

Report to October 2024 CEM Conference On Dialogue Regarding Member vs. Delegate Conference

Goal: to fulfill the mandate given the Mission Centre Presidency team to foster dialogue on the matter of member or delegate conference representation and determine if there is a need for change

Process

- Twelve individuals were asked to be impartial facilitators to guide the dialogue sessions so that all had the opportunity to speak.
- Dialogue sessions preferably were to take place in-person, but a zoom option was provided.
- Background information and research from the ad-hoc bylaw committee was compiled and used to prepare both a participant package and facilitator package so that all participants would have the same background information and dialogue would be based on that assumption.
- Training sessions were provided for facilitators to encourage understanding of their roles and of background materials and answer any questions regarding the process.
- Pastors were informed via letter regarding the process. Facilitators contacted pastors to arrange a mutually agreed upon meeting date.
- Facilitators led the dialogue, recorded questions and viewpoints, and conducted a straw poll at the end of the session to measure the degree of consensus.

Results Of the 41 congregations in CEM as of January 2024

Twenty congregations participated in the dialogue sessions, with approximately 260 members taking part. However, not all congregations were interested in joining the discussion and chose not to participate. Some congregations proceeded independently, resulting in a lack of the anticipated uniformity across the dialogue sessions.

			End of Session Straw Poll Results			
Total In Dialogue Session	Have Served as Delegate	Ex-officio by Virtue of Priesthood Office	Prefer Delegate Conference	Prefer Member Conference	Undecided	Can Accept Either
258	92	24	72	105	22	23

Issues and Questions Raised

- What is fair representation of those in “General” membership?
- Would there be administrative time savings for member conferences given all participants must register and have membership validated?
- Desire to have limits on number of people to represent any congregation
- Desire to ensure delegates are active members - not sure how to define active however
- Suggestion that average attendance or number of active members, rather than book membership, be used to determine delegate numbers assigned to a congregation
- How does member conference have accountability to congregations?
- Readiness to eliminate ex-officio designation repeated in many of the dialogue sessions
- Concern expressed that delegates do not vote congregational wishes but rather their own opinion

Summary

1. As some congregations chose to dialogue without a facilitator, the integrity of a uniform approach to dialogue was lost. There was no report provided from those sessions.
2. A total of 128 of the 258 participants in dialogue sessions would prefer member conference or can accept either member or delegate conferences. 72 preferred a delegate conference and 22 were undecided. Although the dialogue session poll indicates a preference for member conferences, it would be premature to make this assumption with such a low level of participation.
3. The lack of participation suggests that the matter of member or delegate conference is not of interest to most congregations or members.
4. Although the question was not specifically asked in dialogue sessions, anecdotally a readiness to eliminate ex-officio designation was indicated in most dialogue sessions. If the membership were to act upon readiness to eliminate ex-officio designation, a bylaw change that includes change to the ratio of delegate representation would be required.
5. There is insufficient consensus to make recommendations.

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Mission Centre Presidency Team