

FMC Discussion Activity – Summary Notes

February 9, 2020



Instructions:

Individually, and using the cue cards provided (one idea per card) respond to the following:

1. **Best Experience:** Reflect on your entire experience at First Mennonite Church. What has been your best experience?
2. **Values:** What is it about First Mennonite Church that you value? If you can, make a top three list.
3. **Core Value:** What do you think is the core value of First Mennonite Church? What is it that if it didn't exist would make our church totally different than its current state?
4. **Future Vision:** What are three wishes that you have for the future of First Mennonite Church?

Choose one card to share with your table group. Allow each person at the table a chance to share. Following the meeting, we will gather the cards and collate the information. Information will be shared back to the church in some way e.g. newsletter or bulletin insert.

1. **Best Experience:** Reflect on your entire experience at First Mennonite Church. What has been your best experience?
 - Youth/young adult experience in our youth group and youth/young adult choir
 - Honestly, the long-term experience of watching families grow – seeing today's middle aged folks and recalling when they were children. Knowing that their current lives have been influenced by our congregation. It feels great.
 - 2016-2017 – baptized and married, songs, families Christmas choirs x2
 - Christmas Eve music
 - Committees and task force work
 - Singing with the youth choir (long ago) AND fellowship retreats @ Camp Assiniboia as a kid (sorry, couldn't pick just one)
 - Also my first experience – 2011 European choir trip
 - Helping guide the congregation to intentional interim minister
 - Singing "O Come All Ye Faithful" in harmony
 - My baptism – it was very meaningful to me
 - Honestly, I don't think I'm able to choose A best experience. There have been so many "best experiences" for me in the last 10 years! Highlights – third advent services, Good Friday, retreats, youth trips/events, potlucks, podcast discussion group
 - Returning to my spiritual home after 15 years in BC and Toronto and finding not only old friends, but a welcoming, loving community for my children who sometimes struggled to make friends at school
 - People supporting individuals in crisis, dedication to serve the church through choir, singing, teaching Sunday School
 - Youth groups, choir, volunteering, community events i.e. potluck

- The fellowship we used to have as a church community – we got to know each other even though we were different ages
- Best experience is the opportunity to try different channels of volunteering and test leadership skills – something I may not have been able to do in secular community. My educational level doesn't meet requirements. In these experiences I grew spiritually and intellectually and as a person.
- The music – choir singing classic Bach etc.
- FMC has been part of every significant part of my/our life/lives – often with music
- I enjoyed getting to know others of my own faith group
- Making friends with members of FMC and joining them to play with Black Knights
- Services, choirs, fellowship, Tabitha Women's group
- Being able to participate in the music program where I feel the message and love of God that I can share as I sing.
- John R. Friesen came to the balcony to share my first communion here at FMC
- Music – “the power, peace giving, calming, loving, evening the playing field” of good quality, carefully thought out and presented music in our church through choral presentations, worship band, individual groups, piano, organ, all forms including talent night. The feeling of serving.
- Overriding feeling of church family and support
- Having coffee time and the chance of connecting more personally
- The ten years I spent directing the choirs at FMC – more recently – our refugee work
- Impossible to say – been here 60+ years from childhood to now. (Sorry!)
- Welcome Sound, fundraising concert that felt both inward and outward looking
- Participating in music-making to enhance the worship service
- Enjoying the various music conductors we have had past and present: Ben Horch, Henry Engbrecht, Henri Enns, Yuri Klaz, lifelong friends I met in church
- Participating in a choir with “Leanne and Friends” in Handmaid of the Lord. Bonus besd: being part of youth groups and young adults
- Having friends – as from the old Fellowship group, doing work together – repairs, committee work, helping refugees
- Getting married here, getting baptized here, being welcomed here even though not a “birth Mennonite”
- Meeting my spouse
- Wedding day, classes leading to baptism and the baptism itself, Candlelight service every year
- Welcoming spouse from a different culture – comfortable and accepted here
- That we are an Anabaptist Church where choice to accept Christ is the key
- Fellowship – same value – same faith
- At first it was family, now it's friends and like-minded people
- Fellowship – sharing the same values, being with like-minded, sharing faith
- Coming in as a complete stranger as a young adult, it was open. Welcoming yet respectful of my need for space. Choir
- 70s and 80s youth choir and currently the choir
- Each and every choir rehearsal and the beautiful feeling of community it creates
- Singing Suenopfer with Sig Enns

- Christmas Eve is the best experience due to the start of the festive season and it would not be Christmas if I wasn't able to attend this lovely celebration. The choir is my favourite part of the worship service
- Youth group in the 70s and 80s including the choir, singing in the choir today
- Being able to come to the same church for 62 years
- Meeting and getting to know many wonderful, caring people over the past 45 years
- Meeting and working with different people
- My best experiences have been related to the involvement of children in the service, specifically my own children, whether children's stories or camaraderie with parents in the nursery
- Music
- A family of confirmed believers
- Too many to choose one
- All in 1962 – catechism, baptism and wedding
- Camaraderie, team work in projects, singing in choirs, involvement in many things enriches my life, young woman – baptismal candidate – growing young women and being married here
- Great music I love singing in the choir, if it were not for the music, I would not be here
- Winter retreats as a child with the fellowship group
- Baptism by Rev. Enns
- Feeling the love and support of my church family when going through difficult circumstances – best experience of church coincided with the worst experience of my life
- Some of my best experiences at FMC have involved genuine human connection in the context of worship – tears of joy wept at seeing children participating in worship, seeing people take risks to offer their gifts in different aspects of FMC life i.e. committee work, music-making, worship leading, preaching, reading scripture. People responding to an arising, unexpected need in worship i.e. Amos and Esther Marimba/Nakitula needing a translator and one of our youth in French Immersion going to help. Conversation with people from different backgrounds, families, visitors in church after worship – us being the hands and feet of Christ
- Spending time in fellowship, especially at retreats
- Youth in the 1980s/90s – the group became a vital part of my “Formation” as a young adult. A great alternative to school friends. We were a great support to each other and truly became lifetime friends
- Serving coffee and ushering, making connections with people I don't normally connect with
- The choir – music ministry
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Eve
- Our daughter's wedding
- Christmas Eve
- Appreciated being allowed to work with groups on facility improvement
- Our daughter's wedding in 1986 where a long man with long hair, 19 years old sang “the Rose”
- Being part over the years of various committees, groups, e.g. library, Agape Table program, Missions and Service, Ladies groups
- Choirs and piano accompanist, Christmas Eve, organist
- Music/fellowship

- Youth church retreats, youth choir, lasting friendships, Bible study
- Strong youth groups, Sr. high and University 1984-1992, Christmas Sunday School and Christmas Eve services, seeing my children become friends with 3rd generation FMC kids, whose parents and grandparents were also friends
- Music, camaraderie
- Best experiences, as a child, singing in children's choir on Christmas Eve in the Candlelight services. As an adult singing contemporary worship songs together (intergenerationally), often at retreats.
- A sense of reverence for God, the Scriptures, and the Church as community of believers.

2. Values: What is it about First Mennonite Church that you value? If you can, make a top three list.

- The quality of the services. They move me. I am instantly energized after a service.
- Excellent, thought-provoking sermons, wonderful music, family history, supportive leadership, four-part harmony, community, music, worship, friendship, service
- Music – of ALL forms, challenging, thoughtful sermons, community
- Community, sense of belonging, musicality and all it involves, intergenerational connectedness
- Music – what brought me here, Friendship – what keeps me here, Involvement – what keeps me integrated here
- Quality of sermons/services, opportunity to experience leadership in a supportive environment, four-part harmony in the sanctuary
- Community, music, social issue activism/willingness to talk about issues
- I've found a value here to be accepting of others, strong attention to well thought out worship – all elements, embracing newcomers
- A community that is open accepting and loving, especially for my children, a place of respite from the struggles of the world, a home for my Russian-German Mennonite culture
- Being open/welcoming church, diverse expressions of music, solid theological foundation
- Sense of family, music – old and new (band, camp songs), striving to do good
- Music, sermons, community
- The opportunity to participate in meaningful ways, lifelong friendships, solid faith development
- Excellence of music, theological interpretation, freedom and acceptance to interpret Christ's teaching
- Choir music
- I value the emphasis on honesty and living by example
- Ministers, support during grief, music (Choirs, Simpletones)
- Good pastoral leadership, music, a peaceful church with members
- I value the guidance of the ministerial staff, I value the music program – being able to sing in the choirs, I value the various musical talents, I value the strong, supportive friendships that I have in this church
- Consideration/diversity, open mindedness, music of all kinds
- Fellowship, music in worship, an open-minded congregation

- Intelligent, thought-provoking sermons rather than “Bible-thumping”, highly “evangelical” sermons, music – high quality of, regardless of type, to enhance our worship, statement about LGBTQ and other openness and welcoming of “discomfort-inducing” issues
- Diverse, engaging perspectives, value of the arts, balance of tradition and innovation
- I value our strong leadership at the ministerial level – all four ministers have their unique strengths and seem to work as a great team, all the various groups and committees that help run things and provide services, the church choir and worship band – thanks for loyal service
- Community of people and sense of caring, acceptance of all people at different parts of their journeys, connection to each other, the greater community and to God through music
- Liberal ideas and views
- Themed messages “Sermons” coordinated with music, hymns and children’s story
- Music – especially the worship band, the mix of music between traditional hymns, choral and worship band, community building activities – coffee time, talent evening, prayer shawl group, “Leanne and Friends”, Ladies groups, painting the board room and basement
- Good fellowship and friends, Sunday morning sermons
- Fellowship with others, sense of belonging, sometimes challenges my way of thinking
- Welcoming, inclusion of different values and worship styles, service
- Acceptance, understanding
- Find out ways to meet people
- Preaching, music, inclusion
- The ministers – time and messages and caring, we’re a welcoming church, music – all kinds
- Music – high standard, variety of styles
- Exceptional music programs
- Wide acceptance of lifestyle choices, high standard of music, German and English singing
- Closeness in geography
- FMC is very inclusive of all gender and race inclusions
- Acceptance of all peoples, exceptional music program – high standard of music
- FMC welcomes and has programs for all generations, people who attend
- Everyone is accepted regardless of their background and if their spouse or family come to church and this was before it became a political society issue, Background: Russian German Mennonite roots of people who persevered persecution to worship so we can worship today
- I value the worship service, sermons and music
- Good music, well thought out and stimulating sermons, coffee/fellowship in the basement after the service
- Friendship and communication with others – larger and smaller groups – all generations, well organized and delivered sermons – appealing to all or most – inclusiveness, music – contemporary and traditional, variety – talent night, presentations by choir, instruments
- Love and care of fellow members
- Fostering worship and faith development, feeling of being safe and comfortable here, caring for others and those in the broader community
- Music – this is the only Winnipeg church (Mennonite) which has the choir rehearsing weekly. The others only assemble a choir for special occasions
- Community, consistent leadership, theology (Progressive?)

- Caring people who reflect God's love
- Things I value about FMC are: ability to be flexible and rise to the occasion with the unexpected situation, focus of worship comes back to care of the vulnerable care of ourselves and relationship to God
- The worship experience (Sermons, congregational songs), people, theology – how and what we believe
- Vision statement (theology), the people (friends) and life experiences of our older generation – hearing what people went through in Europe and coming to Canada
- Our ministerial team, the fellowship groups e.g. women's groups, social groups, the theology
- We have four excellent ministers, all of which add value
- Music, coffee time, choir
- Coffee time after service
- Music, fellowship
- Enjoying fellowship at coffee and other church events
- Our forefathers were associated with Schoenwieser for as long as I can remember – from the late 1920s
- The music, fellowship (after service coffee)
- Music
- Fellow members
- Acceptance of different beliefs, ability to have different viewpoints, friendships and community, FMC is like a village in a big city
- Open opinions on different topics
- Choir's music
- Having been in church this morning – the music
- Vision statement, community (friendships), Sunday School
- I value the message, the music, the community
- Values, welcoming acceptance; free speech; openness to discuss difficult issues (i.e. still coming to the table and willingness to listen to each other).
- a. The regular weekly meeting of believers to hear sound biblical preaching, and to participate in prayer and praise, including the varieties of music. b. We value greatly the festive events in the life of the church, such as communion services, the high holidays of the church year, congregational anniversaries, baptisms, ordinations, funerals and other celebrations. c. The involvement of children and youths in church life in various ways.

3. Core Value: What do you think is the core value of First Mennonite Church? What is it that if it didn't exist would make our church totally different than its current state?

- The choir – the lack of it would make our church totally different
- I would like to think it is to serve God – that should be the gold standard – let us not continue to be rooted in our traditions that we become stale and die
- Tradition – music, style, atmosphere. Theology – don't overvalue tradition, adjust, inclusiveness

- A church that is willing to constantly adjust to the community and world around us (e.g. LGBTQ), and to do so with thoughtfulness and as required challenging dialogue that is faith and scripture centred.
- All inclusiveness – trying to encompass all needs and wants of a wide variety of congregants
- Welcoming and acceptable
- The thoughtful and scholarly theology
- I really don't know – acceptance perhaps – FM Church would surely fully collapse if we can't have a safe and accepting community
- Hard for me to articulate an answer to this...our welcoming statement, affirmative status. I would find it to be a totally different place now without it.
- Belief in God as a God of love and peace with Christ as his son as an example of how to live our values
- Dedication of individuals to volunteer. Faith basis in Anabaptist theology
- I don't know anymore. I am not discouraged, just see this as a time to make decisions and grow. God, of course, inclusivity, welcoming
- Openness to diverse ideas
- Serving members during worship service, grief. There would be less communication between members
- Inclusivity – acceptance and promotion of various lifestyles. Gender equality – ethnic and racial diversity
- Discipleship
- Our church tries to be inclusive
- Core value: the choir participation; music presentations. Without: wouldn't need church building – would meet at homes
- Developing a strong faith throughout services, outreach to members and the community, as well as caring for members who need extra help. If the church choir and musicians were not here, it would be greatly missed
- Inclusivity, non judgemental celebration of our history, present and future
- The importance of music in worship: congregational singing, choir/group singing, a balance of traditional and contemporary music
- Commitment to Christian/Mennonite values/tenets. Theology without closed minds or narrow interpretation
- Value of gathered worship
- I appreciate the emphasis our church puts on being a welcoming space. Helping others with guidance from mission and service – refugee work
- Community – one of my reasons for coming to church and to church events is connecting with others and seeing my friends. I've made many good relationships with people I'd never have met if people at FMC didn't talk to and care about each other. The people here are what makes this church home.
- Good friendships, caring and support for needy people – refugees
- Support and caring for each other and community – local and global based on the Christian values

- A strong Sunday School and Youth groups (our church would be so different without young people)
- Open to different points of view
- Christianity (although I guess this would be a little too obvious?), peace, worship with music
- Mennonite belief of service
- Inclusivity, involvement, music
- Organizing learn how to read the Bible
- That we are living our harmony for the most part
- Being Mennonite, peace church, welcoming all! Service to all
- High standard of music, tolerance, and even acceptance of a variety of lifestyle choices
- Inclusive, wide acceptance, music
- Acceptance, music
- Adult baptism, relevant sermons which reflect current situations in the world today (non-judgmental), music program
- Cannot have just one, acceptance/tolerance, music
- To follow Christ and worship in a traditional format. If didn't exist: choir, German presence
- The in depth sermons – with reference made to so many resources, Bible scripture
- Ability to change and be flexible according to change in the church family (inclusive also), age, financial abilities, sexual orientation, musical preferences
- Love and concern of fellow members
- Worship and faith development, caring for others – can contribute to our sustainability
- “willingness to work with change...eventually
- A desire to love God i.e. in worship and love neighbor i.e. in service to each other and those beyond our walls
- FMC's ability to be tuned in to God's call and the need around us. Without this we would begin to serve ourselves and we would begin to feel an off emptiness
- A loving God who accepts all people
- Outward looking – sponsor refugees
- Immigrants remembering what it means to be immigrants
- The theology
- Interaction with all members
- The Anabaptist values
- The music programs
- Being an exclusive church
- Pad remainder of benches
- Music
- Anabaptist Christians
- I most value that the message is thoughtful and thought-provoking. Our service values cognition over emotion. Although I am often moved in church, I feel it is an intellectual experience more than an emotional one, and this to me is critical.
- People are willing to share their talents in our church
- 10:00 a.m. service, preaching the word
- More diverse service. Contemporary service style needs to be added.

- Core value of love (goes with the above acceptance and openness to communicate).
- To be a Christian is to participate in a communal form of life shaped by a long Christian, and in our case, Mennonite, history; the coming together in the same faith, even though we are very different personalities and may pursue different life styles.

4. Future Vision: What are three wishes that you have for the future of First Mennonite Church?

- I hope we can maintain these things I value: a message that moves me intellectually and keeps me thinking and learning, all the music – I love it all, the community – I much appreciate the last paragraph of Kathy’s report – amen!
- Continued existence, more youth, better sound system
- That it continue to be the special people of all ages that we are
- More diverse service with worship band more often. That we can pass on our faith to the next generation. Welcome new members
- We all stay together making strong music together. Get more members
- Having only one minister for a declining attendance
- Be more inviting to the community
- Friendship
- Overhead screen
- A music/worship leader who practices an Anabaptist faith and is excited to be here. A multicultural membership who are, all valued and contributing members. A congregation which welcomes the marginalized outsider and wants to help them to live a full life.
- Getting new members – via immigration? We need more young people. Continuing to worship at the current level of excellence we enjoy. Change to grow with the times.
- Just to keep existing, attract new people
- Increased engagement from entire congregation – clear purpose that all know, consistent “elevator speech”, resources (people and money) to see it through
- Growth of congregation, continue to be all-inclusive, continue to support families and young people (under 18 for example)
- Sustainability, continuing what we do well. Growth – membership and financial, collaboration from all generations
- More involvement of youth. Getting the wider church past misbehavior of its leaders (not FMC)
- Continue to grow in numbers (of members). That we get more involved in our community (West End/Winnipeg). That we sponsor more refugees.
- Live more fully into our “welcoming” posture, including making our building more welcoming. Continuing to work at embracing diversity in our congregational life and worship. Outward thinking – that someday we might be able to engage in/contribute to our neighborhood/city – surface lot visioning (East of Arlington)
- I wish our church continues to exist despite its financial difficulties and dwindling membership. I wish for a return to a more democratic approach to church decision-making. I wish we continue to learn to find solutions to our struggles together and in love
- Solid worship. Caring community. Fostering of young people and young families.

- Community outreach – clothing and food
- That good words/ideas continue. Music – especially choral continue
- Increase in younger congregants who are prepared to participate in committees. Move forward with new practices e.g. more responsive readings etc. but not forget our roots – the old hymns. Financial stability
- Merge with another congregation? Young people come and sing. Young and old mix program.
- Continue to grow more welcoming. Embrace service in the area based on relationship rather than program. Openness to spirit.
- I wish we could appeal to more of the younger generation. Our older generation is dying off, and we need to replace them.
- Younger members. Members to get to know the mix of generations. Even though we were large, we knew the members.
- That membership would increase. That more young families would attend. That the church continues for the next generation.
- Increased attendance and membership. Find more ways to use space – try to use venue to raise income for the church.
- Keep growing the music work.
- That we continue to work together to be a truly inclusive church, welcoming all who choose to attend to provide programs that are fluid and will keep up with our changing demographics and celebrate our members. Maintain our cherished music including new, modern, and meaningful pieces of all types, genres. Look at ways of making our church viable by being open to renting out spaces etc.
- Innovative music in worship. Innovative and meaningful worship that reaches people where they are. Community outreach.
- A reversal of current “membership” demographics – i.e. equal or more members of persons ages 20-50...equal to for example, the current “older members”. More people present at Sunday services (not just special events). Ongoing efforts to meld various generations in the work/administration and social interaction within the church.
- Risk-taking in community engagement. Wrestle directly with relationship to Mennonite distinctions. Nurture spiritual disciplines.
- More young families. That we nurture and maintain our church choir and worship band
- Better communicate everything that this church is doing – we do a lot to help others but not everyone knows what’s all available. More activities that mix established groups. If/when we can no longer support ourselves (ourselves = FMC) financially – groups and committees stay intact and heart of the church continues on.
- Greater concern for climate. Give opportunities for sharing and discussion. Have some young people come to share their concerns. Some sermons could have panel reaction groups (short sermon, 15 minutes) followed by panel discussion
- Hope that a variety in message and song will draw in more attendance (and membership) and that we consciously welcome “new” people attending. That we continue to support volunteers in our midst, and volunteer as we are able
- That it can continue to be viable. Attract new members – upgrade website (soon to happen). Keep the Sunday School and actively promote it.

- For First Mennonite to continue to exist in the years to come. For our membership to remain/increase
- My wish is that the church can fundamentally reinvent itself and continue to exist and thrive well into the future. However, without the leadership to make this happen, I foresee that FMC will cease to exist in the next 10-20 years.
- Broaden our service beyond our walls more. More youth in our church. Growing involvement with broader number of members
- Hub of daily life. Expanded events. Community involvement.
- Welcoming. Accepting people join the church.
- Broaden our vision to other churches so our youth will meet other Mennos and stay within our community of faith.
- Need younger members. Wider community involvement. More participation of people.
- Financial sustainability. Sustainable membership.
- Growth of youth groups. Growth of families. Sermons reaching out. Website improvement.
- That a sustainable structure be created that allows FMC to continue for the foreseeable future.
- That more people would be attracted to join the congregation and be willing to participate in church activities. More advertising on-line presence to attract new young parishioners. Wish areas was safer – especially at night.
- Sustainable funding bringing in new members.
- That we keep people coming and becoming members. Continued good music programs. Good sermons.
- Keep our membership while maintaining our values and who we are
- Young families, singles coming and feeling cared for and welcomed. Continuance of the ministers' sermons. Activities to keep our members involved – sponsorship of refugees, music, young children's programs and activities.
- The church begins to rebound in attendance and membership
- Stable membership
- Hope we can continue to be financially viable – membership numbers
- Continuation of love and care for/of fellow members. Continuation of four-part harmony. Continuation of support for our young people
- Foster value of caring environment. Foster environment of faith development. Embrace the change of our congregation as opposed to grieving the past.
- Embrace smaller membership. Downsize facility. Everyone belongs to a small group or core group.
- Continue to grow in faithfulness and in sharing the good news. Continue to be responsive to change as led by the spirit. Continue to ponder what it means to be a welcoming church.
- Live in a place of vibrancy, openness to LGBTQ and continued. Live out a call to take God-inspired risks to follow our call to live with love. Live in a place centered in prayer community and action-centered around God.
- Attract more members – more diversity, less cliquish. Regain the outward looking focus that must have existed to start Bethania, Westgate, Concordia Hospital etc. Become a "Centre of Excellence" to sponsor refugees.
- People – community amongst the members. Theology

- Stay true to our Christian values. Maintain community. Stay/get open and welcoming.
- First – top of the list! Get – keep – our youth with us!
- That we have a future. We need a dedicated committee for growing the church. That we do not accept a slow death. That we use the resources we have (people of all ages, Sunday School that still has children, youth group) to actively change the direction and grow church before it is too late. Very soon it will be too late.
- That our congregation remains intact, regardless of the future of the church building.
- Larger congregation, more young people
- Increase membership, church keeps going for many years.
- Like to see more topics e.g. cannabis etc. that are relevant to our younger congregation.
- Reduce church staff to reflect the active membership attendance of church services. Improve sound system to eliminate echoes that makes hearing very difficult.
- Screen. Snow clearing on lot. Improved caretaking
- Overhead screen as seen in Springstein Church.
- Vision: my wishes are: - more coordinated focus for each Sunday (eg. the scripture or topic for the sermon is related to the Sunday school lesson and or adult education); - more congregational singing (eg. if unable to fill special music for a few Sundays, just insert more congregational songs/hymns); - outreach to the neighbouring community, let's be part of where we are located.
- a. That we may learn to be a middle-sized congregation, less self-contained and more ecumenical. b. That we may be faithful in the context of an increasingly secular society.