

## CCMBC MB Confession of Faith Amendment Procedure Policy

**Preamble:** According to the CCMBC Bylaws: “*The National Faith and Life Team exists to articulate and safeguard Mennonite Brethren theological convictions, produce theological and pastoral resources, provide discernment and guidance on current issues. The National Faith and Life Team stewards the Confession of Faith on behalf of the Conference.*” This stewarding responsibility involves overseeing any proposed amendments to our MB Confession of Faith.

The MB Confession of Faith is our collection of biblically based theological and ethical convictions that guide our Canadian MB family. These convictions are important to us because they help us understand what it means “to focus on Jesus, be faithful disciples of Jesus, and participate in God’s big redemption story in the world.”<sup>1</sup> “These convictions are ‘prescriptive’ and ‘normative’ for each and every local MB church and each and every MB leader (credentialed and non-credentialed) because we hold these convictions to be faithful to what God is telling us through Scripture.”<sup>2</sup> However, our Confession of Faith is a summary articulation of Scripture and is not on par with Scripture itself. As a result, there may be times when we as a national family will want to make edits and revisions to one or more of our 18 articles so that they more clearly reflect what we understand as God’s voice to us through Scripture.

The CCMBC General Operating Bylaws—Article 16 (approved in 2021 by the National Assembly) describes the final step in the approval of a recommended amendment to the MB Confession of Faith:

### ***CCMBC General Operating Bylaws (2021)***

#### ***16 ARTICLE 16 - AMENDING THE CONFESSION OF FAITH***

*The Conference’s Confession of Faith at the time of approval of these bylaws remains the July 1999 version as contained in Appendix A.*

##### ***16.1 Notice***

*Notice of motion to amend the Confession of Faith may be given at any National Assembly or by publication through written or electronic means to all the Members. Notice of motion to amend the Confession of Faith must be presented to all the Members three months before the National Assembly at which it is to be voted on. The notice of motion will include all details of the amendments to the Confession of Faith.*

##### ***16.2 Sponsorship***

*Sponsorship of a motion to amend the Confession of Faith may be initiated by either the National Faith and Life Team or the Executive Board.*

##### ***16.3 Voting***

*A two-thirds majority of those delegates present and voting at a National Assembly shall be required to carry an amendment. Referenda may not be used to amend the Confession of Faith.*

However, these bylaws do not describe the process prior to the sponsoring of an amendment to the National Assembly by the National Faith and Life Team (NFLT) and/or the CCMBC Executive Board. The “CCMBC MB Confession of Faith Amendment Procedure Policy” is designed to clarify the steps prior to sponsoring an MB Confession of Faith amendment to the CCMBC National Assembly. This procedure policy is to be followed when dealing with amendments to the eighteen full-text articles themselves NOT in reference to the various extra resources that were developed to accompany these eighteen articles (e.g., Summary of the MB Confession of Faith, Explanatory Notes, Living the Confession (FAQs), Living the Confession [formerly Pastoral Application], or Responsive Worship Readings [formerly Liturgical Readings]).

<sup>1</sup> “Introduction to the MB Confession of Faith (2023)” FAQ 4.

<sup>2</sup> “Introduction to the MB Confession of Faith (2023)” FAQ 3.

## **Rationale for a Proposed Amendment to the MB Confession of Faith**

The “Introduction to the MB Confession of Faith (2023)” chapter clarifies that there are three qualifying reasons for a proposed amendment:

*Revision to an article in the Confession of Faith can be undertaken for one or more of the following reasons:*

1. *We believe that the older language needs updating in order to clarify the original intention of an article as understood when approved in 1999/2021.*
2. *We believe that something needs to be added to a specific article in order to address a new situation facing our MB family today.*
3. *We believe that a present article does not faithfully express biblical teaching.*

## **Initiating the Process for a Proposed Amendment to our MB Confession of Faith**

The National Faith and Life Team welcomes formal written requests related to the amending of the MB Confession of Faith from a provincial MB conference office/Provincial Faith & Life Team, as long as all requests fit within the parameters of the three qualifying reasons for a revision. The NFLT decision about moving an amendment forward is solely at their discretion as they discern carefully how the amendment fits within the qualifying reasons noted above.

Note: Individuals within our MB family and local MB churches may send their requests for Confession of Faith amendments to their provincial MB conference office and/or their Provincial Faith & Life Team who can then process them and forward them as desired.

Formal written requests for a proposed amendment may be received by the NFLT by one of the following methods:

- An email or letter from a provincial MB conference office/PFLT to the National Faith & Life Director and/or the NFLT. All requests must include a rationale for the amendment and biblical support for the amendment (if the amendment involves more than just the updating of language).
- The NFLT may also from time to time send out a survey to Canadian MB churches and/or credentialed leaders inviting responders to share suggested amendments to the Confession of Faith.
- The NFLT itself will also proactively poll its members regularly to discern whether it should pursue an amendment of an article.

All requests for a proposed amendment to our MB Confession of Faith received by the National Faith & Life Director will be shared with the NFLT. The NFLT will normally include an agenda item in their Fall meeting each year to consider requests around the possible amendment of the MB Confession of Faith. Since any amendment to the MB Confession of Faith requires a significant and careful process involving about a two-year timeline, the NFLT will consider the urgency of the proposed amendment in light of its other work.

## **The Steps for Processing a Proposed Amendment to the MB Confession of Faith**

### **Step 1: Selection of an Amendment Proposal**

- The NFLT has the final authority to move forward with a proposed amendment based on their evaluation of how the proposal fits with the rationale for amendments, and in light of its other pressing tasks.
- The NFLT may choose not to move any proposed amendment forward to the next step, or they might select more than one to work on at the same time. This is again up to their discretion. In the case of a non-substantive suggested amendment (e.g., editing a few words and/or adding/deleting one or more of the supporting Bible verses), the NFLT could move this request directly to Step 7 below.

- If a suggested amendment is seen as worthy of further consideration, the NFLT will create a more detailed amendment proposal and move it forward to Step 2.

### **Step 2: NFLT's Careful and Prayerful Community Hermeneutic Process**

- Since the NFLT is tasked with the discernment and editing process for amendments to the MB Confession of Faith, they will give time for careful and prayerful Scriptural study in relation to the proposed substantive amendment. Since the process of Confession amendment is significant, a specific amendment provides an opportunity to update language and make any other revisions to the entire article as long as they are consistent with the three qualifying reasons for confessional amendments.
- The NFLT is responsible to create a first draft of the revised article (Full Edition and Summary Edition) along with providing a document explaining the rationale and biblical support for these amendments.

### **Step 3: Facilitation of a National Community Summit**

- The entire NFLT will host an in-person and/or virtual **National Community Summit** to pray, study Scripture together, and test the proposed amendment(s). Each provincial MB conference is invited to nominate TWO representatives for the Summit in addition to the provincial representatives who are already part of the NFLT. The CCMBC Executive Board, MB Seminary, and Multiply are also invited to nominate ONE representative for the Summit in addition to the representatives who are already part of the NFLT. Each of these bodies has the freedom to send the representatives they deem most fit for this task. The NFLT has the freedom to decide whether it will be an in-person, virtual, or hybrid event. The costs for in-person participation in a National Community Summit will be covered by the NFLT.
- The objective of the National Community Summit is to come to an agreement about how the proposed draft achieves the goals for the amendment within the parameters of our deep conviction that the MB Confession of Faith is based on what the Bible teaches.
- The Summit participants may affirm the proposed draft, suggest edits to the proposed draft, or recommend to the NFLT that the suggested amendment(s) not move forward.

### **Step 4: NFLT Processing of Feedback from the National Community Summit**

- The NFLT will meet to process the outcomes of the National Community Summit and the recommendations from that event. They are responsible to make edits to the proposed draft as they see fit.

### **Step 5: Invitation for Local Community Hermeneutic Discussions**

- If the NFLT chooses to continue the process, they will communicate the proposed amendment(s) and the biblical rationale to the CCMBC Executive Committee, each of the provincial MB offices, their Executive Boards and Faith and Life Teams (PFLT's), as well as to CCMBC related agencies and partners (MB Seminary; Multiply; MB Historical Commission; ICOMB). This will include an invitation to them to engage their churches and constituencies in order to provide feedback to the NFLT. Each group is encouraged to pray, study Scripture together, and provide feedback on the proposed amendment(s).
- Communication in the *MB Herald* (and other media) describing the proposed amendment(s) and inviting careful and prayerful feedback from local MB churches and individuals as they study Scripture together. Only non-anonymous feedback will be shared with the larger NFLT.
- The NFLT will make the proposed amendment available on its website in at least the following languages: English, French, Cantonese/Mandarin, and Spanish.
- A National Town Hall (virtual gathering) will be held to explain the proposed amendment(s) and allow for feedback from those present.
- **Timeline:** This invitation for discussion and feedback will be given a minimum of 90 days from the date of formal invitation and communication of the amendment to all parties.

**Step 6: NFLT Reflections on Gathered Feedback**

- The NFLT will meet together to weigh the feedback from these groups and consider any further edits to the draft. The overall purpose is to discern whether the proposed amendment(s) should continue to move forward to the next step.

**Step 7: “Final” Testing of the Proposed Revision**

- If the NFLT desires to continue to move forward with a proposal for amendment, they will send their Final Draft of the relevant article (along with biblical rationale) to the larger MB family (CCMBC Executive Board, the provincial MB offices/executive boards, the PFLT) who are tasked with sharing the proposal with their local church communities. If possible, this Draft will be shared at each provincial MB convention for information and feedback there.

**Step 8: Sponsoring the Revised Article (Final Draft) for Approval by the National Assembly.**

- Assuming that there are only minor revisions needed after the completion of Step 7, the Final Draft will be sent to the CCMBC Executive Board for approval there prior to it becoming a motion at the National Assembly. If the national feedback opposes the proposed revisions, the NFLT may choose to halt the process or they may choose to propose new revisions and work through these new revisions from Step 4 onward.
- Once proposed amendments are approved by the Executive Board, they will become part of a Notice of Motion sent to all member churches at least three (3) months prior to the planned date of the National Assembly.

**Step 9: Updating the Related Confession of Faith Translations and Resources**

- Assuming that the National Assembly approves the motion relating to the revised article, the NFLT will then have the new article translated into French, Cantonese/Mandarin, Spanish, etc. The NFLT will also edit all available updated resources (e.g., Summary of the MB Confession of Faith, Explanatory Notes, Living the Confession (FAQs), Responsive Worship Readings) to ensure that these are consistent with the amendment(s).