

Covenant on the shared ministry of Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service

January 2024 to December 2026

Preamble

Canadian Mennonite (CM) tells the story of the church, in partnership with the Churches of Mennonite Church Canada.

Through online and print media, CM is a central place for conversation across the country. We are the primary source of news and information for changes in churches, pastoral transitions, milestones and passings. We are a point of engagement with letters to the editor, opinion pieces, social media responses and website conversations. We are interested in creative new ways to host conversations about what it means to be Mennonite today.

Today, CM receives 17,000 visitors per month on our website and has an active social media presence. We are the connecting thread for people wanting to stay informed as well as a landing point for people newly learning about Mennonites and Anabaptism.

Many current subscribers of *CM* magazine say that print is their preferred way to engage in these conversations. And, many others, including young people and newcomer churches, relate digitally. To attract the most people to conversations about faith, we need to tell our story in varied ways.

As CM continues to inform, inspire and foster dialogue through multiple media, CM will remain the key point of communication and connection for the people and churches of Mennonite Church Canada.

COVENANT

1. Shared ministry

Taking inspiration from:

- Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16, that God equips us with varied gifts to prepare God's people for works of service, and to build up the body of Christ;
- and
- Hebrews 10:23-25, where the church is called to meet with one another and spur one another on to love and good deeds;

the regional churches and nationwide church, collectively referred to as the "Church" or "Churches", make this covenant with Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service.

The covenant recognizes that:

- The denomination needs to tell its story – and its many stories – of how God is working through the church (locally, regionally, nationally, and beyond) and through its members – to each other, and to the wider world. Telling this story requires intentionality, focus and skilled staff.
- Communication and story-telling need to be carried through multiple channels and on various platforms: in-person, online and in print.

- There is room within the church for multiple voices: voices of a diverse church membership, institutional voices, and more independent journalistic and editorial voices.
- When church stories are told through an independent, journalistic lens, the story of the church is amplified. The audience understands that the church is transparent and accountable when it allows third-party review of its activities. A wider audience online is more open to reading about faith and the church when stories are presented by an independent source.
- The journalistic approach complements institutional communication “of” the church with a measure of independence to report “about” the church to provide a forum for the diverse voices of the church.
- Church journalism cannot function from a simplistically critical stance. The most effective church media offers a critical voice in the context of a covenantal relationship.

This covenant provides a common understanding for the governance, ministry, editorial direction, operation, funding, and procedure for amendments. It is an extension of covenants in place since 2005.

The appendices attached are informational but are not part of the Covenant itself.

2. Vision and mission

CMPS works in partnership with the Churches to serve and to build the missional church. Using multiple media to tell stories, CM shares news, nurtures spirituality, builds community and fosters dialogue in the church. These media include but are not limited to email, a website, social media, and a magazine.

CM is a ministry of, and for, the church. (See Appendix C for more detail.)

3. Creative and editorial direction

3.1. Overall creative and editorial direction is set by CMPS in consideration of its mission statement (Appendix A) and editorial policy (Appendix B).

3.2. The Churches provide feedback and counsel on creative and editorial direction, mission, and policy through their representatives on the CMPS board.

3.3. The Churches may initiate conversation with CM staff about articles and topics, bearing in mind the principles of editorial independence (Appendix C).

3.4. For potentially controversial subjects, or in exceptions to normal editorial policy, CMPS will consult with its partners. The goal of reporting on controversial subjects is to provide transparency, accountability, and avenues for restoration so that trust “in the body” can be further built up and/or maintained.

4. Ownership and governance

4.1. CMPS is a Canadian charitable corporation, employs staff, and owns property and equipment.

4.2. The CMPS board of directors sets policies, approves budgets, and hires or dismisses senior staff.

4.3. The CMPS board consists of twelve directors. The Churches appoint nine directors: Mennonite Church Alberta (one), Mennonite Church British Columbia (one), Mennonite Church Canada (four), Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (one), Mennonite Church Manitoba (one), Mennonite Church Saskatchewan (one). CMPS elects three directors at its annual general meeting.

4.4. By appointing 75% of the CMPS board, the Churches are integrally involved in carrying out the mission of CMPS.

5. Funding of the shared ministry

- 5.1. The ministry of CM will be supported by a fixed contribution from the Church, as set out below. The amount is equivalent to approximately 25% of CMPS revenue.

Publishing Partner	Share of subscriptions	Cost before tax				
		2023	2024	2025	2026	
MC Alberta	6%	\$ 8,800	\$ 8,760	\$ 8,700	\$ 8,500	4%
MC BC	5%	\$ 8,000	\$ 7,200	\$ 7,100	\$ 7,000	3%
MCEC	53%	\$ 82,300	\$ 81,300	\$ 80,500	\$ 78,900	36%
MCM	28%	\$ 46,900	\$ 43,180	\$ 42,700	\$ 41,800	19%
MC Sask	9%	\$ 14,500	\$ 13,800	\$ 13,700	\$ 13,400	6%
Sub-total						
Regional Churches		\$ 160,500	\$ 154,240	\$ 152,700	\$ 149,600	
MC Canada		\$ 85,600	\$ 78,300	\$ 74,400	\$ 70,700	32%
Total	100%	\$ 246,100	\$ 232,540	\$ 227,100	\$ 220,300	100%

- 5.2. CMPS will raise revenue for the three-year period from other sources which include, but are not limited to, sponsorships for online events, subscription sales outside the primary constituency, advertising sales, fundraising (both within and outside the primary constituency) and grants from government or other agencies, as available.
- 5.3. We gratefully acknowledge the spirit of commitment to the mission of CM shown by the Church since the first partnership covenant took effect in 2005.
- 5.4. If circumstances dictate that one of the Churches needs to change its funding commitment or other aspects of this covenant, that Church shall notify the other Churches and CMPS of its situation at least six months prior to CMPS's budget year ending Dec. 31. The CMPS chair will initiate consultation among all partners to address the situation. If CMPS has significantly changed circumstances itself, it will likewise consult with the Churches.

6. Duration of covenant

This covenant will be in effect from Jan. 1, 2024 to Dec. 31, 2026. The CMPS board will initiate the process of developing a new partnership covenant no later than Jan. 1, 2026.

7. Agreement

Following an October 14, 2023 meeting of Mennonite Church Canada Joint Council and the CMPS board, Geraldine Balzer emailed Tobi Thiessen to indicate agreement on behalf of Mennonite Church Canada and the regional churches. The October 17 email also noted that MCEC would send a separate response. On November 15, 2023, Doug Klassen emailed Tobi Thiessen to confirm MCEC's participation.

This covenant has been undertaken by:

Mennonite Church Canada	Geraldine Balzer, Moderator
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada	Ben Cassels, Moderator
Mennonite Church Manitoba	Cheryl Braun, Moderator
Mennonite Church Saskatchewan	Sharon Schulz, Interim Moderator
Mennonite Church Alberta	Brenda Tiessen Wiens, Moderator
Mennonite Church British Columbia	Gerry Grunau, Moderator
Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service	Tobi Thiessen, Publisher

APPENDIX A: Canadian Mennonite mission statement

To educate, inform and inspire Mennonites in Canada, fostering dialogue on important matters, and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective. We do this through multiple media, working with our church partners.

Guiding values:

- Hebrews 10:23-25
- Accuracy, fairness, balance
- Editorial freedom
- Seeking and speaking the truth in love
- Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will
- Nurturing writers and storytellers within the church
- Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and even more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:23-25).

APPENDIX B: Canadian Mennonite editorial policy, used for all media endeavours

Canadian Mennonite understands the church to be a covenanted community of believers—the body of Christ. A “covenant” is an agreement that establishes a relationship (1995 *Confession of Faith*, p. 33), and implies a commitment to: extend trust to each other; dialogue with each other; know and understand each other better; discern God's will together; encourage the full use of our gifts to edify and build up the church; search for truth together; mutual encouragement and exhortation.

The fundamental purpose of a church press is to function as a communications instrument that promotes covenantal relationships (Hebrews 10:23-25). Therefore, *CM* will: establish and maintain channels through which accurate and fair information can be shared; provide spiritual direction and encouragement to obedience through faith profiles and inspirational/educational material; provide opportunities for discernment and analysis of the complex issues facing the life of the church in society; provide opportunities for dialogue, exhortation and exchange of diverse views for the readers. In the above ways, *CM* is one vehicle through which the principle of mutual accountability can be exercised within the community of believers.

Canadian Mennonite is guided by the church's confession of faith, and thereby seeks the welfare and vitality of the church with the practice of editorial freedom. Editorial freedom is expressed through truth-seeking and openness to discernment, and by providing a balance of perspectives. Editorial freedom is conferred by the covenantal relationship and accountable to it. “Speaking the truth in love in the Christian community shows our commitment to right relationships as well as to accurate speech” (*Confession of Faith*, pp. 75-76).

Adopted by Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service Board, February 6, 1998.
Revised 2023.

APPENDIX C:

Expressions of our shared *Canadian Mennonite* ministry

C1. Partnership contributions from CMPS.

CM supports the Churches in their work in several ways:

C1.1 CMPS employs writers to cover news and write articles about the people, churches, leaders and ministry of Mennonite Church Canada. Care is taken to give each geographic region proportionate coverage, and includes regular reports on the work of the Churches.

C1.2 Anyone who attends a Mennonite Church Canada congregation may subscribe to *Canadian Mennonite* print magazine at no direct cost to them. Subscriptions are available by mail, email or both. Church administrators are responsible for the subscription lists within their own congregations: keeping names and addresses updated, adding and deleting subscriptions as needed. In some cases, congregations may ask for issues to be sent as a bulk mailing to the church.

C1.3 Through its other sources of revenue, CMPS provides the Churches with Every Home Plan magazine subscriptions at about half of actual cost to enable the Church to reach as many as possible while costing the Churches as little as possible.

C1.4 *CM* highlights the work of the Churches using weekly regional church emails for story ideas. The editor welcomes occasional participation in regional church communicator meetings.

C1.5 The *CM* website (canadianmennonite.org):

- is the primary place people get information about Mennonites in Canada.
- has a calendar of upcoming events. Churches may submit events through the online calendar to appear online and be published in the magazine.
- makes past issues of *CM* publicly available, plus blogs and news articles not always published in the magazine.

C1.6 The Churches are provided with the opportunity to use *CM*'s resources and infrastructure to communicate directly with their constituencies about their work or related ministries. Some examples: send a targeted email to subscribers in their region once per year; publish up to two pages of free advertising to promote a delegate session or other Church program. This is in addition to ongoing news coverage and regular mention of church events in other *CM* endeavours.

C1.7 *CM* provides at least two columns per year to each Church for their leaders or designates to address the constituency directly.

C1.8 *CM* regularly highlights and promotes the work of church-related agencies (such as camps, schools, and mission and service agencies) through news and feature stories, and by sharing stories on social media.

C1.9 *CM* supports local congregations: by seeking out articles on spiritual teaching from our pastors, by assigning writers to cover local church events, by giving priority to publishing articles submitted by churches, by publicizing a calendar of local church events and by publishing announcements on births, baptisms, marriages and deaths.

APPENDIX C:

Expressions of our shared *Canadian Mennonite* ministry (cont.)

C2. Partnership contributions from Church partners.

The Churches agree that:

C2.1 *CM* needs to continue being pastoral and prophetic for the purpose of building up the church.

C2.2 *CM* is a significant missional partner for each Church. It engages people who attend an MC Canada congregation and others who do not.

C2.3 We need to intentionally foster our CMPS relationship through our board appointees.

Specifically, the Churches support *CM* as one of their own programs and act to foster its ministry by:

C2.4 Publicly affirming *CM*'s ministry and encouraging their constituency to receive/read/engage with it.

C2.5 Using *CM* media to communicate with, call to service, encourage, exhort and otherwise minister to their constituency.

C2.6 Sharing *CM* articles or events on social media or linking websites to appropriate *CM* content.

C2.7 Proposing that their delegates support budgets adequate to fulfill this covenant.

C2.8 Respecting the professional journalistic and editorial judgment of *CM* staff.

C2.9 Helping *CM* in its ministry through affirmations and suggestions for improvement.

C2.10 Authorizing *CM* to collect and maintain church subscription list address information, within the terms of applicable privacy policies and legislation.

C2.11 Asking each church administrator to manage the congregation's subscription list. *CM* will assist by sending bulletin announcements to the churches with information about EHP subscriptions and by providing a current list to the administrator for annual updates.

Revised August 2023 TT