

## **FAQ**

### **Regarding the proposed change in agency status for Everence and MHS Association**

#### **General**

##### **1. Why are Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (MC USA), Everence and MHS Association considering this change?**

This proposal is part of an ongoing conversation initiated in 2022 by MC USA Executive Board leaders with the leaders of [Everence](#) and [MHS Association](#) to explore ways to enhance the effectiveness of their organizational relationships amid the new ways people are approaching church life and ministry.

##### **2. What is the Delegate Assembly being asked to do?**

The Executive Board is seeking the counsel and advice of the Delegate Assembly on the merits of repositioning Everence and MHS Association from MC USA agency status and establishing them as entities (ministry partners). If the feedback is positive, delegates will be asked to vote to provide approval to make the necessary revisions to the bylaws that reflect the new status of these organizations.

##### **3. How many agencies does MC USA currently have?**

MC USA currently has five program agencies: [Everence](#), [MennoMedia](#), [Mennonite Education Agency](#), [Mennonite Mission Network](#) and MHS Association.

##### **4. What is the difference between an MC USA program agency and an entity?**

Both churchwide program agencies and other designated entities assist the Executive Board in providing leadership and resources for carrying out the purposes of MC USA. The major differences are how they are established and how they are governed.

According to the [MC USA bylaws](#), program agencies have accountability to the Executive Board in the following ways:

- a. The governing boards of program agencies “are to act in the best interests of Mennonite Church USA as a whole.”
- b. The MC USA Executive Board must approve the appointment, reappointment or dismissal of the program agency’s executive officer. The MC USA Executive Board may also remove the program agency’s executive officer and/or board chair with or without cause.

- c. Program agency chairpersons and executive directors are participants in MC USA's governance council.

Program entities (ministry partners) are self-governing and relate to the denomination through formal agreements. The Executive Board can establish program entities at any time to meet the immediate needs of the members of MC USA.

## **5. How are Everence and MHS Association different than the other MC USA program agencies?**

MC USA Executive Board distinguishes Everence and MHS Association among its agencies as ministry services program groups, as compared to MennoMedia, Mennonite Education Agency and Mennonite Mission Network, which it categorizes as theological/formational program groups.

Everence is a mission-driven enterprise made up of 16 not-for-profit and for-profit entities, with combined assets under management of approximately \$5.8 billion. Its comprehensive financial products and services are open to individuals, organizations and congregations that share the historic Mennonite and Anabaptist stewardship principle that all we are and all we have are from God (Psalm 24). As a financial services company, Everence is subject to extensive federal and state regulatory and governance requirements and serves large groups outside of MC USA. Approximately one-quarter of current Everence clients and members are affiliated with MC USA, making it the largest denomination represented across the Everence customer base.

MHS Association is a national member association of 79 Anabaptist health and human service organizations. These are primarily senior living, behavioral health, and organizations that serve adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Member organizations are Anabaptist or resonate with Anabaptist values but not all are Mennonite or affiliated with MC USA. MHS Association serves the leadership of its member organizations with a focus on leadership development, best practices in governance and networking from an Anabaptist perspective.

## **6. How will these changes impact marginalized communities?**

MC USA actively seeks to dismantle individual and systemic racism, sexism and harmful biases in our church and its communities. We will continue to work with our program agencies and ministry partners to equip our conferences, congregations and constituents to develop intercultural competence, to peaceably resist injustice in all forms and places, to advocate for marginalized communities, to heal divisions and to value all the gifts of God's diverse people.

MC USA's justice work is grounded in Christ's gospel of love, peace and justice and summarized in MC USA's [Renewed Commitments](#) to follow Jesus, witness to God's peace and reflect God's love through the transformation of the Holy Spirit. to follow Jesus, witness to God's peace and reflect God's love through the transformation of the Holy Spirit.

The change in governance does not change MC USA's commitment to serving those on the margins or working with partners who share that commitment. Everence and MHS Association will continue to support programming that serves all our members.

### **7. What are the advantages of repositioning Everence and MHS Association as entities (or ministry partners) for the members of MC USA?**

Advantages of repositioning Everence and MHS Association as entities (or ministry partners) for MC USA include:

- Clearer differentiation between theological/formational program groups (i.e., Mennonite Education Agency, MennoMedia and Mennonite Mission Network) and ministry services program groups, such as Everence and MHS Association).
- Better fit for the scope of the Executive Board's leadership capacity, especially given the legal complexity of governing institutions in highly regulated industries.
- Streamlined process for strategic planning, collaboration, and communication in the service to the MC USA constituency.
- More programming flexibility and cost-effective governance for **MC USA, Everence and MHS Association**.
- Clearer lines of authority for decision making and development of services.

### **8. What are the potential disadvantages of repositioning Everence and MHS Association as entities (or ministry partners) for the members of MC USA?**

Potential disadvantages include diminished governance influence and a need for more intentional communication between the various layers of MC USA and the entity (ministry partner).

### **9. Who has the authority to terminate a program agency?**

Article X, 3, f, of the MC USA bylaws says, "Churchwide program agencies may be established or terminated as the Executive Board determines from time to time and on such terms and conditions as the Executive Board determines, with the counsel and advice of the Delegate Assembly." The Executive Board believes this decision must have the support of the Delegate Assembly and recommends the approval of Resolution 3.

Please note that the "termination" is a technicality for repositioning MHS Association and Everence in MC USA's governance structure. The services of Everence and MHS Association will continue, as will the longstanding relationship with MC USA.

## **10. How will this impact the MC USA Executive Board financially?**

The MC USA Executive Board, Everence Board of Directors and MHS Association Board of Directors will address these details, pending the actions taken at the Delegate Assembly later this year. Everence intends to continue its financial sponsorship and investment in MC USA activities and other Anabaptist groups in a similar manner as it has in the past. Both Everence and MHS Association are committed to the success and stability of MC USA.

## **11. Will conferences, congregations and constituents have access to the same services under the new ministry partnership?**

Yes, conferences, congregations and constituents will have access to the same Everence and MHS Association services they have enjoyed in the past.

Everence will continue administering Mennonite Retirement Trust, Jubileo Ministerial, and The Corinthian Plan (MC USA-sponsored retirement and health plans), as well as the Pastor Salary Guidelines program. Additionally, Everence will continue equipping MC USA members and churches through its stewardship advocates, Sharing Fund grant program, Pastoral Financial Wellness Program, Safe Church grant program, church lending services, endowments, congregational stewardship education resources, socially responsible investing options, and other faith-based financial products and services.

MHS Association does not provide direct services to congregations. Rather MHS Association helps member organizations integrate faith and work and serves the organizations that are providing health and human service ministries from an Anabaptist perspective. Member organizations such as Anabaptist Disabilities Network will continue to connect and support people with disabilities and Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship will continue to nurture the integration of faith and practice for medical professionals in our congregations. The repositioning of the relationship will not affect this work.

## **12. What is the nature of the new relationship?**

The MC USA Executive Board, Everence Board of Directors, and MHS Association Board of Directors will formalize the specifics of a new relationship, pending the anticipated actions taken at the Delegate Assembly later this year.

## **Everence**

### **1. What is the Everence history with MC USA?**

Everence (originally known as Mennonite Mutual Aid Inc., or MMA) was formed in 1945 by the (Old) Mennonite Church General Conference (“Mennonite Church”) as a new way of extending mutual aid to church members. It wasn't until the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church merged to create MC USA in 2002 that MMA's relationship to

the denomination was defined as the stewardship agency of MC USA. [Learn more about the Everence story and heritage.](#)

## **2. What services does Everence provide?**

Rooted in the Anabaptist faith tradition, Everence helps individuals, organizations and congregations integrate finances with faith through their comprehensive financial services and products – including banking, insurance and financial services with community benefits and stewardship education. Its products and services, along with the expertise of its national team of financial professionals, are designed to help members and clients be faithful stewards of their God-given resources, based on the historic Mennonite and Anabaptist biblical belief that all we are and all we have are from God (Psalm 24). [Learn more about how Everence helps people and institutions integrate faith and finances.](#)

## **3. What are the advantages to Everence if it shifts from an agency to an entity/ministry partner?**

Adapting our ministry partnership will help Everence enhance the ways it can continue serving MC USA and its members and have greater flexibility in responding to the shifting demographics, relationships, needs, and approaches to church life across other Anabaptist communities, congregations and organizations. Additionally, this arrangement will better align the governance structures for both Everence and MC USA more effectively and accurately.

## **4. What are the potential disadvantages for Everence if it shifts from an agency to an entity/ministry partner?**

Over the past 21 years, Everence has valued the ongoing support of (and shared work with) the MC USA Executive Board, agencies, and colleagues. Adapting a new ministry partnership between MC USA and Everence will not diminish these significant relationships – but will require new and intentional ways to connect, communicate and collaborate with the MC USA Executive Board, agency CEOs, and other denominational colleagues.

## **5. How will Everence keep its Anabaptist focus when it is no longer an agency of MC USA?**

[Since its founding in 1945](#), Everence has grown out of a long Anabaptist tradition of church communities putting faith into action by sharing resources with each other. The organization exists to serve members and clients from Anabaptist communities and/or who share the [historic Mennonite and Anabaptist biblical belief that all we are and all we have are from God](#) (Psalm 24). Everence products and services, member benefits, and corporate practices are – and will continue to be – designed around values and beliefs rooted in the Anabaptist faith tradition. Additionally, Everence will continue to select board members who share the organization's Anabaptist faith traditions and values.

## **6. How will these changes impact marginalized communities?**

Addressing issues of diversity, equity and inclusion are strategically important for Everence, and this change in ministry partnership will not change that. Everence actively is working to address the financial and economic inequalities that have systemically oppressed individuals, families and communities for generations, by creating innovative solutions and community economic development activities to better meet the needs of diverse members; fostering a more diverse and inclusive workforce; and educating others about the intersection between race, faith and money and how it impacts communities of color.

## **7. How will conferences relate to Everence if it is no longer a program agency?**

The relationship between Everence and MC USA conferences will not change. Everence intends to relate to conferences in similar and/or new ways as a ministry partner to MC USA. Working together helps to build healthy financial stewardship cultures which, in turn, helps congregations experience greater spiritual vitality and resources, pastors gain improved capacity for ministry, and individuals and families grow closer to God.

## **MHS Association**

### **1. What is MHS Association's history with MC USA?**

MHS Association became a program entity of MC USA in 2013 and has deep roots in the Mennonite church. As early as the late 1800s, Anabaptists in the United States began developing health and human service organizations such as nursing homes, mental health centers, hospitals, senior housing, underserved communities, and agencies serving youth and those with developmental disabilities. Following World War II, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) established five mental health organizations under the umbrella of Mennonite Mental Health Services. Paralleling these developments was the work of the Mennonite Board of Missions through its Health and Welfare division. In 1988, Mennonite Mental Health Services was separated from MCC. At the same time, Mennonite Board of Missions spun off its health and welfare institutions to a re-constituted Mennonite Health Services (MHS). Then MHS Association began relating to other health and human service ministries supported by conferences and congregations from across the entire Anabaptist family.

### **2. What services does MHS Association provide?**

Anchored in Anabaptist values, MHS Association integrates faith and work and inspires and strengthens health and human service ministries to fulfill their missions. MHS Association provides programming to support: the network of member Anabaptist organizations to inspire unique collaboration; shared values to guide our members' culture toward creative solutions; faith-grounded strategic business tools and resources; leadership development; and best practices in governance.



**3. What are the advantages to MHS Association of repositioning MHS Association as an entity (or ministry partner)?**

Repositioning the relationship will help MHS Association enhance the ways it can serve the best interests of MC USA and its Anabaptist and other like-minded organizations. Additionally, this arrangement will align the governance structures for both MHS Association and MC USA more effectively and accurately. It is important for MHS Association to continue to have a close relationship with MC USA to fulfill our mission and vision.

**4. What are the disadvantages to MHS Association of repositioning MHS Association as an entity (or ministry partners)?**

Over the past 10 years, MHS Association has valued the ongoing support of, and shared work with the MC USA Executive Board, agencies, and colleagues. Adapting a new ministry partnership between MC USA and MHS Association will not diminish these significant relationships – but will require new and intentional ways to connect, communicate and collaborate with the MC USA Executive Board, agency CEOs, and other denominational colleagues.

**5. How will MHS Association keep its Anabaptist focus when they are no longer an agency of MC USA?**

MHS Association's bylaws specify the purposes of MHS Association as having a foundation in its Anabaptist faith. Being Anabaptist is imperative to our mission, vision, and the value we provide to our members. Some member organizations have Anabaptist roots extending back more than 130 years. MHS Association has formal and informal covenantal relationships with other Anabaptist denominations and intends to continue its relationship with MC USA. The biggest threat to MHS Association losing its Anabaptist focus is the shrinking of the church. Simply put, if MHS Association isn't Anabaptist, it loses its purpose.

**6. How will these changes impact marginalized communities?**

MHS Association serves member organizations that serve marginalized communities, including those who are elderly, addicted to substances, have mental health diagnoses, are without homes, living in foster care, have intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, are undocumented, and under-resourced. MHS Association is dedicated to advancing justice, inclusion, diversity and equity. MC USA has been and will continue to be an important resource in advancing our efforts. This change will not impact any of this work.

**7. How will conferences relate to MHS Association once they are no longer program agencies?**

MHS Association provides periodic reports to conferences upon request. Staff from MHS Association occasionally offer presentations for MC USA conferences. We anticipate that these things will not change with a shift to a ministry partner relationship.

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