

DISCERNMENT in Elevation

Elevation includes 4 occasions for discerning a man or woman's suitability for ministry: 1) before TREK,* 2) before Elevation, 3) mid-way through Elevation, and 4) at the end of Elevation. On each occasion, the participants consider, "Is this person suitable for ministry as a Mennonite Brethren lead pastor who is oriented towards making disciples?" Usually, answers to this question become clearer during each successive discernment process. Initially, participants may simply gain a general impression of the person's suitability

for pastoral ministry that is characterized by evangelism and discipleship. As that person's desires, skills, and character grow, clarity about his or her suitability will become more evident.

The following diagram answers 4 questions that describe each discernment occasion along a person's Elevation journey to becoming a disciple-making lead pastor. When does discernment takes place? What is the central question to be considered? Who will accompany the person seeking discernment? Which processes or tools will be used?

“I feel motivated to see people develop a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. It breaks my heart that Christ is so misrepresented in society.

– Jonathan Muehling, Elevation apprentice



DISCERNMENT #4

When: at the completion of Elevation after 4 years in supervised pastoral ministry, completion of MB Seminary-CMU's MACM* degree (incl. the course Supervised Ministry Experience), and credentialing as a pastor by the MBCM's FLC.*

Question: is this person suited for ministry as a lead pastor oriented towards disciple-making, or for another Christian ministry?

Who: faculty advisor and another faculty member (at least one from MB Seminary); SME* ministry supervisor (usually the pastoral supervisor); another MA* student; an MBCM leader; congregational representative(s); others as appropriate.

Processes: a prayerful conversation built around the MACM's Ministry Discernment Process, which is initiated and led by the student's faculty advisor. The student provides a portfolio representing their 4 years of ministry activities and reflections.



DISCERNMENT #1

When: after the individual has completed a Bachelor's degree.

Question: is this person suited for TREK (or equivalent program), or for another Christian ministry?

Who: the person's congregation (incl. pastors and/or leaders), and TREK's leaders.

Processes: conversations, prayer, TREK's application process and interview.

DISCERNMENT #2

When: during mid-term evaluations, and final debriefing sessions of TREK (or equivalent program).

Question: is this person suited for Elevation, or for another Christian ministry?

Who: leaders of TREK, MBCM,* and MB Seminary;* ministry placement supervisor; congregational representatives (i.e. from the TREK practicum and upcoming apprenticeship).

Processes: prayerful conversations drawing on the following: tools like APEST,* PSI,* and spiritual gifts inventories; coached and supervised hands-on ministry; processes for clarifying personal mission and calling; Elevation's application process. (The involvement of MBCM, MB Seminary, and congregations may take place during or after TREK, whatever is most appropriate.) The student provides a portfolio representing their TREK ministry activities and reflections.

DISCERNMENT #3

When: midway through Elevation after 2 years in supervised pastoral ministry, and completion of MB Seminary-CMU's* Graduate Certificate in Theology (incl. the course Foundations of Christian Ministry).

Question: is this person suited for completing Elevation, or for another Christian ministry?

Who: pastoral supervisor; MBCM and MB Seminary leaders; congregational representative(s). An MBCM leader will initiate this event.

Processes: prayerful conversations concerning the apprentices' supervised pastoral ministry, and courses taken (the Foundations course includes assessments of personal temperament, strengths, and calling—e.g. Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory, Strengths Finder 2.0, & Twenty Pastoral Tasks). The student provides a portfolio representing their 2 years of ministry activities and reflections.

NOTE 1:

For these discernment events to be helpful, and to avoid inappropriate surprises, it is important that the participants agree on the key bases for discerning apprentices' suitability for progressing through Elevation in light of the question "Is this person suited for ministry as a Mennonite Brethren lead pastor who is oriented towards disciple-making?"

Within Elevation, apprentices are expected to develop competence in the following ministries as preparation for becoming lead pastors: community outreach (incl. evangelistic work such as apologetics, mission, cultural analysis), leadership and administration, teaching and preaching, pastoral care, and conflict resolution (e.g. inviting and managing criticism).

Tools for identifying the specific competencies for these ministries are quite widely available. Good examples include the MB* ministers' manual [Following the Call \(Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 1998\)](#), and the document for credentialing MB pastors. (For a more far-reaching description, see the document "[Twenty Pastoral Tasks](#)"—click on the link, and then on 'Download.')

Competencies for being evangelistic—a key part of disciple-making—are, however, less often developed and defined. With respect to Elevation's apprentices becoming evangelistic, their discernment should include the following two foci. (1) How is this apprentice living evangelistically in his or her own relationships? (2) How is this apprentice influencing or leading others to be evangelistic?

- To explore the first question, the apprentice could be asked
- ▶ How have you prayed for people around you who do not know God in Christ?
 - ▶ How have you paid attention to the Holy Spirit's work among people who

- don't know God in Christ? What have you discovered?
- ▶ What needs for shalom have you recognized in your own neighbourhood, and in the neighbourhood of the congregation you serve? Have you begun responding to any one of these needs? Elaborate.
 - ▶ What risks have you taken to participate in God's 'contrast community'?
 - ▶ How do you live with and among people who aren't part of the church?
 - ▶ How have you shared your faith with others? Did you use the Bible for that? Elaborate.
 - ▶ Have you asked others for a response to Jesus? Explain.

To explore the second question, the apprentice could be asked

- ▶ How have you helped others work through each of the preceding questions with the congregation in mind?
- ▶ What resources in the congregation could offer help for any of the shalom-oriented needs being identified?
- ▶ How have you helped the congregation witness to Jesus by loving each other in unity?
- ▶ How have you helped the congregation be a signpost of God's coming reign among people outside the church?
- ▶ In what ways are you helping the congregation be attentive to the 3 questions "Who are we? What has God called us to do or be? Who is our neighbour?"

Two resources that can assist these evangelistic conversations include "[The Art of Neighbouring](#)" (cf. the Block Map in the free resources), and [The Engel Scale](#) regarding the process of conversion.

NOTE 2:

A representative of MBCM will maintain a record of the outcomes of each apprentice's journey through Elevation, including reports on the four discernment processes. (As of June 2017, Janelle Braun is maintaining these records.)

*GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS:	
APEST	Apostle-Prophet-Evangelist-Shepherd-Teacher inventory by Alan Hirsch
FLC	Faith and Life Committee
L2L	Leaders2Learners
MA	Master of Arts degree
MACM	Master of Arts degree in Christian Ministry
MB	Mennonite Brethren
MB Seminary	Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (co-sponsor of Elevation)
MB Seminary-CMU	Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary at Canadian Mennonite University
MBCM	Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba (co-sponsor of Elevation)
PSI	Personal Styles Inventory (based on the DiSC personality profiles of Dominance-Influence-Steadiness-Conscientiousness)
SME	Supervised Ministry Experience (a theological field education course)
TREK	TREK Central Canada (an 8-month discipleship-in-mission program of MB Mission)