

College Mennonite Church - "Descriptive Characteristics of CMC" - Identity discussion #2, March 26, 2008

Summary of 18 table group discussions of 20 statements, listed in order of agreement

Most statements originated from responses to the questions "Why did you come to CMC?" "Why do you stay at CMC?" "What is CMC's greatest strength?" or "What is one thing you would change about CMC if you could?" stated by CMC members in interviews or submitted on forms last December. A few statements are demographic statistics selected because of their unusual or important influence on CMC identity.

This summary represents an ongoing process, not a finished product. It will inform further work as we develop a clear, energizing and owned vision for the congregation. Explanatory notes have been added to the last three items. Numbers in () represent repeated comments. - Becky Horst, chair of the Church Board

#	Yes	No	Original statement	Comments/Questions from table groups
1.	18	-	Graced by God with many gifts: spiritual gifts, material resources, extensive experiences, many quality programs	
3.	18	-	High levels of formal education	
6.	18	-	Caring	
8.	18	-	Residences are geographically concentrated near the meeting place	
9.	18	-	We value congregational singing in general, and specifically four-part harmony	Some disagreement. Add (<i>hymns</i>)
4.	17	1	Globally connected	Not sure what this means.
7.	17	1	Aging	Find a better way to state it.
17.	17	1	A ten-year consistent pattern of declining worship attendance.	More viewing at Greencroft & on internet.
13.	15	3	A congregation whose church building is on a college campus; with legal relationship to the college; with many informal connections between faculty, staff, students and congregational members.	Omit "students" to make a true statement. (3) We share a building, but have only a few connections now.
2.	13	5	Predominantly professional, comparatively few business folk	What is the actual % breakdown? (3) Clarify: laborers or business people? What about artisans? self-employed? blue collar? There may be more business folks than we realize. Are these categories especially important?
10.	13	5	Many of us have many friends here; it takes a lot of our energy to keep up with them; this makes it difficult for new folk to fit in, who don't know members	Difficult for non-Mennos to connect. Agree with first clause, but not the remainder (2) Agree with first and third clause, but not the second. We know folks whose entry was remarkably easy; but perhaps true for quite a few.
11.	13	5	Some of us have many family members here.	Many do not. (4) Change "many" to "several." Question the significance of this characteristic.
16.	13	5	An unrealized potential for outreach through radio, Greencroft and web transmission.	We try. What else? We don't have good ways of integrating this kind of outreach. (2) Unsure. (2) Add "and at the college." How is this being measured?
14.	11	7	A tendency to consider ourselves more highly than we ought, which results in less felt need to pay attention to what can be learned from other congregations	No agreement. "Self-sufficient" instead of haughty. We use the gifts and resources within rather than elsewhere. Reluctantly agreed. Delete first clause. Natural consequence of #2. We see change in this characteristic for the better.

#	Yes	No	Original statement	Comments/Questions from table groups
15.	10	8	Head (cognitive) spirituality predominates, while heart (emotive) spirituality is suppressed: this results in avoidance of both ends of the emotional spectrum--deep pain/suffering/darkness and exuberant joy and celebration.	2 nd half may be overstated. More at pain/suffering end. Too judgmental. False dichotomy. Some of us get emotions through our heads. Perhaps true at times. Getting better at this. Yes, but these happen more in small groups.
19.	10	4	We lack a clear, energizing, and congregationally owned vision <i>Note: 4 tables did not get to this item, #19 on the list.</i>	Mission statement vs. vision statement? We have a statement. Is it energizing? Why is this needed?
20.	10	5	We are anxious about conflict <i>Note: 3 tables did not get to this item, #20 on the list.</i>	We avoid it, but may not worry much about it. (2) We do have passive-aggressive Mennonites at CMC. We need better discernment processes for controversial issues.
5.	7	11	Traditional (high value placed on "the way we have done it"); changes are slow/difficult. <i>Explanation: Changes certainly occur at CMC, but, relative to other congregations, many of us perceive that they are sometimes slow and/or difficult. CMC is largely perceived as a traditional congregation.</i>	2 parts may be disconnected, but separately true. Size is cumbersome. (2) Don't hear "the way we've always done it." Tradition of being progressive, but change is a slow process for us. "Gradual" instead of "difficult." Change is relative.(2) More traditional than not. Music has broadened. Worship services show some change (screens, internet). Worship has variety, but overall structure static. Have more flexibility than in the past. Change is happening constantly.
18.	7	10	We say we are firmly committed to Mennonite Confession of Faith, yet pastors do not feel free to be bold with sensitive issues that have political (nationally or congregational) connotations: e.g. the Iraq war, homosexuality, etc. <i>Explanation: This statement reflects consensus of the pastoral team as well as the perception of some members.</i> <i>Note: 1 table did not get to this item, #18 on the list.</i>	Pastors as bold as can be. Are pastors trained to be followers rather than leaders? Yes, pastors tend not to speak boldly on sensitive issues. Careful statements instead (2) Not sure what the Menn. confession of faith says. We don't know. (2) Non-sequitor. We do not see the Confession as dealing with controversial issues. Does broadcasting constrain? Fuzzy. Two different statements.
12.	5	13	We use our wealth to influence what happens; money readily appears for what we want, but not always for what we need. <i>Explanation: "Need" represents items such as the annual spending plan and the Student Aid Fund. Both are chronically short of funds, while many special funds and projects generate donations with relative ease.</i>	Judgment call. What is the need? (5) Not clear what is meant. (4) 1 st part true. 2 nd part unclear. (2) We do not believe that wealth influences decisions in unhealthy ways. (2) Yes, but money also responds to needs. This may have been truer years ago when there were fewer affluent members.