

Being a Great News People

Over a year ago in February 2023, we gathered for our convention around our conviction that In Our Brokenness, Jesus Shines. Leading up to that gathering, we'd experienced the pain of brokenness which culminated in difficult convention decisions to remove two churches who were no longer fully committed to our confession of faith. Even as we grieved, though, many expressed sober joy over our increased sense of unity and focus. Our convention theme this year, Being a Great News People, captured our desire to unify for the sake of living and sharing the power of the gospel.

We met at Scott Street Church in St. Catharines on February 23 & 24 and began on Friday evening with a service of worship and communion anchored by a powerful word of testimony from Philip and Robyn Serez. We were humbled and challenged by their invitation to a deeper, good news life. The reality of suffering caused by Philip's ALS amplified the impact of their greater delight in Christ. A multi-congregational music team led us as we sang songs of worship throughout the weekend and Michelle Knowles and Doug Valerio, ONMB board chair and vice-chair, led our AGM on Saturday with joy and skill.

In addition to our convention, over 100 pastors and leaders gathered on February 23rd for our first Healthy Leaders Training which will be offered once every five years and is required for all ONMB credential holders. This year, Carolyn Klassen facilitated sessions focused on Addressing Pastoral Vulnerability and Power Dynamics. Subsequent online offerings of this training meant that nearly all our credentialed leaders were able to learn and interact with one another on this important topic.

And that's not all. On Thursday February 22nd, seniors from the Niagara region packed into the gym at Scott Street for a Senior's Luncheon, another new initiative meant to bless and celebrate the elders of our church family. All in all, the last weekend of February was jam packed with good things and would not have been possible without the diligence and gifting of so many. Ontario's Executive Assistant, Kristi Lee, together with the Scott Street staff team and countless kitchen volunteers deserve special mention.

This year's convention also included a time of prayer and commissioning for our new Executive Director, Trevor Seath. Trevor joined our ONMB staff team in late January after a decade supporting church planting across Ontario. His work began with C2C Network in 2013 and continued past the Multiply de-merger with C2C Collective. Over the years, Trevor formed strong ties with several MB churches and leaders so that his move to serve within our family felt like a natural step. With this hire, Ryan Jantzi, who served as Interim Executive Director beginning in 2022, returned to his Ministry Director position. Ryan's interim leadership, which focused on strengthening relational trust across our churches and required travel that repeatedly crisscrossed our large province, has left an invaluable legacy.



Spiritual Health and Theology

In addition to Healthy Leaders Training in February and our recent Pastors & Leaders Retreat in May, we are engaged with other important initiatives to encourage spiritual health and faithful biblical theology across our family. Over the past year, ONMB Leaders participated in a Revoice Coaching Cohort, focused on learning how to disciple sexual minorities within the context of an historic Christian sexual ethic. This was a very positive experience, leading the PFLT to begin exploring the possibility of this as broader resource for our ONMB pastors and leaders.

Of course, pastoral credentialing is a centerpiece in our approach in this area. In 2023, six new ONMB leaders received credentials. We're also excited that six from Ontario participated in Pastoral Credentialing Orientation in British Columbia this May.

Leadership Development

We are joyfully anticipating the September launch of an MB Seminary Teaching Church at WMB Church in Kitchener Waterloo. The first course, Interpreting Scripture Today, will lay a great foundation for this important ministry. The fall will also mark the start of a new Gap Year Program at Camp Crossroads, an initiative we're praying will become an important step in the growth of many young adults for years to come. Meanwhile, the Jesus Stories podcast hosted by Ryan Jantzi has continued to share relevant conversations on mission and church leadership from across ONMB.



May 5-7 marked an important milestone as over 40 pastors, leaders, and spouses participated in our Pastors & Leaders Retreat at Camp Crossroads. Derek Parenteau and Rene Nyland led sessions focused on Walking in the Spirit with 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 as our theme passage. The retreat was a great opportunity for rest, fun, and friendship while also providing for significant times of worship, prayer, and equipping. In our closing session, Derek shared a plea from John 21 for our ONMB family to 'cast our net on the right side' of faith and dependence on Jesus' leading and power to bring in a great spiritual harvest in our day.

Mission

SOAR Kitchener, a Multiply initiative in partnership with Glencairn and WMB, saw youth from these two churches come together during March break to experience the very present help and love of the Holy Spirit as they stepped out to join God's mission. One participant reported, "I learned how to better listen to the Holy Spirit and follow through without as much hesitation." What a great foundation for mission! In April, Southeast City Church (Ottawa), who began weekly worship services in 2019, started a 1-year Church Planting Internship for Matthew Houle as he and his wife Heather explore church planting in Carleton Place.

We recognize that we need to learn about mission (and other things!) with and from the global Church and so we're very thankful for numerous opportunities that God is opening as we intentionally embark on this important journey.

Organizational Health

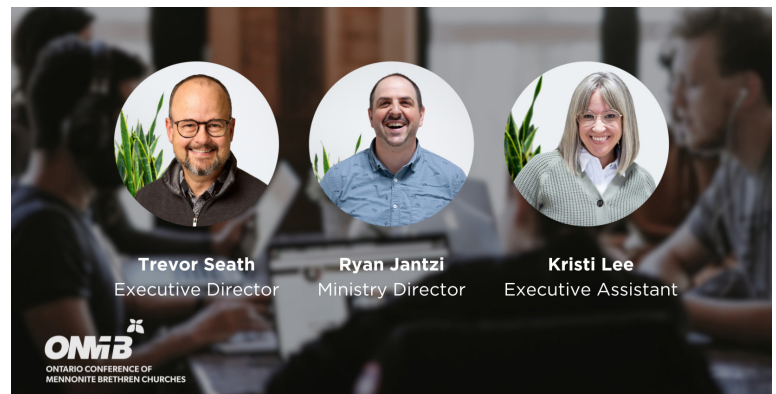
With a desire to support churches in seasons of transition, we invited Ontario leaders to consider online training with the Transitional Pastors Network in April. Ryan Jantzi, together with one other Ontario pastor, participated. We look forward to building this team.

A key focus for our provincial Organizational Health Team is ensuring that we have clear and helpful policy developed for our governing board, staff, and churches. This work continues through a process of systematic policy review and editing as well as by writing new policy where needed. Additionally, advising and supporting MB churches in Ontario as they undertake their own bylaw review to ensure compliance with the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporation Act (ONCA) by this year's deadline has been an ongoing project.

Overall, we are so grateful for how God is working by His Spirit among our churches to exalt Jesus and expand His Kingdom!

Respectfully submitted,

The ONMB Staff Team



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