

May 10, 2018

Dear Mennonite Church Saskatchewan,

Just over two months ago, 130 of us gathered in Swift Current for our Annual Delegate Sessions to worship together, eat together, discuss our work and life together, and simply be together. Betty Pries, our guest preacher and facilitator, reflected on our year long journey, *Refresh, Refocus, Renew*, and concluded that MC Sask is being called to pursue the following themes over the next three years; *Deepening our Walk with Christ; Deepening our Walk with Each Other; Deepening our Walk with our Neighbours.*

This call to deepen our walk with Christ is an invitation for us to increase our awareness of God's presence in our lives and to reawaken Jesus' call to follow him. To quote from the *RRR* Report, "This focus reflects our deep gladness as a church; it also speaks directly into the world's deep longing – the desire for meaning, purpose, and belonging is often expressed as a longing for a center, for inner quiet, for living in a world with meaning, where we are not alone and where there is 'something' out there that is bigger than us."

As Mennonites, we have often stressed the importance of discipleship, of doing good works of justice and righteousness in the name of Jesus. This is a good thing! However, good works detached from the center can leave us exhausted and spent, or worse yet, misguided and judgmental. With all that needs "fixing" in the world, we can easily become overwhelmed by all the good works that must be done. However, I am not convinced that "doing good works" is the starting point of faith, but rather the fruit of it. Jesus' own life models this "centered" spirituality. The gospels often tell about how Jesus slips away from the crowds, and from his work, to pray. This getting away to pray is not escapism, but rather a centering and re-centering, a coming back to the Source of his life and ministry, which in turn allows him to go back into the world.

In John 15, Jesus says to his disciples, "Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me." In this first year, we are being invited to abide, to remain, to deepen our walk with Christ. At the end of the *RRR* report there are two lists of practices that we can do to assist in deepening this walk. Some of these activities require more energy and intention, others less. Many of our congregations have started to engage these practices and we would love to hear and share what you are doing. MC Sask has created a "Deepening our Walk with Christ" page on our website, where you can find resources from CommonWord, an invitation by the Spirituality Resource Team, and the *Refresh, Refocus, Renew* final report. If you would like to share what you are doing as a resource for others, please email the resource to mcsask@mcsask.ca and we will gladly post them.

Eugene Peterson writes, "Jesus is the way, and the way is Jesus." May Christ's presence be ever near to you as you continue to travel the way.

Yours in Christ,

Ryan Siemens