***Covenant of Understanding***

**Credentials Committee of Faith and Life Commission**

**Candidate’s Name**

**Date**

*The Credentials Committee of Faith & Life Commission, Virginia Mennonite Conference acknowledges that the call of God in one’s life is a sacred calling. We affirm* ***CANDIDATE’S FIRST & LAST NAME’s (hereinafter FName)*** *personal call to ministry and* ***Cong/Agency Name*** *Mennonite Church’s call to serve their congregation. We welcome* ***FName*** *as an* ***ORDAINED/LICENSED*** *minister of Virginia Mennonite Conference. On behalf of the Conference, we offer this Covenant of Understanding with* ***FName*** *to assist in sustaining her/his ministry and to mutually give and receive counsel on matters of faith and life.*

The Credentials Committee has engaged in an assessment of **Pastor’s name** preparedness for ministry in the following activities:

* Review and clarifying with [**Pastor’s name**] the information provided in the Ministerial Leadership Information process and attached references.
* On **Month DD, Year**, [**interview members**] conducted an interview [**how**]. [**Who**] chaired the meeting and drafted this covenant of understanding.

As the Credentials Committee grants the ministerial privileges to FName, the following mutual understanding is identified:

**Mutual Understanding between the Credential Committee and CANDIDATE’S FULL NAME**

1. God has gifted **FName** with core Anabaptist beliefs and strong theological commitments, formed through theological studies and life experiences. We affirm **FName** for the following things:
* (**list areas to affirm**)
1. Knowing that each pastor needs to care for one’s own well-being within their ministry setting, the interview committee encouraged ongoing accountability and support that includes
* (**list areas of concern**)
1. **FName LName**, executive conference minister**; FName LName**, district minister; and **FName LName** and **FName LName**, members of the Credentials Committee have encouraged Candidate **FName** to discover enrichment through the following:
* **List areas/Areas needing strengthening/enrichment suggestions).**
1. The leaders of **Congregation/Agency’s Name** Mennonite Church, **City, STATE, included Full Name**, district minister/cluster leader of **Name** of cluster/district, in a discernment that called and affirmed **FName** as their Candidate’s Role/Title.
2. The Credentials Committee affirmed **FName** because of the following leadership practices and commitment to those practices:
	1. The Bible provides theological truths concerning matters that God seeks to reveal to the people of God. A minister is called to discern how best to utilize the Bible in the practice of ministry, guiding the formation of new believers, and shaping the congregation’s ministry.
	2. The *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (*hereinafter “CFMP”*) is the teaching position of Virginia Mennonite Conference and best articulates its beliefs.
	3. In pastoral ministry there may be ministry opportunities that move a congregation to hold different beliefs than those stated in the *CFMP*. Leadership practices that may challenge common understandings of CFMP should involve proactive communication with the District Minister of the congregation, and Faith and Life Commission in order to contribute to healthy relationships for the pastor, congregation and the conference. In the event members of the Credentials Committee and/or **FName** need to revisit this covenant of understanding, a request to do so shall be made in writing by either party.
	4. Recognizing the challenges on divisive issues within the faith community, congregations, the **District/Cluster’s’s Name**, Faith and Life Commission, and Virginia Mennonite Conference, discernments are essential for our unity as the people of God. While the CFMPguides the faith and life of Virginia Mennonite Conference, we also value diverse theological thought and encourage hospitality toward those with diverse positions.
	5. Given our support of all the articles of our 1995 CFMP, and valuing appropriate accountability, the Faith & Life Commission and/or the Oversight Leader shall undertake a formal review of **FName**’s ministerial credentials in the event the leadership practices significantly contradict the CFMP. The ministerial credential that Virginia Mennonite Conference is providing represents a covenantal relationship between the pastor and the conference to uphold the CFMP and approved VMC documents on matters of faith and practice.
3. The Credentials Committee requests that **FName**, as pastor of **Congregation/Agency Mennonite Church**, both inform and seek counsel from the oversight leader of **District/Cluster**, and Faith and Life Commission if discussions begin and before making any final decision concerning withdrawal of congregational membership from Virginia Mennonite Conference. Any decision by the congregation to withdrawal should be communicated via a formal written letter.
4. The Credentials Committee of the Faith and Life Commission welcomes **Fname** into pastoral ministry in Virginia Mennonite Conference. We value her/his gifts, and covenant together to give and receive counsel with her/him in order to grow together in Christ and in our knowledge and understanding concerning the way of Christ in the 21st century.

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Full Name, Pastor Full Name, District Minister

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Interview Facilitator, Credentials Committee Full Name, Exec Conf Minister