



## National Faith & Life Director Report for 2023 Provincial Conventions

### 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.

### ACTIVITIES IN 2022

This has been my first full year in this role, half-time Interim Director from January to April, full-time Interim Director from May to October, and now full-time Director starting in November. I want to thank our former National Director, Ingrid Reichard, for her contributions during her time in this role. I also want to thank the NFLT, the CCMBC Executive Board, as well as the CCMBC Staff Team for their very gracious welcoming of me to this role. I have been so blessed and encouraged by these individuals who have become not only colleagues but family.

Some of the highlights of the year include:

- We produced a resource for the **2022 CCMBC Week of Prayer entitled “BLESS!”** (If you missed this resource, you can still access it on the CCMBC website and pray through it now in 2023).

- We produced a **Collaborative National Credentialing Policy** which means that our six provincial conferences will be much more unified around credentialing expectations and even the processes for reviewing credentialed leaders who appear to be moving away from the commitments associated with credentialing status. We also rewrote the policy related to candidates from whom the formal and academic structures of credentialing create an almost impossible barrier. This is now called the **Mentor-Based Credentialing Policy**.
- In light of the many questions surrounding the nature and use of our Confession of Faith that have been asked of us recently (e.g., what does it mean to “affirm” the Confession of Faith?; is the Confession of Faith prescriptive and normative—or something else?; are there “two tiers” in our Confession of Faith?; what happens when a church/leader moves away from affirming and supporting the MB Confession of Faith?; what does a “community hermeneutic” actually look like?; when would we seek to change the Confession of Faith?), we have approved a new **Introduction to the MB Confession of Faith**. This introduction will replace the existing “Nature and Function of the Confession.”
- We have had several requests to be involved in dispute resolution between credentialed holders or applicants for credentialing and their provincial MB conference credentialing bodies. As a result, we created the **NFLT Review Process Policy** to attempt to address these concerns. We have put significant effort into the implementation of this policy but feel that we as an NFLT do not have the resources and expertise to deal with some of these conflicts. We are undecided about whether we should offer ourselves for this purpose in the future.
- We are embarking on the replacement of the 1999/2000 supplementary resources (Commentary and Pastoral Application) for each of our 18 Articles. This year we approved in principle the **Explanatory Notes for Article 1**. We have posted them on our website and are inviting feedback before we give final approval.

While we celebrate these highlights from 2022, we continue to engage prayerfully and thoughtfully around the following:

- For 2023, we have decided to move from a Prayer Week to a Monthly Prayer Focus. Our monthly theme relates to “**Holy Spirit—Fill Us!**” Each prayer guide will be available monthly by email and through the *MB Herald*.
- We are excited to oversee the **Pastors Credentialing Orientation** June 6-8, 2023 in Winnipeg. This is always a wonderful time of getting to meet new church leaders and welcoming them into our family.
- We are also excited about the return of an in-person **Equip** conference to be held October 26-28, 2023 at Northview Church in Abbotsford. The theme is **Fire and Ashes: Why Church? Why MB?** We will be addressing key questions around whether the gathered local church body and a denominational national (and international) family are still worth all the effort in the midst of challenges both internal and external.
- We have been asked for a procedure policy related to affiliation, review, and even the ending of affiliation for local MB congregations—so we are working through a draft version of a **Collaborative National Church Affiliation and Review Policy**. It is helpful when we can have clear, open, and transparent policies around these questions that are consistent across our provincial MB conferences.
- We have also been asked for a procedure policy related to when and how the NFLT might embark on the review and possible amendment of an article in our MB Confession of Faith. We will be working through a draft version of a **CCMBC MB Confession of Faith Amendment Procedure Policy**.
- We are hoping to give final approval to updated and revised **Explanatory Notes** for Confession

of Faith Article 2: Revelation of God; Article 6: Nature of the Church; and Article 7: Mission of the Church. This is part of our ongoing project.

- We have been asked to provide resources related to Christians and **gender questions**, and **Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD)**. At this point, we have not been able to respond fully to these requests but are recommending helpful resources available from others (e.g., the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Posture Shift, etc.). We are also exploring the implications of our **2006 Women in Ministry Resolution** in the light of diversity of views in our national family.

Besides all of these more formal involvements, I had the privilege this past year of verbally reporting to most of the provincial MB conventions in-person or online; attending the ICOMB meetings held in Curitiba, Brazil; attending the USMB pastors gathering and convention in Kansas City, MO; and representing CCMBC and the NFLT in various preaching, teaching, and board contexts.

The questions that we are facing within our national MB family are both urgent and significant ones affecting the very fabric of our unity. What does it look like to be a church family faithful to Jesus (and the character of Jesus as described in the fruit of the Spirit list from Galatians 5), scriptural teaching, and God’s Kingdom mission at this exact moment? We need God’s wisdom and your prayers for such a time as this. **May 2023 be a year where we—more than ever—worship King Jesus while we see, experience, and participate in God’s Kingdom work in the world!**

If you have suggestions, encouragements, or thoughts, feel free to email them to us at [listeningwell@mbchurches.ca](mailto:listeningwell@mbchurches.ca)



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