

Delegate Feedback on Themes

Church Life and Culture

Alternative Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being countercultural – an upside kingdom • Cultural influence on Christian witness; each church is a different culture; respect for each others’ approaches and decisions; differences from one congregation to another • How do we maintain biblical, Godly faith without the world pressing in on us; How do we balance our faith – being in the world – but not of it. • How does the church address difference voices in the world • Churches as contrast community, especially how is a Christian household different in the ethical values it embodies – our faith should make us different – a common thread throughout • How does the church work at matters of disagreement in love, not resorting to media, cultural driven violence? • How do we discern what is culture and what is Gospel?
Cultural Influence on the Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture of fear – violence, purchase of guns, Bible says we don’t need to fear. • How do we remain faithful, living in culture of fear (terrorism, immigration, homosexuality?) • Community becoming fragmented as access to communication increased; losing community ideas; growing narcissistic ideas • Materialism (money, finances, creation, possessions) • Syncretism – influence of culture – in particular, how it affects our understanding of scripture • “Christian” values in national legislation – troubling, debatable, concerned about the lack of separation of church and state, what is the role of a Christian in government? • Mix in US Culture/Church Culture • Enculturation – conformed to North American way of speaking/generational differences, technology diversions, time and money squeeze • We are becoming too much like surrounding culture and letting that define us as a church • Christianity and Culture- learn more to understand • Role of our culture/living counter culture •
Unity and Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop positive cooperation with members of congregation • How does the church address divisions between cultural/ethnic/racial and economic groups? • How to keep people involved and engaged in the church life. What will happen to our rural churches in aging communities?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we handle conflict and disagreement in ways that maintain our witness to Christ? • Servants to each other – class would not matter • Relationship building especially individually and congregationally • Responsibility for being nonjudgmental, respecting one another • How do we live our daily lives across socio-economic barriers? Showing that each one is valued. • Relationship building especially individually and congregationally • Involvement of new people and established members in community activity (activities of the church, e.g., business meetings and in witness activities of the church) • Building community and unity • How can we worship in a Christ-like community with our differences (love our neighbors). • Accountability (how do we live out our faith); Church discipline (difficult but important)
Anabaptist Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anabaptist perspectives on Lordship of Jesus • How to not compromise our own Anabaptist beliefs and still be welcoming and accepting to others • Discipleship program from Anabaptist perspective
Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global wealth gap • Social justice: How can we get involved personally (beyond just our money) • Relations to government (Guantanamo Bay - government decisions)
Social Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue of homosexuality – open dialogue • GLBTQ concerns because people have been hurt, better relations • Gender issues – dangerous to limit or reprioritize what the focus is • Pacifism • Abuse – not dealt with – “can’t happen in church” – but it does • Political allegiance – how to respond and work together

Evangelism and Outreach

Reclaiming evangelization as priority ministry of the church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we recapture the zeal for the unchurched-evangelizing. How do we reach people – outreach – what is essential to being Mennonite and what is non-essential? • Evangelism – first priority is to have a relationship with Jesus Christ; (South American church plants are excited about Jesus); When does evangelism happen? - “not until you’re...” Evangelism - making sure people have accepted Jesus; more sermons preached on this. Assumption made that everyone is a believer, it’s not necessarily true. Having God in your life changes a person and their thinking. • Reaching out to other people in order to grow – not look inward
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission (are we ashamed to share the Gospel with our neighbors and the world? PC concerns) Evangelism (how do we reach out to our neighbors with the love of Jesus) Look outside ourselves • Reaching out with the love and grace of Jesus •
Reaching out to the marginalized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to share love of Christ to disenfranchised – associate with those who are “not us” – lifestyle • How can the church be welcoming so visitors don’t feel left out • Importance of including people on the fringes who are different that we (whoever “we” are) wealth, culture, mental health, sexuality, elderly, alone, etc.
Reaching the “other”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to relate to people who wouldn’t feel comfortable coming to church • Local church consider inclusiveness of people out of our comfort zone – racial monitors, drug addiction, sexual orientation, mental illness • Faith representation that draws from the power of Jesus – truthful, ethical, outspoken lives – witness against violence, wealth, racism – how the “different” are marginalized •
Relevant Witness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we become communities with spirituality and mission relevant to the world • Going to live in another culture within Biblical boundaries; do something radical • How do we become communities with spirituality and mission relevant to the world • Receive/extend hospitality • How is the church presented as life-giving, life-changing, and relevant to young Christian adults in our country • Individuals need to have a life the world will seek and ask questions about
Reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation: healing and hope • How do we act as agents of peace • Peace-making in all aspects of life • Peace witness (holistically) – much more than being “anti-war.” • Participation in God’s reconciling work in the world, reaching out to hurting people/different people/listening to one another and being sensitive to differing views • Peace-making – loving our enemies
Ecumenism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening one’s self up to broader community/ecumenical

Discipleship and Commitment

Competing loyalties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial commitment to Christ over livelihood and business; what does it mean to be a disciples? What are our paths toward radical discipleship; simplicity of possessions and of lifestyle – allegiance and commitment to the church over idolatry of business and excess • Idolatry- making God first • How the example and teaching of Jesus guides our life today with specific focus on relation to militarism, nationalism, patriotism •
Faith/Life Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating our faith into our daily lives, how to articulate our faith and how does that translate into our involvement in our church and conference • Discernment between personal family, professional, church or spiritual life. How time is spent divided between parts of our life. • Lack of Christian commitment within the church/lack of disciplines/citizenship of Kingdom • We conflate the way we live/believe with what Christianity is. What is the essence of faith? • How to give adequate time to faith community formation • Identity and articulation • Busyness pushing our faith to the edge

Spiritual Formation/Disciplines

Prayer Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer-Practice-Pray indifferent from our own wished and not our own agenda/for the Holy Spirit – Intentional practice of spiritual disciplines
Formational Bible Reading/ Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical worldview-letting the Bible inform worldview; equipping the congregation to know the story of scripture and letting it inform our decisions/discipleship • Biblical directions for being faithful witness for every member of the church (not just “professionals.” • Promoting Biblical knowledge and understanding and living it so other know • How does a congregation discern God’s will- how do you determine Biblical interpretation/God’s will with so many voices? • Taking the word of God out of context, making it say what we want it to say (watered down) • Biblical worldview-letting the Bible inform worldview; equipping the congregation to know the story of scripture and letting it inform our

	<p>decisions/discipleship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The word of God – taking it seriously, discerning scripture • How do we understand and interpret scripture: Make the Bible more important • Biblical literacy
Worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant worship, fulfilling, sustaining thru week, causing spiritual growth from within
Spiritual Discernment/ Ethical Discernment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs that Holy Spirit is speaking • Spiritual health/formation • Ability to discern...God's leading, helping discern identity and direction, influence of culture • Definition of sin and dealing with sin • So focused finding the right position on an issue as compared to what Jesus would have us do in community
Spirituality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each person to have a deeper spiritual life with Jesus
Young Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a way to keep post-high school members connected to the church?
Children/Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, our children's faith, children living in poverty in our midst – parenting without rules or ethics • Youth not serious about practice of faith – Youth formation; commitment level of youth. • Suicide, what can church do to encourage youth, given them hope; fame gained from suicide
Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idolatry, modern times, where do we spend out money • Caring for creation; stewardship of lifestyle • Creation care (how do we relate to all of creation) • Current ecological crises
Leadership Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and grow leadership-congregations need to be resourced about how to encourage leaders
Nurture of New Believers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New believers need discipling and helping to grow tot tell others about Jesus

Central Plains Mennonite Conference
Annual Meeting 2013
Table Group feedback