



**Video Update – June 2016**  
**Willy Reimer, CCMBC Executive Director**

Hi, my name is Willy Reimer, and I'm the Executive Director of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

This summer we're getting together in Toronto for our bi-annual national convention, which we call Gathering. I'm excited about what's happening this summer, and I'm excited to invite you to come and join Canadian Mennonite Brethren – from coast to coast – to Toronto. As we gain a heart for what God is doing among us, as we are inspired by what the Spirit is saying to us and as we also get a heart for the mission that's happening in Toronto.

**What is the Purpose of Gathering?**

Historically, Mennonite Brethren have been coming together as a national body to come and discern together what God is calling us to. One of our core ministry services is Building Community.

Building Community has several elements to it. One is obviously how we communicate across the country – and face to face to each other – the things that God is doing in us, among us and through us. Another key piece is our theological centre: our confession of faith and how we express that confession and discern that as we get together as a national body.

Another big part of Gathering, and why gather, is the fact that we need to come together and just seek God together. We need to come together and pray together.

We need to come together and hear the mission that is being accomplished through God's people from coast to coast. As we hear stories of faith being built, of faith being expressed, of people coming to Christ. Of churches walking through difficult times and seeing God work, of global mission happening through the support of our churches across the country, of sacrifice that is happening as people go to extend the gospel, of our work together in our schools. As we hear from Mennonite Central Committee of the things that we do for humanitarian causes in the name of Christ.

Really, this is our missions conference. We gather nationally because we are a national body and because we believe God wants to work through us nationally as a people on mission.

**What are the benefits of Gathering?**

One that is really high on my list is the fact that Canadian churches – Canadian Mennonite Brethren Churches – need to have an understanding, a vision and a heart for Canada. It's only in places like this when we actually hear each other from coast to coast because information tends to run north and south, so we don't know much about the provinces beside us or the churches beside us.

And so we need to come together to understand what the Canadian landscape is. What are the spiritual opportunities and challenges across our country? Where should we actually be sacrificing for the sake of

mission to invest across our country? Not just locally, not just internationally – which are both incredibly important – but also across our country.

How do we address the unique opportunities and challenges that are Canadian? How do we address the unique opportunities and challenges that are Mennonite Brethren? How do we partner together with each other? How do we partner together across our country?

How do we encourage each other – from the smallest church to the largest church? Every church has something to give, and every church has something to receive, no matter what size we are or what resources we have at our disposal that God has given us. I believe we have a mutual responsibility for each other as Canadian Mennonite Brethren.

So, there are many great reasons for us to come. And, of course, the best part is all the relationships that we form as we get to be with people, pray with people and worship with people from across this country – and build those friendships that God often leads us to, supernaturally, that have ongoing relational and missional impact as we leave Toronto.

This year our theme verse is 1 Corinthians 9:16:

“For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”

When I read that verse, what strikes me is that the internal compulsion that Paul is writing about is not because he’s a motivated, type-A leader, and it’s not because of his apostolic gifting – even though God uses all those things. When I read that verse, I hear the Spirit putting something inside of Paul that runs so deep, that is so core to who he is: that if he is to be faithful to what God has placed in him he *must* preach the gospel.

When I think of Gathering this summer, my greatest dream, my greatest desire is that the Holy Spirit would fall on us in such a way that we are truly driven to our knees. Not out of some sense of corporate vision (even though we need a corporate vision), but really it’s because we are so overwhelmed by the reality of God, the truth of the gospel, the power of the cross, the fact that he died for us and saved us. We respond to that incredible act of grace that we just give everything back. That we just come before him and say, “Whatever you want, whatever you are calling us to, wherever you are leading us to, we will obey, we will follow.” And that that would be a corporate sense rising up in us.

I know we have to do business, I know we have to do reporting; it’s appropriate, it’s responsible, it’s the right thing to do. But my heart for this summer is so much bigger than that. I keep praying that the Spirit would fall on us. That we would be overwhelmed by the presence of God. By the mission that he’s given us. By the reality of the fact that many millions of Canadians do not know Jesus.

[I keep praying] that we would be compelled by that reality of the Spirit working inside of us. That we would have a sense, leaving Toronto, of what the Spirit is calling us to personally, as churches, and then, as a national body of churches together. For his glory, for the benefit of the lost and for the ongoing transformation of the bride.