

Losing and Finding and celebrating the re-discovery – I have thought about that idea many times since listening to this sermon at Gathering and then listening to it again in preparation for today. What have we lost? What have we rediscovered? Have we celebrated?

I think of last week's parking lot party – a celebration of the re-discovery of community that, while not lost during covid, was certainly not the same. We celebrated the joy of coming together again, of conversing without being mediated by a screen, of hearing laughter and children and sharing food. And with many re-discoveries, what we find is not exactly what we lost. Perhaps the sheep and the coin were unchanged, but the son was not, nor were the father and brother that received him. How have we changed as individuals? As a congregation? As a nation wide church?

These ideas of losing and rediscovering shape my thinking as I begin my role as moderator of Mennonite Church Canada. Maybe there are things we need to lose in order to imagine into being a church relevant for this time and place. I am struck by the ways in which Mennonite Church Canada is rooted in loss, a community of displaced people who have come together to worship and serve. Our founding groups, Anabaptists from Switzerland, Alsace-Lorraine and South Germany who arrived in Ontario via Pennsylvania seeking safety and the right not to bear arms lost their homes in Europe and the new homes they had built in the USA. Mennonites from Prussia and Russia who came to Canada fleeing violence and the loss of land, some who were diverted through Paraguay and others whose journeys took decades. And while much was lost, community was not as

new settlements mirrored old with cousins and friends sharing the journey, architecture, place names, and worship mirroring what was left behind.

And then there are those who have arrived from around the globe, seeking a new home, peace, and a God who is reflected in communities that believe in peace and helping each other. People who chose to be Mennonite because they received a school kit in a refugee camp, were sponsored by a Mennonite congregation, or interacted with a witness worker in their country of origin. When I look at the congregations of Mennonite Church Canada and realize the number of languages spoken, the ethnic and racial diversity, and the gender inclusivity, I am filled with hope for the future of the church. As Doug noted, the growth in Mennonite Church Canada is in the new Canadian churches. First Mennonite Kitchener gave space to the Hmong Mennonite church and helped them buy their first building. Hmong Mennonite helped Chin Mennonite with their first building – seeds are sown and the church grows and changes.

Since 2017, MC Canada has been working with the new structure. These last years have been filled with detailed work – policies, operating agreements, shared revenue agreements. We have paid attention to the details of the church – and that is important. But now, we need to focus on the vision of MC Canada – who do we want to be? We have exciting initiatives underway – important work for our age: Indigenous Settler relations, Climate Change, and Witness. We struggle with the work evangelism and how we bring the good news without doing harm to cultures and communities. And we pray – our new churches encourage us to pray more.

I'm excited to lead Joint Council as we struggle with what it means to be an Intercultural church. As Glen Guyton, Executive Director of MCUSA, stated, an intercultural church needs to be more than "spaces for brown faces."

Congregations in BC and Ontario are working hard to live into this vision.

Sherbrook Mennonite in Vancouver is a congregation of Korean, Spanish and historical Mennonites; First Mennonite of Kitchener is Spanish and historical Mennonites. How do we, as Mennonite Church Canada live into this reality? How do we continue to build relationships and know each other as Christ knows us?

And I wonder, What are we so afraid of losing that we can't let go and find what may be waiting for us?