



LIVING OUT OUR VISION

Our vision includes a commitment to submit to clear and reliable pathways for communal biblical discernment when considering beliefs and practices that differ from the broader church. When a congregation is considering beliefs or practices that differ from the beliefs and practices outlined in our conference by-laws, *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995), *Mennonite World Conference: Shared Convictions of Global Anabaptists*, *Missio Dei: What is an Anabaptist Christian?*, *Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love*, or *A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership* (the MC USA polity manual), the congregation will engage in a process of discernment that includes engaging with another congregation.

Process of Discernment

We commit to submit to clear and reliable pathways for communal biblical discernment when considering beliefs and practices that differ from the broader church.

- 1) *Begin by articulating how the beliefs and practices we hold in common bear witness to God's intended purposes for the church and the world.*
- 2) *Accept guidance from the Missional Leadership Team in designing a trustworthy process of discernment.*
- 3) *Articulate the differing belief or practice to brothers and sisters in the conference in terms of how it bears witness to God's intended purposes for the church and the world.*
- 4) *Enter into a thorough and substantive process of biblical discernment with a peer congregation that embraces the conference's articulated beliefs and practices.*
- 5) *Be led in their study by a qualified teacher offered by the conference leadership in consultation with participating congregations.*

If after the full commitment of a congregation to the conference discernment process the congregation embraces the conference's articulated beliefs and practices, the process is considered complete. If that is not the case, there are two options for the Missional Leadership Team to consider as the outcome of this discernment process:

First, the congregation will be blessed to follow that course of the teacher Gamaliel, "If the path is of human origin it will fail, but if it is of God it will flourish." (Acts 5:38-39)

Second, that if after the full commitment to the process the congregation still believes it must differ, the conference and congregation can evaluate the continuation of the relationship.