

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



STAFF SUMMARY AND IMPACT STATEMENT

This summary is the opinion of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board staff on the impact of the proposed resolution if passed by the delegate board. This summary does not necessarily reflect the views of resolution writers or the Executive Board. Delegates are encouraged to consult other resources, engage the writers of the resolution and discern within their context. This summary is based on the staff's understanding of the current bylaws and policies of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA).

TITLE: A RESOLUTION FOR REPENTANCE AND TRANSFORMATION

[Link to the resolution.](#)

TYPE OF RESOLUTION: CHURCH STATEMENT

WHAT IS A CHURCH STATEMENT RESOLUTION?

A church statement gives direction to the church on matters of Christian faithfulness, often concerning current issues or issues where current church documents or previous statements fail to adequately address current questions/challenges. Church statements are approved by the delegate body and are implemented by the national body, area conferences, local congregations and individual followers of Jesus according to the rights and responsibilities provided to each body. ***Church statements should be developed to further God's mission, as defined by our statement of vision and purpose as well as our Renewed Commitments.***

Please read: [Developing Resolutions for Mennonite Church USA](#) for a more detailed overview of resolutions in MC USA.

WHAT DOES THE RESOLUTION ADDRESS IN MC USA?

FROM THE WRITERS

"Our denomination's policies, structures, practices and theologies have excluded LGBTQIA persons from fully sanctioned participation in the denomination and have caused great harm to LGBTQIA Mennonites and their families."

STAFF SYNOPSIS

This resolution is a response to a variety of practices and policies in MC USA and seeks to have the delegate body acknowledge harm done to the LGBTQIA members of MC USA. The resolution is also positioned as a commitment to live into **forbearance** by "doing the difficult work of being church together."

The Executive Board recognizes that Section III of the Membership Guidelines have been applied differently by the various MC USA area conferences, which has resulted in a diversity of practices that have led to confusion and conflict. Find a timeline of events related to this resolution here: [A timeline of the resolution process](#)

Please check out [Delegate Resources: Special Session May 2022](#) for more information.

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CURRENT POLICIES OR PROGRAMS RELATED TO THIS CHURCH STATEMENT

1. In September 2020, the Executive Board took action on the Membership Guidelines Advisory Group recommendations, which addresses some of the actions requested in this resolution.
2. This resolution aligns with the intent of **MC USA's Renewed Commitments**. "God invites us to experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation. We yearn to know and share in the mystery of God's unending love. We confess that sin fragments our wholeness and strains our relationships with God, each other and the world. Confronted with the misuses of power in our lives, communities and institutions, we seek to tell the truth and repent. The Holy Spirit beckons us toward the restoration of all things in Christ. God continually calls us beloved."
3. Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, **Article 6. Creation and Calling of Human Beings**: "*We believe that human beings were created good, in the image of God. As creatures according to the divine likeness, we have been made stewards to subdue and to care for creation out of reverence and honor for the Creator. As creatures made in the divine image, we have been blessed with the abilities to respond faithfully to God, to live in harmony with other human beings, and to engage in meaningful work and rest.*"
4. **Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Article 19. Marriage**: "*We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life. Christian marriage is a mutual relationship in Christ, a covenant made in the context of the church. According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship. Marriage is meant for sexual intimacy, companionship, and the birth and nurture of children.*"
5. A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership: Polity Manual for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. Sexuality. "Celibacy is the standard for single persons and a monogamous, heterosexual relationship for married persons, as reflected in Article 19 of our Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective."
6. **Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, Article III.4.a-b: "Rights and Privileges**. The congregation shall retain or be given certain rights and privileges as a member of the Mennonite Church USA.
 - a. "The congregation shall have the authority to determine the criteria and the responsibility to implement the process for membership of persons joining their congregation, and which shall be done in consultation with their area conference and in consideration of expectations for membership in Mennonite Church USA.
 - b. "The congregation shall retain the right to manage its own affairs, including but not limited to its organization, personnel, program and management of property."
7. **Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, Article IV.2.a-c & 3c-d**
 2. "**Rights and Privileges**. Each area conference shall retain or be given certain rights and privileges as a member of the Mennonite Church USA.
 - a. "Each area conference shall have the authority to determine the criteria and responsibility to implement the process for membership of congregations within their area conference, including procedures for withdrawal and dismissal.

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- b. “Each area conference shall retain the right of final decision to manage its own affairs of its organization, personnel, program and management of property.
- c. “Each area conference shall retain the privilege of withdrawing from the Mennonite Church USA, and in so doing shall withdraw all of its member congregations from Mennonite Church USA, provided that a withdrawing area conference shall discharge its financial commitments to Mennonite Church USA as part of such withdrawal.
- 3. **“Duties.** As a member of the Mennonite Church USA, each area conference shall have a responsibility to be loyal to and support the work of the church. Specifically:
 - c. “Each area conference shall establish provisions and procedures for the credentialing of ministers.
 - d. “Each area conference shall make its own determinations as to membership of congregations, taking into account the common vision, commitments, and membership guidelines of Mennonite Church USA.”
- 8. **Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, Article VI.1.f:** “Ensure that anti-racist and culturally competent principles are practiced throughout church structures and programs.”

ACTIONS PROPOSED IN THE RESOLUTION

Summary of Actions	Division of MC USA Responsible	Financial Impact
1. There is a general call to confession, truth-telling and repentance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All members of Mennonite Church USA. 	This action is aspirational. There is no direct financial impact.
2. Rescind Section III of Membership Guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board staff. • Area conference. 	There is no direct financial impact in rescinding a section of the Membership Guidelines.
3. Executive Board will consult with LGBTQIA leaders to create a constituency group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board. 	No details are listed. Constituency groups in MC USA are responsible for their own funding. MC USA EB staff may incur additional meeting costs of \$2,000-\$5,000 annually.
4. Provide denominational resources for individuals, congregations, and conferences to engage with repentance and reconciliation in their own contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board staff. 	Existing resources could be distributed in our system at minimal cost. Programs in MC USA without dedicated staff support may cost \$15,000-\$25,000 annually to have any meaningful impact.

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<p>5. Follow the leadership of LGBTQIA Mennonites to provide support and resources for LGBTQIA leaders in the church.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board staff. 	<p>Existing resources could be distributed in our system at minimal cost. Programs in MC USA without dedicated staff support may cost \$15,000-\$25,000 annually to have any meaningful impact.</p>
<p>6. Formalize and publicize policies for MC USA’s Executive Board, staff, and church-wide program agencies that prohibit the use of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status as criteria to restrict a person’s full participation in the ministries, activities, roles and committees at the denominational level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board staff. • Program agencies. 	<p>This is already current practice, so there is no additional cost.</p>
<p>7. Embody a theology that honors LGBTQIA people and relationships with all future MC USA theological statements, including, but not limited to, future revisions of The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective and A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board staff. 	<p>Some aspects of this action are aspirational. In addition, MC USA would need to hold numerous consultations to set clear expectations for a theology that honors LGBTQIA people and relationships.</p>
<p>8. When MC USA partners with other denominations or faith groups, its input into the process will advocate for this theology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board staff. 	<p>This action is not defined well enough to attribute a cost.</p>

ADDITIONAL NOTES CONCERNING IMPACT

PROCESS FOR A RESOLUTION FOR REPENTANCE AND TRANSFORMATION

MC USA delegates will determine if this resolution will be discussed and voted on at the Special Session of the Delegate Assembly.

The first delegate vote related to this resolution will ask MC USA delegates whether they will process and vote on “A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation” at this Special Session of the Delegate Assembly.

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- Regarding “A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation,” delegates will be asked to choose one of the following options:
 - I choose to add the “Repentance and Transformation” resolution to the agenda of this meeting for delegates to discuss and vote on.
 - I choose not to add the “Repentance and Transformation” resolution to the agenda of this meeting.
 - I abstain.

Full details are available at: [Delegate process for May 2022 Special Session of the Delegate Assembly](#).

MC USA EXECUTIVE BOARD STAFF

The Executive Board of MC USA has directed the staff to address many of the actions requested in the resolution. Please read: [Mennonite Church USA Executive Board processes Membership Guidelines Advisory Group report](#)

Action #3. The action calls for the Executive Board to consult with LGBTQIA leaders to create a constituency group. This action would be stronger with a change in the Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, [Article IX.2.e](#). The bylaws grant the power to form constituency groups to the Executive Board and not to the Delegate Assembly: “The Executive Board may, in its discretion, identify new constituency groups and determine the number of representatives therefrom to the Constituency Leaders Council.” It is not clear how this action impacts the “discretion” the Executive Board has moving forward or the number of representatives appointed to CLC.

Action #7. MC USA currently has no plans to create a new Confession of Faith.

Our polity manual, A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership, is a joint document shared with Mennonite Church Canada and cannot be unilaterally changed by Mennonite Church USA.

Action #8. Staff would need more clarity to understand how to execute these actions. As written, the actions are more aspirational than substantive.

MC USA PROGRAM AGENCIES

Action #5. While hiring policies vary by agency, no program agency, nor the Executive Board staff restricts employment based on sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status. Currently, any member in good standing in an area conference can serve in MC USA. Agencies may also hire people who are not members of MC USA. Each agency is different and may be subject to different state and national employment laws.

SPECIAL SESSION OF THE

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MC USA AREA CONFERENCES

Action #1. The resolution calls members of MC USA to truth-telling, repentance and transformation in the Way of Jesus and outlines that confession. Conferences would be responsible for how they engage this action in their contexts.

Action #2. Currently, area conferences vary in how they enforce the membership guidelines in their contexts.

MC USA CONGREGATIONS

Action #1. The resolution calls members of MC USA to truth-telling, repentance and transformation in the Way of Jesus and outlines that confession. Congregations would be responsible for how they engage this action in their contexts.

Action #2. Currently, congregations vary in how they enforce the membership guidelines in their contexts.