



Participants at PCO East, held in Ontario, October, 2021.

PHOTO: KRISTI LEE

National Faith and Life Team Report for MBCM Assembly 2022

Mandate

According to the new Collaborative Unified Strategic Plan (CUSP), we as a Conference exist “to cultivate a community and culture of healthy disciple-making churches and ministries, faithfully joining Jesus in his mission.” The National Faith and Life Team (NFLT) exists to articulate and safeguard Mennonite Brethren theological convictions, produce theological and pastoral resources, and provide discernment and guidance on current issues. The National Faith and Life Team stewards the Confession of Faith on behalf of the Conference.

NFLT’s ongoing responsibilities include providing:

1. Assessment tools for spiritual and confessional health of our churches and leaders
2. Resources for spiritual and theological health in the MB Church of Canada
3. Updates and upkeep of the Confession of Faith
4. Opportunities to engage with the Confession of Faith
5. Opportunities for study conferences and peer clusters
6. Credentialing processes, on-going pastoral support, and professional development of pastors
7. Surveys of church and pastoral health, engagement, and trends

NFLT in 2021

As has been necessary for all of us in 2021, the NFLT has been adjusting, pivoting, and creatively responding to unexpected events. In January, our National Director, Ingrid Reichard, took a medical leave of absence which was extended throughout the calendar year. We tried to cover her absence with a working team of present NFLT members (Elton DaSilva, Andrew Dyck, Karen West, Ken Esau) but, since Ingrid’s return has been delayed, the Executive Board appointed Ken Esau as half-time Interim Director of the NFLT beginning October 1.

In spite of these challenges and all of the realities 2021 brought our way, the NFLT has experienced a busy year of online meetings as we moved forward to fulfill our mandate (as well as we could by God’s grace). Some of the highlights of the year include:

- We produced resources for the **2021 CCMBC Week of Prayer**.
- The National Assembly in June approved our proposed revision of **Article 8 (Baptism)**. We have also produced new Article 8 resource materials (Explanatory Notes and FAQs) which are available in the most recent printing of our MB Confession of Faith.
- We have updated what had been called the “Brief Edition” or “Digest Edition” of our Confession of Faith and renamed it the “**Summary Edition**.” As part of this, we have retired what was referred to as the “**Sidewalk Version**” since we believe it is inadequate to express our rich MB theological identity.
- We have distributed (via our Provincial Conference leaders) a Draft Document entitled: “**Vaccinations & Living Well for Jesus**.” This document was created to assist leaders and churches as they discuss and discern how we can walk together

faithfully in this very divisive moment.

- We have approved an expanded “**Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics**” for each Provincial Conference to use for its credentialed leaders. This code of ethics clarifies expected positive ministry commitments and priorities, as well as describes behaviors that are contrary to our shared values.
- We have participated with ONMB leadership in their in-person **Pastoral Credentialing Orientation (PCO)** which was held in St Catherines in October. We were blessed by the participation of a number of Indigenous leaders who are moving toward credentialing. A second PCO hosted by BCMB in a monthly online format has also just recently been completed. We hope to host another fully in-person event in 2023.
- We also hosted a “**Virtual EQUIP-Mini**” (November 2021) with Dr. David Fitch around the topic of “Engaging Healthy Conversations.” We are excited to host an in-person event in November 2022.

While we celebrate these highlights from 2021, we continue to engage prayerfully and thoughtfully around the following:

- Partially in response to an “Open Letter” asking us to increase conversation about how MBs engage with LGBTQ+ individuals inside and outside of our churches, we have created two documents. One is a document that describes our biblical theological commitments (“**Loving Well our LGB Neighbours, Friends, and Family**”) and the other is a shorter document expressing our love and invitational posture toward LGBTQ+ individuals who are in our churches or are visitors to our churches (“**MB Welcome to LGBTQ+**”). We plan on distributing these as DRAFTS in order to continue to hear from our MB leaders and churches about what biblical faithfulness and Jesus’ love look like. The recent passing of Bill C-4 has become part of our conversations. We are committed to biblical orthodoxy and practice as we seek further clarity around this new legislation.
- We are also exploring questions around what it means for MB leaders and churches to affirm, agree with, and live in accordance with our MB Confession of Faith.
- Just as we did for Article 8, we are working on updating our Confession of Faith resources for the remaining 17 Articles. We believe that this clarity will assist us in discipleship, MB identity, and shared mission.

We continue to ask you to pray for our team as we meet together to discern how we as MBs can be faithful to Jesus in our present Canadian context. If you have suggestions, encouragements, or thoughts, feel free to email them to us at listeningwell@mbchurches.ca May 2022 be a year where we—more than ever—see, experience, and participate in God’s Kingdom work in the world!



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National Faith and Life Team

National Faith and Life Team

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