



GATHERING 2025 SUMMARY

Introduction

Gathering 2025 brought together Regional Church Delegates, Congregation Representatives and Participants numbering over 400 from across MC Canada to reflect on who we are as a nationwide church, where we are going, and how we are walking together in faith. Guided by 1 Peter 4:10 “Each has a gift”, the church discerned what it means to become an Intercultural Church, to live out the priorities of our denomination, and to enhance nationwide programming.

To begin our discernment process, speakers provided input and then the 44 tables generated 619 pages of notes. *The Gift Exchange* (daily newspaper) provided initial rapid summaries of most discernment sessions – summaries that were drafted by an MC Canada staff person, edited and approved by the Listening Committee. Additionally, every page of table discussion notes was read by two students who transcribed the material. Finally, the comprehensive document was studied by at least one MC Canada staff member. An AI (artificial intelligence) tool was then used for data confirmation, assisting with comparisons and to help evidence possible biases. What follows is a summary of the table discussions, discernment, and debriefing meetings from Gathering 2025.

Priority 1: Pursuing God’s Calling

We asked:

What do you long/hope for? (for yourself, for your congregation)

What do you fear? (for yourself, for your congregation)

- **Identity and Belonging** - Participants yearned for spaces where they could fully express their spiritual, cultural, and personal identities without fear—especially in a time when society is so polarized.
- **Deeper Relationships** - There was a strong desire to build trust through sharing stories that would challenge individualistic norms and fostering more connected communities.
- **Youth Engagement** - A major concern was the loss of younger generations. Participants emphasized the need for intergenerational relationships and leadership development.
- **Intercultural Church** - The vision of a church that embraces and integrates diversity was deeply resonant, moving beyond mere inclusion to full participation.
- **Christ-Centred Faith** - Amid social justice efforts, many reaffirmed the importance of keeping Jesus central to theology and community life.
- **LGBTQ+ Inclusion** - Honest and hopeful dialogue emerged, with calls to revisit Article 19 and create welcoming, safe spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Social Justice as Mission** - Climate action, Indigenous solidarity, and housing justice were identified as urgent areas for faithful engagement.
- **Adapt Church Structures** - Participants imagined less institutional, more organic and collaborative models of church—sustainable and responsive to current realities.
- **Leadership and Pastoral Support** - Concerns were raised about leadership transitions and the need for strong support systems and shared ministry cultures.



- **Conflict and Dialogue** - There was a call to embrace healthy disagreement, reconciliation, and unity in diversity—valuing dialogue as a spiritual practice.

Priority 2: Creating Space for Companions

We asked:

What part of Dann's presentation resonated most with you?

How do you see this applying to you/your congregation?

What do these ideas inspire you to do?

- **Presence Over Performance** - *Shift in mindset*: Moving from task-oriented ministry to relational presence. *Language of "we"*: Emphasizing shared journeys over hierarchical roles. *Redefining success*: Not by measurable outcomes, but by depth of connection and mutual transformation.
- **Embracing a Transformative Path** - *Intercultural lens*: Honouring diverse ways of knowing and being. *Letting go of the past*: Acknowledging Eurocentric history with gratitude but no longer being bound by it. *Inner work*: A growing desire for spiritual and emotional vulnerability. *Courageous presence*: Asking "Where are we willing to show up (to be in relationship)?" rather than "What can we do (task-oriented)?"
- **Practices for Companionship** - Participants explored embodying new relational practices:
 - Curiosity over assumptions
 - Listening with humility
 - Being a guest, not a host
 - Asking for help as a strength
 - Receiving gifts with openness and gratitude
- **Decolonization and Power-Sharing** - Decolonization: Must be led by the colonized; Western churches are called to relinquish control and listen deeply.
- **Companionship as "com (together)-pan (bread)-ions"**: "Sharing bread" as a metaphor for mutuality.
- **Covenant vs. Contract**: Exploring the balance between trust and accountability in relationships.
- **Indigenous Relations** - *Authentic reconciliation*: Rooted in relationships, not programs. *Listening and storytelling*: Treated as sacred acts that foster transformation and accountability.
- **Organic Growth** - *Church growth*: Encouraged through shared meals, open houses, and unscripted gatherings.
- **Interculturalism and inclusion**: Seen as essential, especially for immigrants, BIPOC, and queer communities.
- **Redefining Success** - Relational depth and spiritual health: Prioritized over metrics and institutional benchmarks.
- **Listening and Storytelling** were highlighted as nearly sacred acts—tools for transformation and accountability.

Priority 3: Creating a Culture of Call

We asked:

Who first called you?

Who owns the "calling function" in your congregation – and should that change?



What barriers – past or present – might be preventing people in your congregation from hearing and responding to God’s call?

- Calling was described as **Relational and Communal**—often sparked by mentors, shoulder taps, and affirmations.
- **Encouragement** was named as essential, especially for those who feel inadequate or uncertain.
- **Barriers to Calling** included lack of structure, cultural restrictions, and personal fears. Everyone’s job is no one’s job.
- A **Diversity of Callings** was celebrated—from preaching to storytelling, activism to engineering.
- **Early Engagement** through camps, youth groups, and mentorship was seen as vital.
- Existing **Structures** like nominations committees were critiqued for being overly functional. A call was made for more spiritual discernment.
- **Representation** matters—seeing diverse leaders inspires others to step forward.
- The **Spiritual Dimension** of calling was emphasized—an inner prompting, a holy discontent, a sense of divine purpose.

Visiting the Wounds

We asked:

Where do you see yourselves in Joon and Carolina’s stories?

Do you have stories of your own?

What do these stories make you think/feel?

- **Re-centering Anabaptist Identity** - Participants questioned whether Mennonite identity has been overly shaped by Eurocentric cultural norms. - There was a call to prioritize **theological and practical expressions of Anabaptism** over cultural heritage, making space for broader participation.
- **Confronting Exclusion** - Acknowledgement of clear **racial and cultural exclusion** within Mennonite communities. Participants named the **emotional and spiritual harm** experienced by marginalized groups. There was a strong call for **introspection, confession, and systemic change**.
- **Embracing Vulnerability and Change** - The church was invited to adopt a posture of **vulnerability, reflection, and courage** to foster healing and transformation in a diverse community.
- **Stories of Belonging and Exclusion** - Testimonies from **people of colour, LGBTQ+ individuals, and newcomers** revealed both pain and resilience. These stories emphasized the need for **radical inclusion**.
- **Intercultural Church: Vision vs. Reality** - While the dream of an **intercultural church** was affirmed, participants noted that current efforts often feel **superficial** and face **structural barriers**.
- **Historical Legacy and Trauma** – Eurocentric Mennonites acknowledged their own **traumas and historical narratives**, recognizing how these shape current fear of diversity dynamics
- **Power and Privilege** - Discussions explored **who holds power**—who gets to lead, speak, and be visible in the church. There was a call to **redistribute leadership and visibility** more equitably.



- **Language and Communication** - Language was seen as both a **barrier** and a potential **bridge** to deeper connection and understanding.
- **Hope for the Future** - Despite challenges, there was a shared **hope** for a church where **every voice is heard and valued**, and where belonging is not conditional.

Transforming Injustices

We asked:

Where do you see barriers to change? (yourself/your congregation)

Where do you sense God calling? (yourself/your congregation)

- **Intercultural Transformation and Identity** – This requires cultural humility and reimagining belonging as rooted in Christ and community rather than tradition or ownership.
- **Letting Go and Trusting the Process** – Transformation requires releasing control and the need for certainty, inviting openness to Spirit-led change that may unfold in unexpected ways.
- **Power, Systems and Structural Change** – Critical awareness of how power operates within the church is essential. Systemic change that makes space for new ways of being. It examines how time, authority and process are culturally shaped.
- **Emotional and Spiritual Readiness** – Acknowledges fear, fatigue and the emotional weight of change. The church will need safe spaces and spiritual grounding.
- **Collaboration and Complexity** – Change is inherently communal and complex. There is importance in collaboration, training the navigating of tensions with patience and grace.
- **Purpose, Hope and Abundance** – Transformation must be rooted in clear purpose and sustained by hope grounded in relationships. Rejecting scarcity and fear opens the way for mutual flourishing and a shared vision of abundance.
- **Barriers to Inclusion** were named: fear, tradition, power dynamics, and tokenism.
- The **Call to Transformation** was clear: shared leadership, authentic relationships, and faith-rooted change. The future is intercultural.
- Wrestled with the **Tension Between Comfort and Growth**—knowing that transformation requires discomfort.
- **Practical Challenges** like time, communication, and leadership capacity were acknowledged.
- Yet, **Hope and Possibility** emerged.

MC Canada Programming

International Witness

We looked outward, globally.

- **A Ministry of Companionship** - The concept of **companionship** in mission is strongly affirmed. This evolving model shifts away from transactional or colonial views of mission, inviting the church to:
 - Slow down
 - Notice and attend to the movement of God
 - See relationships and financial support as **integrated** within this paradigm.



- Understand that supporting **Witness workers** remains a vital expression of this companionship
- **Opportunities for International Witness** - Participants encouraged IW to deepen engagement in several key areas:
- **Storytelling:** This was the most emphasized area. Sharing stories through media and in-person encounters helps bring global experiences into congregational life.
- **Youth Exchange:** Welcoming youth from the global church to Canada.
- **Global Church Presence in Canada:** Exploring how to receive and support mission workers from the global church to serve locally.
- **Pathways to Deeper Connection** - Suggestions for strengthening ties between Canadian congregations and the global church:
- **Shared prayer practices** across cultures.
- **Hospitality through shared spaces**, such as offering church buildings to global church congregations already present in Canadian communities.
- **Core Values and Themes**
- **Mutuality and Reciprocity:** Emphasis on learning from and being led by the global church.
- **Listening and Humility:** Named as essential postures for mission work.
- **Hospitality and Engagement:** Especially with diaspora communities and refugees.
- **Youth Engagement:** Through exchange programs and intercultural service.
- **Storytelling and Visibility:** Seen as ways to foster empathy and connection.
- **Challenges and Capacity:** Acknowledged, but there is a strong desire to deepen relationships.
- **Reconciliation and Decolonization:** A clear call to address these in global mission efforts.

Indigenous Relations and Climate Action

We turned toward the land and relationships with indigenous people.

- **Recognize and move beyond paralysis.** Feelings of being overwhelmed have led to inaction, but this can be overcome. Let's look for small, joyful steps that help us move forward with hope.
- **Acknowledge impatience with inaction.** Many expressed frustrations with ongoing conversations that lack follow-through. The perfect can be the enemy of the good. Take action, even if it's imperfect. Land acknowledgements without action could be seen as harmful.
- **Risk relationship with Indigenous neighbours.** There was a strong call to engage with Indigenous communities—listening to stories, learning from one another and walking together in care for creation.
- **Respect diverse capacities and priorities.** Congregations vary in their readiness and resources. Clear, practical next steps will help those ready to move forward. Grounding our actions in a healthy theology will be deeply valued.
- **Pursue a shared goal.** Can we identify a common cause—something that invites collective action, shared sacrifice and deeper unity?
- **Relationship Building** with Indigenous communities was prioritized over token gestures.
- **Truth and Healing** required confession, reparations, and spiritual transformation.
- **Creation Care** was framed as sacred stewardship—solar panels, gardens, and lifestyle changes.
- **Barriers to Engagement** included fear, fatigue, and structural limitations.



- The **Role of the Church** was seen as a place for education, conversation, and collective action.
- **Education and Storytelling** were named as tools for intergenerational learning.
- A **Vision for the Future** emerged—mutual respect, shared stewardship, and spiritual covenant.

CommonWord

We closed with a look at resources and formation. (**Note:** CommonWord gathered an extensive survey of its own and staff are conducting their own analytics)

- **Mentorship and Faith Formation** were described as organic and relational.
- **CommonWord** was appreciated but underutilized — suggestions for better access and promotion were made.
- **Small Groups and Practices** like storytelling and creative worship were valued.
- **Accessibility Needs** included multilingual resources and online formats.
- **Authenticity in Ministry** was emphasized—gentle, intentional, and mutual.
- **Post-Pandemic Challenges** called for practical tools to re-engage congregations.

Leadership

(Note: Leadership Day preceding Gathering 2025 was designed to explore transformational leadership in a time of significant change within pastoral ministry. The day focused on listening, discernment, collaboration, and preparing for emerging ministry models—particularly co-vocational and part-time arrangements. Further, there are significant leadership development components in how Priority #3 (Cultivating a Culture of Call) was shaped.

Conclusion

Gathering 2025 was a profound time of collective discussion, discernment, and reflection for Mennonite Church Canada. Through extensive periods of deep listening, courageous storytelling, and faithful dialogue, participants named both the beauty and the brokenness, the hope and the challenges within our communities. The themes of intercultural transformation, identity, belonging, companionship, and a renewed culture of call emerged as guiding insights for the journey ahead. These insights are invitations to action - to more substantially embody the gospel that we love and pray our way toward the church that we long to become.