

LEADERSHIP DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE REPORT TO MENNONITE CHURCH USA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2023

The Leadership Discernment Committee (LDC) of Mennonite Church USA is pleased to present the slate for affirmation to the delegate body.

Our first meeting was held in Elkhart, Ind., in February 2022 in the midst of a northern Indiana blizzard. The intent was to spend some of this time with the Executive Board and agency CEOs, but due to the inclement weather we met some in person and some via Zoom. This meeting began a challenging 14-month journey of discernment and decision-making to find gifted members of our church community able and willing to serve in a variety of roles: moderator-elect, Executive Board members, and members of church agency boards. At the peak of COVID-19 it was especially challenging to find volunteers. But, even now, it is not an easy task to find individuals with the gifts and passions who are willing to serve in these roles. People report being busy, tired and already highly committed in their local congregations and communities.

The LDC is a very active committee within MC USA structures. It has taken LDC one in-person meeting and 18 Zoom meetings to accomplish our assignment for this biennium. In addition, our guidelines require LDC to solicit two references for each individual before contacting them about their availability. During these 16 months, LDC has conducted 58 interview/reference checks on prospective board members, including both persons who are renewing their terms and those who are being considered for board positions. We have contacted a total of 15 persons to serve in 13 different positions. Thirteen of these individuals accepted our invitations and two declined. One additional reference now includes a background check for each board member, including those whose terms are renewing.

The task assigned to us by the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA is as follows:

1. To exercise judgment in choosing nominees whose spiritual qualifications, experience, and competence fit them for the position for which they are being named.
2. To assure that the slate provides broad representation of the life and composition of MC USA.
3. To make available a description of each nominee's church membership and present employment so that this Assembly is adequately informed and acquainted with all nominees.
4. To secure from each nominee a commitment to take the assignment seriously, if affirmed.
5. To emphasize the finding of new leaders, with careful attention to broadening participation in church leadership.
6. To develop appropriate lists of potential nominees by soliciting from each conference and associate group a full slate of suggestions. Suggestions shall also be sought and welcomed from the church wide agencies, committees, and constituency.
7. To develop nominees for elected and appointed positions on the following assumptions to the extent reasonably attainable and appropriate in our judgment: 50/50 women to men ratio and 20/80 people of color to Anglo/European.

This is challenging work. It requires a significant amount of discernment to find persons with the gifts and willingness to serve the church on these boards. At the conclusion of this biennium, we are pleased to report that our new balance percentage will be 56/44 men to women and 41/59 BIPOC to white.

Regarding conference distribution, we are aware that Illinois Conference, with 7% of MC USA's membership, has no current board appointments.

These observations will help shape the Leadership Discernment Committee work in the next biennium. Our team is comprised of people from various conferences across the country. But we continue to need help from conference leaders in identifying individuals with the gifts and backgrounds to serve in these roles.

With this work in mind, your prayers of support, helpful suggestions for our various boards, and an openness to consider serving when contacted are vital as we seek to discern who will lead our denomination into fulfilling ever more deeply our vision and mission as members of the Body of Christ.

The LDC is grateful to the many persons who offered recommendations for the various boards, responded to our emails, answered our questions about prospective board members and gave us helpful counsel. Our meetings were filled with much joy and celebration when we could report that someone had accepted our invitation to serve on a church agency board.

LDC worked long and hard. We certainly had our challenging times. We came to appreciate and value the gifts that each person brought to our working times together. We will forever be bonded by this experience. The importance and blessing of working together as a community of Christ's followers was evident as we fulfilled our assignment.

In the days ahead, please share with us names of person you believe have leadership skills and gifts, and who might be available to serve. We as a committee know many people across the country in our denomination. But we don't know everyone. So, your suggestions are needed. The process is easy! Simply complete the form at this link: <https://form.jotform.com/60667071982968>

Please continue to hold the Executive Board and the agency boards in your thoughts and prayers. As we proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ at home, across the street and around the world, let's be fully open and responsive as the Holy Spirit guides and empowers the work of our faith community in these days when God is re-shaping the church to bring healing and hope to the world.

Stan Shantz, chairperson
Doug Basinger
Marty Lehman
Sandra Montes-Martinez
Isaac Villegas
Ruth Yoder Wenger