

# Mennonite Church Manitoba Annual Report for 2023



At our annual Gathering March 3-4 at Douglas Mennonite Church, delegates from our community of congregations began “Re-Imagining Church Together.” We called on God, who is “able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine,” to work among us and through us as we began dreaming of new ways of being and doing church in these days of change and turmoil.

Two new congregations joined MCM at that Gathering, even as we grieve the departure of two other congregations this year. Thirty-nine congregations have covenanted together to be MCM, and we are grateful to God for these relationships of common identity, mutual support, and shared ministry.

In 2023 we re-imagined pastoral ministry. Co-Directors of Leadership Jeff Friesen and Karen Schellenberg supported our pastors with a New Pastors Orientation, training on Healthy Boundaries in ministry, and a Pastors Retreat which allowed pastors to rest and be refreshed for ministry. Two pastors were ordained in 2023; another three were licensed toward ordination. Fourteen pastors were installed in new positions, including nine new to MCM.

We also re-imagined congregational health. Director of Congregational Ministries Kathy Giesbrecht developed MCM Mondays, a series of online conversations on topics related to church life and ministry. We hosted “Living Hope,” a gathering of youth and young adults from across Canada joining with members of our Climate Action Working Group to lament and learn about climate change. This fall Kathy began piloting Congregational Check-Ups, an opportunity for congregations to reflect on their life and ministry and so move toward greater health as a community. Woven—our women’s ministries working group—has also been re-imagined, concluding its ministry by re-investing its funds in Anabaptist education for women in Asia through Mennonite Church Canada’s International Witness program.

Mission was re-imagined as Director of Mission Engagement Melanie Neufeld worked with our Mennonite Coalition for Indigenous Solidarity to host “New Blood,” an Indigenous-led dramatic performance which sparked important conversation among us about reconciliation. She also worked with MCIS and MC Canada colleagues to host a session on land reparations, and with MCM congregations to connect our southern and northern communities. A key part of Melanie’s work has been supporting congregations as they re-imagine mission in their local communities and partnerships with our International Witness ministries. We have also relied heavily on our Palestine-Israel Network since the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas and the subsequent invasion of Gaza by Israel.

Camps with Meaning was re-imagined after three years navigating Covid and public health restrictions. This summer we had 549 campers, including 177 adults with disabilities, who were served by 82 youth and young adults as summer camp staff. In addition, throughout 2023 Camp Assiniboia hosted about 170 groups representing nearly 7,000 people. In 2024 we will celebrate 75 years of camping ministry, and all are invited to join us for this celebration June 21-23.

An important piece of “Re-imagining Church Together” is sharing our stories of what God is doing among us and through us. In 2023 this led to the launch of MCM Monthly, an online newsletter telling these stories of our regional church, complementing our weekly MCM Updates which highlight prayer items and upcoming events. Anyone is welcome to sign up for these at [www.mennochurch.mb.ca/contact](http://www.mennochurch.mb.ca/contact).

“Now to God who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20-21)