

# 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: CLARIFICATION OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA POLITY AND THE ROLE OF THE MEMBERSHIP GUIDELINES OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA

[Link to the resolution.](#)

## TYPE OF RESOLUTION: ORGANIZATIONAL RESOLUTION

### WHAT IS AN ORGANIZATIONAL RESOLUTION?

These resolutions are taken to approve bylaws or deal with other legal matters.

## WHAT DOES THE RESOLUTION ADDRESS IN MC USA?

### FROM THE WRITERS

Pastoral accountability is a function of the area conference that holds the credentials. It is not the responsibility of the Executive Board. Pastors, congregations and area conferences discern the appropriateness of performing same-sex marriages in their contexts. Congregations are accountable to area conferences. Conferences have broad latitude in determining membership and credentialing.

The [original Membership Guidelines for the Formation of Mennonite Church USA](#) state that disputes related to Section III be resolved by area conferences, not the Executive Board. In that spirit, we commit to the difficult work of being church together, amid our differences, working at biblical justice and reconciliation where there is conflict.

\*Please note the staff participated in drafting this resolution as agents of the Executive Board.

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

## STAFF SYNOPSIS

The resolution clarifies authority in MC USA and aligns our practice with our stated polity. The retirement of the Membership Guidelines does not change where authority lies within our system. This organizational resolution does not speak to the merits of LGBTQ inclusion in MC USA nor address concerns about same-sex unions.

Please read: [Dispelling myths related to the Membership Guidelines of Mennonite Church USA](#)

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

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Please read: [Timeline for Membership Guidelines of Mennonite Church USA](#)

## CURRENT POLICIES OR PROGRAMS RELATED TO THIS CHURCH STATEMENT RESOLUTION

1. [A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership](#) is the polity manual for Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada.
2. Neither the original Membership Guidelines for the Formation of Mennonite Church USA, nor the current version, nor A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership: A Polity Manual for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA outline the review process nor give authority to the Executive Board of MC USA to supersede the governance authority of the area conference or local congregation.
3. **[Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA, Article III.3: "Congregational Derived Membership in Mennonite Church USA.](#)** Congregations automatically derive and attain membership in Mennonite Church USA through their membership in an area conference member of Mennonite Church USA. Unless expressly stated otherwise in these Bylaws, all references to member congregations of Mennonite Church USA herein mean this derived membership."
4. **[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."
5. **[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.
    - 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.

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- 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."

## ACTIONS PROPOSED IN THE RESOLUTION

Summary of Actions	Division of MC USA Responsible	Financial Impact
Retire the Membership Guidelines as the active polity in Mennonite Church USA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Executive Board staff.</li><li>Area conferences.</li></ul>	A significant amount of staff time and meeting time has been devoted to discussing the Membership Guidelines. The passage of this action should create a substantial financial savings to Mennonite Church USA.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES CONCERNING IMPACT

### MC USA EXECUTIVE BOARD STAFF

"The Membership Guidelines for the formation of MC USA" were created to facilitate the integration of Mennonite Church and General Conference into a new denomination. The guidelines were to be reviewed for their ongoing usefulness after the first six years (2007). "Bylaws of Mennonite Church USA," area conference policies and A Shared Understanding Ministerial Leadership are the tools available to our MC USA leaders to hold credentialed leaders accountable.

### MC USA PROGRAM AGENCIES

This resolution should have little to no impact on how the program agencies operate.

### MC USA AREA CONFERENCES

Each area conference shall retain the right of final decision to manage its own affairs of its organization, personnel, program and management of property. Each area conference shall continue to establish and maintain provisions and procedures for the credentialing of ministers.

### MC USA CONGREGATIONS

Congregations derive membership and obtain ministry credentials through their area conference. Congregations should work with their area conference to determine if the conference plans to change any requirements based on the outcome of the delegate vote.

*The resolution clarifies authority in MC USA and aligns our practice with our stated polity. It does not change the authority within our system.*