



CHURCH HEALTH

REPORT

APRIL 2024

IMAGINE

PREPARED FOR THE 2024 FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA
GENERAL CONFERENCE | APRIL 25-28 - TORONTO, ON

Church Health Department

Report to General Conference 2024

Preamble

It is the vision of **The Free Methodist Church in Canada** “*to see a healthy church within the reach of all people in Canada and beyond.*” This vision demonstrates that the health of a church is paramount and serves as the foundation for effective outreach, community impact, and the establishment of new congregations. Since the last General Conference, the Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCIC) has undergone several restructuring processes to revitalize and strengthen the organization. As part of this vision, the Church Health Department was separated from the Leadership Development Department and merged with the Church Planting Department (in early 2023) and is now operating under the banner of the ‘Church Health Department.’ This shift aimed to focus efforts toward the intentional revitalization of the Movement as an operational priority. In addition, a new Senior Director of Church Health was hired in June 2023.

The primary focus of this new department is to assist pastors and boards in fostering the growth of healthy churches. This process involves supporting current church planters while also recruiting new ones and launching revitalization projects that bring new and innovative expressions of the Church into the Free Methodist Church community in Canada. Since June 2023, our department has focused on stabilizing, refocusing, regrouping, and recharging, accompanied by a nationwide listening tour. In addition, the department has continued to collaborate with churches to develop strategies and support pastors and boards in transition and building healthy churches. Our Church Health Coaches and Church Planting Coaches have also continued to motivate and guide local church leaders and planters to create thriving, community-centred churches and continue to support our ongoing revitalization efforts throughout the movement. Over the following months and years, our overarching goal is the deliberate, sustained, and systemic revitalization of the Free Methodist Movement across Canada, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Events & Highlights (Staff):

- In the latter half of 2022 and throughout 2023, we experienced the resignation of two Coaches—one for Regional and the other for Church Planting. These leaders, along with the previous Directors of Church Health and Director Planting (who also left their positions within that time frame), played a crucial role in laying the foundation upon which we continue to build.
- In recognition of the growing responsibilities within our new Church Health department, Lorilee, who had been instrumental in supporting Church Planting Database processes and later both Operations and Finance & Church Health as Admin, has now transitioned into a full-time role as Administrative Assistant to the Senior Director of Church Health (effective January 1st, 2024). This adjustment allows her to focus entirely on supporting our 134 or so

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churches, streamlining processes, and enhancing overall efficiency. Lorilee has seamlessly adapted to her new role.

- Also, Jessica Isaak, who previously served as the Admin assistant to the Director of Church Planting, has increased her hours from 14 to 17.5 and has now been officially promoted to the role of Church Planting Coordinator (effective January 1st, 2024), where she has been instrumental and actively involved in the crucial functions of the department, (especially during the transitional period after the previous Church Planting Director's departure).

Listening Tour & Aftermath

- During the Listening tour, we had the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations with pastors, delegates, coaches, leaders, and board chairs from more than 70 churches nationwide. We gained valuable insights that have helped us continue to shape our ministry's direction and enhance our ability to support the health of our churches in 2024 and beyond. After our nationwide listening tour, one of our first tasks was to develop precise and pragmatic definitions of Church Health that could effectively guide our work. Next, our goal was to operationalize this vision through a clear and condensed Church Health Pathway.¹
- In response to the feedback received from our pastors, we have streamlined and simplified our Church health approach. We have carefully examined existing Church Health tools, such as the LifePlan, and integrated their essential elements into this unified journey towards health.
- We aim to empower every church, ensuring the process is accessible, practical, and conducive to positive transformation. Lay leaders and pastors will receive training on understanding this journey and utilizing the new tools effectively. It is a renewed LifePlan. This New Pathway is a dynamic roadmap for our churches to flourish, embracing God's design in the ever-evolving landscapes of our Canadian context and beyond.
- **In November 2023**, the listening tour results were presented to all our church planting and Regional Coaches, allowing for on-the-ground feedback to be incorporated.
- **In January 2024**, over 30 Pastors and leaders gathered to listen to the results of this nationwide listening tour, to offer their input, and to pray together in groups. The National Prayer Team was involved in this event, and Intercessors and scribes were assigned to each Zoom discussion group, and results were collated and sent back to the Director.
- **In February 2024**, the Department staff, including regional and church planting coaches, met for a weekend of connection, learning, and growth as we examined the operationalization of the renewed church health pathway.

¹ These are all underway, have been presented to some Pastoral Networks, FMCIC leaders and coaches, and will, finally, be presented at the 2024 General Conference.

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- Over the following months and years, our goal is to produce a complete Church Health Pathway, which offers a comprehensive package to enhance church health through a structured process & program. This package would include a textbook for foundational learning, pilots at diverse churches for practical testing, a workbook integrated with instructional videos for in-depth understanding, a coach's guide for personalized support, graphics and flow diagrams for visual clarity, and a PowerPoint presentation for streamlined training sessions. The goal is to empower pastors and church leaders with the tools and knowledge necessary to implement effective strategies for sustained church growth and vitality.

Conclusion

Our journey this past year has been marked by intentional steps toward building a stronger foundation for the future. As we look ahead into the coming years, our commitment extends to reworking and refining all our Church health processes, clarifying our approach to Church planting, and enhancing church support structures. This strategic realignment directly responds to the collective wisdom gathered during the nationwide listening tour and positions us to meet the evolving needs of our church communities proactively.

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Thank you for the privilege of serving you!