

NEW WINE/NEW WINESKINS

Prayer, worship part of MCC Ontario revisioning exercise

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Worship began and framed the day-long New Wine/New Wineskins exercise in thinking about MCC's future at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate last month.

Led by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario board chair Marg Nally, a leader in the KW House Churches, there was an extended prayer after the reading of Jeremiah 29:11-14: *"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile."*

Using the hymn "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" (Hymnal: A Worship Book, No. 353) as a response, Nally led the group of around 110 from across the

MCC Ontario constituency in a time of prayer and contemplation. Beginning each contemplation with the *"There is a time for every purpose for everything under heaven"* quote from Ecclesiastes 3, she then phrased a question for prayerful thinking:

- For what are we grateful in our story?
- What do we need to lay down from our story?
- What do we need to pick up? What are the expectations of our time together? What is the purpose for which we are gathered?
- Help us confront what we are avoiding. Bring to the surface that which needs attention. Help us address with a full heart the intention of change.
- Recognizing what we hope for, open us to name that which we dream.

Using Appreciative Inquiry, a discernment method that focuses on what is working in an organization or in a ministry, rather than looking for weaknesses and how to repair them, Jan Schmidt of

Winnipeg, co-facilitator and co-coordinator of the New Wine/New Wineskins project, led the group through a series of exercises created to help them get to the core of their personal hopes and aspirations for MCC.

The day ended with concrete ideas for shaping and re-shaping MCC's goals, vision and structures. Ideas like giving ownership of MCC to the worldwide Mennonite community, rather than retaining ownership in North America, were tempered by questions of where non-Mennonite partners around the world fit into the picture of priority- and goal-setting.

After six hours of working together on a cold winter Saturday (Jan. 24), energy continued to flow through the participants as they completed one last exercise on the way out: placing four "dots" on charts which listed strategic activities for MCC, voting for their priorities (the tallies of which were not complete at the end of the day). ☼

/// Briefly noted

Canadians respond to hunger in Zimbabwe

Canadian Foodgrains Bank is providing 9,109 metric tonnes of food to people in Zimbabwe, in response to growing need in that country. The \$7 million project includes 6,927 metric tonnes of maize, 1,385 tonnes of pulses, 405 tonnes of oil and 392 tonnes of corn soy blend, all purchased in southern Africa. Approximately 120,000 beneficiaries will receive rations to sustain them for five months, until the next harvest. Zimbabwe faces one of the most significant food crises in the world in coming months. The UN predicts that 5.1 million people, nearly half the population of Zimbabwe, will require emergency food aid in the first quarter of 2009. There are several contributing factors, including recent drought, some poor agricultural policies, a lack of agricultural inputs, a rapidly declining economy, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and a recent cholera outbreak.

—Canadian Foodgrains Bank Release

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



John Fast of Waterloo describes his group's "ideal structure" for Mennonite Central Committee at the end of the day's last appreciative inquiry exercise.

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