

MC Sask Ministries Commission Minutes
July 28, 2020
6:30 pm
Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon

Present: Claire Ewert Fisher (Chair), Mark Bigland-Pritchard, Nancy Epp, Ron Nickel, Eric Olfert,

Present via Zoom: Sharon Schultz (Council Rep.) and Josh Wallace (Church Planter and interim MC Sask Church Engagement staff)

Visitor: Terry Stefaniuk (MC Sask Council Chair)

Excused: Jeanette Hanson

1. Opening Reflections:

- Claire shared some thoughts from Richard Rohr.
- He says God does not call us to be nice; instead God calls us to be Honest and Just, in Love and Respect. We need to look for win-win options.
- We need contemplation to achieve this mentality. True contemplation is the most subversive activity. If we expose ourselves to God, God changes us.
- Claire opened in prayer.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes of our 20-01-21 and 20-04-30 meetings:

- **January minutes:**

- Claire recommends *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

- **Church Planting Status** – A small group of about 8 is meeting online. It is hard to access the target church demographic given COVID19 restrictions. The group meeting is giving good encouragement and worship. Josh asks for ongoing prayer for this effort.

Two Goals for coming weeks:

- Moving to Erindale on Sunday.
- Planning an in-person gathering in the next weeks.
- The New Leaf network will be offering coaching training for leaders in the new church era.
- Heather is still leading the Reconciliation Podcast.
- **May minutes:**
- There was only one response to the invitation to submit experiences of being church during the pandemic. Energy seems to have shifted to exploring what reopening looks like.
- Both the **20-01-21 and 20-04-30 minutes were approved.**

3. Ongoing Work:

a) Walking the Path – Nancy and Eric

i. Black Lives Matter/Police Killings/Racism:

- We/I own some of the responsibility for deciding how to respond to that which makes us uncomfortable.
- Nancy's daughter, Heather, has compiled a list of organizations who can effectively respond to mental health issues. These should be a first priority before calling the

police. Where could such a list be useful? Nancy will share the list with us. It is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/heather.epp2/posts/10159918401298146>

- Mental Health Association has a Mental Health First Aid course.
- Becky Sasakamoose Cuffner is the Cultural Diversity and Race Relations consultant for the City of Saskatoon. She recently did an excellent presentation for Reconciliation Saskatoon, which is to be available in video form.
- Many Mennonites are working on these things. Gabby Martens in Winnipeg is a good resource. **Jake Buhler will work at gathering a list** of things already under way.

ii. Support Federal Legislation to meet UNDRIP Commitments (former Bill C262):

- The Liberal government had expressed commitment to moving on this, but the the minority government, the Wet'suwet'en crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic have pushed it far to the back. The goal is to try to get it tabled by the end of the year.
- Steve will send out a template letter that churches are being asked to make into their own and sign on to.
- Ottawa needs a bunch of white groups to support this.

iii. Follow-up on sacred sites conversation:

- Those for whom the Hershel area sites were sacred have long since been pushed out of the area, but the sites and others still deserve recognition.
- Research continues, often hampered by landowner resistance. How can we get farmers/ranchers on side?
- As of last week, permission has been given to research sites in the PFRA pastures. Dave Neufeld is helping with documentation.
- The objective is to get a more complete record of sites and a commitment to conservation. Thousands of sites have already been destroyed by cultivation.
- Response from the original peoples has been enthusiastic.
- How can we do effective education/promotion in our churches? How do we work at 'changing the story' as Harry Lafond so helpfully suggested?
- So many of our people have no idea about treaty.

iv. Colten Bushie/Gerald Stanley story:

- Tasha Hubbard has done an excellent documentary on this story.
- How could we engage our community in a study and reflection of these painful events?

v. Treaty Walk, a new film from Brad Leitch:

- A documentary about folks raising awareness around Treaties, including unionists and Mennonites walking together... there are 2 free online versions... the short one was made for the Union (which paid for the production)... the longer one includes a wider range of voices <https://www.treatywalk.com/treatywalkajourneyforcommonground>

vi. Equipping Series via Youtube and/or Zoom?

- Walking the Path suggests that some of the above five areas could be addressed by a four-week series of pre-recorded input with a Zoom based discussion option.
- Walking the Path would be willing to help set up the input videos together.

b) International Witness; - Jeanette

- Jeanette is in Edmonton, where her husband Todd has just undergone surgery. She was hoping to be part of our meeting via Zoom, but that obviously wasn't possible.

4. Agenda Additions:

a) Virtual Equipping Proposal:

- There was follow-up conversation of the idea presented by Walking the Path. It was understood that all of this would need to be forwarded to the Equipping Committee. Josh will see to that.
- Besides a weekly virtual equipping during an Equipping month, this could be organised as a monthly Equipping event.
- It would be best to start with those topics where we already have strong resources to share.

b) Dreaming the Church;

- Ministries planned a virtual Town Hall on June 16 to talk about how the Spirit is calling us forward in this time of pandemic. It was seen to have been a good idea, well done. Thanks, Josh, for all your hard work.
- There was a strong sense that Jesus nourishes us through times like this.
- We are shifting from 'snow day' thinking (short term disruption) to a 'marathon' mentality (planning/operating for the long term).
- We are both missing traditional church services and excited about new possibilities.
- There are surprising Connections and Re-connections. Fear was not mentioned much.
- Three themes identified by Josh:
 1. We have growing opportunity for consistent discipleship inside and beyond congregational life. > **How do we equip congregations for this kind of "distributed discipleship"?**
 2. Reopening decisions are a source of conflict. > **How do we equip congregations for navigating this conflict?**
 3. We are called to hopeful solidarity/joining in the midst of risk and liminality. > **How do we equip congregations to nurture and act in hope?**
- Can Ministries pick one of these areas and focus energy on them?
- There was a sense that the conflict over best ways forward seems to be resolving itself.
- We could develop a worship series on Discipleship, with a focus on distributed or scattered discipleship.
- We need to continue to look for direction, for next steps.
- All of us are charged with thinking further about this.

c) Creation Care:

- Mark is still working towards a table-talk event as a next step.
- Our effort needs a name. Are we OK with 'For the Love of Creation', the name of the national group working on this?
- The original plan turned out to be a three-hour conversation. This needs to be split up and reduced to an hour at a time.
- Mark had still hoped to run people through the three-hour session in late August to test the concept.
- Mark will send out a revised framework for our comments and response. He is still hoping to do a run-through in late August.

4. A Word from/to MC Sask:

- The funding question regarding the church planting effort has been sorted out.
- The ideas for virtual Equipping are useful.
- Creation Care is good.
- We seem to have a recurring structural stumbling point, which usually expresses itself in budget terms. Ministries regularly ends up feeling inadequately consulted in budget changes made by Council.
- Structurally the current arrangement runs the danger of creating silos who are not sufficiently aware of each other and their work. Cooperation, coordination and creating coherence are very important. Fall Leadership Assembly and ADS are basically the only place this presently happens. Minutes from each of the Committees/Commissions used to be shared broadly, but no longer.

5. Next Meeting:

- We will meet **Tuesday, September 22 @ 6:30 pm at Mount Royal Mennonite Church.**

Recorded by Eric Olfert
Drafted August 1/2020