

NATIONAL FAITH AND LIFE TEAM AND NFL DIRECTOR REPORT FOR 2026 PROVINCIAL CONVENTIONS

MANDATE

According to the 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 2025

It feels a bit repetitive to say the same thing every year, but I am so thankful to be working with such excellent National Faith and Life Team members, CCMBC Staff, and those on the National Ministry Team and Executive Board. These teams are made up of deeply committed praying men and women of godly character. They are an inspiration and encouragement to me each and every day. Over the course of 2025, we said good-bye to Walter Fast (MBCM) and Rick Schellenberg (SKMB) and welcomed Victor Neufeld (MBCM) and Rick Bayer (BCMB). We are very thankful for Walter and Rick’s faithful service and are also glad to have such competent replacements in Victor and Rick.

Some of the NFLT highlights for 2025 include:

- We produced a monthly “**Pray First! Pray Always!**” resource that was focused on praying intentionally through each phrase in the Lord’s Prayer.
- We gave final approval to the Explanatory Notes for **Article 5: Salvation; Article 7: Mission of the Church; Article 9: Lord’s Supper; Article 10: Discipleship; and Article 11: Marriage, Singleness, and Family** as part of our Confession of Faith Resource Revision Project.
- We are in the near final approval stage for our **NFLT Women in Ministry Leadership Updated Resource** which we hope will be available very soon on our website. This resource is not intended

as a biblical-theological guide for churches to work through (as important as that is), but an explanation of how the NFLT understands our recent history on this question, our important resolutions from 1999 and 2006, and the *Gifted, Called, and Affirmed* publication from 2008.

- We partnered with MB Seminary, ONMB, and MBCM to oversee **PCO 2025: Getting to Know the Family!** May 6-8, 2025 at Behta Darya Church (Mississauga ON) with about 30 participants. It was a wonderful event with many highlights including a guided visit and prayer walk through a core Toronto neighbourhood facilitated by a Multiply worker serving there.

The biggest event of the year was hosting **Equip 2025: The Gospel, Peacemaking, and the Kingdom** at NKMB (Winnipeg, MB). About 270 registered guests participated in plenary sessions, breakout sessions, “An Important Family Conversation” (CCMBC), and several roundtable conversations about Article 12: Society and State and Article 13: Love and Nonresistance. Recordings of most of the presentations are still available here: mennonitebrethren.ca/equip/.

Besides all of these more formal NFLT involvements, I enjoyed having many opportunities to present at provincial gatherings, local churches, and Christian schools. I wrote some of the 2025 **Q&R Corner** columns in the *MB Herald Digest* addressing such topics as a Christian Response to Donald Trump’s Election (April), the Swearing of Oaths Prohibition in Article 12 (June). I have completed an adaptation of my Equip 2025 plenary presentation for **Direction** journal to be published later in Spring 2026. It will be called “Peace, Violence, and Article 13.”

While we celebrate all the highlights from 2025 (and thank God for so many answered prayers!), we continue to engage around the following items for 2026:

- Our 2026 “**Pray First! Pray Always!**” monthly prayer columns will focus on praying for peace in the four relationship areas of life—God, others, creation, and oneself—and interceding for peace

in our churches, communities, and world. We will be hearing from a variety of different contributors again this year.

- We are working with MB Seminary, BCMB, ABMB, and SKMB to host **PCO 2026: Getting to Know the Family!** (June 2-4, 2025) at Columbia Bible College (Abbotsford, BC). (For information and registration, visit the PCO website: mennonitebrethren.ca/pcos/)
- We continue to give significant effort to our **Confession of Faith Resource Revision Project** and hope to process new explanatory notes this year for **Article 14: The Sanctity of Human Life; Article 15: Stewardship; Article 16: Work, Rest, and the Lord's Day; Article 17: Christianity and Other Faiths; and Article 18: Christ's Final Triumph.**
- A big decision this year will be whether the NFLT begins the process of review and possible revision to Article 12: Society and State and Article 13: Love and Nonresistance. We did receive some strong encouragement in that direction from registrants at Equip 2025. If we move forward with

that, the next two years will involve significant discernment, widespread feedback, and numerous rounds of approval to make that happen.

My prayer is always that everything that I do and that we do together as a family would reflect faithfully the character and mission of King Jesus and God's Kingdom. As we live into God's Kingdom story of 2026, may each church member and participant increasingly be transformed into the character of Jesus as peacemakers and disciple-makers who together model and witness to God's Kingdom! Blessings and Shalom in Jesus as you pray and serve in your family, church, and community!

If you have suggestions, encouragements, or thoughts, feel free to email them to us at listeningwell@mbchurches.ca



Ken Esau

National Faith and Life Director

2026 National Faith and Life Team



Back Row: Ryan Jantzi (ONMB), Keith Reed (MB Seminary), Matt Unruh (ONMB), Rick Bayer (BCMB), Vic Neufeld (MBCM), Richard Lougheed (AEFMQ), Phil Gunther (SKMB), Reg Toews (BCMB), Kristal Toews (MAL—BCMB), Laurence Hiebert (ABMB), Ken Esau (NFL Director)

Front Row: Cam Stuart (CCMBC National Director), Connie Maier (MAL—ONMB), Jason Dyck (MBCM), Paul Loewen (ABMB)