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"I will be with you every day." Jesus makes this statement right at the end of what we call The Great Commission. Not only on Sundays or the days that I pay attention to Him. Not only on the days of peace or when the church is thriving. Not just on the days when people suffer or when the church breaks. But on every day. Whether we notice or not, Jesus is with us!

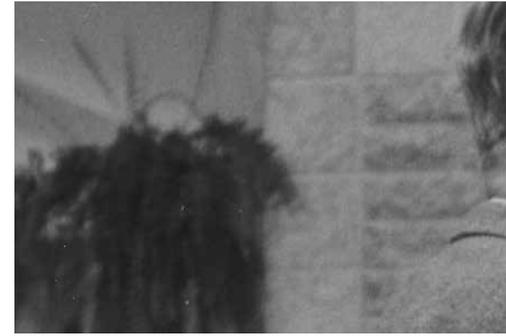
I've chosen three categories that represent significant discipleship and community values to capture my time in this role.

1. Preferred Culture

Essentially, preferred culture is a way to place a tag line on the behaviour we want from people. Our preferred culture, as the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba (MBCM), includes times where we work out our faith together. Some examples:

Nuts and Bolts: Manitoba pastors and leaders gather at this equipping event. If you are interested, mention it to your pastor and come along! Short presentations on a church-related topic are followed by significant processing and group discussion. We don't always come out with grand statements of theology or revolutionary new systems, but we do learn from another and leave with meaningful relationships. I hope to continue this good work.

Refresh: Our pastor and spouse retreats are a refreshing getaway. Together we experience collegial comfort while embracing the opportunity for growth.



Assembly: At Assembly 2019, we processed an article of our confession together, thanks to the initiative of the National Faith and Life Team. We will continue addressing our shared convictions and imagining the way they meet the needs of our churches and communities.

Collaborative conversations: A crucial ingredient for the success of the Collaborative Model is you! Collaborative conversations certainly do happen at Nuts and Bolts, Refresh and Assembly. We will continually foster more creative ways to engage in these discussions.

2. Change management

My 40 something-year-old body knows that everything is constantly changing. You can probably relate. How much should we work to manage that change? Is that even possible or worth the effort? My several months of exercise, followed by months of refusal to exercise, communicates that at best, I'm trying. But I know it's worth it, and the same goes for the change in the church.

The Holy Spirit is our ultimate source of wisdom in any change management system, yet God has chosen to partner with us mere humans. That partnership includes good work on our part. It's been life-giving to work at managing change with:

Church boards: Members of church boards desire to help the bride of Christ, which is excellent work! I have enjoyed working with a few boards on vision, strategy and pastoral care.



Search Committees: I've sat with search committees as they face the challenge of hiring a new pastor. I am encouraged by the wisdom, will and ingenuity of these excellent leaders of all ages. Hiring a great pastor can significantly impact the health of a church, and I'm grateful to be a part of that.

Pastors: They can be the coolest and most joyful leaders. They can also be really competitive, driven and sometimes even careless. Pastors aren't weird; they're just people who are called into a life of servant leadership. I love these people. They genuinely care about your wellbeing and future.

I get to watch Pastors care for each other. They laugh, cry and pray together. They find courage and strength from one another. Don't forget to love the pastor in your life; they need it. And if you are a pastor, thank you!

3. The Mess

We all know life is messy, and most of us have lived it. Four words from a leadership podcast by pastor and author Andy Stanley have stuck with me for many years, "Walk toward the mess."

'Walk' communicates a steady, deliberate action. 'Toward' encourages us not to ignore or run away from the mess. We aren't perfect, and we can't expect everyone else to be either, even when that's painful. And then there's the 'mess'. At times the mess is some junk lying around, and sometimes it's incredibly messy.

Enough metaphors. You've probably seen it. It looks like a fight between two groups of people in the church; a pastor that displayed embarrassing or even inappro-

priate behaviour; money being mismanaged, or even worse, stolen. Neglect, cheating, threats, sexual and emotional abuse have been a part of our past and present. We will probably face them in the future too. How do we walk toward the mess? What good can come from the pain?

I've walked toward a few messes in the past few months, and it's not easy. I have wept with people in our churches who have experienced a great deal of pain. I've been a part of good amid these messes, and could not have done that alone. The MBCM Staff and board have been an invaluable support. In the face of pain and disappointment, I cling to this one truth: Jesus is with us every single day.

"Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age." Matthew 28:20b CEB