

Mountain States Mennonite Conference

Response to Mennonite Church USA Criteria for Admission of New Conferences

1. Eligibility

By virtue of creating an entirely new conference, including a new name, new incorporation, new membership and new organization, Mountain States Mennonite Conference (MSMC) is applying for membership in Mennonite Church USA as a new conference.

2. Qualifications

A. *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*

1. Mennonite Church USA congregations in the Rocky Mountain region who would be invited to join MSMC have previously expressed support for the *Confession of Faith* through their previous conference affiliations.
2. The Future Committee representing the various participant congregations has stated in its core values affirmation for the *Confession of Faith*.

B. Reflection of Denominational Culture and Character

1. In the formation of Mountain States Mennonite Conference, the Future Committee has reviewed various denominational documents. These include the *Membership Guidelines*, core convictions, priority outcomes, *Organizational Strategy, Culture and Structure, Confession of Faith*, and *Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love*. We recognize that these documents constitute the polity and teaching positions of Mennonite Church USA and affirm and embrace them as central to our teaching ministry and as integral to our discernment of faith and life issues. Charter members of Mountain States Conference are members in good standing of conferences who participated in adopting these documents at Nashville in 2001.
2. We believe that our Vision Statement, "*Pursuing the Dreams of God by the power of the Holy Spirit in the way of Jesus Christ*," reflects the call that God gives to all people from the global community to individual Christians.
3. The above vision statement is more specifically articulated in the individual priorities of Mennonite Church USA.¹ Through our "passion-driven" contextual ministries, foundational ministries and other structural elements, we intend to embody the evangelistic outreach and justice ministries of a missional church.
4. We heartily affirm the "Challenges to the Church" and "Internal Strengths and Limitations of the Church" delineated in the denominational organizational document.²
5. The first item of our mission statement of MSMC "*To engage in spiritual/faith formation*," reflects the initial core strategy and goals of Mennonite Church USA to "*Grow in our faithfulness*."³

¹ Priority Outcomes for Mennonite Church USA, March 10, 2003 draft. The seven items listed as priority outcomes include: missional church, worship, leadership, education, stewardship, anti-racism, and global, ecumenical and intra-church relationships.

² Organizational Strategy, Culture and Structure for Mennonite Church USA 2001-2011 prepared by the Transformation Team, January 30, 2000, (p6,7)

³ Ibid, lines 252-261, 318-325

6. In its Leadership Team, MSMC will pursue a style of operation that is similar to the function of the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA using the “Carver” model of governance.
7. Inspired by the work of the Constituency Leaders Council, MSMC will develop its capacity for corporate discernment with a regular “Faith and Life Forum” as a part of its structure.

C. Adherence to Mennonite Church USA Bylaws, Article IV, Area Conferences

MSMC has both the capacity and will to adhere to the Mennonite Church USA bylaws as they relate to the functions of area conferences. While it is clear that our size and geographic dispersion will affect the particular ways in which we carry out various functions, we do not philosophically disagree with Article IV of the bylaws.

D. Agreement of Previous Conferences

Congregations forming MSMC were previously members of Western District Conference and Rocky Mountain Conference, both Mennonite Church USA member conferences. Both congregations and leadership from each of these conferences were consulted and gave their blessing to move ahead with this formation. Upon the admission of MSMC into Mennonite Church USA, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Conference will be dissolved and therefore no longer contain members churches. Upon admission, Western District Conference will be asked to bless those congregations who were formerly members of WDC and will now be participating only in MSMC.

3. Viability

We believe MSMC should be considered viable for at least two reasons:

- a. The proposed membership, budget and geographic area largely reflect that currently represented by the Rocky Mountain Mennonite Conference. RMMC is currently considered a viable member conference of Mennonite Church USA.
- b. MSMC will provide conference affiliation for 22 Mennonite Church USA affiliated congregations that would not geographically be covered by any other conference. In other words, there is currently no geographic “overlap” with another Mennonite Church USA conference.

4. Process

In consultation with Jim Schrag, Executive Director for Mennonite Church USA, we believe that we have sufficiently met the requirements and time-line for application for admission to Mennonite Church USA.