

1                                   **Report of Mennonite Church Canada's**  
2                                   **International Witness / Relationships**  
3                                   **Working Group**

4                                   (June 2017)

5  
6  
7 Part 1: Introduction (page 1)

- 8                   • Participants
- 9                   • Our Work

10  
11 Part 2: Priorities (page 5)

12  
13 Part 3: Funding (page 10)

14  
15 Part 4: Possible Models for Structuring International Ministry (page 16)

16  
17 Part 5: Recommendations (page 23)

18  
19 Part 5: Key Documents (page 26)

- 20                   • General Terms of Reference for all Working and Reference Groups
- 21                   • International Witness Group Terms of Reference
- 22                   • Article 10: The Church in Mission from the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite*
- 23                    *Perspective*
- 24                   • Approaches to International Ministry (a summation of numerous statements made
- 25                    by Mennonite Church Canada and Witness Council)
- 26                   • Mennonite Church Canada and International Ministry Partnership Values
- 27                   • God's People in Mission: An Anabaptist Perspective, A Statement of the Mennonite
- 28                    World Conference Mission Commission
- 29                   • Letter from César García, General Secretary Mennonite World Conference

30

## Part 1: Introduction

### Working Group Participants:

**Palmer Becker** is a retired pastor who has done numerous short term assignments around the world. He is the author of the books “What is an Anabaptist Christian” and “Anabaptist Essentials.”

**David Driedger** is a pastor at First Mennonite Church (Winnipeg) and a member of Mennonite Church Canada’s General Board.

**Donna Entz** served for many years with Mennonite Church Canada in Burkina Faso. She presently lives in Edmonton where she is a church planter, an ESL educator and a frequent participant in dialogue with Muslims.

**Claire Hanson** is a Canadian Mennonite University student. Claire was born in China and spent most of her growing up years living in China where her parents served with Mennonite Church Canada.

**Nhien Pham:** Nhien is the pastor of the Vancouver Vietnamese Mennonite Church. Pastor Nhien and the North American Vietnamese Mennonite Fellowship started work in Vietnam in 1997, when there were only a few Mennonite churches and less than 100 Mennonites in that country. Today there are over 10,000 Mennonites in Vietnam.

**Don Rempel Boschman** (chair): Don is a pastor at Douglas Mennonite Church and a member of Mennonite Church Canada’s General Board. From 1985 to 1996 Don served with Mennonite Church Canada in Botswana.

**Susan Reynar** works for Mennonite Central Committee and has served with MCC in Bangladesh. Susan spent most of her growing up years living in Taiwan where her parents served with Mennonite Church Canada.

**Matthew Veith** is a graphic artist and a graduate of Canadian Mennonite University. Matthew spent most of his growing up years living in China where his parents served with Mennonite Church Canada.

**Jonathan Bonk** was a non-voting consultant to our group. He a Senior Consulting Editor of International Bulletin of Missionary Research, a Research Professor of Mission at Boston University and the author of Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem.

**Tim Froese** was the non-voting Mennonite Church Canada staff member of the working group. He is the Executive Minister, Witness, for Mennonite Church Canada where he gives leadership to national church staff involved in both international ministries and Indigenous Relations

1 Previously he worked in South Korea (with Witness), Panama, and Brazil, and he spent much of  
2 his childhood in India.

3  
4 **Rod Reynar** helped the working group design its questionnaire. Rod teaches social sciences at  
5 Canadian Mennonite University.

## 6 7 8 **Our Work** 9

10 The International Witness / Relationships Working Group began its work towards the end of  
11 February, 2017 with two meetings of the Winnipeg participants. The agenda of those meetings  
12 focused on developing a list of whom we wished to consult, what we wanted to know and  
13 which questions we might ask. Two people who were not officially part of the working group  
14 were especially helpful in this stage of our work: Rod Reynar who teaches social sciences at  
15 Canadian Mennonite University and Jonathon Bonk, a Mennonite missiologist.

16  
17 From the list of questions, an online survey was developed and distributed to the following  
18 constituent groups. The number in brackets indicates how many online survey responses we  
19 received from each group.

- 20
- 21 • Pastors of congregations primarily made up of newer Canadians (8)
  - 22 • Other Mennonite Church Canada pastors and congregational leaders (75)
  - 23 • Representatives of Mennonite Church Canada congregations which are currently in a  
24 mission partnership with a Witness worker or that worker's home congregation (16)
  - 25 • Young adults who are part of Mennonite Church Canada (11)
  - 26 • Individual supporters (14)
  - 27 • Past and Current International Witness workers (30)
  - 28 • Area church board members and staff (16)
  - 29 • Representatives of constituent groups (e.g. Mennonite Women, Mennonite Men) (5)
  - 30 • Missiologists and theologians (4)
  - 31 • Representatives from other North American Mennonite agencies with overseas programs  
32 (11)
  - 33 • Representatives from our international witness partners (16)

34  
35 A total of 206 people responded to our online survey and Palmer Becker conducted oral  
36 interviews in Ontario of several pastors of congregations primarily made of newer Canadians.  
37 At least 84 different Mennonite Church Canada congregations were represented (not all  
38 versions of the survey asked about congregational affiliation)

39  
40 The majority of the working group was able to meet in person for a day-long meeting at  
41 Canadian Mennonite University on Saturday, May 6. The focus of this meeting was to go  
42 through the survey results and summarize what we had learned and to make a  
43 recommendation about a future model for Mennonite Church Canada's international Witness  
44 work. Special thanks should be given to Claire Hanson (Saskatchewan), Donna Entz (Alberta)

1 and Palmer Becker (Ontario) who all travelled to Winnipeg at their own expense in order to  
2 participate in the meetings.

3  
4 The terms of reference asked the International Witness / Relationships Working Group to  
5 recommend a model for Mennonite Church Canada's international work, while being attentive  
6 to eight other questions. We found that the working group (who were all working as  
7 volunteers) did not have the time to address all of the questions posed in the terms of  
8 reference, but we did focus on three key issues which will be dealt with in the following  
9 sections:

10

- 11 • Priorities
- 12 • Funding
- 13 • Models for structuring international ministry

14

15 The working group was able to come to a good consensus on the first two issues but consensus  
16 eluded us on the third issue.

17

## Part 2: Priorities

One of the tasks given to the International Witness / Relationships Working Group was to define the core purposes or priorities for Mennonite Church Canada's international ministry. To do this, the working group began by asking various members of our constituency to share their own visions for international ministry. The working group then looked at key Mennonite Church Canada theological and policy documents. Finally, the Working Group looked for areas of overlap to determine which missional priorities from our foundational documents resonated most strongly with our constituency.

The working group consulted with MC Canada pastors (making a special effort to connect with pastors from newer Canadian congregations), congregational leaders, young adults, theologians, current and past Witness workers and area church boards and staff. Primarily by means of an online survey (but also with some in-person interviews), 175 people gave more than 400 answers to the question "What should be the 2 or 3 core purposes of Mennonite Church Canada's international ministry?" The majority of the answers which were received could be grouped into the following broad categories:

- A Approximately 140 answers focused on the importance of forming relationships or working in partnership with the global church. 43 of these answers focused on responding to the global church's requests for financial and human resources.
- B Approximately 140 answers focused on the kinds of ministry activities which respondents felt were the most important:
  - 1 Evangelism and church planting (61 responses)
  - 2 Social gospel ministries of peace-building, community development, social justice etc. (39 responses)
  - 3 Leadership training (22 responses)
  - 4 Sharing an Anabaptist vision of Christian discipleship with the global church (16 responses)
  - 5 Inter-faith dialogue (3 responses)
- C Approximately 65 answers focused on Canadian churches
  - 1 Helping Canadian churches learn from the global church (32 responses)
  - 2 Empowering Canadian congregations to work globally, by discerning mission priorities, providing financial resources, supporting Witness workers and providing administrative support (29 responses)
  - 3 Inviting the global church to send workers to Canada / receiving the gifts of the global church (4 responses)
- D Approximately 60 answers did not easily fit into the categories listed above:
  - 1 Uncategorized (53 responses)
  - 2 Discomfort with international ministry (5 responses)

1  
2 A number of people cautioned against programmatic duplication, especially engaging in the  
3 same kind of development and relief activities which are currently being done by Mennonite  
4 Central Committee. Several other people stressed that in setting our priorities, we need to  
5 listen to the voices of the global church. In an *Emerging Voices Initiative* blog post Laura Carr-  
6 Pries wrote: “I have found that when we talk about neighbours, the conversation quickly turns  
7 into a question of: how do we (the church) best engage with our neighbours? What would  
8 happen if we change the question, and asked what our neighbours would like to see from the  
9 church? Whether in international or local relationships, what would happen if we let our  
10 partners shape our relationship?”

11  
12 There were also differences both within the survey responses and within the Working Group  
13 regarding the understanding of mission at this time in our history. This is visible in the shifting  
14 work of Indigenous Relations which has emphasized a model of mutual gift giving even beyond  
15 the Christian tradition, that is to say, this model does not assume a non-Christian expression  
16 ‘needs’ to hear the Gospel presented by us as Christians; that in fact we need to be open to  
17 hearing ‘good news’ from non-Christian traditions.<sup>1</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission  
18 has also explicitly called for ‘mutual respect’ when engaging Indigenous communities whether  
19 traditional or Christian. While we believe that ‘good news’ is for all people, the lessons learned  
20 in relating to indigenous people is a solid basis for creating relationships with traditions and  
21 religions the church encounters here in Canada and around the world, thus shaping this new  
22 vision of International Witness. However, just as church-to-church relationships are the  
23 responsibility of the General Board, religion-to-religion encounters of an educational nature  
24 could easily be facilitated elsewhere in our structure. If, however, religion-to-religion  
25 engagement, from personal friendships, to joint action, to official inter-religious dialogues  
26 carries with it the opportunity for reciprocal verbal witness and the possibility of mutual  
27 spiritual growth and inspiration, then Witness would be one of the appropriate partners.

28  
29 After hearing our various constituencies describe their visions for international ministry, the  
30 working group then looked at several Mennonite Church Canada statements on the mission of  
31 the church and the approaches and values which have guided our international ministry over  
32 the past decades. These documents included our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*  
33 (Article 10, The Church in Mission), “Approaches to International Ministry” (an official General  
34 Board approved Christian Witness Council summation of numerous statements made  
35 previously by MC Canada and the Witness Council) and “Mennonite Church Canada and  
36 International Ministry Partnership Values” (a document adopted by the Witness Council). Later,  
37 “God’s People in Mission: An Anabaptist Perspective” (a statement of the Mennonite World  
38 Conference Mission Commission) was also referenced.

39

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<sup>1</sup> A stated priority of Indigenous Relations is “Fostering inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue with Indigenous lifeways, respectfully finding ways to receive “good news” from traditional circles/communities so that our Christian faith(s) can be refined and rooted in this land.”

1 What are the primary areas of overlap between our foundational documents and the current  
2 vision of our constituency? The International Witness / Relationships Working Group  
3 recognized three areas of ministry which both our foundational documents and our  
4 constituency highlighted as significant at this time in our history and which are not part of the  
5 mandate of other organizations which have broad support in our constituency (e.g. Mennonite  
6 Central Committee).

7  
8 1 We are called to go beyond our communities, following Jesus' instructions to make disciples  
9 of all peoples.<sup>2</sup> While at times we will go to communities where there currently is no  
10 Christian witness, at other times we will partner with other Anabaptist groups or with other  
11 Christians and churches who share our vision, to carry out that calling.

12  
13 2 There is a widespread desire among Mennonite Church Canada congregations to form  
14 relationships and work in partnership with the global church, and in particular the global  
15 Anabaptist church.<sup>3</sup> These partnerships will be mutually beneficial as the church in Canada  
16 shares its material and people resources in order to strengthen the global church<sup>4</sup> and as it  
17 learns, is inspired and receives the spiritual gifts and people resources from the global  
18 church.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "We believe that the church is called to proclaim and to be a sign of the kingdom of God. Christ has commissioned the church to be his witnesses, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things he has commanded." (**Article 10: The Church in Mission** in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*) "We go beyond our communities as witnesses, following Jesus' instructions to make disciples of all peoples. We form new communities of believers, transcending boundaries of nationality, culture, class, gender, and language. Because we believe that God has created and blessed cultural variety, we expect new forms of the church to emerge as we go." (**God's People in Mission: An Anabaptist Perspective** *A Statement of the MWC Mission Commission*)

<sup>3</sup> We will "develop fraternal and gift sharing relationships among church leaders, and Anabaptist congregations nationally, regionally and internationally." (**Approaches to International Ministry**, *A Statement of Mennonite Church Canada's General Board*) "We believe God is our first partner in all ministry. Recognizing God's presence in all parts of the church, we invite and give serious consideration to invitations to ministry from Canadian and international congregations, Witness workers, and other ministries/organizations. Mennonite Church Canada facilitates partnerships for mission ... Mennonite Church Canada values the church as the primary ministry partner in Canada and in each country internationally. We value and respect the national leadership selected in each country. We place priority on working in partnership with church bodies, strengthening the church and its mission in each country we relate to." (**Mennonite Church Canada and International Ministry Partnership Values**, *A Statement of Mennonite Church Canada's Witness Council*)

<sup>4</sup> "Understanding that the church is God's chosen instrument to transform the world, we will strengthen and nurture the local, area and national church in every country in which we minister." (**Approaches to International Ministry**, *A Statement of Mennonite Church Canada's General Board*)

<sup>5</sup> This two-way, giving and receiving of gifts was not reflected in the foundational documents which we examined but it is included here because of the strong affirmation it was given in the survey of our Canadian churches. If Canadian Mennonite congregations are serious about this priority, we will also need to be more intentionally intercultural among the various congregations, languages, and ethnicities we currently have present in MC Canada.

1 3 Many Mennonite Church Canada congregations, and in particular those congregations  
2 made up of newer Canadians, feel called by God to particular ministries around the world.  
3 Mennonite Church Canada and the area churches will seek to aid these congregations in  
4 both their discernment and their response to those callings.<sup>6</sup>  
5

6 Finally, what is the role of Mennonite World Conference in all of this? While MC Canada is  
7 called to do mission in places where there are no other churches and many of current partners  
8 are not members of Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Church Canada's relationship  
9 with Mennonite World Conference is a unique and special relationship. According to our  
10 bylaws, it is the responsibility of Mennonite Church Canada's General Board (not the Witness  
11 Council) to "foster relationships with other church bodies" (By-laws: V, 18, m) and the  
12 International Witness / Relationships Working Group encourages that this continues. Thus,  
13 Mennonite Church Canada's past dialogue with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada and  
14 its current dialogue with the Anglican Church of Canada are General Board responsibilities.  
15 Similarly, it is the General Board which deals with matters relating to the Canadian Council of  
16 Churches, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and the Canadian Council of Anabaptist  
17 Leaders. When it comes to Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Church Canada is  
18 allowed to send three representatives to MWC's general council. These members are chosen  
19 by the General Board (not the Witness Council) and currently it is the practice of the General  
20 Board to nominate its moderator, executive director, and either the chair of the Formation  
21 Council or the Witness Council (currently it is the chair of the Formation Council). There is also  
22 a Mission Commission of Mennonite World Conference and the Witness Council appropriately  
23 represents Mennonite Church Canada on that.  
24

25 Recently, the General Secretary of the Mennonite World Conference has expressed some  
26 concern that responsibility for relationships between Mennonite Church Canada and other  
27 global Anabaptist conferences or national churches might be delegated to Mennonite Church  
28 Canada Witness (see the letter on page 30).<sup>7</sup> **This is not the recommendation of this working  
29 group.** There is a difference between relationships and programming and it is easy to envision  
30 church to church relationships that do not involve any programs<sup>8</sup>. When, however, church to  
31 church relationships do involve programming or joint ministries, it is appropriate for the  
32 General Board to delegate some of its responsibility to its international ministries program or

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6 "God has gifted us with a faith heritage, congregations, spiritual gifts and talents, financial resources and global relationships. We are a national family of congregations that speaks 20 different languages in Canada! We have many gifts to share and many gifts to receive." (***Mennonite Church Canada and International Ministry Partnership Values, A Statement of Mennonite Church Canada's Witness Council***)

<sup>7</sup> Witness activities and relationships have been significant in linking emerging Anabaptist bodies to Mennonite World Conference. Recent examples include both the South Korea and Chilean churches becoming MWC members. Ongoing work is being done with relationships in Cuba, Macau, and Thailand.

<sup>8</sup> Currently, Mennonite Church Canada has only one non-North American sister church relationship (at the national church level) which relates to the General Board. This was established in 2004 at the request of the Conference of Mennonites in Mexico and does not involve any program funding.



1 agency because the Witness Council’s mandate to do international ministry is one way which  
2 the General Board works at fostering relationships with other church bodies.<sup>9</sup>  
3

### 4 **Part 3: Funding**

5  
6 The Future Directions Task Force recommended that Mennonite Church Canada’s international  
7 ministry be funded through a variety of channels. The Task Force envisioned a “unified flow of  
8 financial resources, with a covenant determining the allocation of regional / national /  
9 international initiatives” (page 5). The Task Force recommended that a fixed percentage of each  
10 congregation’s donation to the area church be forwarded to the national church, with a portion  
11 of those funds going into a separate fund earmarked for international ministry. Individuals who  
12 served internationally would have some of their financial support drawn from this common  
13 national fund but a significant part of their support would also have to come in the form of  
14 additional “confirmation of call” donations from supportive individuals and congregations.<sup>10</sup>  
15 More recently, an Interim Council report also described a funding model which would have  
16 Mennonite Church Canada providing some budget support of Witness workers while  
17 congregations and clusters of congregations discern participation and provide additional  
18 financial support.<sup>11</sup>  
19

20 The following material is largely based on an online questionnaire which was completed by 160  
21 Mennonite Church Canada leaders from more than 65 different congregations. While 15 people  
22 did not answer the question on funding, 145 MC Canada leaders (pastors, area church staff and  
23 board members, Witness workers, congregational mission committee chairs, theologians)  
24 responded to the question on funding international ministry. Forty-four respondents also  
25 added comments to their multiple choice answer. Other groups such as young adults, other  
26 North American Mennonite agencies, and our international partners were not asked this  
27 question.  
28

29 What did we learn?  
30

- 31 1. Both Mennonite Church Canada’s current model of funding our international ministry and  
32 the funding model proposed by the Future Direction Task Force are hybrid models where  
33 funding for international ministry comes from a variety of sources:
  - 34 a. Contributions made to the general budgets of local congregations which then  
35 contribute money to area / national church budgets. Some of the national church’s  
36 budget is used for international ministry.
  - 37 b. Designated donations from individuals and congregations for international ministry

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<sup>9</sup> For more discussion of this issue see “Church-to-church relationships; A Report to Mennonite Church Canada’s General Board” from the International Relations Committee (Sven Eriksson; Jack Suderman; Tim Froese; Janet Plenert), February 28, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> In the past few months, some MC Canada and area church leaders have switched from using “confirmation of call” language to the phrase “relational funding.”

<sup>11</sup> A Proposal for Revitalizing MC Canada & Area Churches, page 19.

- 1 c. Designated donations from individuals and congregations for specific international
- 2 ministry workers or projects
- 3 d. Self-generated funds (e.g. teaching salaries in China and South Korea)
- 4 e. Bequests designated for international ministry
- 5 f. Financial support from international partners for shared ministries and workers
- 6 g. Financial support for international ministries that are beyond those supported by
- 7 the core program budget (e.g. partner projects)
- 8

9 Many of the comments to Working Group's survey endorsed some version of this hybrid  
10 model. For example:

- 11 a. *I think that MC Canada should demonstrate its commitment to international work by*
- 12 *including such work in its budget. The ministry could be too precarious if dependent*
- 13 *only on donations from individuals and congregations. Also, then the international*
- 14 *workers will have to spend far too much time and energy raising funds. But I do think*
- 15 *it is good to allow individuals and congregations to make special donations as a way*
- 16 *of demonstrating their commitment, and deepening their commitment to the*
- 17 *ministry.*
- 18 b. *This is a very high priority for the national church - a primary, if not the primary*
- 19 *reason for its existence - doing together what is difficult for any one congregation to*
- 20 *do alone. This means funding adequate staffing to facilitate. At the same time local*
- 21 *congregations need direct connections to international ministry if they are to buy in.*
- 22 *Not sure how to combine those forms of funding.*
- 23 c. *I think there needs to be some core funding, but congregations should be invited to*
- 24 *take initiative and contribute to specific projects and partnerships.*
- 25 d. *I have no strong feelings on this issue, with the caveat that long-term planning*
- 26 *requires a relatively secure financial commitment for budgeting purposes, which*
- 27 *would make me hesitant to support an exclusively designated-gifts model.*
- 28 e. *Some administrative staffing should come out of MC Canada's budget; that way*
- 29 *there's immediate capacity to send people who get the call to go and the*
- 30 *administrative percentage taken out of direct contributions to Witness workers is*
- 31 *less. Those administrative "taxes" are super necessary (and often beneficial) but*
- 32 *never popular. People want to feel like the cheque they put into the offering shows*
- 33 *up in the witness worker's account. Overseas staff should be primarily funded directly*
- 34 *through their network of relationship building and fundraising. It's no fun.*
- 35 f. *I think there are all sorts of possibilities for hybrid models but it may mean that there*
- 36 *is not one system-wide international ministry approach. Congregations banding*
- 37 *together to do something might be exciting but may be outside the national church*
- 38 *budget approach...*
- 39

40 **Thus the question is not whether or not to have a hybrid model, but rather how to**  
41 **structure a funding model so that we can maximize generosity for the many ministries**  
42 **supported by Mennonite Church Canada congregations.**  
43

- 1 2. **There is a desire among many people to more clearly link individual workers and**  
2 **ministries with specific congregations or groups of congregations.**  
3 a. The Addendum to the Future Directions Task Force Report states that “on  
4 international witness, many voices [questioned] the idea of congregations becoming  
5 involved in a ‘confirmation of call.’ Over time, the tones on the latter became more  
6 muted to speak in terms of congregations needing to become more aware and  
7 engaged.”  
8 b. This linking of international workers and ministries to groups of congregations and  
9 individual supporters is increasingly becoming the norm in other international  
10 ministries. Mennonite Central Committee is, however, one exception to this trend.  
11 c. Comments from our survey:  
12 • *the national budget alone is obviously not a sustainable source of funding -that's*  
13 *why we are in the situation we are in. But I hear a great deal of interest in*  
14 *congregations still wanting to be part of international ministry. I think a hybrid*  
15 *model could work, where there is some part of the national budget which*  
16 *provides a basic administrative infrastructure, and the support for mission*  
17 *workers is sourced through partnerships with congregations and individuals.*  
18 *Also, I think corporate sponsorship could be part of the package, and even setting*  
19 *up ministries with a business component to them where they could partially fund*  
20 *themselves.*  
21 • *I think it would be good to have funding built into our conference budgets. I also*  
22 *think congregations will have to get excited about supporting witness workers.*  
23 *As a pastor I would strive to get our congregation excited about International*  
24 *witness work.*  
25  
26 3. **There is a reluctance to ask individual workers to shoulder a significant part of the**  
27 **responsibility to raise funds for their own salaries.**  
28 a. People with excellent front line ministry skills do not necessarily have excellent  
29 fundraising skills.  
30 b. We do not ask other national church or area church employees to take responsibility  
31 for raising their own support.  
32 c. Comments from our survey  
33 • *Ideally Witness work should be a part of the MC Canada budget and MC Canada*  
34 *should make the decisions on where the work is. It is a problem if Witness*  
35 *workers have to focus on funding their work because that can lead to the work*  
36 *that is easiest to "sell" getting the funding. Sadly the financial realities may not*  
37 *allow for that to continue.*  
38 • *I don't favour the idea of the workers doing their own fund-raising during*  
39 *furloughs.*  
40 • *This is a hard question, since people aren't that interested in giving to national*  
41 *church budgets, but asking individuals to do their own fundraising means self-*  
42 *selecting workers who are able/willing to fundraise. Which might not be the most*  
43 *needed skill, internationally.*  
44

- 1 4. One question which the Interim Council is considering is how designated donations to  
 2 international ministries should be treated; should they be accounted in a way that primarily  
 3 benefits the area church or international ministries? The Interim Council seems to be  
 4 leaning in the direction of accounting for designated donations to international ministry in  
 5 such a way that the area church would be the primary beneficiary i.e. any designated  
 6 donation from a congregation or individual to international ministry would reduce the  
 7 amount forwarded from that congregation's area church.

8  
 9 **In our survey, however, there is a very strong, wide-spread bias against using designated  
 10 donations for international ministry in a way that in which the primary beneficiary of  
 11 these additional donations would be the area church and not international ministry.**

12 Approximately 150 people answered the following question: "What would be the best way  
 13 to fund Mennonite Church Canada's international ministry?" The answer options were:

- 14 a. Funding for international ministry should be a set percentage of the area/national  
 15 church budget and any extra giving by congregations and individuals should count as  
 16 part of that percentage.  
 17 b. Funding for international ministry should be a set percentage of the area/national  
 18 church budget but congregations and individuals should be allowed to make  
 19 additional donations.  
 20 c. Mennonite Church Canada's international ministry should be funded only by  
 21 designated donations from individuals, congregations and area churches.  
 22 d. Additional comments or other ideas

23  
 24 The answers were as follows:  
 25

	Option a	Option b	Option c	Comments and other ideas	Did not answer the question
Pastors and other congregational leaders	7	55	5	27	8
Pastors and other leaders in congregations made up of newer Canadians (option 1 was worded slightly differently to this group)	0	6	2	1	2
Witness workers and partners (past and present)	5	14	1	7	2
Area church leaders (board members and staff)	1	7	3	4	1
Home and partner congregations of Witness Workers	4	9	2	1	0
Supporters	3	9	0	1	1
Missiologists and Theologians	1	2	0	3	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>15</b>

1  
2 **Thus, by a margin of approximately 5 to 1, pastors, congregational leaders, and area**  
3 **church leaders specifically indicated that they did not want designated donations to be**  
4 **accounted as part of an area church’s commitment to international ministry.**  
5

6 There should be some parity in how we treat designated donations to different parts of the  
7 system. Many area churches also support schools, camps, and other ministries. Under the  
8 proposal which seems to be coming from the Interim Council, any designated donations to  
9 international ministry would reduce the area church’s contribution to international ministry  
10 by an equivalent amount. Will that also be true for these other organizations that are also  
11 built into our budgets? Will our area and national church contributions to our schools,  
12 Mennonite World Conference, Canadian Mennonite etc also be reduced when  
13 congregations and individuals contribute directly to these organizations? If not, why is it  
14 proposed that we treat international ministry differently?  
15

16 Not only should there be parity between how designated contributions to specific ministries  
17 are treated, any system designed to claw back designated donations to international  
18 ministry will most likely prove to be very discouraging to donors and will be counter-  
19 productive in the long run. Imagine, for example, a system in which the annual budgets  
20 from the area and national churches allowed for a \$1,000,000 budget for international  
21 ministries. Under the current Interim Council proposal, if supporters of international  
22 ministries raised an additional \$500,000, the net result would still be a \$1,000,000 budget. If  
23 supporters of international ministries raised an additional \$1,000,000 the net result would  
24 still be a \$1,000,000 budget. Only if supporters raised \$1,000,001 would the net result be an  
25 additional \$1 of international ministry. Under this model, any informed donor will simply  
26 not make designated donations to our international ministry. Can we imagine doing this for  
27 all of our ministries? Will this kind of system inspire generosity or will it discourage it?  
28

- 29 **5. Mennonite Church Canada congregations currently spend relatively little on international**  
30 **ministries.** In his response to the Witness Working Group survey, a former General  
31 Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, cited a study of MC Canada congregational giving  
32 from 2005-2010 which reported that only 4.5% of congregational giving eventually found its  
33 way to the needs of others beyond Canadian boundaries:

34 a. *“In the research we did, we discovered that from 2005-2010, about 82.5% of all MC*  
35 *Canada congregational giving is spent to benefit the donors themselves (in*  
36 *congregational life; area church programs designed to strengthen congregations;*  
37 *national church programs designed to do the same; schools; senior homes; bursary*  
38 *funding; etc.). About 14% of all congregational giving was designated for ministry*  
39 *beyond ourselves, but within Canada. And 4.5% of congregational giving eventually*  
40 *found its way to the needs of others beyond Canadian boundaries. I suspect these*  
41 *numbers have not changed dramatically. It is astounding the capacity we have to*  
42 *absorb more and more of our own resources, with less and less being available to*  
43 *partner with other needs. So the issue is not so much a “funding formula” as it is a*  
44 *“vision-casting commitment” designed to paint a picture of our role in global equity*

1                    *and partnerships. This has to do with our own vision (or lack of it); with*  
2                    *communication; education; and demonstration.*<sup>12</sup>  
3

4                    While the interim council has not yet released its funding proposal, it has been suggested by  
5                    some that funds should be diverted from international ministry and towards resourcing  
6                    Mennonite Church Canada congregations, many of which are declining in attendance. This  
7                    has been a strategy that has been pursued for at least ten years. In 2007, just over 45% of  
8                    MC Canada funds were spent on international ministry; in 2017 the budgeted amount is  
9                    36.4%. If less than 5% of congregational giving is currently being spent on international  
10                    ministry and more than 95% of congregational giving is currently being spent in Canada, it is  
11                    difficult to see how upping that percentage to 96% or 97% will make us a healthier church.  
12                    Indeed, it could be argued that spending more of our money on ourselves makes us an  
13                    unhealthier church.  
14

- 15                    6. **We have no data on what percentage of their giving to their area and national church**  
16                    **congregations wish to be spent on international ministry.** One possibility is to simply ask  
17                    congregations what percentage of their giving to the area church they would like to go to  
18                    international ministry and respect that.<sup>13</sup>  
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<sup>12</sup> Because of rounding, the percentages add up to 101%.

<sup>13</sup> The experience of Mennonite Mission Network indicates that we would have a wide variety of responses. See [https://www.mennonitemission.net/Downloads/BYO\\_October\\_C16-126\\_Screen.pdf](https://www.mennonitemission.net/Downloads/BYO_October_C16-126_Screen.pdf) page 17.

## Part 4: Possible Models for Structuring International Ministry

In its face-to-face meeting and subsequent email exchanges, the International Witness / Relationships Working Group discussed four possible models for structuring Mennonite Church Canada's international ministry. Because the fourth model (D) is the least familiar and most reflects the direction in which the Interim council seems to be leaning, it is dealt with in the most detail.

### A Continue as a program of the national church

#### 1 Features of this model

- a National church staff and a volunteer council would work with congregations, area churches and our international partners to prioritize ministry opportunities and publicize the work that we are doing together.
- b While the international ministry program would be partially funded out of the money received by the national church from the area churches, congregations and individuals would still be free to give donations directly to the international ministry program.
- c International long-term workers would be employees of the national church. The national church would take care of logistical details such as the paying of salaries, pensions, healthcare, visas and work permits. The national church would also be responsible for signing memos of understanding with our international partners and so that all donations would be CRA compliant.

#### 2 Strengths of this model

- a The national church and its international ministry would continue to be linked not only to Mennonite World Conference, but also with the many churches, ministries, and organizations which it has built up relationships over many decades. These decades of experience and relationships would not only help in big picture planning but also help in the orientation and support of new workers.
- b MC Canada's highest profile work in its constituency has been its international ministry (e.g. more than 90% of all designated donations to MC Canada go to Witness). Having international ministry lodged with the national church would continue to link some constituents with a strong MC Canada identity.
- c MC Canada would continue to have the capacity to place long-term workers in ministry assignments. Because support for any one particular international ministry would be shared between so many different congregations, the withdrawal of interest of any one congregation from that ministry would not be fatal.

#### 3 Weaknesses of this model

- a Some congregations and area church staff have argued that while congregations made up primarily of newer Canadians often have a passion to do ministry in their

- 1 countries of origin, they have found it difficult to have their missional priorities  
2 supported and adopted at the national level.
- 3 b The amount of money given to the national denomination is on a long-term  
4 downward trend. This is true not just in Mennonite Church Canada but also in many  
5 other North American denominations.
  - 6 c This model may not be enough of a change from the current structure and may not  
7 sufficiently address the disconnect felt by some congregations and area churches.

8

9 **B Create a new semi-autonomous agency**

10

11 1 Features of this model

- 12 a A new agency would be formed that would have its own independent governance  
13 structure. The board of this new agency would be made up of representatives from  
14 MC Canada’s constituency who are committed to international witness. A  
15 partnership council could also be formed which would include representatives from  
16 both the national and area churches.
- 17 b This agency would see Mennonite Church Canada congregations as its primary  
18 constituency although other individuals and congregations may wish to support it.
- 19 c This agency would focus on programmatic activity with the same global and MWC  
20 partners that it has currently while facilitating global relationships for Mennonite  
21 Church Canada, area churches, and congregations.
- 22 d This agency would seek to be responsive to the desires of those Mennonite Church  
23 Canada congregations and area churches which wish to have a greater say in  
24 developing new international initiatives.

25

26 2 Possible strengths of this model

- 27 a This is a very common model for many Anabaptist international ministry  
28 organizations. Mennonite Church USA did this when they set up Mennonite Mission  
29 Network. In Canada, Mennonite Central Committee has some distance and  
30 autonomy from its supporting denominations. Most of the schools and some of the  
31 camps which are supported by Mennonite Church Canada constituents operate in  
32 this way and are still seen as “our school” or “our camp.”
- 33 b There may be room for this ministry to grow. Giving to denominations by  
34 congregations is on a downward trend in North America. Generosity and  
35 engagement may increase as individuals and congregations give directly to programs  
36 that they support instead of giving through intermediary organizations.
- 37 c MC Canada would continue to have the capacity to place long-term workers in  
38 ministry assignments. Because support for any one particular international ministry  
39 would be shared between so many different congregations, the withdrawal of  
40 interest of any one congregation from that ministry would not be fatal.

41

42 3 Possible weaknesses of this model

- 43 a There is no assured funding for this model because a new semi-autonomous agency  
44 would not have an automatic slice of area and national church giving.



- 1 b There are numerous existing Anabaptist international ministry organizations in  
2 North America. It may be wiser to join with an existing agency than to start a new  
3 agency.  
4 c Already some MC Canada congregations feel that decision making about  
5 international ministries is lodged at too far of a distance from the local church.  
6 These churches long for a model in which their international missional priorities will  
7 be supported. Moving international ministry from a program of the national church  
8 to a semi-autonomous may increase that distance.  
9

10 **C Restructure so that most of the initiative, decision-making and fundraising for**  
11 **international ministry comes from congregations and area churches.**  
12

13 1 Features of this model

- 14 a Each Area Church would appoint or elect an Area International Witness Committee.  
15 The role of the area committees would include:  
16 • Serving as a reference council for a volunteer or employed “Area Mission  
17 Minister.”  
18 • Helping the Area Church to adopt goals and strategies for mission.  
19 • Encouraging local congregations to engage in mission/ministry and help them to  
20 implement their ideas, ministries, and candidates.  
21 • Screening and bringing these ideas, ministries, and candidates to the attention of  
22 the Canada International Witness Council.  
23 • Encouraging and assisting congregations in raising funds for approved ideas,  
24 ministries and candidates.  
25 • Encouraging and assisting congregations in establishing partnerships within the  
26 Area Church and between their congregations and select overseas  
27 churches/organizations.  
28 • Appointing a member to the National International Witness Council (or whatever  
29 it would be called).  
30  
31 b The role of the National International Witness Council would include:  
32 • Nominating a National Mission Minister for employment by the National General  
33 Board (or whatever it will be called).  
34 • Serving as a reference council for the National Mission Minister.  
35 • Encouraging the Area Committees as they engage in goal-setting, brainstorming  
36 ideas and ministries and recruiting possible candidates for short and long-term  
37 ministries.  
38 • Examining and adopting understandings and guidelines that are in keeping with  
39 Anabaptist theology and missiology.  
40 • Receiving and determining overall priorities by which ideas, projects and  
41 candidates submitted by Area Committees will be approved and funded.  
42 • Forming and recommending a budget to the Mennonite Church Canada General  
43 Board (or however it might be called) on how Witness Dollars received by the  
44 National Church will be used to supplement or fund the ideas, ministries, and

1 candidates submitted by the Area Committees and approved by the National  
2 International Witness Council.

3  
4 c The role of the National Mission Minister would include:

- 5 • Researching and teaching in the area of evangelism service and mission.
- 6 • Encouraging the Area Committees in their goal-setting, idea development,  
7 ministries and recruitment efforts.
- 8 • Providing administrative assistance for getting international work permits, health  
9 insurance, and other HR matters.
- 10 • Assisting Area Committees and Mission Ministers and committees in the  
11 provision of pastoral care for their workers.

12  
13 d Funding for ideas, ministries, and candidates would come through a variety of  
14 channels.

- 15 • Local congregations would take primary responsibility for their ideas, ministries  
16 and mission workers.
- 17 • When needs are greater than congregational abilities, congregations, with the  
18 help of their Mission Minister would submit requests for help to the Area  
19 Committee.
- 20 • The Area Committee would evaluate suggestions and establish an annual budget  
21 that it would recommend for adoption at the annual Area Church Assembly. The  
22 budget would include funds for work within its area and funds forwarded to the  
23 National Council for broader and overseas workers.
- 24 • The Area Committee, assisted by its Mission Minister and the area treasurer,  
25 would allocate funds according to its adopted budget.
- 26 • The National Council, with the help of its Mission Minister, would distribute  
27 funds to needy Area Committees that it has approved.

28  
29 2 Possible strengths of this model

- 30 a The local congregation and then the Area Church would increasingly be seen as the  
31 focus of mission and worship.
- 32 b This is a relational model. Trust and relationships would be essential for the  
33 emergence of ideas, ministries, and candidates.
- 34 c Area Committees and Mission Ministers would have the congregational knowledge  
35 needed to establish meaningful partnerships between congregations.
- 36 d Congregations that have expressed the desire to be part of an Area Church but not  
37 the National Church would find acceptance and be retained.
- 38 e This model has been tested and found successful in Mennonite Church Eastern  
39 Canada.
- 40 f Area Churches would learn the benefits of having an Area Committee and the  
41 possibility of having a volunteer or employed Area Minister.

42  
43 3 Possible weaknesses of this model

- 1 a Currently, Mennonite Church Canada has a single international witness program/  
2 department and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada has a mission's minister. While  
3 involving all five area churches in international ministry will add complexity to the  
4 system, shared guiding principles and vision and a clear understanding of roles will  
5 ensure that the national and area churches will not be working at cross purposes.  
6 b A "bottom up" ministry and administrative pattern, in contrast to a "top down"  
7 pattern, opens the door to considerable variety and differences of opinion and  
8 practice.  
9 c Major donations and bequests have often been given to a national organization. Will  
10 they continue?  
11

12 **D A Hybrid Model of A and C** (this is an attempt to describe what the Future Directions Task  
13 Force and the Executive Staff Group envisions)  
14

15 1 Features of this model

- 16 a Each individual congregation would be responsible for discerning what God is calling  
17 them to do around the world. Ideas for international ministry could come from  
18 either individuals within the congregation or from the area church which would  
19 forward ideas from other congregations, area churches, the national church, MWC  
20 or other global partners.  
21 b Funding for international ministry would come through a variety of channels. It is  
22 envisioned that a fixed percentage of each congregation's donation to the area  
23 church would be forwarded to the national church and a fixed percentage of those  
24 funds would then go into a separate fund earmarked for international ministry.  
25 Individuals who served internationally would have some of their financial support  
26 drawn from that common national fund but a significant part of their support would  
27 also have to come in the form of additional "confirmation of call" donations from  
28 individuals and congregations.  
29 c The role of the national church:  
30 • MC Canada would articulate its priorities for the kind of projects and partners it  
31 would work with  
32 • MC Canada would screen projects against its priorities  
33 • MC Canada would establish partnerships with overseas churches / organizations  
34 • MC Canada would screen potential overseas workers  
35 • MC Canada would be the employer of the workers who are sent  
36 • MC Canada would provide oversight to the projects and would provide support  
37 to the workers  
38 • MC Canada would be the conduit for funds for projects. This would include  
39 receiving and receipting donations from donors for specific projects and ensuring  
40 CRA compliance for the projects and their funding.  
41 • MC Canada's budget would partially fund overseas workers  
42 d The role of the area church:

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- The area church would pass on invitations to ministry from the national church or other area churches to local congregations or clusters of congregations to see if there is interest.
  - The shift in financial resources from the national church to the area church is being driven in part by the desire to strengthen the fundraising and communications capacity of the area churches. The area churches would have increased responsibility for fundraising for and communications about the church’s international ministry.
- 2 This model is based on the “Future Directions Task Force Report and Addendum” and the January 2017 working document “A Proposal for Revitalizing MC Canada”. Some issues which still would have to be worked out are:
- a What would be the governance structure for international ministries? While vision and funding would move in the direction of the local congregation, who would ultimately provide oversight of the whole?
  - b The January 2017 working document: “A Proposal for Revitalizing MC Canada,” states that the national church will still have the responsibility to provide staff support for the church’s international ministry while area churches (to whom financial resources are being shifted) **may** provide staff (page 19). On one hand, it does make sense for the national church to provide staff support because international work permits, health insurance, and other HR issues are complex and thus difficult to delegate to congregations or area churches with small staffs. The Interim Council, however, envisions a much smaller national church staff, most likely less than half its current size. Presumably, this will significantly impact the size of the International Witness staff. A dispersed model of planning, funding, calling workers and connecting workers with local congregations will, however, most likely require more staff time, not less. What will the national Witness staff be expected to stop doing?
  - c To whom would workers be primarily accountable: the local church, the area church or the national church? Also, who would be the employer of long-term workers: the local church, the area church or the national church?
- 3 Possible strengths of this model
- a Some congregations and area church staff have argued that congregations with specific interests and passions in international ministries have found it difficult to have their missional priorities supported and adopted at the national level. If the national church has less of a gatekeeper role, the gifts, talents, and resources of congregations with a passion for international ministry may be unleashed.
  - b Some congregations have expressed the desire to be part of an area church but not the national church. By moving more of the initiative, decision making, and financial controls away from the national church and to the area churches, these congregations may feel more comfortable in staying part of their area church.

- 1 c Area churches which are large enough to have dedicated staff for international  
2 ministry may find it easier to connect interested congregations with international  
3 ministries.  
4
- 5 4 Weaknesses of this model
- 6 a If it is the role of the national church to provide staff support for international  
7 ministry, and the role of the area church to do the communications and fundraising,  
8 and the role of the congregation to discern direction and which workers to support,  
9 are we not creating a more complex structure rather than a simpler structure? In  
10 one conversation, a member of the Executive Staff Group (ESG) stated that any new  
11 structure should be simple to understand and practice. Does this model meet that  
12 test?
- 13 b If a significant portion of each worker's support is dependent on relational funding,  
14 it may be difficult to sustain long-term ministry. Thus, more work will be done by  
15 shorter term volunteers. Unless these short term workers are from the culture they  
16 are returning to, they will not have the language and cultural skills which are needed  
17 to do their work effectively. Long-term cross-cultural ministry may come to an end.
- 18 c It is an untried model. As far as we know, no other Anabaptist denomination in  
19 North America has organized its international ministry in this way. Perhaps this is  
20 because we recognize that cross-cultural / cross-national ministry is complicated.  
21 This is one reason why we as a national church do not encourage individual  
22 congregations to start, fund and sustain their own relief and development programs  
23 around the world. Instead, we have developed specialist agencies like Mennonite  
24 Central Committee and Mennonite Economic Development Associates which have  
25 developed the skill and experience to do this work effectively. If international  
26 witness work is no less complex than relief and development work, why do we think  
27 that individual congregations can do this work sensitively, effectively and  
28 sustainably?
- 29 d Will this model allow our international ministry to thrive and grow? Will smaller  
30 area churches be able to add the responsibility to communicate about and fundraise  
31 for international ministry or will it be relegated to a relatively low priority?  
32  
33

## Part 5: Recommendations

### Priorities

1. We believe that the church is called to proclaim and to be a sign of the kingdom of God. We will go beyond our communities as witnesses, following Jesus' instructions to make disciples of all peoples. We will form new communities of believers, transcending boundaries of nationality, culture, class, gender, and language. Because we believe that God has created and blessed cultural variety, we expect new forms of the church to emerge as we go.<sup>14</sup>
2. We will assist Mennonite Church Canada congregations to form relationships with Christians and churches around the world, particularly with the global Anabaptist Church. These partnerships will be mutually beneficial as the church in Canada shares its material and people resources in order to strengthen the global church and as it learns, is inspired and receives the spiritual gifts and people resources from the global church.
3. In cooperation with the area churches, we will assist local Mennonite Church Canada congregations to discern and carry out particular international ministries to which God has called them.

### A Model for Structuring MC Canada's International Ministry

While International Witness / Relationships Working Group could not come to a consensus as to which structural model to recommend, **either continuing as a national program or forming a new national mission agency had the most support within the group.** Our lack of consensus was mirrored in a survey which we did of area church board members and staff. While only sixteen area church board members and staff responded to the survey, **there was fairly weak support among area church leaders to shift significant responsibility for international ministry to the regional churches.** In response to the statement and question: "It has been recommended that both the area churches and the national church work together to set priorities and vision for Mennonite Church Canada's international ministry. Does your area church board have the time, passion and expertise to do this or would you prefer this to be largely done at the national church level?"

- Eight respondents were positive about shifting more responsibility to the area churches. Mennonite Church Eastern Canada respondents were the most positive.
- Seven respondents were negative about shifting more responsibility to the area churches. Mennonite Church Saskatchewan respondents were the least positive.
- One respondent did not express a clear preference.

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<sup>14</sup> **Article 10: The Church in Mission** in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and **God's People in Mission: An Anabaptist Perspective** *A Statement of the MWC Mission Commission*

1 **Whatever model is chosen the working group recommends the following principles be**  
2 **implemented:**

- 3 4. Any future international mission structure must continue to move in the direction of  
4 becoming ever more responsive to the missional impulses of its constituency. We have an  
5 increasing number of new Canadian churches in some of our Area Churches who are  
6 passionately committed to Anabaptist expressions of the gospel and have an interest in  
7 articulating that gospel in the countries from which they came. A key issue is “how does a  
8 national body lend its experience and wisdom to local congregations and area churches  
9 without always becoming the gatekeeper to international ministry?”
- 10 5. Any future international mission structure should continue to move in the direction of -  
11 when possible - connecting specific international ministries and projects with local  
12 congregations and clusters of congregations and interested individuals.
- 13 6. When possible MC Canada’s international ministry should be done in partnership with  
14 churches and organizations already present in those countries.
- 15 7. Mennonite Church Canada Witness has existing workers, international and North  
16 American mission partners with significant experience and gifts, trust, and connections  
17 with MC Canada congregations. Any future international mission structure should build on  
18 the relationships, gifts and shared commitments these current and historical ministries  
19 represent.
- 20 8. We need to recognize that different area churches may have different needs. Mennonite  
21 Church Eastern Canada does have more resources to do international ministry on its own.  
22 Some congregations also desire distance from national church structures and may feel  
23 more comfortable relating only to their area churches. Other area churches, however,  
24 welcome national church leadership in international ministries. These different realities  
25 need to be reflected in our practice of international ministry.
- 26 9. Mennonite Church Canada’s relationship with the Mennonite World Conference (MWC)  
27 and its member churches is primarily the responsibility of MC Canada’s General Board  
28 which has responsibility for all church-to-church relationships. The General Board may,  
29 however, delegate some responsibilities for joint programs to its international ministries  
30 program. MC Canada Witness is a member of the MWC Mission Commission, a global  
31 network of Anabaptist mission and service agencies.

32  
33 **Funding**  
34

- 35 10. Mennonite Church Canada’s international ministries should be funded through a variety of  
36 channels (e.g. donations from individual and congregational donors for specific projects  
37 and workers, donations from congregations to the work of the area and national churches,  
38 bequests, self-generated funds, financial support from some of our international partners).
- 39 11. Long-term International Witness workers should not have the responsibility to raise funds  
40 for their own support. No other area church or national church employees are asked to  
41 raise their own support and Witness workers should be treated equitably. Witness  
42 workers do, however, have a responsibility to nurture relationships not just in the  
43 countries in which they are working, but also with churches and individuals who are  
44 interested in their work here in Canada.

- 1 12. Designated donations for international ministry should be treated in a way in which  
2 benefits international ministry, not the area churches. Area churches currently support  
3 schools, camps, and many other organizations. Mennonite Church Canada supports  
4 Mennonite World Conference and the Canadian Mennonite and when individual donors or  
5 congregations make extra donations to these organizations, the area and national  
6 churches do not claw back those designated donations by a reduction of their planned  
7 giving. The same should be true for international ministries. Clawing back designated  
8 donations reduces the incentive to give among knowledgeable donors.
- 9 13. Mennonite Church Canada congregations spend relatively little money on international  
10 ministries. While the working group did not have access to any current data, past data  
11 indicated that ten years ago less than 5% of congregational giving went to international  
12 ministries (see page 13). Since that time, MC Canada has cut the percentage of its budget  
13 which it spends on international ministries and thus it is likely that international ministries  
14 now receive less than 4% of congregational giving. One rationale for cutting international  
15 ministries by a greater percentage than other ministries is that resources should be shifted  
16 from overseas spending to domestic spending so that the Canadian church can thrive and  
17 grow. It is doubtful, however, that upping domestic spending from 96% to 97% will  
18 indeed help us thrive and grow. It may, instead, simply make us more selfish. Thus, the  
19 working group recommends that the national church track how much is being spent on  
20 international ministry and challenge itself, the area churches and congregations to be  
21 increasingly generous to the wider world when it comes to our financial resources.
- 22 14. We have no data on what percentage of their giving to their area and national church  
23 congregations wish to be spent on international ministry. One possibility is to simply ask  
24 congregations what percentage of their giving to the area church they would like to go to  
25 international ministry and respect that.

26



## Part 6: Key Documents

### General Terms of Reference for all Working and Reference Groups December 2016

- 1) Working and Reference Groups are tasked with reviewing aspects of church life related to their area of assignment.
- 2) The Groups will supply progress reports as needed, and a final report, to the Transition Coordinator.
- 3) The Groups will interact with the Transition Coordinator through the life of their mandate.
- 4) The Interim Council will in most cases suggest a person from the members of each Group to act as chair or moderator. The chair/moderator will be the primary contact for the Transition Coordinator.
- 5) The Groups, in conversation with the Transition Coordinator may develop methods for testing ideas with the broader church beyond those in place through the current transition process.
- 6) The Groups will consult with the Transition Coordinator in the event of confusion about their mandate, difficulty with working together, or any other issue where outside assistance would be helpful.
- 7) In conducting their work the Groups shall aim for outcomes that support the overall vision of the FDTF Report and Addendum:
  - a) The centrality of the congregation as a place of worship and mission;
  - b) The centrality of the Area Churches as a place of support to congregations in their work of worship and mission;
  - c) The centrality of the Area Church for congregations be part of something larger than themselves;
  - d) The centrality of the National church for being part of something larger than either the congregation or the Area Church;
  - e) The centrality of the National Church as a place of connection, communion across the country, identity, and working together to do things we cannot do alone;
  - f) The centrality of the Global Church for us to be part of something larger than the National Church; and,
  - g) All levels of the church are central to our identity as a particular expression of the body of Christ.
- 8) In conducting their work the Working Groups shall aim for outcomes that support the 1995 vision statement: Vision: Healing and Hope: "God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world."
- 9) Throughout their deliberations and decision making the Groups will ask:
  - a) How does the outcome of our work contribute to helping local congregations be their best?

- 1           b) How does the outcome of our work contribute to helping the larger church (in its
- 2           Regional, National, and Global expressions) be their best?
- 3       c) Is the outcome of our work faithful?
- 4       d) Is the outcome of our work feasible?
- 5   10) The Role of Staff
- 6       a) Staff persons may be named as ex officio members of some Groups.
- 7       b) The role of staff is to provide advice and expertise to the Group.
- 8       c) Staff assigned to a Group do not participate in the making of decisions.
- 9       d) There may be occasions where the Group meets without staff present.
- 10   11) Decision Rule: The Groups will make decisions about the content of their reports by
- 11       consensus.

**International Witness Group Terms of Reference**  
**December 2016**

- 17   1) The International Witness/Relations Working Group will develop a model for the
- 18       international work of the Mennonite Church Canada congregations that is consistent with
- 19       the Future Directions Task Force Report and Addendum and is shaped by the structure
- 20       proposal developed by the Executive Staff Group and approved by Interim Council for
- 21       presentation to the Area Church Annual Assemblies.
- 22   2) In doing its work the Group will be attentive to the following questions:
- 23       a. What are the core purposes of our international work? How does that shape the
- 24       focus of our work? What are we called to as Anabaptist people? How is international
- 25       work connected to Canadian witness?
- 26       b. What are we doing now and how does that best fit with what we ought to be doing
- 27       as an Anabaptist church at this time in history?
- 28       c. In what ways should the reconciliation process envisioned by the TRC shape
- 29       International Witness/Relationships?
- 30       d. How do we best relate to the national churches of other countries? How does
- 31       purpose shape our responses to international partners who invite us to work with
- 32       them? In what ways can Mennonite World Conference help facilitate relationships?
- 33       To what extent do we take direction from the global church?
- 34       e. What are the models for developing shared priorities for international witness
- 35       across the area churches? What happens if there is slippage in shared commitment?
- 36       f. What is the Group's response to the funding model in the proposal that is going to
- 37       Area Church Delegate Assemblies?
- 38       g. How do congregations most effectively engage in the international work of the
- 39       church? What are the models for finding or fostering imagination in congregations?
- 40       h. How do we address the balance of short and long-term programme?

**Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective**  
**Article 10: The Church in Mission**

1  
2  
3  
4 We believe that the church is called to proclaim and to be a sign of the kingdom of God. Christ  
5 has commissioned the church to be his witnesses, making disciples of all nations, baptizing  
6 them, and teaching them to observe all things he has commanded.

7  
8 In his mission of preaching, teaching, and healing, Jesus announced, "The kingdom of God has  
9 come near; repent, and believe in the good news." After his death and resurrection, Jesus  
10 commissioned his disciples, saying, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send  
11 you. . . . Receive the Holy Spirit." Empowered by that Spirit, we continue Jesus' ministry of  
12 gathering the new people of God, who acknowledge Christ as Lord and Savior.

13  
14 The church is called to witness to the reign of Christ by embodying Jesus' way in its own life and  
15 patterning itself after the reign of God. Thus it shows the world a sample of life under the  
16 lordship of Christ. By its life, the church is to be a city on a hill, a light to the nations, testifying  
17 to the power of the resurrection by a way of life different from the societies around it.

18  
19 The church is also to give witness by proclaiming the reign of God in word and deed. The church  
20 is to seek the lost, call for repentance, announce salvation from sin, proclaim the gospel of  
21 peace, set free the oppressed, pray for righteousness and justice, serve as Jesus did, and  
22 without coercion urge all people to become part of the people of God. The church is called to  
23 be a channel of God's healing, which may include anointing with oil. Even at the risk of suffering  
24 and death, the love of Christ compels faithful witnesses to testify for their Savior.

25  
26 Such witness is a response to Jesus' call to make disciples. As they are welcomed and  
27 incorporated into the church, new Christians learn to participate in the church's worship, in its  
28 fellowship, education, mutual aid, decision making, service, and continuing mission. New  
29 believers also help the church to learn new dimensions of its mission.

30  
31 God calls the church to direct its mission to people from all nations and ethnic backgrounds.  
32 Jesus commissioned his disciples to be his witnesses in "Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria,  
33 and to the ends of the earth." The apostle Paul preached to the Gentile nations. The church  
34 today is also called to witness to people of every culture, ethnicity, or nationality. The mission  
35 of the church does not require the protection of any nation or empire. Christians are strangers  
36 and aliens within all cultures. Yet the church itself is God's nation, encompassing people who  
37 have come from every tribe and nation. Indeed, its mission is to reconcile differing groups,  
38 creating one new humanity and providing a preview of that day when all the nations shall  
39 stream to the mountain of the Lord and be at peace.

40

1 **Approaches to International Ministry**  
2 **(a summation of numerous statements made by MC Canada and Witness Council)**  
3

4 As members of a national church, our approaches to international ministry are shaped by and  
5 deeply connected to the vision, identity and priorities discerned by the members of Mennonite  
6 Church Canada. The following approaches integrate the key Mennonite Church Canada  
7 statements and inform our activities and relationships with international church and ministry  
8 partners, including those of Witness Workers.  
9

- 10 1 Live, respond to, and communicate the vision God has given us.  
11 • Live our respective roles in the global church in ways that attract and invite people into  
12 relationship with Jesus Christ and His church.  
13 • Respond to the Spirit and mission of God by attending to missional peace initiatives  
14 from Canadian or international ministry partners that reflect our vision, reinforce our  
15 priorities and lead us into relationships of mutual growth and gift sharing.  
16 • Communicate the vision as expressed in our current and future ministry in ways that  
17 foster imagination, learning and participation  
18
- 19 2 Provide members of Mennonite Church Canada congregations with awareness of and  
20 access to international ministry opportunities for adults of all ages and ethnic backgrounds.  
21 • Work with congregational and international ministry partners in the discernment of  
22 Witness Worker gifts, call to service and support for ministry.  
23 • Provide Witness Workers with support and access to resources that will further develop  
24 their faith formation.  
25
- 26 3 Establish and nurture missional peace congregations.  
27 • Witness to God’s coming and present reign, bringing reconciliation and peace in Jesus to  
28 contexts experiencing significant social, political and economic distress.  
29 • Form relationships with individuals, families and groups in which Christ’s character can  
30 be seen in our lives, God’s word can be heard and understood, and God’s Spirit can do  
31 its transforming work.  
32 • Develop communities of faith with congregational and leadership models that are  
33 sustainable, replicable and are appropriate to their identity and context. Such  
34 communities would engage in worship, be united and compelling in their self-identity as  
35 missional peace congregations, growing in response to God’s call to faithfulness and in  
36 their capacity to be ministry partners.  
37 • Develop fraternal and gift sharing relationships among church leaders, and Anabaptist  
38 congregations nationally, regionally and internationally.  
39
- 40 4 Understanding that the church is God’s chosen instrument to transform the world, we will  
41 strengthen and nurture the local, area and national church in every country in which we  
42 minister.

- 1 • Relate to other church bodies out of our strong faith identity, with biblically based
- 2 convictions and character as a global, Anabaptist, missional, peace church.
- 3 • Partner with national, area and/or local churches in the development and
- 4 implementation of shared ministries. Special attention will be given to churches that
- 5 self-identify as Anabaptist or wish to relate with us and our vision.
- 6 • Call, develop, and mentor local leaders and leadership teams for the current and future
- 7 church, modelling and equipping leadership for missional peace congregations,
- 8 facilitating access to resources for training, and developing leadership paradigms that
- 9 are sustainable, foster growth and are replicable.

10  
 11 5 Commitment to the 4-self understanding of church. We establish and nurture new and  
 12 emerging Christian communities of faith that mature in ways that facilitate their growth in  
 13 becoming primarily self-reliant in their:

- 14 • **Governance**-Ability to provide their own leadership and governance structure;
- 15 • **Finance** - Ability to provide their own financial and personnel resources for sustaining
- 16 ongoing ministry;
- 17 • **Identity** - Ability to articulate their faith and theological identity in authentic and
- 18 contextually appropriate ways; and
- 19 • **Mission** - Ability to engage in ministries and ministry partnerships beyond their
- 20 immediate context that grow and/or replicate communities of faith.

21  
 22  
 23 **Mennonite Church Canada and International Ministry Partnership Values**

24  
 25 **Missional church** – God does mission. We pay attention to what God is doing so that we can  
 26 partner with God in sharing the good news in word and deed, in forming disciples and calling  
 27 communities of faith to come together. We give priority to establishing and nurturing missional  
 28 peace congregations and strengthening the church in every context where we have ministry.  
 29 Initiatives may come from Canada or from around the world.

30  
 31 **Partnership** – we believe God is our first partner in all ministry. Recognizing God’s presence in  
 32 all parts of the church, we invite and give serious consideration to invitations to ministry from  
 33 Canadian and international congregations, Witness workers, and other  
 34 ministries/organizations. Mennonite Church Canada facilitates partnerships for mission.

35  
 36 **Sharing gifts from our congregations** – God has gifted us with a faith heritage, congregations,  
 37 spiritual gifts and talents, financial resources and global relationships. We are a national family  
 38 of congregations that speaks 20 different languages in Canada! We have many gifts to share  
 39 and many gifts to receive.

40  
 41 **Incarnational ministry** - We value ministry through the presence and gifts of people and  
 42 relationships of trust and caring. We have short and long-term service options that our ministry  
 43 partners have invited us into and which we seek to fill from our family of congregations. We

1 focus on engaging and developing local leaders to continue and incarnate ministry in their  
2 context.

3  
4 Investment and generosity – We invite all partners to be generous in word and deed, active  
5 “investors” in our shared ministry. We do not identify ourselves as primarily a funding body, but  
6 we do facilitate funding when we can meet all the necessary criteria and legal requirements.  
7 We desire to use models that have the potential to multiply and replicate the ministry we do.  
8 Missional Capacity building – We take a holistic approach to ministry and seek to develop the  
9 missional capacity of our ministry partners. We believe God desires that each of our partners  
10 will grow in their ability to do mission within and beyond our partnerships.

11  
12 **Becoming an interdependent “4-self church:”**

- 13 • In terms of mission, we desire young churches to become **self-reproducing**;
- 14 • In terms of leadership/polity/institutions, we desire our ministry partners to become  
15 **self governing**;
- 16 • in terms of sustainability, we desire our ministry partners to become **self-supporting**;
- 17 • in terms of identity, vision and priority in context, we desire our partner churches  
18 become **self-theologizing**.

19  
20 **Church to Church relationships** – Mennonite Church Canada values the church as the primary  
21 ministry partner in Canada and in each country internationally. We value and respect the  
22 national leadership selected in each country. We place priority on working in partnership with  
23 church bodies, strengthening the church and its mission in each country we relate to.

24 **Accountability** – we represent 5 area churches with 225 diverse congregations. We are  
25 responsible to this body for the vision and priorities for which they have created our programs,  
26 the resources they have generously shared, the relationships nationally and internationally that  
27 we are a part of (e.g. Mennonite World Conference), and to legal and good governance  
28 standards.

29  
30 **Integration** – the programs and ministries of the national church are numerous yet integrated  
31 in a shared budget. While donor designations are honoured, we recognize that there are costs  
32 involved in facilitated giving, and that a portion of all gifts (co-ministry support) goes to support  
33 the overall ministry of the national church.

34

1 **God's People in Mission: An Anabaptist Perspective**  
2 *A Statement of the MWC Mission Commission*  
3

4 God is a missionary God. Jesus is a missionary Lord. The Holy Spirit is a missionary empowerer.  
5 The entire Bible is a missional book. The whole church is a missional people.  
6

7 *Therefore, by the grace of God, as an Anabaptist faith community*  
8

9 1. **ORIGINS** We lead people to know God as Father, the Creator who initiated in Christ a loving,  
10 comprehensive plan to restore peace to the universe.  
11

12 2. **MEANS and MODEL** We announce Jesus, the Son of God, as both the means and the  
13 incarnate model by which God restores peace. It is through Jesus' life, teachings, death, and  
14 resurrection that the door opens to reconciliation, redemption, new creation, and eternal life.  
15 Incarnational witness and service is our model for mission.  
16

17 3. **POWER** We walk in the power of the Holy Spirit in word, deed, and being. We live and  
18 proclaim the kingdom of God, forgiving, teaching, healing, casting out evil spirits, and  
19 embodying suffering love.  
20

21 4. **MESSAGE** We invite all people to acknowledge Jesus as Lord, turn from sin, receive baptism  
22 upon confession of faith, and follow him in life as part of the worshiping, serving community of  
23 faith. This community is itself a sign to the world. We announce God's kingdom by serving  
24 others with humility and gratitude, caring for creation, and seeking to live in the world without  
25 conforming to the powers of evil.  
26

27 5. **SCOPE and TASK** We go beyond our communities as witnesses, following Jesus' instructions  
28 to make disciples of all peoples. We form new communities of believers, transcending  
29 boundaries of nationality, culture, class, gender, and language. Because we believe that God  
30 has created and blessed cultural variety, we expect new forms of the church to emerge as we  
31 go.  
32

33 6. **RISK and SUFFERING** We trust God in all areas of life, living as peacemakers who renounce  
34 violence, love our enemies, seek justice, and focus especially on serving and reaching out to the  
35 weak, poor, vulnerable, voiceless, and oppressed. Because Jesus Christ suffered for us, we also  
36 accept risk and suffering for his sake.  
37

38 7. **TEXT** We hold and share the Bible as our authority for faith, life, and mission. The Holy Spirit  
39 within and among us is the primary interpreter of the Word.  
40

41 8. **WORSHIP** We gather regularly to worship, celebrate the Lord's Supper, and hear and  
42 respond to the Word of God in mutual accountability. Our worship is an integral part of  
43 equipping us to participate in God's mission.  
44

1 9. **UNITY and RESPECT** We promote the unity of all Christians as part of our witness, and we  
2 respect the people of other faith traditions as we share the hope that is within us.

3  
4 10. **FULFILLMENT** We eagerly await Christ's return and anticipate the final fulfillment of God's  
5 kingdom when people of every tribe, tongue, and nation gather in worship around the throne  
6 of God and of the Lamb.

7  
8  
9 **Addendum to the Future Directions Task Force**  
10 **May 2016**

11  
12 Perhaps the most intense response of all those received or made public at area church  
13 meetings was to the proposition "...we envision a shift toward more local and domestic  
14 witness/service, and toward more collaborative, shorter term international assignments in  
15 response to invitations from global partners" (p. 15, the Backstory).

16  
17 Relatively few comments were made in relation to domestic witness; and, of those that were,  
18 they were affirming. But, on international witness, many voices argued in particular the  
19 importance of long-term over short-term arrangements (some equating 'short term' with  
20 'tourism'), the importance of national leadership in partnership development and in evaluating  
21 and screening invitations for mission partnerships, and questioning the idea of congregations  
22 becoming involved in a 'confirmation of call.' Over time, the tones on the latter became more  
23 muted to speak in terms of congregations needing to become more aware and engaged.

24  
25 Such strong affirmation for international witness is a testament to the work that's been done,  
26 and speaks to the international connectedness many within the church feel with our  
27 international church family. International witness manifests a commitment of the churches of  
28 Canada to the world-wide body of Christ.

29  
30 The Task Force affirms the conversation the report has instigated, and suggests a more formal  
31 conversation should take place. In such a conversation questions like the following could be  
32 considered:

- 33  
34
- 35 • How do we best relate to the national churches of other countries?
  - 36 • What is the focus or emphasis of our international contribution?
  - 37 • What are the pros and cons of short-term and longer-term assignments?
  - 38 • Where does domestic witness fit into this picture?
  - 39 • How do congregations most effectively engage in international witness?

40 Recommendation: That a formal conversation be undertaken (e.g. via a working group,  
41 conference, or other means) to review our future vision and strategy for international  
42 relationships and witness, addressing the above and related questions, to be completed by  
43 December 2017.





- 1 • *A refocus on the local congregation as a central place for worship, mission, and ministry.*
- 2 • *Framing the purpose of the Regional Churches as providing supports to congregations as*
- 3 *they live out their mission locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.*
- 4 • *Framing the National Church as a place where our sense of peoplehood and identity is*
- 5 *strengthened, and as a place where the Regional Churches define national priorities and*
- 6 *give life to them.*
- 7 • ***Understanding the Global Church as a place where Anabaptist identity is nurtured, and***
- 8 ***where we carry relationships of learning and support with Anabaptist brothers and***
- 9 ***sisters in other countries around the world.***

10  
11 I understand that MC Canada has set up numerous working groups to speak to the various  
12 interest groups that are part of MC Canada. It is interesting to us to see that although there is a  
13 Witness working group, there is no working group looking at international relationships outside  
14 of or beyond Witness. MC Canada is a member of MWC, and as a member has both  
15 opportunities and responsibilities to engage in many different ways with other MWC members  
16 around the world. The mission and service work done by Witness is important, but that should  
17 not be the only tool for MC Canada to engage with the world beyond the Canadian border.  
18 MWC provides the only international Anabaptist space where national member churches  
19 gather as equals and as peers. Without a working group looking at the future of international  
20 relationships other than Witness, there is no spokesperson or advocate for engagement with  
21 MWC and the global church in this restructuring process.

22  
23 I would like to gently remind you that that relating to MWC is one of the important tasks to be  
24 named, and carried out somewhere, as you think about national roles and regional roles in MC  
25 Canada. Yes, there are financial responsibilities that come along with this task. There are also  
26 many opportunities to engage with brothers and sisters around the world other than simply  
27 attending the General Council gathering every three years, such as participating with the  
28 commissions, networks, prayer network and special global celebrations such as World  
29 Fellowship Sunday. I attach two documents that might help to give you some perspective on  
30 this: the “Mutual Expectations” document that Lynn Roth as MWC North American  
31 representative attempts to work on with every national member church, and the Fair Share  
32 membership fees assessment for MC Canada. Updates were recently sent to Willard Metzger.

33  
34 MWC provides opportunities to engage in the world beyond Canada. These opportunities look  
35 very different from Witness, and it takes an intentional cultural shift to engage in these  
36 relationships. They are not programmatic in nature, but are opportunities to engage  
37 meaningfully in an interdependent way with brothers and sisters around the world. All of the  
38 nine MWC member churches in North America invest heavily in mission beyond Canada, and  
39 that seems to be their primary tool for engagement with the world outside Canada. I hope to  
40 share a similar letter (or concern) with the leaders of these North American member churches  
41 and with the mission leaders in the days ahead.

42  
43 We sometimes wonder what it might look like if every one of those national member churches  
44 were to invest at least 10% of their mission budgets in the global church through MWC, as a

1 way of working together with brothers and sisters around the world on global shared priorities.  
2 This is just an idea at this point, but we hope it gives you pause to reflect on how MC Canada  
3 invests not only its financial resources but its energy and relationships with the global church  
4 through the global church structures, in addition to investing in MC Canada's own structures in  
5 Witness.

6  
7 As MC Canada sets its priorities for the roles of the national church, regional church, and local  
8 congregation, we ask you to be intentional about framing MC Canada as a member of MWC,  
9 and naming relationships with the global church through MWC as one of the important  
10 priorities that needs to find a home.

11  
12 In Christ,  
13 César García General Secretary

14  
15 Cc:  
16 Lynn Roth, North America Regional Representative for MWC  
17 Arli Klassen, Chief Development Officer and Regional Representatives  
18 Coordinator Keith Regehr, MC Canada Transition Coordinator

19