

MENNONITE COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ANNUAL REPORT 2009

January 2009

The Mennonite Committee on Human Rights is a group of Mennonite individuals and organization who are committed to exploring the intersection of human rights and Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and to fostering education and action for human rights. The Committee has three main objectives:

- To facilitate reflection on the intersection of Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and human rights,
- To engage the Manitoba Mennonite constituency and participating organizations with respect to human rights thinking and practice,
- To offer a Mennonite perspective to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in the development of its exhibits and programs.

The committee met nine times between January and December. Peter Rempel and Judith Dueck serve as co-chairs of the committee, replacing Kenton Lobe. Esther Epp-Tiessen is the secretary.

A major project begun in 2007 was completed in March 2008. This was the hosting of a 6-session continuing education course on “Human Rights through a Mennonite Lens.” The course was jointly sponsored by and held at Canadian Mennonite University. It was taught by Ismael Mvingi (a human rights lawyer and professor at Menno Simons College, CMU) and Paul Doerksen (theologian and teacher at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute). About 20 people were enrolled in the course.

The committee began planning an exhibit on the Right to Food as a way of engaging the Mennonite and broader constituency on human rights. The exhibit will include three components: an art exhibit featuring the work of artists from around the world, a historical depiction of Mennonites and food issues, and a section that helps to interpret the human rights in the context of Christian faith. We hope that the exhibit will travel to a variety of venues across the country and possibly internationally beginning in the fall of 2010.

The committee also continued to monitor developments related to the Canadian Museum of Human Rights. We were pleased to see the Museum become a nationally-sponsored museum under the Federal Department of Heritage and Culture. We submitted our perspectives on the Museum and its contents to an on-line survey that was prepared by a Museum transition team, and were pleased that a number of our suggestions were incorporated into a final report.

The committee developed a website with a variety of levels of access. The address is <http://mennosforhumanrights.org/>.

Members of the committee are the following:

- Peter Rempel – Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba
- Judith Dueck – Member at large

- Esther Epp-Tiessen – Mennonite Central Committee Canada
- Paul Redekop – Canadian Mennonite University
- John J. Friesen – Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society
- Alf Redekopp – Mennonite Historical Society of Canada
- Royden Loewen – Chair of Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg
- Ray Dirks – Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery
- Paul Hagerman – Canadian Foodgrains Bank
- Wendy Kroeker – Member at large
- Eliakim Sibanda – Member at large

Participating organizations include:

- Canadian Foodgrains Bank (Paul Hagerman)
- Canadian Mennonite University (Paul Redekop)
- Chair of Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg (Royden Loewen)
- Friends (Canadian) of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine (George Dyck)
- Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society (John J Friesen)
- Mennonite Central Committee Canada (Esther Epp-Tiessen)
- Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba (Peter Rempel)
- Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery (Ray Dirks)
- Mennonite Heritage Village (John J Friesen and Roland Sawatsky)
- Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (Alf Redekopp)
- Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College affiliated with the University of Waterloo (Lowell Ewert)

Submitted by Esther Epp-Tiessen, secretary