



Minutes

Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly

July 10, 2021 – by Zoom videoconference

1. Welcome and prayer

Moderator Joy Sutter opened the meeting, reporting that 315 delegates have registered. She noted the unique format with online participation only, including the limitations that this imposes. Even so, the business of the church will be conducted in good order. She offered a prayer of invocation and invitation, expecting God's presence through the Spirit throughout our time together.

2. Instructions for using Zoom and poll/voting button

Lee Penner, technical support director, provided information about the features available to participants. There will be five issues requiring delegate vote, for which there will be individual polls for quick response.

3. Introduction of Delegate Assembly leaders:

Joy Sutter, Moderator
Linda Dibble, Moderator-Elect
Glen Guyton, Executive Director
Bill Zuercher, Assembly Secretary
Ed Diller, Parliamentarian

4. Introduce agenda for the meeting

Joy provided a verbal overview of the agenda, through to the leadership transition.

Action 1 M/s/c to approve the agenda.

Michelle Dula/Jeff Hochstetler

5. Introduction of Special Rules

Joy gave a brief history of the development of special rules in previous assemblies to ensure an orderly process of conducting delegate business. These rules become particularly relevant in the virtual format we are using. It was clarified that these rules apply only to this meeting.

Special Rule #1: Any motion that brings substantive business to the delegate body must be taken to and approved by the Resolutions Committee before it can be brought to the floor (see *Developing Resolutions for Mennonite Church USA*).

Special Rule #2: Amendments to motions that appear in the agenda or in assembly materials must also be presented to and approved by the Resolutions Committee before they can be brought to the floor.

Action 2 M/s/c to approve the special rules.
Phil Rich/Danilo Sanchez

6. Summary of July 2019 Delegate Assembly minutes

Recording Secretary Bill Zuercher provided an overview of the minutes of the July 2019 delegate assembly.

Action 3 M/s/c to approve the 2019 Delegate Assembly minutes.
Leah Wenger/Fernando Hernandez
267 Yes 0 No 8 Abstain

7. Leadership Discernment Committee report

Stan Shantz, chair of the LDC, reported on behalf of the committee. Following the 2019 assembly, the committee met once in person and 21 times virtually, culminating in a slate that is being presented today. Stan emphasized the importance of members offering names of persons to be considered for appointment, and he invited the ongoing prayers of all for the work of this committee.

Action 4 M/s/c to approve the slate of nominees for MC USA leadership and agency boards.

MODERATOR-ELECT AND MODERATOR. Elect as moderator-elect for two years (2021-23) followed by two years as moderator (2023-25):

Jon Carlson, Lancaster Pa.

EXECUTIVE BOARD. Elect for a four-year term:

Richard R. Aguirre, Goshen, Ind., 1st term
Emily Merolli, Takoma Park, M.D., 1st term

EVERENCE. Elect for a four-year term:

Katelyn Nafziger Leichty, Goshen, Ind., 1st term
Ruth Suter, Brisbane, Calif., 1st term

MENNONITE MISSION NETWORK. Elect for a four-year term

Kelsey Hochstetler, Millersburg, Ohio, 1st term
Horace McMillon, Jackson, Miss., 1st term

LEADERSHIP DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE. Elect for a four-year term

Sandra Montes-Martinez, Dallas, Tex., 2nd term
Stan Shantz, Lancaster, Pa., 2nd term

Leslie Francisco III/Emma Hartman
261 Yes 2 No 12 abstentions

8. State of the Church report

Executive Director Glen Guyton provided his report. He acknowledged that while our numbers have dwindled, we are still connected in important ways to the worldwide Anabaptist fellowship of churches. Equipping leaders remains an important task for the denomination.

Our continuing task is to focus on what we have to offer the world as a network of Anabaptist churches, focusing on what we do best. In spite of the challenges we face, we are convinced that there is a future for the church beyond the current generation, reinforced by the experience of youth in attendance at this assembly.

Our emphasis in the coming years will be transformation through the work of the Holy Spirit, as we are attracted to Jesus. Our combined strength comes from the sum of the leadership throughout the church—congregational and area conference. We have a promising future if we claim it.

9. Racial/Ethnic & Constituency Group Reporting

A. Mennonite Women USA

Brooke Oyana reported for MW USA, serving as the administrative assistant for the organization. They have welcomed some new leadership during the past two years, under the creative direction of Cyneatha Millsaps. They continue to produce a Bible study guide used by women's groups across the country. This resource is designed to appeal to a variety of ethnic and cultural groups. MW continues to provide scholarships for women to attend college. Sister Care hopes to go to Cuba and Thailand in 2022, now that travel opportunity is opening up again.

B. African American Mennonite Association (AAMA)

Alicia Manning reported that congregations have been engaged in mission work, particularly looking at issues of violence among youth. Others are engaged in multicultural efforts in their communities. AAMA invites the prayers of members across the church and continues to look for ways to work together across ethnic and cultural lines.

C. Native Mennonite Ministries

Iris de León-Hartshorn reported on behalf of NMM leader Carol Roth, using a PowerPoint presentation. They celebrated the long life and ministry of Lawrence and Betty Hart with special activities in Clinton, Oklahoma that included Native American Mennonites from elsewhere. NMM has an endowment that supports scholarships for students attending college, and also for treatment of persons suffering from addictions. A challenge is to identify and equip potential leadership. NMM asks for prayers and financial support.

D. Mennonite Men

MM Director Steve Thomas provided a PowerPoint presentation, which described a variety of resources for men: JoinMen (fellowship); JoinHands (financial support for new churches), and JoinTrees (a tree planting project with a goal of one million trees by 2030). Steve invited men to engage with MM in one or more of their special projects, including the provision of financial support for the benefit of congregations in need of a meeting place. Their website provides details on all of these activities.

E. Iglesia Menonita Hispana

Pastor Fernando Ramos reported that there are 58 congregations that are members of IMH; he currently serves as moderator. Their last in-person leadership meeting occurred just before the pandemic began; everything since has been virtual. They are planning a group meeting a week from now. IMH has provided financial support to nine churches experiencing particular hardship due to the pandemic and other causes. A primary service of IMH is the provision of training opportunities for pastors. A recent ministry has been a virtual prayer meeting. They missed one year of conducting a youth camp, which they hope to resume this year.

F. Indonesian Mennonite Association

Pastor Buddy Hannanto from California reported. Some IMA congregations have aligned with Mosaic Mennonite Conference. They have been spending time dealing with issues of violence. They are planning for participation in the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Indonesia, postponed until next year. They have been supporting a mass vaccination effort for COVID.

10. MC USA bylaw changes read through

The bylaw changes were distributed prior to the meeting and have been endorsed by the Executive Board and CLC. These were highlighted and narrated by Glen in a PowerPoint on the screen: policy/procedural, governance, structural/organizational, and wording/grammar.

Action 5 M/s/c to approve the MC USA bylaw changes as recommended by the Executive Board.

Joyce Kusuma/Nathan Good
282 Yes 6 No 6 Abstain

11. Report from the Resolutions Committee

Linda Dibble, chair of the Resolutions Committee, gave its report. The Resolutions Committee (RC) began its work August 2020 by reviewing the "Developing Resolutions for MC USA" guidelines as approved by the Executive Board in January 2020. The term "resolution" means any action taken by vote of the delegate body. In our assemblies there are different kinds of actions approved by a vote of the delegate body. These include simple resolution, organizational resolution, and church statements.

The RC held each of the resolutions presented to the standards within the guidelines. The guidelines provide five benefits of developing and having church statements. They are to facilitate discernment, to educate, to build unity, to provide a denominational understanding while acknowledging dissenting voices, and to provide a foundation for member advocacy.

Additionally, the RC asked whether each of the resolutions presented called us to the reconciling work of God by considering these questions:

1. Does the proposed resolution enable us to join God's activities in the world?
2. Does the proposed resolution enable us to live and act in ways that allow God's healing and hope to flow through us to the world?
3. Does the proposed resolution advance our Vision: Healing and Hope, our Purpose Statement and the Renewed Commitments that guide us toward God's preferred future for us?

In anticipation of the special delegate assembly in May 2022, the following resolutions have been received and are being processed:

A. FOR JUSTICE IN THE U.S. CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

Authored by: Zachariah Begly, Reba Place Church and Elizabeth Reimer, Lombard Mennonite church; **sponsored by:** Reba Place Church and several other congregations. This resolution is presented for study by the delegates at Special Assembly May 2022.

B. MC USA ACCESSIBILITY RESOLUTION

Submitted by: Anabaptist Disabilities Network, Mennonite Health Services and four Mennonite congregations.

This resolution is presented for vote by the delegates at Special Assembly May 2022.

C. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERSHIP GUIDELINES RESOLUTION

Submitted by: Executive Board of MC USA.

This resolution is presented for vote by the delegates at Special Assembly May 2022.

D. A RESOLUTION FOR REPENTANCE AND TRANSFORMATION

Submitted by: Inclusive Mennonite Pastors and 30+ congregations and organizations. This resolution is at an impasse at this time.

E. DERIVED MEMBERSHIP

Submitted by: Mount Clinton Mennonite Church

The resolution would allow congregations who are members of an MC USA area conference to withdraw from membership in MC USA and recommended a proposed addition to the MC USA bylaws to allow for that change in status.

This resolution was not processed as it would require significant changes to our membership and how we operate as MC USA.

12. Plans for May 27-30, 2022, special delegate session

The resolutions identified above will comprise the primary agenda for the special delegate session, to be held in Kansas City, Missouri. The text of all the proposed resolutions will be posted on the MC USA website following today's meeting. The intention is that this delegate session will result in formal action on the resolutions that are accepted for such action.

13. Leadership transition

Joy expressed her appreciation to all for their presence and participation in this unique format. She also expressed her appreciation for the extraordinary efforts of staff and volunteers during this unprecedented past biennium dominated by the lockdowns caused by the pandemic. The support and encouragement of past denominational leaders were most helpful.

Joy gave words of support and encouragement to incoming moderator Linda Dibble. Nancy Kauffmann offered a prayer of blessing for Linda as she assumes this mantle of responsibility.

Linda invited Jon Carlson to join her, to be recognized as the incoming moderator-elect, who will become her partner in leadership. She gave him a ceramic peace lamp as a symbol of the illumination needed for leadership at all levels. Sandra Montes-Martinez offered a prayer of blessing for Jon.

The meeting was adjourned by acclamation.

Bill Zuercher
Assembly Secretary