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**Associating.
Belonging.
Called.**

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CBOQ Assembly 2023 Summary

ABC: Associating, Belonging, Called

June 8-10, 2023

Hilton Mississauga/Meadowvale



A Word from our Executive Minister

One thing that I learned from this year's Assembly was how much things can shift when we see things from a new perspective. I've seen Assembly from a lot of angles: first, as a McMaster student who had no idea how Baptists worked. Then I saw it as a delegate, usually sitting along the wall at the back. I've been an Emcee, a workshop leader, and a presenter. This year, I was a staff person. It was a whole new perspective.

I saw, with new eyes, the amazing work of our CBOQ staff, who worked tirelessly to craft this gathering for us. I saw the work of the board, and all the time, prayer and discernment given to every moment of our AGM. From the stage, I saw our Baptist family. Speaking. Listening. Praying. Caring. All of you eager to seek God with open hearts, in everything from singing to voting to making amendments. From my perspective, Assembly was a beautiful gathering, a space for conversation, a time to celebrate, a chance to hear what God was doing. I will never ever forget the moment of entering the hall after my ratification vote to a sea of my family cheering my on. What a view I got to have in that moment!

Thank you to our Plenary and Learning Session speakers for their inspiration and encouragement throughout Assembly. I would also like to thank our delegates for their engagement in Assembly. CBOQ's vision and mission rely on your decisions as those faithfully appointed representatives of member churches and Associations. Your leadership is essential for CBOQ to fulfill our mandate and accomplish our mission. Thank you for your sacrifices to be present and guide us during this time.

I also remember that there were other perspectives. Just like Assembly was different when I sat at the back, Assembly for you will depend a lot on your perspective. What caused some to rejoice caused others to groan. What caused some to cheer caused others to wail. I carry great hope coming out of our gathering, and I also carry the knowledge that some of us went home with questions and uncertainty.

My prayer coming out of Assembly is that we, as faithful Baptists, will remember perspective. That we'll consider there may be reasons we do not know that someone voted as they did. That there may be feelings someone carries that I do not. I pray we will seek God's perspective in all things, believing that – from God's perspective – there are great things in store for CBOQ. I'm so thankful for the many glimpses of that we got at Assembly, from so many perspectives.

With gratitude and joy,



Leanne Friesen
Executive Minister, CBOQ

Thursday, June 8

CBOQ Assembly 2023 took place in person, and it was a wonderful experience to be together once again. From the beginning of the Assembly, there was a real sense of community as everyone gathered for a common purpose. This year, our theme was ABC – “Associating, Belonging, Called.” Associating comes from Matthew 16:13-20 and 1 Corinthians 14:26-33. Belonging comes from John 3:16 and Romans 3:22-26. Called comes from Acts 9, where Jesus calls his Disciples. May you be inspired while reading the summary of Assembly 2023. May God’s presence guide you to be Associating, Belonging, and to be Called.

Q&A for AGM

During the AGM Q&A session, several warm-up questions were addressed, including the number of church plants and the ordination of CBOQ pastors in 2022. The session then moved on to addressing questions that were submitted via email and during Fall listening sessions.

The first question was regarding using British spelling in the by-law revisions instead of the Americanized version. Eleanor Emmott, 2nd Vice President and Chair of the By-law Review Team, responded affirmatively by stating that it is permissible. The next question was whether Leanne Friesen, the new Executive Minister, is aligned with CBOQ policies and the lifestyle statement. Evelin Wharram, new CBOQ President and the chair of the search committee assured that Leanne was thoroughly questioned on these topics during the interviews and aligns with all the positions and decisions made by the Assembly.

The question of why the new Executive Minister’s start date was not delayed until Assembly was also raised. It was explained that according to the by-law process, the Board is responsible for appointing the Executive Minister, subject to ratification by delegates at the AGM. Additionally, provisions were made in Leanne Friesen’s job offer to address the possibility of non-ratification.



Afterward, questions were taken from the floor. One question inquired why “This We Believe” is not a standard for the discipline. David Page, First Baptist Church Kingsville, provided an answer, explaining that “This We Believe” was created as a non-binding resource document in 1985 due to concerns about approving a binding statement of faith. Approving it as a binding standard now would require a two-thirds vote.

Another question was why it was necessary to review the by-laws and core documents before implementing the Membership Review process. Members of the Board explained that the existing by-law lacked sections on resolving questions or conflicts concerning members’ responsibilities or termination, necessitating their inclusion. Furthermore, reviewing core documents was crucial to clarify the agreements and decisions made by CBOQ member churches.

Dale Rose, Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, addressed a question about the people involved in the membership review process, their qualifications, and training. It was explained that a missional team is appointed to review and finalize the process. This team will consist of individuals with various skills and perspectives, aiming to maintain objectivity throughout the process.

Additional questions were addressed on topics including:

- Which documents or motions are binding
- What is in the Constitution, and how can these documents be made readily available to constituents
- How can churches deal with issues in their context as a part of CBOQ
- Timeline for the Membership Review process and how the Board will deal with delay tactics or non-response
- Clarification of local autonomy and the balance of accountability with scripture
- How can CBOQ help when congregants do not attend in-person worship and donations are down
- Ways that other churches support growth in young families and youth segments

At the end of the Q&A session, it was announced that a separate space would be available for individuals who may have needed to process their feelings or seek support after the meeting. CBOQ staff would be present in this space to offer prayer and pastoral care, emphasizing that it was not meant for debate or theological discussion.

Plenary 1: “Associating”



We were grateful to have Sam Chaise, who has years of leadership experience within CBM, CBWC, and Christie Refugee Centre, in addition to launching the Carey Institute at Carey Theological College in Vancouver, as our first plenary speaker.



Sam Chaise explored the need for the Church in Canada to reassess its model and mission in light of changing times. He drew a parallel between the decline of Blockbuster and the rise of Netflix to illustrate the importance of adapting to new models. He emphasized that Blockbuster’s failure to recognize its mission to deliver entertainment conveniently rather than being tied to a specific model led to its downfall. Sam urged the Church to avoid making the same mistake and stated that the future of the Church would be multi-model.

It was posed that the current model of the Church, centered around a weekly planned, staffed Worship Service, may be hindering its mission to be a community of Christ-followers and to reveal God’s Kingdom. Sam challenged the notion that a Worship Service is necessary for fulfilling the mission and called for testing and innovation to better align with the mission of making disciples.



Highlighting the present era’s uniqueness, the Church’s need to understand and adapt to the times was asserted. It was noted that the Church had faced epic uncertainties throughout history and had to rethink its identity and mission. Sam suggested that the Church must not cling to a model created in the 1600s but should explore new ways forward that align with the changing cultural context.

Sam expressed that Canadian Baptists are well positioned to innovate and discern new approaches because the DNA of the Baptist movement is rooted in being local communities of discernment. He highlighted that Baptists are not meant to replicate a single model but rather cultivate diverse expressions of the Church that reveal God’s Kingdom. The importance of mutual learning and collaboration among Baptist churches was emphasized.

Sam highlighted the significance of associating with other churches and working together on larger-scale issues. Sam posed three questions for consideration:

- Example #1: What is our theology of social media?
- Example #2: What is our theology of retirement?
- Example #3: What is our theology of identity?

Additionally, suggestions were provided for how to move towards gardening communities of local discernment that reveal the kingdom and can be applied at a local church level, a denominational level, and a Canada-wide level:

1. Set up “research and development” departments.
2. Learn to fail well, fail often, and fail forward.
3. Decide what our goals are, then design with the goals in mind.
4. Let go of the idea that “Church” means “Worship Service.”
5. Figure out how to remove money from the equation.
6. Learn from people who are away from the center.
7. Let’s not wait for heroic individuals to do this for us.
8. Let’s become missionaries to our culture.
9. Let’s be both/and people.

Plenary 1 called the Church to re-evaluate its model and mission, recognizing the need for adaptation and innovation. The plenary asserted the importance of distinguishing between the model and mission. It encouraged the Church to be a local mission community of discernment while associating with and learning from other churches.



Friday, June 9

In the morning we commenced with a heartfelt invitation to engage in Guided prayer for the AGM, offering dedicated time to commune with the Lord and seek His guidance. It was an opportunity to open our hearts and minds, allowing Him to lead and direct the proceedings of this important day.

The Annual General Meeting – Part 1

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) brings together our Member Churches and Associations each year to address important matters and establish the direction for our CBOQ Board and Staff. During the Assembly, we focus on four key areas: church resources, leadership development, fostering partnerships, and strengthening identity/relationships.

The AGM commenced with a warm welcome from Koon Wah Leung, Senior Director of Operations for CBOQ, who expressed gratitude to our lead sponsors. She prayed for our time together and invited Mike Janzen, a Juno-nominated composer, and musician, to lead us in worship.

Rev. Craig Rumble, CBOQ President, and Evelin Wharram, 1st Vice President, CBOQ, officially opened the session. Evelin presented the organizing motions and they were all passed. We took a moment to acknowledge and warmly welcome Logos Baptist Church Oakville as a new member, welcoming their delegates as they joined us for this and succeeding Assemblies.

Craig Rumble, Board President, delivered the Board Report, highlighting some key points. In 2022, the Board held six full-agenda meetings, both virtual and in-person, with an approximate attendance rate of 86%. They met with the Oxford-Brant, Elgin, and Norfolk Associations in April and held their annual Board Retreat in Guelph in September. Additionally, the Board worked on the CBOQ Membership Review Process, including drafting a step-by-step process.



A Core Documents Review Missional Team completed the review of CBOQ's core documents, and a By-law Review Missional Team was created. Proposed By-law revisions were communicated to CBOQ Member Churches and Associations for approval at the 2023 Assembly. Listening Sessions were held to gather input on the Membership Review Process and proposed changes to CBOQ's Core Documents.

Eleanor Emmott, 2nd Vice President, offered the report on the Membership Review Process. She outlined the many undertakings of the Board along with the Advisory and Missional Teams. Eleanor explained that we have been putting together a Membership Review Process that can be used in cases of significant conflict in our church family. She continued that this process allows for discernment and dialogue at different levels to ensure that when conflict arises between groups of churches. Through this, stakeholders will collaborate to discern God's will in each local congregation and dialogue between local churches and involved associations.

Eleanor then referenced the listening sessions held by the CBOQ Board in the fall of 2022, where various members of our constituency joined together to have conversations to share your feedback, wisdom, and advice, as well as to ask questions. She expressed how helpful these listening sessions were to us as we worked on the Membership Review Process and many other core documents and By-laws that your Board and committees have been actively involved in this year. She emphasized the intensive work that went into the by-laws over the past eight months and the core documents during 2022.

Craig Rumble continued with the motion regarding By-law revisions, which included replacing CBOQ's General Operating By-law No. 3 with the new General Operating By-law No. 7, and was passed. This was followed by the passing of the Board motion "That CBOQ Assembly affirms the priesthood of all believers, with both women and men as being equally called and gifted for pastoral ministry and church leadership; That CBOQ Board and Staff leadership will model this value in belief and practice by giving equal employment consideration to qualified men and women to all leadership roles, including invitations to preach, teach and serve in all capacities at CBOQ sponsored events; That CBOQ churches, boards, and clergy are expected to show honour and respect to women who are in pastoral and church leadership roles in CBOQ; and that the CBOQ Assembly strongly encourages all churches to recognize the spiritual gifts of all believers and faithfully call both men and women into all areas of leadership within the church, including the role/office of pastor."



Treasurer's Report

Koon Wah Leung presented the 2022 Financial Report and shared that CBOQ was in a strong financial position for the year. We are deeply grateful for your faithful support and sacrifice, especially as churches continue to recover from the effects of the pandemic. Evaluating and learning from our 2022 financial results, challenges, and opportunities is critical.

In 2022, we achieved 94% of our revenue target and managed to keep our expenses lower than planned. We are immensely thankful for the generosity of our churches in contributing to CBOQ. We plan to give back most of these funds to support our churches, pastors, and partners. However, it is essential to note that our expenses outweighed the revenue received. To balance this, we rely on inter-fund transfers, which include interest, dividends, and limited capital from our restricted funds. Due to ongoing pandemic restrictions during the year's first half, we transferred less than planned in 2022.

One of our primary objectives is to give back to our churches and partners. In 2022 we gave back through church grants, partner support, and pastor benefits/subsidies. The amount we gave back represents 75% of the funds received from churches, a significant increase from 70% in 2021. However, we, unfortunately, did not have enough applicants for last year's grants. As a result, we had to leave \$15,000 unallocated. All eligible parties are encouraged to apply for grants, as we aim to increase our ministry grants to half a million dollars in the 2024 draft budget.

During the previous Assembly, the Board presented the three-year strategic priorities. In 2022, the Finance team focused on building a sustainable financial model. Through collaboration with the Investment Committee, Financial Oversight Committee, and Board to review our Investment Strategy, we concluded that alternative asset class



funds would balance growth and risk, and be more environmentally and socially responsible. This required a change to an institutional investment manager that was approved by the Board. Additionally, the CBOQ Foundation had voted to transfer assets to CBOQ and the transfer was completed by the end of 2022. We expressed gratitude for the Foundation leadership, especially highlighting the faithful service of Nancy Bell and Don Hallman to our Baptist family.

It is essential to acknowledge that we have experienced the closing of 21 of our churches over the past five years, with four more deciding to close this year. Despite this, we will continue to guide our churches experiencing financial difficulty through the closing process. We remain hopeful that we can evaluate church plants or innovative church models to continue serving these communities.

Moreover, the motion was passed to accept the 2023 Revised Budget published in the Treasurer's Report in the Assembly Book of Business 2023. The motion to accept the 2024 Draft Budget published in the Treasurer's Report in the Assembly Book of Business 2023 was also passed unanimously.

Rev. Leanne Friesen was ratified unanimously as the new Executive Minister of CBOQ. Our CBOQ family of churches gathered to celebrate God's faithfulness in calling her to this role. Evelin Wharram, 1st Vice President, welcomed Leanne into her new role. Leanne shared about her journey with faith and recalled her experience of being called by God to serve, which led her to her background in ministry and qualifications for the role, as well as her hope for the future of CBOQ. Her faith journey started young and grew stronger through camp ministry. Despite feeling like a late adopter, she recognizes God's guidance in every phase of her life. With 18 years of experience as a Lead Pastor, she understands pastoral ministry and has been involved in various initiatives and projects. Leanne has a visionary, creative nature and deep love for the Church and the CBOQ. Her vision for the CBOQ is to foster a supportive family of churches where each congregation can thrive in its unique context. She aims to encourage and empower staff and board members, dreaming big for the CBOQ and addressing the real needs of congregations. Leanne desires to celebrate the identity and potential of each Church, helping them embrace their calling and impact their communities with the transformative power of Christ.



The Annual General Meeting – Part 2



The afternoon session of the AGM started with Eleanor reading through the names of those who reached significant achievements in 2022, including new ordinands, newly transferred credentials, and the graduates of the Youth and the Children & Family certificate programs. Of note is Woodstock Baptist Church's 200 year anniversary celebration.



Janice Charko then delivered the Nominations Committee Report, which included the motions that nominations be closed and that the persons named in the report of the Nominations Committee be and are now elected to the positions so indicated. These motions were passed unanimously.



Furthermore, Leanne expressed her gratitude and thanks to Tim for his time as Executive Minister of CBOQ. She shared the vision and update on the Board's strategic plan, including priority areas for the CBOQ to work towards from 2022-2025. Tim McCoy was invited to highlight achievements in 2022. Tim shared that it was a privilege and an honor to submit, for one last time, the Executive Minister's Report to Assembly 2023. He expressed how living out with you our CBOQ Mission of equipping churches to engage in your mission from God in your community has been a great blessing to him over the last 17 years. He continued to share how CBOQ has made progress in meeting strategic priorities through the new three-year strategic plan that CBOQ embarked on in 2022 to equip churches and leaders for God's mission within their community. This includes providing responsive support through core programs, resources, and consultations.

Tim elaborated that efforts have been made to strengthen Baptist identity and polity, innovate, and share new church models/expressions, cultivate leaders focusing on future pastors, and establish a sustainable financial model with supporting resources. Various initiatives and accomplishments were highlighted, including grants to churches, engagement with member churches, revisions of core documents, support for church plants and revitalization, and the optimization of financial systems and resources. Leanne concluded the Executive Minister's report by focusing on work to be done in strengthening baptist identity and polity, as well as, prioritizing development of new Baptist pastors for our churches.

Lionel Pye from Campbellford Baptist Church introduced a member proposal stating, “As Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec, let it be known that we welcome all people to share in worship within our many local church congregations. However, we neither affirm nor endorse any sinful lifestyle identified in the Word of God.” Before reaching a final decision on the motion, Craig initiated a quiet prayer between the individuals present and God, after which Eleanor led the AGM in prayer. The motion was subsequently passed. Craig shared that a prayer room was available where CBOQ staff would support those who wished to process the delegate discussion surrounding the motion.





Jennifer Lau, Executive Director of CBM, started the CBM Partner Presentation by offering greetings and a general update. The 2022 impact was highlighted, showcasing how the organization empowered vulnerable communities. They supported over 136,000 individuals through causes such as poverty, justice, kids at risk, church building, and crisis response. Notable achievements included supporting children and youth, empowering women, assisting refugees, and providing theological and integral mission training. The generous response to the Ukraine emergency appeal, which raised over a million dollars, was also acknowledged.

Jennifer introduced Adrian Gardner, Director of Canadian Partnerships, who discussed new partnerships, specifically with the Togo Baptist Convention, the Egyptian Baptist Convention, and Operation Dawn in Thailand. These partnerships aimed to provide capacity building, strategic planning support, pastors training, necessary mission training, and assistance in gender-based issues and church planting. CBM introduced the staff involved in enabling these ministries, expressing gratitude for their dedication. Gang XiaoDan, Philipp Frolich, Conrad & Fiona Kwok, Michael Waddell, Brenda Halk, Louise Hannem, Catherine Cole, and Rob Sellitto, the Regional Representative for Central Canada, were mentioned. Finally, Rob delivered closing remarks, expressing gratitude for prayers and support. The audience was reminded of how churches and individuals could partner with the organization, briefly mentioning Active in Mission.



Helena Bergen, Executive Director of CBWOQ, shared a video that displayed the variety of ways they serve Baptist women in Ontario, Quebec, and worldwide. She went on to express gratitude for the partnership with CBOQ and the opportunity to share about the work of Baptist Women in the past year. The focus was guided discernment, leading to a clear vision and mission for Baptist Women. She described the vision as empowered women transforming the world as God's beloved, emphasizing the importance of identity and a deep connection with Christ. She further elaborated that the mission is to inspire women to reclaim their intimate connection to God's calling through a deep and abiding friendship with Jesus and a renewed commitment to witness God's goodness.

Helena highlighted the opportunities for engagement at their table during the Assembly, encouraging attendees to participate in filling out leaves on the Unshaken Tree as a symbol of belonging to an unshakable kingdom. Visitors were also invited to interact with the Baptist Women staff to gather information about supported missions, programs, and resources and enjoy various goodies available for purchase. She concluded with a heartfelt thank you to individuals, groups, and churches that support BW, highlighting their dependence on donors to carry out their work.



We heard from Stanley E. Porter, who provided an update on behalf of McMaster Divinity College. He stated that McMaster Divinity College adapted to new course delivery methods in the past year, offering students online, live stream, and in-person options. The flexibility attracted students from various locations and allowed them to balance studies with the ministry. He continued that graduates from programs like the Doctor of Practical Theology and new Certificate programs made a positive impact in their respective fields. The MDC expressed gratitude for their support and welcomed opportunities to visit churches and share their mission. Additionally, they highlighted upcoming conferences on secularism and disability-theology intersections. The college encouraged staying connected through their email list and website for updates and collaborations.



To conclude the AGM, Evelin prayed for the ministries, partners, and programs. David Page then prayed for the new officers and those newly elected to the Board and committees, including thanksgiving and God's leadership in their lives and work ahead. Finally, Craig presented Evelin with the Holy Bible and gavel as symbols of office and welcomed her as the new CBOQ President. Evelin gave her closing remarks, expressing her gratitude for stepping into her new role at CBOQ.

Plenary 2: “Belonging”

We appreciate Rhonda Y. Britton, the Senior Pastor of the New Horizons Baptist Church on the East Coast and a member of a reminder advisory council, taking us through our second plenary.

Rhonda began by citing Ephesians 2:19-20, reminding us of the transformative power of Christ’s work on the cross. Through Him, we are no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of His household. She explained how this profound truth calls us to examine the societal divisions and segregation that have sedately shaped our way; these divisive messages and practices have also permeated our churches. Also mentioned was the need to recognize and challenge these deep-rooted barriers as we strive to create a more just and inclusive community.

She expanded on how our societal structure has been built on division and segregation, perpetuating disparities, and inequalities among various groups. These divisions are not easily pushed out since they find their way into the very fabric of our church communities. It was stressed that we cannot overlook the influence of our society, with its prejudices and biases, that accompanies us when we enter the church building.

Rhonda stated that amid these divisions, we are called to ask a profound question: Can the Jesus in you see the Jesus in me? Our ability to truly see and embrace the presence of Christ in others, regardless of their cultural or ethnic background, is a testament to our understanding of the gospel’s transformative power. As Ephesians 2:15b-16 suggests, Jesus came to create one new humanity out of the diverse fragments of society, bringing about reconciliation and peace through the cross.



She continued that being who the Lord commands us to be as His followers go beyond church membership, tithing, and busyness in church work. It requires a deep commitment to the disciplines at our discipleship’s core. These disciplines involve actively pursuing justice and loving mercy. We are called to live out these principles, not just within the walls of our Church but also in the broader society.

Rhonda asserted that just and trustworthy people willingly make room for all to belong at the table. We can create a space of genuine inclusion through our willingness to embrace diversity, listen to different voices, and dismantle the barriers that exclude others. This requires stretching ourselves and trusting in God’s guidance to navigate through the discomfort and challenges that may arise.

Beyond this, to embody the love and justice of Christ, we must actively resist injustice. We cannot remain silent or indifferent when faced with immorality and hate. By the power and authority bestowed upon us as believers, we are called to raise our voices, hold others accountable, and challenge the systemic injustices present in our society. However, we must ensure that we are not causing injustice but promoting belonging and equity for all people.

She shared that realizing the Lord's identity in us takes discipline and practice. We are called to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. This transformation requires ongoing self-reflection, a willingness to unlearn harmful biases, and a commitment to aligning our thoughts and actions with the teachings of Christ. Through this continual growth and renewal process, we can truly reflect the love and justice of our Saviour.

As outlined in Plenary 2, as followers of Christ, we are called to imagine a church and a society where unity, justice, and inclusion are foundational principles. It is a journey that requires intentional efforts to dismantle divisions, challenge societal norms, and actively promote belonging for all people. By embracing the gospel's transformative power, we can be agents of change, working towards a more just and inclusive world. Let us imagine and strive for a church that fully embodies the love, grace, and justice of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Saturday, June 10

Saturday morning, we started with learning sessions from knowledgeable speakers on various pertinent topics to our CBOQ community of churches.

Learning Sessions #1-6

Learning Session 1 – The ABCs of the New Testament

Stanley E. Porter spoke about how the New Testament can be applied to situations in today's world in the context of the Assembly's theme of associating, belonging, and calling.

Learning Session 2 – The ABCs of Being Anti-Racist

Rhonda Y. Britton discussed how being anti-racist must be a deliberate state of mind followed by intentional action. Additionally, she outlined some of the first steps towards developing a consciousness of anti-racism.

Learning Session 3 – The Church and the Marketplace: How Kingdom Impact Occurs When Faith Meets Work

Michael Waddell and Brenda Halk from CBM's Venture team explored the Kingdom impact that occurs when faith meets work. They explained the importance of the 'other six days' for the Kingdom of God and how people can find purpose in their daily work through the local Church.

Learning Session 4 – Parenting: Navigating Everything

Brett Ullman explored how to build a foundational relationship with your kids to help them navigate the world they are growing up in.

Learning Session 5 – CBOQ Financial Support for Churches

Adam Cree spoke about the financial support provided by CBOQ to the member churches. The session focused on different areas of financial assistance, such as grant funding, subsidies for basic health benefits, mortgages and loans, certificate loans, and the fellowship fund.

Learning Session 6 – Re-envisioning Buildings and Spaces

During this interactive workshop led by Dallas Friesen, congregation members they explored innovative ways to use or re-develop their building. The focus was on project ideation, planning processes, and overcoming barriers that churches face to steward their building assets for their next mission season.



Learning Sessions #7-12

Learning Session 7 – The ABCs of Being Anti-Racist (Repeated Session)

Rhonda Y. Britton discussed how being anti-racist must be a deliberate state of mind followed by intentional action. Additionally, she outlined some of the first steps towards developing a consciousness of anti-racism.

Learning Session 8 – Re-envisioning Buildings and Spaces (Repeated Session)

During this interactive workshop led by Dallas Friesen, congregation members explored innovative ways to use or re-develop their building. The focus was on project ideation, planning processes, and overcoming barriers that churches face to steward their building assets for their next mission season.

Learning Session 9 – Urban Sherpas and Suburban Guides: Mentoring for the Kingdom

Kaarina Hsieh addressed the challenges faced by today's youth and young adults, emphasizing the importance of attuning to God's voice and His magnificent plan for their lives. The transformative power of a mentored life to combine grace, wisdom, and joyful hope to make a lasting impact on the Kingdom of God was discussed. She explained timeless and adaptable mentoring elements, encouraging participants to embrace intentional relationships that better understand, celebrate, and speak life into the next generation.

Learning Session 10 – Retiring, Not Expiring

Panelists shared practical and spiritual insights on navigating retirement from the ministry, with a discussion about the importance of considering the future and available resources for a smooth transition explored. Participants were provided with valuable knowledge and guidance for this significant life change, ensuring they were well-prepared for retirement.

Learning Session 11 – Conversations on Women and Men in Flourishing Partnership in Ministry

The Journey Together team facilitated a storytelling session where women and men shared their partnership experiences. The session explored their challenges and how these experiences contributed to personal growth and community flourishing. Through this interactive exchange, participants deepened their understanding and learned from one another's lived experiences.

Learning Session 12 – The Church and the Marketplace: How Kingdom Impact Occurs When Faith Meets Work (Repeated Session)

Michael Waddell and Brenda Halk from CBM's Venture team explored the Kingdom impact that occurs when faith meets work. They explained the importance of the 'other six days' for the Kingdom of God and how people can find purpose in their daily work through the local Church.

Plenary 3: “Called”

CBOQ’s newly appointed Executive Minister, Rev. Leanne Friesen, led our third and final plenary. A pivotal moment during this plenary session was the commitment exchange as Leanne assumed her position of Executive Minister. This significant transition was not taken lightly, as it carried the weight of responsibility and the expectation of leadership. With a prayer of dedication, she was inducted into this esteemed role in a service led by Evelin Wharram, symbolizing Leanne’s readiness to guide and inspire the community. Delegates from Mount Hamilton Baptist Church presented her with a lucet. Leanne led participants to partake in community together.

After accepting her new position, Leanne captivated the audience with a reading from the Book of Mark 10:46-52, recounting the powerful story of Bartimaeus. This story emphasized three crucial points that shed light on the nature of God’s calling.

Firstly, Bartimaeus was an unlikely recipient of Jesus’ call. Despite societal perceptions and prejudices, Jesus saw beyond appearances, reminding everyone that He calls the most unexpected individuals to carry out His divine plans. This truth is a powerful reminder that one’s worthiness or social standing does not limit their potential to be called by Jesus. Secondly, the concept of a calling was explored beyond the traditional notion of full-time ministry. It was emphasized that the master calls every believer, regardless of vocation or circumstances. Understanding this widens the scope of what it means to be called by Jesus, reaffirming that everyone has a unique purpose in furthering His kingdom. Lastly, Bartimaeus’ throwing aside his valuable cloak showcased an immense leap of faith. By discarding something precious and embracing the unknown, Bartimaeus demonstrated his unwavering belief in Jesus. This act inspires all believers, urging them to trust in God wholeheartedly, even when it requires letting go of what is comfortable or familiar.



Leanne shared a personal account of how she embraced her calling to assume the role of executive minister. Having been initially hesitant, Friesen experienced a gradual realization as more and more people approached her about the position. It became evident that God was orchestrating this path for her, calling her to step outside her comfort zone and embrace a new and challenging role. Her story encapsulated the sacrifices and risks often associated with answering one's call. From leaving behind loved ones, corporate careers, or even their cherished "cloaks," individuals continue to be inspired by the transformation that comes from embracing their unique calling. It served as a testament to the transformative power of surrendering to God's plan.

Through Leanne's thought-provoking message and personal reflections on God's call, attendees of Plenary 3 were reminded of the profound impact that answering the call can have on one's life. This plenary session catalyzed self-reflection and a renewed commitment to embracing and pursuing their unique callings, ultimately deepening one's relationship with God and the community they serve.



Thank you for being a part of this year's gathering for our family of churches. We look forward to seeing you at CBOQ Assembly 2024!

This summary and on-demand viewing of all the plenary sessions, ministry voices clips, the featured church stories (such as the "[Kids Konnection Reading Support Program](#)" from Central Baptist Church in Sarnia), and highlight video are available at baptist.ca/assembly.

Your Board and Staff recognize that coming out of Assembly, you may need space to process difficult emotions that may have arisen for you as a result of our discussions or decisions. Going forward, we wish to be sure to communicate that this space is available. If you need to talk to someone, please do not hesitate to reach out to our Executive Minister, Leanne Friesen, our Director of Church Life and Leadership, Ken Foo, or our Clergy Care Associate, Paul Lam. We also want to remind those who receive benefits through the CBOQ of counselling options available through our Employee Assistance Program.



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