

**MINUTES**  
**Mennonite Church USA**  
**Special Session of the Delegate Assembly**  
**Westin Hotel, Kansas City, Missouri**  
**May 27-30, 2022**

**Friday, May 27**

**1. Worship – Emerging Through the Storms of Leadership**

Featured storytellers were Anna Yoder Schlabach, Katherine Jameson Pitts, and Sunoko Lin.

**Saturday, May 28**

**2. Worship – What Matters Most: For We are God’s Children Through Faith**

At each table, there was a container with “transformation beads,” into which a small amount of water was poured. Participants were invited to watch the transformation of the beads during the day.

The featured worship speaker was Dr. Samuel Sarpiya, the executive director at the Center for Nonviolence and Conflict Transformation in Rockford, Ill. Previously he served as moderator of the Church of the Brethren. His message drew from Galatians 3:23-29.

Some takeaways from the message:

- The song we just sang—*Draw the Circle Wide*—is a beautiful picture of the Kingdom of God, with Jesus as the center
- Discernment happens when everyone has an opportunity to participate
- Some things matter more than others
- The gospel of Jesus Christ—the only thing that unites us
- We live in an age of polar opposites
- Most important task is to be a witness to a broken world
- Everyone deserves a chance to be in the kingdom
- God does not discriminate
- What does it mean to be an heir of the kingdom?
- We are sons and daughters of Abraham whether we like it or not
- I am in Christ, so all the promises given to Abraham are fulfilled in me
- How can my religion talk about peace, given all the chaos in the world?
- What kind of peace exists [in the church] when we cannot agree with the brother/sister next door? I.e., “I will only align with people in my camp”
- Can we be the salt and light of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, embracing those on the fringes?
- We have a generation called to be pioneers at drawing the circle wide
- Your love for God is directly tied to your love for brothers and sisters
- God is counting on us to be the church that he wants to bless
- When we seek to be united through the bond of love, that is what God wants

### 3. Opening Business Session

#### A. Purpose of the Special Session of the Delegate Assembly

Moderator Linda Dibble noted that the purpose of this special meeting is to complete the 2019-2021 biennium resolution process. Delegates will discuss and vote on two resolutions that were delayed due to the global COVID pandemic:

(1) *Clarification on Mennonite Church USA Polity and the Role of the Membership Guidelines of Mennonite Church USA* (see Minute #11)

(2) *MC USA Accessibility Resolution* (see Minute #17)

(3) A third resolution is designated for study only: *For Justice in the U.S. Criminal Legal System* (see Minute #16)

(4) Delegates will determine if a fourth proposal, *A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation*, will be discussed and voted on. (See Minutes #6 & #13)

#### B. Selection of eligible delegates:

(1) One delegate for each 100 congregational members

(2) One delegate each 1,000 area conference members plus youth delegates

(3) Three delegates from each racial/ethnic group, plus 1 delegate for each 1,000 members

(4) Each member of the Executive Board

#### C. Officers for the assembly:

Linda Dibble, moderator

John Carlson, moderator-elect and chair of Resolutions Committee

Mitch Kingsley, parliamentarian

Emily Merolli, parliamentarian

Michelle Dula, timekeeper

Glen Guyton, executive director

#### D. Resolutions Committee members:

Jon Carlson, chair

Bonita Croyle

John Goshow

Sarah Bixler

Rosetta Landis

#### E. Table Group Information

Delegates have been assigned to tables, where they will remain for the entire assembly. Linda explained the privileges and responsibilities of delegates, each of whom has one vote, with no provision for proxy voting. As of this morning, 506 delegates are registered.

#### F. Adoption of Special Rules

The parliamentarians explained the decision making process, guided by *Robert's Rules of Order*, in accordance with MC USA bylaws. For this assembly, the following special rule is proposed:

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

**Action 1 M/s/c that the proposed special rule be adopted.**

Doug Luginbill/Elinor Kosek

G. Adoption of Agenda

In accordance with the bylaws, the written notice of this special meeting, which has included the time, date, place and purpose for the meeting, was submitted to area conferences and member congregations 90 days in advance of the meeting. This information also included the detailed agenda.

**Action 2 M/s/c that the proposed agenda be approved.**

DJ McFadden/David Heusinkveld

H. Highlights of Minutes from the July 2021 Delegate Assembly

Delegate Assembly Secretary Bill Zuercher provided a synopsis of the meeting, which was held on July 10, 2021, by Zoom videoconference. This was part of the biennial convention held in Cincinnati, Ohio.

**Action 3 M/s/c that the minutes be adopted as published.**

Nathan Luitjens/Paula Stoltzfus

I. Table Group Introductions

Linda instructed the table groups to take time for introductions and getting acquainted, using cards at each table that provided questions for individual response.

**4. Opening Community Building Exercise**

Linda introduced the two facilitators leading this morning's (and subsequent sessions') exercises: Sidney Morgan and Matthew Tibbles.

The topic to be addressed is radical hope, which involves action. At the tables, participants spoke individually about what radical hope looks like for the Special Session of the Delegate Assembly.

Next, the tables drew some visual representation of radical hope on a poster, after agreeing on how the group perceives it.

A sampling of tables shared the results of the individual and group work. Words that were expressed included honesty, compassion, trust, unity, and growing capacity for the love of Christ.

**5. Facilitated Discussion**

This session's topic is the proposed resolution on *Clarification on Mennonite Church USA Polity and the Role of the Membership Guidelines of Mennonite Church USA*. Its purpose is designed to provide the background on the Membership Guidelines, which will be up for vote in Sunday morning's session (see Minute #11).

Attention was drawn to the contrast between learning and building as we experience the tension between these two factors. It involves listening deeply. It is also a matter of being versus doing; our default typically is to *do* more than to *be*.

Table groups were instructed to give attention to the Membership Guidelines, beginning by duplicating the diagram on the screen depicting the dichotomy between learning and building. After discussing the benefits of lived experiences with the Membership Guidelines among themselves, they were invited to circulate to observe the work of other tables.

Focusing on the learning side, the facilitators posed another question: What are the unintended consequences when we do not learn the lived experiences of others related to the Membership Guidelines. This question was repeated, examined from the building aspect.

Looking separately at both building and learning, groups gave attention to the benefits of building our capacity to hold others' lived experiences as these stories relate to the Membership Guidelines.

The concluding discussion allowed for reporting from tables groups to report some of the themes that arose from the various table group topics. Samples:

- Need for humility
- A fuller appreciation of what God has been done in our community
- Being open to new relationships and experiences
- Longing for energy that has been wrapped up in the Membership Guidelines to be extended to other important ministries
- Others' stories matter, even when exposing vulnerabilities
- Community and judgment — exclusion versus inclusion
- Pain exists on both sides of inclusion and exclusion
- Ambiguity and compromise
- There have been positive stories
- The voices of some people of color are not being heard
- What does belonging mean?

After all of this, the truth is that tensions remain.

## **6. Vote on Resolution**

The Executive Board has asked the delegates to exercise their collective judgment on whether to process *A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation*. The choices will be either to not include it or to include it, leading to discussion and decision at a later session.

**Action 4**      **M/s/c to add the resolution to the agenda of the delegate assembly.**  
Chris Scott/Scott Troyer

The Resolutions Committee has agreed that if the resolution is placed on the agenda, it can be amended. If it should be tabled, it will require a 2/3 majority vote.

Discussion revealed a preponderance of support for adding this resolution to the agenda. Several suggested that this will need to be dealt with sometime, so further delay seems unwarranted. One suggested that this process did not conform to our stated resolutions process, which calls for the Resolutions Committee to determine which proposals are eligible

for discussion and vote. Concern was voiced about the prospective loss of more conservative churches if it is adopted.

Some felt that there is not yet enough consensus across the church to take action. Others place value on the opportunity to discuss this with tablemates, not possible on the schedule today. If we believe we are faced with a choice between faith and fear, we only prolong the fear if we do not even talk together. One expressed the fear that conservative churches are, by definition, not inclusive, which is a false dichotomy. Our need for repentance and the ability to come together in respectful dialogue was confirmed, even acknowledging differing opinions.

**Linda called for an end to the discussion, and for delegates to mark their ballots.**

**Result: Yes, 357 (72.6%); No 135 (27.4%); 5 abstentions**

## **7. Perspectives: Ministry in Context**

Marisa Smucker, senior executive staff with Mennonite Mission Network hosted a panel consisting of Jess Engle, pastor of Hesston (Kan.) Mennonite Church; Vikki Pruitt-Sorreles, pastor of Lee Heights Community Church, Cleveland, Ohio; Megan Ramer, pastor of Seattle Mennonite Church; and Aldo Siahaan, pastor of Philadelphia Praise Center in Philadelphia.

Marisa invited all to look around the room, pondering the thoughts they had that preceded attendance today. Consider the new faces present at this meeting: all have names and personalities. In her prior role in church relations with MMN, she met with many churches and individuals, gaining energy from observing the passion of ministry in many communities. Today, we are featuring a number of pastors who will be sharing about their ministries and communities.

### **A. What ministry is your congregation involved with in the local context?**

Lee Heights Community Church is primarily an African American congregation. They hosted a number of COVID-19 vaccination clinics for 18 months in response to having the highest cases of COVID-19 in their state. They have a partnership with the Cleveland Foundation dealing with domestic violence. They are a major contributor to an ecumenical organization providing services and ministries to families.

Pre-COVID-19, Hesston Mennonite Church had about 300 attendees, sharing a worship space with Hesston College, which seats over 600 persons. When Jess interviewed about four years ago, he felt this site was too big for him. But deciding to come on board, he has done his best to delegate to pastoral team members and lay persons to cover the load. Their church has a summer lunch program for community children and families. One member is deeply engaged in immigration services. They actively support the county's homeless shelter. They are near Schowalter Villa retirement community, which offers a variety of services.

Seattle Mennonite Church has a ministry to the homeless, some of whom congregate near the church. It started with companionship, opening up the church lobby and providing food and bus tokens. They partner with a nonprofit organization in these homeless services. They are now working on a housing project, looking systemically at the crisis of homelessness, and the plight of persons on the margins. Target is 250-280 units of affordable housing.

Philadelphia Praise Center serves a younger constituency, many of whom are recent Christians. The congregation is comprised primarily of people who have immigrated to the U.S. and who are in need of a variety of services in order to become settled with family members. Many are unable to work and support themselves. The congregation contacted Mosaic Mennonite Conference for connections and they also connect with the city of Philadelphia for needed services, with an emphasis on the elderly. Whenever possible, they offer assistance to persons who have experienced Asian hate crimes.

**B. What are the characteristics of your congregations related to the ministries you named?**

Lee Heights Community Church focuses on community consciousness and loving their neighbors. This year's theme it is "Doers of the Word." This has involved a community outing, ice cream socials, kickball games and home improvement. Lee Heights is a true community church, drawing most of their members from the neighborhood. They are advocates for social justice concerns. Their emphasis is on keeping their voice active in community concerns and services. They evaluate themselves on how well they are doing, as Doers of the Word. They also introspectively ask themselves what the source of their passion is, and what they are doing to share the love of Jesus.

Hesston Mennonite Church is located in a small town in middle America. Many persons are involved in the community in a variety of ways, including schools and businesses. The sociology can get complicated. His grandfather's advice was to love the people. They will know if you really do. Grandpa also said, don't push people too hard. He is reminded of Micah 6:8.

For Seattle Mennonite Church, the issue is location, location, location. They are engaged with business owners and community services. They own a couple of buildings with a lot of air above them. So, they are looking up in their building planning. This is all related to their intent on addressing the homeless population. They are framing this in terms of Jubilee, bringing together the resources of land, labor and capital. Doing deep listening, they are planning seriously for land redevelopment in a context where the wealth gap is exponential and growing.

They as Asians at the Philadelphia Praise Center have the spirit of "gotong royong" [Indonesian word meaning "sharing, working together"]. The immigrants lack most resources for daily living, which they are trying to address. For many of these folks, it is a matter of survival, fearful of being deported or separated. The church leaders engage in frequent and fervent prayer in their effort to address these overwhelming needs. Sharing is the most important word that guides their work and ministry, being very generous even though many work for minimum wages. They value their relationships with other churches and their area conference.

*Marissa invited the audience to jot down the unique characteristics of their communities that they are there to serve.*

**C. How does your congregation discern what new ministries to engage?**

Lee Heights Community Church has learned the Mennonite way of process, which means that it can take considerable time to begin something new. They have adopted a five-year strategic

plan to guide their ministry. They have a partnership with Salem Mennonite Church in Kidron which provides some new ideas. There needs to be a willingness to shift, to go in a different direction. As Vikki spent time away, in college and otherwise, she was always drawn back to Lee Heights because of “lobby.” That is the spacious area where people congregate to converse and build relationships. That is where friendships started and grew. This is a good way to find out what people like to do, especially related to fellowship.

Congregations have their own culture, which all the others have described. Hesston Mennonite Church has longstanding ways of functioning, working within a relatively new structure. Sometimes it is hard to do discernment whenever everyone is always right. His drive is to keep everyone at the table, to keep on talking together. Their boards, councils, teams and committees are important parts of their action group, which will continue. Being part of the local ministry alliance is also important in their community.

Sometimes it is with fear and trembling that Seattle Mennonite Church contemplates something new or different. They practice radical hospitality and spiritual discernment, which are guiding principles in their governance and administration. They listen for God’s voice even in the silence of waiting. They try to be open to be formed in new ways. They are sometimes fearful of making mistakes, given to perfectionism as a mostly white congregation. They keep challenging themselves to act, even when they don’t have everything figured out. Staying in relationship with each other, and their community members including the homeless, is a high value.

The discernment process at Philadelphia Praise Center is to be open to needs and spend time in meeting to decide on ways to meet the need. Such needs are largely involved with immigrants, who often need very basic services and resources. They have been blessed that Mosaic Mennonite Conference has been paying attention to churches of color, providing relationship and resources.

### **8. Closing Community Building Exercise**

The activity is a Circle Story which has been described in an email from the facilitators. At the tables, one member was instructed to relate a situation that brought them joy. The person on their right followed with a story that built on a similar theme, setting or experience. That continued until everyone at the table took a turn, completing the story circle.

## **Sunday, May 29**

### **9. Worship – The Way of Peace in Our Polarized World**

The session began with a table group activity, individually speaking a word of blessing to each other successively in a circle. After singing several songs, including one in Korean, Dr. Samuel Sarpiya delivered the morning message, drawn from Hebrews 12:14 and Romans 12:1-2. The sermon this morning has been recorded on YouTube, accessible to congregations across the church.

Some takeaways:

- Where is the church in this polarization? We will be the third way that Jesus can use

- What is the center of our energy: Republican Party, Democratic Party or Jesus?
- We believe in freedom, but we cannot agree on what that freedom is
- We may even now be in the middle of a civil cold war
- Only 47% of Americans claim to belong to some religion
- Our challenge and opportunity are to be instruments of God's peace in the midst of polarization, calling for a commitment to love our neighbor, which is the measure of our love for God
- Our imperative is to seek out what God wants for us, the church heeding the call for transformation by the renewing of our minds
- What does it mean to trust our brothers and sisters?
- Jesus is the driver of what we believe God is calling us to
- We see the image of God when we relate as brothers and sisters
- The world is looking for a church that can provide a message of hope
- The love of Jesus is the one thing that can help us overcome the polarization
- We are called to the third way of following Christ in the way of peace
- God is calling us to accountability to each other through reconciliation
- Transformation and the third way will require creative imagination, going back to the centrality of Jesus

The session ended with a video featuring MC USA and its agencies, institutions and ministries, as part of a worldwide community of faith

#### **10. Opening Community Building Exercise**

Today's exercise is storytelling, listening and observing. One storyteller talked about when they felt most heard, with a response from a listener, while two others are observing. This continued until all members at each table served in each role.

#### **11. Discussion and Vote**

The resolution on *Clarification on Mennonite Church USA Polity and the Role of the Membership Guidelines of Mennonite Church USA* was introduced for discussion and vote, following yesterday's initial consideration (see Minute #5).

Linda read a statement clarifying the relative responsibilities of the area conferences and Executive Board, which will not change if this resolution is adopted.

**Action 6**      **M/s to approve this resolution.**  
Ron Adams/Janeen Bertsche Johnson.

After a limited amount of discussion, the following motion was made, which if passed would stop further discussion.

**Action 7**      **I move the previous question.**  
Matthew Yoder/Kathy Neufeld Dunn.  
The motion failed due to the lack of a two-thirds majority vote.



Open discussion noted that for some this is primarily a polity, not a sexuality, issue, differentiating the authority of the Executive Board versus the area conferences. Others countered that it is also regarded as a biblical/theological issue. This harks back to the polity differences between the General Conference and Mennonite Church when the merger was being discussed and approved in a compromise that recognized conferences as members of the denomination, not congregations.

As open discussion continued, several voices called for table discussion, which was deferred until the end of the open mic time.

Several spoke to the harm they perceive has been done to pastors, congregations and individuals, saying that it is time to move on in ways that will end such harm.

One person's perception was that at the time of the merger, the LGBTQIA community became a common enemy, whereas we are talking about human beings living among us.

Some saw the effect of the resolution to create a conflict with the Confession of Faith which remains a core document in the denomination. This was specifically related to the definition of marriage. But another noted that an article in the Confession of Faith focused on the diversity among congregations.

Several Hispanic voices noted the dominant conservative theology practiced among them, which is inclusive in ways different from the typical understanding of the term. They welcome all and depend on transformation through the Holy Spirit.

There were varying views of how scripture is being used and interpreted, evidence of significant variations among delegates in their perceptions and understandings.

This evident lack of a unified position raises concern about how we will engage younger pastors as we try to find spiritual leaders for our congregations.

Some expressed concern about the implications for structural change in the denomination.

Through all of this, hope is expressed that we can remain in fellowship with each other across the church, believing that the reconciling love of God is more important than our differences.

**After time for table discussion, delegates were instructed to mark their ballots.**

**Result: Yes 404 (82.8%); No 84 (17.2%); 3 Abstentions.**

## **12. Mennonite Church USA Survey Presentation**

Glen Guyton expressed his appreciation for the presence and work of the delegates this weekend. He reported on *The Mennonite Experience: an MC USA Membership Study 2021-22*, completed by 2,276 persons. He reviewed the objectives of the survey, which along with the results will be available on the website:

- #1 Develop a membership snapshot of MC USA constituents.
- #2 Determine what being Mennonite means, both culturally and spiritually.
- #3 Discover members' experiences and understanding of MC USA.
- #4 Examine tenets and philosophies that drive membership.

Responding to the information generated by the survey, staffing additions and adjustments have been made to provide the needed support to area conferences and congregations. Staff and Executive Board will continue to process the findings from the survey.

The survey also revealed the extent to which congregations and conferences make use of agency services and staff.

Table groups were instructed to share about what they learned from this survey summary, what challenges give the most concern, and what makes them the most hopeful.

### **13. Facilitated Discussion and Vote**

Given the vote yesterday to add this to the agenda (see Minute #6), a facilitated discussion proceeded on *A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation*.

Table groups were instructed to engage in a World Café exercise, discussing the following questions:

- What resonated with you?
- What do you have more questions about in the resolution?
- What part(s) of the resolution creates some type of resistance/dissonance (thoughts, emotions, physical reactions, etc.)?

Following this rotating group exercise, table groups took time to share what they heard at other tables as they rotated. With that shared information in mind, groups addressed the following questions:

- How do we hold the tension between the three previous questions in a constructive/generative way?
- How do we hold the image of God of everyone in this resolution?

Linda reminded all that a prayer team continues to circulate through the room, as well as being available in another designated room. She reviewed the substance of the resolution.

**Action 8**      **M/s that resolution be approved.**  
Melissa Atchison/Roberto Malles

Jon Carlson, chair of the Resolutions Committee, reported that no amendments were submitted prior to the meeting, and one was proposed during the meeting that the committee has deemed unacceptable, since it would substantively change the resolution.

Discussion:

There were many voices in favor and against. One believes it does not propose a third way. Others believe it will draw the circle [of membership] smaller.

Inclusive pastors voiced assurance that it is not punitive and does not require pastors or congregations to deviate from current practice.

Many agreed it is important to have this conversation. Some felt it does not best represent a way forward, while others believe it will right a long period of wrongs and harms inflicted.

An objection was voiced against conflating a more traditional position with people of color. However, one representative suggested that the changes being proposed are nonnegotiable.

Several voices spoke in support of the traditional understanding of marriage as stated in our Confession of Faith; others support same sex marriage, some for decades already.

Either way there will be repercussions, but this process, however imperfect, seems to be effective in moving us forward.

Generational differences in outlook were acknowledged, with the hope that young persons can be kept at the table. One suggested that passing the resolution would be reassuring to young people.

One suggested that successive readings of the resolution provided for a broader understanding of the intent and value as a means of promoting further productive dialogue. Hard work will be required, regardless of how one votes.

A lament came about how long we have been allowing homosexuality to dominate the discussion, decrying the time and energy it has drained, nationally, regionally and locally. What might we have done if we had devoted this time and energy to mission and ministry?

A concluding comment offered a more positive resolution and resulted in a motion to table.

#### **Action 9 Move to table the resolution until next delegate assembly.**

Mark Keller/Stephen Pardini

Result: Yes 129 (25.3%); No 379 (74.4%); Abstain 13; the motion failed

**After 20 minutes of table discussion, delegates were instructed to mark their ballots.**

**Result: Yes 267( 55.7%); No 212 (44.3%); Abstain 9**

#### **14. Closing Community Building Exercise**

Given the extended afternoon session, the facilitators concluded with a brief heart space, beginning with a breathing exercise to expel some of the tensions built up today. Members were encouraged to join hands around their tables, relax and refresh.

#### **Monday, May 30**

#### **15. Worship – Great Expectations? Rejoicing and Mourning in One Body**

Malinda Berry, AMBS professor, and Sarah Bixler, EMS professor, provided the morning meditation, with Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and Romans 12:9-18 as the background scriptures. When invited to speak, they both asked what they could say that would be helpful and appropriate, given the emotional character of some of the agenda that delegates would have confronted.

Some takeaways:

- They both believe in the church—in this church—participating further in what God is doing in the world
- Jesus calls us to follow him in the ministry of reconciliation
- Our expectations were enormous, full of emotion
- How can rejoicing and mourning exist together in one body? The passage from Ecclesiastes suggests that there are times for both, consistent with the cycles of life
- It is important to name, aloud, the variety of experiences and emotions that exist among us
- As we look around at each other, we ask how we can remain in fellowship. It will take compassion and love, as Jesus is our model.
- If our primary emotion is anger, we ask ourselves how best to deal with that in constructive ways
- Our desire is that we can be whole

- We are interdependent and need each other because we really do care deeply about one another
- Our neighborhoods help us understand how to live together because we are all different. But the neighborhood is changing, which can cause us to be fearful. Above all, won't you be my neighbor? (reference to Mister Rogers' Neighborhood)
- "I am because you are"—South African proverb

The session concluded with a prayer for the church and for this gathered body.

### **16. Facilitated Discussion on *For Justice in the U.S. Criminal Legal System Resolution***

In the World Café format, table groups were instructed to discuss the following questions:

- What is justice?
- What does it look like, taste like, smell like, sound like, feel like?
- What are your initial responses to the ***For Justice in the U.S. Criminal Legal System Resolution***?
- What resonated with you?
- What part(s) of the resolution creates some type of resistance/dissonance (thoughts, emotions, physical reactions, etc.)?
- What do you have more questions about?

Discussion:

- We need to find ways to identify those being harmed by the broken system and help them receive services that will enable them to reintegrate into society
- Need to learn who in our communities of faith are involved in various justice-related vocations: police officers, district attorneys, judges
- The document should address pregnancy and childbirth in prison
- Need to learn how to have conversations that include addressing injustices involving young children
- Justice versus mercy versus grace: how these are addressed and administered to white people in contrast to people of color
- Victim/offender/community: justice recognizes and addresses the need for wholeness for all three

### **17. Discussion and Vote *MC USA Accessibility Resolution***

Linda introduced the resolution, with background information that verified the commitment of our church to address the longstanding failure to fully recognize the potential contribution of members with disabilities.

**Action 10**                      **M/s/c that this resolution be approved.**  
Eric Vincent/Tamara Zechin  
Motion approved unanimously by acclamation

Discussion:

A number of questions related to paying the cost of building renovations to be more accommodating, given the small size and limited financial resources of many of our

congregations. The Everence Sharing Fund was mentioned but clarified by an Everence representative to be available to individuals needing assistance for home accommodations, but not for church building renovations. There are no denominational funds available, but members were encouraged to be in touch with other churchwide agencies, in particular the Anabaptist Disability Network, which has a detailed list of resources of all types. Creation of mutual aid funds is encouraged, enabling those with means to help those without.

A number of voices called this a no-brainer, calling on us to do what is needed to recognize and respond to the needs of members with a variety of disabilities. Since churches were exempt from the 1990 federal Americans with Disabilities Act, this is now an opportunity to overcome the injustices that that legislation allowed.

Some inadequacies were noted in the accommodations for this meeting, such as the limited spacing between tables.

There was a call for more attention to the theological aspects of services for those with disabilities.

It will be a challenge to be able to encourage the many congregations not represented at this meeting to join this churchwide priority, and in particular, communicate with those who may have some negative reservations. It will also be important to be attentive to all the ways that persons with disabilities can do as much as possible for themselves.

A demographic often overlooked are deaf persons, for whom it is important to make provision for their ability to participate with understanding. Not to do so deprives the church of many gifts. Others sometimes overlooked are those with autism, Downs syndrome and bipolar disorder.

Issues of injustice can also include climate change and environmental concerns, such as the pervasive use of industrial chemicals in ways that have harmed the population, especially children.

Twenty minutes of table discussion were provided for delegates to talk about how their congregations have taken steps to address these issues.

Jon Carlson thanked all for their participation, on behalf of the Resolutions Committee. He drew attention to the resolutions process that is available during the next year in preparation for the biennial assembly next July. He invited table groups to spend a few minutes sharing with each other about their experiences during this special session.

## **18. Closing and Sending**

Linda expressed her (and everyone's) appreciation to our Executive Board staff for their untiring work in preparation for this assembly. She also named the prayer team and facilitators for their effective work. She offered a prayer of blessing in closing.

Bill Zuercher  
Recorder/Assembly Secretary