



JF: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the *Renewed Commitments* document?

Propelled by the energy and outcomes of the Future Church Summit, the *Renewed Commitments* document articulates concise core values orienting MC USA toward a faithful future.

It serves as a springboard inviting congregations, small groups, agencies and area conferences into a conversation about our common commitments as a church, and how they are enacted in various contexts at all levels.

The JF process is designed to articulate the most current discernment of who we are as MC USA (our core values), and where God is calling us to go for the future (strategic plan and setting priorities at all levels of our church).

How does the JF document relate to other church docs? Does it replace other documents? Is it a “decision-making” document?

- a. Overall: In a dynamic exchange with our delegates and Constituency Leaders Council, the Executive Board articulates broad vision and policy for the denomination. We look to area conferences to interpret and implement the implications of the Journey Forward document in mutual accountability with other area conferences, particularly through the CLC.
- b. Strategic Plan (Purposeful Plan): The JF doc will guide staff as we develop a new strategic plan.
- c. Confession of Faith: This does not replace the CoF. The CoF is still a foundational document that describes our identity and history. The JF doc is a document emphasizing what we plan to focus on for the future.
- d. Concise set of convictions (Mennonite World Conference 7 Shared Convictions): The MWC 7 document articulates where MWC is in the global church context. In a similar but not identical way, the JF document will outline MC USA’s concise convictions. The shared convictions of MWC are an important point of reference

for all members of MWC. We believe that values described in the JF document will be consistent with these convictions.

- e. Membership Guidelines: The JF process is not about replacing other documents. The JF identity statement is a document emphasizing our focus for the future. The JF document articulates values we hold in common, not rules or regulations for membership. For example, the JF document is not intended to resolve our disagreements on human sexuality.
- f. Vision: Healing and Hope: The JF statement articulates the living out of the Healing and Hope vision. This document describes the values operating in our denomination that will empower us to reach the aspirations of our vision statement.

Is this a descriptive or aspirational document?

The Journey Forward document is descriptive in the sense that, theologically, it states the core of who we are as Anabaptists. It is also aspirational -- moving us from where we are to where God is calling us.

What is the narrative that led us to this process?

Based on the energy related to and the outcomes from the Future Church Summit, this process fulfills a promise to engage the denomination and give voice to the members of MC USA as they live out the mission of the church in their context.

Because of the significant changes in the global church and in our Anabaptist churches in the last several years, the FCS was a way to gauge where we as MC USA are currently, and where we feel God has called us to go. The JF takes the next steps to center MC USA around our core commitments as Anabaptists.

Clarify the contextual nature of the doc itself. For example, will the JF document emphasize theological themes *particular to current contexts*, or themes more *universal in scope* that are then used to make applications?

- a. This is a broad document -- it articulates the concise theological core of our Anabaptist values, while leaving openness to what the Spirit is doing in our midst. We want this document to be flexible enough that it can be used by theologians, practitioners and all members at various levels in our denomination. It is both the center and the starting point of who we are as MC USA.
- b. The study guide will provide opportunity for congregations and groups to name practical applications for their context.

Whose document is this? Is it the Executive Board's doc? The whole church's doc? What is the relationship of this document to what will happen in KC19? Will it be approved/affirmed/voted on there?

Renewed Commitments will be taken to the Delegate body for affirmation during the 2019 convention in Kansas City, Missouri. The intent is that this is a churchwide document that belongs to the whole church. This is the whole basis for the study process -- instead of a top-down approach, the purpose of JF is to provide a ground-up process for setting MC USA's vision for the future, rooted in the discernment we did together in Orlando 2017 as part of the Future Church Summit

How do we imagine that congregations will use this document in their congregational life? Where will people engage with practical applications?

The study guide will provide opportunity for congregations and groups to name practical applications for their context.

Churches will be encouraged to share how they are participating in the JF through storytelling and reflection at the Delegate Assembly.

What's our dream for how this Journey Forward work as a whole will strengthen the church over the next 5-10 years?

- That churches will take this on as their own visioning process as well -- contextualizing the values articulated in *Renewed Commitments* in their setting.
- Strengthen our Anabaptist identity
- Re-energizing congregations and leaders to fulfill mission in their context
- Renew our commitment as a peace church
- Church growth
- Successful church plants
- Awareness of Anabaptist identity/values in the context of the broader society.