

MENNONITE COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

EST. 1889



Mennonite Collegiate Institute Annual Report to Congregations – 2022

This was a year of both joy and struggle.

There were many things to celebrate in the past year. Deep social bonds formed among the students and the school was able to offer a strong educational experience despite the many rules and restrictions at the start of the year.

With the lifting of pandemic restrictions, we joyfully embraced the return of cherished activities: sharing lunch in the dining hall, participating in intercollegiate sports, and performing 'Matilda' the Musical! for nearly 2,000 live audience members. Saengerfest returned after a 3-year hiatus. We spent the last Sunday of May in a wonderful time of worship and celebrated the musical gifts of our students. We were filled with joy on the last Sunday of June as we marked the graduation of 22 wonderful young people.

We continue to hear many positive reports from students and families, about the wonderful experiences that students continue to have at MCI.

Unfortunately, there were also struggles. Late in 2021, MCI was selected as one of only two schools in all of Canada to record Handel's version of the Hallelujah Chorus alongside the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. For many years, it has been a treasured tradition for alumni to join students on stage to sing this jubilant song of praise at the conclusion of the Christmas concert. Many of us were delighted to share our tradition on an even larger stage. We received professional assistance in preparing the choir and making the audio and visual recordings. The resulting video was a cherished accomplishment for many.

Some of our families chose not to participate and were profoundly dismayed that our school would be publicly associated with a secular theatre company's project, whose interpretation of scripture or portrayal of Jesus they could not agree with. Conversations were difficult. Three congregations formally withdrew support from MCI and no longer have seats at the Board table.

Later in the spring, we also encountered differing and strongly held views on how sexuality curriculum should be implemented in the school, and how best to offer students appropriate guidance and supports. These differences and disagreements persisted into the summer. In the fall, MCI leadership was able to begin to put some guidance in place to help address some of these matters, ensuring that MCI remains a safe place for everyone.

In September, the new school year began with a fresh set of struggles. Our attempts to increase enrolment had floundered. A year earlier we had good hopes for continued growth. By spring we had planned and budgeted to maintain the student count at 75. We began September with only 57. Decreased enrolment means decreased revenue from tuition, other fees, and provincial grants. Expenses are up significantly.

The Board and Leadership Team have worked hard to manage the school's finances. We have accessed some unreserved savings, discussed financing options, reduced costs, and called for the continued generosity of our donor base. In these difficult circumstances, we must remind ourselves that:

Our purpose is to educate young people in an Anabaptist Christian context, seeking to develop their God-given potential...

Our goal is to raise up a generation who express Christian hope by serving others, promoting peace, and providing Christ-like leadership within the church community and secular world.

~ from the MCI Mission Statement

Since 1889, young people have had life-changing experiences at MCI. In this Christ-centered environment, students have received a high quality, well-rounded education, formed life-long friendships and grown in faith and faithfulness. Our alumni have gone on to significant roles of service and leadership in the church, local community, and wider world.

We know we continue to make a real difference in the lives of students every day. The mission of MCI is as vital now as it ever was. Vision and a viable business plan will both be required. We also need to restore trust and increase enrollment. The Board and Leadership Team recognize that hard work is still needed for there to be healing and restoration of relationships that were damaged by conflict in the past year.

The Board is working hard to establish effective strategic plans and workable financial arrangements. A new Leadership Team has been put in place. Harold Schlegel completed his time as Executive Director at the end of 2022. Jennifer Klippenstein will serve as Principal and provide school leadership for the rest of the school year. Kieran Reynolds continues as Director of Student Life and Recruitment. We are currently seeking a new Director of Finance and Administration.

Most importantly, we want to communicate how much we value all the families who entrust their students to MCI, and we hope you can help spread the word that MCI continues to be an excellent choice for Christ-centered and academically sound education, providing a solid foundation for their future.

We call on our churches to come together in unity to support MCI with their talents, gifts, and prayers. Please pray that God's wisdom will guide us as we discern the way forward.

Submitted by
MCI Board and School Leadership Team