



## ONMB Credentialing Policy

### 1.0 Rationale for the Credentialing of ONMB Leaders

The credentialing process is a key element in the formation of what we often describe as a “covenant relationship” or a “ministry covenant” with the provincial and national MB family. Credentialing establishes the foundation for mutual care and mutual obligations between the local leader and the provincial and national MB family. In credentialing, the leader commits to shared theological and ethical convictions as articulated in the MB Confession of Faith (1999; 2021), to shared mission, and to shared relationships of accountability and support. The leader also commits to live according to the Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics. The provincial conference leadership and the Provincial Faith and Life Team (PFLT) covenant themselves as well to care for and support the ministry of the credentialed leader from this point on.

The ONMB Faith & Life Team (FLT) is responsible to provide credentialing for qualified leaders serving within ONMB congregations and in various spiritual leadership and/or teaching roles in MB organizations. There are several reasons for this careful process:

- On behalf of the larger ONMB family, the FLT is responsible to ensure that all ONMB leaders share what we believe are biblically faithful theological and ethical convictions as articulated in the MB Confession of Faith (1999; 2021). We believe that theological and ethical clarity is critical to the well-being of our ONMB family and the mission of our churches.
- The FLT also assists local ONMB congregations by having the credentialing candidate go through the rigorous process of theological, ethical, and personal reflection required for credentialing. We believe that this reflection and screening process will assist successful credential holders to be more familiar with MB theology and convictions, and ultimately be more effective in their ministry settings.
- The FLT also assists and protects credentialed leaders and their local congregations by having the leader enter into an ongoing accountability relationship with ONMB as articulated in the ONMB Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics for Credentialed Leaders.
- By credentialing qualified individuals and recommending them to the Province of Ontario for registration as a “Religious Representative,” the FLT maintains compliance with the standards of the “*Marriage Act*” for Ontario. Only leaders recognized by a local ONMB congregation will be eligible for registration.

## 2.0 Key Definitions

*2.1 Credentialing* – The process by which the provincial Faith & Life team deems a pastoral minister’s theology and life-style fit to serve in the provincial Mennonite Brethren Conference, in the role for which s/he is being considered. The credentialing process is a prerequisite to registering the pastor with the province for a license to solemnize marriages, though credentialing does not automatically lead to registration.

*2.2 Mentor-Based Credentialing Process* –For some candidates (e.g., those from a narrative culture, those who communicate well only in other languages, those with little formal higher education) the present credentialing process presents extraordinary obstacles. The Mentor-Based Credentialing Process is designed to assist qualified candidates who face one or more of these extraordinary challenges to move through and become credentialed MB leaders. See Appendix #1 (Mentor-Based Credentialing Policy) for details related to this process.

*2.3 Registration* – The legal provincial registration to solemnize marriages according to each provincial Marriage Act. The provincial MB Conferences may issue temporary registrations at the discretion of the PFLT or Provincial Conference Minister.

*2.4 Questionnaire* – the Ministry Credentialing/Ordination Questionnaire is the document owned and managed by the National Faith and Life Team (NFLT) for the purpose of gathering information regarding the personal and spiritual maturity of the candidate as well as their theological/ethical convictions particularly as they relate to our MB Confession of Faith and service within our MB family.

*2.5 Pastors Credentialing Orientation (PCO)* – A three-day seminar-style introduction to Mennonite Brethren history, theology, and polity. Successful completion of PCO is a credentialing requirement. PCO is normally held once per year alternating between Winnipeg and the Lower Mainland of BC.

*2.6 Ordination* – by the laying on of hands is the act by which the local church and the provincial conference, under the Holy Spirit’s guidance, commission men and women to the vocation of long-lasting leadership ministry. Ordination is initiated by the local congregation normally for an Open Credential holder. The ordination requirements and process are not addressed in this document, but in *Ordination: Principles and Practices* (2017).

*2.7 The MB Confession of Faith* – This is the “full-text” edition of the 17 Articles originally approved in 1999 (Articles 1-7; 9-18) and the one newly revised Article 8 approved in 2021 (See <https://www.mennonitebrethren.ca/mb-convictions/the-mb-confession-of-faith-detailed-edition/> ). Together these 18 Articles represent our national MB family’s shared theological and ethical convictions about what we believe God has spoken to us today by means of Scripture. Where Scripture is firm, our Confession is firm. However, our Confession of Faith is not a closed ever-unchanging document in areas where we believe Scripture speaks in ways that are more open or unclear to us. As a result, we may consider revision of specific articles if our Community feels that our present words have not be faithful to Scriptural truth. However, the MB Confession of Faith is a national MB family document, and thus any suggested changes require careful study, discernment, and approval from our

national family. An individual leader or even a local church is not free simply to ignore or change elements that we have agreed upon together, nor to adopt another Confession of Faith statement that conflicts with or ignores elements of our MB Confession. We expect our ONMB church family to use our MB Confession of Faith as they welcome new members and as they teach and disciple these new members.

*2.8 “Affirm” the MB Confession of Faith* –To embrace, teach, and live in alignment with the 18 Articles of the MB Confession of Faith. To affirm does not mean that one has no reservations or questions about some element of the MB Confession of Faith, or about how we should live them out in complex situations. Affirming the MB Confession of Faith is about a thoughtful and a willing allegiance and submission to our shared MB Confessional convictions both personally and publicly. Failure to demonstrate this affirmation of the MB Confession of Faith is considered a serious violation of one’s covenantal relationship with the larger ONMB Conference.

*2.9 “Covenant relationship” or “ministry covenant” with the Provincial/National MB Family* – To commit oneself to a mutually loyal and long-term relationship with the leaders and churches that are part of our Provincial and National MB family. This involves mutual commitments of care, relationship, accountability, support, and truth-telling. While the biblical word for covenant implies a life-long, “ending only in death” type of relationship (e.g., God-people; parent-child; wife-husband), we are using the word here more in the “covenant-like” sense. Covenant is not an impersonal contract with legalistic stipulations, the violation of which ends the relationship. Covenant violations challenge rather than immediately end the covenant relationship. Ideally, violations should lead to steps of restoration, reconciliation, and healing. But because local church families are more like a covenant-like relationship and not full covenants, we recognize that an individual member, leader, and/or a church, after much prayerful reflection, may choose to end their covenant relationship with the ONMB family (and/or the CCMBC family); and the ONMB family after the same process, may choose to end its ministry covenant relationship with an individual leader and/or church. While the ending of a covenant-like relationship should lead to grieving and an on-going invitation for restoration, this separation could be what love, integrity, and faithful witness requires in the moment.

*2.10 ONMB Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics for Credentialed Leaders* – This is the collection of ethical standards that all credentialed MB leaders are asked to adhere to and live in compliance with. They involve attitudinal and behavioral expectations in one’s key relationships (viz. personal, family, church, community), as well as theological commitments. Failure to live in accordance with these commitments is considered a serious violation of one’s covenantal relationship with the larger ONMB Conference and could result in a formal review of the Credentialed Leader with outcomes ranging from remediation steps, Probationary Status, or even the revoking of one’s credential. A slightly altered version of this Code exists for Non-credentialed Leaders.

### 3.0 Eligibility and Expectations

ONMB desires that a newly hired eligible leader complete the credentialing process as soon as possible after being hired in their ministry context. The credentialing process needs to be completed **within one year of the hiring start date**.

The following ONMB Ministry roles require credentialing:

1. All church staff employed at ½ time or more who carry the title “pastor” or who provide the primary leadership of a church community,
2. All ministry staff employed at ½ time or more with a spiritual leadership and/or teaching role (regardless of title), in a local church or an MB organization (such as Multiply, MB Seminary, etc.).

Individuals not on this list who are members of a ONMB congregation and desire credentialing (e.g., for Chaplaincy or Mission work in MB or non-MB organizations) must contact the ONMB office and provide a rationale for their inclusion in the credentialing process. The FLT reserves the right to make the final decision regarding this inclusion.

Credentialing is not required for staff whose roles are primarily administrative. Interim or short-term pastors may, at the discernment of the PFLT, serve without being credentialed. It is recommended that local churches require that these individuals commit themselves to the ONMB Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics for Non-credentialed Leaders.

The ONMB Minister Credential is bestowed on applicants who show clear evidence that they are:

1. Living out a **holistic and vibrant Christ-centred spiritual life**
2. Demonstrating a **clear commitment** to affirm and live out the biblical and theological convictions recorded in the MB Confession of Faith as evidenced in their preaching, teaching, and life example.
3. Possessing **ministry giftings** that fit well their specific ministry role, and **God-given wisdom** appropriate to their ministry role and level of experience.
4. Living out a personal and ministry life consistent with the **ONMB Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics for Credentialed Leaders (2021)** and are willing to enter into an ongoing accountability relationship according to this code of ethics.

ONMB Credentialed Ministers are eligible for registration as Ontario “Religious Representatives” able to officiate at weddings. They may also be eligible for the CRA clergy-housing tax allowance depending on how their ministry role fits with CRA guidelines.

**Every three years**, all ONMB Credentialed Ministers must re-affirm in writing their on-going commitment to the Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith and to the Code of Professional and Ministry Ethics.

## 4.0 ONMB Credentialing Process

In order to avoid challenging outcomes later in the process, ONMB churches working through the hiring of pastoral staff (especially Lead Pastors) should notify the ONMB Office once they have shortlisted their final candidate. The Conference Minister and a representative from the FLT can assist by connecting with the candidate prior to congregational affirmation. This conversation will make the candidate aware of the credentialing process and the expectations of credentialed ONMB Ministers. It will also help clarify for the local church and for ONMB staff whether the candidate is a good fit for these expectations. The local ONMB congregation will also be encouraged to have the new staff member sign the Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics for Non-credentialed Leaders as part of their contract obligations until the time of their receiving ONMB credential status.

Once hired into a ministry role that involves credentialing, these individuals must receive certificates of completion from CCMBC’s **Pastors Credentialing Orientation (PCO)**. If possible, PCO should be completed prior to the credentialing interview, but if this is not possible, it must be completed within **24 months** of the interview.

Applicants are required to complete the nationally approved credentialing questionnaire accessible on the ONMB website, read and respond to the suggested resources, commit themselves to the ONMB Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics, invite key individuals to provide personal references on their behalf, and submit a criminal record check to ONMB. Upon completion of these tasks, an interview will be scheduled with the ONMB FLT. Those credentialing candidates from a narrative cultural tradition can request the Narrative Credentialing Process (See Appendix #1).

This interview will involve an opportunity for the FLT to get to know the applicant (and spouse if applicable), gain clarity about responses provided in the questionnaire, hear from a ministry representative from their home congregation, and grant the appropriate credentialing status (Specialized, Open, Ordained) to the successful candidate.

### **Credentialing Categories**

Some credentialing candidates are excellent fits for their roles but do not have the leadership giftings, biblical and theological foundation, or ministry experience required for other ministry roles. As a result, ONMB has instituted three credentialing categories (Open; Specialized; Ordained) to recognize this diversity.

### **ONMB Minister—Open Credential**

The Open Credential category indicates ONMB’s highest level of endorsement and affirmation for service within the ONMB Conference and is given to those who demonstrate a mature spiritual life, a deep biblical and theological foundation consistent with the MB Confession of Faith, a diverse and adaptable reservoir of ministry skills, and overall relational and interpersonal wisdom gleaned from significant experience in ministry. (There are times when the FLT will affirm individuals with the Open Credential even though not all of these areas are equally fully developed. This is normally done in

situations where the trajectory is positive for the individual, and the ministry context provides supports for this growth to happen.)

Individuals with the Open Credential are free to pursue any suitable leadership or pastoral position within the ONMB Conference.

### **ONMB Minister—Specialized Credential**

The Specialized Credential category indicates affirmation of the individual for an associate or other specific ministry role (e.g., Children’s Ministry, Youth/Student Ministry, Worship, Chaplain, etc.). The Specialized Credential requires the same indication of spiritual maturity, integrity, relational health, and alignment with our MB Confession of faith as the Open Credential category, but it recognizes that not all applicants are called or gifted for lead or teaching pastoral leadership. Others may need further growth and mentoring before they are ready for the full responsibilities of congregational leadership. Ministers with a Specialized Credential would normally be expected to be actively supervised and mentored by Open Credential holders from within their church pastoral team.

An individual with a Specialized Credential is free to pursue a ministry role anywhere within the ONMB family that is substantially the same as that in which they were credentialed (e.g., Children’s Ministry, Youth/Student Ministry, etc.).

Those receiving a Specialized Credential designation, but later desiring an Open Credential designation, can apply for this change with the endorsement of their ministry supervisor or appropriate church leadership after a 24-month period from their prior credentialing interview. The candidate should include a 2-3 page document that explains why they are seeking this new status, rationale for how they would now fit this status, and any revisions to their Credentialing Questionnaire that they feel are relevant. The ONMB FLT and the FLT Chair will examine the application for completeness, and will help prepare the candidate for an interview with the FLT. The FLT will decide the length and format of this interview.

### **ONMB Minister—Ordination**

Ordination is initiated at the local church level and affirmed and endorsed by the Provincial Conference. As a result, ordination is at the initiation and invitation of a local ONMB congregation rather than from a candidate or from ONMB. While the FLT will hold an interview with the candidate and needs to affirm the candidate for this status, ordination is viewed as a congregation-based endorsement and does not indicate a higher level of designation or authority within the ONMB community beyond that of Open credential. Ordained leaders within the ONMB community are subject to the same expectations and requirements as other credentialed holders. While some groups see ordination as a life-long status, we consider ordination to be a limited status that could end in the same ways as all other ONMB credentials. See Section 6.0 below for a description of the various ways a credential status can end.

An ONMB congregation that desires ordination status for one of its pastors must submit a request to the ONMB Conference Minister. Ordination is only available for Open Credential holders<sup>1</sup> who have served in a leadership role within that church for a minimum of two years. Requests will be evaluated by the FLT on a case-by-case basis. Upon approval, the Conference Minister will co-ordinate a service of ordination together with the local congregation.

### **Recognition for Partial Completion of Credentialing Process**

#### **ONMB Minister—Conditional Status**

There may be situations where the FLT deems that a credentialing candidate will be a good fit for credentialing, but the candidate still needs to complete a few steps prior to them being eligible for one of the three credentialing categories (Specialized, Open, Ordained). These additional steps could involve a re-writing of part(s) of the Credentialing Questionnaire, participating in additional educational opportunities, or even working on an unresolved interpersonal conflict. Conditional Status is a step on the way to successful credentialing but does not confer credentialing status on a candidate. Conditional Status should normally be given only in situations where the required actions would not exceed a timeline of **twelve months**. Conditional Status is intended only for candidates who appear to be good fits for credentialing and close to completion. It is also intended to be a temporary status with clear timelines for the resolution of the issues involved.

### **5.0 Temporary “Religious Representative” Policy to Perform Marriages in Ontario.**

ONMB credentialed leaders (Open; Specialized; Ordained) will normally be registered with their provincial government to be religious representatives eligible to perform marriages. However, there are limited situations when the ONMB office will make application for others who request temporary marriage registration. In order to comply with the Ontario *Marriage Act*, the ONMB Conference will only make application for a temporary marriage registration for individuals who fit one of two primary categories with a proviso for “special situations.”

#### **New leaders within ONMB**

For individuals who are new to pastoral ministry within the ONMB family and who have not yet been credentialed by the FLT, temporary registrations to conduct marriages in Ontario should only be applied for within the first two years of pastoral service. Since completion of ONMB credentialing is expected within two years of the start of ministry, requests for a temporary registration beyond the two-year point will be denied (except in cases of extenuating circumstances).

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<sup>1</sup> There may be situations when a credentialed leader has a role outside the local church (e.g., chaplaincy) which would normally be eligible only for a “Specialized Credential” but the role may need “Ordination” status for recognition in the workplace. In these special circumstances, a candidate could apply for a Specialized Credential and Ordination at the same time because of the requirements of their ministry context.

### Out of Province Requests

For individuals who are not residents of Ontario, and who wish to perform a wedding in Ontario, the ONMB Conference will make application for a temporary registration for individuals who meet the following criteria:

1. They must be members in good standing of an MB church in Canada.
2. They must currently hold a ministry credential by the MB Conference in the province in which they reside, and be in good standing with their provincial conference.

### Special Situations

Where a church does not have a licensed pastor, consideration may be given to apply for temporary registration for a non-credentialed pastor/leader, although this will be a case-by-case basis and ONMB will not normally apply for more than one registration on behalf of a non-credentialed pastor/leader.

## 6.0 Cancellation or the Revoking of ONMB Credential Status

There are five situations which would normally lead to the removal or the surrender of one’s ONMB credential status (and Ontario Religious Representative status):

- 1) **If a credential holder leaves or retires from their ONMB ministry role, their credential will normally officially end at that point and be removed by the ONMB Provincial Office.** For those who desire to have their credential status continue temporarily (e.g., up to two years), they must make a request to the ONMB Conference Minister who will consider this request in consultation with the FLT. Requests will normally be considered for those who are actively seeking another ONMB ministry assignment or for retired credential holders who are serving in some unpaid ministry role connected with the ONMB family. All credentialed leaders who are granted this temporary extension must continue to live according to the expectations expressed in the ONMB Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics for Credentialed Leaders.
- 2) **If a ONMB credential holder themselves cannot in good conscience affirm, preach, and lead in ways consistent with the MB Confession of Faith, or is not living in a way consistent with the Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics,** it is expected that the credential holder will voluntarily request the ending of their ONMB credential status. The FLT will be responsible to grant these requests, but in some situations, the PFLT may take steps to revoke the credential status of the individual rather than allow them to surrender it.
- 3) **If a PFLT removes or revokes a credential after going through the steps of the Provincial Review Process (see Section 7.0).** This Review will be triggered in cases where the ONMB provincial office and/or the PFLT becomes aware of a situation where it appears that a ONMB credential holder is not affirming of the MB Confession of Faith in their preaching, teaching, and leading—and/or are violating the Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics.

[It is expected that ONMB churches and agencies will not hire, continue to employ, or provide ministry leadership or preaching/teaching opportunities for former credential holders who have



had their credential status canceled or revoked for non-affirmation of the MB Confession of Faith or for violation of the Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics. (Any special circumstances or exemptions should be approved by the FLT and Provincial Conference Minister.)]

- 4) **If a credential holder is found guilty of ministerial misconduct**, the ONMB Review Team may remove the credential. (See ONMB Ministerial Misconduct Policy.)
- 5) **If a credential holder is ministering in a church that is no longer part of ONMB** (either by request or removal) or is ministering in a church outside of the ONMB family, their ONMB credential will be cancelled.

## 7.0 Process for a Review of a ONMB Credentialed Leader

**Purpose of ONMB Review:** The purpose of any review of a credentialed ONMB leader is that there would be integrity in the theology and life of the leader; integrity in the local church’s teaching and ministry; and integrity in our larger MB family. Unless our credentialed leaders are committed (in both teaching and living) to both our Confession of Faith and our Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics, we believe that our churches—and ONMB—will be hindered in their (and our) unity, ministry, and witness.

**Values in the Review Process:** We desire that the review process would be undertaken with honesty, openness, transparency, truth, and love—all of which reflect the character of Jesus.

**Situations that Could Trigger a Review:** There are two specific situations that could lead to a review of a ONMB credentialed leader.

1. A credible indication of violation of a leader’s lived commitment to our ONMB Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics could lead to a Review.
2. A credible indication that a credentialed leader is not embracing, affirming, and preaching/teaching in ways consistent with our MB Confession of Faith could lead to a Review. This could become known by the ONMB Provincial Conference Leadership and/or the FLT by self-report (viz., expression of disagreement during Credentialing re-affirmation procedures) or by other means (viz., communication from church attendees; sermons/communication posted online; etc.).

### Process of a ONMB Review:

1. When ONMB Provincial Conference Leadership becomes aware of a potential violation of our Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics and/or dissonance with our MB Confession of Faith, the first step is to determine if this is a “credible indication” of violation.
  - If the potential violation involves an **alleged moral violation** (e.g., physical harm, sexual misconduct), the FLT Chair and/or the Provincial Conference Minister will go immediately to the ONMB Executive Board Chair who is obligated to inform the Executive Board of the alleged violation. The Executive Board is responsible to investigate these sorts of violations and involve legal authorities if the complainant alleges the breaking of laws.

- If the potential violation involves **failures related to theological commitments and/or ministry leadership**, the Provincial Conference Minister/Executive Director (or designate), the FLT Chair (or designate), and one other FLT member will do a preliminary investigation of the complaint.
  - If the preliminary investigation determines that the potential violation is not credible, they will close their review, and provide a summary of the review findings to the FLT to be minuted at the next meeting.
  - If this group determines that the report is significant enough to investigate further, the review will move to Step 2.
2. The FLT Chair will report to the larger FLT the initial indication of violation and why the ONMB Review Team considers it to be credible. The FLT Chair will initiate the following steps:
- a. Within fourteen (14) days of the beginning of Step 2, the PFLT Chair will communicate to the credentialed leader and the relevant Church Leadership Chair the initiation of a formal ONMB Review, the nature of the concerns being investigated, and the purpose and steps in the Review. The FLT Chair will also share this policy procedure document with the credentialed leader and the affected local church leadership.
  - b. The ONMB Review Team will schedule meetings with the credentialed leader and with any others who can help the Team learn all they need to complete the review.
  - c. The ONMB Review Team will meet to process their findings and make a formal recommendation to the larger FLT concerning the proper response to the alleged violation. They may conclude that:
    - After investigation, the credentialed leader is not in violation of their commitment to the MB Confession of Faith and/or the Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics. The Review ends and the decision is communicated to the credentialed leader and their local church leadership
    - After investigation, the credentialed leader is seen to be in violation of these important commitments.
    - The first option is that the Review Team will propose some sort of remedial next steps. The Review Team may recommend that the leader be placed on Probationary Status until these steps are completed. These steps could include:
      - a) The credentialed leader demonstrates measurable actions and a timeline to move away from the violation and toward faithfulness to their commitment to adhere to the Code of Personal & Ministry Ethics and the MB Confession of Faith. If these are deemed appropriate, the Review Team will recommend the ending of the Review, and the leader will at that point move from Probationary Status to their prior status.
      - b) The credentialed leader takes steps toward the righting of wrongs as much as that is possible, and if these are deemed appropriate, the Review Team will recommend the ending of the Review, and the leader will move from Probationary Status and return to their original status.

- The second option is that the violation may be of such a nature that the Review Team does not allow for remedial steps but deems it necessary to recommend the cancellation or revoking of the credentialing status immediately or at some agreed-upon date.
3. The ONMB Review Team will produce a short summary of the Review which will be kept in the ONMB PFLT files.

## **8.0 Transfer of Credentialing Status to Other Provincial Conferences**

MB leaders who have been credentialed within the previous ten years and hold a current and valid Open, Specialized, or Ordained ministry credential from another Provincial MB Conference and move to take a ministry role in ONMB congregations appropriate to their credentialing status (viz., Specialized, Open), will be able to participate in a streamlined credentialing process with ONMB. They will be asked to submit their original Credentialing Questionnaire to the FLT along with 1-2 pages of updates/reflections. They will be required to sign the updated ONMB Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics and provide a current Criminal Record Check. The FLT will schedule a shorter interview meeting to get to know the candidate and confer the appropriate ONMB Credential status.

This interview will involve an opportunity for the FLT to get to know the credentialed leader (and spouse if applicable), gain clarity about responses provided in the questionnaire and the update, hear from a ministry representative from their new congregation, and affirm the candidate for ministry with ONMB.

## **8.0 Limited Dispute Procedure**

If a credentialed leader or a candidate for credentialing believes that the FLT has made a decision related to their credentialing status that has been adversely affected by procedures not being open and transparent—or by misunderstandings—that individual can contact the CCMBC National Faith & Life Director and request an NFLT Review of the process. See *NFLT Review Procedure Policy: Appendix #2*.

## **9.0 Privacy Policy**

All credentialing documentation will be stored, shared, and destroyed in keeping with the provincial privacy legislation. The information requested in the Ministry Credentialing/ Ordination Questionnaire may be accessed only by those within the Mennonite Brethren Conference who have been designated to determine the candidate’s suitability for credentialing in the indicated ministry role. Information from the questionnaire may not be shared without the candidate’s permission. The questionnaire will be kept by the ONMB conference office in confidentiality and in a safe and secure location.

## Appendix #1



# Mentor-Based Credentialing Policy

## Rationale for Policy

The current conventional MB credentialing process involving the candidate’s completion of a lengthy and detailed Credentialing Questionnaire and a careful PFLT interview presupposes familiarity and skills in oral and written communication most often produced through post-secondary education (viz., biblical/theological studies from a Bible College or Seminary). There are qualified candidates for whom this robust process represents a significant obstacle. These candidates may come from an oral based and/or narrative culture (e.g., Indigenous leaders), have limited English skills, and/or lack the formal biblical/theological training presupposed by the Credentialing Questionnaire. For these reasons, the Mentor-Based Credentialing Policy has been created to disciple, train, and prepare for credentialing, called, gifted, and affirmed leaders who face one or more of these significant obstacles.

The mentor-based credentialing process is also designed to encourage candidates, especially those from outside our MB family of churches, to adopt and reflect our MB theological, ethical, and spiritual DNA in their ministry lives.

## Clarification

1. The Mentor-Based Credentialing Policy is not intended to lead to a watered-down, ‘weaker,’ or ‘junior level’ credentialing. Indeed, through the rigour of mentoring a candidate over a 6 to 18-month period, this process will include at least six meetings prior to the formal interview with the PFLT. The mentor-based process provides for an even more exhaustive vetting of candidates compared to those who participate in and complete the regular credentialing process. The mentor-based process has great potential for successfully nurturing our authentic evangelical-Anabaptist MB DNA in our candidates.
2. The mentor-based credentialing process will still lead to verification of a candidate’s fitness for ministry within our Canadian MB family. However, in this process, the mentor and the PFLT will work together to assess the candidate’s authenticity of faith, theological alignment with the MB Confession of Faith, and fit for ministry leadership. There are many benefits to this process including a clearer sense of a candidate’s willingness to collaborate, grow, serve, and lead within their local context.

3. Since the MB credentialing process normally expects a high degree of education, literacy, and oral proficiency (especially in English), the PFLT will need to take special consideration of the candidate's special missional context and the worldview, values, and skillset needed to minister in that context.

### The Process

1. The candidate (with or without the help of an advocate) will send a request to their Provincial Conference Office and the PFLT Chair to participate in the mentor-based credential process. This request will include an explanation of why this is the best fit for their situation and ministry context.
2. The PFLT will discern the request at either a regular meeting or one specially held for this purpose. They may choose to hold an intake interview with the candidate and advocate to discern the appropriateness of the candidate for credentialing and for the mentor-based credentialing process. The decision to approve the candidate will be based on both the candidate's information and on the recommendation of leaders who are familiar with the candidate. The PFLT holds the final decision to approve a candidate for the mentor-based credentialing process.
3. The PFLT will evaluate the request and, if approved, move toward finding a mentor most suitable to assist the candidate through the process. It is expected that the mentor would be able to assist the candidate through the entire process and be present at the final PFLT credentialing interview. (It is hoped that the mentor would be able to do this task within their own ministry role and not require additional remuneration for this service.)
4. The mentor-based credentialing process should take between six to nine months from the first meeting with the mentor until the final interview, but it could extend up to eighteen months in special situations. The mentor-based credentialing process is an opportunity for discipleship growth as well as a discernment time related to theology and alignment with the MB Confession of Faith. Therefore, it should not be hamstrung by attempting to complete the process within a particular window of time which is why a 6 to 18-month period is suggested. **The credentialing candidate is expected to attend and complete the Pastor's Credentialing Orientation as well as any other provincial conference office requirements for candidates in their province.**
5. The mentor and candidate will set up a series of at least 6-8 meetings, ideally two-to-three hours in length, for relationship-building, discipleship, teaching, training, and prayer. The conversational element of the visits allows the mentor to acquire needed information in order to identify learning outcomes and to assist the candidate in his/her competencies.
6. Mentoring methodology.

Part A: During these meetings, the Mentor will ensure that the most significant theological/discipleship topics that form the foundation of the credentialing interview are covered:

- What is your understanding of the Nature of the Triune God? (God as Father, Son, Holy Spirit)
- What is the Nature of the Gospel/Salvation/Atonement?
- What is the Nature of the Bible? (Authority; Relationship of the OT/NT)
- What is the nature/mission/purpose of the Church?
- What is the nature/importance of discipleship to the Gospel? How does the Gospel impact discipleship in the areas of sexuality/gender, peacemaking, stewardship, and creation care?
- What is God's plan for the world's future? (Return of Christ? Final Judgment? Eternal State?)

Part B: The Mentor will also encourage the candidate to discern their personal theology of leadership, as well as their understanding of personal gifts and ministry fit for their ministry context.

Over the course of these meetings, the mentor should take summary notes related to the candidate's theological/discipleship convictions in the areas noted above, as well as notes about the candidate's gifts and ministry fit for their context. The mentor will share these notes with the candidate to ensure that they are an accurate representation of the candidate's convictions.

7. At the conclusion of the mentor-based credentialing process, the mentor will submit the collected notes to the PFLT in anticipation of the final credentialing interview. In addition, the mentor will submit a summary statement to the PFLT regarding a recommendation about the candidate's readiness for credentialing and any additional steps the candidate may yet require.
8. The mentor, along with a local ministry supervisor, will accompany the candidate to the PFLT interview meeting, providing advocacy and assistance in interpreting the PFLT's inquiries for the candidate during the meeting.
9. The candidate will be considered by the PFLT for any level of credentialing available (e.g., Open, Specialized, Ordained), but this decision is at the final discretion of the PFLT. A candidate who is close to completion but is lacking in only a few areas may be given Conditional Status and provided with steps and a timeline to complete the process.



# NFLT Review Process Policy

**Description:** This document outlines the NFLT Review Process for Disputes Between Prospective or Credentialed MB Leaders and their Provincial Faith and Life Team.

**Preamble:** There will be times when disputes will arise between Prospective or Credentialed MB Leaders and their Provincial Faith and Life Team (PFLT). These disputes could result from a sense that procedures were not fair and transparent, that details were missed, or that there was a misunderstanding of either the Leader’s theological and/or ethical position or that of the MB Confession of Faith (COF). These disputes could involve (but are not limited to):

- A Prospective Candidate not being approved for Credentialing by the PFLT.
- A Prospective Candidate (or Credentialed Leader) not receiving the Credentialing status that they felt was appropriate for them.
- A Credentialed Leader coming under investigation or discipline over questions of compliance with the COF and/or the Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics.
- A Credentialed Leader having their Credential status suspended or removed by the PFLT.

**Desired Outcome:** Although not every Prospective or Credentialed MB Leader will agree with decisions made by their PFLT, it is our desire that these decisions will follow a process that has been fair, transparent, and not prone to misunderstanding. If a Prospective or Credentialed MB Leader feels that in their specific case, the process has lacked these qualities, they can ask for an NFLT Review. However, it should be noted that this review is NOT an appeal process where the NFLT imposes a final decision in favour of the candidate or in favour of the Provincial Faith and Life Team. This review process will, at the most, recommend that the PFLT revisit their decision with the individual to assess whether their earlier decision is still appropriate in light of the Review Team's report.

## **Review Process:**

**Step 1:** Prospective Candidates and MB Credentialed Leaders who believe that the PFLT’s process in their situation has not been fair and transparent, has missed key details, or has been based on a misunderstanding of the Candidate’s or Leader’s compliance with the MB COF and/or the Code of Personal and Ministry Ethics, may send a written or email request to the NFLT Director for an NFLT Review. This request should be received within 60 days of the PFLT decision and it should explain exactly why the Complainant thinks that the PFLT’s process has been inadequate.

**Step 2:** Within 14 days of receiving the request, the NFLT Director (or designate) and one other NFLT member will initiate a conversation with the complainant to clarify the nature of the complaint, and to explain the review process so that the steps and possible outcomes are understood by the complainant. If the NFLT Director (or designate) and the other NFLT member agree that the complaint fits with the criteria, and if the complainant desires to continue the process, the review moves to step three.

**Step 3:** The NFLT Director (or designate) will lead the three-person Review Team and is responsible to recruit two current NFLT members. The complainant, if they desire, can nominate one of these eligible NFLT members for this Team, and the NFLT Director will seek to recruit that member. NFLT members who are Provincial Conference Ministers, members of the PFLT involved in the dispute, or on a temporary leave from the NFLT, cannot be part of the Review Team.

**Step 4:** The three-person Review Team will meet in person or virtually at least three times:

- The whole team will meet with the complainant to hear about their concerns regarding the PFLT decision. The complainant may desire to have one person from their congregation join them for this meeting.
- The whole team will meet with representatives of the PFLT to hear their understanding of their process and their decision.
- The whole team will then meet on its own in order to reach a final decision.

The Review Team’s final decision has the following options:

- The Team could decide that, after careful review, the procedures were fair and transparent, no significant details were missed, and no significant misunderstanding existed that led the PFLT to their decision. The Review Team is not agreeing or disagreeing with the final decision. It is only saying that there do not appear to be any procedural reasons for the PFLT to revisit their decision. The Team would report this conclusion and the review process would end.
- The Team could decide that, after careful review, there is a significant concern about procedures, missing details, and/or misunderstandings which contributed to the PFLT’s decision. Again, the Review Team is not agreeing or disagreeing with the final decision. It is only saying that there do appear to be procedural reasons for the PFLT to revisit their decision. In this case, the Team would recommend that the PFLT in question meet again with the complainant to try to resolve the dispute in light of these procedural questions. The PFLT, however, is not obligated to change its final decision at this new meeting. Even with the inclusion of new information and the following of new procedures, the PFLT may still make the same final decision as before.

**Step 5:** The NFLT Review Team will submit to the NFLT its Final Report including short summaries of each of their meetings, the final decision, and the rationale for this decision. The NFLT will receive a copy of the Report before it is passed on to the Complainant and to the PFLT.



The overall process should take no more than FOUR months from the date of the initial complaint to the point where a written decision is communicated to both the complainant and the PFLT in question. This signals the completion of the Review Process.



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