

February 6, 2019

Dear Mennonite Church Saskatchewan,

During this past year, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan has focused around the theme ***Deepening our Walk with Christ*** in the hope of increasing our openness to encounters with God's presence in our lives. This theme grew out of an awareness that if we desire to live well in this day of great turmoil and uncertainty, we need to come back to the One who calms the storm and brings us peace. To help us deepen our trust in Christ, we were encouraged to take up the daily and weekly practices of sabbath keeping, scripture reading, prayer, sitting in silence, worship and reflection. Nothing overly new here! Yet, in our frenzied lives, not only can these practices help us keep our heads above water in shifting seas, but by deepening our awareness of God's presence, we can navigate these seas with trust and confidence.

This coming year, we continue to build upon this theme. While it can be tempting to "individualize" our spirituality and focus only on "Jesus and me," in the hope of regrounding ourselves in our core Anabaptist/Mennonite commitments, we are being invited to ***Deepen our Walk with Each Other***. In many ways, this should not come as a surprise. When Jesus is asked about the greatest commandment, he responded, "Love God with all your heart, soul and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself." When the prophet is asked, "what does the Lord require of you," the response is "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." Throughout the biblical story, there is a direct correlation between our love of God and our call to love each other.

Palmer Becker, in his book ***Anabaptist Essentials***, boldly claims that "Community is the Centre of our Lives." And while we all yearn to belong to an authentic Christian community, if we're honest with ourselves, life together is not always easy to do. When Matthew records Jesus saying "whenever 2 or 3 are gathered, I will be present," I sometimes wonder if he misheard and Jesus actually said, "whenever there are two or three gathered, there will be conflict," because as we know, from the earliest days of the church community, there has been conflict, disagreement and schisms. Spoiler alert: These will not disappear any time soon. The question before us isn't whether we will have disagreements or challenges with one another, but rather how will we live, and love one another, when we do?

To deepen our walk with Christ *is* to deepen our walk with each other--locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. We cannot separate these. Therefore, by the grace of God and for the sake of God's beloved world, let us continue walking this path together.

Yours in Christ,



Ryan Siemens
Executive Minister
Mennonite Church Saskatchewan