



Mennonite Church British Columbia COVENANT

In II Corinthians 5:17-19 Paul writes, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” (TNIV) As part of the Body of Christ, we the congregations of Mennonite Church British Columbia (MCBC), an area conference of Mennonite Church Canada, will strive to present this Gospel with the desire to lead all people to be reconciled with God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and to grow to maturity in Him. Our foundation is Jesus, “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (I Corinthians 3:11). The fully reliable and trustworthy standard for our Christian faith and life is Scripture, the Word of God.

In 1 Corinthians 12:12, the church is described as a body. “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.” The Apostle Paul encourages us to unity in Romans 15:5-6, “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

Recognizing that there are many parts within the Body of Christ, we, as part of that body, MCBC, desire to be united as one body. To that end we covenant with each other, to strive toward unity of understanding and living out the Word of God. The tenets of our faith, as described in Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, will be our guide; the Scriptures, our final authority. Together, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will move forward in unity and mutual accountability, accepting and giving direction, correction, and discipline, discerning God’s desires for our congregations and MCBC. Our elected and appointed MCBC leadership will also give guidance in this process.

A “covenant relationship” for local congregations within a renewed MCBC entails:

I. Common Commitment to Essential Doctrine & Practice

- a commitment to doctrine and practice reflecting a Biblical, Christian world-view and ethic as stated in our confession of faith and accepted statements.

II. Common Commitment to Meaningful Worship and Fellowship

- a common commitment to meaningful worship and fellowship among congregations that would be Christ-centred, relationally oriented and celebrative in nature.

III. Common Commitment to Shared Ministries

- a common commitment to ministries that cannot be effectively accomplished as individual congregations or that are better done together. The focus will be on mission, leadership training and education.

IV. Common Commitment to Discernment

• a common commitment to a community-based, timely, decision-oriented process of education, debate and discernment that strives toward the goal of oneness in Christ. This discernment will take place at the local congregation level, within the larger context of our mutual discernment and accountability.

V. Common Commitment to Mutual Accountability

• a common commitment to mutual accountability in a spirit of humility and love. This recognizes the need for ongoing dialogue between and among congregations and MCBC.

VI. Common Commitment to Service

• a common commitment to peace, justice and service in support of MCC, MDS and similar church related service programs.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF A COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP IN MCBC

1. support for and agreement with our Confession of Faith and accepted statements, in both word and action.
2. desire to support/identify/commit to the shared vision of MCBC as articulated in our vision and mission statements, and in line with Anabaptist theology and practice.
3. congregations will support and strongly encourage pastors in making every effort to participate in MCBC pastoral gatherings.
4. congregations will participate in delegate sessions and in forums for theological discernment as we continue to grow in our understanding of God's desire for our congregations in British Columbia and as the Faith and Life committee calls us to discernment.
5. congregations will make every effort to support the financial needs of MCBC as a vital part of their church ministry
6. congregations will joyfully encourage, call out and release people to serve on MCBC committees as an extension of local church ministry.
7. congregations will choose to believe the best about one another.
8. in a spirit of humility and love, congregations will commit to speak to other congregations directly about concerns they might have and likewise receive input from other congregations.
9. congregations will welcome MCBC leadership into conversations with them that will facilitate their health and growth.
10. recognition and acceptance of proactive spiritual leadership from MCBC.
11. MCBC will give leadership in dealing with congregational conflicts and distancing situations.
12. When a local congregation distances itself from common commitments, and it becomes clear that restoration of unity is no longer possible, a willingness to withdraw from the greater fellowship is expected.