

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2022



STAFF SUMMARY AND IMPACT STATEMENT

This summary is the opinion of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board staff about 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: FOR JUSTICE IN THE U.S. CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

[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.***

This resolution is not scheduled for a vote. It has been designated as a study resolution.

A STUDY PROCESS FOR RESOLUTIONS

- a. Proposed resolutions, approved by the Constituency Leaders Council, may be posted on the Mennonite Church USA website and printed for distribution.
- b. Proposed resolutions may be promoted by the writers/sponsors via blogs or opinion pieces, as appropriate.
- c. The constituency may provide feedback to proposed resolutions via email or postal mail to the Executive Director, CLC, Executive Board or the Resolutions Committee.

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

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WHAT DOES THE RESOLUTION ADDRESS IN MC USA?

FROM THE WRITERS

"We, as a church body, commit to confronting the injustice within the current U.S. criminal legal system. There are many ways individual congregations, conferences, institutions and agencies of the denomination can participate. We will call on them to report back to the delegate body at the next biennial convention."

STAFF SYNOPSIS

This resolution provides members of MC USA an opportunity to explore core Anabaptist beliefs in a modern context, especially in the contexts of the church's relationship to the state and the use of violence by the state. The church statement calls for study, education and action. Several options are given for members to choose from.

CURRENT POLICIES OR PROGRAMS RELATED TO THE CHURCH STATEMENT RESOLUTION

1. This resolution aligns with **Renewed Commitments for MC USA**, particularly the call to Witness to God's peace: "We are called to extend God's holistic peace, proclaiming Christ's redemption for the world with our lives. Through Christ, God frees the world from sin and offers reconciliation. We bear witness to this gift of peace by rejecting violence and resisting injustice in all forms, and in all places."
2. Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, **Article 22. Peace, Justice, and Nonresistance**: "Led by the Spirit, and beginning in the church, we witness to all people that violence is not the will of God. We witness against all forms of violence, including war among nations, hostility among races and classes, abuse of children and women, violence between men and women, abortion, and capital punishment."
3. Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective: **Article 23. Church's Relation to Government and Society**: "The church is the spiritual, social, and political body that gives its allegiance to God alone. As citizens of God's kingdom, we trust in the power of God's love for our defense. The church knows no geographical boundaries and needs no violence for its protection. The only Christian nation is the church of Jesus Christ, made up of people from every tribe and nation, called to witness to God's glory. "In contrast to the church, governing authorities of the world have been instituted by God for maintaining order in societies. Such governments and other human institutions as servants of God are called to act justly and provide order."
4. **Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, Article II.1.a-g**:
 - a. "Share the good news of Jesus Christ through word and deed, calling people to salvation in Christ, and to form Christian communities of love and service to others.
 - b. "Establish, teach and promote the core values and beliefs of the church based on scripture as expressed in the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, as updated from time to time.
 - c. "Tell the story of God's faithfulness in our journey as an Anabaptist people.
 - d. "Encourage and enable congregations to actively engage in God's mission in the world.
 - e. "Confront forces of the world which work against God's intent for all creation.
 - f. "Be a channel for dialogue and witness to other church bodies and to governing authorities.

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- g. “Provide a sense of larger community, creating a common identity for ourselves and recognized by those with whom we come in contact.”

ACTIONS PROPOSED IN THE RESOLUTION

Summary of Actions	Division of MC USA Responsible	Financial Impact
There is a general call to “confront the injustice within the current U.S. criminal legal system.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board staff. • Program agencies. • Area conferences. • Congregations. 	This action is aspirational. There is no direct financial impact.
The resolution lists ten “starting places” to work at the aspirational call.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board staff. • Program agencies. • Area conferences. • Congregations. 	Many of the items listed are educational. There will be some cost associated with acquiring educational resources, staff coordination time and possibly shifting investments, if groups are interested in divestments. The additional costs associated with this resolution seem minimal. MC USA Executive Board staff has established the Justice Fund , which may be helpful for conferences and congregations working at the concerns in this resolution. Read more about the Justice Fund.

ADDITIONAL NOTES CONCERNING IMPACT

MC USA EXECUTIVE BOARD STAFF

This resolution is consistent with work currently carried out by MC USA Executive Board staff. As part of the Journey Forward process and our [Bring the Peace Initiative](#), we are well-positioned to facilitate the recommendations in this resolution. The staff has provided an [Anabaptist grounded resource for clergy and congregations to engage in learning about the call for police abolition](#). The Executive Board staff is strengthening our capacity for peace and justice with new strategic staffing coordination with the various program agencies and other partners.

The resolution will not significantly change our work; it will reinforce the importance of this work in MC USA.

MC USA PROGRAM AGENCIES

Agencies will be invited to report at the next Delegate Assembly on how they engaged in the options listed in the proposed church statement resolution.

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

SPECIAL SESSION OF THE

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MC USA AREA CONFERENCES

Conference delegates will be invited to report at the next Delegate Assembly (following the May 2022 Special Session) on how they have engaged in the options listed in the proposed church statement resolution.

MC USA CONGREGATIONS

Congregational delegates will be expected to report at the next Delegate Assembly (following the May 2022 Special Session) on how they have engaged in the options listed in the proposed church statement resolution.