

“Family Covenant”

Of the Ontario Conference of MB Churches

Families are interesting. You don't choose them. You can't control them, and you can rarely predict the twists and turns they'll take over time. But you're always part of them. In the MB family, most of us aren't ethnically “Mennonite.” At least half of us aren't “Brethren” (in the truest sense of the word). But just as we know that following Christ personally and individually necessitates being deeply connected to a healthy local church, we hold the same to be true for churches themselves, that they too are at their best when connected to a healthy, larger family. That's why our conference of churches exists.

In that spirit, we (re-)invite each of our Ontario MB churches, through their senior staff and leadership/elder boards, to their place at the MB family “table;” to embrace a fresh sense of belonging and commitment to our larger family of churches and to the collective impact we believe we're called to make, as expressed through this “Family Covenant.”

Our covenant commitment as churches, to and with one another, is aligned with our national strategic framework focusing on Spiritual Health & Theology, Leadership Development, and Mission, and is organized around five strategic initiatives within Ontario, in order to bring clarity, unity, and purpose among our ONMB family of churches:

***NOTE:** These shared commitments represent what we believe we can do better together than alone. We appreciate that all our churches lead by example on some points, while having room to grow on others. Through this Family Covenant, we desire a commitment to direction more than perfection and to covenant more than contract. In that spirit, we invite you into a **5-year transition** toward the full scope of each statement, inaugurating a rhythm of covenant review, renewal, and re-affirmation among our member churches anticipated every 5 years.*

1) Establishing Holistic Gospel Presence

- Commit to proclaiming and embodying the person, work, and impact of Jesus as the highest “banner” raised in our churches; higher than individual church brands and distinctions, and higher than our MB “banner.”
- Align teaching and ministry with our MB Confession of Faith while participating in and submitting to the ongoing review, refinement, interpretation, and application of the Confession, as directed by our Faith and Life Team(s).
- Develop, support, and sustain activities of relief, reconciliation, compassion, justice, and peacemaking for the poor and marginalized, both locally and globally, calling disciples to express the gospel in both word and deed.

2) Developing Leaders

- Ensure all teaching and pastoral staff are affirmed through our MB credentialing process, ideally as part of hiring or by the end of their first year of pastoral ministry (and for existing uncredentialed staff, as soon as possible).
- Where possible, participate in ongoing ONMB, Multiply, or MB Seminary leadership development initiatives and educational opportunities such as Pastors' & Leaders' Day, *Awake*, and various seminary offerings, in order to further hone the skills required to navigate faith and discipleship in today's context.
- Encourage and intentionally develop young leaders in your context. Where possible, participate in and leverage leadership development initiatives such as *Leaders' Collective*, *SOAR*, *Action*, *Trek*, etc.
- Where possible, promote Camp Crossroads to children and students as an investment opportunity into their discipleship and leadership development.

3) Building Community

- Make every effort to involve leaders in networking experiences such as “Team of Teams” monthly calls, regional meetings, pastoral clusters, and our annual convention.
- Relate with other leaders in a spirit of trust and accountability, always assuming the best intentions and taking responsibility for conflict resolution or relational reconciliation when necessary.
- Speak well of and seek opportunities to encourage or support sibling churches.

4) Multiplying Churches

- Commit to the vision of becoming churches that multiply churches by: supporting church planting partnerships, identifying potential planters within your community, or through multi-site or regional partnership initiatives.
- Pray for our church planters and new congregations throughout the province.
- Be available for mentorship and support of new church leaders in your region.

5) Resourcing Ministry

- Support and promote to staff and congregation the financial and operational resources and benefits provided by the conference.
- Actively share unique expertise, experience, skill sets, and learnings with other MB churches.
- Practice a “corporate tithe” of financial investment in order to expand the impact of God’s love beyond any of our individual local churches, **committing at least half of this “tithe”** (i.e. 5% of budget) to the conference (provincial and national combined) in order to invest in and expand our collective ONMB and CCMBC kingdom initiatives. Communicate your conference contribution at the outset of each fiscal year and submit contributions quarterly in order to assist with planning and implementation.

The staff and Board of the Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches is inviting member churches, as represented by their leadership, to sign this covenant, to and with one another, as a renewed and renewable statement of their commitment to our denominational church family. We realize that each church is unique and so we eagerly welcome heartfelt conversations to help all of us grow toward this deeper place of connection and commitment, for the sake of Christ and each other.

Through signing this covenant, the leadership of our church family, _____, desires to live and serve in partnership with the larger church family of Ontario Mennonite Brethren Churches. We give thanks for our place at the table and embrace the privilege of sharing it with our extended family of faith.

Senior Leadership

Lead/Senior Pastor

Date:

Board Chair

Date: