

MOVING FORWARD

Regional Gatherings 2016



As the FMCiC LifePlan Study Team prepares for the 2017 General Conference, it is at the stage of providing a “writing team report” to the FMCiC constituency. You are invited to prayerfully reflect on it in advance of the **2016 Regional Gatherings** – to ask the Lord to give you insight into what has been identified and what has been missed.

Please work your way through the issues that are listed and also make good use of the prayer prompts as you pray.

WHAT KINDS OF CHURCHES DOES CANADA NEED?

The Canadian religious landscape has changed. The fastest growing segment of the Canadian population are people who are converting toward having no religious identity at all (the so-called ‘Nones’). In order to be more faithful to what God is calling us to be and do, we need to recognize that many Canadians see life very differently from us. We need to understand how much has changed and reach out beyond our comfort zones.

As evidenced by:

- Much of our resources are invested in reaching Evangelicals - 12% of the population. Much of our growth continues to come from this small segment of the population.
- 45% of Canadians identify themselves as Christian but that makes no appreciable difference in the way they live their lives and what they value.
- The “Nones” have grown from 4% to 24%, in the last 40 years. There is now a 2nd generation of Canadians who are being raised to believe that having no religion is the most positive way to live.
- Immigration has bolstered the number of committed Christians in Canada but it has also increased the number of members of “Other Religions” in Canada- from 4% to 11%.

Prayer:

- Lord, what would Your church look like if we actively gave more of our attention to “the other 88%”?
- Lord, what can we do together in order to reach more kinds of people?
- Lord, who are the people in my life that deserve more of my attention?

CLARITY OF FMCiC IDENTITY

When people healthily identify with the mission, vision and values of the FMCiC, they are able to experience the benefits of full participation in its ministry. In order to be more faithful to what God is calling us to, we must address the lack of clarity around what it means to be a Free Methodist in our churches.

As evidenced by:

- A general lack of knowledge in our congregations of what it means to be Free Methodist.
- A lack of intentional formation in our churches around the unique calling of Free Methodists within Canada.
- A lack of willing engagement in the FMCiC accountability infrastructure.

Prayer:

- Lord, what is your unique mandate for us as a denomination?
- Lord, what more can I be and do to more faithfully live out who You have called us to be?

DENOMINATIONAL ECOSYSTEM

Our denominational ecosystem is the interrelated way by which we sustain and nurture life together as local churches, pastors, and lay leaders. In order for us to be more faithful to what God is calling us to do we need to take a deeper look at the functioning of our denominational ecosystem.

As evidenced by:

- the fears, that some express, regarding church and pastoral transitions
- the frustration among leaders regarding inadequate coaching (eg. the tracking process)
- the inconsistencies in participation in Core (the national operating budget) and Giving Streams (Church Planting, Global Missions and Leadership Development)

Prayer:

- Lord, what vision could you birth in us for our denominational ecosystem?
- Lord, how can we collectively steward our resources and energy?

See all research data and notes at:

<http://fmcic.ca/regional-gatherings-2016/>



DISCIPLESHIP

Free Methodism relies on intentional discipleship as a core component of Christian formation in our churches. In order to be more faithful to what God is calling us to we must continue to develop a culture of discipleship within our churches.

As evidenced by:

- Pastors and churches still feel inadequate to make disciples
- Discipleship is a momentary practice in our churches rather than an ongoing rhythm.
- Measuring discipleship practices continues to be a challenge for our churches
- The need for new leaders continues in order to fulfill the mission we see before us.

Prayer:

- Lord, I know that you have told us to go and make disciples. Please help me.
- Lord, release the gifts you've given us for the equipping of the saints for the work and for the building up of the Body of Christ.

COMMUNICATION

Healthy two-way communication is essential for a robust organization. In order to be more faithful to what God has called us to do, we must address the issue of communication.

As evidenced by:

- Good news stories of local churches, FMCiC initiatives, programs and systems are not being heard.
- The lack of clarity of the roles and responsibilities of the National Leadership Team.
- The lack of responsiveness from the constituency to requests from the FMCiC (eg. Performance appraisals).

Prayer:

- Lord, deepen our life together. Help us converse with one another - to listen and hear each other.
- Lord, help us encourage one another by sharing the stories of what you are doing among us.

CONNECTION

Although connection is a core value of the FMCiC, some people are feeling less connected. In order to be more faithful to what God has called us to do, we must address the issue of what links us together.

As evidenced by:

- Attendance trends at denominational events
- Limited interaction among churches in the same region
- Lack of awareness of the connection between local churches and the FMCiC.
- The desire of local church leaders for more connections with national leaders.

Prayer:

- Lord, I pray that we would be one as You and the Father are one.
- Lord, how can I encourage and 'spur on' other Free Methodists ministering near me?

YOUNG LEADERS AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENT GODLY LEADERS

A healthy organization must be led by Godly competent leaders. In order to engage with the present and prepare for the future we must develop new generations. To be more faithful to what God has called us to do, we must address the issue of leadership recruitment and development.

As evidenced by:

- The rapidly changing landscape of Canadian culture
- 50% of current pastors are over the age of 50
- 26 pastors are eligible to retire in the next 5 years
- An observable decrease in the number of youth and children in our churches

Prayer:

- The fields are white unto harvest. Lord, please raise up a generation of courageous and insightful workers. Show me what I can do to love and encourage others to respond to your call.
- Lord, what can I do to love and encourage younger people?

BI-VOCATIONAL PASTORS

At least 50% of our churches currently function with bi-vocational leadership. In order to be more faithful to what God is calling us we must grapple with the current realities of Bi-vocational pastoral ministry.

As evidenced by:

- In an increasingly secularizing Canada, the demand for full-time pastoral employment may be diminishing.
- The economic realities of bi-vocational pastors have implications on their capacity to conduct ministry in churches with "full time" pastoral expectations.
- There are practical implications for bi-vocational pastors to fully participate in our essential parts of our ecosystem (e.g. network meetings, pastoral conferences, foundation courses, and leadership committees).

Prayer:

- Lord, give me the spirit of doing whatever it takes to accomplish your mission
- Lord, I thank you for the willingness of others who sacrifice on our behalf. Help me to come alongside to encourage them.
- Lord, help me to be gracious and realistic in my expectations of others.

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The Free Methodist Church in Canada
www.fmcic.ca