

The following document is an early review of the collected data. It is meant to serve as a quick first look at what the gathered Mennonite Church Canada body is saying. It is subject to change with a more thorough review which will follow in the months ahead.

Introduction

The table responses have been organized into four overarching categories, recognizing that many individual comments contain multiple layers of meaning. Each category is introduced with a thematic heading, followed by selected examples drawn directly from the response papers. A brief commentary then expands on the theme, using fresh and engaging language to capture the deeper insights and emotions expressed by participants.

Themes:

1. Mennonite is a faith perspective primarily and is expressed in many cultural ways.

- Too much culture, not enough faith
- Resonate with theology
- Mennonites only 1 percent of the greater church
- Are we forgetting the wrong aspect of the origins of our faith – bucking the cultural norms, faith and protest.
- Can we elevate the historical/biblical/theological connecting points over “cultural” identity?
- Can we separate “cultural identity” from “theological identity” among Anabaptists.
- Mennonite transcends race, colour and cultures.

Commentary:

"Re-centering Anabaptist Identity on Theology Over Culture"

These comments reflect a concern that **cultural expressions of Mennonite or Anabaptist identity** may be overshadowing the **core theological and historical foundations** of the faith. Key ideas include:

- A desire to **prioritize faith, theology, and biblical roots** over cultural traditions.
- A call to **reclaim the radical, countercultural origins** of Anabaptism—rooted in protest, conviction, and spiritual renewal.
- A questioning of whether **cultural identity (e.g., ethnic Mennonite traditions)** is limiting the broader, more inclusive theological identity that transcends race and culture.
- An emphasis on **unity in faith** rather than division by cultural heritage.

2. Mennonites are being asked to come to grips with their racism.

- “I will never be a Mennonite” – I don’t want this to be true.
- Elements of power and racism – we need to name these.
- The unconscious ways that we as a church reinforce a cultural...white Mennonite identity.
- Feeling like a single-coloured dot on a white page
- Why can’t they treat me as a person, not....
- When will you stop asking me if I’m a Mennonite
- Hard to work to build credibility – saying and doing are different
- Stop assuming people feel welcome
- The work seems focused on the superficial things need to move to deeper items like diversity having a place
- Systems of dominance and if you are a part of the majority, you don’t see it.
- We have created boundaries to keep us safe, but those boundaries also keep other out.
- We need to deal with our trauma
- Are we willing to confess that we are racist?

Commentary:

"Confronting Exclusion: Moving from Cultural Comfort to Radical Belonging"

This theme reflects a deep yearning for:

- **Recognition of racial and cultural exclusion** within Mennonite spaces.
- **Honest confession and accountability** for systems of power, whiteness, and dominance.
- **A shift from superficial inclusion to deep, systemic transformation** that creates true belonging for people of all backgrounds.
- **Naming and healing trauma**, both individual and collective, as part of the church’s journey toward justice and reconciliation.

It also highlights the **emotional and spiritual toll** of being marginalized in a community that professes peace and justice, and the **urgent need for introspection, confession, and change**.

3. We have many emotions that arise for us when dealing with this challenge...there is a deep sense of fear that lies beneath the surface.

- How do we sit with these wounds
- What is the threat or fear of loss if the Mennonite church becomes more diverse?
- Assumption of assimilation

Commentary:

"Facing Fear, Embracing Change: Healing and Transformation in a Diverse Church"

This theme reflects:

- A call to **acknowledge and sit with the pain and wounds** caused by exclusion, racism, and assumptions of assimilation.
- A challenge to **interrogate the fears and perceived losses** that may arise as the Mennonite church becomes more diverse.
- A critique of the **expectation that newcomers must assimilate** into dominant cultural norms rather than being embraced as they are.

It invites the church into a **posture of vulnerability, reflection, and courage**, asking: *What are we afraid of losing—and what might we gain if we truly open ourselves to transformation?*

4. We are being invited to move forward into a new future...

- a. With hope
 - Gratitude to the Mennonite Church for welcome
 - Embrace the chaos of joining together.
 - Keep the story open
 - Grow into our faith – we are not born into it.
 - Add layers to our traditions – stop feeling offended as the majority
 - What is the foundation that we have in common?
 - Curiosity is important
 - We need to encounter others face to face
 - Origin stories are different – need to hear them
 - The commitment to everyone being equal and having a voice helps support diversity
- b. That is centred in a faith
 - We are a faith group
 - Find that common story of faith, centered on Jesus
 - Hang on tightly to where you're from with one hand, reach out with the other
 - We each choose to be Mennonite
- c. Making room for others
 - Change our timelines and expectations giving space for others to lead in their way.
 - Money and belonging – let's move to welcome and space
 - Policies and structures that are more open
 - We have work to do in listening, humility and a desire to be different

d. Giving and receiving gifts

- True integration: not simply “we are the hosts/givers but mutual sharing of gifts
- My stories are exciting but are my gifts inferior?
- How do we welcome different cultural practices and gifts in the congregation?
- What others are willing to give are we ready to receive – this is a power thing.
- This involves power
- Gifts – positive and negative.

Commentary:

This list reflects a rich and hopeful vision for transformation within the Mennonite church. Several interwoven themes emerge:

1. Hopeful Transformation and Openness to the Future

- *“We are being invited to move forward into a new future... with hope”*
- Embracing change, uncertainty, and growth with gratitude and curiosity.
- Keeping the story open and allowing new voices and experiences to shape the future.

2. Faith-Centered Unity

- Emphasizing a shared foundation in Jesus and a common faith story.
- Recognizing that Mennonite identity is chosen and rooted in belief, not birthright.
- Holding onto personal heritage while reaching out to others in love and solidarity.

3. Radical Hospitality and Inclusion

- Moving beyond superficial welcome to **genuine belonging**.
- Creating **space for others to lead**, contribute, and shape the community.
- Challenging assumptions of assimilation and majority-centered timelines or norms.

4. Mutuality and Shared Gifts

- Shifting from a host/guest dynamic to **reciprocal giving and receiving**.
- Valuing all cultural expressions and spiritual gifts equally.
- Acknowledging and addressing **power dynamics** that affect how gifts are received.

5. Encounter and Relationship

- Encouraging face-to-face engagement and storytelling.
- **Listening deeply** to diverse origin stories and experiences.
- Cultivating **curiosity, humility, and empathy** as spiritual practices.