

Chapter 4

Synergies in Mission: The MWC/MCC Relationship

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[A]s the coming years give us opportunity, help us to help one another in all the good ministries of the gospel, of compassion and aid. . . .

—Harold S. Bender, Closing Prayer, MWC Assembly, Kitchener, Ontario, 1962.

The Mennonite and Brethren in Christ story must be seen within the wider context. The present size, geographical dispersion, and multicultural complexion of the groups that comprise MWC are a direct result of the modern missionary movement.

—Wilbert Shenk, "Highlights in Mennonite History 1945-1990," *MWC Handbook*, ed. Diether Goetz Lichdi (Carol Stream, Ill., 1990), 127-37.

MCC has long been committed to strengthening the ties among worldwide Mennonite and BIC conferences and congregations. MCC program has been designed to nurture a strong sense of mutuality and interdependence between the North American churches and Mennonite and BIC sisters and brothers in other continents.

—John A. Lapp, MCC Executive Committee minutes, Dec. 9-10, 1994.

The MCC/MWC friendship—incarnated in sharing counsel, resources, people, and structures, is, we believe, both service to and blessings for the global family of faith.

—Bedru Hussein and Larry Miller, MCC Executive Committee minutes, March 30, 1998.

A recent Mennonite World Conference (MWC) press release announced the good news that the Vietnam Mennonite Church (VMC) had received full legal status.¹ This development allows the church to own real estate, establish a Bible Institute for training leaders, develop relationships with other denominations, and serve as an official partner with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in relief and development work. The government deputy director of the National Religious Affairs Committee noted the long-term involvement of Mennonites in Vietnam, beginning with MCC (1954) and Eastern Mennonite Mission (1957). MWC sent a *Koinonia* Delegation to Vietnam representing five continents to celebrate the church's formal recognition by the government; in his words to the VMC, MWC General Secretary Larry Miller, noting the gathered witnesses from around the globe, stressed: "These are the most important gifts we bring to you, ourselves as an incarnation of communion with you in the global body of Jesus Christ."

Given the turbulent history of Vietnam and the long struggle of the VMC to gain public status, the government's recognition of the church represented a momentous occasion. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) had played its own role in the "incarnational gift" of sharing with the Vietnamese church. MCC's incarnational gift included providing personnel to Vietnam during the "American War" (with several workers remaining in the country after the collapse of South Vietnam), being the first North American non-governmental organization (NGO) invited back into the country after the end of the war, and placing a total of 150 service workers in the country between 1954 and 2008.²

The case of Vietnam is but one illustration of an ongoing synergy in mission between MWC and MCC. Indeed, it is my thesis that the two organizations are made of the same cloth—the fabric of Anabaptist peoplehood—and have had an increasing impact on each other and the mission of the church over the past decades.

The prayer delivered by H. S. Bender at the closing of the Kitchener, Ontario, MWC Assembly in 1962 was described by Bender's biographer Al Keim as "almost certainly the best remembered Mennonite prayer ever uttered." That prayer begins to lay the foundation

for the notion of "mission" as used in this paper.³ To borrow a phrase from the late South African missiologist David Bosch, I contend that mission is not ours, but God's—the *missio Dei*. Mission consists of alerting the world to God's reign. Mission is not what we do but what God is doing through us. Mission thus requires that we bear witness both for and against: for salvation, healing, liberation, reconciliation, and justice; against unbelief, exploitation, discrimination, and violence.⁴ Whenever, wherever, however we are involved in such witness, we are involved in mission.

As I explore the missiological relationship of MWC and MCC, I assume expansive definitions of both organizations. MWC, for example, refers not only to the specifically organized efforts of the assemblies, governance bodies, and staff of MWC, but also to the denominations and their congregations that together form this global faith family. MCC, meanwhile, certainly consists of programs and personnel (both paid staff and volunteers) but also includes the governance bodies, denominations, and congregations of its supporting North American constituency. The MWC-MCC "relationship" being charted here (past, present, future) suggests a continuum across counsel, coordination, cooperation, collaboration, and, potentially, consolidation.

Both MWC and MCC have been around for almost one-fifth of Anabaptism's five century history. What follows is a brief and limited outline of the MWC-MCC relationship, gathered from the minutes and other documents of the two organizations, related literature, and twenty-one interviews with governance and staff personnel of the two organizations.⁵ Over the ensuing pages, I will outline three key components of the MWC-MCC relationship: 1) "relationship builders," i.e. factors which have contributed to strengthened inter-connection between MCC and MWC; 2) "relationship complexities, criticisms, constraints, and concerns"; and finally 3) potential future relationship considerations.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDERS

Converging Purposes

Multiple elements have contributed to a movement toward closer connection between MCC and MWC over the decades. For example, the defined purposes of each organization, as articulated in their statements of identity, vision, and mission, have played key roles in the relationship between them. For example, MWC's identity,

vision, and mission statements have placed a strong emphasis on inter-Mennonite solidarity. The first gathering of the MWC in 1925, the four-hundredth anniversary of Mennonite beginnings, was "mainly concerned with celebration of the Anabaptist heritage, the life of Menno Simons, and relief."⁶ From this initial inclusion of "relief" in the MWC's mandate, MWC participants have pushed for the conference to be more than a gathering (or Assembly, in current terminology). The 1967 MWC constitution spelled out three purposes: fellowship (bringing people together), communication (burden-bearing with other faith communities), and facilitation (promoting vision, mutuality, and theological reflection) to develop "faith and hope, and to stimulate and aid the church in its ministry to the world."⁷ In 1985 Paul Kraybill asked the rhetorical question of MWC members: "What holds us together?" His answer: "A strong tradition of caring, community and mutual help; themes of peace, reconciliation, love and discipleship in daily life; our witness, not so much the words we believe, but the life of peace we live."⁸ The current "communion/community" vision adopted in 2006 includes fellowship, worship, service, and witness as intertwined dimensions of building a community of faith, nurturing solidarity, and relating to other Christian communities. MWC's increasing sense of identity and self-confidence have played a "significant role in the impact in mission of [the Anabaptist] faith community."⁹

The 1937 MCC Articles of Incorporation, meanwhile, articulated how MCC had already functioned over the previous seventeen years, namely, "as a charitable organization in the relief of human suffering and distress and in aiding, rehabilitating and reestablishing Mennonite and other [emphasis added] refugees, and generally to support, conduct, maintain and administer relief and kindred charitable projects."¹⁰ The 1976 "Principles that Guide Our Mission," subsequently updated every several years, spelled out the importance of embodying the "values and insights of this faith community," being in "continual consultation with constituent bodies . . . and Mennonite World Conference," learning "from the people with whom we work," and giving "priority to programs with Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches and missions."¹¹ The current two-year global consultation process (New Wine, New Wineskins) with MCC partners asked anew how MCC's mission should be shaped and how best to organize for this purpose. From its inception, then, a key component of MCC's mission has been inter-Mennonite collaboration and assistance.

Programmatic Intersections

Orie Miller enunciated the twin foci of MCC's mission: first, MCC promotes mutual sharing within the Christian community (household of faith, Galatians 6:10); and second, through such sharing "light, life, and healing can flow to all of needy mankind."¹² Early observers of MCC's efforts acknowledged that "in all areas where Mennonite churches were located, especially in Europe, the MCC work led to close and fruitful interaction between North American and local Mennonites."¹³ Mennonite unity came to be realized experientially through such interaction.¹⁴ After World War II, the presence of service workers in Europe

did more than provide emergency food and rehabilitation. They became the sinews for reconnecting churches that had been in opposing countries during the war. Through these workers the slow rebuilding of trust and mutual regard so necessary for the establishment of MWC took place.¹⁵

On the occasion of MCC's fiftieth anniversary, scholars noted the support MCC had given to various Mennonite church efforts globally, including the establishment of theological schools in Uruguay, Switzerland, and Indonesia, a variety of publishing efforts, exchanges for young people, and renewed inter-Mennonite interaction on issues of peace.¹⁶ Moreover, for several decades of its early history (from the 1920 until the 1950s) MCC focused significant program resources and efforts on assisting the immigration of Mennonite refugees from the Soviet Union and Europe to North and South America.¹⁷

MCC's response to those both inside and outside the household of faith has helped to redefine Mennonites as a people who cooperatively pursue social justice around the world.¹⁸ Of 497 MCC project partners in 2000, 67 were Mennonite or Brethren in Christ (MBIC) organizations.¹⁹ The 2004 statistics indicate that in about half of the countries in which MCC operated one could find MBIC congregations. While serving as president of MWC, Million Belete thanked MCC for helping the faith community get to know one another regionally and worldwide.²⁰ For its 2008-2009 programs MCC partnered in 99 projects with the Anabaptist family, with financial resources totaling US\$4.4 million.²¹

The MWC assemblies have provided fertile ground for a relationship with MCC. MCC jointly sponsored the Danzig 1930 gathering, together with Dutch and German Mennonite organizations, a gathering focused exclusively on the theme of relief efforts, past and

present.²² MWC requested that MCC take the initiative and invite the MWC to meet in the USA in 1948 and to accept the responsibility to organize, implement, and collect funds for the assembly. MCC organized all aspects of the assembly program, sent out invitations to international guests (and then toured them through the constituency afterwards), and oversaw all logistical details in Goshen, Indiana, and North Newton, Kansas, the two assembly venues.²³ The assembly examined the plight of refugees after the war during the Goshen part of its meetings and attempted to reconcile the choices made by Mennonites in different countries in the course of its North Newton gathering.²⁴ This two-stage assembly represented the "largest single undertaking of the MCC in international Mennonite relations."²⁵

MCC played significant roles in later MWC assemblies. For example, during the 1997 assembly in Calcutta, MCC India (MCCI) seconded Margaret Devadason, its administrator, to MWC already part-time in 1994, and later full time, while remaining on the MCC payroll. Most (national and expatriate) staff of MCCI actively participated in the assembly planning, with managers being given permission to spend up to ten percent of their time on the assembly.²⁶ Indeed, one of the original reasons for the MWC assembly being held in Calcutta was the presence of the MCCI office, which would later be the venue for the early preparation for the assembly.²⁷ Most recently, MCC's decades-old role in bringing Mennonite refugees to Paraguay in the 1930s into the 1950s, as well as the agriculture and road-building programs that followed, helped set the stage for the 2009 assembly in Asuncion.

THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS IN NURTURING THE MWC-MCC BOND

Given the broad definition of MWC and MCC offered above, it should be clear that the MWC-MCC relationship consists of the people who make up the community of faith who nurture the relationship. But this broad, all-encompassing category, today numbering in the millions, can be broken down into three progressively narrower groupings. The first sub-group consists of the hundreds of thousands of governance board members, paid staffers, service workers, and informal volunteers who have participated in and shaped the activities of the two organizations. The second grouping consists of key people who have given leadership in both of the organizations: in MCC's first six decades, H. S. Bender, C. J. Dyck, Ray Schlichting, and Robert Krieder actively served in MWC alongside MCC; over the past two

decades, Larry Miller, Reg Toews, Nancy Heisey, Kathryn Good, John A. Lapp, Paul Quiring, Tim Lind, Doris Dube, Liesa Unger, Herman Bontrager, Naomi Unger, Judy Zimmerman Herr, Paulus Widjaja, Cynthia Peacock, Bert Lobe, and Ray and Margaret Brubacher undertook projects for both organizations as well. At his retirement from the MWC treasurer position, longtime MCC leader Reg Toews quipped, "MWC is the hospital rehabilitation of MCCers."²⁸

But one person, more than any other, personifies the MWC-MCC relationship. While Christian Neff is often viewed as the father of MWC, MWC's current organizational shape has arguably "been shaped more by Harold S. Bender than by any other person."²⁹ Bender rallied the community of faith behind his "Anabaptist Vision" as the theological vision for Mennonite organization in the twentieth century. During his initial doctoral study in theology at the University of Heidelberg, Bender spent much of his time in service to Mennonite refugees from Russia temporarily sheltered in Germany and organized part of the migration to South America, personally designating Paraguay as the country of choice.³⁰

MCC had sent Bender to the 1930 Danzig assembly as its representative; Bender brought back a report that gathered support in North America for the refugees. He subsequently became Assistant secretary of MCC ("assistant" because at that time the staff leadership position was called "executive secretary") in 1931 until his death in 1962. Similarly, Bender served as secretary and then as president of the MCC Peace Committee from 1939 to 1962 and as president of the MWC from 1952 to 1962. Between 1945 to 1961 he spent thirteen summers (of the seventeen) in Europe working on MCC and MWC agendas; in 1947-8 he spent a whole year in Europe, encouraging MCC personnel, trying to deepen the spiritual life of churches, and promoting nonresistance.

MCC Support for MWC Program

MCC has provided significant financial support to MWC's programs over the past decades, beyond the funding of the 1948 assembly noted above. Beginning in 1952 MCC has assisted with travel funds for representatives from the Global South (initially for Indonesia, then Africa and South America). On occasion MCC has extended loans to MWC. MCC supported the International Mennonite Peace Committee, which later became the Peace Council of MWC, with a regular grant from 1972 until 2007. In 1995, to mark its seventy-fifth anniversary, MCC presented a \$600,000 "jubilee" gift to MWC with no strings attached so that MWC could establish a Church Sharing

Fund to support denominational and congregational programs around the world.

Between 2001 and 2008 MCC designated just over US\$1 million to a wide variety of MWC programs and initiatives, including MWC's General Fund, Travel Fund, the YAMEN! youth exchange program, Global Missions Fellowship, Global History Project, International Planning Commission, Zimbabwe Koinonia delegation, Service Consultation, Congo Forum, and the Global Youth Summit.³¹ In addition to the financial support, MCC and MWC have collaborated on joint program development, including the Jerusalem Seminar in 1999 in which Mennonite leaders from Africa visited Holy Land sites and MCC projects in Palestine, a Service Consultation in 2006, and an internship program for young Mennonite leaders at the MCC United Nations Office in New York.

While MWC has deeply appreciated MCC support, this assistance has not been without its critics, with some within MWC worrying that the amount of MCC's assistance threatens to overwhelm MWC and render it dependent on MCC support, some concerned that increased levels of support to MWC could move MCC away from broader ecumenical and interfaith partnerships, and some distressed that projects implemented by MWC are often administered outside of MCC's program planning system for international programs and are thus not held to the same standards of accountability and scrutiny as other projects.

STEPS TOWARD CLOSER COLLABORATION

The program support and interaction outlined above, indeed the entire MWC-MCC relationship journey, has occurred in a context of intentional steps taken by both organizations to foster the relationship. Already in 1963 at the MWC General Council A. J. Metzler suggested that MCC should be represented at such meetings.³² In 1964, MWC General Secretary C. J. Dyck, noting that H. S. Bender was no longer there to represent both bodies, wondered whether there could be an exchange of minutes and attendance at each other's important meetings.³³ At the Presidium meetings of 1972 the question was raised whether MCC (and other organizations) should be a member of MWC to increase mutual exchange.

The period between 1978 and 1990, a time of governance and staff leadership changes within both MCC and MWC, proved pivotal for intensifying the intentionality of the relationship. These years also witnessed probing challenges presented from and to different parts

of the global faith family. At the Wichita Assembly (1978) the major speakers from the Global South raised hard questions about poverty and injustice in their settings, stressing how North Americans were complicit with unjust economic and political structures.³⁴ Mennonite leaders from the Global South called on MCC not only to continue its programming responses to economic injustice but also to highlight global economic and political issues to its constituency through MCC's annual meeting.

One particular MWC event also pushed MCC in the direction of more activist peacebuilding initiatives. At the MWC Strasbourg assembly in 1984, Ronald Sider issued his ringing challenge for Mennonites to engage in direct nonviolent intervention in areas of conflict. The speech energized North American denominations, their mission agencies, and educational institutions, with MCC standing at the forefront of a consultative process which eventually led to the formation of Christian Peacemaker Teams.

In 1990 four Mennonite mission boards and MCC jointly published the Mennonite International Study Project Final Report. The report, penned by Nancy Heisey and Paul Longacre following a two-year project of interviewing church leaders around the world, called for increased cooperation among overseas mission programs, stressed the need for consultation by North American Mennonite agencies with non-North American churches both in the design and implementation of these mission programs, and urged MWC to cooperate in implementing this process. MWC, they said, "had made it possible for small and struggling churches around the world to realize that they belong to something bigger than themselves. It has promoted significant discussion on mutuality in mission and the nature of the peace witness."³⁵

MCC Executive Secretary John A. Lapp took the report seriously, in keeping with his earlier call for more effectively receiving counsel from the global MWC community and developing "functional structures for international work that emphasize the holism of the gospel mandate."³⁶ What was called for was bringing "*Diakonia* and *Koinonia*" together and dealing with the "credibility gap between being North American and functioning internationally."

Two study papers from 1993 had significant impact on the direction MCC and MWC would go in relationship to one another. MWC president Mesach Krisetya's paper "From Dependence to Interdependence in the Global Church," presented that year at the MWC General Council meeting in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, called for changes in the way mission agencies operate and urged MWC to become "a

center for international mission, a mediator or even 'glue' for church to church or conference to conference relations, and at the same time being an initiator for international mission."³⁷ The MCC Africa department had earlier that year held a consultation in Nairobi, Kenya, to seek counsel from African colleagues. Their report concluded that the primary focus for programs should be

breaking down stereotypes [to] help . . . level the inter-people playing field . . . the old "fixing/saving/meeting human need" paradigm would be subsumed and transformed under a larger paradigm of building global community and particularly global church community.³⁸

A statement of "Mutual Expectations," the first documented MWC-MCC agreement, was formulated by then-MCCer (and later MWCer) Ray Brubacher in 1995 and received its final approval at the MWC General Council in Calcutta in 1997. In this one-page, open-ended document, MCC offered to share its global infrastructure of staff, facilities, relationships, and institutional memory, while MWC offered its global accountability structure to which MCC could bring major questions for counsel. While MWC approved the document, the comments and questions raised by the MWC Executive Committee were instructive: Could MCC mobilize its constituency in the direction of closer collaboration with MWC? Should MCC be more accountable to the global church in how it conducts its programs and spends its money? If MCC and MWC were to have differing priorities as to how resources should be used, as would sometimes inevitably be the case, how would such differences be resolved? Should MCC internationalize its board? Could MCC help MWC raise its profile among Mennonites in Canada and the United States?³⁹

These questions raised by the MWC Executive Committee in 1997 reflected issues with which MCC has been grappling over the past few decades, issues which can be grouped under the broad rubric of "internationalization." Brubacher had prepared a seminal paper on that topic, in which he outlined MCC's struggle in dealing with this issue. In that paper Brubacher concluded,

While the presence of international persons in our midst can be very valuable, the primary focus should not be to bring international people into our structures, but to make our structures more open to direction by local groupings in places where we work. Our task is to acknowledge our "North Americanness" and with integrity relate to overseas partners as brothers and sisters who are one with us in Christ.⁴⁰

The Global Anabaptist Mission Consultation (GAMCO) convened in Guatemala in conjunction with the MWC General Council meeting in 2000 sought to tackle the "internationalization" agenda facing MCC (as well as North American mission boards). An introductory comment suggested that this meeting is as important as the early days of the radical reformation." Its concluding statement called for MWC to establish a

permanent, facilitated global mission council to provide forums for missiological discernment and training, to help the exchange of resources for use in new and ongoing mission efforts . . . and for existing mission agencies . . . of all MWC member churches to commit a fair share of their budgets for the implementation of the MWC mission council. . . .⁴¹

At the end, some participants from the Global South expressed frustration that churches and church agencies in the Global North were still trying to control the mission agenda and forward progress was inhibited by finely nuanced questions of structure and procedure.

A formal review of the MWC-MCC relationship in 2000, mandated by both organizations, issued multiple recommendations for deepening and broadening the relationship. The recommendations included the following: that MWC initiate an International Planning Commission, supported financially by MCC, to project a five to ten year vision for MWC; that MCC and MWC prepare a renewed Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation (MOUC); that joint projects between the two organizations be expanded; that MCC advocate for MWC, including especially within its Mennonite constituency in Canada and the United States; that the two organizations continue to exchange participant observers at each other's meetings; and that, "when the time is right," MCC invite four MWC continental representatives to become part of MCC governance structures.⁴²

The two organizations approved a new MOUC in 2002. Even with the approval of the new MOUC, however, MWC concluded that it was not appropriate to appoint MWC members to the MCC governance bodies: "to appoint our constituents to MCC programs is healthy. To have MCC empower our constituents to work within our own program is healthier."⁴³

In 2004 MCC and MWC established a joint "Forum for Counsel and Accountability" which mandated an annual meeting of three senior staff and governance representatives from each organization. Two years later, MWC and MCC convened a joint "Service Consultation" in conjunction with MWC's General Council with the purpose

of exploring the biblical foundation for service, documenting what programmatic cooperation the two organizations had already undertaken, and formulating future steps of collaboration. The Service Consultation concluded by calling for: sharing gifts both within and outside of the family of faith; a holistic understanding of *diakonia*; an increase in MCC's relationships with Anabaptist churches globally; and steps for greater involvement by global Anabaptist partners in MCC's decision-making processes.⁴⁴

These calls surfaced again in 2008 when the MWC Executive Committee hosted and participated in MCC's global summit in Manila for the MCC New Wine/New Wineskins appreciative inquiry process. Continued discernment about how MCC cooperates with MWC member churches and global Anabaptist service agencies has been a key element of the New Wine/New Wineskins process and figures to remain a high priority agenda item as MCC undergoes a process of structural transformation over the coming years.

RELATIONSHIP COMPLEXITIES, CRITICISM, CONSTRAINTS, AND CONCERNS

While the relationship builders outlined above have increased and intensified the relationship between the two organizations, this joint journey has been complex and constrained, with early and continued criticism and concerns about the relationship expressed at denominational, governance, and staff levels.

Denominational

From MCC's and MWC's earliest days some Mennonites have harbored suspicions of inter-Mennonite efforts. In some cases fears of "modernizing" dimensions of ecumenism fueled these suspicions. Other persons, meanwhile, questioned whether inter-Mennonite efforts were sufficiently "spiritual." At the 1948 MWC assembly, for example, MCC leaders Orié Miller and Harold Bender attended not as members of their denomination (the "Old" Mennonite Church, which had reservations about the type of ecumenical movement which MWC represented) but instead only as members of MCC.⁴⁵

Today, meanwhile, some MWC governance people question whether MCC's constituents in Canada and the United States are prepared to take the relationship with MWC seriously. At the same time, however, various Mennonite denominations have voiced concerns about MCC potentially overstepping its mandate with respect to Mennonite denominations in Canada and the United States in fur-

thering the MWC-MCC relationship. Accordingly, North American Mennonite leaders have expressed considerable caution about the potential blurring of the organizational identities of the two organizations: this concern was voiced at the 1964 MWC Executive Committee meeting as the worry that North American Mennonite churches would not approve of "mingling the spiritual dimensions of MWC and the material work of MCC."⁴⁶ Thus, for the past several decades, the default position has been to approve joint collaboration on particular projects but not structural mixing.⁴⁷

Governance

Some MWC and MCC governance voices have also cautioned against blurring organizational identities. One executive member of MCC summarized this concern: "There needs to be a clear recognition that we are two different bodies that work with a different mandate. MCC's mandate comes from a North American constituency, most of which does not understand the relationship."⁴⁸ Some would say that putting international voices on the governance bodies would be inefficient, counterproductive, and representative of a problematic tokenism.⁴⁹

MWC, for its part, has raised concerns about MCC's program priorities. Does MCC work enough with the church, in particular Mennonite churches? Why does MCC hire non-Christians?⁵⁰ Why is MCC helping Muslims, when "our countries are struggling with Islam?"⁵¹ At the same time, however, some in MWC have questioned whether MWC member churches really want to become involved in the ownership of MCC.⁵²

Program

Many MCC staff members have voiced concerns about a closer relationship with MWC. Would such a closer partnership restrict ecumenical and interfaith programming? Would programs become too narrowly focused or fall outside the areas of MCC priority? Might MCC overwhelm MWC and make it dependent upon MCC?⁵³ Is MWC too much invested in the outcome of the Wineskins process?

To be sure, working at program collaboratively or jointly is complex. During the 1980s, MCC and MWC struggled with the question of which agency should take the lead in programming in the then-USSR, Paraguay, and Indonesia.⁵⁴ Joint initiatives such as the International Peace Committee in earlier years and more recently the YAMEN! young adult exchange and the internship program at the MCC United Nations Office in New York are not easy to administer

when the goals of the two organizations are not congruent. The MCC planning mode, meanwhile, is experienced by some within MWC to short-change relationships, while some in MCC question whether many MWC member churches are committed to the rigorous program planning done by other MCC partner organizations and thus question whether it is a responsible use of MCC's resources to increase the amount and scope of partnerships with MWC member churches and church-related organizations.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The relationship between MWC and MCC once more stands at a pivotal point. Both organizations are engaged in direction-setting processes which will significantly shape their relationship. MWC is implementing the "Communion/Community" model that came out of the International Planning Commission. MCC is amid structural reorganization emerging from the New Wine/New Wineskins appreciative inquiry process. Given the flux within the two bodies, the MOUC governing their relationship which was due for review in 2009 has been pushed back to 2010.

Most, but not all, of the MCC and MWC workers whom I interviewed projected a move to a deeper level for the relationship, even as interviewees recognized that when structures are discussed, the conversations become more problematic. Many interviewees called for each organization to emphasize the importance of the other and called for both organizations to embrace structural change to enhance the mission of the church. Several indicated that MWC, for reasons of accountability, needed to be part of the MCC picture.

In Ethiopia in summer 2010, MWC convened a consultation of Anabaptist-Mennonite service agencies to discern possibilities for collaboration and joint action in the future. MCC agreed with the other agencies to work together to build a space for collaboration and information sharing under MWC auspices. As MWC and MCC change, they will need one another. Interviewees suggested that MWC's future depends on MCC's creativity in assisting MWC to change into a more dynamic and responsive body, while other interviewees claim that MCC needs MWC to move beyond an artificial separation of service and evangelism which sometimes characterizes MCC.

Interviewees raised many questions about how the MCC-MWC relationship will evolve. Questions for MCC included these: Is MWC a stakeholder, partner, a part-owner, or the owner of MCC? Will

MCC's future programmatic emphasis be on delivering more effective program or on making its agenda more credible to the global community? Will MCC try to become a more effective NGO or will it serve the church? Should the locus of MCC's program priority be the "household of faith" or the wider ecumenical, and even inter-faith, community? Or must these two dimensions of work stand in opposition to one another?

For MWC key questions include these: Will MWC's "Communion/Community" model be relational or programmatic in character? Will MWC member churches be able to develop organizational capacity in order faithfully and effectively to carry out diaconal ministries, be it through partnership with MCC or by other means? And for both organizations, the broad question remains open: Which constituency will decide these questions and by what mechanism?⁵⁵

The relationship options for MCC appear to range across a spectrum that would at one extreme minimize the relationship to MWC and at the other would maximize it. Within this spectrum, MCC could in the future a) become a parachurch organization (a decidedly regressive step in the relationship)⁵⁶; b) become a Participant Member of MWC (a course of action approved by the MCC board in 2007, but now under review); c) sit alongside other Anabaptist-Mennonite service agencies at an MWC-convened "Round Table" to share information and strategize together (perhaps using MWC's Diaconal and Mission Commissions now being formed as an institutional home for such strategizing and information-sharing); or d) become the service arm of the MWC mission. Where MCC ends up on this spectrum remains to be seen.

This sketch of the history of the MWC-MCC relationship has identified several key factors which have nurtured as well as constrained the relationship. Two foundational issues underpin this analysis of the MWC-MCC relationship. The first is identity. MCC was founded as, is currently, and should remain an arm of the church. While this is presently most visible (to its supporting constituency) in North America, it has always been thus internationally. While there are occasional exceptions (e.g. North Korea, in some ways in Iran, and sometimes as articulated and lived by individual workers), these do not obviate the rule.

If MCC is to continue to be an arm of the church, it is critical that MCC's relationship with and accountability to the global church (meaning, in the first instance, that part of the church that identifies most directly with the Anabaptist communion, and then secondarily but importantly, the wider church) be strengthened. Absent this clear

vision and identity, MCC would quickly move toward a parachurch institution at best and beg the question as to its very existence.

The second foundational issue is that of accountability or mandate. MCC has been clear over the years that its accountability in the first instance is to the supporting faith community. Over time this accountability has been increasingly shared with the people in the countries in which MCC does programming: MCC is not only accountable to constituents who give of their money, material goods, and time, but is also accountable to the organizations worldwide with which MCC works and to the program participants⁵⁷ in whose interest MCC and its partners operate. Often, as already noted, this more globalized form of accountability has been, and appropriately so, with and through the local expression of the Christian faith.

What form MCC accountability to Anabaptist-Mennonite churches worldwide can and should take requires careful thought and negotiation. An iterative or contingent process, i.e. a process in which a final blueprint need not be devised, only continued steps taken in the right direction, is perhaps a positive way to proceed. Requiring that all MCC country programs establish local Advisory Committees was an important step along the way toward this inter-Mennonite accountability. But there are further steps to be taken if the welfare of the global church and the efficacy and validity of MCC are to increase.

MCC has played a vital role in MWC from its origins. MCC has often provided the infrastructure for MWC's operational reality. But MCC also gains symbolically and in purpose, increasingly, from MWC's global churchly mandate. Thus it would be totally counterproductive, if even possible, to stop or even reverse this growing relationship. The current effectiveness of MCC would be diminished and the opportunity cost would be immense if the relationship did not stay on course. The immediate future steps forward in this decades-long relationship may not be clear. Yet the overall direction should be evident, one of moving toward new forms of partnership between MCC and MWC member churches and church-related agencies. The process will be incremental and risky, but the benefits are worth the risk and the potential cost of disengagement seems certainly immense.⁵⁸

NOTES

1. "Religious Affairs Committee in Hanoi Legalizes Vietnam Mennonite Church," November 24, 2008.

2. For the story of one MCC service worker who remained in Vietnam after the fall of the south, see Earl S. Martin, *Reaching the Other Side* (New York: Crown, 1978).

3. Albert N. Keim, *Harold S. Bender, 1987-1962* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1988), 518.

4. See, for example, Bosch's *Witness to The World* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1991), and *Believing in the Future* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1995).

5. Of the 21 interviewees, 16 had staff or governance experience with MCC, 15 with MWC. The interviewees included: Herman Bontrager (1,2), Ray Brubacher (1,2), C.J. Dyck (1,2), Peter Dyck (1), Ron Flaming (1), Kathryn Good (1,2), Karen Klassen Harder (1), Nancy Heisey (1,2), Arli Klassen (1), J.M. Klassen (1), Robert Kreider (1,2), Mesach Krisetya (2), John A. Lapp (1,2), Albert Lobe (1,2), Larry Miller (1,2), Danisa Ndlovu (2), Paul Quiring (1,2), Walter Sawatsky (1), Reg Toews (1,2), Pakisa Tshimika (2), David Wiebe (2). 1 indicates MCC staff and/or service in MCC governance structures; 2 denotes MWC staff and/or service in MWC governance structures.

6. Paul N. Kraybill, "MWC—A Growing Vision." Presented to the International Mennonite Peace Committee, Hyderabad, December 1985. (MCC Library, Akron, Pa. Hereafter MCCLPA) See also C. J. Dyck, "The History of the MWC," *MWC Handbook* (1978), 1-9.

7. MWC Presidium, July 1967. 36-44. (MCCLPA).

8. Kraybill (1985).

9. R. Mathies to MCC Annual Meeting. June 2005. (MCCLPA).

10. A creative tension, from the beginning of MCC to the present, has been what balance of assistance should be given to the "household of faith" and how much to the "other."

11. Last updated 1999.

12. Orie O. Miller, "Basic Principles Underlying the Services of the MCC and the Future of the Committee's Activities," proceedings of the 1948 MWC. (MCCLPA)

13. *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. 3 (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1957), 606.

14. Walter Sawatsky. AMBS course notes for forthcoming publication, "Mennonite History in Global Perspective."

15. John A. Lapp and Ed van Straten, "Mennonite World Conference 1925-2000: From Euro-American Conference to Worldwide Communion," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 77/1 (January 2003): 19.

16. "Mennonite Central Committee 1920-1970," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 44/3 (July 1970). See especially the articles by Robert Kreider, John A. Lapp, and Larry Kehler.

17. Robert S. Kreider and Rachel Waltner Goosen, *Hungry, Thirsty, A Stranger: The MCC Experience* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1988).

18. Donald B. Kraybill, "From Enclave to Engagement: MCC and the Transformation of Mennonite Identity," in *Unity Amidst Diversity: MCC at 75*, ed. Robert S. Kreider and Ronald J. R. Mathies (Akron, Pa.: MCC, 1996), 26-28.

19. Edgar Metzler, "Partnerships and Secondments: a Preliminary Survey and Some Policy Issues" (March, 2000). (MCCLPA).

20. Million Belete, MWC Presidium (1976). (MWC Office, Kitchener, Ont. Hereafter MWCKON).

21. Arli Klassen to MWC Executive Committee (July 2008). (MCCLPA).

22. MCC Executive Committee Minutes (August 1930). (Hereafter MCC ExCom) (MCCLPA).

23. MCC Executive Committee (June 1948). (MCCLPA).

24. Nancy R. Heisey, "Pilgrimage, Place and People: A History of the Locations of Mennonite World Conference Assemblies, 1925-2003," *The American Society of Church History* (December 2006), 863.

25. John D. Unruh, *In the Name of Christ* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald, 1952), 354.

26. MWC Officers Minutes (1994). (MWCKON).

27. MWC Officers Minutes (1992). (MWCKON).

28. MWC Executive Committee (1998). (MWCKON).

29. Erland Waltner, "The Ecumenical Mennonite," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 38/2 (April 1964): 71.

30. Much of this paragraph comes from J.C. Wenger, "Harold S. Bender: A Brief Biography," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 38/2 (April 1964): 39-46. See also Keim, 256.

31. "MCC Grants to MWC," (2008). (MCCLPA)

32. MWC General Council (November 1963). (MWCKON)

33. MWC Executive Committee (December 1964). (MWCKON)

34. MCC Workbook (1978). (MCCLPA).

35. Nancy Heisey and Paul Longacre, *Mennonite International Study Project: Final Report* (Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonite Board of Missions, 1990), 43.

36. Executive Secretary Report to MCC Excom. June 1988. (MCCLPA).

37. Mesach Kristeya, "From Dependence to Interdependence in the Global Church" (July, 1993). (MCCLPA).

38. Africa Department MCC, "Towards a Vision of Global Belonging: MCC and Africa" (December 1993). (MCCLPA).

39. MWC Executive Committee, (1997). (MWCKON).

40. Ray Brubacher, "Internationalization: Toward a Globalization of Accountability" (March 1997). (MCCLPA).

41. GAMCO Vision Discernment Team statement (2000). (MCCLPA).

42. Ray Brubacher and Pakisa Tshimika, "Review of the Relationship Between MWC and MCC" (April, 2000). (MCCLPA).

43. R. Mathies "Report on MWC to MCC Executive Committee," August 23, 2002 (MCCLPA).

44. "Listening Group Report and Recommendations" (March 2006). (MCCLPA).

45. Keim, 389-9. Lapp and van Straten, 19-20.

46. MWC Executive Committee (December 1964). (MWCKON).

47. MWC General Council (2000). (MWCKON).

48. MWC Executive Committee (June 2005). (MWCKON).

49. MCC Executive Committee (April 1997). (MCCLPA).

50. MWC Executive Committee (1999). (MWCKON).

51. Ibid.

52. MWC Executive Committee (1997). (MWCKON).

53. Brubacher and Tshimika (2000).

54. Kraybill, MWC Executive Committee (1982, 1986, 1988). (MCCLPA).

55. See also Will Braun, "A Priesthood of MCC Believers," *Canadian Mennonite* (November 10, 2008): 9.

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56. MCC Executive Committee (June 2008), stated that this was not the direction to go.

57. Often the word *beneficiaries* is used.

58. R. Mathies to Inter-MCC Round Table (1998). (Privately held).