## Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia



# 2022 Annual Report

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#### Mennonite Historical Society of BC Agenda of the 2022 Annual General Meeting Wednesday, 5 April 2023, 1:30 pm Ricky's Country Restaurant, 32080 Marshall Road, Abbotsford, B.C.

#### Agenda

- 1. Welcome: Richard Thiessen, President
- 2. Minutes of 2021 AGM 3 March 2021 by Zoom
- 3. Financial Reports: Marvin Rempel, Treasurer
  - a. Financial Statements 2022
  - b. Budget 2023
- 4. Election of Directors

Current terms:

Ending in 2023: Elmer Wiens and Cheryl Isaac Ending in 2024: Helen Esau Ho, Linda Klassen, Robert Martens, and Elma Pauls Ending in 2025: Maryann Jantzen and Richard Thiessen

Elmer Wiens has decided to not let his name stand again for election to the Board. We thank him for his work on the Board, and are happy to hear that he will continue as a volunteer for the Society, managing our website.

Rod Ewert was elected to the Board in 2022, but has resigned. Marvin Rempel was appointed by the Board in interim to replace him.

The board is nominating Cheryl Isaac and Marvin Rempel for three year terms, ending in 2026.

We will be left with four vacancies on our Board. We have actively sought additional members throughout the past few months, and will continue to do so. If there are individuals who come forward, they will be appointed by the Board in the interim, and formally approved at the next AGM.

- 5. Presentation of Committee Reports
- 6. Questions / Further Business
- 7. Adjournment

#### Mennonite Historical Society of BC Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting Thursday, March 3, 2022 via Zoom Meeting

**Present:** Richard Thiessen, Maryann Jantzen, Laura Unger, Rod Ewert, Jennifer Martens, Cheryl Isaak, Linda Klassen, Mary Ann Quiring, Elmer Wiens, Robert Martens, Dolores Harder, Julia Toews, Irene Plett, Waltrude Gortzen, Dave Rempel, Henry Wiens, Helen Esau Ho, Elma Pauls, Helen Nickel. Elfrieda Nikkel Ingrid Epp, James & Elfrieda Nikkel, George Kroeker Dora Dueck, John Goertz

- 1. **Opening**: Richard called the meeting to order. Moved Robert Martens, Second Julia Toews to approve the agenda as presented. **CARRIED**.
- 2. **Minutes of AGM** October 6, 2021. Moved David Rempel, Second Elmer Wiens to approve the minutes as presented. **CARRIED.**

#### 3. Financial Report – Rod Ewert

Receipts last year were fairly close to budgeted amounts. We withdrew \$22,000 from our investments for the operating budget. Our investments performed better than budgeted, returns were good and this builds up our endowment fund.

Total receipts were \$18,000 ahead of budget, mostly due to gains on our investments. There hasn't been any expenditure for the Mennonites in History project yet but we expect to begin the project this year. Some of the funds from this project (\$100,077.00) were moved to Edward Jones and saw an increase of \$1,635.00 for the year. Our endowment fund grew from \$582,000 to \$618.000 in 2021

Motion to accept the financial report - Rod Ewert, Second - Elma Pauls, CARRIED

#### Budget 2022

Donations for 2022 are expected to remain the same, and should sustain at that level. We hope to raise an additional \$15,000 through fundraising events this year. The withdrawal from our investment is increasing from \$22,000 to \$24000 for 2022 and we expect a 5% gain from investments. We are hoping for other sources of income throughout the year as well. There will be a cost-of-living increase to salaries but we don't expect any staffing increases.

Motion to accept the budget for 2022 - Rod Ewert, Second- Irene Plett, CARRIED

#### 4. Election of directors

Four directors reached the end of their terms this year: Ingrid Epp, Rod Ewert, Maryanne Jantzen & Richard Thiessen. Ingrid has resigned but will continue volunteering with us. Our thanks to Ingrid for her contributions and dedication to MHSBC. Rod, Maryanne & Richard have let their names stand for another three-year term, ending 2025.

Three spaces remain open on the board but there were no further nominations.

Motion to accept the directors as stated - Julia Toews, Second - Dave Rempel. CARRIED

#### 5. Presentation of committee reports

We heard brief reports from the President, Office & Volunteer Manager, Archive, Roots & Branches, Library, Website and Computer Technical Committees.

Motion to accept reports - Dave Rempel, Second - Cheryl Issac CARRIED.

Motion to adjourn: Irene Plett - Second - Cheryl Isaac CARRIED

Meeting Adjourned, 2:56 pm.

## **Board of Directors**

Helen Esau Ho	- Registered Nurse, Abbotsford
Cheryl Isaac	- Retired Director, Continuing Education, UFV – Abbotsford
Maryann Jantzen	<ul> <li>Assistant Professor; Writing Centre Co-Director Trinity Western University – Abbotsford</li> </ul>
Linda Klassen	- Former Business Owner - Abbotsford
Robert Martens	- Poet, Writer & Editor – Abbotsford
Elma Pauls	- Retired Health Care Administrator - Chilliwack
Marvin Rempel	- Bookkeeper - Langley
Richard Thiessen	- Executive Director Mennonite Museum– Abbotsford
Elmer G. Wiens	- Economist/Webmaster – Vancouver

## Officers

President	-	Richard Thiessen
Vice President	-	Robert Martens
Secretary	-	Linda Klassen
Treasurer	-	Marvin Rempel

## **President's Report**

#### **Staffing and Personnel**

Together, the Society and the Museum employ two full-time persons: Jennifer Martens serves as Office and Volunteer Manager and Mary Ann Quiring serves as Financial and Office Assistant. Each are employed half-time by the Society and half-time by the Museum.

The Society has approximately 60 volunteers that provide staffing for the Society and work on a variety of indexing, filing, translation, and scanning projects. Our volunteer structure includes several volunteer coordinators who work alongside our Office and Volunteer Manager. These coordinators maintain weekly contact with our volunteers and provide direct supervision and resourcing. This allows our Office and Volunteer Manager to focus more attention on volunteer policies and procedures and in-take procedures for new volunteers.

#### Communications

Roots and Branches, our periodical, is our primary means of communication with our members. This year we again published three 32-page issues and a smaller Christmas issue for the year. We send out approximately 400 copies of the newsletter to members, churches, and sister organizations. We also rely on our website [http://www.mhsbc.com] and our Facebook page to communicate with our members as well as the general public.

#### **Public Events**

The Society held the following events in 2022:

- 12 February: Pier 21: two performances held at the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium
- 26 February: Writer's Workshop with Helen Rose Pauls
- 30 April: Writer's Workshop with Danny Unrau
- 2 October: Fall Fundraising Faspa: Music That Shaped Our Mennonite Souls
- 5 November: Genealogy Conference

#### Projects

1. Digitizing the Mennonitsche Rundschau and Der Bote Volunteers from the society have been digitizing issues of Die Mennonitische Rundschau and Der Bote for several years. Earlier in 2022 we learned that scans of Die Mennonitische Rundschau were now available online at the Internet Archive for 1880-1942 (missing 1897) and 1962-1993. As a result, we chose in conjunction with the Centre for MB Studies (Winnipeg) to upload all of our scans of the periodical to the Internet Archive. All issues except for 1897 are now available to the public except for a handful of missing issues. The following issues of Der Bote have been scanned: 1924-1934, 1935 (partial), 1936, 1961 (partial), 1962, 1963-1964 (partial), 1966 (partial), 1969-1970, 1971 (partial). 1972-1978, 1979 (partial), 1980-1990, 1991-1992 (partial), 1993-2003, 2004 (partial), 2005-2008. These numbers remain unchanged from 2017.

#### 2. Archival Holdings

Linda Klassen heads up our volunteer group that works with processing our archival holdings and uploading images and archival description records to MAID. Although we did not receive any significant collections in 2022, volunteers have been kept busy processing church and school donations from previous years.

#### 3. EWZ Records

We receive numerous requests from individuals, especially in Germany, for digital copies of EWZ files.

#### 4. Genealogy

Most of the visitors to our Archives have an interest in genealogy. Our volunteers assist visitors in compiling their family histories and they also respond to emails and letters. Volunteers have also been quite busy scanning

unpublished family histories and newspaper obituaries. Several of our volunteers are copying and pasting obituaries from the digital scans of the Mennonite Brethren Herald into the Biographical Wiki database (https://mla.bethelks.edu/mediawiki/index.php/Main\_Page) maintained by John Thiesen at the Mennonite Library & amp; Archives at Bethel College. This database includes the full text of obituaries from several Mennonite periodicals, including Mennonite Weekly Review, The Mennonite, and a number of local newspapers. Our volunteers have entered 2,829 obituaries from the Mennonite Brethren Herald as of January 2023.

For many years our volunteers have maintained an obituary collection, including newspaper clippings and funeral bulletins. Over the past several years we have noticed that more and more people are choosing to publish obituaries of their loved ones on funeral home websites. These are often the only published obituary, or they are an expanded version of the obituary published in a newspaper. A project that we began in 2021 was to begin collecting digital obituaries from online newspaper and funeral home websites. At year end we had collected 6,485 online obituaries.

Our goal is to eventually digitize all of the print obituaries in our collection and eliminate the newspaper clippings. We will only keep hard copies of funeral bulletins. At the end of 2022 we had digitized 12,715 print obituaries. This gives us a total of 19,200 online and digitized print obituaries.

Several of our volunteers also do a significant amount of work with the GRANDMA database, managed by the California Mennonite Historical Society. Members of the public submit corrections and additions to their family information that is in GRANDMA, and our volunteers can log into the database in California and make the necessary changes. Several volunteers are also working at creating a Legacy database of individuals in the EWZ records. Once completed, this database will be merged with GRANDMA.

#### 5. Translation Projects

Volunteers are involved with several other projects, including the translation letters and diaries from German to English. Many of these projects begin as requests from individuals who make a donation to have something translated. Once the project is completed, a copy of the translation is made available to MHSBC.

#### 6. History of Mennonites in British Columbia Project

This year the Society began work on the publication of a written history of Mennonites in British Columbia. The general editor of the project is Dr. Bruce Guenther. Work will continue over the next several years, with the goal of publishing by 2028, which marks the centennial of the establishment of the village of Yarrow, the first settlement of Mennonites in the province that still exists today.

Submitted by Richard D. Thiessen, President 13 March 2023

## **Office & Volunteer Manager Report**

Hello, my name is Jennifer Martens and as Office and Volunteer Manager, I am pleased to present the report for the office.

2022 saw us continue to have our research centre open by appointment which was a step up from being closed to the public until November 2021. At first we helped patrons at our dual monitor station (patrons could see on their own screen what our research assistant was working on with theirs). This helped both our patrons and volunteers feel comfortable with helping people in person again. Gradually, we have gone back to helping people at our work stations; the dual monitor station is still available for those who feel more comfortable with that arrangement.

Over the course of 2022, our volunteers and staff settled back into pre-2020 routines on-site. A dream was realized in 2022 with a project that was completed by Marvin Rempel. The project was to create a place where our Patron Assistance volunteers could find a "one stop shop" for the "go to" resources to help our patrons with their family history research. All of our MHSBC volunteers who already help with patron assistance took training with Marvin to learn how to use this powerful tool and those who were interested were also trained. The tool provides a "home-base" for links, records, data and excellent search guides according to time, geography and topic. It saves so much time for everyone as the resources have been specially curated for the kind of research help we provide. This is just one of the amazing projects that our volunteers have worked on during the year.

Communication from the office continued via email (16 news & notes and related), mail outs, social media and phone calls. 38 reference questions came across my desk plus countless more that were fielded by Mary Ann and our volunteer team both on and off-site.

We missed having an event for acknowledging and thanking our volunteers so we added that to our annual Christmas Social in December. The work our volunteers do means so much to so many and it is a privilege to recognize all the hours and care that goes into the work that they all do for those who need us now and for future generations.

We are still looking for volunteers. We need more help in our library, IT, digitizing, scanning and more. Those who can translate from handwritten Gothic script are in demand. We are expanding our teams in the project room who are working with documents and photos. Shifts are 2-3 or more hours per week and some projects for the society lend themselves to off-site work. We are looking for volunteers who are available for our reference/reception desk on Monday afternoons and/or Thursdays. Contact me to find out more!

Jennifer

## **Archives Report**

Our archive department moved at a very steady pace throughout 2022. We were very happy to have Caitlyn join us to help with scanning photos and she has been a wonderful support to our MAID program. Helen, along with the rest of the photo team (Dolores, Hildegard, Joan, Henry & Brian) added hundreds of new photos to the MAID database in 2022.

Robert works with the initial intake of donations, accessioning items and keeping detailed records of our acquisitions.

Laura continues working with John B. Toews' materials and she and Linda completed a large reorganization of these records that have made the whole collection easier to access.

Julia & Linda worked through several smaller jobs of textual records before starting on a large donation of MCC materials. This was completed in late fall and resulted in a few more boxes of records being added to our MCC holdings.

One of the best parts of our job is the unexpected surprises we find! Among those we discovered this year was Russian currency dating between 1898 – 1920 hidden in some nondescript notebooks. Another was a large, colour illustration of the book of Revelation, created in the late 1930's rolled up in a mailing tube. It is a thrill to discover and experience these unique treasures up close and it always adds a spark of excitement.

We are receiving a growing number of media items: reel-to-reel tapes, cassette tapes, CD's, slides and even some 8mm film! All of these require attention from someone who enjoys working with older media and can organize and catalogue them. The historical value of these things is hard to predict but there are sure to be some surprises hidden there, as well.

I am very thankful for our dedicated and diligent volunteers who work hard to preserve so many priceless pieces of our history. It is a privilege to do the work and to do it together.

Linda Klassen Archive Department

## **Roots and Branches Report**

During 2022, our collegial periodical committee once again generated four issues of *Roots and Branches*. Our first issue of the year in February was "something of a potpourri" with "guest writers telling stories of Mennonite forebears in the USSR, Romania, Germany; of the pioneer settlement of Yarrow; of traditions such as the annual pig slaughter; and more" – definitely providing something of interest for every reader! While the June issue focused largely "on aspects of Mennonite life in Ukraine," it also attempted to "acknowledge the hardships and deprivations so many Ukrainians [were] experiencing" as a result of the Feb. 2022 Russian invasion. Our final full-length issue, published in September, celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Mennonite Historical Society of BC, paying tribute to some of the initiators of the society. Each issue also included additional articles on diverse historical topics, book reviews, a genealogy column and artwork by BC artists, as well as relevant news releases and announcements of upcoming events. And once again, Julia Toews and Louise Bergen Price put together an excellent shorter December issue focused on historical Mennonite experiences of Christmas.

Robert Martens, Maryann Tjart Jantzen, Julia Toews and Louise Bergen Price continue to share editorial responsibilities as well as contributing articles. Each new issue gives us an excuse to gather together over coffee for a planning session, a time enjoyed by all. Our new layout designer Bill Glasgow has done an excellent job of preparing issues for publication once the committee completes a final draft. We attempt to feature a variety of writers in each issue, from diverse segments of our constituency. And the office staff works hard to see that each issue is printed and mailed in a timely fashion. The contributions of all these individuals are essential; without them, *Roots and Branches* would not exist.

Our policy is to try to incorporate a broad range of material so that all readers will find something of interest. We welcome receiving any of the following: letters and photos from the past; "mystery" pictures that need identification; short personal narratives; book reviews; biographical sketches; articles of historical interest. Contributions can be in English or German (we will translate). All contributions are subject to editorial approval and revision, as needed.

Please direct any letters, comments or questions to the Periodical Committee c/o the Mennonite Historical Society of BC, or email archives@mhsbc, subject Roots & Branches.

#### Maryann Tjart Jantzen

#### Library Committee Report

Little has changed since the most recent annual library committee report (2020). Committee members have not been meeting, partly due to the pandemic; and partly because skilled volunteer librarian staff are currently lacking. A search is ongoing.

Will there be a merger of the MHSBC library with the Columbia Bible College library? CBC is part of the BC Library Consortium, which uses Evergreen, an open source library program. It is hoped that progress will be made on this file in the coming year, and that library committee meetings will soon resume.

Submitted by Robert Martens

## Website and Computer Technical Committee

Members: Elmer Wiens (Chair), Jennifer Martens, Richard Thiessen (ex officio)

Objectives: The committee was formed to discuss and implement improvements to the www.MHSBC.com website, and changes to the MHSBC computer facilities, scanners, software, etc.

Jennifer Martens and Richard Thiessen handle the computer facilities at the MHSBC's offices. The following report deals with the www.MHSBC.com website. I work with Jennifer Martens and other members of the MHSBC Board and Staff to handle changes, updates, revisions, and troubleshooting on the www.MHSBC.com website as events unfold. These changes, etc. occur frequently throughout the year requiring hands-on attention by the webmaster.

The following list itemizes some features that available on the www.MHSBC.com website.

- 1. The website displays events taking place at the Mennonite Heritage Museum on the webpage https://www.mhsbc.com/futureevents/mhm\_events.php and on the entry webpage https://www.mhsbc.com/.
- 2. In cooperation with the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies at The University of Winnipeg, their events such as lectures by scholars from around the world are now being displayed along with a link for further information.
- 3. We now have a website security certificate that increases the security of the www.MHSBC.com website. The URL of the website now starts with https:// instead of http://, although both ways work the same way. An https connection is protected in that data sent between you and the website is encrypted and keeps the information private. It also tells a user's browser that we actually are who we claim to be.
- 4. The Genealogies and Family Histories webpage has the list of family histories available at MHSBC. Thanks to Robert Martens it was updated in December, 2022 with a PDF down loadable document. Users can also locate a reference to their family history on the web page indexed by title and cross-referenced by name. This web page is popular. Perhaps we should advertise its availability in R&B and request families to submit their information if they have not already done so (and welcome a donation). (https://www.mhsbc.com/famhistories.php)
- 5. Members of the Society can pay their membership dues online with PayPal. (https://www.mhsbc.com/memberships.php)
- 6. Donations to MHSBC can be made by way of PayPal (https://www.mhsbc.com/donations.php) Sponsors can view and print a .PDF document with sponsorship details (https://www.mhsbc.com/pdfs/mhsbc\_sponsor\_event.pdf ).
- 7. Potential volunteers can complete and submit our online membership and volunteer form. https://www.mhsbc.com/volunteers.php)
- 8. Tickets to events like writers' workshops can be purchased online through PayPal on the https://www.mhsbc.com/futureevents/purchase\_event.php) webpage.
- 9. MHSBC events and meetings are posted on the website entry page and the Future Events web page https://www.mhsbc.com/futureevents/mhsbc\_events.php
- 10. Once the event is over, the event details are transferred to the Past Events web page. (https://www.mhsbc.com/pastevents.php) This web page provides a list of past events, accessible by year, going back over a decade to November 2004.
- 11. Editions of Roots and Branches are available on line one year after publication, archived back to 1995. The URL for this webpage has been changed to https://www.mhsbc.com/periodical.php.

It has been my pleasure to continue working on these tasks this year.

Respectfully submitted by Elmer G. Wiens, Webmaster

## **Membership Committee**

As of December, 2022 we had a total of 141 paid members for the year plus 10 lifetime members (3@\$750), plus 10 honorary members.

Paid members included:

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Fraser Valley & Vancouver = 111
BC = 16
Alberta = 6
Saskatchewan = 2
Manitoba = 2
Ontario = 4
Lithuania = 1
US = 6
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Our honorary members include:

- 1. Giesbrecht, David
- 2. Janzen, Tim & Rachael
- 3. Konrad, John
- 4. Neudorf, Peter
- 5. Pauls, Helen Rose
- 6. Penner, Jack
- 7. Price, Louise Bergen
- 8. Redekop, Peter
- 9. Sawatsky, Lora
- 10. Toews, John B & Lillian

Mandate of the Membership Committee: (as set out by board decision of May 20, 2015)

The goals of a membership committee is to:

- increase membership,
- recruit new members,
- communicate with members,
- remind members of renewals, and
- address membership related issues

Benefits of MHSBC Membership:

- Support the preservation of MHSBC
- Receive the MHSBC Roots & Branches magazine 3 times a year
- Receive invitations to MHSBC events
- Entitled to 10% off purchase of MHSBC Archive books, CD's, DVD's
- Voting privileges at AGM (April of each year)
- Become familiar with and preserve the history of Mennonites

The membership year is January to December. Persons joining mid-year receive all back issues for that year, at time of payment.

## **Financial Report**

#### A. Introduction

As is obvious from my presence, Rod Ewert is no longer the Treasurer of MHSBC. For those that do not know me, my name is Marvin Rempel. I was asked to join the Board late last year in the capacity of Treasurer after Rod resigned.

Let me provide a brief introduction to myself. I have a Bachelor of Business Administration from SFU. I completed the 4th level of the CGA program when it existed.

Starting before the introduction of the GST in Canada and the fall of the Berlin wall, I have worked in a number of administrative, IT and accounting capacities. My accounting, administrative, and IT experience started in radio broadcasting before moving on to wholesale automotive radio distribution, shipping, methanol manufacturing, telecommunications, wholesale distribution, and more recently, the non-profit sector and architectural services.

While accounting principles are consistent across industries, the presentation and the financial numbers emphasized can vary widely.

My LinkedIn profile and my resume, has the following summary at the top:

"The numbers help tell a story. Helping organizations understand their story to improve productivity, efficiency and effectiveness."

As a result, my presentation of the results will be a little bit different than those of my predecessors. As I become more familiar with the society and the financial presentation for non-profit societies, I will continue to make adjustments to meet the needs of all financial stakeholders.

#### **B.** Financial Statements

What do the financial statements of the society tell us?

Statement of Funds and Equity

- a. The statement of Funds and Equity is a snapshot in time of the society's resources and obligations at the end of 2022.
- b. The society's assets consist primarily of cash and financial instruments distributed across cash holdings and two major funds invested with Edward Jones. These funds are the Mennonites in BC History Project and the MHSBC Endowment Fund.
- c. Accounts receivable are primarily the result of the cost sharing arrangement with the Museum and a GST refund from the government.
- d. The society carries no debt and has no outstanding payables.
- e. The society's two major endowment funds experienced a significant drop in their market value during 2022 similar to the drop experienced in 2018 before they recovered in subsequent years.
- f. Because members drive the financial results and the activities of the society, a summary of the number of members over the last five years is included at the bottom.

Statement of Receipts and Disbursements

- a. This statement shows the financial impact of the activities undertaken by the society over the last 5 years. In addition, the statement shows how the society did in 2022 compared to its budget allocations.
- b. The presentation of the numbers in this document has been altered significantly to ideally summarize the numbers in a more understandable format for users and to provide relevant information for financial decision-making by the Board.

Disbursements and reductions are reflected as negative numbers rather than the positive values used for disbursements in prior years

- c. Cost sharing with the Museum has been incorporated into the relevant disbursement areas rather than shown as a separate item.
- d. Despite a tough economic year coming out of the COVID pandemic, members were exceedingly generous bringing donations back to the pre-pandemic levels experienced in 2019.
- e. On the other hand, membership fees have not yet recovered to their pre-pandemic levels.
- f. While fund-raising and events resumed in 2022, the \$9,380 in funds received were slightly below the \$9,551 in costs used to hold the events.
- g. However, genealogy services and retail sales of DVDs, CDs, and tapes recovered nicely providing the society with \$5,824 in receipts against \$1,327 in direct costs.
- h. On the disbursements side of the ledger, despite rent costs, wages and benefits, and administrative costs being higher than anticipated in the budget, operational expenses were \$7,748 lower than anticipated primarily because project expenses for the Mennonites in BC history project were roughly \$10,000 lower than anticipated.
   Despite ongoing work by volunteers, no funds were disbursed in 2022 for document digitization.

Despite ongoing work by volunteers, no funds were disbursed in 2022 for document digitization or the EWZ project.

#### **Operational Summary**

- a. This is a new section in the financial statements. It is an expanded version of a single line item shown at the end of last year's statements as operational surplus/(deficit). This section has been expanded to better illuminate what this number represents.
- b. The purpose of this item is to show a summary of the society's activities without the impact of one-time events such as the external financial impact on the endowment funds and project activity. This is a reflection of the year-to-year operations of the society without the external "noise".
- c. With the exception of 2019, the society has been running consistent operational deficits. They are not serious but they are something that requires attention.

The deficit of \$6,195 in 2022 represents roughly 5% of receipts when the investment adjustment to market value for the endowment funds is taken out.

Instead of looking for cost cutting opportunities, the best way to address this situation is by seeking out new profitable opportunities to provide value to our clients and customers.

Submitted by Marvin Rempel Treasurer