

**Mennonite Church USA
Phoenix, AZ
July 1-5, 2013
Delegate Session**

MINUTES

Tuesday, July 2

Session 1

1. Welcome and get acquainted

Moderator Dick Thomas opened the first delegate session with a welcome to what will be a unique experience in Phoenix, as we focus on issues surrounding immigration. He called us to a time of renewal as we learn and share together, while also being able to laugh and have fun. He referred to our vision and mission statements, as well as *Our Purposeful Plan*. Executive Board member Addie Banks led an opening prayer, followed by singing the *Vision: Healing & Hope* statement, set to music by Moderator-elect designate, Patty Shelly.

Dick invited all area conference ministers and moderators to stand and be recognized, naming them as important leaders in our national church body. He identified the Constituency Leaders Council members and their mission. Ervin Stutzman, Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA, commented on the relationship of denominational ministry staff to the area conferences.

Dick noted the existence of an empty chair on the stage, symbolizing the absence of a significant group of persons who chose not to come to Phoenix because of apprehensions related to immigration issues in the city and state. Those absent include moderator-elect Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, who joined the meeting for a few minutes via Skype from Sarasota, Florida, where she is on the road with plans to join the assembly for its final day on Friday. In this connection, Dick read a letter from the general board of Iglesia Menonita Hispana outlining their rationale for not attending the assembly and asking for an empty chair, along with their desire for unity in the church and a commitment to pray for the work of this week by those who have come together. A moment of silence and reflection followed.

Dick called on André Gingerich Stoner to introduce the inter-church connections embodied in the presence of a number of fraternal visitors, including Willard Metzger, Mennonite Church Canada; Ed Boschman, US Conference of Mennonite Brethren; Alan Robinson, Brethren in Christ; Pastor Chris King, Conservative Mennonite Conference; Bishop Victor Umoabasi from Nigeria; Lynn Roth, US representative to Mennonite World Conference; Nelson Kraybill, president-elect of MWC; Rev. Carlos Malavé, Christian Churches Together; Dr. Kathryn Johnson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and Dr. Mark Williams, Church of God (Cleveland). These persons gathered for a dinner last evening, hosted by Ervin Stutzman.

One of the most important parts of the delegate experience is the existence of table groups who will work together during the week. During the morning worship service, persons were given a sticker

reading I AM. Ervin invited table group members to introduce themselves beginning with “I am” and following with words that will identify who they are.

Ervin referred to the Guidelines for Biblical/Communal Discernment, giving background information on its creation. It is in a sense a successor to the foundational document, *Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love*. It was modified to add a caution about its use, which led to the creation of the Biblical/Communal Discernment process and paper. Table groups were given time to scan the document in order to be aware of its principal message as churches and other groups work toward reaching agreement after a careful process of discernment. Ervin then reviewed segments of the document, focusing on the group covenant which will be an important aspect of table group work during the week. Predictably, one issue this week that will be the subject of discernment is the statement on immigration adopted ten years ago. One caveat is that in some settings where this process is used, there can be preconditions or presuppositions that can amount to conflicts of interest that need to be recognized and addressed (things that need to be laid down).

Dick turned to a review of the Executive Board’s report that was distributed prior to the assembly, which was developed around *Our Purposeful Plan* and its seven priorities. He further reviewed the agenda for the week, and the various items for discussion, decision and learning experiences. Action on the resolutions distributed in advance will occur on the final day, along with time for personal stories of God’s work among us. Other items for delegate attention include the embrace of MHS Alliance as a member agency, adoption of updated bylaws, and election of new members for churchwide boards and agencies.

Delegates were recognized in accordance with their category of appointment or representation, with an explanation of the eligibility requirements. Dick clarified the definition of a quorum, which consists of those delegates present. (As of July 2, registered delegates totaled 635.) He requested that persons who speak at microphones identify themselves and the congregations of which they are a member.

Action 1 M/s/c that the agenda be accepted.

Dick reviewed special rules that apply to this delegate assembly, which were included in delegate packets. These relate in particular to resolutions and amendments.

Action 2 M/s/c that the special rules be accepted to guide our work during the week.

Hearing no objection, the moderator declared the minutes of the Pittsburgh 2011 assembly to be approved.

The Listening Committee was introduced, who will be sharing their findings in a report on Friday (see Minute #17 and Addendum 1). Members are David Sutter, chair; Carmen Horst, Linda Dibble, Gilberto Flores, Merrill Moyer, and Louise Wideman.

The Resolutions Committee was introduced: David Boshart, chair; Addie Banks, Charlotte Hardt, Kim Vu Friesen, Horace McMillon, and Keith Weaver.

Antiracism Team members were introduced: Violeta Ajquejay, Tim Nafziger, Zenebe Abebe, Tim Burkholder, Rolando Santiago, and Ron Adams.

Duncan Smith, chair of the Leadership Discernment Committee, referred to the ballot for delegate action in a later session, first introducing the other members of the Committee: George Stoltzfus, Horace McMillon, Louise Wideman, Paula Brunk Kuhns, Kim Vu Friesen, Dionicio Acosta, and Edie Landis. Duncan reported that it is now possible to nominate persons to serve in the variety of positions by going Online at the Mennonite Church USA website.

Session 2

2. Biblical perspectives on immigration

Dr. Danny Carroll-Rodas, professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary and a former resident of Guatemala, his mother's native country, gave a presentation based on his extensive study and action related to immigration.

He came to a peace position through his acquaintance with the Mennonites in Guatemala, which he now values and appreciates. Economic, security, educational, and cultural aspects are all important pragmatic issues. Our ideals and values will define how we address the pragmatic. We need to be self-conscious about thinking in Christian and biblical terms about immigration. The Bible is very much about the migration of people—people on the move. I Peter 2:11 identifies every Christian as a sojourner, but Christians have become comfortable in their “strange” place, and want to keep the strangers out.

Reading the Bible as Christians is critical, and begins with Genesis: everyone is created in the image of God, having intrinsic worth and infinite potential. Immigrants bring these to their host countries. The DREAM act facilitates this potential for the common good, making theological sense. This should also make legislative sense.

The story continues with Abram, called to leave Ur and go to Haran and eventually Canaan. He spends his life on the move. He moves for the reasons that many since him have moved: for food, water, gainful employment—rather than to stay, or return, and die. Joseph, who is forcibly removed and eventually comes into positions of power and influence in Egypt, becomes assimilated into Egyptian life and culture.

Immigration/migration is a story of labor. We need their labor—we just don't want them. We turn to the story of Ruth, going from Moab to Bethlehem with little encouragement or support from Naomi. But Ruth worked hard and made her way, marrying well and becoming an ancestor of Jesus. Then we look at Daniel, who became a subject of a conquering ruler but prevailed.

The laws of Israel in the ancient world have more reference to immigrants than any other culture. Their laws allowed immigrants to take part in their religious celebrations. But every country has laws. It is a matter of what kinds of law exist, in terms of equity, fairness and justice. God's message to the people throughout their history was that they were strangers and pilgrims in Egypt, which they should never forget.

U.S. history is rife with discriminatory activities related to immigrants such as people who are Chinese, Irish or Jewish. Deut. 10:17-19 is a reminder that God loves the sojourner. God cares for, feeds and clothes the immigrant, through God's people. God cares about vulnerable people, made in his image.

In the New Testament, we turn to Romans 13. We ask ourselves now, what do Mennonites think about immigration? Our mandate is to process immigration *as Mennonites*, but we should start with Romans 12. We are to submit to the government, but not blindly obey, in order to do the right thing. We are called to be true to our faith. Let the journey begin. It is OK to struggle with this issue. We trust the Spirit not to get beaten down.

Questions and comments from participants:

**In the ancient world, were there boundaries or borders to be crossed?*

There was at least the figment of borders. We do not see the distinctions of “legal” and “illegal” being made in ancient times as we do now. Today we do have an understanding of the need for security, but the legislative piece needs to be wedded to the Biblical piece.

**Comment on the difference between the kinds of immigration occurring now and the communal immigration that is part of Mennonite history.*

That is an important distinction. In the Bible we see both: whole communities being relocated (e.g., Babylonian exile). Current legislation is more geared toward the individual phenomenon.

**How do you work with the story of Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman?*

The people most hated, besides the Romans, were the Jews and Samaritans. When Jesus empowers the woman, he goes through a cultural minefield. When we engage “the other,” we do it with awareness of cultural and other issues.

**How do the countries from which immigrants come recognize both the positive and negative aspects?*

Migration is a global issue: 2½ million people a year are on the move. It is a migration of labor, not just knowledge, given the global economy. A false economy can be created, since it does not arise from within a country. Thus the solution needs to be global, not just within the U.S.

**Give us a list of the pragmatic issues.*

Several things: A Christian voice of peace and wisdom in the national dialogue, rather than anger. Within churches, ESL classes, after school classes, medical services. Legislative piece: try to give a different voice, e.g., the DREAM act that contributes to the national good. As a Biblical Christian, he acknowledges that we are a fallen race, with “bad” people in any group. We need border security because we live in a fallen world. We dare not be naïve, lest others turn us off. We need to combine realism with our Christian convictions.

**We are a resource because we have our own immigration story. For some, there is an effort to get rid of the baggage that they bring with them. How do we deal with assimilation issues?*

In the Bible, compare Ezra who wanted nothing to do with the Persians, with Nehemiah who worked for the government but wanted to hear news from home. Then there is Esther, with a growing self-awareness of her past and her people. These represent a variety of levels of assimilation, which we are experiencing in our country. Assimilation often is discussed from the viewpoint of the host culture. From the immigrants’ side, assimilation is negotiation of loss, of shame: color, accent, clothes, needing to translate for parents. It’s a dance, sometimes very sad.

**The definition of the word ‘us’ is confusing. What are we assimilating people into? Is it time for the church to renounce its [U.S.] citizenship?*

Deut. 4:5-8: the nations around you will see your laws, what a wise God you have. Judaic law related to an agrarian economy. The values of the subset of the laws are what transcend time and culture. There are strong Biblical ways without falling into a theocracy trap.

Table groups were instructed to address the following questions:

1) What new thing(s) did you learn from this presentation on immigration and the Bible?
What caught your attention?

2) What guiding Biblical principles would you suggest in how we approach the issue of immigration and relate to immigrants within our churches and communities as Christians formed by scripture?

Reporting from the table groups included the following.

**What do you do with the conquest narratives in the Old Testament?*

The nature of ancient propaganda is an issue: don’t believe everything you read.

**What could motivate us to assimilate people to become like Jesus?*

The foundation of the Christian faith is the Lord's table—welcoming the unloved, the issue of forgiveness, of oneness in Christ, in sharing resources—ultimately the cross.

**Re the Israelites forgetting their story, how do we as Mennonites connect with our congregations, recording and preserving our stories?*

We see a series of religious rituals put in place to preserve our memory.

**The issue of immigration [for Hispanics] generates fear.*

Reaching out in our neighborhoods is key. People fear what they do not know. Get to know families. Get together with others around food and singing.

3. Leadership Discernment Committee ballot

The ballot for new and continuing service on churchwide boards was distributed and marked as an affirmation. The results were 94% that checked “all” and 6% checked almost all names individually.

Session 3

4. Dwelling in the Word with Deuteronomy 24:17-22

Leslie Francisco read the scripture as persons followed the printed and projected passage. Table groups were instructed to read the passage again, and then discern together what God is saying to us through this scripture, using a series of questions on a sheet at the tables.

5. Churchwide Priority: Christian Formation

Terry Shue, Director of Leadership Development for Mennonite Church USA, gave an update on the churchwide priority of **Christian Formation**. In essence, this priority gives substance to the reasons that we exist as congregations in our communities. We have moved from a time when we assumed that the church was central in our lives and that we lived in a Christian culture. Our focus on Christian Formation helps us clarify our identity as a church. We now ask ourselves, how are we doing?

Russ Eanes, Executive Director of MennoMedia, accompanied by board chair Melissa Miller focused on the vision statement and how we are living that out, individually and corporately. The indispensable nature of Christian community in meeting the priority of Christian formation was underscored, especially in an age and culture of individualism. MennoMedia is committed to providing a wide range of materials and resources that guide the church in this priority.

Rose Stutzman, director of the SHINE curriculum project, reported on the progression of materials created for children's Christian education. She will present a more detailed presentation in a seminar on Friday.

Marlene Bogard, Minister of Christian Nurture for Western District Conference, introduced planning for a Year of the Bible launch that will occur on August 1-2 at Bethel College, which has its own website providing a wealth of relevant material. She invited delegates to furnish additional website links that will broaden the supply of resources.

Terry noted that the network of spiritual directors has a blog that is available. Palmer Becker is working on discipleship training. Congregations across the church have been encouraged to identify and promote their twelve favorite scriptures in ways that suit their unique environments.

Table groups were instructed to spend time with the following questions for group discernment:

1) How and in what settings do you practice Christian formation in your congregation? In what new ways has your congregation adapted to the changing realities around you?

2) Note the five “steps” of Christian formation in lines 152-156 of *Our Purposeful Plan*. Which of these present the greatest challenge to your congregation?

Comments:

*Are the 5 steps in *Our Purposeful Plan* age-group related?

*One church stopped having youth fundraisers, and instead had the youth share in table conversations like this, generating the support they needed from the congregation.

*One church used small care groups, which after a time are encouraged to invite nonbelievers. Intergenerational groups do prayer walks during worship services. They have mentoring programs with youth. Young adult groups are encouraged to meet and reach out.

*Greater interest in smaller, more informal groups as part of formation. All five steps are extremely challenging.

*Have promoted the Year of the Bible with pictures that have heightened interest.

*Also thinking about *spiritual* formation, which can provide additional dimensions (borrowing from the Catholics).

Wednesday, July 3

6. Delegate learning experience

This day was filled with Learning Experiences and seminars, with no delegate sessions scheduled. Delegates were encouraged to take notes, jot down questions, and in other ways be prepared to share the things they are learning with others members of their table group (see Minute #8). That pattern was repeated on Thursday morning.

Thursday, July 4

Session 4

7. Dwelling in the Word

Executive Board member Kenneth Thompson began the session with prayer. Patty Shelly read the scripture for group reflection, Romans 13:1-5. Table groups used a paper at the tables to reread the text and several citations from the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.

Dick recognized the presence of Bishop Victor Umoabasi from Nigeria, being hosted here by Pacific Southwest Conference.

8. Churchwide priority: Christian Community

André Gingerich Stoner provided background information on the priority of **Christian Community** and the ways it is being implemented throughout the church—a community of brothers and sisters in loving relationships, giving and receiving counsel, in conversation with those around them, open to the Holy Spirit. Every member of the community has an important role to fill in living out its calling.

Chuck Neufeld, conference minister for Illinois Mennonite Conference, provided some examples of the ways Christian community is being experienced in a variety of multicultural ways in their context.

Table groups were instructed to share one insight or new awareness that was gained from the learning experiences of the past two days that could help them nurture authentic Christian Community which addresses and transcends racial, ethnic or class divisions.

9. Churchwide priority of Holistic Christian Witness

André Gingerich Stoner; Stanley Green, Executive Director of Mennonite Mission Network; and Rick Stiffney, Executive Director of Mennonite Health Services Alliance; addressed the priority of **Holistic Christian Witness**. They began by citing their grandmothers' names and their histories with connections to holistic Christian witness.

They talked together about how the life, teaching and ministry of Jesus perfectly embodied holistic witness. As a denomination, we have acted through our history to institutionalize some of the services that are an integral part of holistic witness. In time, there was a temptation to separate social and spiritual ministry: deed versus word. Indeed, they often were the basis for disagreements and division. We have at times in our history made sure that we have all the parts of the body but we have not integrated them into a whole. Recent developments have worked positively toward the creation of holistic witness: having headquarters offices that bring the staff into juxtaposition; and the proposal to accept Mennonite Health Services Alliance as a churchwide agency.

Stories were shared that included a pictorial history of the Puerto Rican Mennonite Conference and its nearly 70 years of history with a focus on holistic health services, Vignettes were shared from Glencroft Retirement Community in nearby Glendale, AZ. Reports highlighted church planting across the country (85 in the last 5 years) that involves partnership arrangements between Mennonite Mission Network and one or more area conferences.

Even as we celebrate the existence of new and established churches, there are many population centers around the country where there is no organized Mennonite presence. This should be cause for wonderment and a challenge to hear God's voice about multiplying the worship and witness of Jesus-centered, peace-teaching communities of faith.

Table groups were instructed to address the following questions:

- 1) What new possibilities for a missional peace church presence of service, witness and worship might God be calling us to?
- 2) What could you do in your context to pursue these possibilities?

Samples of table group discussions:

*Some congregations struggle with being not only missional peace churches but missional churches at all. Their advice is to get out of their buildings.

*There is concern about the limits of human language and how to talk about church planting, and the implications of ownership and territorialism.

*What do we do with current churches that are shrinking: how can they be revitalized? Church planting can be done not only by "professionals." Help from ordinary church members is also needed.

*Church planting can take different forms, not just Sunday morning gatherings. Are we willing to be stretched, as we strive to be missional?

*A partnership with churches in Argentina helped bring new life to established churches.

*Would there be a way to connect with the MEA list of students in population centers as a way to begin Anabaptist witness?

*Consider a single website which could be accessed from any area that would inform pastors of connections.

Session 5

10. Churchwide priority: Stewardship

Marty Lehman, Mennonite Church USA Associate Executive Director of Churchwide Operations, and Larry Miller, President of Everence, introduced updates on the churchwide priority of **Stewardship** with a PowerPoint presentation. They highlighted the partnership between Church Extension Services, a service of Everence, and a Hispanic congregation in Florida, where CES provided loan funds that enabled the congregation to complete the construction of a worship center. Everence is also working with Mennonite colleges and universities in a student debt management program. Everence is partnering with the Lake Institute, providing seminars around the country on Creating Congregations of Generosity. The Corinthian Plan, providing health coverage for pastors and church workers continues to fill a need, but its future in combination with the national Affordable Care Act is uncertain. The Corinthian Plan will continue at least through 2014 as further developments are studied.

Glen Guyton, Associate Executive Director of Finance and Convention Planning for Mennonite Church USA, presented the budget for Mennonite Church USA for the fiscal year ending July 31, 2014. A particular challenge is the anticipated shortfall of revenue of about \$450,000 for Phoenix 2013. There is an increasing dependence upon giving from individuals, given the shrinkage in contributions from congregations and area conferences, which has implications for staff time devoted to fundraising.

Table groups were instructed to spend time with the following questions:

- 1) What are the issues/goals/challenges your congregation will be addressing in the next three years and how do they intersect with stewardship concerns/needs?
- 2) What are the stewardship-related issues being faced by members (Gen X, Gen Y, Boomers, The Great and Silent Generation) of your congregation? What help do you need in addressing these concerns?
- 3) What ministry and missional goals would your congregation pursue tomorrow if lack of resources were not an obstacle? In your congregation, does mission drive budget or does budget drive mission? Can you state your mission?

Sample comments from table groups:

- *Large congregations with access to internet technology are creating virtual congregations that never come to church. With mobile members it is difficult to create a sense of unity.
- *Sharing resources, including buildings that are underutilized, is a useful goal for those located in the same geographic areas.
- *There is a real need among ethnic congregations that have few resources who are unable to buy into the Corinthian Plan, calling for a sharing of the wealth among us. In fact, a fund exists to help such circumstances—about \$2 million since the Fund's inception benefiting about 100 congregations.
- *The stewardship of time is an important issue among busy members.
- *Congregations that do have surpluses also face some struggles in how to disperse them.
- *The skepticism of members about the direction of Mennonite Church USA and/or area conferences creates its own dynamics.
- *Denominational/agency loyalty can no longer be assumed. Do the agencies exist for the congregations, or the reverse?
- *In some Mennonite enclaves, there is a multitude of agencies that also ask for resources of money and time.

*Some congregations suffer from lack of space and thus are limited in their ability to reach out and welcome newcomers. The changes in demographics also need to be acknowledged: those on fixed incomes and young families whose budgets are stretched.

*It would be instructive if agencies that exceed their budgets would name specific projects that would be funded.

11. Churchwide priority: Leadership Development

Terry Shue, Director of Leadership Development, and Carlos Romero, Executive Director of Mennonite Education Agency, led in the update of the churchwide priority of **Leadership Development**, with stories from Violeta Ajquejay, a director of the Spanish language program, Instituto Biblico Anabautista; Loren Swartzendruber, President of Eastern Mennonite University; Dan Dietzel, teacher at Lancaster Mennonite High School; and Nancy Kauffmann, staff member in the Ministerial Leadership office.

One of our basic premises is *leadership matters* Mennonite Church USA has devoted significant education and training resources in providing multiple opportunities through its schools, seminaries and other settings. A major challenge facing our educational institutions is affordability while keeping in the forefront the significance of what they provide as a lifelong investment.

An important service of the Leadership Development office is the maintenance of pastoral candidate records that are shared with conferences and congregations in the pastoral search process. The Ministerial Leadership Information form is a key document in accumulating and sharing personal and professional information that enables search committees to make some preliminary assessment of candidates' suitability for their settings.

The Anabaptist Leadership Institute gives educators, primarily those newer to Anabaptism, an educational experience that better prepares them for teaching in Anabaptist settings.

A new initiative is an effort to create Anabaptist learning centers, based in congregations that have leadership development opportunities and resources to share in meaningful ways across the church.

There is both statistical and anecdotal evidence that graduates of our educational institutions are making major and significant contributions, often out of public view, in all areas of our society and culture, both in the U.S. and internationally. A number of examples were cited.

The presentations concluded with the reassertion that leadership matters. It is a continuing challenge and opportunity for Mennonite Church USA, through all its levels of organization and service, to multiply its resources to provide leadership development opportunities.

Table groups were instructed to address the following:

- 1) In what ways is your congregation co-creating leaders for the needs of the congregation?
- 2) As you reflect on the leadership and educational needs of your congregation and area conference, what are the most important things that Mennonite educational institutions and programs (both degree and non-degree, formal and informal) could do to serve the needs and help support the mission of your church?

Sample comments from table groups:

*The IBA program could be adapted to other people groups in their contexts.

*There is a discrepancy between how we call forth leaders in the church, and how scholarships seem to be awarded for some specific leadership gifts while ignoring other gifts.

*When the pulpit needs to be filled, look to a young person, as well as for other leadership roles.

Make sure our educational institutions stay grounded in the scriptures.

*Potential convergence idea: higher education opportunities that require practical experience beyond formal education. We have institutions and agencies that need such skills.

- *Can secondary-level online courses available from Mennonite high schools be offered to public high school students?
- *When an idea is presented by a person in the church, they are asked what they can contribute to implement that idea.
- *There is a need on college campuses for reconciling various groups on campus: ethnic Mennos and others, that can be a more welcoming and reconciling community.
- *Can seminars such as we have had here this week, be offered online? A “Menno talk”?
- *Several part time staff from within the congregation enable several local persons’ gifts to be well used. Post affirmations on the congregation’s bulletin board related to leadership.
- *At the age of 12 and 13, youth are told about Jesus. Individuals in the church send letter to these young folks affirming their gifts.
- *How about a Mennonite vocational education program, collaboratively with Mennonite businesses?
- *Need for training opportunities within congregations that are available to Hispanic students who cannot leave home to go to college.
- *Shoulder tapping both adults and youth for pastoral gifts.
- *Set up scholarships for careers not available in Mennonite colleges.
- *Include youth on pastoral search committees.
- *Offer online graduate degrees in divinity/pastoral studies.

Friday, July 5

Session 6

12. Resolutions

Executive Board member Tina Begay led an opening prayer in the Navajo language. Moderator Dick Thomas drew attention to two resolutions to be presented and acted upon. One is on Creation Care, and another is Protecting and Nurturing our Children and Youth. A third agenda item is a review of the 2003 churchwide statement on immigration.

Dave Boshart, chair of the Resolutions Committee, gave some background on the resolutions process put in place for this assembly. He described the various types of resolutions that are possible. The ones that are before us are in the “church statement” category, of which David gave an overview. He explained the process of implementation throughout the church if the resolutions are adopted. The Resolutions Committee commends these to the delegates for their consideration and action.

Table groups were given time to discuss the resolutions and express their readiness to take action.

Comments prior to action related to Creation Care:

- *The resolution did not mention anything specific about engaging or experiencing creation care.
- *Education needs to be provided regarding specific scientific data.
- *Develop curriculum related to place-based and experiential creation care.
- *In secular settings, creation care rhetoric can prove threatening, especially in rural and agricultural areas.
- *There is absolute urgency related to action on climate change. There is a growing awareness of the importance of divestment from fossil fuel industry.
- *Immigration and creation care together: looking long into the future, the implications of climate change are that there will be inevitable immigrations (e.g., Bangladesh that may be under water).

- *Struggle with statement that care for the creation is an integral part of the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- *Everence might develop an oil-free investment portfolio.
- *Concern about the tendency of environmentalism to become a new religion, especially in reference to creation care being part of the Gospel.
- *We have been reminded of first nations' people and their struggle in living on and with the land. Many immigrants try to come to our country because of wars, violence, and land-related issues. These are indeed inter-related.
- *Can we refer to Paul's statement in Romans 8? He relates daily with farmers who live on and off the land.
- *Support for keeping the language that makes care for the world an integral part of the Good News.

Luke Gascho, one of the authors of the resolution, commented on follow up plans if the resolution is approved, taking into account the comments being received during this week. The Creation Care Network is committed to continuing in dialogue; providing resources that are not prescriptive, given the diversity within the constituency; identifying and communicating specific tasks that individuals and groups can engage. The goal is to have the same spirit in any curriculum that is included in the resolution itself.

Comments prior to action related to Child Protection:

- *Can it include some ability for the churches to look inside of themselves and see that child abuse and violence have been augmented by some past statements and actions in the church? The church needs to be penitent.
- *Which program board will take responsibility for implementation steps? **Response:** We will make sure that there are policies in place for dealing with specific issues. Networking will be important, as a consortium of congregations, conferences and national church leaders. Leadership Development staff are the liaison within that network who will be on the front line to give attention to action steps.
- *Is there something that helps us in dealing with potential and actual offenders? **Response:** There is material available on the website.
- *One participant who works with offenders noted that he is concerned that we understand and recognize that the offenders are also part of the community and often are demonized. They also need help after the fact.

Jeanette Harder commented on the resolution. There is an intention to acknowledge past actions and activities that have contributed to the problem that we are now seeking to correct. Curriculum and resources will be developed and shared churchwide.

[A number of persons representing Pink Mennos stood throughout the delegate hall during the prior discussion, and were acknowledged by the moderator. He called on a representative to read a prepared statement, after which he called for a time for reflection on the message just communicated, and led in prayer after a time of silence.]

Action 3 M/s/c to accept the resolution on Creation Care.

Action 4 M/s/c to accept the resolution on Protecting and Nurturing our Children and Youth.

Dick introduced the discussion on the 2003 statement on immigration. Table groups were instructed to take into account everything that they have heard and experienced during this week, as well as at

times prior to the assembly. Participants were urged to talk together about their ideas regarding the statement, including possible changes they would recommend.

As an interlude, Dick introduced moderator-elect Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, who arrived in Phoenix last night and has joined the assembly, after having been featured on the screen on two occasions earlier in the week prior. He invited Elizabeth to comment on some highlights from her journey to Phoenix. She described her travels as going through the periphery of Mennonite population prior to arriving at the center represented by those assembled here in Phoenix. She believes that we are here in Phoenix for a purpose, now as we address issues related to immigration. She gave words of caution about well-intended acts of “witness” that can result in negative consequences.

Four persons who journeyed to the Mexico border with Border Links were invited to the microphone.

*Met a family with a child who had lived in Nebraska for 15 years, now deported. People do not want to be separated from their families, but some are willing to remain apart in order not to disrupt family still in the U.S.

*Actually seeing the wall was the most impressionable experience.

*Hearing at first hand the choices persons are making in an attempt to be reunited with family. We need to address the economic issues related to so-called free trade agreements.

*One participant noted that a sense of urgency arose from her visit, observing steps taken to help persons trying to cross the border, survive the desert, and seeing the personal items picked up on the escape route. Her sense of urgency relates to the immigration statement under consideration.

Four persons were invited to the microphone to comment on table group conversations related to the 2003 immigration statement.

*Reaffirms the statement. Hearing statements from persons who have been face-to-face with immigration officials. Add: remembering and acting on our allegiance to Jesus Christ, and that the center of our work is reconciliation.

*Reaffirms the statement, but add: updated government actions, policies, and laws. Acknowledge diversity of opinion. Enlarge the resource list, including how to host and partner with immigrant groups in our communities. Challenge to all to learn personal stories.

*Include in action steps, addressing issues of climate change. Many of the voices most affected are not here with us. Does this delegate body have the right to reaffirm or modify the statement?

*Rewrite the statement to add a number of things not now included, and with a different layout.

What do we celebrate? What do we challenge? What is our call and commitment? Give attention to how we interpret the Bible, and how U.S. legislation affects the current situation.

Dick summarized the situation as a call to do some rework of the statement, considering the very small sample of oral comments made today and also written comments that will be submitted. The Executive Board will prepare a draft that will go out to delegates and Iglesia Menonita Hispana for review and response, with a final statement to be created. An intermediate step could be to submit a draft to the Constituency Leaders Council at their October 2013 meeting for review, as they did the resolutions acted on earlier this morning. A display of green cards gave strong affirmation to this course of action.

See Minute #16 for additional comments.

Session 7

13. Churchwide Priority: Undoing Racism and Advancing Intercultural Transformation

Iris de León-Hartshorn, Director of Transformative Peacemaking, and Saulo Padilla, MCC US staff person, presented an update on work related to this priority. The scope of the challenges in dealing with immigration was well understood, as plans and preparations were made to come to Phoenix. Earlier, the Executive Board and staff made a trip to the border as part of their orientation and understanding of the major issues. They have listened to many stories from many people about leaving their home countries to come to the U.S. in hopes of achieving a better life especially for their children.

Two regional events were held in an effort to familiarize persons across the church with the plight of immigrants. Meetings with government leaders were held in Washington, D.C. Meetings were also scheduled with immigrant leaders in an effort to understand the substance and implications of proposed federal legislation. Other educational events were scheduled for congregational and individual education. MCC's Washington office has been key in working through many of these arrangements. MCC US will continue to be an important partner in developing and promulgating resources related to immigration issues and the larger churchwide priority.

Iris introduced members of a youth group who shared some of their observations and impressions after returning from their trip to the border with BorderLinks.

Joanna Shenk and Hilary Scarsella gave a report and update on the Women in Leadership project of Mennonite Church USA.

Ron Byler, Executive Director of MCC US, related numerous ways that Mennonite Church USA and MCC US collaborate in common ministries and programs, included some shared staff. Two key shared initiatives are immigration education and learning tours to Palestine and Israel.

14. Embrace of Mennonite Health Services Alliance as a churchwide agency

A discernment process has been completed with the Executive Board in consultation with the MHS Alliance board, resulting in a recommendation that MHS Alliance be accepted as the fifth churchwide agency. Marty Lehman and Rick Stiffney gave some background to this process and recommendation.

Action 5 **M/s/c to embrace MHS Alliance as a churchwide program agency of Mennonite Church USA, with all of the privileges and responsibilities pertaining thereto, and to make the requisite changes in the Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, Inc. to reflect their change of status.**

The trustees of the MHS Alliance board were invited to the platform and recognized for their service, after which Ervin Stutzman led a prayer of welcome and blessing.

15. Adoption of updated bylaws

Dick reviewed a number of changes to be made in the Mennonite Church USA bylaws, with copies distributed to delegates in advance. Discussion revealed the need for two amendments, as follows:

Action 6 **M/s/c that the phrase “shall appoint a total of (4) members” (Line 534) be replaced by “shall each appoint one member.”**

Action 7 **M/s/c that the phrase “..or directly” (Lines 371-372) be deleted.**

Action 8 M/s/c to approve the December 17, 2012 version of the Mennonite Church USA bylaws, with its suggested revisions, as amended.

16. Feedback on immigration statement (continued)

Time was given for additional comments on the 2003 immigration statement to be considered in the successor document to be created (see Minute #12).

*In 2003 there were a number of forces being addressed. Ten years later, there are implicit issues related to the government that need to be recognized. Interest was expressed in expanding the Biblical background in the document, possibly involving Dr. Carroll-Rodas.

*Re “Us” and “them” language: frame rewording so that it is clear that we are all in this together. Do not let the European migration piece be so central in the document.

*Re “undocumentable”: counsel not to use that word, given the difficulty of getting documents, contrary to some Anglos’ assumptions.

*The challenge in individual congregations is to get to know the personal stories of people all around them.

*Pay attention to economic issues, such as encouraging our member employers to pay adequate wages rather than perpetuate the “low-wage” mentality.

*Be clear when using “our” and “us”: when we mean the U.S., say it; when the church, say it.

*Caution about totaling demonizing the system. What kind of citizenship are we fighting for and encouraging people to embrace?

*Commitment to action should apply not only to Anglos, but to all persons, including Hispanics.

*As advised in *Our Purposeful Plan*, we need to be cautious about both the appearance and reality of engaging in partisan politics by our leaders on behalf of the church.

*It was a revelation that African Americans are considered immigrants. If it has taken nearly 200 years for African-Americans to feel welcome, it is imperative that we act with haste now regarding other people groups!

*It is important that we recognize and use the gifts of all persons in congregations and conferences regardless of documentation status.

*It may be possible for more persons to remain in their own countries of origin if financial resources (low-interest loans) can be made to enable local entrepreneurship that can support families.

*Our document may not be completed until after U.S. legislation has been passed. Delegates are encouraged to take the existing document and contact local legislators, doing advocacy.

*As we look at immigration globally, we are more than a majority white church.

*Racism can be expressed when good-hearted white people take steps without consulting the people involved. We need to be in conversation with the people we are trying to help. We have been racist in actions even if not in intention.

*Consider broadening the scope of the statement, recognizing the fallen nature of humankind and the tragedy of women and children being caught in human trafficking.

*Immigration has a subtext of Hispanics. Not all immigrants are Hispanic and not all Hispanic people are immigrants. In the U.S. Southwest, the U.S. migrated to the Mexicans.

Table groups ended the session in prayer.

The Executive Board has acted to reaffirm and update the statement on immigration with the following resolution: *The delegates at Phoenix 2013 reviewed the 2003 “Mennonite Church USA Churchwide Statement on Immigration,” including the 8 commitments listed. We recognize that our witness to God’s embrace of the stranger in our midst is not complete. Therefore, we reaffirm and resolve to update our churchwide commitments in light of delegate feedback in order to embody a*

fuller expression of God's love, justice, and grace to undocumented and undocumented immigrants.

Action 9 M/s/c to approve the foregoing resolution.

Session 8

17. Listening Committee report

Members of the Listening Committee delivered their findings. See Addendum 1 for the text of the report.

18. Anti-racism Committee report

Members of the Anti-racism Team presented their report. See Addendum 2 for the text of the report.

19. Churchwide priority: Church-to-Church Relationships

André Gingerich Stoner gave a report and update on the relationships that Mennonite Church USA has developed with a variety of church bodies and parachurch groups, including interfaith peace groups. Joanna Shenk, Associate in Interchurch Relations, added comments about the ways her work has involved conversations and relationships with other church groups. We have developed a level of self-confidence in these interchurch relationships that enables us to make a positive contribution to others.

20. Message from Mennonite Church Canada

Dick Thomas introduced Willard Metzger, Executive Director of Mennonite Church Canada, who brought greetings from his church body. He expressed appreciation for the welcome he has experienced during his time with us. He noted that MC Canada has just moved to a biennial schedule of churchwide meetings, scheduling their sessions in alternate years with Mennonite Church USA as a gesture to invite increased cross-border participation. He characterized MC Canada as our “little sister”, having been birthed at the same time as Mennonite Church USA. Their congregations worship in 17 languages. He cited a number of factors we share in common that are challenging the church, but we both claim to be part of the Kingdom of God whose purposes are not yet completed. Across North America, both church bodies have much work to do, but we remain active as long as God does!

21. Mennonite World Conference 2015

Elizabeth reported on the planning now well underway for Mennonite Church USA to host Assembly 16 for Mennonite World Conference in 2015 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. She was joined by Arlie Klassen; Nelson Kraybill, president-elect of MWC; and Iris de León Hartshorn, member of the MWC Executive Committee representing North America. The group extended an invitation and provided information about MWC and its organizational components. It is increasingly apparent that Mennonite Church USA has a great deal to learn as we fellowship worldwide, even as we have much to contribute.

MWC has asked Mennonite Church USA to conduct a survey among its congregations on their connections with others around the world.

22. Open Microphone

Individuals were invited to share anything on their hearts, especially focusing on good things happening in our congregations. Sample comments:

- *We do well to get to know our national legislators, and remember to pray for them.
- *Our expressions of appreciation should include the Phoenix area Mennonite Churches and the convention center staff who have served us well. *Applause*
- *Persons opposed to immigration reform may change their position if they allow themselves to have personal contact with immigrants and learn their stories.
- *There is concern that persons from the global south may be restricted in their ability to come to the U.S. for the 2015 Mennonite World Conference Assembly, given visa limitations.
- *MCC's *Washington Memo* is a very helpful resource, especially on legislative action and contact information for legislators.
- *Persons who went on the BorderLink tours were shown hospitality by Shalom Mennonite Church in Tucson, which was deeply appreciated.
- *Having the convention in the west undoubtedly limited attendance, but those who live in the west are deeply grateful that this happened, understanding that this will not happen again for a while.
- *It is significant to note that in Phoenix 84% of elementary school students are Hispanic and only 6% are white.
- *We should be paying attention to the shift in the way our country wages war. Are we paying attention to the ways violence is being visited on people "on our behalf"?
- *The seminar organizers and presenters deserve our thanks; they were wonderful events and learning opportunities, allowing for open and honest conversation.
- *One participant noted that in spite of initial resistance to attending convention, the experience during the week generated deep appreciation for having been blessed and touched by participation and hearing stories, even feeling proud to be a Mennonite.
- *Corporate political action does not absolve us from personal responsibility to reach out.

Dick concluded with an expression of thanks for the dedicated engagement during the week, and his sense of strong positive vibes from the audience. Mennonite Church is dependent on all of us to be the church's ambassadors. He expressed special thanks for the opportunity to serve as moderator noting how much he has grown and changed, and how much he loves this church. Dick also expressed gratitude to his wife Joyce, the Executive Board, Ervin Stutzman, and Executive Board staff.

23. Transfer of responsibility in the moderator role

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht and Patty Shelly joined Dick on the stage for the passing of the mantle of leadership. Dick noted the length of time that he and Elizabeth have worked together in a variety of roles in southeast Pennsylvania up to the present time as they shared responsibility for leadership for Mennonite Church USA.

Elizabeth responded with her own words of appreciation to Dick for his leadership and role of teacher as they have served together. She cited several expressions of appreciation from absent Executive Board members for Dick's leadership and belief in the goodness of people. He willingly shared power in their work together. He has agreed to continue serving on the Executive Board as past moderator for the coming two years.

Ervin presented Dick with a gift on behalf of the Executive Board—a piece of original wood art that Ervin created.

Elizabeth introduced Patty Shelly, moderator-elect, noting with wry humor that the church is now in the hands of two women! She gave Patty a prayer shawl as a symbol of God's grace and empowerment in her new position of leadership and responsibility.

Gilberto Flores came to the platform to lead a prayer of blessing, in both English and Spanish.

24. Commissioning of delegates for their work in the church and the world

Elizabeth drew the meeting to a close, with additional comments. As she has visited, and will continue to visit, churches on her journey, she is inviting persons to our next convention in Kansas City in 2015. She is calling for an expanded delegate body there that is representative of all of the church. She invited the counsel of persons across the church. She prayed a prayer of the farm worker, shared with her by César Garcia. She challenged all here to share their stories, and be the people God intends them to be. She dismissed this delegate body with a word of blessing, and a prayer in Spanish.

Bill Zuercher
Recorder

Glossary of Abbreviations Used in These Minutes and Attachments

AZ	Arizona
CLC	Constituency Leaders Council
D.C.	District of Columbia
DREAM (Act)	Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors
ESL	English as a Second Language
IN	Indiana
IBA	Instituto Biblico Anabautista
“M” (word)	Mennonite
MEA	Mennonite Education Agency
MHSA	Mennonite Health Services Alliance
MMN	Mennonite Mission Network
M/s/c	Moved/seconded/carried
MWC	Mennonite World Conference
OH	Ohio
OR	Oregon
PA	Pennsylvania
TX	Texas

Addendum 1 Listening Committee Report (See Minute #17)

The following script was drafted as a foundation for the committee's oral report to the delegate assembly. Exact wording of what was said can be found on the recording.

David Sutter, South Bend, IN, Chair of the Listening Committee introduced and thanked members (standing with him) who served on the committee: Linda Dibble, Albany, OR; Gilberto Flores, Dallas, TX; Carmen Horst, Lancaster, PA; and Louise Wideman, Bluffton, OH. Merrill Moyer, Souderton, PA was also a member of the group, but needed to leave the assembly prior to the report.

- The committee expressed appreciation for those who came to talk with us at our table and at various times and places during the convention or who took the time to write notes to us. We appreciated the spirit of grace, respect and understanding, as well as humor, at times, with which you offered your comments, expressed your affirmations, thoughts, and needs.
- We have listened all week. Now we are ready to talk. Remembering Danny Carroll-Rodas..."How much time do we have Dick?" And, did you notice that Dick Thomas does NOT have a tie today?

A few other notes as general introduction before we list items we have heard.

Most of the comments we received were made by individuals... so it is hard to assess how widespread the ideas are, but we will do the best we can with our report and try to let you know when we heard items more than once.

- We will be turning in all of the raw data for review by convention planners, including suggestions, comments and preferences about worship, music, speaker suggestions, facility challenges, food service, and other such items.
- A written summary of our report will be given to the Executive Board.
- Quite a number of comments we received were logistical in nature--things that were affecting the delegate body during our deliberations. These we thought best to pass on for immediate work communicating them to the Moderators, convention staff, whoever we thought might be best to address them...things like room temperature, more copies needed, instructions, process suggestion items, and so on.
- Our comments are in the following categories: affirmations/things that were appreciated; items for clarification or concern; overall reflections on the sense of our meeting.

Affirmations/things appreciated/went well:

- 1) Humor is helpful and was appreciated in all our discussions throughout the week.
- 2) Appreciation and gratefulness was expressed for the DREAM Act video Tuesday a.m.
- 3) For the symbol of the empty chair representing Iglesia Menonita Hispana leaders, members and friends.
- 4) Ervin's humor and recognition that table groups don't always discuss what they are "told" to discuss!!

- 5) Appreciation was expressed for the “generous orthodoxy” Mennonite Church USA extended to non-Menno speakers – Cheryl Bear, Bishop Minerva Carciño, and Danny Carroll-Rodas. We should continue the practice.
- 6) Appreciation was also expressed that this convention seems to have had a Christ-centered focus.
- 7) Appreciation was expressed for the energy and diversity of the worship leaders in music and we heard affirmation for Patty’s setting the Vision to music.
- 8) Several pastors expressed that they were deeply moved by the pastor appreciation on Wednesday morning. Great idea. The \$25 gift of books was wonderful! Thank you to all the agencies for this gift. Can it be free next time???
- 9) This convention has been inviting and friendly to Hispanic brothers and sisters.
- 10) Regarding *Our Purposeful Plan*, skepticism was expressed at the initial release; but after working with it for some time, value is now seen in it. Much appreciation was expressed for the content. The Purposeful Plan focuses us on the mission of the church without emphasizing the “M” word.
- 11) There was affirmation for the week-long focus on a particular topic. Perhaps this could be a pattern for future conventions to allow time for more in-depth understanding. This was reiterated more than once.
- 12) There is appreciation for Dick Thomas’ loving and appropriate response to the Pink Mennos by allowing their statement to be read while acknowledging that there are disagreements. The confessional, prayerful response was profoundly Christ-like. We heard this numerous times after this morning’s session.

And did you notice??? Dick Thomas did not wear a tie on Thursday?

Items for clarification/concerns/comments:

- 1) It is helpful to remember that immigration is not only an Hispanic issue.
 - a) The DREAM Act video highlighted many cultures, countries and ethnic groups challenged by immigration issues.
 - b) Would it be helpful to change the language used from “immigration” to “pilgrimage”?
 - c) There is desire that undocumented pastors and leaders receive credentials to exercise their God-given gifts to serve their own communities.
- 2) During the discussion on the DREAM Act, some were hoping for more tips for practical application in the local context.
- 3) There is tension between highly structured and circumscribed sessions and a desire to have more time to be open to the blessing of chaos.

Did you notice??? Dick Thomas did not wear a tie on Friday?

- 4) There is a desire for a deep level of engagement in issues. We need to be aware that there is a tendency to try and keep it safe and civil for the dominant culture.
- 5) We did hear from at least one person that there remains a concern for the process and outcome regarding the decision to come to Phoenix.
- 6) Someone suggested they needed more clarity on delegate learning opportunities listed on the delegate agenda.
- 7) There was initial confusion about the introduction of documents to the delegate body. Clarifying the process at various times was very helpful.

- 8) If IBA is a school, then it should be included with school listings and not named a “program” of our church.
- 9) During the resolutions for Creation Care and the Protection and Nurturing of our Children and Youth, there was no mention of caring for the unborn and their future.
- 10) A desire was expressed that we seek to engage in authentic listening to Scripture as a delegate body rather than using Scripture as a basis for asking leading questions.
- 11) During the structuring of delegate sessions, is there any way we can build in more time to allow for surprising ways the Holy Spirit works?

Did you notice? Dick Thomas is not wearing his glasses today?

General Reflections – (sense of the meeting, experience framed for convention – an attempt to articulate what we have heard that people can take home):

- 1) There was genuine and interested dialogue with the presentation by Dr. Carroll-Rodas.
- 2) We received numerous affirmations for each of the delegate speakers’ contributions.
- 3) The generosity of the youth in their offering for DREAM Act is a shining example to the adults. The youth showed strong solidarity with other youth/young adults.
- 4) The challenge to Mennonite Church USA in moving forward with multi-cultural brothers and sisters is for the pastors and congregations to become bi-lingual in various languages and to address history with redemptive shalom.
- 5) Suggestions for the future: Perhaps Sean Slaughter could be invited to rap the parliamentary introduction for us!!!!
(Linda puts on a baseball cap & headphones, begins to clap. With apologies to Sean Slaughter for the imitation and apologies in advance to Dick Thomas and Ed Diller.)

On day one of the delegate session,
there came the moment for instruction
on the need for parliamentarian.

Now at convention, there are some rules
we need to mention - to you.
Number one is to be kind,
Number two – don’t be blind!
Let’s be loving in our talk.
And when it’s time, to make a motion,
Be sure to state your name and location.

So in the future, we think perhaps,
That rappin’ could hold our attention, and
we’d be done in three minutes,
We’d be done in three minutes.
Bring it down, now, bring it on, now!

Did you notice? Dick Thomas did not wear a tie on Thursday or Friday and did not wear his glasses?

Finally, thank you to Dick, Elizabeth, Ervin and the Executive Board, the CLC, and all those who planned the delegate sessions. Thank you for your prayers for the church and for the care and preparation for this time.

Can we give a round of applause for the work of Shelley Buller, the staff of multi-media, communications, and those behind the scenes, and all other convention planning and office staff who work tirelessly and with joy prior to convention and during the event itself!

Addendum #2 Anti-Racism Team Report (See Minute #18)

Team members: Zeneba Abebe, Tim Burkholder, Rolando Santiago, Tim Nafziger, Violeta Ajquejay and Ron Adams

Violeta Ajquejay read the purpose of the team.

OBSERVATIONS:

- We noticed that in the first seven delegate sessions only 10 people of color spoke in open mike time from the floor, while approximately 10 times as many Anglos spoke.
- We are grateful for the deliberate attempt at diversity in the worship services. We believe this modeled what we are working toward.
- We observe that modest progress has been made at the convention level with regard to our anti-racism commitment.
- We were especially encouraged by the MWC exhibit and their working diligently to make their materials available in multiple languages.
- We were grateful that the presentation on immigration by Danny Carroll-Rodas was offered to the entire delegate body and beyond.
- We are grateful for the number of learning experiences that focused on immigration.
- We want to highlight the Bafa Bafa seminar that provided cross-cultural competency for youth through games.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. We recommend that our anti-racism commitment be picked up by area conferences and congregations. We know some conferences are engaged in the work. We recommend that conferences share what they are doing with the broader church.
2. We recommend that the moderator and table leaders invite and encourage people of color to speak when we are in open mike time.
3. We recommend having designated translators available near microphones during open mike time.
4. We recommend that presenters, speakers, exhibitors and the media be provided with guidelines and orientation in anti-racism as they prepare for our conventions.
5. We recommend making available copies of the resource produced by Mennonite Mission Network called *Shared Voices* for presenters, speakers, exhibitors and media.

We are grateful for this opportunity to serve as your anti-racism team. Thank you.