

**INDIANA-MICHIGAN MENNONITE CONFERENCE ANNUAL SESSIONS**  
**SUMMARY: "READINESS TO ADOPT" SHEETS**  
**June 18, 2016**

*Number in parentheses notes total number of responses with similar sentiments.*

**17 responses (20.0%) Yes, I am ready to adopt**

- "with enthusiasm for relationship & diversity!" (1)

**21 responses (24.7%) Yes, I am ready to adopt BUT I have the following MINOR concerns**

- Not quite sure how the process of congregation helping congregation actually work; will practices feel burdensome; more freedom in shared practices, covenanting; don't want covenant to be treated as law or rules; encourage shared practices but not dictated; not have a list that "adds one more thing to have to do" (10)
- Lack of discernment on #2 in Breadth of Variance; encourage congregations to engage in relationship/covenant where there are differences (not "have to" but "encourage") in Breadth of Variance; difficult of walking a congregation through the last 2 statements in Breadth of Variance; Want to see congregational engagement between congregations of differing views in their discernment about LGBT inclusion and/or same-sex marriage (4)
- Geographic isolation: much more discussion on the items of covenant; practicality of doing practices together if distant and small; time-stress for congregations & pastors to relate "among" one another; the difficulty in actually broadening our interactions (4)
- May mean more work for conference staff (1)

**19 responses (22.4%) Yes, I am ready to adopt BUT I have the following SIGNIFICANT concerns**

- More inclusive language in part 3 of Breadth of Variance; each congregation decide whether to ordain person in same sex commitment; (5)
- Removal of the discernment process for #2 Breadth of Variance; Strong disagreement to allow congregations to perform same-sex marriages; Concerns for people/congregations that will be deeply troubled by the move toward LGBT inclusion (3)
- Not sure my congregation will be able to affirm it; Given the full agenda of our congregation not sure we will have time to process for covenanting in 2017 (2)
- Language regarding shared practices; Length: don't need to be so specific with actual laying out of practices; how to make church sharing practical (3)
- Specifics of commitment and connections must be adaptive and flexible since diversity of contexts, local cultures, ministries (1)

**28 responses (32.9%) No, I am NOT ready to adopt because of the following concerns**

- Our congregation could not affirm letting each church decide about marrying same-sex couples; Breadth of Variance (oversteps MC USA, statement of faith, moves too quickly for our conference, probably cause our congregation to withdraw); separates, not unifies; clarity regarding LGBT and 1995 Confession of Faith statements; Breadth of Variance should be voted on first (14)
- Need more information; lack of clarity on belief and practice; confusing as to what it means to covenant with another congregation; covenanting of congregations and leaders difficult to do due to busyness; covenanting seems more restrictive rather than seeing or allowing variance; Need more discussion and feedback and possible revisions based on our discussions this weekend; Not enough time for discussion, particularly Breadth of Variance; unclarity of document, its impact of "covenant" on congregations, more time to process with church, unclarity of discernment and application (9)
- No concerns identified; Did not have a chance to review document; first time seeing it (4)

- Because #3 in Breadth of Variance that assumes a same-sex person will never have the gifts to serve in a credentialed role. (1)
- Pastor is not willing or needs to sign a commitment form (1)

### **MY QUESTIONS ARE**

#### Yes, I am ready to adopt

- How will the discernment process play out with the Breadth of Variance?
- What resources will conference have to help congregations center on Jesus?
- What will shared commitment to congregations mean for churches outside the Elkhart/Goshen region?
- What ways will we see to plant Anabaptist churches in Michigan and Indiana? Places of abandonment?

#### Yes, I am ready to adopt BUT I have the following MINOR concerns

- From FAQs #5: Are there 2 discernment processes? 1) whether a congregation covenants with IMMC? 2) process for congr. at variance with established positions?
- Like the expectations for “covenanting and credentialed leaders” but must they do all these things or just encouraged?

#### Yes, I am ready to adopt BUT I have the following SIGNIFICANT concerns

- How might this be even more simplified? Where will the staff energies fill the requirements that this demands?
- Will non-signing congregations be removed?

#### No, I am NOT ready to adopt because of the following concerns

- What are/is conference really trying to ask with this concept of covenant?
- Why was discernment process removed from #2 Breadth of Variance?
- How will IMMC come up with “qualifications” for teachers?
- How will IMMC ensure that “discernment” is learned by congregations who have little training or experience in discernment around the process of scripture, prayer, and listening?
- For the process of discernment, would the biblical discernment with a peer congregation be just leadership, or member-to-member?
- How would the process work for pastor censure if the local congregation decides? What then, if/when other covenanted congregations disagree?

### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

#### Yes, I am ready to adopt

- Would like to see more about strengthening relationships and accountability among credentialed leaders as has been done regarding congregations. Congregations may be better served by seeing/experiencing leaders who can model accountability and good relationships.
- To center on Jesus mean uncertainty (not a lot of Black & White answers).

#### Yes, I am ready to adopt BUT I have the following MINOR concerns

- Partnering with another congregation is an interesting idea, not sure how it will work out, we need to hear stories of how congregations accomplish this.
- It seems to me that this is a noble idea that should be pursued. But we need to remain basically non-legal. I still tend toward congregational authority.

- Share practices is going to take work if taken seriously – not as legalistic language suggested. Discernment is going to be hard to implement and enforce sharing between other churches is very hard to do. We each have our ministries and agendas.
- Affirm the document, but see it as logistically and practically very challenging. The long-term results, however, may prove to be very exciting.
- Affirm centrality of Jesus language.
- Thanks for the good work you have done.
- Hope section: what God is leading us to do in Jesus’s name NOT what we do so shift emphasis off us and put on Spirit.
- Affirm the desire to move toward relational emphasis.

Yes, I am ready to adopt BUT I have the following SIGNIFICANT concerns

- It seems like there is still clarity needed around communal biblical discernment. A clear process might be welcome by pastors.
- Seems to be tension between 1) expecting a discernment process for congregations at variance and 2) stating at the end that congregations are free to decide about LGBT issues
- Give each other good space and keep the vision alive and strong and affirm the move to strengthen ties.
- Appreciate a lot of work here.
- No explanation of ecclesiology (nature of church, especially in the context of conference). Very weak Christology. This is the heart of convening conference in this document. It is thematically weak, syntactically odd, and only relatively orthodox. Perhaps just direct to the confession.
- We need more time to process the Breadth of Variance.
- Strongly disagree with the decision to allow congregations to perform same-sex marriages. But this may be the only way to move forward with the broader vision. We need to respect those who do not want to participate in this vision and own our part in the resulting splits.
- Congregational autonomy on issues regarding LGBT membership & officiating union/ceremonies. A bit confused about the role for discernment process in this revised document.

No, I am NOT ready to adopt because of the following concerns

- We already focus on Jesus. This draft is about LG--
- I wish my congregation could embrace this.
- There doesn’t seem to be any goal other than “how can we keep people happy?”
- The above statement does not necessarily reflect my personal views.
- Not enough time to discuss such a large document
- I like a lot of the document but need a chance to discuss Breadth of Variance
- Am a new delegate and have not had time to process.

**OTHER**

- 4 “readiness to adopt” sheets were turned in that had writing on the back, BUT not votes for any of the four categories.
- 1 person voted for all 3 categories EXCEPT the “yes, I am ready to adopt” (*this was not counted in the tallies above*)
  - I did not read the documents yet. I will try to do so tonight.
- 1 Person voted BOTH “yes, I am read to adopt BUT I have the following SIGNIFICANT concerns” and “no, I am NOT ready to adopt because of the following concerns” (*this was not counted in the tallies above*).

- I affirm the conference's desire to give more freedom of choice to congregations. I am disappointed about the last statement and it feels like the conference is scapegoating MC USA so decisions can be avoided. 1) This document could be reduced in length. 2) The covenant feels like your putting words to practices that are already occurring → if this is the goal, great. If not, could this be more open to allow for natural relationships to happen.