

CPMC Conference Council plans to establish a Task Group charged with developing a recommendation for CPMC Annual Meeting 2010. The recommendation will propose to delegates Procedures for implementing the Variance Policy and any changes to the Policy. Acknowledging the diversity of theological approach within our conference, the Task Group will retain the Confession of Faith as the centering point of our fellowship, respect all persons and parties united in our Conference, and invite discernment around areas of difference while keeping Jesus as our center and mission our priority.

In developing this recommendation the Task Group will seek significant and broad involvement from across the spectrum of Central Plains, geographically, demographically, and theologically.

Some priorities and assumptions:

1. We seek a consistent, effective, redemptive policy with respectful procedures that will allow us to acknowledge our differences and live joyfully together in community.
2. In seeking to achieve this we claim Jesus Christ as our center and accept the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* as the recognized expression of our common life together.
3. The faith we see expressed by Jesus in the Gospels is one that anticipates differences but calls us to be a community of witnesses united in love and service to one another.
4. The Confession of Faith is confessional not creedal. The Confession of Faith is not intended to define the boundaries, but the center to which we all relate in our communal life together.
5. We affirm the rightful place of prophetic voices in our communal life together. We anticipate that these voices themselves will be diverse. Spirit-led communal response to such voices "might mean saying the same thing, modifying previous speech, or changing direction from previous discernment." (Being a Faithful Church: Testing the spirits in the Midst of Hermeneutical Ferment; Mennonite Church Canada; March, 2009)
6. We affirm "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love" (Wichita 1995) as a guiding document in our discernment together.

*This is our goal:*

**To preserve and enhance our unity so we can be the church of Jesus Christ together even though we do not agree on everything.**

*There is so much disagreement on this or that issue we are never going to totally agree. Instead we need to commit ourselves to a way of living together that empowers our fellowship, worship and mission, rather than being about an absorbing focus on differences.*

*Prompting issues & related thoughts:*

1. Differences have existed, do exist and will continue to exist & emerge in our midst. Identifying such differences is an exercise in honesty in our fellowship.
2. At integration: the "Mission Focused Approach to Congregations at Variance" document (Variance policy) took the focus off individual members so delegates would not need to "scrutinize" all members of other congregations. The policy focused on what credentialed and lay leaders were willing to teach.
3. Some have expressed discomfort with the results of a congregation being identified as being "at variance." For example, a number have questioned the need or value of suspending the voting rights of a congregation "at variance."
4. The absence of established and consistently applied procedures for the variance policy has been problematic for many. The effect has often been seen as inconsistent and inequitable application of the variance policy.