

Notes from Essex/Leamington FDTF meeting

- Those in attendance: 13 in attendance, Jason, David and 9 NLUMC members and 2 members of Faith MC *Regrets – Harrow MC; Leamington UMC and Windsor Mennonite Fellowship.
- Alicia Good opened in prayer
- David Martin facilitated discussion
- Those in attendance given summary of proposal
- Also invited to go to futuresdirectionsmc.ca web site for most recent updates/developments
- David gave history of Future Directions process at the beginning of the meeting
- Where are we at? The proposal will be discussed at Area Church gatherings (Feb-Apr 2017) and provide feedback; proposal will be revised from feedback and then final draft will be available for October Assembly 2017. Working Groups will be focusing on specific priorities. Listening Group also will be speaking into proposal development.
- The proposal is aimed at all three bodies of the church: local congregations; area churches and national church
- Biggest shift at the national level; National Church will resource Area Churches who will then resource/support congregations
- MCEC keeps more at the regional level to resource congregations (60% MCEC; 40% MC Canada); other regional churches have less dollars to resource congregations – reduce amount going to national church so that more resourcing can happen at the congregational level, redistribute those dollars
- Philosophy of shift of mission to local church, is it known/understood by average church member? Not really. It is a shift that begins to resonate with congregations says David Martin. As he is speaking in congregations he is finding local churches engaging in missional activity. Gave Re-Learning Community program as evidence of this missional thinking shift. The church is reaching its neighborhood. It is a 'culture shift' for the church.
- Is this more successful in an urban church than in a rural church? Not necessarily. Connections are being made in rural areas.
- Younger people buying into this missional shift? Yes. Simon Sinek TED talk speaker says, it is important to "start with why" and not the 'what' – if you don't know why you exist no one will care. The hope that this conversation pushes us to ask this question.
- We need to ask ourselves, how do our strengths help us experience God?
- Our family invited into 'church family' – a strength of the church, provided it is not self-serving but used to serve others.

- Each church will need to listen to the voice of God's Spirit at work, rather than a 'one size' fits all for each church.
- Loss of Mennonite name can lead to losing of Anabaptist emphasis. We need to ask ourselves – why do we exist? Doing this will sharpen our identity for us.
- How do we be intentional about nurturing relationships across Canada? Ruth indicated: attended SJMC, Rockway Collegiate, studied at Grebel, served with MCC (twice), first placement in Edmonton. Now serving on Anabaptist Identity Working Group. I have been intentional at building relationships across Canada. How do we pay attention to the formation of relationships across the country? If we don't pay attention to this, we could lose our connection to each other. We need each other.
- We need to tend to each of our relationships as congregations, and as regions. We must be purposeful in tending our relationships (not forgetting about international relationships also)
- Young people expressed "we need something that is bigger than ourselves."
- Let's get together across the country for fellowship and study – that is the hope expressed in the future directions proposal, but more intentionality – linking is needed to connect with folks in each town across Canada
- How does this (national/international issues) affect my local church? When we are engaged in peace and justice issues we can demonstrate our relevance to our neighbors that we are having an impact in our world.
- In our digital age we could make connections with each other, find out what someone in another province is doing and how can that help me? CommonWord is hoped to be such a resource across Canada, but perhaps is not known by more folks.
- The proposal hints at the potential of greater collaboration between executive leaderships, especially as they will get together 4-6 times/year
- For myself, I don't think I would find it very helpful relating to folks from across Canada for my ministry needs, but would benefit from more local connections, since their contexts are different across Canada, says Jim
- How do we become New Testament people? Jesus worked with family units. Be careful not to put down family, but how do we keep those relationships porous?
- People assume they know each other well. We don't always know the people in our own church well, despite claiming we know everyone. We miss out on opportunities for meaningful conversations. Intentionally sit with different folks to get to know others (new people).
- It is a good thing when these questions push us to go deeper in conversation about who we are and who we want to be.
- Our seniors shouldn't be written off as being inflexible to future change – some of them are quite willing to change

- Why should it make a difference what the conference does? (as a local church member)
- We need to think about apps that could be made for our kids to play. How do we help our children get engaged?
- Peace Vigil we did in Leamington – woman who joined was willing to come and ‘check out’ Alicia’s church – North Leamington UMC – that is the kind of way the church can intersect with its neighbours.
- David Martin closed in prayer
- Jason Martin took notes