

# God's Call for Genetic Stewardship and Evangelism in Our Community

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As a Mennonite community, we are richly blessed with shared values, traditions, and a deep sense of belonging. God has woven us together as a close-knit family. Yet, with these blessings come responsibilities. Just as we are called to tend to our spiritual well-being, God calls on us to tend to our physical and genetic health, so that future generations may thrive.

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” — *Ephesians 2:10*

## 1 Understanding Genetic Diseases in Our Community

Genetic disorders, such as deafness caused by mutations in the *GJB2* gene, are part of the design God has allowed in creation. These conditions follow a pattern known as **recessive inheritance**, meaning a person must inherit two copies of a mutated gene—one from each parent—to be affected.

However, if a person has just one copy of the gene, they are a **carrier** and can pass this gene on to their children without being affected themselves.

## 2 What is Genetic Stewardship?

As children of God, we are called to care for our bodies and families. **Genetic stewardship** is one way we can honor this calling. It means being aware of our genetic heritage and taking steps to protect the well-being of future generations.

If you have a sibling affected by a genetic disorder like deafness, there is a **67% chance** (or 2/3) that you are a carrier of the same gene mutation. This is not a burden, but an opportunity—a call from God to take steps in wisdom, love, and care.

“**My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.**” — **Hosea 4:6**

We are encouraged to seek knowledge, and genetic testing is one way to understand if you or your potential partner are carriers of certain genes. This is not a matter of fear, but of preparing for a healthy future for your family, as God guides our steps.

## 3 Stewardship or Evangelism?

If both you and your potential partner are carriers, there is a **25% chance** your children will be affected by the disorder, and a 50% chance they will also be carriers. But even if you are a carrier or affected, if you find a partner who is not a carrier, your children will not be affected by the condition, though they may carry the gene themselves.

The choice before us is a profound one, and it can be seen as part of our calling. God gives us at least two paths:

1. **Genetic Stewardship:** Consider genetic testing to understand your genetic background. By doing so, you can protect future generations. If you are a carrier or even affected and find someone who is neither, then you are bound to have healthy children, even if some are carriers. If both you and your partner are carriers, genetic counseling can help you make informed choices. Fervent prayer and good nutrition may help tip the odds in favour of an unaffected child. This is not just a medical decision, but a spiritual one—a way of nurturing God’s creation in a responsible and loving manner.
2. **Evangelism through Exogamy:** Another option is to look beyond our close-knit community for a spouse. In the general population, only about 2% of people are carriers of the gene that causes deafness (*GJB2*). Marrying someone from outside the community can reduce the risk of passing on genetic disorders while also

offering an opportunity to welcome someone new into our fold—an act of evangelism, bringing others into the faith and family of Christ.

**“Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!” — 1 Chronicles 16:24**

God calls us to be fruitful not just in numbers, but in faith, love, and wisdom. Evangelism through marriage can be a beautiful way to extend the community while safeguarding the health of future generations.

## 4 A Call to Love and Action

Our shared genetics are not a curse but an opportunity—a reminder that we are uniquely blessed by God. Whether through stewardship or evangelism, we are called to love one another deeply, just as Christ loves us.

**“Let all that you do be done in love.” — 1 Corinthians 16:14**

By taking these steps, we honor God’s creation. Whether you choose to marry within the community or bring someone new into it, you are part of God’s divine plan for our people. Let us embrace this opportunity with joy and responsibility, trusting that God will guide us as we seek to grow in faith, wisdom, and health.

**“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.” — Jeremiah 29:11**

May we continue to be a shining light of God’s grace, through our stewardship, our marriages, and our evangelism.

## 5 Technology and the Importance of Planning for the Future

We live in a time of remarkable technological blessings, and we give thanks to God for the medical advancements, such as cochlear implants, that help those who are affected by genetic conditions like deafness. However, while we are grateful for these tools, we cannot be assured that such technologies will always be available or accessible in the future. As stewards of God’s creation, it is wise to plan for the long term, ensuring the health of future generations, regardless of the availability of medical interventions.

**“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?” — Luke 14:28**

This is why it’s vital for our community to keep track of its genealogy, preserving the knowledge of who carries certain genetic traits. By doing so, we can be better informed in helping our young people find suitable mates, protecting the health of future generations and making the journey toward marriage more secure and fulfilling.

## 6 A Call for Genealogists and Matchmakers

One way we can honor this call is by encouraging the creation of volunteer positions within our church community, such as a **genealogist** and a **matchmaker**. These roles would help ensure that we keep track of family histories and provide support to those seeking partners, both within our community and, when needed, through exogamous partnerships.

**Genealogist:** A volunteer genealogist could help track the community’s familial relationships and genetic histories. This would assist in determining who might be carriers of genetic conditions, as well as help guide potential couples in understanding their genetic backgrounds before marriage.

**Matchmaker:** In the Bible, many marriages were arranged with the wisdom of family and community elders. This took much of the guesswork out of finding a spouse and ensured that marriages were made with care and purpose. Today, finding a mate is one of the most difficult and nerve-wracking parts of life. Having a trusted **matchmaker** in the community could help make this process less stressful, offering guidance on what to look for in a partner, how to approach exogamous marriages if needed, and making matches that align with both family values and health considerations.

**“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.” — Proverbs 15:22**

## 7 Strengthening Our Community Through Support

Through genealogy and match-making services, we can help our youth not only find love but also build strong families, ensuring the well-being of future generations. Whether choosing a mate from within our community or from outside it, these services can provide invaluable support, preserving our traditions while honoring God’s call for stewardship and care.

By working together in faith and love, we can continue to be a strong, healthy community—one that cares deeply for its future, and trusts in God’s guidance for the path forward.