

What MLT Heard from 2017 March Delegate Sessions
May 8, 2017

We are grateful for the time that you as delegates made to attend one of the three 2017 March regional meetings, for the care you took in responding to each other, and for recording your responses to the questions regarding Renewing a Vision (RaV). We appreciate the number of congregations who continue to engage this vision in its entirety about the kind of conference and people we want to become. (Please see the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (IMMC) website for "Table Wisdom Sheets.")

Overall, we continue to believe that adopting RaV will help us center our conference life around Jesus through engaging in shared spiritual practices, that our relationships with one another will be strengthened, and that we will all grow in our capacity for God-centered worship, Christ-like love, and Spirit-led witness and service.

We heard a wide range of ways that our congregations are already living out key parts of the RaV. This leads us to believe that the community of congregations who comprise IMMC remains an abundant resource to learn from and support one another.

We heard "practical questions" about living out RaV: What happens if a congregation or pastor does not sign the covenant? How will the discernment process work? How will congregations connect with one another? The MLT has prepared a separate "Frequently Asked Questions" document with responses to address many of these questions. (Please see IMMC website for this and other resources.)

We continue to hear the theological breadth and diversity that exists within our conference. For example, we heard a range of opinions expressed about the "breadth of variance" portion. While many affirm what is proposed, others wish that the three statements would say the opposite of what is recommended.

We heard the pain and recognize the loss that many of us feel by the significant number of congregations who have left our conference. We also grieve this reality. And though we can celebrate our conference's history, it also seems that there is a call for change in how we function and conceptualize ourselves. A key question that each of us must answer is: What does it mean to be a member of IMMC? The RaV gives guidance to this question.

Finally, we also heard hope regarding what our conference may be in the future as we live into RaV. Below are some responses from the Table Wisdom notes. (See IMMC website for more responses.)

- Can help us break out of our "silos" ...provides us with a network of support beyond ourselves, and hope.
- Covenanted people are more engaged and committed to what they are doing.
- A place where differences in belief and practice are recognized but the discernment of congregations and in connection with each other is affirmed.
- More multicolored in 10 years! Faith based, not ethnic based.
- May provide opportunity for deeper relationship of congregations...Even simple connections between congregations can bring great fruit.
- Gives permission to congregations to work in own varying context (sociological, theological, economic contexts)...within the larger confessional theology framework.

- Millennials will alter the church dramatically – more open, less rigid, less critical – if they are not co-opted by the culture.
- Could help us actually be less independent; increase relationships between congregations...Greater embrace of diversity. Centered on Jesus, not boundaries or “issues.”