

# MOSAIC 2023 Listening Tour

## Overview & Summary of Findings

### Overview

Since its formation in 2020, the Mosaic Mennonite Conference has experienced significant growth and diversification that have been well-aligned with its intercultural priorities. These changes in diversification, however, have also sparked discomfort and unrest. One notable example was the tension that escalated with the 2022 Repentance and Transformation (LGBTQIA) resolution from MCUSA. Due to this discord, the Mosaic delegates agreed to engage in a two-year strategic planning process focused on clarifying internal and external relationships and determining the most efficacious pathway forward.

In 2023 the Mosaic Mennonite Conference formulated the Pathway Steering Team to partner with Grovider - a knowledge management consulting firm – to lead, design, and co-facilitate a process that would include a listening tour and result in a two-year strategic plan. The listening tour was purposed to provide insights into the following learning questions:

- To what extent are Mosaic churches and conference-related ministries (CRMs) aligned with Mosaic’s priorities?
- What must be true for Mosaic to fulfill its priorities?
- How do Mosaic’s priorities align with those of Mennonite Church USA?
- What does Mosaic gain/lose in the Mennonite Church USA relationships?
- How can Mosaic reconcile conflicts and address barriers as they arise?
- How do people in the Mennonite community prioritize operating in a Spirit-led way?

In answering these questions, Mosaic sought to identify potential needs and barriers to address as a part of the strategic planning process, with the intent to increase overall clarity and alignment. Another objective was to uncover the diverse viewpoints within the conference. The answers to these questions would potentially aid in identifying and articulating sustainable goals and actions for the conference’s future. 16 focus groups and 15 interviews were completed. The interviews and focus groups created an opportunity for Mosaic’s staff, leaders, and congregants to share their perspectives about mission, vision, and priorities, as well as relationships and strategy development to help build culture and facilitate transformational change.

In this summary, you will find the highlights from each research question and the implications/solutions for moving forward. For greater detail, please refer to the Mosaic Memo Listening Tour Findings document.

### Key Learnings

Learnings were compiled and categorized by theme and learning question to ensure ease of use in the strategic planning process. Below, you will find abbreviated, summarized takeaways for each key question.

#### **To what extent are Mosaic churches and CRMs aligned with Mosaic’s priorities?**

- In general, participants in the listening tour found very little misalignment between Mosaic’s priorities and those of their churches or ministries. However, findings from the listening tour did reveal that leaders within ministries were more aware of Mosaic’s priorities, and congregants were more likely to be aware of their own ministry’s priorities.

### What needs to be true in order for Mosaic to fulfill its priorities?

- Listening tour participants had a variety of insights to share regarding the supports and structures needed to ensure Mosaic fulfills its priorities. These insights fell into six categories: Clarity, Congregational Support, Leadership, Greater Focus on Discernment, Transparency, and Collaboration and a Relational Approach

### How do Mosaic’s priorities align with Mennonite Church USA?

While there are differences in language, participants found Mosaic and MCUSA’s priorities to be mostly aligned in spirit and content. However, there were several large discrepancies noted in the areas below.

- Espoused vs. Lived Values
- Racial Justice vs. Justice in All Forms
- Shifts in Denominational Ideology regarding LGBTQIA Inclusion
- Differences in Where Emphasis is Placed

On the matter of whether Mosaic should remain with MCUSA, the chart below outlines the respondents’ opinions.

| <b>Response</b>                            | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Count</b> |
|--|---|--------------|
| <i>Stay with MCUSA</i>                     | Number of times staying with the MCUSA was mentioned  | 35           |
| <i>Leave MCUSA</i>                         | Number of times leaving the MCUSA was mentioned   | 10           |
| <i>Conditional Relationship with MCUSA</i> | Number of times adjusting the relationship to (i.e., "dotted line"), partnership, or conditional relationship was mentioned | 10           |

### What does Mosaic gain/lose in the Mennonite Church USA relationships?

In responding to the question about the specific benefits of MCUSA, participants named several direct and relationship-driven benefits. This included (1) financial and educational resources, (2) ministry-sustaining resources for smaller congregations, (3) fellowship with a broader body of believers, (4) a connection to the denomination and years of history, (5) accountability and guidance that allowed for some standardization within the denomination. These benefits provided some insights into reasons to remain a member of MCUSA.

### How can Mosaic reconcile conflicts and address barriers as they arise?

When asked specifically about Mosaic’s response to conflict, participants shared a range of conflict response practices that are most frequently used within the conference.

### How do people in the Mennonite community prioritize operating in a Spirit-led way?

Being Spirit-led emerged as a significant priority across all participants. To move forward in alignment with that priority, participants believed that it was important for the conference to gain collective alignment on “Spirit-led” by clarifying the meaning and noting specific practices or ways of engaging that could support the conference in becoming more Spirit-led.

## Implications

In alignment with the data and insights collected from the learning questions, a set of implications and next steps for the conference were developed. Below, you will find the five implications and a brief rationale. Each conclusion and overview have been developed and informed by the data collected.

**Implication I: Mosaic should focus on creating opportunities to build relationships and create resolution and reconciliation within the conference.**

**Overview**

Relationships within the conference are torn and often difficult to repair due to a lack of clear structure for resolving conflict. The conference also does not provide enough opportunities for congregations, pastors, or ministry leaders to come together, get to know each other, and build. Intentional focus must be paid on developing a process of resolving conflicts, building internal relationships, ensuring conservative and progressive congregations can be heard in a balanced way, and equipping leaders and congregations with tools to navigate difficult moments.

**Implication II: Mosaic should deepen its commitment to being Spirit-led.**

**Overview**

Participants shared that being Spirit-led is vitally important to Mosaic's future. While the priority is clear, how Mosaic collectively defines and operates as a Spirit-led conference is less clear. Additionally, the conference could better articulate and activate its commitment to growth and transformation through Jesus.

**Implication III: Mosaic should deepen its support for the intercultural priority to address necessary learning and alignment across the conference.**

**Overview**

To achieve the intercultural priority, the conference will need to acknowledge its gaps and challenges with living out espoused values related to this priority. While the intention has been stated, the priority elevated, and many churches and congregants are working to increase diversity or partner across lines of difference, time should be spent building inter-conference capacity, resources, and actions in alignment with the intercultural vision.

**Implication IV: Mosaic should invest in building leadership capacity at the conference level to navigate the complexities of a diverse and growing conference.**

**Overview**

Participants believe that leadership is essential to the journey ahead. While the decision to create Mosaic was grounded in a desire to represent something different, the process of making the conference a cohesive entity is going to require decisive, transparent, and skilled leaders who can provide clarity, structure, care, and action when needed. Leadership will need to balance gentle understanding with strategic pushing to assist the conference in meeting its goals.

**Implication V: Mosaic should continue to define and clarify its identity in alignment with its priorities.**

**Overview**

Participants shared that Mosaic has not articulated a clear identity. This identity confusion has caused internal conflict, slight differences in priorities between churches and the conference, and a lack of certainty regarding Mosaic's value to and ongoing relationship with MCUSA.

Potential solutions for each of the implications can be found in the Listening Tour Memo.