



## In Our Brokenness, Jesus Shines.

This was our theme as the Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches gathered for Convention, February 23-24 at Maple View Mennonite Church in Wellesley. We felt this truth deeply throughout 2022-2023.

We have experienced brokenness. Sadly, in the past year the leadership of Ed Willms as Executive Director came to a conclusion after 10 years of blessing our churches. Two churches were also removed from membership with ONMB by a vote of our convention members. As they heard from all our member churches, the ONMB Board recognized the need for clarity in this complex and challenging season, and to guide our churches in life and mission according to the shared convictions of our MB Confession of Faith. An additional church has communicated their departure from ONMB membership, effective at the close of 2023, due to a divergent theological vision. No question, we have been feeling the grief of these losses.

We have also experienced Jesus shining brightly. Through these challenging events, our churches and leaders have rallied together. Despite the transitions and departures, the ONMB Board has observed an emerging sense of increased unity and focus. We see that our churches are eagerly anticipating a greater collective disciple-making focus as we hire a permanent Executive Director and continue to embrace the CUSP. The stories of Jesus shining across our churches and initiatives are plentiful. People are finding new life and freedom in Christ. We are grateful for God's faithfulness.

A key focus for myself (Ryan Jantzi) in 2022-2023 has been strengthening relational trust across our churches and leaders. This has meant much time on the road gathering with our churches for worship and entering into conversations and prayer over coffee or meals. This has been a blessing and has offered a window into how Jesus is shining brightly. Our pastors have also begun regular regional gatherings for prayer.

### Spiritual Health and Theology

Throughout 2023 our pastors have engaged in robust conversations based on the book *A Church Called Tov* by McKnight and Barringer. We're actively asking the question, "What does it look like to shepherd our churches in a good way

that gives life?" We also continue to work with our leaders to grow in our capacity to care for and disciple 2SLGBTQ+ persons well, within our commitments to a biblical sexual ethic as expressed in the MB Confession of Faith. Members of our Faith and Life Team are receiving coaching from a believer with same-sex attraction, committed to celibacy within a traditional sexual ethic, through a cohort-based program with Revoice. We're also hosting monthly zoom calls for our leaders to learn from people who are committed to a traditional sexual ethic and also identify as LGBTQ+ or are closely connected to someone who is.

### Leadership Development

In November 2022, approx. 40 pastors, leaders and spouses gathered for a Retreat at Muskoka Bible Centre. Following the covid-19 pandemic and ONMB transitions, this became a beautiful space to rest together. Six young adults also participated in our Leaders Collective program, growing together as disciple-makers. We are anxiously anticipating the establishment of an MB Seminary Teaching Church here in Ontario.

### Mission

Our latest church plant, Bytown Community Church led by Dan Chook Reid in Ottawa is experiencing steady growth as it matures to become a thriving church. A disciple-making initiative in the trucking industry is also being launched by Darren Milley. ONMB has ongoing partnership with Multiply workers doing cross-cultural disciple-making here in Ontario. Fifteen leaders also participated in Disciple Making Movement (DMM) Training with Derek Parenteau. Sadly, with the shift for myself to the Interim Executive Director role, leadership in this realm has been largely on hold until a permanent Executive Director is hired for Ontario.

### Organizational Health

Our dedicated Organizational Health Team, PFLT and Board continue to work with churches and partner ministries as they navigate hiring, church conflict, potential mergers and updating bylaws. ONMB policy work to enable efficiency and focus has also been a focus of the past year.

As the ONMB Board experienced renewed health and joy through the spring of 2023, they have sought God's direction for our Conference, which will lead into the hiring of a permanent Executive Director. This hiring process started in September with November 2023 set as the desired conclusion point. With this hire comes hope and anticipation for what God has in store for our churches in 2024. Would you join us in praying for the leading of the Holy Spirit?

We are grateful for our partnership across CCMBC and for the extra support we've received from national and regional staff through the transitions of the past year. You've all been a gift to ONMB.

With love and hope,

**Ryan Jantzi,**  
Interim Executive Director

