

An invitation to delegates and attenders at 2020 regional delegate meetings:

Renewing a Vision brought together several characteristics of a vibrant conference: centering around Jesus, hope for the future, relationship, shared spiritual practices, a periodic celebration of corporate life and a recognition that not all choose to be part of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (IMMC).

Much of it was well received and affirmed. But the celebration of covenant was not. Missional Leadership Team (MLT) decided to step away from the covenant celebration planned for 2018 so people could experience living into the vision. As 2021 approaches, MLT wants to test some ideas for a way forward.

The covenant plan approved by delegates in 2017, part of *Renewing a Vision*, was:

Congregations and credentialed leaders who want to be part of this conference will be asked to sign a covenant every three years. In brief, the covenant asks us to commit to: engaging the shared spiritual practices, to participate in conference affairs (via volunteers, delegates, finances, prayers and communications), to use the communal discernment process as needed, and to foster inter-congregational relationships.

The intended goals of the covenant plan are:

- as a celebration of being together and belonging. The idea of signing covenant was thought of as a way of expressing this commitment.
- Covenant also provided a way for congregations and credentialed leaders to cease belonging by not signing. There are congregations and pastors in IMMC who have not participated in decades but have not “left.” The idea of signing covenant was a way to address this question of whether congregations wanted to be part of IMMC, and what commitment is required for membership.

As MLT listened to the concerns, it became clear that several items complicated the covenant idea as presented:

- It was in the same document as the Breadth of Variance, raising concerns across the spectrum about the integrity of signing a document if one doesn’t agree personally with the stated positions on variance.
- There was a possible conflict if a congregation made one decision about signing and the pastor(s) made another.
- Some pastors thought their credential would be revoked if they personally differed from the breadth of variance.

MLT’s suggestion is to NOT do the covenant as we had previously voted, but seek ways to strengthen congregational relationships. Delegate help is needed as we focus on the hopes of *Renewing a Vision*. MLT will bring two questions about congregational connections and invite the group to name two additional discussion items. You will identify the question you want to talk about with others who share your passion. To do this, an hour of the delegate meeting will be held in breakout conversations, followed by some large group wrap-up.

The work done on this day will be set alongside work done at the other delegate meetings. It will be compiled and then summarized for distribution. Using the work done at delegate meetings, MLT will bring a proposal to delegates at Annual Sessions.