



Mennonite Church Canada **2017 Special Delegate Assembly** **Future Directions: Covenant New**

Conversation Starter for Congregations

In preparation for Special Delegate Assembly, Oct. 13-15, 2017
re: Future Directions Process

Society is changing how people connect to the church. In this shifting landscape, the church has an opportunity to strengthen its role as a place of transformation, even as society seems to push the church toward the margins.

Our old ways of being church – at every level – need to adjust to this shifting ground. For example, regular church attendance today means 1-2 times/month; generous givers have more good causes to support than ever before; overall, loyal, committed giving to the church at the regional and national levels continues to decline.

However, these new circumstances present us with a unique opportunity to re-think how we offer meaning, purpose and connection to people – in our neighbourhoods, cities, and beyond into the world – who are looking for meaning beyond traditional faith communities. Leaders of our Area Churches and MC Canada have had many long conversations about how to support our congregations' best imaginings in these changing times. Across Canada, many pastors, leaders, and church members have contributed to these discussions.

From Oct. 13-17, congregational delegates will gather in Wpg. to discern the Final Report and recommendations on our Future Directions process. The proposal strives to:

- Strengthen local Congregations as centres of worship and mission
- Enhance Area Churches to better resource congregations in their work
- Re-imagine Mennonite Church Canada as our connecting point for Mennonite identity and witness.

Our current Vision: Healing and Hope statement continues to undergird our understanding of what God calls us to as a church:

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

In light of Vision: Healing and Hope, what do you hope your congregation will look like in your neighbourhood in the next 5, 10, or 20 years? What does it mean for your congregation to be connected with other Mennonite churches as it moves into the future? What resources will it need to remain vibrant and faithful in its mission and ministry? Congregations are encouraged to prepare for this Special Assembly by meeting with their delegates, pastors, and leaders in advance of this assembly.

Below are some questions to help spark discussions. Take notes and help your delegates bring your best thoughts with them to the Special Delegate Assembly.

Conversation starters:

- When you imagine new opportunities, or think about your congregation's existing outreach into its surrounding community, and into the world beyond, how does being a Mennonite church affect your congregation's ministry and mission locally/regionally?
 - o Nationally?
 - o Around the world?
- To receive the supports your congregation and pastor(s)/leader(s) would need locally/regionally, nationally, and around the world, would you a) decrease, b) maintain, or c) increase the percentage your congregational budget currently allocates to your area/national church? Why?
- As you think about your Area Church, what gifts (not limited to finances) does it have that would strengthen congregations, connections, and Mennonite identity across the country?
- What kind of connections does your congregation have with your Area Church or other congregations elsewhere in Canada? What might you share about your experience that would be helpful to other Congregations?