



Introduction to the Survey of Appointed Delegates

The Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA has prepared the following survey of delegates as part of their preparation for the Delegate Assembly at convention in Kansas City, Mo., June 30-July 5, 2015. A link to the online survey (in both English and Spanish) will be sent to delegates after they register for the convention. The feedback from the survey will guide the Executive Board (meeting on April 6-8, 2015) in shaping specific proposals for delegates to discuss and decide upon at the Delegate Assembly. The questions grew out of interactions with many individuals and groups, including the [ad hoc structure committee](#), a group appointed by the Executive Board to discuss possible changes in our denominational organization and polity.

In the questions below, the words “denomination” and “national conference” are used to describe the *whole* of Mennonite Church USA, in distinction from congregations or area conferences, which are crucial *parts* of Mennonite Church USA. Two other crucial parts are the constituent groups and churchwide agencies/ministries. The Executive Board gives leadership to and acts on behalf of the whole denomination when the Delegate Assembly is not in session.

Questions 1-5 and 18-23 in this survey are designed to gather demographic information, for the purpose of comparisons between various demographic groups. Questions 18-23 are identical to those which were included in the recent [survey of credentialed leaders](#).

Questions 6-8 are designed to solicit your opinion on questions related to the role of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) persons in our denomination. They are identical to three of the questions which were included in the [survey of credentialed leaders](#).

Questions 9-17 are designed to solicit your opinion on questions of polity (organizational process and governance) and structure in Mennonite Church USA. They address some of the significant differences of opinion in our church regarding our churchwide organization, how authority is exercised at various levels in the church, and the nature of decisions that can be made by the Delegate Assembly. Questions 9-10 are identical to two of the questions which were included in the [recent survey of credentialed leaders](#).

Question 14 speaks to the level of authority of decisions made by delegates. It is clear that the Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, Inc., which must be approved by the Delegate Assembly, are legally binding on all parts of Mennonite Church USA. In contrast, there is considerable debate about the authority of other kinds of resolutions (decisions) made by the Delegate Assembly, such as the adoption of churchwide statements.

Question 15 refers to the [Membership Guidelines](#) which were adopted as part of the formation of Mennonite Church USA in 2001. The language about the merger was removed from the Membership Guidelines by the Executive Board in an administrative update in 2013. Members across the church have expressed widely differing opinions regarding the interpretation of the Membership Guidelines, including their current status and authority over various parts of the church. Therefore, the Executive Board believes that the Delegate Assembly should have the opportunity to decide on the future role of these guidelines in the life of the denomination.

Question 24 provides an opportunity for delegates to give open-ended responses on whatever matter(s) they choose, including matters not specifically addressed by a question in the survey.

DELEGATE SURVEY

Please respond to the following questions. Your responses will remain confidential and available only to those who analyze the results of this survey.

1. Please indicate your delegate role for the Kansas City convention: (Mark just one choice.)

- I am a delegate representing my congregation.
- I am a delegate representing my area conference.
- I am a delegate representing a Racial/Ethnic group (African American Mennonite Association, Native Mennonite Ministries or *Iglesia Menonita Hispana*.)
- I am a delegate representing the Executive Board.

2. At which of the past Mennonite Church USA conventions have you served as a delegate? (Mark all that apply.)

- Nashville, Tenn., 2001
- Atlanta, Ga., 2003
- Charlotte, N.C., 2005
- San Jose, Calif., 2007
- Columbus, Ohio, 2009
- Pittsburgh, Pa., 2011
- Phoenix, Ariz., 2013
- None of the above.

3. Check one of the following:

- I am a lay person. (Skip to question six.)
- I am a credentialed minister.

4. If you are a credentialed minister, please indicate your assignment:

- I have a congregational assignment.
- I have an assignment outside the congregation.
- I am retired.

5. If you are a credentialed minister, please indicate whether or not you completed the survey of credentialed leaders last August. [If yes, please answer the current survey in your role as delegate.]

- Yes
- No

6. Under what conditions, if any, do you believe that people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) should have opportunities for membership within Mennonite Church USA congregations? (Mark just one choice.)

- LGBTQ individuals should have full opportunities for membership without conditions.
- Only LGBTQ individuals who remain celibate or are in committed monogamous relationships should be members.
- Only LGBTQ individuals who remain celibate should have full opportunities for membership.
- Under no conditions.

7. Under what conditions, if any, do you believe that people who are LGBTQ should have opportunities to serve in congregational leadership roles, including the pastorate, as called by congregations of Mennonite Church USA? (Mark just one choice.)

- LGBTQ individuals should have opportunities to serve in leadership roles without conditions.

- Only LGBTQ individuals who are celibate or are in committed monogamous relationships should have opportunities to serve in leadership roles.
- Only LGBTQ individuals who remain celibate should have full opportunities to serve in leadership roles.
- Under no conditions.

8. Under what conditions, if any, do you believe that pastors in Mennonite Church USA should be able to officiate at same-sex weddings without censure or review of their ministerial credentials? (Mark all that apply.)

- Under no conditions.
- If the pastor feels convicted to perform such weddings.
- If and when the congregation approves of same-sex marriage.
- If and when the area conference approves of same-sex marriage.
- If and when denominational delegates approve of same-sex marriage.

9. Which of the following best characterizes your personal convictions in regard to the organizational decisions being faced by Mennonite Church USA? (Mark just one choice.)

- I want to be part of a church fellowship that fully includes LGBTQ persons as a matter of faithfulness to God, even if it means that we will lose members who disagree.
- I want to be part of a church fellowship that upholds the vision of marriage expressed in our Mennonite Church USA Membership Guidelines, which prohibits same-sex relationships, even if that means we will lose members who disagree.
- I value the unity of the church so much that I am willing to live respectfully with ongoing differences within Mennonite Church USA.

10. Which of the following best captures your sense of a preferred future for the organization of Mennonite Church USA? (Mark just one choice.)

- Mennonite Church USA should be reorganized with greater authority being held by the Executive Board and denominational agencies.
- Mennonite Church USA should be reorganized so that area conferences are fully the centers of authority for credentialing and other matters and the denominational staff are largely in the role of resourcing area conferences and congregations.
- The current organizational structure of Mennonite Church USA is satisfactory and should not be changed.
- I prefer a model where congregations are the centers of authority (e.g. hold credentials, make membership guidelines), but the denominational and area conference staff are available for consulting and resourcing.
- I support the dissolving of Mennonite Church USA and its area conferences as they currently exist, allowing congregations full autonomy.
- Other. (Please describe in a sentence or more.)
- I'm not sure.

11. As you think about the future of Mennonite Church USA and opportunities for delegates to be involved in denominational decision-making, which of the following would you prefer? (Mark all that apply).

- Continue the current pattern of delegate assemblies held in conjunction with the biennial national convention.
- Continue biennial conventions, but lengthen the time between delegate assemblies (e.g. every three or four years).
- Create a different model that seeks congregational feedback through other mediums.

12. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "It is essential that congregations continue to be granted a delegate voice in the decisions that govern the life of the national conference." (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree)

1 2 3 4 5

13. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: “The national Delegate Assembly is well-suited as a place to debate/decide our denomination’s theological approach to controversial social issues (i.e. abortion, immigration, same-sex marriage, gun control, national health care, Israel/Palestine).” (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree)

1 2 3 4 5

14. Which of the following choices best reflects your view of the resolutions (decisions) passed by the Delegate Assembly?

- These should be binding on all area conferences and congregations.
- These should only be binding if ratified by one’s area conference.
- These should only be binding if ratified by one’s congregation.
- All decisions made by the delegates should be considered as guidelines, not binding decisions, for area conference and congregational interpretation and discernment.

15. Which of the following choices best represents your opinion on the future status of the Membership Guidelines, particularly [Part III](#), as they relate to issues of sexuality? (Mark your first (1) and second (2) choices.)

- The guidelines should continue to guide the denomination and be enforced by denominational leaders.
- The guidelines should continue to guide the denomination as interpreted and acted upon by the Executive Board in its [June 2014 statement](#).
- The guidelines should continue, but with authority for their interpretation and administration given to area conferences.
- The guidelines should be revised to reflect changing convictions across the denomination.
- The guidelines are no longer relevant.
- I’m not sure.

16. In current Mennonite Church USA ministerial leadership polity,

- congregations call local pastors,
- area conferences provide ministerial credentials,
- the national conference (the denomination) provides a shared understanding of the standards for credentialing, and
- the national conference, via the Delegate Assembly, may discuss and decide major issues of policy for the denomination.

In light of the above polity, which of the following choices do you prefer for the future of Mennonite Church USA? (Mark only one choice.)

- Mennonite Church USA should maintain the current commitments for credentialing described above.
- The national conference (denomination) should have greater jurisdiction over the credentials approved by area conferences.
- Each area conference should have greater independence over the credentials they approve.
- Congregations should have local authority to credential the leaders they call.

17. What should be the consequences (sanctions), if any, when an area conference does not abide by the decisions made by the delegate assembly? (Mark all that apply.)

- The delegate body should vote on the rights of the area conference to have continued membership in Mennonite Church USA.
- The area conference should lose its right to appoint delegates to the biennial Delegate Assembly.
- The area conference should have a voice, but not vote, at the Delegate Assembly.
- The area conference should be designated as “at variance.”
- There should be no consequences.

Other. (State briefly.)

18. Indicate the name of the state or commonwealth where your congregation is located. (Fill in the blank.)

19. Where is your permanent residence now? (Mark just one choice.)

- On a farm.
- In open country, but not on a farm.
- In a small town (under 10,000) or its suburbs.
- In a small city (10,000 to 50,000) or its suburbs.
- In a medium city (50,000 to 250,000) or its suburbs.
- In a large city (over 250,000) or its suburbs.

20. Indicate the name of your area conference. [There will be a dropdown menu]. (If dually affiliated, mark both.)

21. Indicate your age in years:

22. Sex. (Circle one.) M F

23. Indicate your highest educational level. (Mark just one choice.)

- Some high school, but did not graduate.
- High school graduate.
- Trade or technical school beyond high school.
- Some college, but not a four-year degree.
- College graduate, a four-year degree.
- Some graduate school, but not a degree.
- Master's or similar professional degree.
- Doctorate or similar advanced degree.

24. What would you like to say to leaders of Mennonite Church USA as they prepare for the 2015 Delegate Assembly?