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OPERATING AGREEMENT

Among the Five Regional Churches in their Collaboration as Mennonite Church Canada
(Approved by Joint Council January 28, 2023)

NOTE: Unlike the Operating Bylaws, the Operating Agreement does not require MC Canada delegate approval.

List of acronyms used in the text

- AEM** – Assistant Executive Minister
- CLM** – Church Leadership Ministers
- COSL** – Community of Spiritual Leaders
- EM** – Mennonite Church Canada Executive Minister
- EMG** – Executive Minister Group
- FPAC** – Financial Policy and Audit Committee
- JC** – Joint Council
- MC Canada** – Mennonite Church Canada
- REM** – Regional Executive Minister
- SRA** – Shared Revenue Agreement

1. Introduction and Background

This Operating Agreement replaces the Operating Agreement prepared for the Special Assembly of October 14, 2017, in the formation of the new structure, as well as the Governance Protocols of November 30, 2017. Prior to 2017 Mennonite Church Canada followed a General Operating By-law.

2. Purpose of Operating Agreement

This Operating Agreement articulates how the five Regional Churches (Mennonite Church Alberta, Mennonite Church British Columbia, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, Mennonite Church Manitoba, and Mennonite Church Saskatchewan) will operationalize their covenant with each other as Mennonite Church Canada, consistent with the General Operating By-law. As such the Joint Council can change the agreement within the limits of the By-law.

3. Theological Identity of Mennonite Church Canada

MC Canada is a faith community rooted in the historic Anabaptist tradition, grounded in Scripture, with the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective serving as an interpretive guide for faith and life. Three core convictions animate MC Canada: 1) **Jesus** is the centre of our faith, 2) **Community** is the centre of our lives, and 3) **Reconciliation** is the centre of our work.

4. Mennonite Church Canada as an integrated structure

4.1 MC Canada is an integrated system, beginning with congregations, which form Regional Churches, which covenant together as MC Canada for a common mission:

- **Congregations** are the primary locus of God’s mission in the world. In these local communities, Christians worship and pray together, discern how to faithfully follow Jesus Christ, nurture and support each other, and reach out into their communities in service and witness.
- Congregations covenant with each other as **Regional Churches**. As Regional Churches, congregations support and resource each other, learn from each other, undertake regional missional initiatives, and nurture and administer pastoral leadership.



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- 48 • Regional Churches covenant with each other as **Mennonite Church Canada**. As MC Canada,
49 Regional Churches support and resource our nationwide priorities and ministries as well as
50 fulfill our responsibilities in the larger body of Christ, both Anabaptist and other.

51 4.2 The covenant among the Regional Churches forming MC Canada will be reviewed and renewed
52 every 3 years.

54 **5. Core Principles**

55 5.1 MC Canada is a legal entity and as such has its own formal identity.

56 5.2 MC Canada is the five Regional Churches working together as one. As such the five Regional
57 Churches and MC Canada are mutually interdependent.

58 5.3 The Regional Churches are accountable to each other through a covenant by which:

59 5.3.1 They commit to seeking the health of all Regional Churches and MC Canada as a whole
60 system in their decision-making, both individually and collectively. All programming is
61 thus ultimately programming of the larger system, whether initiated and administered
62 by a Regional Church, or collectively as MC Canada.

63 5.3.2 They agree that policy, nationwide agenda, and priorities are to be established through
64 collaborative work in and through the JC.

65 5.3.3 They agree that they will animate the agenda and priorities of the larger system
66 through regular attention to them at Regional Church Board meetings and at Regional
67 Church delegate gatherings, e.g., by inviting the EM or other senior staff to Board
68 meetings, retreats, or other such settings.

69 5.4 MC Canada strives to be an intercultural church, with values of equity, diversity, and inclusion at
70 all levels, e.g., in the appointment of representatives to the JC from the Regional Churches.

72 **6. Delegate Gatherings**

73 Delegate Gatherings take place annually, with an expanded Gathering scheduled for every second
74 year. At these Gatherings delegates from the Regional Churches receive reports, approve budgets,
75 and discuss and debate issues, thereby discerning the direction of MC Canada and its participation in
76 the mission of God in the world (see By-Law for detail).

78 **7. Joint Council**

79 7.1 The JC is the primary setting in which the Regional Churches collaborate and exercise
80 governance of MC Canada. It is composed of 13 voting members:

81 7.1.1 Three officers elected by MC Canada delegates;

82 7.1.2 The Moderators of the five Regional Churches;

83 7.1.3 One additional representative from each Regional Church.

84 7.2 The EM serves as the staff person for the JC. The five REMs sit with the JC for its meetings.

85 7.3 The JC is a governing Board, giving primary attention to vision, priorities, and policy. For duties
86 see By-law.

87 7.4 The EM is responsible for developing the agenda for JC meetings, in conversation with the JC
88 Moderator and the EMG. Regional Church Moderators as well as other JC members are
89 welcome to propose agenda items to the EM.

90 7.5 Recommendations to the JC normally come from the EM or FPAC, and perhaps occasionally
91 from EMG. Recommendations initiated by program areas (e.g., International Witness) are
92 processed first by the EM and come to JC via the EM. Recommendations may be approved,
93 changed, rejected, or tabled by JC.



94 7.6 The integrated nature of MC Canada, consistent with the Regional Churches' commitment to
95 seek the health of the whole integrated system (i.e., the Regions & MC Canada), requires that
96 JC members agree to act in the interests of the whole, and not give their own Regions
97 preferential consideration. This does not, however, prevent them from offering regional
98 perspectives in the conversation.

99 7.7 Since the Regional Churches are independent bodies with their own identity and governance,
100 even as they are covenanted together as MC Canada, it is always an art as to how decisions
101 made by the JC impact upon the Regional Churches. Whenever the JC makes a decision, it will
102 thus also consider and address how this decision intersects with the role and authority of the
103 Regional Churches, e.g., whether it is a final decision or requires ratification by the Regional
104 Churches.

105 7.8 If a JC member perceives that they may be in a conflict of interest, they will declare this to the
106 Board.
107

108 **8. Joint Council Executive**

109 8.1 The JC Executive consists of the 3 JC officers elected by MC Canada delegates (Moderator,
110 Assistant Moderator, Secretary/Treasurer), plus one additional member elected by the JC from
111 within itself.

112 8.2 The JC Executive derives its authority from the JC and acts on its behalf between meetings. The
113 Executive may not alter JC decisions. The JC may from time to time grant the Executive more
114 or less authority over certain matters.

115 8.3 The JC Moderator is the only JC member authorized to speak for the JC. The Assistant
116 Moderator may assume this role if the Moderator is not available.

117 8.4 A primary responsibility of the JC Executive is to facilitate and ensure the integrity of the JC
118 process.
119

120 **9. Financial Principles**

121 9.1 A Shared Revenue Agreement approved by JC and the Regional Churches articulates how the
122 Regions understand their mutual financial accountability and responsibilities within the
123 covenant relationship (copy attached).

124 9.2 The Financial Policy and Audit Committee (FPAC) monitors MC Canada's financial operations,
125 develops policies and procedures for recommendation to the JC, and provides advice on all
126 financial matters to the EM and JC (for more detail, see By-law).
127

128 **10. Mennonite Church Canada Executive Minister**

129 10.1. The EM is appointed by the JC upon recommendation from a JC-appointed Search
130 Committee.

131 10.2 At least a year before the end of the EM's appointment term, the Executive oversees a review
132 process leading to a recommendation to the JC for formal action on possible reappointment.

133 10.3 The Moderator serves as the direct supervisor of the EM.

134 10.4 The EM is responsible for leading and overseeing MC Canada programming, as well as for
135 hiring and supervising MC Canada staff.

136 10.5 The EM is a full participant in the meetings of the JC, the JC Executive, and the EMG.
137

138 **11. Regional Executive Ministers, and the Executive Minister Group**

139 11.1 The EMG consists of the five REMs and the EM, collaborating together as peers. It is thus not
140 a governance body making programmatic decisions.



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- 141 11.2 The EMG is chaired by the EM.
- 142 11.3 The REMs are each accountable to their respective Regional Churches and Boards. The
- 143 covenant among the Regional Churches to form MC Canada, however, gives them vision and
- 144 responsibility beyond their own Region to that of other Regions and MC Canada as a whole.
- 145 They thus agree to act in the interests of MC Canada as an integrated system.
- 146 11.4 The five REMs have a responsibility to represent and promote nationwide programs in their
- 147 own Regions. Conversely, the EM has a responsibility to represent and promote regional
- 148 programs across the country. The REMs also are part of providing feedback to the EM
- 149 reflecting the concerns and priorities of their Regions.
- 150 11.5 The EMG meets regularly for the following:
- 151 11.5.1 Fellowship and mutual support;
- 152 11.5.2 Sharing and learning from each other about regional programs, e.g., camps;
- 153 11.5.3 Providing feedback to the EM;
- 154 11.5.4 Considering and reviewing the overall health of the MC Canada system (Regions and
- 155 nationwide), including monitoring how budgets are tracking (see SRA clauses 1 and
- 156 3);
- 157 11.5.5 Operationalizing administrative details in their joint collaboration;
- 158 11.5.6 Assisting the EM in developing recommendations for JC on programs, initiatives or
- 159 positions.
- 160
- 161 **12. Church Leadership Ministers (CLM) and Community of Spiritual Leaders (COSL)**
- 162 12.1 Through the office of the EM/AEM, MC Canada brings together regional Church Leadership
- 163 Ministers for collaboration on leadership programming across the regions and guidance on
- 164 the development of nationwide/binational policies related to leadership ministries.
- 165 12.2 The office of the EM/AEM also coordinates the nationwide Community of Spiritual Leaders
- 166 program as a forum to support nationwide engagement by pastors/spiritual leaders and
- 167 discernment around theological matters that affect the regional churches.
- 168 12.3 Agenda for the CLM and the COSL flows from JC through the MC Canada EM/AEM to CLM
- 169 and COSL, and from CLM and COSL to the JC through the EM/AEM. The EMG is kept
- 170 informed of CLM/COSL agenda through the MC Canada EM.
- 171
- 172 **13. Nationwide Programs, Ministries and Roles**
- 173 13.1 A program approved by the JC becomes a nationwide program or initiative, under the
- 174 responsibility of the EM.
- 175 13.2 MC Canada will administer and provide the necessary staff for nationwide programs and
- 176 ministries as determined by the JC and the Regional Churches (e.g., International Witness)
- 177 to be funded through the SRA.
- 178 13.3 MC Canada will provide services to the Regional Churches as determined by JC and the
- 179 Regional Churches, including the following: nationwide benefit plan, nationwide pension
- 180 plan, salary guidelines for pastors, and ministerial database.
- 181 13.4 The ministry of MC Canada and its Regions extend to national and global partnerships and
- 182 affiliations. The Regional Churches thus normally relate to international bodies via MC
- 183 Canada. The structure and essence of these partnerships and affiliations are determined by
- 184 the JC.
- 185 13.5 The EM may appoint advisory groups/committees with specialized experience and skill in
- 186 relation to particular program areas, e.g., International Witness. The formation of such
- 187 groups is done in consultation with a variety of people with attention to the regions. The



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188 EM will report this to the JC, with the minutes of meetings of such groups available to the
189 JC.
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192 **14. Communications**

193 14.1 MC Canada (normally) speaks on behalf of the whole (Regional Churches and their
194 congregations) as it relates to MC USA, Mennonite World Conference, other global bodies,
195 international agencies, the nationwide church and nationwide denominations.

196 14.2 MC Canada may at times develop and declare position statements. Such statements may
197 be drafted by various parts of the organization (e.g., EMG), but if considered significant
198 they should be processed by JC.

199 14.3 Regional Churches speak on behalf of MC Canada, including the work of the JC, its program
200 and work, and the other Regional Churches in their communication with their member
201 congregations.

202 14.3 Regional Churches agree to develop and work within a shared communication strategy,
203 with an eye to consistent unified branding across the system.
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