

Informed Conversations: The Survey

In June 2017 our pastor Marilyn Zehr ended her ministry among us. The departure of a pastor is a time for a congregation to take stock. To help us do so, we will use a new survey, Informed Conversations. This online survey was developed by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) to do an in-depth assessment of how congregations act, equip, and organize themselves to participate with God to share the peace of Jesus Christ in their congregations, their local community, and the wider world. The survey will help us as a congregation to understand who we are, what our gifts are, and what ministry gifts we can offer each other and our world.

When and how

Here is the link to the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TUMC2018>. The survey has 125 questions and will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Once you begin, you will need to complete the survey, you don't have the option to save and return later, so please complete when you have the time to do so.

The survey is confidential, and the only personal information you will be asked to provide is which age bracket you are part of. Every member and adherent 15 years of age and older is encouraged to complete the survey. If you receive the electronic announcements, have a name tag or a mail folder, or expect to ask for one of the above soon, please regard yourself as an adherent.

You also have the option of completing a paper copy of the survey.

MCEC will prepare a detailed report on the responses and share it with the TUMC Board on November 6. The Board will then report to the congregation, perhaps with a recommendation on how to engage the whole congregation in follow-up conversations, at the Congregational Meeting scheduled for November 18.

More about the Survey

Each question has four options: agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, disagree – you will not be asked to provide written answers. Your answers to these questions will enable us to see how well we incarnate ten factors that set congregations apart in their preparedness for and engagement with the 21st century:

- empowered and empowering leadership
- passionate spirituality
- loving and authentic relationships
- a sense of values, identity, purpose
- effective structures and appropriate resources
- inspiring worship
- holistic “smaller” opportunities to connect within the larger whole
- gift-oriented ministry
- need-oriented engagement with the world
- marketing / action-reflection

Overall, the survey is interested in collecting information about how we experience congregational life and how we experience God's presence in our congregation. The survey itself does not allow for a deep conversation about these issues; rather, the intention of the survey is to be a conversation starter –

triggering important conversations within the leadership and within the congregation about the work God is doing through and with the congregation.

The questions in this survey will help our congregation in the following way:

- We will receive data that outlines areas of strength, areas of unique calling, and areas where we have, thus far, invested less energy.
- Areas of strength and unique calling are those areas we may wish to enhance and support in order to deepen our ministry as a congregation.
- Areas where we have invested less energy are those areas where we may wish to say, “This isn’t who we are and we are ok with this.” Or these may be areas where we wish to do more to strengthen our ministry as a congregation.
- We will be able to test leadership versus congregation impressions.
- We will be able to see if there are significant differences in how various age groups respond.
- We will have the opportunity to do this survey at regular intervals (once every three years, for example) in order to get a sense of the character of our congregation over a period of time, allowing us to notice trends, changes, etc. and alerting us to important shifts in our ministry calling.
- We will help MCEC get a deeper understanding of congregations within MCEC so that it can better equip leaders and resource congregations.

Please participate!

Richard Ratzlaff, TUMC Board