

Annual Report 2021

EMC Values in a Pandemic



Moderator's Message

This past year has been one of seemingly constant change—global health, church programming and the daily balancing act of living amidst these dynamics. In the conference, much like in our individual and congregational lives, this uncertainty has taken a toll on us. And therefore, we have regularly wanted to return to the core of who we are to “reset” our activities and remind ourselves of “whose we are” and the priorities that we have committed to shaping our lives and organizational lives.

Conference staffing has been in flux as we restructure in light of current and anticipated executive staff retirements. At one level, this could be destabilizing; yet on another level, this “kairos moment” provides the opportunity to set the stage for a preferred future. Thankfully, we are prepared for this time.

Romans 5:6-8 tells us that “at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” And Paul uses the same expression in 2 Cor. 6:2 “at just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.” And as a conference leadership, we have sensed God’s timely guidance and direction in charting our future.

Over the past few years, we have reviewed and affirmed our EMC vision to be “a movement of people advancing Christ’s kingdom culture as we live, reach, gather and teach.” In the pages ahead you will note how the reports reflect how the EMC core values have shaped this work. We value interpersonal relationships as well as the relationships that our conference work together affords us. We value people as made in the image of God and commit ourselves to sharing the love of Christ in our work together. We value the truth of Scripture—and the revelation of Jesus as “the Way, the Truth and the Life.” We value obedience to the teachings of Christ and we are committed to discipling each other to discern God’s leading for our lives, individually and corporately. This is the ministry that we can do better together than as individuals or individual churches. May it be reflected in the activities of the past year as well as our anticipation for the coming year. Even so come Lord Jesus.



Abe Bergen
Moderator

Nominations

Moderator (1)

- Abe Bergen* (Kleefeld EMC)

Board of Church Ministries (2)

- Diana Peters (Straffordville EMC)
- Vacancy

Board of Leadership and Outreach (2)

- Chris Hughes* (Abbeydale Christian Fellowship)
- Jennifer Isaac (Morweena EMC)

Board of Missions (2)

- Art Koop* (Anola Fellowship Chapel)
- Joanne Martens* (Kola EMC)

Board of Trustees (1)

- Abe Loewen (Morweena EMC)

Nominating Committee (6)

- Peter Doerksen (Region 1)
- Walden Plett* (Region 5)
- Vacancy
- Vacancy
- Vacancy
- Vacancy

*Incumbent

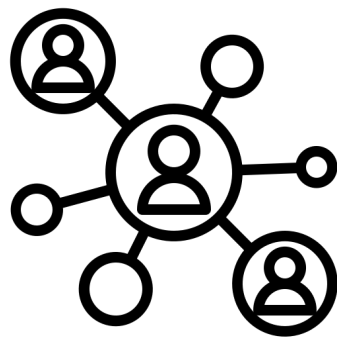
Relationships and Church

Gathering Together

In spring 2021, as we approached the one-year anniversary of COVID-19 in Canada, we were optimistic that the first glimmers of dawn were beginning to appear.

A year later, the refrain has shifted. As vaccines became widely available and lockdowns continued longer than hoped, we struggled to find the 'normal' we thought was waiting for us. Even as we returned to seeing mask-less faces in our church sanctuaries, tension has remained. Though the operations of the church were largely unaffected, this tension and differences of opinion contributed to a sense of fragility. Unity seemed superficial, and almost all leaders interact with a few people who are angry and vocal. And yet, as pastors and youth leaders across EMC were asked about their specific settings, the initial response was most often "we're doing quite well." (More of their responses can be found in Growing Together's February 2022 issue).

Compiling this 2021 annual report was an improvement over 2020's – things happened and we have photos that are not of Zoom calls! We look forward to sharing with you how you as the EMC continued to live out our core values, rejoicing in where God has brought us and looking forward with eagerness to where he will lead us next!



Churches Re-Gathering

No two churches in the EMC experienced the pandemic in the same way. What made the difference between our experiences? Many things, including the size of the church, the cultural background of attendees, the politics of the neighbourhood around the church, whether the church was urban or rural, the amount of COVID-19 in the area, the province the church was in, the personalities and approaches of the leaders, and sometimes even plain old luck. But as a whole, EMC churches have done better in the last two years than we feared we would. Let us thank God for his abundant care for us even when we got tired, exasperated, sick or discouraged. We are still standing and the gates of hell have not prevailed.

Abundant Springs Pre-Launch

With the event postponed yet again, the National Youth Committee has encouraged youth groups to hold their own pre-launch events. We anticipate running a few regional youth events across the country at the end of May to indicate the priority we continue to place on students in our churches.



National Office Staffing

What does an organization do when half of the staff members are replaced over the course of four years? In the EMC, the General Board decided to use the opportunity to review and evaluate the ongoing personnel needs of the EMC. They invited Don Peters (formerly of MCC Canada) to serve as a Transition Consultant, interviewing board members, staff, and others to determine the optimum staff configuration moving forward. Don's report provided a clear path for our Conference, and his proposal was presented to the Conference Council where it received strong affirmation. The Personnel Committee has been faithfully implementing these recommendations since then.



Tim Dyck



Ken Zacharias



Rolf Kruse

Roles and responsibilities have been updated. The Executive Director (Tim Dyck) announced his retirement and a search committee has been established to find someone to take his place. The Director of Global Outreach (Ken Zacharias) retired, and an Interim Director (Rolf Kruse) has been installed. Erica Fehr has been installed as the Director of Communications and Administration. Andrew Walker has resigned as the Communications Assistant, and Adrienne Funk has been hired in that newly defined role. A Director of Next Generation Ministries is the next position to be hired. We thank the Lord for his provision of capable staff to pick up the torch when others have carried it so well.



Andrew Walker



Adrienne Funk

Christian Community

and Supporting Each Other

Online Events

In 2021 the EMC zoom account hosted 80 or so online meetings with ministers, delegates, board members, prayer meeting participants and various task groups (and of course staff). We've been eager to meet face-to-face and we began to do that individually as the year progressed, but we must acknowledge at least one thing online meetings do better: bring people together in equal-sized blocks, regardless of their role or their distance from the host.



In summer 2021 Dr. Yemiru was able to join the ministerial meeting from Ethiopia as the main speaker; pre-recorded in case of internet issues and in real time to answer questions. Missionaries joined prayer meetings with supporters, and ministers and delegates could participate from across the country without the expense and time-commitment of travel.

The next step is learning how to do hybrid meetings. We'll lose something there too no doubt, but we'll gain something too.

Gathering Together Again!

What's Next?

Healing for the Past...

...Vision for the Future

EMC Festival 2022

June 10 and 11
Steinbach Bible College
Steinbach, Manitoba



Festival 2022 Events

Friday, June 10
Ministerial Meeting (9 am)
Not-So-Late-Show (7 pm)

Saturday, June 11
EMC Run (7 am)
Conference Council (9 am)
International Market (4 pm)
Worship Evening (7 pm)

Find more information and register at www.emconference.ca/convention

Truth

Interpreting Scripture Together

Growing Together

The purpose of Growing Together, an email newsletter launched in January 2021, is to respond to what is happening in our culture, and to discuss issues that are challenging for the church—specifically the EMC churches.



Growing Together



A comment received in response to issue four illustrates why we think GT is important. *“Overly confident assertions about things we do not fully understand severely damage our credibility on matters of faith... the questions you (Layton) have raised are evocative, compelling, and potentially edifying, and I thank you for articulating them so eloquently. I, for one, do not know the way forward, but am keen to engage these questions, within and beyond the community of faith, I am willing to listen to those who have fresher insights than any I can offer.”* ~Henry Janzen

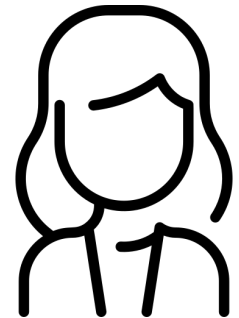
Topics covered have included...

- Responding to Moral Failure
- The Unexpected Challenges of Being a Wealthy Foreigner
- Unmarked Graves
- How Should Christians Think About Old Testament Violence?

Find the articles and sign up for the newsletter at www.emconference.ca/growingtogether.

Women in Pastoral Ministry

Like the evangelical church across the world, the EMC is seeking the Lord’s wisdom on the question of women in pastoral ministry. Ending June 2021 the Ministerial spent 15 months studying the question, asking what views or practices should be permitted within EMC doctrine and ministry practice. Led by the Board of Leadership and Outreach they worked to craft a resolution to this ongoing dilemma that we thought might work. However, in a vote, that proposal narrowly failed to get the support it needed. We keep on praying, studying the Bible and asking the Lord to bring us to unity on this question.



Inspiring Partnership in Ministry

In 2018 the General Board formed the Inspiring Partnership In Ministry taskforce to help our Conference learn more about how men and women could work together in healthy and various ways. The group’s mandate ended in 2021. They have asked us good questions: What fears do we have about men and women serving together? What stories need to be told, especially about women who have served their decades in our mission work and church ministry? Their work is ended, but may the Spirit continue to bring men and women together in powerful service in our churches.

Hermeneutics

As the Church across North America struggles mightily with enemies within and without, we need to be able to confidently answer the question; what does it mean to read the Bible like an EMCer? What convictions, practices and postures does an evangelical, Mennonite, Christian church bring to the table when we gather around the Word of God? The Education Committee of the Board of Church Ministries is considering a small-group Bible study resource to help us find our place on this question. Stay tuned.

Theodidaktos



Theodidaktos, after a break in 2021, will continue without its founding editor. Thank you, Darryl Klassen for sixteen years generating dialogue on theology in EMC. In 2022 Kevin Wiebe together with Jesse Penner will build on Theo’s tradition and branch into a new-to-us format. Look for their podcast—*The Armchair Anabaptist*, coming in January 2023.

People

Carrying the Good News Near and Far

A Vision Trip to Spain

In 2021, the initiative to pursue Spain as an EMC field received substantial encouragement with the application of Antonio and Esther Pitta as long-term missionaries to



Moroccans in Algeciras, Spain. The Director of Global Outreach, Rolf Kruse, and Muslim ministry committee explored Muslim ministry options, continued the conversation with OM about partnership and an exploratory visit was planned for the fall.



In October, Antonio, Esther and Rolf travelled to Algeciras, Spain and met with ministry teams there. The initial plans for a partnership with OM in Spain have been reshaped and will continue to be refined. Meanwhile the Pittas have pursued different solutions for obtaining a visa to live in Spain.

Official partnership with OM and EMC is on hold for the time being. We continue to provide Antonio and Esther with the support we can to facilitate their move to Spain. We have also pursued conversations with other mission agencies to glean insight on how best to proceed.

Indigenous Ministry

The Indigenous Ministry Committee was formed two years ago in response to a Conference Council decision. Elvira Cote, Joshua Dueck, Peter Fehr, and Jen Kornelsen, along with Ken Zacharias and Gerald Reimer as staff members seek to identify the key issues affecting relationships between Indigenous people and European settlers. They have spent much time listening to one another's personal stories, sharing resources, and praying for a path forward. Each of them have also written or been interviewed for EMC publications and shared stories that build bridges and challenge us to think about our perspectives. We look forward to stronger and healthier relationships as we continue in partnership.

Updates on EMC Mission Fields

Bolivia

The Villa Nueva School, where Nancy Friesen works, successfully finished another school year with six graduates. Two Grade 12 students were killed in a motorcycle accident in August which was a very hard time for the whole school. The Teens group Nancy is involved in (Junior Youth) grew from 12 to 18 youth.

As noted on the next page, Benny Fehr passed away in June. Ester continues to serve in the radio ministry in San Jose.

Guadalajara, Mexico

The Mexico team began the year by focusing on leadership training with Juan and Ana and Hugo and Ivonne. They studied the book "The Emotionally Healthy Leader" and followed this up with a Leadership Retreat in May. The church met online for Sunday services until August when they began meeting in person, Bible studies, counselling, discipleship and service projects also continued.

Paraguay

In 2021 Chris and Revita Kroeker ministered to about 20 couples and 14 individuals with counselling and the marriage course. In the Minga church, they were able to hold services with only a few interruptions and are grateful for the three youth baptized in December, and the dozens of kids who come for Sunday school.

Travis and Rosey Zacharias' main ministry continues to be the church plant in Guavira Poty, Minga Guazu. Weekly church services, Sunday school, Bible studies, youth ministry and visitation continue as they lead the church plant and disciple believers. Their involvement with the Che Roga camp in Campo 9 has been good for them and for the children, adolescents and teens in their church.

A New EMC Mission Field?

The Board of Missions is recommending to Conference Council that Spain be approved as a new EMC missions Administered Field Antonio and Esther have already begun the visa application process and hope to make the move to Spain as soon as their visa is in place.

Obedience

Following Jesus and His Call

New Church Plants

On a beautiful autumn evening in 2020, the Kingdom Life Church (KLC) members gathered at St. Vital EMC, with whom they had established a formal partnership. This marked the official opening of the KLC as part of the EMC, under the pastoral care of Ibrahim and Phebe Zabaneh.



This ministry seems to be extraordinary, not only in its focus on Arabic-speaking people in Winnipeg, but that it is led by a pastor couple with such incredible experience in this type of ministry. Many who attend this church arrived in Canada from a troubled past, often fleeing violence and therefore longing for hope in the midst of fear. KLC is providing this hope in the person of Jesus Christ.



Three weeks later in the small town of Bow Island, Alberta, another community of faith met for the first time. Blessed by the commissioning and sending of families from the Gospel Light Church, some 45-minutes away, Bow Island EMC has a strong leadership core and many families in the community are hungry for a place to

worship the Lord together. Abe and Anna Bueckert agreed to use their first two years of retirement to mentor and support the new church, while Abe and Kara Penner, pastors of the Gospel Light Church, are revisioning how their church can not only rebound from this, but reset their path of outreach within the very needy town of Redcliff.

Obedient Unto Death

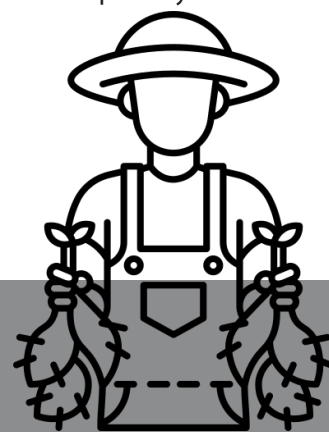
There are times when events in life don't seem to make any sense. Benny Fehr's untimely passing is one of those times. This strong and vibrant man passed away in June 2021 from



COVID at the age of 43. Benny and Ester had calculated the risk of serving overseas and decided to leave the comfort and security of their home in Canada to serve in radio ministry and be a witness in a spiritually dark context in Bolivia. We mourn the loss of Benny and pray for Ester and her children as they navigate life without him.

Church Plants Without Leaders

Several EMC church plants and ministries, (Winnipeg Logos, the Pelly outreach on the Cote reserve, and The ConneXion) sadly lost their pastor-leaders in 2021. A church plant without a pastor hinders the ministry in multiple ways and we desire to see these churches be led once again by humble servants of the Lord. In the meantime they are being led by strong lay leaders.



Obedience to God's Call

The national staff remains committed to praying Luke 10:2; asking the Lord of the harvest to send workers. We are looking to God for pastors, church planters and missionaries from EMC churches, especially to fill the gaps in EMC Administered fields. Our goal is to have three couples or single people for each of the four fields of service. Would you pray along with us? Do you know of someone that should be challenged to respond to the call of God in their life? Perhaps that someone is you!

Discipleship

Deepening Our Faith

Rudiments

Rudiments is seven months of training, study, mentoring and examination that ministers who have been commissioned by their churches go through which credentials them by the EMC and prepares them for ordination. The Board of Leadership runs this cohort once each year. In 2021 ten pastors and missionaries completed the examination process.



Dustin Asham
Ridgewood Church



Michael Dueck
Prairie Grove Fellowship



Andrew Dyck
Stony Brook Fellowship



Christian Loewen
Oak Bluff Bible Church



Sheldon Rempel
EFC Steinbach



Jared Schroeder
Westpointe Community



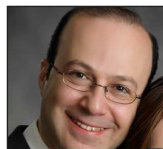
Harvey Thiessen
Wymark EMC



Calvin Tiessen
Kleefeld EMC



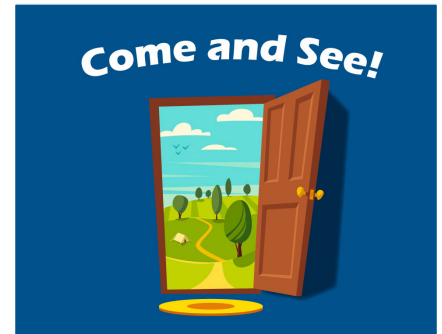
Steven Warthe
Portage Evangelical



Ibrahim Zabaneh
Kingdom Life Church

Preparation for Spiritual Renewal

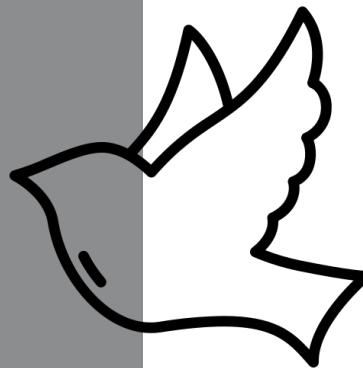
The Board of Leadership and Outreach noticed for some years now that problems in our churches tended to be answered like this: The way to solve this problem [aside from a spiritual awakening in our walk with Jesus] is to implement this program or that policy or this ministry model. With much encouragement from pastors we decided to take away the brackets and devote Advent 2021 to Pentecost 2022 to asking God to awaken in us a new love for our Lord Jesus, send us the power to live like he does, and send us to the world with new vigour. We developed a set of common scriptures to study and preach from. We created a devotional journal that people could use as they walked alongside Jesus. We invited churches to consider what renewal would look like for them specifically. We invited churches to proclaim a fast leading up to Easter. We developed web-based resources. But all of this is simply a way of opening our clenched fists to receive again a work of God through his Spirit. May God set our churches on fire with the fierce but so gentle love of Jesus! May his grace and love soften our hearts to become fertile soil for his Word. May we humble ourselves before the majesty of Christ and offer our souls to him, regardless of the cost.



Renewal like this has so many facets; a heart warmed by the Spirit; a mind fired with the knowledge of the truth of the gospel; a will steeled to do what we are called to do; hands willing and able to care for the poor. It involves a renewal of our marriages and family life. Our wallets need baptism as much as our calendars. We need the very structures and hierarchies of our congregations to be filled with servants of the Lord who wash the feet of their fellow disciples in genuine love. We need Jesus, that's what we need.

Church Visioning

Only those people and congregations who have heard the voice of Jesus should set about to make plans for ministry. We do not go ahead of Jesus in our vision, rather we simply walk behind and imitate him. After the Come and See season of renewal is over, we invite churches to consider a time of conversation and planning. We have walked with Jesus—what is he bidding us to?



Our marriages and family life. Our wallets need baptism as much as our calendars. We need the very structures and hierarchies of our congregations to be filled with servants of the Lord who wash the feet of their fellow disciples in genuine love. We need Jesus, that's what we need.

Financial Report

Sowing and Reaping

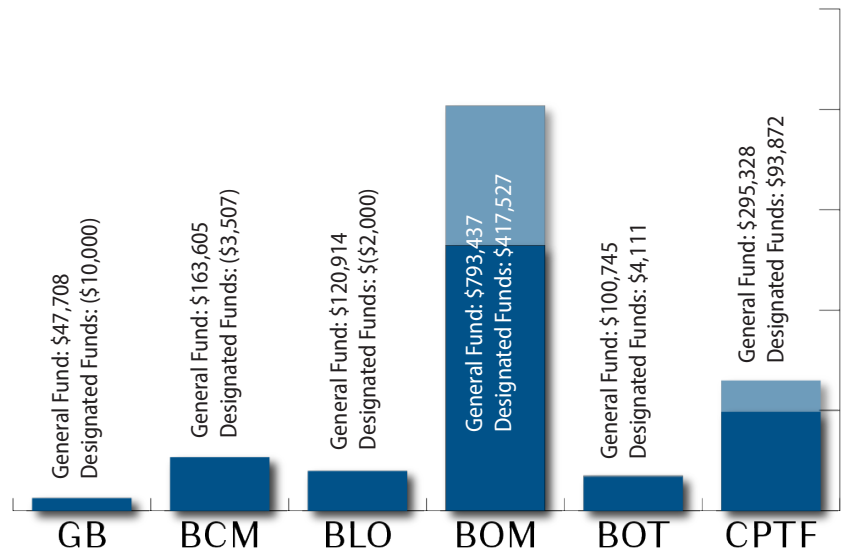
EMC has a strong agrarian base, so we are well acquainted with the concept of sowing and reaping. If you want a bountiful harvest, you can't skimp on the quality and quantity of the seed and fertilizer. It's the same way in God's kingdom. The church grows as we invest our time, energy, gifts and finances. EMCers have sowed generously throughout the years, and the church is indeed growing as a result of this investment.

The General Board requested a reduction in spending for 2021, given the uncertain nature of giving during the pandemic. The expenses last year reflect these reduced expenditures. However, the overall revenues for the year remained strong despite the financial challenges that people were facing, and so EMC ended the year with about \$330,000 more in revenue than in expenses.

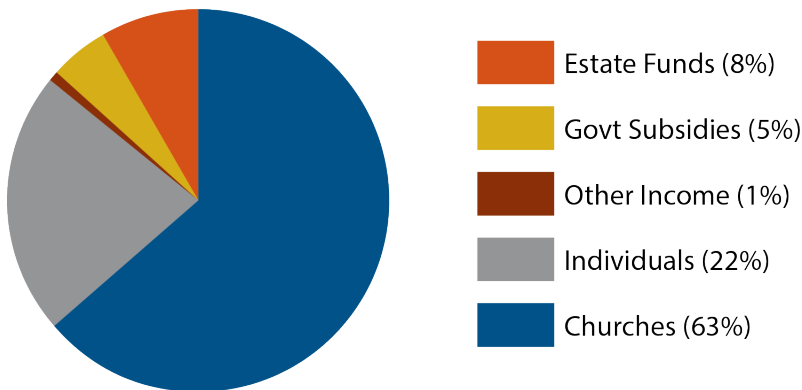
The chart to the right shows 2021 expenditures for each of the boards, including both the undesignated (general) and designated funds.

The pie chart below shows the source of all undesignated revenue for the 2021 year. As usual, most of the funding comes from EMC churches. Individuals are the next largest donors, followed by estate fund transfers. We also received a smaller amount of government funding in 2021, which will not be available in future years.

2021 Budget and Designated Disbursements Total Expenditures: \$2,021,740



2021 General Fund Receipts Total: \$1,851,190



The Sustainable Funding Strategy committee has completed its work and will be giving a final report to Conference Council in June. Many recommendations have been considered and will be described during the presentation.

Missionary support has been moving steadily towards the 60/40 (undesignated/designated) split for fundraising. Our EMC administered missionaries have been amply supplied thus far, and we hope this trend continues.

EMC Churches have been benefiting from the EMC Church Building Grant Fund. In 2021, nearly \$86,000 was distributed to churches with mortgages. This fund has proven to be an effective way to encourage and support EMC churches in their building programs.

We are grateful to the churches and individuals in the EMC who are invested in the growth of the ministries we are doing together. We want to sow generously so that we will reap a harvest that is worthy of our Lord.