

**Values and Draws (Minimum Specifications)  
Responses from Delegates  
Ohio Conference Annual Conference Assembly  
March 4, 2023**

As Delegates considered Scenario 1 and Scenario 2, they were asked, *“What value is most important to you in making this decision? What draws you to the Scenario of your choice?”*

In the ongoing Strategic Planning process, these responses from delegates provide information (White Hat) that helps to further define the “Minimum Specifications” for Ohio Conference.

**Identity**

- Demonstrates self-differentiation.
- Alignment between conference and action/practice
- Faithfulness to Anabaptist values
- Historical faithfulness
- Covenant faithfulness
- Settled peace from which to vision
- Synchronize and practice and confession (identity)
- Faithfulness to values
- Anabaptist principles
- Most Christ-like approach to Mennonite leadership and structures
- Maintaining God's order
- Joining other congregations who are like-minded
- Role is advocate/judge. Remove confusion from the body of Christ
- Unity of thought, theology, and people
- Theological alignment is important governing body supports ministers teaching
- Non-conformity to culture

**Unity in Diversity**

- Staying together as
- Open-heartedness and forbearance
- Models unity among diversity
- Allows for unity among diversity
- Maintain relationship
- Get to  $\frac{2}{3}$
- Desire for unity, purpose
- Unity but may be different than I thought
- Unity living out the mission of the church
- Recognition that we will never completely agree but can remain whole together
- God is present in either option. God is not absent in a group that believes differently
- Important to remain around the table together even when we do not agree
- How do we be faithful? How to relate with those with different views?
- There is faithfulness and unfaithfulness in both scenarios
- Unity forbearance as expression of love
- Maintain community
- Collective way forward
- The unity of God's people would be apparent John 17
- Unity
- Unity recognizing common commitment as well as diversity
- Recognize we are all God's children. Love God and others as ourselves

- Hearing and learning from others in community
- Commitment to remain united with our differences
- Unity in congregation and conference
- Congregational agreement
- Unity and cohesion: which accomplishes the most community?
- Unity
- Diversity of thought and belief and connection to diversity
- To honor what the body decides
- Not running from those we disagree with
- being united together as one body; desire to treat each other as loved family members
- Major concern is love - may lose it if we don't stick together
- Unity - concern over fears
- Unity with conference and Church
- Community in congregation and conference
- Hope for unity in the congregation
- Practice of forbearance. Don't feel threatened by different opinions
- Choosing to love thy neighbor. Don't break away without a clear understanding
- Come to acceptance of those who are ministers too
- Able to stay together and live with diversity
- Community process of doing this in community
- Not removing others or ourselves from the table
- Unity
- Move together in unity
- Fruits of the Spirit: concern for unity and the next generation
- Agape Love of God: positive experience of agreeing / disagreement
- Congregational unity: Hope for a common ground
- Unity: congregation and conference. Unity of purpose with diversity
- Unity: live with differences a testimony or witness to the world
- Unity in the midst of differences: maintain fellowship with individuals families congregation conference MC USA and Anabaptist World Conference
- Openness to differences
- Community and diversity
- Smaller group / choice agree to disagree
- Agree to disagree/choices

## **Scripture**

- Consistent interpreting lens for scripture
- Following God's word being faithful and true
- Following scripture
- Collaborate with scripture
- What gets us towards following biblical truths
- Biblical standards for sexuality important. Upholding
- Biblical/gospel
- Truth representing the word of God the fruits of the organization
- Biblical conviction
- Scripture
- High commitment to New Testament teaching: cohesive community
- Faithfulness to Jesus and to scripture
- Sound biblical doctrine. Faithfulness clarity of mission moving forward

- Following Christ's teaching. Christ-centered. Beliefs in the authority of scripture
- Value to remain authentic to God's word
- Follow God's word
- Follow the teachings of God's word
- Following a biblical perspective
- Focus on scripture
- Focusing on all scriptures
- Following scripture
- Faithfulness to God's word
- Scriptural interpretation
- Scriptural interpretation: human sexuality traditional view

### **Vision**

- Bring as many to Christ as possible and let God judge
- A fresh purpose, recentering and being centered around the gospel
- That God be glorified
- Focus on the kingdom. Move away from hostility.
- Moving away from felt agendas or tensions, moving towards something positive
- Everyone experience the love of Jesus and participation in church
- Drawing people to Jesus is the heart of the gospel

### **Values**

- Compassion, love
- Courage to speak in truth
- Belonging
- Grace: living with uncertainty and different understandings. Ability to hold other stories and experiences
- Discipleship and reaching out to future generations
- Truth being on the side of faith
- Following God's ways, not man's ways
- Conformity to God's will
- Being inclusive is important and won't interrupt the church's work
- Witness to world under Christ
- Consistence in the midst of difference
- Acceptance
- What are we communicating to younger generations?
- Acceptance, Love, embracing others
- Witness of the church
- Inclusion for everybody
- Not judge: inclusive versus exclusive
- Acceptance of everybody
- Love and acceptance, no one left out
- Conducting ourselves in a loving peaceful manner: seeking consistency
- Working toward unity rather than division
- Inclusion: why divide?
- Everyone included
- Inclusion - gospel is for all and to be true to the gospel
- Respect and integrity
- Being non-judgmental

- Trust
- Love of the church and keeping with Jesus
- Fulfills the value
- loving our neighbor as ourselves
- following God's will
- embracing God's radical love
- love and inclusion of all; not deciding who's in or out
- Space to dialogue with people I disagree with. Value inclusion
- Fidelity in Christ. Energy and excitement of a gospel-centered mission
- Humility and grace
- Safety and opportunity for spiritual growth
- Consensus and mutual respect
- Familiarity and reduced risk
- Compassion
- Continued need for diversity
- Longevity
- Getting off dead center; moving forward
- Openness
- Welcoming
- Witness to a watching world
- Overarching love
- Love for everyone
- Kindness and love in whatever decision
- Stewardship. Willingness to be open and welcoming
- Camaraderie / missionality
- Ministry/focused activity
- Not having sideways leadership
- Service with love
- Christ-centered
- Including people
- Not build fences

**What draws you to the scenario you chose?**

- Excitement for vision of MC USA
- Offended by how MC USA leadership has handled the process
- Feel disrespect from MC USA
- Enlightening experience in the process and the presence of the Holy Spirit
- A more local conference connection
- Leaving would be to give Ohio Conference a new start and to follow God
- Remaining with MC USA allows us to be connected to the structure of the whole.  
Resources.
- Long-term support in Ohio Conference and MC USA
- Appreciates MC USA being willing to talk about issues
- Efforts in building strengths together with different organizations
- Drawn towards scenario that maintains strengths of relationships and organizations
- Scenario 2 is clear to the view of the Gospel and the Bible
- Drawn to Scenario 1 as breaking down walls
- Continuity of connectedness
- Represent home congregation well and accurately
- Broken trust and disrespect from MC USA to Ohio Conference

- Process is top-down in MC USA rather than bottom-up consensus
- Takes a lot of time and energy to restructure
- Continue involvement in MC USA; congregations will leave if Ohio Conference leaves MC USA
- decision will support his congregation and confession of faith
- Message of scripture is central: MC USA decision doesn't follow scripture
- The actions of Mennonite Church USA in the past as it relates to Ohio Conference
- If Ohio Conference stays with MC USA, congregation will leave
- Connection with broader church
- See the Ohio Conference be respectful listen to others and communicate
- To feel the support from as large a group as possible
- Excited to see what is possible for affiliation with a broader group
- Public witness represented by not leaving
- Sense that we don't have a full relationship
- Neutral
- Staying connected to influence
- Historical precedents
- Deep respect: time to think it through without pressure
- To represent congregation well
- Praising God and focus on mission of Ohio Conference. Respect each other
- To step away from any falsehood we might represent
- Knowing that congregation what her congregation would say and her own desire to be non-judgmental
- Value all that MC USA has to offer
- Posturing by MC USA towards Ohio Conference
- Value making a decision; moving forward
- MC USA moving in that direction; want to be a part of it
- Want to be part of a group working towards that goal
- Represent congregation
- Weariness of hypocrisy pushes away from scenario 1
- Local congregation can move forward
- Remain part of a conference close geographically diverse
- Value in resources from larger and broader church
- Being connected to Ohio Conference
- Not wanting to change
- Not having structure of Ohio Conference
- Change in MC USA or no change in MC USA
- Relationships/friends/family or marginalized
- Submitting to community as a pastor
- Nostalgia to MC USA
- Honor and reflect congregational discernment
- Following God's call and for his will to be done
- A decision that aligns with Christian ethics and morals
- Cohesion and a sense of purpose for Ohio Conference that reflects the congregation's support
- Added tension at the 11th hour
- Decision congregation has already made
- Straying from confession of faith
- Hope of realignment
- Lament / desire to be back to doing church work
- Who fills leadership roles?

- Congregational lead
- Wanting to be faithful to reflecting congregational discernment
- A feeling that MC USA is moving in a different direction than Ohio Conference
- Respect / disrespect: you can work with people if there is respect. Difficult when this is absent
- Understanding the process
- Exhaustion of continuing to discern ready to move on. Articulating a direction
- Sadness in restricting our Ohio Conference boundaries
- Undecided. Don't want to make a decision based on myself, following God's will
- Listening to the Holy Spirit's guidance, hoping all will value that leading
- Make a decision that is best for the congregation regardless of personal choice
- As a delegate is open to and trying to listen to God's spirit and leading
- Be secure in decision before making it
- Not running from conflict, keeping dialogue going
- Choosing because of what we have been through so far, mission
- To minimize the loss of people
- Choice of making choices
- Lose structure
- Lose familiarity
- Unable to answer because of leadership