



Leadership Discernment Committee Report to Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly 2021

The Leadership Discernment Committee (LDC) of Mennonite Church USA is pleased to present the slate of board members for affirmation to the delegate body.

Our first meeting for this biennium was held in Phoenix, Ariz., in October 2019, coinciding with the fall meeting of the Constituency Leadership Council. This began a challenging 19-month journey of discernment and decision making to find gifted members from within our church community to serve as moderator-elect, Executive Board members, and members of church agency boards. In “normal” times, finding individuals with the time and availability to fill these positions is often challenging. But in these COVID-19 days, it has been especially difficult. A classic response to our invitation to serve on these boards has been, “Not right now. Ask me later!”

We believe the LDC may be one of the most active and possibly most unnoticed committees within MC USA structures. It has taken LDC one in-person meeting and more than 20 Zoom meetings to accomplish our assignment for this biennium. The guidelines require LDC to solicit two references for each individual before contacting them about their availability. During these 19 months, LDC has conducted more than 75 interview/reference checks for prospective board members, including both persons who are renewing their terms and those who are being considered for board positions. We have contacted a total of 14 individuals for new appointments and three for reappointments to an additional term. Sixteen declined our invitation, and an additional six chose not to continue or renew their terms.

The task assigned to us by the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA is as follows:

1. To exercise judgment in choosing nominees whose spiritual qualifications, experience, and competence fit them for the position for which they are being named.
2. To assure that the slate provides broad representation of the life and composition of MC USA.
3. To make available a description of each nominee’s experience, background, training and present involvement so that this Assembly is adequately informed and acquainted with all nominees.
4. To secure from each nominee a commitment to take the assignment seriously, if affirmed.
5. To emphasize the finding of new leaders, with careful attention to broadening participation in church leadership.
6. To develop appropriate lists of potential nominees by soliciting from each conference and associate group a full slate of suggestions. Suggestions shall also be sought and welcomed from the church wide agencies, committees, and constituency.
7. To develop nominees for elected and appointed positions on the following assumptions to the extent reasonably attainable and appropriate in our judgment: 50/50 women to men ratio and 30/70 BIPOC to White.

We are pleased to report that we have made good progress with representation and balances required by the bylaws. With the exception of New York Mennonite Conference, all conferences currently have

representatives on at least one agency board. Just under 50% of our board members are women and over 40% are BIPOC.

With this work in mind, your prayers of support, helpful suggestions for our various boards, and an openness to consider serving when contacted are vital as we seek to discern who will lead our denomination into fulfilling ever more deeply our vision and mission as members of the body of Christ.

The LDC is grateful to the many persons who offered recommendations for the various boards, responded to our emails, answered our questions about prospective board members and gave us helpful counsel. Our meetings were filled with much joy and celebration when we could report that someone had accepted our invitation to serve on a church agency board.

LDC worked long and hard. We certainly had our challenging times. We came to appreciate and value the gifts that each person brought to our working times together. We will forever be bonded by this experience. The importance and blessing of working together as a community of Christ's followers was evident as we fulfilled our assignment.

In the days ahead, we invite you to share with us names of persons you believe have leadership skills and gifts, and who might be available to serve (including yourself, if so inclined!). We as a committee know many people across the country in our denomination, but we don't know everyone, so your suggestions are needed. The process is easy! Simply complete the form at this [link](#).

Please continue to hold the Executive Board and the agency boards in your thoughts and prayers. As we proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ at home, across the street and around the world, let's be fully open and responsive as the Holy Spirit guides and empowers the work of our faith community in these days when God is re-shaping the church to bring healing and hope to the world.



Doug Basinger



Nan Kanagy



Marty Lehman



Sandra Montes-Martinez



Stan Shantz, chairperson



Ruth Yoder Wenger

Iris de León-Hartshorn and Shelley Buller provide staff support for the Leadership Discernment Committee.