



Check out our new logo!

Tune in to the January Natural Links to hear the story of how it came to be!

Greetings!

I find that the end of one year and the beginning of the next is a season full of letters. They might be from family or friends or charities seeking your support, but they generally share reflections on what has passed and their hope for what's to come. This year it seems like every letter I read starts with the impacts that COVID-19 has had on that person or organization. It's (hopefully) a once in a lifetime experience to live through a pandemic that reaches out into every part of our world and therefore it's appropriate to take the time to recognize the role it played. Camp and retreat centres throughout the MCA all have stories to share of how the pandemic has impacted their organizations, communities, staff teams and families. Many of the stories have themes of lament, loss, grief, anger, frustration, division, uncertainty and many other emotions. However, there are also stories of hope, creativity, joy, peace, unity, faithfulness, provision, and an awareness of just how great our God is. I can't say with certainty that in all of our situations these two sets of often competing emotions balanced each other out, however, my hope is that as we begin the journey into 2021, regardless of what we experience, we are finding ourselves reminded of God's promises to journey with us.

I'm thankful for the individuals and camps that make up the MCA. Throughout this year we have shared each other's burdens, listened intently to the challenges that were being faced and likewise celebrated the joys. To me, this is one of the great values of being a part of this community. While this is best experienced when we gather in person, this past year has given us opportunities to be creative in how we connect. **We made the difficult decision to cancel our 2020 Bi-National Gathering and have also decided that for 2021 we will not meet together in person.** Rather, we will look for new and creative ways to connect safely using the technology that is accessible to us. Stay tuned for more details to come!

We also recognize that some of the "normal" ways that we support the work that you do has not been possible and again, has caused us to look creatively at how we can lend a hand. **Instead of organizing college visits and creating opportunities to connect in person with their students, we are putting together a video that shares stories of why young people have chosen to spend their summers working at camp and what camp means to them.** Our hope is that this will assist you in your staff recruitment efforts. We began our "Coaching Cohorts" led by Shana Peachey Boshart, MCA Board Member and MC USA Denominational Minister for Faith Formation. These are opportunities to connect as directors and receive guided support and encouragement as we look ahead to the year to come. And, as we look to the summer we are exploring options for how to represent camps at MennoCon 21.

Financially, this year has been a tough one for most, if not all, of us. While we have heard about the many ways individuals, families, churches and businesses have stepped up and filled the gaps in our budgets that are usually filled through camps and retreats, it hasn't been easy. The MCA wants to

recognize the challenges we have faced this past year and want to remind you that for 2020 and 2021 you get two years of membership for the price of one! **If you have already paid your membership fees for 2020, you will not need to pay for 2021.** If you were unable to pay in 2020, we ask that you consider paying your fees this year to cover both years. If your current situation does not allow you to pay the fees, please let us know and we can discuss what options we have.

Finally we want to recognize the transitions that have occurred on the board this past year. Normally this would happen when we gather in March, but since we were unable to do that this past year, we want to recognize the efforts of board members who ended their terms, Andrew Luz and Jenelle Roynon, thank you for your investment in the MCA! We also want to thank Tina Burkhart who for many years kept our books in order and served as our bookkeeper. We appreciate all that she did to get the financial records organized and in order. We also welcome Jeanette Lahm from Laurelville as our President-Elect and Carey Miller as our new bookkeeper.

We believe that the work you do is important and we want to support you in the ways that we can. We hope that you will choose to join us again and we can journey through this year together.

With peace!



Chris Pot
President, Mennonite Camping Association