

## 7 Where is the Spirit?

The previous section outlined the “why” of MCC advocacy. This section identifies some of the principles that guide our work. In other words, this section describes the spirituality that informs MCC’s speaking to government. Perhaps these elements can guide your own advocacy.



“  
But let justice roll  
down like waters,  
and righteousness  
like an ever-flowing  
stream.

*Amos 5:24*



**Solidarity.** MCC’s advocacy efforts arise out of our program work – more specifically, from the call of partners that we work with in Canada and around the world. We try to respond to the longing of real people for justice, peace and human dignity, and we call for government actions and policies that will address those longings. We are inspired by the biblical call to “speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:9). But more than speaking for, we seek to speak with those who demand justice. In other words, we try to be about solidarity. In the words of Samantha Baker Evens, a mission worker among the poor in Cambodia, “We are not ‘a voice for the voiceless;’ we lend our privilege as a megaphone.”

**Integrity.** We know that words and deeds go together; deeds in fact give integrity to words (James 2:14-17). MCC has learned over the years that the words we speak and write to government have weight when they are rooted in the practices of MCC’s supporting congregations and communities as they do God’s work in the world. We can only urge our government to welcome refugees because the communities that support us are willing and ready to sponsor refugees. We can only call on the government to implement restorative justice approaches within the corrections system because ordinary MCC supporters are involved in programs like prison visitation, victim assistance, or Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA). We depend on the practical service and witness of our supporting communities to give our work integrity.

“ **Advocacy is not the only tool we need to use in caring for others, but there are definitely times when our best and most helpful response to pain and suffering in this world is to amplify the voice of our partners, our brothers and sisters, and direct this voice toward those who can change the policies and practices that cause suffering.** *Bonnie Klassen*

**Respect.** In our advocacy work, we try to be respectful of all people in the political system — to treat them as we would wish to be treated (Matthew 7:12), whether we agree with them or not. We try not to be drawn into partisan debates, although we admit that this is sometimes very difficult. Sometimes our commitment to truth-telling makes us want to loudly denounce particular people or policies (and perhaps there is a time for that). We remind ourselves that no one political party has a monopoly on the truth and that each person in “the system” is a child of God, worthy of our respect and consideration.

**Humility.** We seek to be humble in our witness to government, remembering Paul’s words to “do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3). Although we try to listen carefully to our partners, do our research, and get our facts right, we recognize there are times when we don’t have all the information or the wisdom needed to speak. Sometimes we simply don’t have practical alternatives to suggest.

**Lament.** Sometimes, when we as MCC workers listen well and are really honest with ourselves, we glimpse the insight that we – as individuals, as an organization, as a church – are part of the problem, rather than the solution. Even though we may consider ourselves advocates for social justice, at times our partners remind us otherwise. Our Indigenous partners, for example, remind us of the ways that Mennonites



have participated in and benefited from the colonial history of Canada, and the ways that MCC continues to perpetuate unequal relationships with Indigenous peoples. At times, we can only confess, weep and lament.

**Hope.** Our advocacy is inspired by a big hope — an eschatological hope. There are many disappointments in advocacy work. As much as we hope for the success of a change in policy, or an amendment to a bill, or some helpful new regulations, the results often fall short of our goals. Yet if we depended on this kind of “success” to carry on, we probably would abandon the task. As people of faith, we are assured that the [arc of the universe bends towards justice](#). We remember the promise that God’s reign of justice and peace will surely come (Isaiah 2:1-5, Luke 4:18-19). And so we carry on, believing that God blesses our efforts and makes them bear fruit in ways we may not see.

