

## **National Credentialing Process**

*Revised & Approved by NFLT on October 23, 2020*

This document outlines the process for ministry credentialing and registration as carried out by the provincial Faith and Life teams (PFLT) which are part of the Canadian Mennonite Brethren Conference.

### **1. Definitions**

*1.1 Credentialing* – The process by which the provincial Faith & Life team deems a pastoral minister's theology and life-style fit to serve in the provincial Mennonite Brethren Conference, in the role for which s/he is being considered. The credentialing process is a prerequisite to registering the pastor with the province for a license to solemnize marriages, though credentialing does not automatically lead to registration.

*1.2 Registration* – The legal provincial registration to solemnize marriages according to each provincial Marriage Act. Only Lead/Sr. pastors and pastoral staff whose licensing is requested by the congregation in which they serve will be registered. The provincial MB Conferences do not register persons not recognized as ministers in a local MB congregation. The provincial MB Conferences may issue temporary registrations at the discretion of the PFLT or Provincial Conference Minister.

*1.3 Questionnaire* – the Ministry Credentialing/Ordination Questionnaire is the document owned and managed by the National Faith and Life Team (NFLT) for the purpose of gathering information regarding the lifestyle and theological convictions of the candidate undergoing the credentialing process.

*1.4 Pastors Credentialing Orientation (PCO)* – A seminar-style introduction to Mennonite Brethren history, theology and polity. Participation in PCO is a credentialing requirement.

*1.5 Ordination* – by the laying on of hands is the act by which the local church and the provincial conference, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, commission men and women to the vocation of long-lasting leadership ministry. Ordination assumes that credentialing requirements have been completed, and is initiated by the local congregation. The ordination requirements and process are not addressed in this document, but in *Ordination: Principles and Practices (2017)*."

## **2. The Credentialing Process**

### *2.1 General Policy Statements*

2.1.1 The NFLT, in collaboration with each province/region, is responsible for the overall credentialing process, the maintenance of credentialing policies, the upkeep of the credentialing questionnaire, and the maintenance of a national credentialing database. The NFLT grants the authority to provincial MB conferences to credential MB pastors and ministry leaders.

2.1.2 The Ministry Credentialing/Ordination Questionnaire meets the current requirements of each PFLT and the legal requirements for registration of each province. The questionnaire is available on the provincial MB Conference sites in the English or French language.

2.1.3 Pastors and ministry leaders requesting to serve in a church or ministry of the Canadian MB Conference are required to:

- a) complete the province specific pre-hire assessment by the Provincial Faith and Life Team,
- b) uphold and teach the Confession of Faith, and to
- c) complete the credentialing questionnaire and interview, ideally as part of the candidating/hiring process, but at a minimum within 1 year of hiring date.

2.1.4 The following roles require credentialing:

- a) Ministry staff with any spiritual leadership role (regardless of title) in a local church or an MB organization (such as Multiply, MB Seminary, camps),
- b) All church staff with the title “pastor”, employed at ½ time or more,
- c) Chaplains, faculty, missionaries, and others who desire to associate with the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren, but are not serving in an MB organization.

Credentialing is not required for staff whose roles are primarily administrative. Interim or short-term pastors may, at the discernment of the PFLT, serve un-credentialled, completing only the Code of Conduct document.

2.1.5 The credentialing candidate must complete PCO within 2 years of his/her hiring date.

2.1.6 Each PFLT is responsible for the provincial registration of credential holders for permanent and temporary licences to solemnize marriages

2.1.7 Each PFLT assigns a person responsible for the upkeep of the national credentialing database

2.1.8 Each PFLT will assign, as deemed appropriate, an approved mentor to accompany the candidate through the credentialing process.

2.1.9 The PFLT discerns the most appropriate credentialing path for the candidate: the traditional credentialing process or the narrative credentialing process (the latter is for those leaders trained in or serving in narrative tradition environments).

2.1.10 Each credentialed individual will undergo a re-covenanting process (Appendix I of Ministry Credentialing/Ordination Questionnaire) a minimum of every 5 years.

2.1.11 Credentialing completed in any province within 5 years of a role transfer to another province will be recognized by the hiring province. The PFLT in the hiring province must request the original completed Questionnaire and a letter of commendation for the transferred candidate from the PFLT of origin. The hiring province Faith & Life team will conduct a welcome interview with the transferred candidate.

## 2.2 Credentialing Process

2.2.1 The PFLT will invite the candidate to participate in PCO, preferably before the credentialing interview, in order to orient the candidate to the MB Community and to the Confession.

2.2.2 The **credentialing candidate** submits the completed Questionnaire and supporting documentation to the PFLT.

2.2.3 The PFLT will arrange for a pre-read of the submitted questionnaire documentation package by a member of the PFLT to ascertain the readiness of the document package for the credentialing interview. If the documents are deemed insufficient, the PFLT will contact the candidate with requests for improvements.

2.2.4 The PFLT arranges for and conducts a credentialing interview with the candidate, his/her Sr. Pastor or Moderator, the credentialing mentor, and the candidate's spouse, if married. There are three possible outcomes of the interview:

- a) The candidate is deemed unsuitable, in which case the PFLT will inform the candidate and the hiring church moderator of the result.
  
- b) The candidate is denied credentialing until the PFLT recommendations are met in order to complete the credentialing process successfully. The PFLT

will schedule a follow up interview to assess the completion of the recommendations from the previous interview.

- c) The interview is successful, in which case the PFLT will inform the candidate and hiring church/organization of the successful completion of the credentialing process, along with any recommendations on the part of the PFLT for future success and growth of the candidate, and will log the credentialed candidate into the credentialing database.

2.2.5 If the credentialed candidate is a minister qualified for provincial registration the PFLT will proceed to register the credentialed candidate with the provincial Marriage Office.

2.2.6 The PFLT will ratify the newly credentialed candidate at the next scheduled PFLT meeting.

2.2.7 The PFLT may invite the credentialed candidate to any other provincially specific required seminars (e.g. Sacred Trust).

### **3. Privacy of Information**

All credentialing documentation will be stored, shared, and destroyed in keeping with the provincial privacy legislation. The information requested in the Ministry Credentialing/ Ordination Questionnaire may be accessed only by those within the Mennonite Brethren Conference who have been designated to determine the candidate's suitability for credentialing in the indicated ministry role. Information from the questionnaire may not be shared without the candidate's permission. The questionnaire will be kept by the provincial conference office in confidentiality and in a safe and secure location.