receives the offering at delegate sessions at Bethel Mennonite Church, 1983.

their gifts and the second-class status of single women in the church. Women's involvement in CMM expanded marginally. A few women served on committees, and the Education Committee had a female chairperson for several years. A resolution calling for "work toward a 50 percent representation for women in the nominees selected" was defeated in 1982.

In some congregations, like Charleswood, the interest in women's groups dwindled as more women joined the labour force and became active on church council or committees. Some felt the need to be liberated from some of the philosophy behind sewing circles. As Margaret Sawatzky Peters put it:

It was all wrong. Men gave only money. Why shouldn't women also only give? Why all that work to raise money? The whole thing had to do with position. Women were being obedient, serving, making men comfortable. I rebelled against it.⁸

Others, while not minimizing the need to become involved in other than the traditional congregational and conference roles, saw valid reasons for continuing an exclusive women's group in the church. The concept of "sisterhood" should not be "thrown away in our search for equality," noted Anna Schroeder from Grace Brandon at the 1975 CMM sessions.

Finances

The Finance or Business Administration Committee was often seen “as a barrier to progress when it resisted budget increases, and as the aggressive planner when increased levies came about.”⁹ Increases were

Table 15a
CMM Annual Member \$ Request
1970–1995

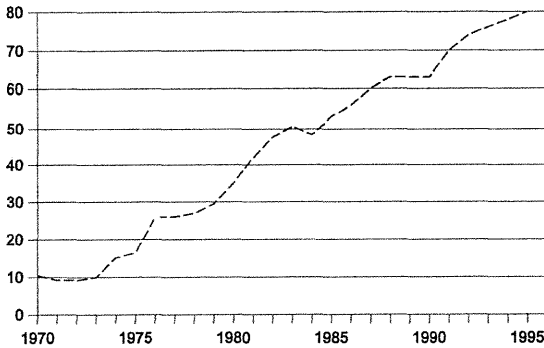
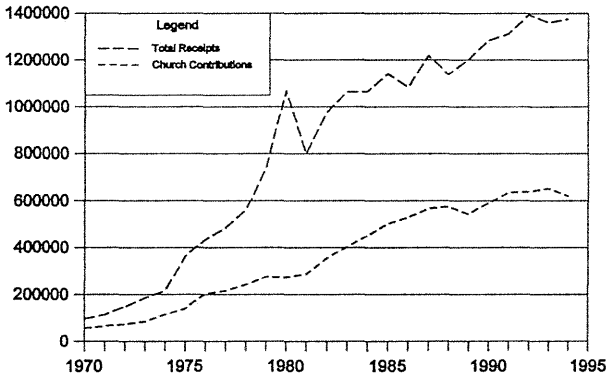
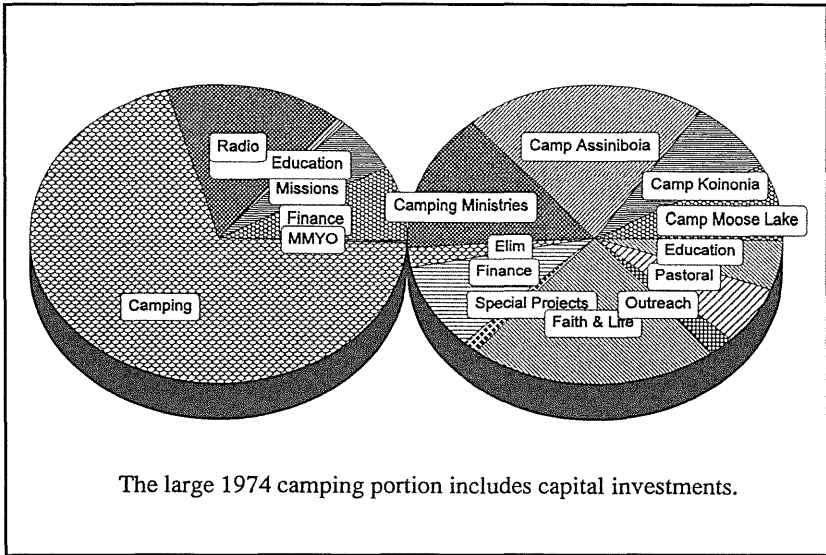


Table 15b
Total Receipts & Church Contributions
1970–1995



Receipts for 1979-80 include designated donations of \$323,930 for Elim. The difference between Total Receipts and Church Contributions is made up of self-generated funds and designated giving, primarily to radio and camp ministries.

Table 15c
Application of Funds 1974 and 1994



everywhere, in budgets, per member levies and deficits. Concern about congregations withholding funds surfaced on the conference floor in 1975 and again in 1982. Were delegates voting “yes” for a budget when they knew that they would not be able to meet their committed portion?

It was not that congregations were not giving (see Table 15). Some of the giving was directed toward the new Elim, allowing debt repayment ahead of schedule. Conferences, MCC, private schools, Eden and many other ministries received money and time from members. A few congregations reported their inability to meet levy commitments so that adjustments in planning could be made. Still, compared to the per member giving of other provincial conferences (Ontario \$50, British Columbia \$64, Saskatchewan \$80 and Alberta \$135), Manitoba’s asking of \$48 in 1982, for example, was lowest. A budget goal of \$1,000 per member was thought to approach a 10 percent tithe. Wilhelm Enns was probably right when he suggested in 1957 that if everyone would tithe there would be no deficits.

CHAPTER 10
STRENGTHENING AND CUTTING BACK
1983–1990s

The will of God has not changed. . . . God desires even now to work through us. . . . We need to discern the specific promise for us in our time. . . . We need to discern the will of God in the midst of the hustle and bustle of our time. To see the needs . . .
—David Schroeder¹

“What we do as churches in the Conference is a partnership in ministry,” emphasized CMM moderator John H. Neufeld in 1984.

We . . . come together to renew and revitalize our partnership. . . . Our partnership is not only with each other, it is also with our Lord, who has graciously called us to be partners in the world.

Two congregations, Gladstone Mennonite Church in 1994 and Halbstadt Bergthaler Mennonite Church in 1995, chose to withdraw from this partnership. Two congregations, the Vietnamese Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and Good Shepherd Mennonite Fellowship at Rainy River, Ontario, joined the partnership in 1996. Another congregation, Northdale Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg, united with a Mennonite Brethren group to form the new Jubilee congregation in 1994. Jubilee’s partnership with the two respective Conferences became a hopeful sign of new things to come.

In partnership the congregations and CMM both cut back and strengthened, even expanded, some areas of work. With reference to Isaiah 54:2, 1984 moderator William Block challenged CMMers to enlarge the “tent” of their theology, their inclusion of others, their models, their view of what is possible and their response to the greatest mission challenge of all times. On the basis of the same Isaiah passage, Henry Gerbrandt summoned CMM to strengthen its stakes: its identity as a people of God, its laity, its stewardship practices and its outreach ministry. To the 1985 delegate body he said,

We believe that all need salvation and this salvation is found in Jesus Christ. . . . Our main emphasis may not be the dated radical conver-

sion experience but a conscious turning around from self to Christ and a radical discipleship that affects all areas of life. . . .

Tomorrow morning Mennonite ministers across this province will share the gospel from their pulpits in English, German, Cree, Saulteaux, Mandarin, Cantonese and Laotian. It is not important whether the Sunday dinner that follows is bannock, steak or fish, whether it is Veraniki [sic] or Chow Mein, or *Würstchen, Brötchen und Sauerkraut*. What is important is that we are known by our love and concern. Our new life in Christ will permit new cultural dimensions to develop. . . . New life requires new wineskins.

Leadership and the various theological understandings between the perceived unchanging positions of the past and the inclusiveness and wideness of God's being and mercy became primary considerations during the last two decades of the twentieth century. CMM's three major (funding) programs during this period were the camps, Faith and Life Communications and Elim. According to researcher John Dyck, member at Burrows Bethel, "There are more pages of minutes and reports concerning Elim than any other single subject in this period." Supported by many loyal alumni, Elim was a "highly charged emotional issue." In Dyck's evaluation, reasonable decisions were made in its termination in a manner respected by the majority of people in the congregations. In 1996 Elim's campus was sold to a Baptist group which intended it for development of a Bible school.



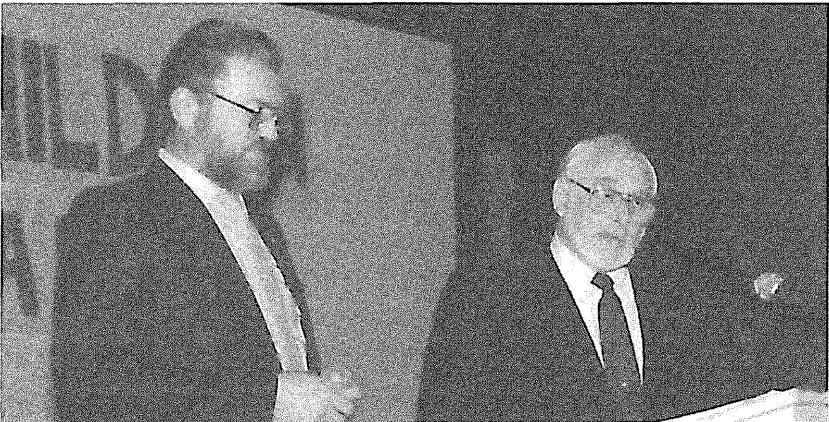
The Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite congregation treats Bethel Mennonite members to an Oriental meal, March 1978. Photo: Rudy A. Regehr

Leadership

Eighty-two commission or committee members meeting monthly, 31 full-or part-time staff working at various programs (with another 200 paid and volunteer persons involved at the camps) and 37 representatives on 11 related organizations gave leadership for CMM in 1993. A call to give more continuity to Conference executive leadership came in 1987 with a change from a one-year to a two-year term (renewable three times consecutively) being approved in 1988. The shorter the term the more the leadership role took on a caretaker function and a maintaining of the status quo. To hear what congregations were saying and to respond to that collective voice (often going in many independent directions) with responsible and balanced leadership, demanded inordinate amounts of time in and outside of meetings for moderators and other leaders alike. One leader wrote to another:

Very few people of our conference know of the number of miles driven [or flown] and the hours spent at meetings and the many hours . . . spent waiting during your . . . term. [We would] like you to know that we do in part understand what it has cost you.²

Moderators came to their tasks with differing perspectives. Frank J. Neufeld, moderator 1988–1991, was elected to the position after having served on the Personnel Committee. His perspective was that officers and staff of the Conference should be strong facilitators in



From one moderator to another—passing the torch, 1991: Frank Neufeld (right) and Neil Heinrichs.

carrying out the wishes of the congregations. The other perspective suggested that the Conference leaders or the office staff have the visions, know what needs doing and have to bring the churches with them. Neufeld was the second layman to lead the Conference; Werner Neufeld had been the first 1975–1978. Frank J. Neufeld was followed in 1991 by Neil Heinrichs, also a layman, indicating that there were strong leaders in the community other than ministers who were willing to be involved. Heinrichs believed that there must always be a balance in leadership, responding to what congregations say but also providing responsible leadership.

In 1991 the Personnel Committee appointed Henry Loewen, former high school teacher and principal, as executive secretary to fill the vacant position of (business) administrator. Loewen served as the chair of FLC for 11 years and knew the woes, the gratification and the challenge of serving with CMM. With roots in the Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Loewen had experiences as lay minister and on various committees at Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship. Coordination of the total Conference program and supervision of the office soon expanded to a variety of needs including that of relating to the congregations through visitation and mediation. Loewen saw mediation as one of the most important things the church does, as part and parcel of the ministry of reconciliation according to 2 Corinthians 5:18–20. Helmut Harder, David Schroeder, Erwin Warkentin, Bernie Wiebe and others were drawn into the ministry of mediation in congregations. According to Neil Heinrichs, mediation helped but did not always resolve differences or heal hurt, for example, at Home Street or Grace,



At 1991 conference session in Gretna (l to r): Darlene Driedger, vice-moderator; Vic Loewen, Finance chair; Henry Loewen, executive secretary.



Members of the Pastoral Leadership Commission (l to r): Randy Klaassen, Jessie Kehler, Abe Neufeld.

Brandon, where groups left the original body because of disagreements. Resolution comes only with an ongoing willingness to dialogue and prayerfully to work through differences.

CMM approved a Pastoral Leadership Commission in the 1989 restructuring to work together with the conference minister on the many issues facing the congregations and their ministerial leadership (see Table 16). Strengthening that leadership role in the congregations and selecting pastors that fit the Anabaptist tradition and teaching,

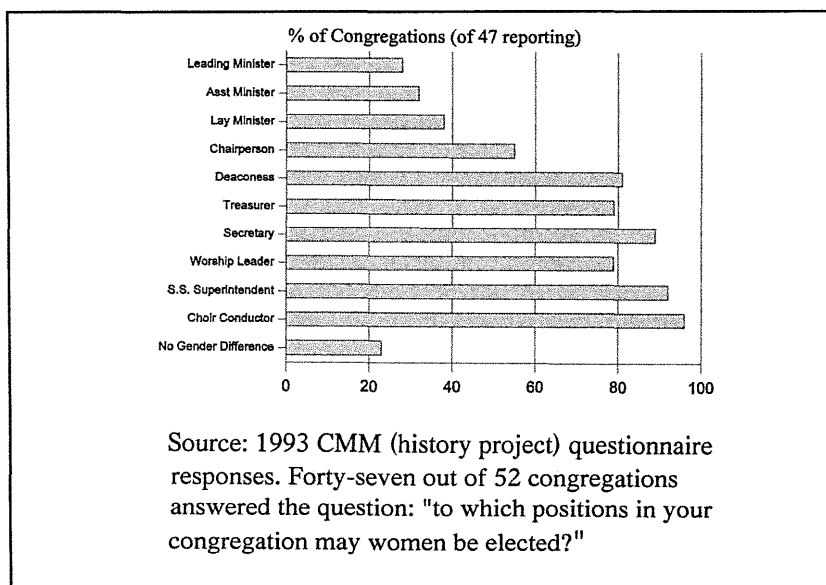
Table 16
1995 Ministerial Distribution

	male	female
1. Ordained lead pastors (including lay ministers)	33	1
2. Ordained assoc. or asst. pastors (incl. part-time and lay ministers) 14	14	1
3. Ordained and in special ministries		
conference ministers	1	0
chaplains/counsellors	7	2
conference/Christian instruction or administration	8	0
teachers in Christian education	4	0
students	1	0
4. Ordained mission/service workers	7	1
5. Ordained and retired persons	46	0
6. Ordained and in non-church related employment or pastoring		
in non-GCMC churches	22	0
7. Licensed or candidates for ordinations	17	4
8. Commissioned pastoral or lay ministers staff	13	5
9. Commissioned missions/service workers	1	0
Total ordained, licensed, commissioned workers in 1995	188	

thereby helping congregations move in the same direction, became a priority as Conference leadership listened to congregations and their struggles. In spite of the tradition of selecting lay ministers from within the congregation, a scarcity of pastors was reported annually by conference minister John F. Wiebe. Although shortages existed, most congregations did not consider women to fill ministerial positions. "Is this a realistic approach to pastoral care . . . when over half of our constituency are female?" Wiebe asked the 1986 delegate body. Ministerial leadership varied from congregation to congregation. To bring some cohesiveness to this role, an adaptation of the GCMC *Ordinal* was adopted in 1991.

The matter of women in leadership was raised repeatedly during the 1992 sessions in Winkler. However, a motion to actively promote equal employment opportunity for men and women at all Conference and congregational levels and equal representation on the nomination ballots drew strong objections and was tabled. An approved seminar on women in ministry, held at Grace Mennonite Church in Winkler in November 1992, attracted mainly female participants with representation from half the congregations. Approximately one-third of CMM congregations were open to having a woman as leading or assistant

Table 17
Women May Be Elected



minister (see Table 17). Several congregations struggled with the issue of women in ministry. Some responded by hiring couples to a team ministry position as assistant pastors, youth or music ministers. Two congregations, Bethel Mennonite and Thompson United Mennonite, accepted single women, Ruth Boehm and Joan Blatz, as pastors in 1989 and 1994, respectively. According to John P. Klassen, conference minister 1994–1995, Fort Garry's fully shared ministry was unique in providing opportunity for seven women to be commissioned as lay ministers and to serve on an equal basis with men since 1980.

Camps

No program involved young people as passionately as did camp ministry. For many youth this summer work represented the first time they were entrusted with leadership in teaching and living out their Christian faith. In contributing to the growth of others they were experiencing maturation themselves, observed Camp Committee chair Rudy Friesen in 1977. Many saw sponsorship of youth as camp counsellors as one of the wisest investments of the congregations and the Conference. Since volunteerism declined significantly over the years, much attention focused on staff sponsorship by congregations and hiring of personnel. The latter was dictated not only by the number of campers but by the needs of campers and the different programs.

Camp staff, committees and delegate sessions revisited the meaning of conversion and related topics periodically. In 1993 Bob Wiebe, director of Camps with Meaning, identified the ongoing tension in the constituency as follows:

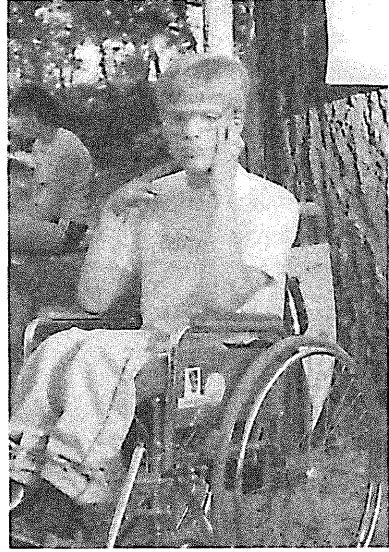
The conflict of approaches . . . is sometimes presented in polarized form: do we push for campers to be saved or do we wait for them to choose Christ? Some of our constituency would propose the former, some the latter approach, based on their own experiences. . . . Faith is experienced in many different ways.³

With this recognition, nurture and the invitation to faith were given camp after camp, summer after summer. Role modelling, the Holy Spirit's working, prayer, and aids like stories and symbols were all considered important components in the invitation to follow Christ.

Making the camps accessible to mentally and physically challenged persons, a move begun in the previous era, represented a cutting edge of camp ministry. A 1982 motion committed CMM to work at removing attitudinal, architectural and employment barriers. Henry Enns from Steinbach Mennonite, director of Disabled Peoples' Inter-



Robert Wiebe, director of Camps with Meaning.



Camping is for all.

national and member of the Camp Committee 1982–1985, brought the enthusiasm and assistance needed to integrate disabled people into the regular camp programs. Information needed for such a process was compiled and printed for distribution across Canada and became useful in other camps, parks and recreation departments, thus multiplying the impact. Resulting ripple effects produced unexpected publicity and resulted in the operation of numerous Canadian Association of Community Living camps every summer.

Primarily because of budget considerations, the question of operating year-round camping programs at three sites emerged repeatedly at delegate sessions. The three-year program for the 1990s, which included raising money for capital work and further development, was marginally successful, prompting more evaluation and questioning. Moving in the direction of local associations for operation and maintenance with a Conference base for programming became a consideration again.

Radio

The chief mandate of Faith and Life Communications, programming, with its weekly broadcast deadlines, required an understanding of the listening audience, endless creative resources for variety and a

healthy sense of humour on the part of program participants. The Abundant Life's teaching ministry continued to be strongly validated. *Wort des Lebens* and *Frohe Botschaft*, thanks to the ingenuity of its producers Betty Wiebe and part-time CMM office secretary, Leonore Peters (secretary since 1983 and producer since 1987), remained vibrant and valued.

The Faith and Life informational program—heard at one o'clock on Sunday afternoons since 1984—while FLC-administered and CMM-funded, was most constituency-owned in terms of participation. With interviews as its main medium, the program focused on issues and themes important to CMM, MCC, private schools, related organizations and concerns, while also providing a sprinkling of messages, musical renditions and special features. For the approximately 520 programs from 1984–1994, Jake Letkemann, Rudy Regehr and Ron Loeppky were probably the most frequent interviewers. Due to FLC cut-backs the program terminated in 1995.

The relocation of the CMM offices from Pembina Highway to 600 Shaftesbury in early 1990 provided a new and larger recording studio for FLC. The half-million dollar, state-of-the-art studio and equipment were made possible largely through General Conference Call to Kingdom Commitment funds. This not only met the needs of Faith and Life broadcasting but enabled FLC to include the constituency more in



FLC staff, 1995 (l to r): Victor Sawatzky (director), Alice Pound, Leonore Peters, Betty Wiebe, Reg Sawatzky (recording engineer).



Henry Neufeld and David Owen outdoors recording Saulteaux Scripture as part of the FLC cassette program. Photo: Henry Neufeld

broadcasting and to provide recording services to congregations and the larger community. A cassette and CD recording ministry developed and served people in the Low and High German, Cree, Saulteaux and English languages.

Two four-year projects of male choir ministry served to rub shoulders with CMM's constituency and beyond and to increase music resources for FLC. Team work by conductor George Wiebe, accompanist Esther Wiebe, manager-director Victor Sawatzky and organizer-secretary Alice Pound, together with eager, supportive choir members, enabled both series, 1984–1988 and 1988–1992, to include programs



The Faith and Life male choir with conductor George Wiebe and accompanist Esther Wiebe (front centre).

in Manitoba and other Canadian churches, a tour abroad and a January concert in the Winnipeg Concert Hall. A third series, projected for completion in 1998, began in 1994.

Marginal inter-Mennonite, inter-faith efforts became magnified when given national exposure through radio and TV spots. However, in the long run FLC could not take advantage of significant opportunities, like inter-faith television, because of limited resources. The Mennonite and Radio Television Council as well as the Inter-Mennonite Media Group were phased out because of insufficient funds.

Mission and evangelism

From a largely salaried ministry in the 1970s, hospital chaplaincy moved more and more to a combination of salaried and volunteer ministry in the 1990s (see Table 14). In 1991 it was transferred from the Outreach Ministries Commission to the Pastoral Leadership Commission. Some ministries (like subsidization of Selkirk Community efforts, the Chinese Mennonite Church or Kanadier Mennonites returning from Mexico) phased out, while others (assistance for the emerging Vietnamese congregation, Covenant in Winkler, Minnewasta at Morden and Northdale in Winnipeg) continued. David Wiebe, Arnaud pastor who was hired as full-time Evangelism and Church Growth director 1986–1989, looked into establishing congregations in areas where interest was expressed or help requested. None of the four possibilities considered were developed. According to Wiebe, a greater spirit of inclusiveness, skills in relating to “outsiders,” encouragement to share the faith at one’s work place and more vision and confidence to draw from Anabaptist experience in evangelism were needed. Such an evangelism, with an Anabaptist view, was the Living in Faithful Evangelism (LIFE) process which 23 CMM congregations (six Winnipeg, 17 non-Winnipeg) entered into in the early 1990s. It is too early to assess the full impact of the involvement. Certainly, through it came a greater awareness and knowledge of the communities in which the participating congregations were located. The process placed responsibility for evangelism within the congregation rather than lodging it with a provincial committee or a staff person.⁴

Women in Mission and other women

While a total of 1,524 women were meeting for fellowship and activities in Manitoba, a gradual decline in membership across North America became evident. Fewer younger women were being attracted and more women than ever were working outside the home. The



The Conference Outreach Commission promoted the Living in Faithful Evangelism (LIFE) program in the 1990s.

minimal attention given to Women in Mission at the conference sessions reflected women's gradual increasing involvement in more areas. No longer was Women in Mission the only voice of women as the opportunity to speak up on conference committees and at delegate sessions became increasingly real. "There was never an overt attempt to keep women out," said Frank Neufeld, CMM moderator 1989–1991. "Churches were asked to submit names and frequently didn't. If names were put forward, they were asked." According to executive secretary Henry Loewen,

we try now to strike a gender balance but it is not done that easily. It is difficult to find women who will let their name stand. Some just don't feel ready. Others with interests and gifts are so busy in their professions and elsewhere.

In spite of the opportunities, very few delegate women spoke on the conference floor. The literal application of the Apostle Paul's admonition in 1 Timothy 2:11, "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness," was not forgotten that easily. One woman wrote: "The image of women being unfit to speak in public lingers long after



Helen Hildebrand, chair of the Program Committee and active in Women in Mission

the rules change. Silence has been bred into many generations of women.”⁵

The search to know the will of God in the matter of male and female roles was not over, and women and men in the various congregations found themselves at different points on the theological continuum on whether Scripture sanctions women leadership. Some said, for example, that if the moderator of the Conference was a woman they would withdraw, reflecting the standpoint (reenforced by groups like Promise Keepers) that men are superior to women and men must be in leadership. With others feeling just as strongly that all are equal and gifted for tasks, including that of leadership, only dialogue and prayer could prevent the Conference from being pulled apart, observed 1996 moderator Neil Heinrichs. The implications were particularly grave for youth and young adults. In a message at an early 1980s delegate session, minister and chaplain Jakob K. Krause reflected the need for respect and tolerance, applicable wherever people come from or whichever generation and gender they represent, when he said: “. . . if you are a liberated lady, don’t foist your freedom, your values upon one who comes from a different period in history.”

Education and the MMYO

Beyond the enduring Sunday school conferences, miscellaneous workshops, the continuing relationship to the Interfaith Pastoral Institute and the promotion of private schools, the need for Bible education became the Education Committee and Executive’s concern

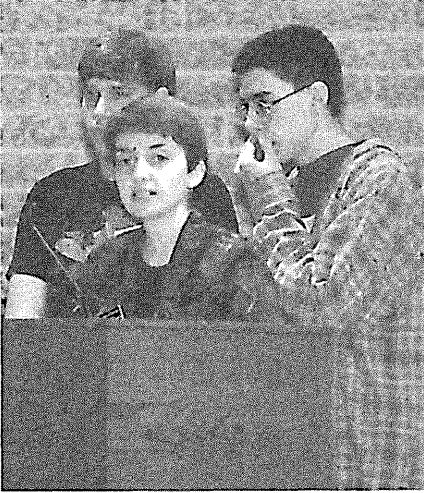
after the closing of Elim. CMM, interested that every generation of young people have the opportunity to learn and treasure the Bible as taught from its own Anabaptist-Mennonite faith heritage, saw the need for another option besides the private high school or CMBC. To that end the Executive Committee explored options of cooperation in Bible education with Winkler Bible Institute and Swift Current Bible Institute. With the Swift Current option disappearing,⁶ the Winkler door remained open for negotiation. Had the relationship to the Mennonite Brethren changed? Neil Heinrichs, involved in the discussions, found that things had changed very much even in the last decade. On the whole, while an older generation may have thought there still were major differences and wanted to keep distinctions, churches were working by economic bottom line realities and realizing more and more the need to work together, observed Heinrichs. He also believed that younger leaders were willing to enter into dialogue and that belonging to one church or another was no longer such a big issue.

According to youth worker Abe Bergen, the congregations played a vital role in the lives of young people. He said:

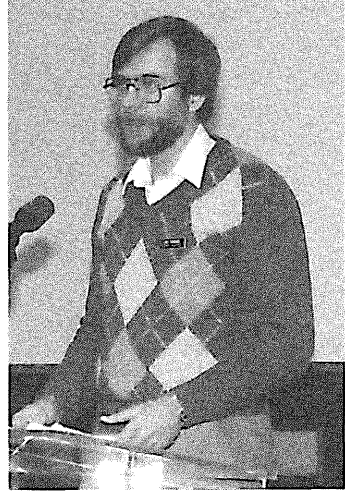
If you want youth to become active disciples, the church must be faithful in its calling by living with compassion and integrity. When the church is faithful to its mission, youth and young adults will want to participate in its life and work and will find it worthy of their commitment.⁷

After Bergen's almost 13-year ministry with Manitoba youth, Pam Peters-Pries served as director 1990–1993 followed by Sonja Friesen. Priorities for directors were local youth groups and their leadership, campus or young adult ministries and the MMYO. For the latter the director served as advisor and mentor in the constant turnover of leadership.

MMYO, with the purpose of gathering the province's young people into a strong peer group system from which to relate to the larger church, found the most popular event to be the annual volleyball tournament. At its peak in 1990 it drew 62 congregational or private school teams with several hundred young people remaining for fellowship over supper and listening to a speaker. The decline of the number of youth in many congregations led to new approaches, like mentoring and youth ministry teams. Introduced by Abe Bergen first in Bethel and Charleswood, mentoring spread to 16 other congregations by the mid-1990s. In ten congregations a sizeable youth group



Sonja Friesen, youth worker, and MMYO youth report on activities.



Abe Bergen, long-time youth worker, shares at conference.

precipitated the hiring of part- or full-time salaried youth ministers.

A concrete young adult ministry began as an inter-Mennonite campus ministry at the universities in Winnipeg where more than half of the young people went to study. Under the auspices of the Education Committee, Arthur Fast from Sargent initially represented CMM on the inter-Mennonite Campus Ministries Committee beginning in 1971.⁸ After 1977 Abe Bergen devoted some time to this work through small Bible study and fellowship groups and personal interaction. The need for an ongoing presence on campus, aired at CMM as early as 1966, was met in the mid-1980s when Irma Fast Dueck, who was exploring her gifts for social work or pastoral ministry, was invited by the Education Committee to the position of chaplain under the supervision of CMBC's Supervised Pastoral Education program. When Fast Dueck terminated this counselling ministry, CMM hired social worker Ingrid Cornies on a part-time basis. Cornies developed the counselling program from meeting students privately in public places to a full-fledged chaplain's office on the University of Manitoba campus as well as a one-day presence at the University of Winnipeg in cooperation with Menno Simons College. In the early 1990s the Education Committee terminated the chaplain's position and office in favour of a broader-than-university campus ministry to young adults. After an interim stint by Lisa Carr Pries, a half-time young adult ministries director, Doug Klassen, was hired in fall 1995.



Making Wrenikje (perogies) at youth camp.

In a position paper regarding young adults in 1991, Pam Peters-Pries and Ingrid Cornies impressed on delegates that young adults needed listeners. They looked for inclusive language and for an understanding of the differences between the generations. The discussion that followed contributed toward a new effort to include youth and young adults at delegate sessions. The 1991 CMM minutes recorded some of the exchange as follows:

Young people don't necessarily dream the same dream the previous generation had. If young adults feel pain of difference[s] with [the] church, be it known [that] the church also feels pain. To bridge the gap of generations allow for ownership—we young adults are also the church. Older adults need to be pushed by young adults. Let's keep working together, we can do it!

Beyond CMM to other conferences and related organizations

As early as 1937 J.H. Enns wrote about the relationships of the various conferences to one another. For him each conference represented a circle. The smallest of the three General Conference entities was the provincial conference and the last and largest of the Mennonite circles, the Mennonite World Conference. The relationship and responsibilities of one conference to another, beginning with the provincial and extending to the other circles, was as the relationship and responsibilities of the individual members to each other within a

Gemeinde or a congregation. But no matter how good or efficient the organization, unity of spirit was the crucial thing. It followed that as member to member in a congregation, so conference to conference needed to consider the other higher than itself.⁹ In practice, however, the three North American conferences ran parallel to each other and each congregation related directly to each conference. As a result, duplication of involvements and fund-raising was not uncommon and unease one with the other occurred.

During the 1983–1990s era the layers of conferences and programs became a concern, and strenuous efforts were made to study future directions. Reorganization of CMC in the early 1990s invited representatives of the provincial (area) conferences into the CMC General Board to help eliminate duplication of programs, coordinate fund-raising and address other concerns. Some voices in the constituency said that one or the other of the conference layers needed to be eliminated. Some congregations found them confusing and were no longer willing to relate to three levels of bureaucracy. Other congregations found it difficult to let go of any one of the conferences, believing that each had a particular and important function.

Cooperation on an inter-Mennonite scale happened through social welfare endeavours such as Eden, but primarily through MCC. The latter probably embraced more conferences and involved more people in hands-on ministries than any Mennonite denominational group or organization. By the 1990s the partnering conferences in MCC Manitoba were the CMM, Mennonite Brethren, EMMC, EMC, Sommerfelder, Old Colony, Reinländer, Chortitzer and the Grain of Wheat community.¹⁰ CMM represented the largest Mennonite body on MCC Manitoba and as a result contributed more than half of constituency income, members of the board and the volunteer workforce. Peter Peters, member at Charleswood, served a number of years first as chair of the board, later as director of MCC Manitoba. During those years he saw CMM members emphasizing a broader peace agenda and the importance of working together.

Working together happened also when CMM partnered with Manitoba's other Mennonite conferences in planning and organizing the twelfth Mennonite World Conference in Winnipeg. The 1990 experience under the theme "Witnessing to Christ in Today's World," continued to inspire congregations and became indicative of greater possibilities for renewal and union.

In the 1980s and 1990s there were no longer any purely *Russländer* or *Kanadier* congregations in the CMM. Members from many of the

Mennonite denominations were found in GC congregations as a result of inter-marriage, unhappy experiences within their own denomination, or simply discovering that the earlier barriers between the different Mennonite groups had largely disappeared. For example, Henry Poettcker, president of CMBC for many years, did not experience the tensions with the Mennonite Brethren as did some leaders in the early decades. He preached at weddings, significant year-end Bible conferences at Elmwood Mennonite Brethren Church, at college graduation, and participated in a communion service in handing out the bread and wine. Rebaptism of members was no longer required in some Mennonite Brethren congregations. Several CMM congregations enlarged their baptismal practice as well in that they did not insist on sprinkling or pouring but immersed candidates when they requested that form. According to David Schroeder, long-time New Testament professor at CMBC who grew up in the Sommerfelder Gemeinde, the key to moving together with those of more conservative leanings and others was to non-judgementally recognize each other as Christians. Then dialogue, both about things held in common and differences, could take place.

A few non-Mennonites of various racial and cultural origins and Christian denominations, both Protestant and Catholic, entered voluntarily and enriched the CMM congregations that received them. That was not to say that the doors were open everywhere as wide as they could be. But a greater understanding and foretaste of Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for are all one in Christ Jesus” was being realized.

Summarizing

Downsizing for CMM came in bits and pieces in almost all areas, following the pattern of government and society in general. In some cases, like the Faith and Life program, people hardly took note; in others, like Elim or campus chaplaincy, individuals involved experienced considerable pain which, in the opinion of some, was never fully resolved.

In the financial area, the downsizing was not as obvious, but income was projected not to climb in the years 1995–1997 with levies expected to remain at \$80 per member. With rising costs and unmet budgets, committees remained in a belt-tightening mode as they had been for the entire decade, and projected budget income was based on the past year’s contributions by congregations. In 1990 the support

from 50 congregations over a ten-year period looked as follows: thirteen congregations (26 percent) gave 100 percent or more; nineteen (38 percent) gave 90-99 percent; six (12 percent) gave 70-89 percent; four (8 percent) gave 50-69 percent; and 8 (16 percent) gave less than 50 percent of expected church contributions.

Strengthening (and enlargement) took place in the areas of executive and ministerial leadership, young adult work and in the relationship with many of the congregations through listening and dialogue. An increased emphasis on togetherness and mutual edification came through worship events such as the Faith and Life festivals, Celebration '96 and congregations meeting in groups. Great Trek events, attendance at annual youth leaders' conferences and membership in the North American Camping Association strengthened youth and camping ministries. Hope for a renewed understanding and mutual commitment to ministry dawned with the adoption of the statement "The Relationship and Responsibilities of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba and its Member Churches" at the 1996 sessions.

CONCLUSION

When the Bergthaler, with other Kanadier, agreed to support and receive the Russländer of the 1920s—despite some sense that the latter had compromised some of their principles by remaining in Russia in the 1870s—they extended their hands in charity and cautious goodwill. They were, after all, of the same blood and faith, whether always following the same interpretation and practice or not. At several points, in part or in whole, the Bergthaler withheld their hands somewhat, World War II being the most obvious example.

The Russländer, indebted to those who enabled them to make Canada their home, needed all the understanding and empathy of like-minded, German-speaking compatriots they could get. It seemed natural that they would cultivate particularly the kirchliche connections and relationships and grasp the hands extended by David Toews and others of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, the Conference of Central/Middle Canada and those of the General Conference Mennonite Church of North America. They needed each other: the Russländer because of poverty, debt and unfamiliarity with the new country; the Mennonites, already established and organized into congregations and conferences, to fulfill their calling to compassion and to do good especially to those of their own household of faith. The rapidity with which the newly-organized Russländer Gemeinden joined the two existing kirchliche conferences (Canadian and North American), as early as 1926 when the Bergthaler kept a certain distance from the latter, is noteworthy.

In spite of the differences between the two groups, the coming together of Bergthaler and kirchliche Russländer at Canadian conferences proved to be highlights, especially for leaders in the first and subsequent decades. A fundamental unity was understood because all were Christian, Mennonite and of kirchliche Russian background. The desire to work together and to look at the larger issues that faced the Gemeinden and their leaders and to find guidance and consensus in coming to some resolution remained undisputed. That is not to say that clashes of opinion, interpretation and personalities did not occur. It may well be because of differing views and personality conflicts within the Canadian context that the wish to form a separate provincial conference arose.

At the provincial conference level the coming together of Bergthaler and kirchliche Russländer was considerably slower and much more cautious than at the Canadian level. Why? G.G. Neufeld in retrospect explained: We were seeking unity (“Wir suchten die Einigkeit”). That pursuit of unity took time in the Gemeinden and at the different Bible and ministers’ conferences as leaders shared and dialogued. Although disagreements surfaced, the frequent conclusion to these gatherings was, as D.H. Koop put it after the June 1929 ministers’ conference in Arnaud: “We had again looked each other in the eyes and departed strengthened and encouraged for further work.”

That sense of being energized through togetherness repeated itself through the decades not only at ministers’ and deacons’ conferences but at annual and special delegate sessions and at many committee and task force meetings. Worship, service, intensive study and discussion on the various concerns of the CMM in its search for faithfulness drew people together. Every generation found the freedom to change structures and programs and experiment in new ways to remain relevant with integrity. This collective spirit and will to be organizationally bound together (in spite of disagreement and frequent uncertainties) made the chaplaincy, radio, camp, youth and other ministries possible. The Abundant Life program by itself was estimated to have anywhere from 30,000 to 50,000 listeners in 1994. Summer camp, which began with one campsite, 288 Mennonite children and 10 to 20 staff members in 1949, numbered 1,191 participants (including 958 children, half of them non-Mennonite, 73 native campers [CMC], and 160 adult mentally handicapped persons) with 208 staff at three camps in 1994. Mennonite children and staff that year came from 39 and 36 CMM congregations, respectively.

At Sunday school conventions workers from congregations became exposed to some of the finest educators and resources available in the conferences. Beginning with the commitment of a few ministers to hospital visitation, the vision grew to include dedicated and qualified lay volunteers who made an ongoing chaplaincy ministry possible. DVBS, mission stations, prison and city ministries provided some of the finest moments of cooperative outreach through the years. The number of ministers who served in Manitoba congregations for shorter and longer periods of time grew from about 40 in 1928 to approximately 550 in the 1990s. Deacons, congregational chairpersons, choir conductors, Sunday school teachers and many other workers contributed to the building of their congregations.

The common vision and support of Christian training and nurture

of youth in the private high schools and Bible institutions supplied teachers and church workers for innumerable schools and congregations. MPM/Native Ministries, COM and MCC, possible only through congregations united in purpose and obedience, became channels for shorter and longer terms of service for approximately 60, 100, 406 men and women, respectively. The enthusiasm and persistence of the youth and women's organizations gave hope and support to CMM's future.

Aspiring to greater unity represented a common thread in the Conference constitutions, necessary to the fulfillment of all other objectives, twining itself through the CMM story and that of its *Gemeinden*. Conference moderators, each in his or her own way, encouraged congregations and committees to work together harmoniously. When the bond of oneness seemed frail, when any of the prerequisites to oneness left something to be desired, programs and support faltered.

In earlier decades divisions occurred over issues of Kanadier and Russländer origins and *Gemeinden* loyalties, language and leadership, or different understandings and interpretations of the Scriptures. While the Kanadier-Russländer or rural-urban orientations faded in significance, the harmony in some congregations was challenged by the diverse theological language of conversion, the perception of the roles of women and men, sexual orientation, and the understanding of God. Could it be possible that the Spirit would free congregations to tolerate variances in these areas thus enriching the Conference and strengthening the identity and bond of all one in Christ Jesus? Would it draw those who saw little credibility in the church or felt marginalized because of their position? Creative diversity and multiplicity of expression are possible within a fundamental unity, suggested John H. Neufeld on the basis of John 17:21-23 in 1986. Neither attitude, passing judgement on another's liberal, more generous position nor despising someone with a narrow conservative stance, contribute to the unity Christ desires.

Where to from here, CMM? Was Ernest Wiebe right when he said: To ask the right questions is the beginning of wisdom? Which are the right questions? Did the moving toward greater individualism of the congregations mean losing sight of the larger vision? Did CMM's programs, carried out by committees or commissions, become too high a priority so that cultivating unity of the congregations was neglected? Were committees and central office staff able to accurately reflect in their agendas the direction and aspirations of the majority of members?

And were they in a position to unite the congregations in support of those directions (as for instance an earlier Ältestenrat might have)? Are future directions in which congregations want to go clear to Conference leadership? What is needed when congregations and conference leadership do not see eye to eye? What is the role of congregational leadership (both ministerial/pastoral and lay) in all of this? Is the trend to multiple staffing in the congregations a necessary and helpful one? Can the Conference remain relevant to the needs of the congregations?

And what about the unity of all Mennonites aspired to by early leaders? Had they misjudged the mind of Christ in this matter or why was it omitted in the Constitution adopted in 1936? Is cooperation in various ways, as for example through MCC, sufficient? Can acceptance of diversity and multiplicity of expression through the love of Christ break down remaining theological and organizational barriers? Could it be that like the Bergthaler Gemeinde gave up its unique identity to identify more fully with the larger CMM, so a time would come where the CMM would give up its separate being to unite with another entity? Where is the vision and the will to dialogue and to pursue the unity which Christ desires for his Church? Or can only economic pressures, persecution, disaster or war force rapprochement? "A visible unity of believers is a precondition for credible witness in the world," reminded Bernie Wiebe on the basis of Ephesians 4:4-6 in 1986. The quest for a visible unity was one of the main reasons for the founding of the General Conference Mennonite Church in 1860 and for the decision by the Wichita assemblies in 1995 to move toward an even larger integration.

One thing is certain. The CMM of the 1990s is not the MMK or KMM of the earlier decades. As well, the CMM of tomorrow will not be the CMM of today. In light of the past, each generation, with the Holy Spirit's promise and guidance, must work out its own understandings and directions in pursuing the unity of the congregations in the Conference, the larger world-wide Mennonite and the ecumenical Church. The foundation, however, can be none other than the one already laid, namely, Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX 1

Statut der Manitoba Mennoniten Konferenz 1936

Name und Bestand. In der Erkenntnis dessen, dass der Herr von seinen Gemeinden rege Wirksamkeit erwartet, dass der Aufgaben in unserer Provinz Manitoba für unsere Gemeinden recht viele sind und dass diese Aufgaben mit vereinten Bemühen besser zu erfüllen sind, schliessen sich folgende mennonitische Gemeinden: Bergthaler, Schönwieser, Blumenortler, Lichtenauer und Herold . . . zu einer Konferenz zusammen, die den Namen "MANITOBA MENNONITEN KONFERENZ," verkürzt "MMK" tragen soll.

Andere mennonitische Gemeinden, die bestrebt sind die Grundsätze der Konferenz zu wahren, dürfen der Konferenz beitreten.

Grundlage. Die MMK gründet sich in allen ihren Bestrebungen auf die Lehre der Heiligen Schrift, wie sie kurz zusammengefasst sind in unserem Katechismus und in dem diesem Katechismus beigegefügttem Glaubensbekenntnis.

Ziel. Das Ziel aller Bestrebungen der MMK ist, unsere Gemeinden geistlich zu heben, dass sie immer mehr von dem Geiste Christi durchdrungen und ein Ruhm der Gnade Gottes werden. Die Konferenz möchte den einzelnen Gemeinden, Familien und Personen nach Möglichkeit helfen, ihre Schwierigkeiten geistlicher und materieller Art zu überwinden.

Organisation. Die MMK hat jährlich im Monat Juni eine Versammlung von Vertretern aller zur Konferenz gehörigen Gemeinden. Diese Versammlung ist die höchste Instanz der Konferenz. Sie wird beschickt durch Delegaten aus den Gemeinden in dem auf je 20 Gemeindeglieder je einer gewählt wird, der eine Stimme abgeben darf. Stimmenübertragung in der Höhe von 10 Stimmen ist gestattet.

Diese Versammlung nimmt Berichte der einzelnen Arbeiter, Komiteen und Kommissionen der Konferenz entgegen, gibt Aufträge und Richtlinien und entscheidet über alle wichtigen Fragen der Konferenz.

Es darf auch eine aussergewöhnliche Versammlung der Konferenz einberufen werden, wenn besonders dringende Fragen vorliegen. Die

Einberufung der regelmässigen, wie auch aussergewöhnlichen Versammlungen der Konferenz geschieht durch die Konferenzleitung, doch darf letztere auch auf Antrag von 200 Gliedern der Konferenz einberufen werden.

Die Konferenzleitung besteht aus 6 Brüdern, die von der allgemeinen Versammlung auf drei Jahre gewählt werden, mit einer jährlichen Ausscheidung von zwei Brüdern.

Die gewählten Brüder wählen aus ihrer Mitte einen Vorsitzenden, Gehilfen des Vorsitzenden und einen Schriftführer-Kassierer, welche das Vollzugskomitee bilden.

Aufgaben der Konferenzleitung sind:

- a) Vertretung der Konferenz
- b) Ausführung der Beschlüsse der Konferenz
- c) Entgegennahme und Vorberatung von Fragen für die Konferenz
- d) Aufstellung des Programmes für die allgemeine Versammlung der Konferenz.

Ausser der allgemeinen Versammlung der Konferenz versammeln sich die Prediger derselben noch einmal jährlich im November zu einer Predigerberatung. Zweck dieser Versammlung ist, die Prediger der Konferenz einander näher zu bringen, durch gegenseitigen Austausch ihrer Erfahrungen sich gegenseitig zu stärken und gemeinsam Fragen ihres Berufes und Glaubensfragen der Gemeinde zu beraten.

Die Zusammenkunft der allgemeinen Versammlung der MMK findet an Orte statt, wohin Einladungen für sie von den Gemeinden vorliegen.

Die Predigerversammlung wählt für ihre Beratungen eine eigene Leitung so wie zwecks Durcharbeitung vorliegender Fragen, eigene Kommissionen.

Zu eben solchen Zwecken wählt auch die allgemeine Versammlung der Konferenz ihre Kommissionen und Komiteen.

Betätigung. Die Konferenz sucht ihre Ziele zu erreichen durch folgende Betätigung:

a) Danach zu sehen, dass alle Ansiedlungen und einzelne Familien, sowie alleinstehende Personen unserer Richtung gut mit Gottes Wort und Seelsorge betreut werden.

b) Für guten Sonntagsschulunterricht in unseren Gemeinden Sorge zu tragen.

c) Hingebende christliche Jugendpflege zu üben.

d) Für guten Unterricht in Religion und Deutsch in unseren Distrikt schulen zu sorgen, und wo das nicht möglich ist, besonderen Unterricht in entsprechender Weise einzuführen.

e) Sich besonders der Lehranstalt in Gretna anzunehmen und dahin

zu arbeiten, dass diese Schule ein Zentrum zur Pflege wahrer Glaubenserkenntnis und deutschen Kulturgutes werde.

f) Für gute Bibelklassen, Bibelschulen zu sorgen und, wenn möglich, eine Predigerschule zu eröffnen.

g) Die vorhandenen Einrichtungen von Krankenhilfe nach Kräften zu unterstützen.

h) Andere Hilfen, wie Waisen, Witwen und Armen und Altersfürsorge zu pflegen.

i) Nach Vermögen auch Evangelisation und Mission zu betreiben.

j) Für die Verbreitung unserer besonderen Erkenntnisgüter einzustehen.

k) Zur Hebung unseres wirtschaftlichen Tiefstandes kollektive Hilfe zu suchen.

Mittel. Wenn durch unsere Konferenz wirklich ertragsame Arbeit getan werden soll, werden die Glieder derselben Opfer bringen müssen. Nach dem Beispiel der apostolischen Gemeinde, werden wir unser Werk, das doch wohl vornehmlich ein Werk persönlichen Dienstes und ernstes Gebetes sein soll, doch nicht ohne geregelte Besteuerung tun können. Die Mittel zu den wichtigen Unternehmungen der MMK soll zusammenkommen: a) durch eine gleichmässige Besteuerung aller Glieder der Konferenz; b) durch gelegentliche freie Kollekten; c) durch den Erlös von gelegentlichen Veranstaltungen von den Jugendvereinen, Sängerkreisen, etc. [sic]; d) durch freie Spenden, die etwa Freunde unserer Sache tun wollen.

Anschluss. Die MMK erwartet, dass die Mennoniten unserer Richtung in den anderen Provinzen sich in ähnlicher Weise organisieren werden, und ist bereit mit ihnen zusammen, wie auch bisher, die Allgemeine Konferenz der Mennoniten Kanadas zu bilden.

Auch zu anderen christliche Konferenzen will sie gute Beziehungen pflegen.

APPENDIX 2

Konstitution der Konferenz der Mennoniten Manitobas (KMM) 1947

Name. Wir treten als Gemeinden zu einer Vereinigung zusammen die den Namen führen soll: Konferenz der Mennoniten Manitobas (KMM).

Zweck. Zweck dieser Konferenz soll sein das Band der Einigkeit zwischen den einzelnen Gemeinden enger zu knüpfen uns so besser befähigend die auf der Canadischen Konferenz gefassten Beschlüsse besser in die Tat umsetzen zu können indem wir solche provinzialen Fragen wie Schulen, Reisepredigt, Hilfswerkarbeit, Jugendarbeit, Dienstfrage, Mädchenheim und ähnliches, gemeinsam regeln. Auch soll neben der Arbeitsgemeinschaft die Gemeinschaft des Geistes gepflegt werden.

Gliedschaft. Eine jede Gemeinde die Mitglied der Konferenz der Mennoniten in Kanada ist, wie irgendeine andere Gemeinde die zur Aufnahme vom Vorstand der Konferenz empfohlen wird, kann Mitglied dieser Konferenz werden, wenn die Mehrheit der Konferenzmitglieder dafür ist solche Gemeinde aufzunehmen.

Vertretung der Gemeinden. Eine jede Gemeinde die dieser Konferenz beigetreten ist, sollte es als ihre Pflicht betrachten, jede Konferenz durch einen oder mehrere Delegaten zu beschicken. Die Delegaten sollen auf einer ordnungsgemässen, einberufenen Gemeindeversammlung gewählt werden. Die Stimmzahl die eine Gemeinde hat soll sich nicht nach der Anzahl der Delegaten, sondern nach der Grösse der Gemeinde richten. Auf je dreissig Glieder und auf den Bruchteil der mehr als die Hälfte von dreissig beträgt, soll eine Stimme kommen. Ein Delegat darf aber nicht mehr als dreissig Stimmen haben.

Verhältnis der Konferenz zu den Gemeinden. Die Konferenz darf sich nicht in die innere Angelegenheit einer Gemeinde mischen, wenn sie von derselben nicht dazu ersucht wird. Sie soll kein gesetzgebender, sondern nur ein beratender Körper sein.

Versammlungen. Die Konferenz tritt jährlich einmal, ungefähr Mitte November zusammen. Den Ort der Zusammenkunft bestimmt sie selber; die Zeit bestimmen die Beamten, die die Konferenz einzuberufen haben.

Beamte. Die Konferenz wählt für eine jede Konferenzversammlung am Schlusse derselben oder in Ausnahmefällen zum Beginn, durch Stimmenmehrheit einen Vorsitzenden, einen Vizevorsitzenden, einen Schreiber und einen Vizeschreiber. Pflicht der ersteren soll sein die Versammlungen zu führen und darauf zu sehen, dass alles ehrlich und ordentlich zugehe. Pflicht der letzteren soll sein, alle Beschlüsse der Konferenz aufzuschreiben, und sie für die Konferenz aufzubewahren.

Komiteen. Die Konferenz wählt ein Programmkomitee und hat das Recht andere Komiteen zu schaffen, welche die Zweige der Arbeit, die sie übernehmen, zu beaufsichtigen und zu leiten haben.

Berichte. Alle Komiteen und Angestellte der Konferenz haben derselben einen schriftlichen Bericht über ihre Arbeit bei den regelmässigen Versammlungen einzureichen.

Zusätze und Veränderungen. Die Paragraphen dieser Konstitution dürfen verändert oder ergänzt werden wenn zwei Drittel aller Delegaten dafür stimmen. Jedoch darf die Abstimmung über ein dahingehenden Antrag nicht auf derselben Konferenzversammlung vorgenommen werden, auf der er gestellt wird.

Appendix 3
Ältesten of Gemeinden in Manitoba

Name	Birth-Death	Born/Baptized	Educated at	Year Ordain	Ordained by whom/where	Gemeinde/congreg. & other conference service
Abrahams, David	1894-1966	Franzthal; Schönfelder	Teacher training College, Ru	1931 1942A	J P Klassen, Pigeon Lake	Russia; Schönfelder in Mb
Bueckert, Johann P	1879-1958	Schöneberg; Osterwick	—	1906 1928A	Isaak Dyck, Osterwick; David Toews, Reinland	Neu Berdjansk Forestry Camp; Arkadak; Blumenort
Enns, Franz F	1871-1940	Alexanderthal, Mo; Gnadenfeld, Mo	—	1903 1906A	Terek; Terek	Terek 03-18; Memrik 20-23; Suworowskaja 23-25; Lena 26-30; Whitewater 30-38
Enns, Johann H	1889-1974	Samoilowka; Bachmut	Zentralschule; teachers training in Prischib, Halbstadt Mo and Moscow	1923 1939A	Johann Braun, Samoilowka; J P Klassen, Schönwieser Wpg	Lichtenauer Gemeinde 25-32; Bible School in Gretna 29-31; Schönwieser Bible School 33-46; First Mennonite Wpg 32-65
Enns, Johann J	1884-1966	Schönbrun;	Zentralschule	1927 1943A	F F Enns, Grunthal	Elim Grunthal
Enns, Peter H	1885-1942	Muntau, Mo; Samoilowka	Zentralschule; teacher training Moscow; Basel Missionsschule	1926 1934A	J. P. Klassen, St Elizab; J. P. Klassen, St Elizabeth	Russia; Lichtenauer in Mb
Enns, Wilhelm H	1895-1974	Samoilowka; Samoilowka	Zentralschule in Halbstadt; Winkler Bible Institute	1930 1941A	J P Klassen, Springstein; Peter H. Enns, Springstein	Meadows; Springstein
Ensz, Bruno	1899-1967	Tiegenhagen, W Prussia; Ladekopp	School of Agriculture, W Prussia; MBBC 49-52	1934 1935A	Orlofffelder, W Prussia	West Prussia 34-45; Refugee Camps Denmark 45-49; Reiseprediger 52-54; Greendale Sardis 54-63; Springfield 64-67
Ewert, Benjamin	1870-1958	Thorn, W Prussia; Halstead, Kansas	Halstead KS Seminary; teacher training Gretna	1895 1926A	Johann Funk, Edenburg; Winnipeg	Gretna; itinerant minister; Bethel Mennonite
Friesen, H P	1924-1971	Niverville; Niverville Menn	teacher training; MBBC; AMBS	1956 1963A	Wilhelm Enns, Steinbch; Elmwood Bethel	Steinbach 56-62; Elmwood Bethel 65-70; Dalmeny EMB 70-71

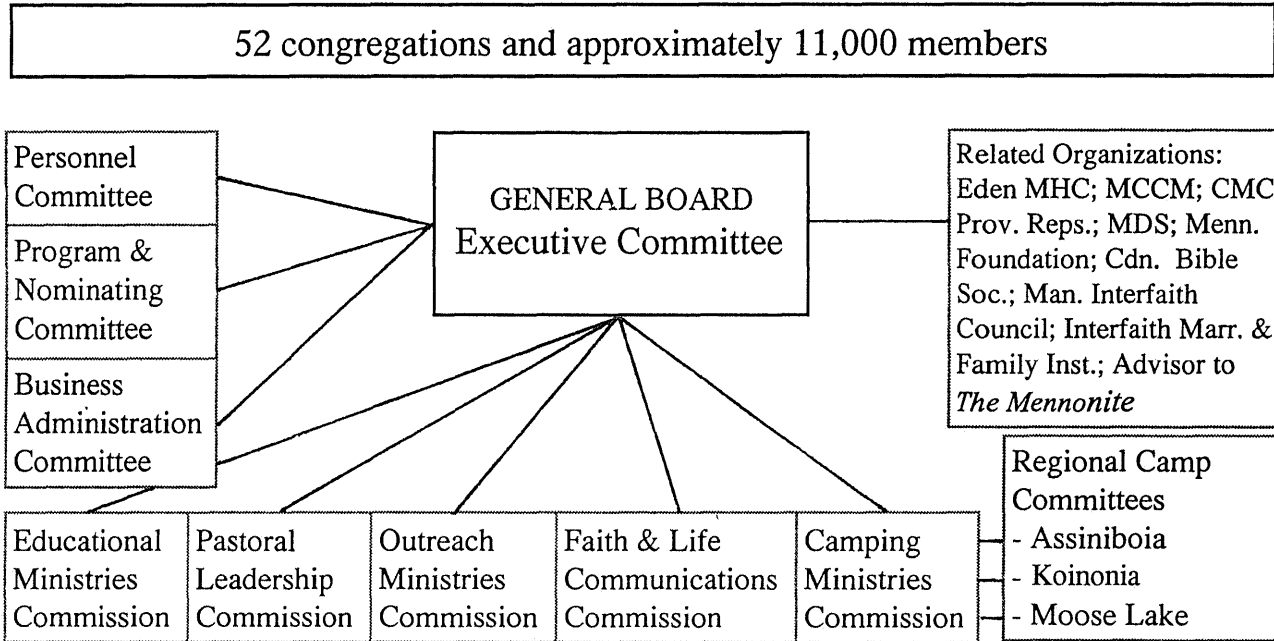
Witness of God in Manitoba (continued)

Friesen, Isaac I	1900-1974	Rosthern; Eigenheim Menn	Rosthern Academy; teacher tr, U of Saskatoon; Los Angeles Bible Institute in CA; Dallas & Westminster Theo Sem; U of Basel	1920 1945A	D Toews, Eigenheim; Benjamin Ewert, J. H. Enns, H. King, Bethel Menn	Eigenheim; Bethel Mennonite; MBBC; CMBC and other schools
Funk, Johann	1836-1917	Russia	—	1877 1882A	Gerhard Wiebe; David Stoesz	Bergthaler Gemeinde
Groening, George	1918-	Kane; Lowe Farm B.	teacher training	1948 1957A	D Schulz, Lowe Farm; I I Friesen, Bethel Wpg	Lowe Farm 48-54; Morris 52-54; Bethel M 54-66; Foothills 66-71; Eden-Chiliwack 71-84; Clearbrook 89; Greendale 84-pres.
Harms, Jacob P	1926-	Whitewater; Whitewater	Elim 48-49; CMBC 68-69; MBS 79	1957 1964A	G G Neufeld, Whitewater; G G Neufeld, Whitewatr	Whitewater 57-71; Sargent 71-86; COM 86-91; Springfield Heights 92-94
Hoepfner, Jacob	1850-1935	Insel Chortitza; Chortitza	—	1887 1903A	Hoffnungsfeld; Hochstadt	All Bergthaler Locations
Janzen, Cornelius C	1904-1980	Kondratjewka; Walkonsky Chutor	—	1934 1953A	J P Bueckert, Nordheim	Nordheim in Mb
Klassen, David D	1902-1985	Halbstadt; Bergthaler Gem	Gretna Bible School	1930 1961A	David Schulz, Altona B; Lowe Farm	Halbstadt 30-38; Homewood 38-75; Bergthaler Gemeinde
Klassen, Johann P	1868-1947	Schönwiese;	Zentralschule; teacher training, Chortitza	1904 1907A	Kronsweide	Kronsweide Gem; Schönwieser Wpg
Klaassen, Michael	1860-1934	Koepenthal, Am Trakt; Am Trakt	Zentralschule	1901 1901A	Jacob Toews, Newton KS	Sichar OK; Herold OK 01-18; Morden Herold 19-35
Loewen, Daniel H	1872-1951	Jasykowo; Jasykowo	—	1905 1936A	Ignatjewo; Rabbit Lake	Ignatjewo 05-19; Dawlekanowo 19-21; Omsk 21-24; Harris SK 24-30; Rosemary 30-33; First Menn NK 33-36; Rabbit Lake 36-42; First Menn NK 42-51
Lohrenz, Gerhard	1899-1986	Neuschönsee; Sagradowka	Handelschule, Alexanderkrone; MCI, Normal Sch; U of M	1954 1959A	J J Thiessen, Sargent Ave Menn	Teacher at Springstein 38-47, MBCI 47-52, CMBC 52-65; Sargent 1954-71
Martens, Wm. J. C	1892-1977	Landskrone, Mo;	Gnadenfeld Zentralschule; teacher training, Melitopol	1919	Franz Enns, Suworowskaia;	Nikolaifeld; Chinook; Coaldale; Vauxhall; Sardinia; Mexico; Niverville

Neufeld, Gerhard G	1902-	Lindenau; Lindenau	Zentralschule in Ohrloff	1927 1938A	Franz F Enns, Whitewtr; Franz F Enns, Whitewtr	Whitewater Gemeinde
Pauls, Jacob F	1928-	Morden; Morden	CMBC 62; MBS 69- 71,83	1954 1961A	D Schulz, J M Pauls, Morden	Morden Berg 54-69; Elim BS 71-74; Altona B 74-77; Bethel Mennonite 77-94
Pauls, Jacob M	1903- 1961	Grigorievka; New York, Bachmut	—	1932 1950A	D Schulz, Morden; D Schulz, Winkler	Morden 32-50; Winkler Bergthaler 50-61
Sawatzky, Peter G	1924-	Schönauf;	CMBC 47-50; Goshen 64-65; MBS 65, 70-71	1951 1958A	J J Thiessen, Mayfair Saskatoon; G G Epp, Mayfair Saskatoon	Cornerstone Sktoon 50-67; MCC-Zaire 67- 69; Grace Steinbach 71-81; AIMM Botswana 79-80; Waterloo-K Un 81-92
Schaefer, Paul J	1899- 1969	Eigenfeld, Kuban, Luth.; Blumenorter adult baptism 1954	Bessarabia Gymnasium; teacher training in Ru and in Canada	1946 1954A	J P Bueckert, Blumnortr; J P Bueckert, D Schulz, Benjamin Ewert, Blumenorter	teacher at Alexandrodar, Kuban 18-24 and Gnadenhal Mb 28-42; MCI Principal 42- 62; Blumenorter Gemeinde 46-69
Schroeder, Viktor J	1897- 1969	Neuhof;	—	1932 1964A	J P Klassen, Culross; J H Enns, NK	Culross; Pigeon Lake; NK
Schulz, David	1897- 1976	Weidenfeld Mb; Bergthaler Gem	MEI; Winkler Bible Institute	1920 1926A	Jacob Hoepfner, Wklr; Jacob Hoepfner, Altona	All Bergthaler locations
Toews, Jacob J	1903-	Schönfeld; Lichtenauer Gem	Zentralschule in Schönfeld	1930 1952A	Franz F Enns, Whitewtr; Sargent	Whitewater; Glenlea; Sargent
Unruh, Nicholas H	1897-	Muntau, Gem.; Halbstadt Gem.	Zentralschule & Kom- merzschule, Halbstadt	1951 1959A	John H. Enns, Lichtenauer	Lichtenauer Gemeinde in Mb
Wiebe, Ernest	1927- 1991	Morris; Lowe Farm	Elim, Teachers College; CMBC; Interfaith PI	1948 1962A	D Schulz, Lowe Farm Berg; D Schulz, Home St	Bergth; Lowe Farm; Home St; CMM; St Andrews UnCh; Chaplain HSC; Interfaith Past Inst; Springstein
Wiebe, Jacob H	1899- 1993	Einlage;	—	1929 1964A	J P Klassen, MacAuley; J. H. Enns, First Menn.	Morris; First Menn

The following were also ordained as Ältesten and functioned as leading ministers of local congregations rather than as Ältesten of multi-congregational Gemeinden: Walter Braun, Peter G. Dyck, Henry J. Gerbrandt and Isaac G. Krahn were ordained as Ältesten in 1968, John H. Neufeld in 1970 and Frank F. Enns in 1977.

Appendix 4 Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba Organizational Table



NOTES

Notes for Chapter 1

1. Menno Wiebe, "At least two histories," A multi-media presentation, 1974. Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives (MHCA), Winnipeg, Manitoba, Author's "Aboriginal people" file.

2. Peter H. Enns, "Mein Eden," *Der Bote*, 16 February 1944, 4. This and all subsequent quotations of excerpts from German sources are translated by the author.

3. James A. Jackson, *The Centennial History of Manitoba* (N.p.: Manitoba Historical Society in association with McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1970), 134.

4. A.P. Toews, *The Coming of the Mennonite Church to Manitoba* (N.p., 1973), 22.

5. Adolf Ens, *Subjects or Citizens? The Mennonite Experience in Canada, 1870–1925* ([Ottawa]: University of Ottawa Press, 1994), 21.

6. Leonard Doell, "History of Mennonites and Natives in the last one hundred years," Unpublished paper, August 1977, 3, MHCA.

7. Leonard Doell, "St. Paul Trail," 5–7; "Walhalla Trail," 3; Unpublished papers, December 1978, MHCA.

8. It was also the Royal North West Police Trail in the area as they worked to keep order, among other things, keep Indians and Métis off the Mennonite reserve. Leonard Doell, "Boundary Commission Trail," Unpublished paper, December 1978, 6, MHCA.

9. Advising the Dominion government, Clifford Sifton wrote from Manitoba: "My own view is that they are a class of claims which are of no account whatever." Cited by Leonard Doell, "St. Paul Trail," 10, note 15.

10. Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 186.

11. John W. Grant quoted in Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786–1920: The History of a Separate People* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974), 209, 217. Hereafter this volume is referred to as *Mennonites in Canada* 1.

12. Henry H. Epp, "Excerpts from a whiteman's diary on the redman's centennial," *Mennonite Reporter*, 10 January 1972, 4.

13. Menno Wiebe, Telephone conversation, 9 April 1996. A copy of the Litany is found at MHCA, Author's "Aboriginal peoples" file.

14. Henry H. Epp, "Excerpts from a whiteman's diary," 4.

15. Menno Wiebe, "At least two histories," [8].

16. Adolf Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?* 45–46, 21. In 1996 Mennonites were still about 10 percent (100,000) of the total Manitoba population (one million).

17. Reserves were first established for groups like the Métis and Canadiens but for various reasons were not that successful. Although generally effective with immigrant groups such as the Mennonites and Icelanders the policy of reserve settlement was soon abandoned. Jackson, *The Centennial History*, 118.

18. 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 & Sons Ltd., 1970), 63ff.

19. [Ernest Enns], *Jubilate: 60 Years First Mennonite Church, 1926–1986* (Winnipeg: First Mennonite Church, 1991), 132.

20. Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites since the Communist Revolution* (Altona: D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd. for the Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council, 1962), 442–444.

21. E. K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba* (Altona: D.W. Friesen & Sons, 1955) used these terms but does not indicate where they originated. Frank H. Epp in *Mennonite Exodus*, 139, credits Francis with the usage.

22. Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1920–1940: A People's Struggle for Survival* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982), 243–244. Hereafter this volume is referred to as *Mennonites in Canada II*.

23. Franz F. Enns to David Toews, 2 January 1928, MHCA, vol. 302.

24. Henry Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, 120; Peter D. Zacharias, *Footprints of a Pilgrim People: Story of the Blumenort Mennonite Church* (Gretna: Blumenort Mennonite Church, 1985), 40; Frank Epp, *Mennonites in Canada II*, 24, 258; Adolf Ens, “Manitoba,” in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. V.

Notes for Chapter 2

1. Cornelius J. Dyck, “Preface,” in Henry Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, iii.
2. *Ibid.*, 75.
3. D.D. Klassen, “Woher? Wohin? Bergthaler Gemeinde!” *Bergthaler Gemeindeblatt*, 17 September 1961, 9; Henry J. Gerbrandt, “Bergthaler Mennonites—Manitoba,” in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. V.
4. Mary Krueger, “Gretna First Mennonite Mission Aid,” *History of Manitoba Mennonite Women in Mission 1942–1977* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Women in Mission, [1977]), 33.
5. Lizzie van der Smissen, “Warum hat das weibliche Geschlecht besondere Ursache sich am Missions-Werk zu betheiligen?” *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 4 January 1894, 1.
6. H.H. Ewert, “Editorielles,” *Der Mitarbeiter*, January 1907, 30.
7. Benjamin Ewert listing of events, 3, MHCA, vol. 543, file 23.
8. Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada I*, 294–295.
9. Benjamin Ewert, “Gretna, Manitoba, 12 Juli, 1894,” *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 26 July 1894, 8.
10. Bethel College, Mennonite Historical Library and Archives (MHLA), 2 of #59, J.H. Janzen collection.

11. John Dyck, "Hoffnungsfeld," Unpublished article, 1991, 5, MHCA, Author's "Hoffnungsfeld" file.

12. Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, 103–108; Benjamin Ewert, "Gretna," 8. For the Mennonite Brethren telling of this story see William Neufeld, *From Faith to Faith: The History of the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Church* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1989), 23ff.

13. D.D. Klassen, "Woher? Wohin?" 9. Henry Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, 118, gives the 1926 membership as 1,162.

14. Michael Klaassen, "Aus Michael Klaassen Tagebuch, 1919-1934," MHCA, vol. 1663, file 4 and file 6.

15. H.H. Ewert, "Die Bibelkonferenz in Steinbach," *Der Mitarbeiter*, January 1918; January–February and March–April 1933, 4–5.

16. Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, 355–356.

17. This section is based on materials provided by Esther Bergen, youngest daughter of Michael Klaassen. MHCA, Author's "Herold" file.

Notes for Chapter 3

1. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada II*, 237.

2. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, 188–189, 193, 197.

3. J.W., "Lymanfarm, Man.," *Der Bote*, 28 January 1925, 2–3.

4. Peter D. Zacharias, *Footprints*, 12.

5. David Toews, "Bericht an die Kanadische Konferenz zu Rosthern, am 4. Juli 1928," *Konferenz-Bericht 1928–1934*, 15–16; David Toews to F.F. Enns, 29 December 1928, MHCA, vol. 302.

6. Cash tickets cost \$188.65 per adult. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, 281; "Reiseschuld," *Der Bote*, 23 December 1925, 5.

7. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, 281; Table 16, 339.

8. Hilda Matsuo, "Helen Epp and the 'Mädchenheim,'" *Mennonite Mirror*, April 1974, 7; Frieda Esau, "The Mennonite Girls' Homes—New Research," *Mennonite Historian*, 2 June 1987, 3.

9. J.H. Enns, "Unser 'Eben-Ezer-Mädchenheim' in Winnipeg," *Der Bote*, 4 December 1946, 2.

10. Eric Rempel, "Eben Ezer Girls' Home: Winnipeg 1926–1959," CMBC student paper, 1977, 8, MHCA.

11. Marlene Epp, "Mennonite Girls' Home," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 6 (1988): 104.

12. John Friesen, "Manitoba Mennonites in the Rural-Urban Shift," Table I, *Mennonite Life* 23 (October 1968): 155. According to Eric Rempel, 12, the home had been bought for \$5,000 in 1943 and was sold for \$11,516 in 1959.

13. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, 209.

14. J.P. Klassen, chair and P. Enns, secretary, "Protokoll einer Vorberatung mennonitischer Immigranten verschiedener Gruppen in Manitoba zwecks Gründung

einer Gemeindeorganisation am 28. Juni 1925, in der Zionskirche zu Winnipeg,” *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 15 July 1925, 12.

15. J.P. Klassen, chair, G.A. Peters, secretary, “Kirchliche Beratung der Vertreter der in Manitoba in den Jahren 1923–1926 eingewanderten und angesiedelten Mennoniten von den Kirchengemeinden in Winnipeg, Man., stattgefunden am 10. März 1926,” *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 17 March 1926, 8.

16. J.P. Klassen, “Einladung,” *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 20 October 1926, 2.

17. J.H. Enns, “Mein inneres Suchen und Finden,” MHCA, vol. 4103, file 62.

18. Franz F. Enns, 1935–1936 Notebook, MHCA, vol. 1030.

19. Enns 1928–1929 Notebook, MHCA, vol. 1030.

20. Enns to David Toews, 26 January 1928, MHCA, vol. 302.

21. A.H. Harder to Toews, 17 February 1927, MHCA, vol.305.

22. Enns to Toews, 27 March 1929, MHCA, vol. 302.

23. According to informed sources, there were other ministers among the Russländer and the Bergthaler who smoked. Gerhard A. Peters in a letter to the GC Home Mission Board, 11 March, 1929, regarding difficulties in the Winnipeg Schönwieser group, wrote: “Now he [JPK] appears to have given it [the smoking] up entirely.” Author’s “1920s–1939 Schönwieser” file.

24. Zacharias, *Footprints*, 41–42; Joh. P. Bueckert to Toews, 6 September 1928, MHCA, vol. 300.

25. Toews to Enns, 14 February 1928, MHCA, vol. 302. D.H. Koop moved to Ontario in 1930.

26. H.H. Ewert, “Kirchliche Mennoniten,” *Der Mitarbeiter*, January 1934, 4–5.

27. A.H. Unruh, *Die Geschichte der Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde 1860–1954* (Hillsboro: General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, 1955), 377, 414.

28. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada II*, 250–251.

29. Franz Fr. Enns, “Die Taufe: Referate von Ält. J.P. Bueckert und Ält. F.F. Enns,” 2d ed., 20, MHCA, vol. 4226, file 20.

30. F.F. Enns to David Toews, 30 January 1929, MHCA, vol. 302.

31. Peter H. Enns to J.H. Enns, 27 March 1934, MHCA, vol. 650.

32. J.P. Klassen wrote to David Toews that both he and J.H. Enns presented papers in the Winnipeg Mennonite Brethren church. Both papers gained full recognition. “I hope,” wrote Klassen on 30 December 1932, “that the *MBgemeinde* finally realizes that we do not allow ourselves to be put down; I believe too that the time is not far away where we can go hand in hand.” MHCA, vol. 307.

33. George David Pries, *A Place Called Peniel: Winkler Bible Institute 1925–1975* (Winkler: Rev. G.D. Pries–Winkler Bible Institute, 1975), 65.

34. Lehrerkollegium, *Der Mitarbeiter*, September 1927, 5.

35. Pries, *A Place Called Peniel*, 65, 81. The reference to the lots having been “purchased,” 70, must be understood in this context.

36. J.P. Bueckert letter (fragment), n.d., “Bueckert, Ält. Johann P. Papers” file, MHCA, “Blumenortler collection.”

37. This was the only Gemeinde in Canada of “Frisian” background.
38. The exception was Gerhard G. Neufeld who was born in Schönhorst and ordained at Woronesch. Much later Peter P. and Jacob P. Harms, whose family came from Grigorievka, were elected to ministerial positions.
39. Almost half of all the 1923–1930 immigrants were “cash passengers.” Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, 282.
40. The first one referred to as a ministers’ conference was held 6–7 March 1928. “Protokoll der Predigerkonferenz,” *Der Mitarbeiter*, May 1928, 2.
41. The German is more poignant: “Gedenket des Herrn im fernen Lande und lasst euch Jerusalem im Herzen sein.”

Notes for Chapter 4

1. A. Bueckert, J.M. Pauls, secretaries, “Protokoll der Konferenz abgehalten in Plum Coulee, den 7. und 8. Juni, 1933,” [2], MHCA, vol. 3786.
2. D.D. Klassen, “One Man’s Memories,” 1972 CMM Yearbook, 18.
3. Zacharias, *Footprints*, 26–27. At Grunthal new immigrants weighed the option of joining with the Chortitzer. The Committee, *Elim Gemeinde, Grunthal, Manitoba, 1927–1972 (N.p., [1972])*, 4–5.
4. Peter H. Enns to Joh. H. Enns, 31 October 1936, MHCA, vol. 650.
5. The Russia experience included *Lehrer Konferenzen* (teachers’ conferences) and the all-Mennonite *Bundeskonferenz* (confederation). The impact of the Canadian and North American structures on the respective Russländer groups is hard to assess. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada II*, 402.
6. “Bibelkonferenz der Mennonitengemeinden Manitobas,” *Der Bote*, 23 May 1928, 2.
7. Immigrant D.H. Koop reports in *Der Bote*, 3 July 1929, 2, on this June 11–12 conference as a ministers’ conference. The immigrants sometimes referred to the Bergthaler-initiated Bible conference as a ministers’ conference. The date, June 11–12, out of line with the regular provincial ministers’ conferences (which were generally in March and November and both took place in 1929), suggests it is one in the series of June Bible conferences, probably mostly attended by ministers, but open to the public.
8. G.G. Neufeld, *Die Geschichte der Whitewater Mennoniten Gemeinde in Manitoba, Canada, 1925–1965* (N.p.: G.G. Neufeld, 1967), 9.
9. Benjamin Ewert, “Von Daheim und Draussen: Gretna Man.,” *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 21 August 1930, 15.
10. *Konferenz-Bericht*, 1930, 29; *Konferenz-Bericht*, 1931, 27; David Toews to F.F. Enns, 2 June 1932, MHCA, vol. 302. Toews writes that Ewert submitted a report but the other two members of the committee could not agree to it. Toews implies this to be a Bergthaler initiative because of dissatisfaction with the Home Mission Board’s administration of the work in Manitoba.
11. An undated Bergthaler ministerial note found between minutes of 7 May 1932 and 27 May 1932 meetings.
12. F.F. Enns to David Toews, 9 June 1932; D. Toews to F.F. Enns, 14 June 1932, MHCA, vol. 302.

13. *Der Mitarbeiter*, July–August 1933, 4.
14. D. Schulz, treasurer, “Kassenbericht der Inneren Mission der kanadischen Konferenz vom 1. Oktober 1933 bis 1. Januar 1934,” *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 3 January 1934, 6.
15. H.H. Ewert to Benjamin Ewert, 9 January 1934, 28. Correspondence with H.H. Ewert 1925–1929, MHLA-MS-6-4, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas.
16. *Der Mitarbeiter*, 27 May 1935, 6.
17. F.F. Enns to D. Toews, 26 May 1931, MHCA, vol. 302.
18. Enns to Toews, 25 November 1930; Toews to Enns, 12 December 1930. MHCA, vol. 302.
19. J.P. Bueckert to D. Toews, 10 January 1936, MHCA, vol. 300.
20. Esther Epp-Tiessen, *Altona: The Story of a Prairie Town* (Altona: D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., 1982), 150.
21. David Schulz, “Etwas zur Erinnerung aus meinem Leben,” 1964, MHCA, vol. 4228, file 1.
22. For a fuller discussion of the McCreary group see Zacharias, *Footprints*, 81–83.
23. J.P. Bueckert to D. Toews, 12 March 1935, MHCA, vol. 300.
24. H.H. Ewert, “Der Mennonit und das Land,” *Der Mitarbeiter*, April 1934, 4.
25. “Über den Allgemein-Mennonitischen Gesellschaftsabend,” *Der Nordwesten*, 27 February 1929, 8, Manitoba Provincial Archives; *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 13 February 1929, 6; 27 March 1929, 2–3; Gerhard A. Peters to Home Mission Board brethren, 11 March 1929, MHCA, Author’s “Schönwieser 1920s–1939” file; J.P. Bueckert to D. Toews, 14 May 1929, MHCA, vol. 300.
26. J.P. Klassen to David Toews, c. 23 July 1935, MHCA, vol. 307.
27. D. Toews to F.F. Enns, 2 June 1932, MHCA, vol. 302.
28. Bergthaler brotherhood meeting minutes, 25 September 1940, *Bergthaler Gemeindeblatt*, October 1940. The only other “offence” treated this way was military involvement. According to Henry Gerbrandt, the rule was assumed but not always enforced.
29. Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, 131.
30. See D. Toews–J.P. Bueckert 1929 to early 1940s correspondence for the unease that gave reason for a wait-and-see stance, MHCA, vol. 300.
31. D.P. Esau, “Warum ist eine Bibelschule für die Gemeinde wichtig?” *Bergthaler Gemeindeblatt*, April 1938, 2; Epp, *Mennonites in Canada II*, 470.
32. Schönwieser council minutes, 10 November 1934, MHCA, microfilm 193.
33. Frank K. Isaac, *Elim: 50th anniversary 1929–1979* (Winnipeg: Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba, 1979), 16.
34. J.H. Enns in his “Mein inneres Suchen und Finden” dates the beginning of the MMK to 1936. Similarly, G.G. Neufeld in *Die Geschichte der Whitewater Mennonitengemeinde*, 16, gives the date as 24 June, 1936.
35. “Aus Winnipeg,” *Der Bote*, 6 June 1928, 1.

36. Johann P. Klassen, Ältester, *Reiseskizzen über die Auswanderung im Jahre 1923* (Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House; Winnipeg: Rundschau Publishing House, n.d.), 16–17.

Notes for Chapter 5

1. J.P. Claszen, "Gedanken über Gemeindebau," *Der Bote*, 14 December 1938, 2.
2. Gerhard J. Ens, *Die Schule muss sein: A History of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute 1889–1989* (Gretna: Mennonite Collegiate Institute, 1990), 105, 53, 122.
3. Peter H. Enns to Johann H. Enns, 25 May 1940, MHCA, vol. 650, file 7.
4. J.H. Enns, MHCA, vol. 4103, file 8.
5. Ken Reddig, "Manitoba Mennonites and the Winnipeg Mobilization Board in World War II" (M.A. dissertation, University of Winnipeg, 1989), 38.
6. David P. Reimer, secretary, *Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War, 1939–1945* (N.p., n.d.), 126, 139.
7. Reddig, "Manitoba Mennonites," 41–43, 69. Besides eight Manitoba Kanadier Gemeinden, the CMRC included three each from Alberta and Saskatchewan. David Schulz, "Unsere Sonderstellung," *Berghaler Gemeindeblatt*, November 1940, 1.
8. Schulz, "Unsere Sonderstellung," 3; Reimer, *Experiences of Mennonites*, 71.
9. 1940 Ministers' conference minutes. At this conference J.H.Enns was unanimously reaffirmed as advisor to draft-age young men of the immigrant Gemeinden and encouraged to represent them at the relevant government offices.
10. Les Derksen, "Service for Peace," in Lawrence Klippenstein, ed., *That there be PEACE: Mennonites in Canada and World War II* (Winnipeg: The Manitoba CO Reunion Committee, 1979), 16–17.
11. Gerhard Ens, "Preface," *ibid.*, iv.
12. J.A. Toews, *Alternative Service in Canada during World War II* (Winnipeg: Publication Committee of the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church, 1959), 103. Ken Reddig, 153, note 2, however, draws attention to the motivational differences that distinguished the Kanadier and the Russländer and "even an unwillingness of the Kanadier to mix with the Russländer in the same camp."
13. "Gifts Received," *The Beacon* (Campbell River, B.C.), 2 January 1943, 8.
14. Peter Lorenz Neufeld, *Mennonites at War: A Double-Edged Sword, Canadian Mennonites in World War II*, Unpublished manuscript, 1993, 4.
15. Elsie Neufeld, Telephone conversation, 24 February 1996. See also, Peter Lorenz Neufeld, "Lakes named after Mennonites killed in military action," *Mennonite Reporter*, 24 June 1991, 1.
16. Ted Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed*, chap. 8, 37, MHCA, Author's "Ted Regehr draft, chapters 1-8" file. Hereafter this volume is referred to as *Mennonites in Canada III*. See also Peter Lorenz Neufeld, "A non-typical student graduates from CMBC," *Mennonite Reporter*, 27 May 1991, 7.
17. David Toews to J.H. Enns, 19 October 1943, MHCA, vol. 203.
18. J.H. Enns' report to Schönwieser church council in the minutes of 12 April 1941, MHCA, microfilm 193.

19. D. Toews to J.H. Enns, 7 February 1941, MHCA, vol. 302.
20. G.G. Neufeld reported at Whitewater that the first agenda item for a meeting of representatives from the Manitoba Mennonitengemeinden on 31 January 1941 was dissolving the MMK. However, the official minutes of that meeting talk about the continuation of the MMK and about reorganization with no mention of dissolution. "Protokoll von der Zusammenkunft der Prediger und des Kirchenrates aus Whitewater, 28 Januar 1941 bei Geschwister Born," MHCA, microfilm 207.
21. The Bergthaler minutes referred to this as a Bible conference, MHCA, vol. 602; the announcements referred to them as ministers' gatherings.
22. *Angelegenheit*, meaning affair, concern, business, is translated as "controversy" in Joh. G. Rempel's "The Winnipeg Controversy," MHCA, vol. 888, file 213.
23. "Protokoll der Predigerversammlung der Schönwieser, Schönfelder und Springsteiner Gemeinden am 16. September 1944 in Springstein," MHCA, Microfilm 195. In Enns' paper (MHCA, vol. 4103, file 20) Denk's teaching is compared with that of Luther's.
24. J.H. Enns to J.G. Rempel, Rosthern, 14 December 1945, MHCA, vol. 888, file 212.
25. For more on the CMC part of the story see Ted Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada III*, draft, chap. 7, 26-37.
26. Joh. G. Rempel, "Sollte Gott gesagt haben?" *Der Bote*, 19 September 1945, 3; and J.J. Thiessen to Benjamin Ewert, 14 January 1946, MHCA, vol. 888, file 213.
27. Lohrenz to Rempel, 26 February 1946; J.G. Rempel, "Winnipeg Controversy," to GC Church Unity Committee; both MHCA, vol. 888, file 213.
28. P. Willms to Joh. G. Rempel and J.J. Thiessen, 24 November 1945, MHCA, vol. 888, file 211.
29. J.H. Enns to David Toews, 6 December 1945, MHCA, vol. 302.
30. J.J. Thiessen (to some known as "hatchery Thiessen"), Winnipeg, to J.J. Thiessen, Saskatoon, 4 September 1945, MHCA, vol. 888, file 211.
31. P.J. Froese to Joh. G. Rempel, 1 November 1945, MHCA, vol. 888, file 212; P. Reimer to Joh. G. Rempel, 11 December 1945, MHCA, vol. 888, file 211.
32. J.H. Enns, "Mein inneres Suchen und Finden," 133.
33. An interesting example of working together is I.I. Friesen's ordination as Ältester at Bethel Mennonite Mission in the fall of 1945. Benjamin Ewert representing Bethel Mennonite Mission, J.H. Enns the Schönwieser and Harold King the Pastoral Institute, officiated together, to the chagrin of some leaders. Jacob Toews to J.J. Thiessen, 28 November 1945, MHCA, vol. 888, file 212.
34. Agatha Schellenberg, Mary Penner, "Bericht über die Sonntagsschularbeit in Lister Schule," *Bergthaler Gemeindeblatt*, September 1941, 2.
35. Peters Lorenz Neufeld, "K.H. brought music to Manitoba," *Mennonite Reporter*, 27 January 1992, 10.
36. J.H. Enns to D. Toews, 1 February 1940, MHCA, vol. 302.
37. G.G. Neufeld, *Geschichte der Whitewater Mennoniten Gemeinden*, 98; Agnes Dyck, "Springstein Frauenverein," in *Manitoba Mennonite Women in Mission*, 49.

38. M. Siemens, "Die Aufgaben und Bedeutung der Frauenvereine," 1944 CMC Yearbook, 67–71; Justina Baerg, "History of Manitoba Women in Mission," in *Manitoba Women in Mission*, 11–12.

39. Katie Hooge, *The History of the Canadian Women in Mission 1952–1977* (Winnipeg: Canadian Women in Mission, 1977), 7.

40. M. Siemens, "Aufgaben der Frauenvereine," 68–69.

Notes for Chapter 6

1. David Schulz, 1949 CMM Minutes.

2. This gave the Bergthaler 114 votes and the immigrant Gemeinden 57. According to the CMC Yearbooks the 1947 membership of 3,570 was the Bergthaler's peak membership. Figures for 1950 were given as 1,962; for 1951, 1,848. From there membership climbed to 3,354 in 1970.

3. P.A. Rempel to Wm. Enns, 12 February 1949, MHCA, Wilhelm H. Enns collection, file 1949.

4. Wilhelm Enns, "Mennonitischer Jugend- und Sonntagsschulpark," N.d., MHCA, Wm. Enns collection, file 1948.

5. P.J. Schaefer letter, "Festgäste auf der Einweihungsfeier des Jugendparks," Gretna, June 1949, MHCA, Wm. Enns collection, file 1949; 1949 CMM Minutes.

6. Wm. Enns to Henry Gerbrandt, 29 June 1952, MHCA, Wm. Enns collection, file 1950–1953.

7. Wm. Enns letter, 22 June 1952, MHCA, Wm. Enns collection, file 1950–1953.

8. "Bericht mit Empfehlungen der Kampfstudienkommission an die Gemeinden der Manitobaer Mennoniten Konferenz," MHCA, Wm. Enns collection, file 1954–1957.

9. The original vision for the AMMC included a row of cabins sponsored by individuals, a senior citizens' home or settlement for healthy elderly, and a true *Jugendheim* for summer and winter. MHCA, Wm. Enns collection, file 1949.

10. "UNSER MISSIONSKAMP am Assiniboine bei Springstein, Man. im Juli 1956," MHCA, Wm. Enns collection, file 1954–1957.

11. According to Helen Derksen, these meetings were held somewhere between 1935 and 1940. MHCA, Author's "Sterling Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg" file.

12. Henry Gerbrandt, "Bethel Beginnings," in Betty Dyck, ed., *Bethel: Pioneering in Faith* (Winnipeg: Bethel Mennonite Church, 1988), 18, tells that story.

13. Dyck, *Bethel: Pioneering in Faith*, 9–28.

14. Peter D. Zacharias, *Footprints*, 37.

15. Jack Heppner, *Search for Renewal: The Story of the Rudnerweider/Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference 1937–1987* (Winnipeg: Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, 1987), 45–48.

16. W.A., "Die Kehrseite der Frauenemanzipation," *Der Bote*, 8 February 1933, 6; A mother, "An unsere Frauen!" *Der Bote*, 17 June 1936; Frau Jakob D. Siemens, "Pflichten und Freuden der Mutter," *Der Mitarbeiter*, August 1941, 1–3.

17. Frank H. Epp, 1957 alumni talk, MHCA, Author's "Frank H. Epp" file.

18. Ernest Wiebe, "Back to CMBC at age 40," Personal files. For access to this collection the author is indebted to his widow, Betty Wiebe.

19. Churches participated in a number of other homes for the elderly in their communities but these did not make it on the Conference agenda. One year at conference sessions, Blumenorter Dietrich Peters, who succeeded J.M. Pauls as chair of the Salem board, referred to six other homes: Tabor in Morden opened in 1952, Eben-Ezer at Altona in 1962 (with David Schulz chair of the board), Rosenort Eventide at Morris 1960, Menno Home in Grunthal 1960, Resthaven Nursing Home in Steinbach 1937 and Greenland 1955.

Notes for Chapter 7

1. Ernest Wiebe to the leading minister of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 7 April 1972, Personal collection.

2. Erland Waltner, "Christ our authority as our problem," in Helmut Harder, *Accountability in the Church: A Study Guide for Congregations* (Winnipeg: Conference of Mennonites in Canada, Committee on Ministerial Leadership, 1985), 53.

3. Frank Epp, *Mennonites in Canada* II, 519, 521.

4. Robert A. Wiebe, "The Shift from the Concept and Practice of Gemeinde in the Bergthaler and Blumenorter Churches of Manitoba," CMBC student paper, 1991, MHCA.

5. Herman W. Enns, "Forms of Ministry," in Henry Poettcker, Rudy A. Regehr, eds., *Call to Faithfulness: Essays in Canadian Mennonite Studies* (Winnipeg: Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1972), 93, says of his father and uncles, Wilhelm Enns, Peter H. Enns and Johann H. Enns, respectively: "When they or their colleagues met, they talked church, purity of doctrine, pastoral care, ethical living, Christian education, conference involvement, optimal participation in ministry, or how to counteract the seductive external influences on youth."

6. Frank H. Epp to Henry Poettcker, 16 April 1957, MHCA, Author's "Frank H. Epp" file.

7. Schönwieser General brotherhood minutes, 10 November 1930, 9 October 1933, MHCA, microfilm 193.

8. Robert Wiebe, "The Concept of Gemeinde," 28.

9. Vic Falk, Dave Tiessen and Art Hildebrand, "Women," in *History of Crystal City Mennonite Church 1948-58*, 1988, 17, MHCA, Author's "Crystal City Mennonite Church" file.

10. Charlotte Siemens, "Two steps forward, one step back: Mennonite women in Manitoba 1978-present," Athabasca University student paper, 1992, 1, MHCA.

11. Falk, Tiessen and Hildebrand, "Women," 18.

12. Marie Funk, "Question Clinic," *Bergthaler Gemeindeblatt*, July-August 1969, 3; *The Canadian Mennonite*, 22 April 1969, 2.

13. Esther Epp-Tiessen, *Altona: The Story of a Prairie Town*, 339-340.

14. Mrs. Elmer [sic] Dyck to Ernest Wiebe, 27 February 1968, Personal collection.

15. Falk, Tiessen and Hildebrand, "Women," 18-19.

16. Ingrid Cornies on Faith and Life Committee in 1969, Elsie Epp in 1970–1971, Leona Dyck and Elsie Buhler in 1971–1972; Evelyn Rempel as secretary of the MMYO in 1970–1972; Education Committee listed Rena Kroeker, Camp Committee Susan Kathler as secretary, and the MMYO Esther Epp in 1971–1972. The first woman on a conference-related organization was Elsie Neufeld on Eden Mental Health in 1971. At the 1971 sessions Helen Redekop was appointed assistant secretary and it was suggested that the Nominations Committee should in future include a female and a younger person. At the 1972 sessions Justina Baerg was appointed to the Resolutions Committee.

17. Henry H. Epp, *Canadian Mennonite Reporter*, 29 November 1971, 11.

18. For example, in 1961 Vernon Neufeld was hired for 2½ months. MHCA, Music Committee minutes, 7 January 1961, in Minutes of the MYO [MJO] Music Committee, October 1956 to April 1964.

19. Directors and resource persons during 1957–1972 included: Alfred Dahl, John Driedger, Henry Engbrecht, Ernest Enns, H.G. Ens, John Friesen, Ben Giesbrecht, P.R. Harder, Henry Hiebert, Ben Horch, Esther Horch, H. Klassen, P. Krahn, Gerald Loewen, John Martens, Neil Matthies, Frank J. Neufeld, Vernon Neufeld, Wilma Poettcker, Marles Preheim (Newton, Kansas), Waldo Schulz, Esther Wiebe, George Wiebe and C.P. Zacharias.

20. Gerhard Lohrenz, “Was können wir tun um mehr unserer Jugend unseren Gemeinden zu erhalten?” *Der Bote*, 5 December 1961, 1.

21. [Ernest Enns], *Jubilate*, 64.

22. H.J. Gerbrandt, *En Route: Hinjawäjis, The Memoirs* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1994), 221, tells the story of Margaretha (Wiebe) Schaefer, P.J. Schaefer’s first wife who, while dying of cancer in a Winnipeg hospital, was visited by J.H. Enns and other First Mennonite ministers. Prior to her death in 1948 Margaretha apparently urged Schaefer to see to it that First Mennonite and the Manitoba Conference be reconciled.

23. In private conversation, Enns said that he would leave “the judgement of mankind to the mercy and justice of God.” Henry Gerbrandt to Henry Poettcker, 26 February 1996.

24. H.J. Gerbrandt to Neufeld, Dueck, Schmidt, 29 July 1964, MHCA, vol. 1598, file 10; Gerbrandt, *En Route*, 221.

25. CMM Executive Committee minutes, 13 October 1964, MHCA, vol. 1597, file 5. It appears that two sets of minutes were kept of this meeting, one omitting some of the discussion, including the above quotation.

26. Gerbrandt, *En Route*, 221.

27. H.J. Gerbrandt to Ältester Jacob Wiebe, First Mennonite Church, 16 February 1965, MHCA, vol. 1598, file 10.

28. First Mennonite General brotherhood minutes, 16 January 1965, MHCA, microfilm 193; J. Enns to Author, 17 July 1995; First Mennonite annual report, 13 January 1968, MHCA, microfilm 193.

29. Church council report, 11 January 1964 annual brotherhood meeting, MHCA, microfilm 195; Schönwieser Brotherhood minutes, 13 October 1964, MHCA, microfilm 195; Minutes of the meeting of the CMM Executive with First Mennonite representatives, 25 February 1966, MHCA, vols. 1597, file 7 and 1598, file 10.

30. Gerbrandt, *En Route*, 221.
31. [Ernest Enns], *Jubilate*, 64.
32. According to Wiebe, the visibility of First Mennonite members, e.g., John H. Neufeld's presidency at CMBC, Ernest and Irene Enns' work with *Umsiedler* and the several involvements on CMM committees has been helpful.
33. Di Brandt, "how i got saved," in Harry Loewen, ed., *Why I Am a Mennonite: Essays on Mennonite Identity* (Kitchener: Herald Press, 1988), 30.
34. New members joining Bernie Wiebe and Frank Isaac on the Education Committee in 1964 were David Schroeder, John R. Friesen, Helmut Harder.
35. Minutes of the special Boissevain sessions and John H. Neufeld, "A Study Paper on the Meaning of Conversion," October 1970, MHCA, vol. 3279, file 10.
36. *The Radio Messenger*, 1 September 1959, 1, MHCA, vol.75. The Bergthaler Christian Home Hour and CMC Missions Committee also had offices in the Centre.
37. Transferring the Abundant Life program to a CMC radio committee came under consideration but nothing came of it for a variety of reasons. 1964 CMC Yearbook; *The Radio Messenger*, August 1963, 2, MHCA, vol. 754.
38. From a rough draft analyzing Abundant Life letters received March 1957 to October 1963, MHCA, vol. 631, file 12.
39. *NOW*, April 1970, 1; July 1971, 2, MHCA, vol.754.
40. *NOW*, April 1970, 1; December 1967, 2, MHCA, vol.754.
41. D.D. Klassen, "Woher? Wohin? Bergthaler Gemeinde," 9.
42. The group chose this name in 1966. Bethel was significant because Bethel Mennonite had been instrumental in the beginnings; Gospel represented the concern and interest "in the Gospel of our Lord;" and Mennonite stood for the branch of the Lord's church which is called Mennonite. Ken Buller, "Report: Bethel Gospel Church, Oak Point, Man., December, 1966," Author's "Bethel Gospel, Oak Point" file.
43. Clara K. Dyck, "Oak Point: Does it pay to keep the doors open?" *Mennonite Reporter*, 31 May 1976, 15, says the Morris building was "donated" by the Bergthaler Church there; the CMM minutes say "bought." CMM owned the church building and property, CMC the parsonage. H.J. Gerbrandt to Frank J. Dyck, 13 September 1974, MHCA, Author's "Bethel Gospel, Oak Point" file.
44. J.H. Enns report to the Schönwieser annual meeting 10 October 1949, MHCA, microfilm 195.
45. Gerhard Enns, "Status of Conference Decisions," 1971 CMM Minutes, 9.
46. D.D. Klassen, "One Man's Memories," in "Comments and Reports" in Lawrence Klippenstein, ed., *In Quest of Brothers: A Yearbook commemorating 25 years of life together in the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba 1946-1971*, 1972, 18.
47. Henry H. Epp, *Canadian Mennonite Reporter*, 29 November 1971.
48. G.G. Neufeld, *In Quest of Brothers*, 20.

Notes for Chapter 8

1. David Wiens, "History of the Elim Mennonite Church," MHCA, CMBC student paper, 1980, 18.
2. J.C. Wenger, "Brüderliche Vereinigung," in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*.
3. An attempt is made to indicate the theological training of the leading ministers/pastors serving in 1996.
4. According to Halbstadt's chair, Wes Friesen, it sees the issue of sexual orientation divisive and CMM heading toward making God gender neutral. 1993 CMM questionnaire.
5. David Friesen, *Journey of Faith: Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church 1895-1995* (Winkler: Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 1995), 18, 23-24. Hoffnungsfeld also contributed members to the first Mennonite Brethren church in the area and to the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church.
6. Committee, *Elim Gemeinde, Grunthal, Manitoba, 1927-1972*. 7.
7. First Mennonite Church, General brotherhood Minutes, 10 October 1949, 2, MHCA, microfilm 195.
8. [Ernest Enns], *Jubilate*, 53.
9. Historical Committee, *History of Oak Lake Mennonite Church* (Virden: The Empire Publishing Company, Ltd., 1994), 26.
10. "Mitteilungen: McCreary Gruppe," *Bergthaler Gemeindeblatt*, August 1940, [2]; Zacharias, *Footprints*, 82.
11. J.H. Enns to David Toews, 8 August 1940, MHCA, vol. 302.
12. Morris Sunday bulletin, 22 June 1969; J. Kauenhofen, chairman of church council, to Ernest Wiebe, CMM, 20 April 1972, MHCA, "88DCMM - Ch-M-B Morris Bergthaler" file.
13. Peter I. Friesen, "Sargent Church Incorporation and Growth to 1993," MHCA, Author's "Sargent Mennonite Church" file.
14. *Gemeinde* here is part of the name and translated means Church.
15. Ray was ordained in the fall of 1986. Marilyn, due to differences regarding the ordination of women, was affirmed in this team ministry but was not ordained. Ted Friesen, *Altona Mennonite Church*, 62-63.
16. Oral tradition passed on from I.I. Friesen to George Groening to Henry Gerbrandt to Author. Another version has it that Enns said: "We? They joined us."
17. Historical Committee, *History of Oak Lake Mennonite Church*, 8.
18. Gerhard Ens, "The Status of Conference Decisions," 1970 CMM Minutes.

Notes for Chapter 9

1. Lawrence Klippenstein, ed., "Preface" in *The Caring Sharing Church: A record of the 26th annual sessions of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba, February 23-24, 1973* (1973 CMM Yearbook), iv.
2. "Priority Poll" results; Rudy Regehr and Ernest Wiebe, "Some Reflections on

the CMM Priority Poll,” part of a package including Preview, Program for and Minutes of 16 June 1973, Spring CMM session, MHCA, with the CMM Reportbooks.

3. At least 25 couples and about 20 women individually are listed in 13 congregations in this era. The CMM Yearbook first listed deacon couples in 1978 for North Kildonan and Sargent.

4. Frank K. Isaac, *Elim 50th Anniversary 1929–1979* (Winnipeg: Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba, 1979), 11.

5. Nancy Dorries, Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Membership class, 1994.

6. Frank Isaac, *Elim 50th Anniversary*, 38, 31.

7. Jacob Friesen, *The Road Unknown* (Gladstone: Jacob Friesen, 1993), 195; 1978 CMM Yearbook, 69–70.

8. Margaret Sawatzky Peters, Interview, 1 May 1995; Susan Froese, “Charleswood Women’s Fellowship,” in *History of Manitoba Mennonite Women in Mission*, 61.

9. 1971, 1975 CMM Yearbook, 21, 59, respectively.

Notes for Chapter 10

1. David Schroeder, “Living in the Kingdom,” 1983 CMM Yearbook, 12.

2. Jake and Dorothy Pauls to Werner and Elsie Neufeld, 27 February 1978, Werner Neufeld Personal collection.

3. Bob Wiebe, “Camps With Meaning working document re: invitation to faith for campers, April, 1993,” MHCA, Author’s “Camps” file.

4. “Manitoba LIFE Statistical Report” prepared for the CMM Outreach Ministries Commission by Alanda Penner, Glenn Penner and Jacob Peters, August 1995, MHCA, Author’s “LIFE” file.

5. Kathy Martens, “Looking back doesn’t always bring fond memories of school,” *Mennonite Mirror*, MWC Special, July 1990, 27 (originally published April 1980).

6. Ron Rempel, “Conferences pull financial support for their Bible school,” *Mennonite Reporter*, 4 March 1996, 1.

7. 1988 CMM Reportbook, 19.

8. The inter-Mennonite aspect dissipated with the EMBs withdrawing in 1977, and the Mennonite Brethren, EMC and EMMC participation by 1985. 1985 CMM Reportbook, 19.

9. J.H. Enns, “Unsere Konferenzen und ihre Beziehungen zueinander,” *Der Bote*, 25 August 1937, 1.

10. Two groups, the former EMB since 1987 known as the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches (FEBC), and the Holdemann withdrew in the early 1990s and mid-1970s, respectively. Peter Peters, Telephone conversation, 5 September 1995.

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