



**MINUTES**  
**Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly**  
**July 7-8, 2023**  
**Kansas City, Missouri**

**Friday morning, July 7, 2023**

**1. Worship Music**

SaeJin Lee and Lane Miller are the designated worship leaders for this session and opened the meeting with a selection of songs. One selection, *Come What May (Pase lo que pase, ven!)* is named the theme song for this event.

**2. Bible Study Introduction**

Sarah Bixler, assistant professor of faith formation and practical theology at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, provided an initial introduction to the Bible study sessions which will happen today and tomorrow. Today's focus is on "Scenes from the Upper Room: Expectations and Transformations," based on John 13:1-11; 20:11-29. Particular attention was directed to the ways that communities of faith read, understand and interpret scripture.

**3. Opening the business session**

Moderator Linda Dibble opened the first business session with a welcome to all delegates, with thanks to the worship team and Bible teacher.

**A. Introduce officers and welcome guests**

Jon Carlson, moderator-elect and chair of the Resolutions Committee

Mitch Kingsley and Emily Merolli, parliamentarians

Glen Guyton, MC USA Executive Director

Doug Klassen, Executive Minister of Mennonite Church Canada, who brought greetings from our sister church north of the border.

**B. Review agenda and rules for the meeting**

Linda reviewed the agenda which had been prepared and distributed prior to the session, and also the rules for the meeting. She declared that a quorum was present for this meeting, with 341 delegates registered.

**Action 1**      **M/s/c that the agenda and rules be adopted.** Emily Toews/Steve Bomar

### C. Report on resolutions passed at the May 2022 special DA session

Jon Carlson provided some context for the activities across the church prior to the special delegate session, with the COVID-19 pandemic introducing a great deal of disruption and uncertainty.

The Resolution on Clarification on Mennonite Church USA Polity and the Role of the Membership Guidelines of Mennonite Church USA, which led to a motion to retire the guidelines, resulted in an affirmative vote of 82.8%.

The Resolution for Repentance and Transformation generated a significant amount of discussion and passed with an affirmative vote of 55.7%.

The MC USA Accessibility Resolution was approved unanimously by acclamation.

### D. Highlight minutes from the 2022 Special Delegate Assembly

Secretary Bill Zuercher provided an overview of the significant discussions and actions recorded in the minutes.

**Action 2**      **M/s/c to approve the minutes.** Jaimie Houghton-Thompson/ Christina Litwiller

## **4. Community building exercise**

Sue Park-Hur introduced an exercise, using a “Menno Bingo” page as a template. Participants were instructed to mingle and find persons who fit the characteristic in the boxes. Following this exercise, table groups spent time becoming acquainted, with specific answers to “the view from your kitchen window when you were ten years of age.”

Sue concluded the session with reference to three panels on each table which described and illustrated “Expectations of Group Discussions” while speaking, listening, and in general.

## **5. State of the Church**

Glen Guyton cited the fantasy of Buck Rogers who woke up in the 25<sup>th</sup> century, recognizing his status of being out of time and space, longing for the times when he lived in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He sees this as a metaphor for the transformative journey of MC USA, having undergone major changes, including significant losses in area conferences and congregations. We moved downward from 113,000 members to about 50,000, even as we had hoped for unity and growth. We have evolved into something different from what we had anticipated and hoped. The world around us is also vastly different from the time of our beginning. But we live with anticipation and hope.

A symptom of the changes is the demographics of the attendees here at MennoCon23, with far more BIPOC members, women and youth. We realize that we have to make the most of the realities of our current status. We are Jesus followers and people of peace at our core, as a small but powerful instrument of Jesus’ message, being active harbingers of peace and hopefulness. We live with the commitments of the Journey Forward. We continue to emphasize service and support for the disadvantaged and oppressed, including those suffering from calamities, both natural and human created.

Our theme for the next biennium will be “Follow Jesus” which will embody the themes of the Journey Forward. It will mean Jesus’ call to deny ourselves, take up His cross, and follow Him. We are not alone in our journey—we are all in this together, requiring courage and commitment. The local congregation of likeminded believers will be key to our ministry and outreach well beyond the familiar and comfortable. New awareness of the needs of our communities, country and world will be required.

## **6. Introduction: Clarification of Agency Governance & Operational Alignment Resolutions**

Glen spoke to the recommendation of moving to a three-year cycle in our operations, with a resolution to authorize that change. He also identified the resolution to clarify the role of program entities. Finally, there is a resolution to change the status of agencies.

The resolution (#1) to move to a three-year cycle will require an adjustment to Executive Board terms. Glen identified other operational cost efficiencies that will result from this change if approved.

The resolution (#2) to clarify the role of the program entity recognizes that we no longer have such entities, the last one of which was *The Mennonite* periodical which has been supplanted by the independent *Anabaptist World*.

The resolution (#3) to change the status of agencies will remove Everence and Mennonite Health Services as denominational agencies, but rather become ministry partners.

Karen Lehman, executive director of MHS Association, added her comments and perspectives related to this proposed change. She provided some background information about the current structure and membership in MHS Association, including the variety of denominational/church groups that are represented within its membership, of which MC USA is only one of many. She noted that MHS became a program agency of MC USA in 2013. MHS has come out of the church and embodies our Anabaptist faith and values, which will not change.

Ken Hochstetler, President and CEO of Everence, added the perspective of Everence related to this proposal to change their status which has the endorsement of the Everence Board. He suggested we would do well, in this consideration of change, to reflect on the changes that have occurred since MC USA began twenty-some years ago. He provided an overview of the scope of services and structure that now exists as a sizable and growing financial and stewardship services organization. Currently, over 30 church and parachurch groups are now represented in its membership. Everence consists of 16 nonprofit and profit-making entities, guided by a board of directors. These multiple entities are subject to a variety of regulatory agencies, both state and federal, which adds to the complexity of the organization.

Glen then outlined the advantages and clarifications that this change will provide if approved. He acknowledged that there will be a diminished governance influence, and the need for more intentional communication and connection between and among MC USA and the agencies. The centrality of the Anabaptist faith tradition will continue to be embodied by both MHS Association and Everence, and their commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion will not be

diminished. There will be no change in the relationship between these two agencies and the MC USA area conferences.

Following these presentations, table groups were instructed to give attention to two resolutions, as follows:

A. If delegates vote to approve a shift to a triennium cycle, what are some recommendations Executive Board staff should consider for engaging conferences, congregations, and youth across MC USA?

B. What clarifying questions do you have related to proposed resolutions #1 and #2?

Comments and questions:

- Connection between the convention and delegate assembly? Also, why not a similarly vigorous defense for keeping the two-year cycle. *We had about 1500 convention participants, and 300 plus delegates for this session. The bylaws only speak to the delegate sessions, not the convention. Timing to get information out to the congregations supports allowing more time in between sessions.*
- Is there a coherent definition/distinction between a program agency and a program entity? *It is the wording included in the bylaws.*
- Did you consider conventions every two years, and delegate sessions every three years? *EB considered two, three and four year options, looking at what other denominations have done, and considering the involvement of the youth.*
- A bigger question is how we are going to nurture our youth. If we go to three years, there could be other events, especially for youth, in between.
- 2025 would be a perfect opportunity to help launch the Anabaptism at 500 celebration, but we wouldn't be meeting. *That is a completely separate event. We also want to stay away from coinciding with Mennonite World Conference assemblies.*
- Would MC USA continue to appoint board members to MHS and Everence? *MHS has not assumed that that would change, but that could happen. For Everence, that will also be a conversation with the MC USA Executive Board. There will be no immediate departure from current practice, if at all.*
- Would it be helpful to defer the change to three years until after the next one still being only two years from now?
- Has there been any consideration of the financial impact of the change to three years on congregations and conferences?

- Affirmed move to triennium based on the rationale offered, but the loss of youth participation is regarded as a negative. A possible alternative could be some regional events that could be more accessible to youth. Also, how are we accounting for sharp drop in membership and its effect on participation by youth in conventions? *Support for other service/fellowship opportunities offered by other church agencies can help encourage participation by youth and others. Also, demographics are changing, and there is more competition (notably sports activities) that attract youth.*
- Comparing the change for MHS and Everence to MCC and MDS membership is regarded as apples and oranges, since those two are identified clearly as Mennonite organizations.

### **Friday afternoon, July 7, 2023**

#### **7. Worship Music**

SaeJin Lee and Lane Miller led in a time of singing, introducing some new songs from *Voices Together*.

#### **8. Bible Study**

Sarah Bixler continued her teaching on “Scenes from the Upper Room: Expectations and Transformations.” She began with a lectio Divina reading of the passage from John 13:1-11, relating the story of Jesus washing his disciples’ feet, in particular the exchange with Peter. The expectations of the disciples of Jesus in the upper room gathering varied greatly from Jesus’ intentions.

Foot washing was a total nonstarter in their minds. The practice gives us a unique perspective on Jesus’ ministry which preceded His violent death to follow. Following Jesus’ example is a transformative action that brings together personal piety with deeds of social justice and equity. One can wonder why Jesus chose to wash his disciples’ feet as a humble act as part of the Passover meal. Perhaps it was in memory of having His own feet bathed in expensive ointment and dried with a weeping woman’s hair. But whatever the motive, it brought about transformation in Peter’s (and perhaps other disciples’) outlook and response.

Table groups were invited to engage in conversation around the following questions:

- A. When you think of the Upper Room, what physical scene do you imagine? What emotions are held in the space?
- B. When you think of MC USA convention delegate sessions, what physical scene do you imagine? What emotions are held in that space?
- C. How might these physical and emotional spaces position us to experience God’s transformation? How might these spaces position us to resist God’s transformation?

Lane and SaeJin concluded session with a musical description of Jesus’ foot washing ministry.

#### **9. MC USA Agency Story: Mennonite Education Agency**

Continuing the MennoCon23 theme of *Be Transformed*, Marco Grete, Director of the MEA Hispanic Ministries Program, spoke to “Transforming Leaders through Education.” He described

the development of the Hispanic Biblical teaching program as a function of MEA when MC USA was formed. Now some 70 churches and their pastors are being served through this ministry, which was described in a video presentation on the screen. This includes Instituto Biblical Anabautista (IBA); Seminario Biblico Anabautista Hispana (SeBAH); Un Momento de Anabautista; Certification in Theological Studies through AMBS; Detective Bible School; and continuing education opportunities. There is also a Spanish language newsletter, *MenoTicias*, some of whose articles are translated into English.

#### **10. Report: Leadership Discernment Committee**

Stan Shantz, chair of the LDC, reported for the committee, whose members joined him on the stage: Doug Basinger, Sandra Montes-Martinez, Marty Lehman, and Ruth Yoder Wenger.

Absent is member Isaac Villegas. The slate of nominees includes the following:

Moderator-elect: Marty Lehman

Executive Board: Phil Helmuth, Rosetta Landis, Todd Lehman, Jerrell Williams

Everence: Lauren Good, Sunday Adie Obri

MennoMedia: Jack Swaim

MEA: Nathan Alleman, Erick Josue Martinez

MHS Association: Charlene Epp

MMN: Cindy Cumberbatch, David Nickel, Noel Santiago, George Thompson

LDC: Joanne Gallardo

Delegates were instructed to mark and submit the ballots on the tables. **Ballot voting resulted in strong affirmation for all of the nominees.**

#### **11. MC USA Agency Story: Mennonite Mission Network**

Marisa Smucker, interim executive director of MMN, reported on behalf of this agency with a presentation entitled “Just Peace Pilgrimage: *Will you join us on the journey?*” She has been on staff with MMN since 2015, having multiple roles that enabled her to become acquainted with mission workers and ministries at home and around the world. During this time, some adjustments in program priorities needed to be made, accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Marisa reported on a particular experience involving a learning tour on the US/Mexico border, observing at first hand the hardships of the immigrants attempting to find a home in the US. She supplemented her verbal report with a video on pilgrimage opportunities focusing on achieving a just peace, which were transformative experiences for many participants.

#### **12. Peace and Justice Grant Recipient**

Susan Hart, pastor of Koinonia Indian Mennonite Church, and a member of the Cheyenne tribe, provided a history and story of the formation of this native American congregation dating back to 1894 in Clinton, Oklahoma. Her church is the recipient of the Peace and Justice grant.

Michelle Armster, Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz, and Sue Park-Hur joined Susan on the stage. Susan continued her story about the deplorable history of boarding schools for Native American children, and the multi-generational trauma that has resulted from that era. She recognized those with her on the stage who represent agencies that are collaborating on documenting the story of the schools, and doing what can be done in restorative justice efforts.

Michelle, Lorraine and Sue affirmed the need for continued recognition and acknowledgment of the injustices experienced by Native Americans and African Americans and

doing whatever can be done to be supportive of and connected to those who are actively working toward reconciliation and restoration.

### **13. MC USA Agency Story: Everence**

Ken Hochstetler, President and CEO of Everence, provided a report on the theme of “Seeking Growth, Transforming Lives.” He gave a brief glimpse of the scope of the services provided by Everence to a growing group of churches and individuals, moving from a primary focus on rural and small town constituencies to a presence in major urban areas. He showed a video that describes this movement into a Philadelphia neighborhood with a credit union, with testimonies from some persons who benefited from the financial counseling services available to them.

### **14. MC USA Agency Story: MHS Association**

Karen Lehman provided a review of “MHS Association Member Ministries at Work,” supplementing information provided in an earlier session (see Minute #6). She showed two videos that provided the stories of member human services agencies.

## **15. Part II: Clarification of Agency Governance & Operational Alignment Resolutions**

### **A. Resolution 1: Change the MC USA Delegate Assembly to a Triennium Cycle.**

Linda read the resolution related to changing the MC USA Delegate Assembly to a Triennium Cycle, including an updating of the bylaws.

The following amendment was proposed: “We recommend that delegates in 2029 review the shift to a triennial assembly model after gathering evidence on whether a triennial cycle increases congregational participation, particularly of youth delegates from underrepresented backgrounds.”

Discussion:

- Appreciates intent of amendment, needing more time to think of the ramifications, but afraid if we do two triennial sessions, we will be locked into that cycle. MennoCon is too important to delay to three years.
- There is something to be learned from trying the proposed time sequence.
- We do need more action on youth engagement, beyond those who are here as delegates, but the amendment focuses too much on youth engagement.
- How will we be able to decide if it is effective?
- Does the language of the amendment lock us into only the groups being named?

**Action 3**      **M/s/c to approve the amendment.** Elizabeth Johnson/Jaimie Houghton-Thompson      **A show of hands indicated a strong majority in favor**

Discussion on the resolution as amended:

- Providing some institutional memory, began attending GC assemblies in 1971 on a three-year cycle, which was a comfortable interval. Moving to three years is a stewardship issue, given major staff time now devoted to planning and facilitation of the biennial conventions.

- Would like to have more information about the advantages to small congregations that were alleged in the presentation. *The information is more anecdotal than specific, given past experience in contacts with conference youth pastors, and other observations.*
- As a youth, coming to youth conventions twice was instrumental in her faith formation. Getting people together is one of the best ways of maintaining fellowship and connections.
- The resolution seems to lack clear focus and specificity in its rationale.
- If we switch to three years, those who dropped out due to COVID-19 will probably not come back. Those who have not been attending otherwise will likely not begin attending. Frequency of such gatherings is an indication of importance.
- His youth did not like the prospect of having to wait for three years to repeat the experience.

**Action 4**      **M/s to approve the resolution as amended.** John David Kenney/Phil Rempel  
 Ballot vote: Yes 210 (65.6%) No 110 Abstain 3  
**Motion fails due to lack of 2/3 majority**

**B. Resolution 2: Change to clarify the role of the program entity**

Linda reviewed the wording and purpose of the proposed resolution which is recommended by the Executive Board. This will require some bylaw changes accordingly.

**Action 5**      **M/s/c to approve the bylaw changes as outlined in the docket.**  
 Alicia Manning/Ryan Koch      **Ballot vote: Yes 310 No 4**

**C. Resolution 3: Request for the Counsel and Advice of the Delegate Assembly, dealing with agency status for Everence and MHS Association.**

Table groups were given time to address the following questions:

1. How supportive are you of the changes in designation?
2. What specific concerns do you have about the shift in status to ministry partner for Everence? For MHS Association?
3. Are there certain details that you feel are essential to be included in a ministry partner agreement with Everence? MHS Association?

Electronic feedback is requested by 8 pm tonight, or email to Shelley Buller.

**16. Report from Youth Climate Summit**

Harrison Horst and Abby Engershaw provided some information from the summit just ended, describing it as a blast. The keynote speaker and a panel were very informative, representing a broad diversity of viewpoints. They affirmed that the climate anxiety is not theirs to own. The emphasis on the involvement of youth in climate policy and action was received as a challenge to be accepted.



## Saturday morning, July 8, 2023

### **17. Worship Music**

SaeJin Lee and Lane Miller opened the session with group singing.

### **18. Bible study**

Sarah Bixler continued with the theme “Scenes from the Upper Room: Expectations and Transformations.” She read John 20:11-31 intermittently for all to hear, relating Mary’s experience in confronting Jesus at the tomb early on Easter morning—outside of the Upper Room. Jesus is clearly sensitive to Mary’s high emotion, with gentleness and love. Late that day He appeared to His disciples, gathered in a locked (Upper?) room. This began a “sectarian impulse” for the Jewish community, with which we as Anabaptists can identify, who began as a persecuted minority. A result was the tendency, and reality, to withdraw from the world. In spite of that, the forces of evil are with us, which has caused us to separate and inflict harm on one another. Yet as with the disciples, Jesus stands among us, through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus informs our agency in the practice of forgiveness.

The gospel of John is unique in its call to believe in an ever deepening relationship with Jesus. That belief calls for love and transformation, both as Jesus followers and in relationship with our fellow believers. Anabaptists understand the reality of woundedness, some of which we value, but others we ignore but which inflict pain, particularly on the marginalized. Yet the truth is that as a fellowship, if one is hurting, all hurt. Transformation cannot happen if the wounds of the past are not confronted and engaged.

Sarah concluded with an explanation of the Logic of Transformation, proposed by James Loder. She identified transformation as:

- Confront wounds
- Engage conflict
- Free choice for self-examination
- Recognize grounding in God
- Faith-full living in new perspective
- Inner and outer transformation

Table groups were instructed to address the following questions:

A. Have you experienced a disorienting dilemma or convicting moment in your faith journey? How did it cause you to examine your perspective, point you toward Christ, and/or experience God’s transformation?

B. As our convention reflections on transformation come to a close, what commitment are you willing to make to open yourself to God’s ongoing transformation in your life?

### **19. MC USA Agency Story: MennoMedia**

Amy Gingerich, executive director and publisher of MennoMedia and Herald Press, provided a report on “Sharing the Biblical Story.” She related some stories that illustrate the resources provided by MennoMedia. She drew attention to a new title published this summer: *The Peace Table*, which is a children’s story book. A goal of MennoMedia is to produce resources that result in inner and outer transformation.

## 20. MC USA Staff Report: Prevention and Accountability Project

Michael Danner noted that this is a joint project with Mennonite Church Canada, and is designed to deal with situations of misconduct and abuse, providing all possible resources. The resources are designed to reflect Anabaptist practices and beliefs. A document was developed in 2022, with good engagement from conference and church leaders. Feedback continues to come in.

We are moving to an external process that will engage the needed resources to deal with situations of misconduct, especially spiritual abuses and abuses of power. The intention is to have a process that will differentiate among various types of complaint. The final document available to conferences will be an online PDF that will be free to download. The goal for completion is October 2023.

## 21. Part III: Clarification of Agency Governance & Operational Alignment Resolutions

Glen provided the result of feedback on the proposed resolution regarding the change in agency status, which showed a plurality in favor of the change.

A sample of concerns, questions and comments:

- The possibility of deep disconnect between our Anabaptist beliefs and theology, which the agency leaders say is the opposite of what they anticipate.
- Fear that Everence would align with more progressive Anabaptist values.
- A question about how MHS's hiring practices would be affected.
- Who determines administrative salary guidelines? *MC USA only*
- Would Everence and MHS be willing to make written commitments to inclusivity in hiring practices?
- Suggests that other agencies move toward becoming entities.

Glen clarified that this resolution is designed to align our bylaws with some of the current realities of how we currently operate with Everence and MHS Association, with particular awareness of the major changes that have occurred in the last twenty years in the membership composition of both agencies.

**Action 6 M/s/c that the resolution to create a change in agency status, including the requisite bylaw changes, be approved. John Murray/Randy Keeler  
Ballot vote: Yes 305 No 4 Abstention 3**

Discussion:

- An amendment was offered but not entertained.
- The church needs to be the church, and not an organization.
- What is the anticipated timeline? *If approval is given, the EB staff will begin working on a plan for the transition that will need board approval. Early 2024 should see the completion of the transition.*
- Will this change cause any shift in Everence's relationship with congregations? *No*
- Any ideas about what an MOU might include? *Regular meeting cycle for feedback, finances and support, representation at national events, how we will intentionally gather together, accountability measures, evaluation cycle of the relationship, and expectations in both directions.*

## **22. Peace and Justice Grant Recipient**

Ivanna Johnson McMurry from Boulder Mennonite Church spoke on behalf of the congregation, first noting that the land on which we are meeting was first the home of a number of Native American tribes. She recalled that the founding of our country was done on the basis of free labor of enslaved people, the injustice of which has still not been fully acknowledged.

BMC engaged in a partnering with Hallet Academy Elementary School in Denver, Colorado, which serves a primarily disadvantaged, Black population. The students are feeling valued and heard, and as a result are thriving in the face of major challenges.

## **23. Report from Anti-racism Team**

Team members gathered on the stage to report the results of their efforts this week to assess evidence of attention to anti-racism practices, including examples of violations. They communicated a number of observations and recommendations (see Addendum 1.)

## **24. MC USA Staff Report: The Corinthian Plan**

Duncan Smith, director of the plan, provided a basic description of the plan which provides health insurance coverage to congregational pastors and staff. He explained how the plan fits into MC USA in a holistic sense related to overall wellness. An important component of the plan is a wellness incentive. There is also a component of mutual aid sharing. He provided a testimonial from a satisfied pastor who participates in the plan. The plan has moved from silver status to gold, given its favorable claims experience. Currently 601 persons are covered by the plan.

## **25. Parting comments and installation of new moderator**

Linda expressed thanks to all of the agencies for the stories they have shared throughout this meeting. She also acknowledged the two grant recipients, who shared inspiring stories related to peace and justice. She expressed appreciation to the delegates for their work during the past biennium. She further acknowledged the connections with and support of a variety of persons and groups.

Jon Carlson, incoming moderator, was introduced. He expressed the gratitude of all of us to Linda for her leadership during the past biennium. He introduced the incoming moderator-elect who was affirmed in yesterday's vote: Marty Lehman, member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana, who has an impressive background of service and ministry in a variety of church agencies and organizations. Marty offered a blessing to Jon as he assumes this mantle of leadership on behalf of the church.

Phil Waite, pastor of College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana, offered a prayer of blessing and benediction for these leaders.

## **26. Moderator's address to the Delegate Assembly**

Jon Carlson spoke as a Millennial, whatever that adds to his pedigree. He invites the prayers of the people as he works on three priorities:

**Peace:** taking seriously Jesus' example, witness and teaching, which attracted him to the Mennonite church 20 years ago. Peacebuilding is a task of everyone individually and collectively, even as we acknowledge divisions and separations that have occurred. He will offer welcome and hospitality to everyone, as he covets that from and to all members.

**Simplicity:** this is central to our shared life together. He says that even as he recognizes the complexity of our organizational structures, his hope is that we can continue to pay attention to ways of simplifying our structures and practices. This will mean recognizing past practices that no longer serve us well.

**Family:** Our vote yesterday strongly verifies that we want to be together as a family, even as we have experienced wounds, some self-inflicted. He welcomes counsel on the multiple ways that we can continue to be family. This includes an awareness that we are a multigenerational church, with shared responsibility. He suggests that we are now a six-generation church, from the Silents to the Gen Z's. We continue to be challenged to find ways to be deliberate and intentional in inviting younger persons to be intimately engaged in all aspects of our lives together.

## **27. Closing**

Jon concluded with the affirmation that we are about God's work, not our own, with reconciliation as one of our highest aspirations and values. He covets the prayers of all of God's people as he takes on this mantle of leadership.

The session concluded with two songs: *May the Peace of Christ be with you* (sung first in Japanese) and *Guide my feet*.

Bill Zuercher  
Recording Secretary

## Addendum 1

### **Anti-Racism Team Report to Delegates**

**Team Members: Alicia Manning, Sue Park-Hur, Celeste Sharp, Joanne Gallardo, Bonita Croyle**

#### Purpose:

In MC USA's ongoing commitment to anti-racism, a team of five persons gathered this week to monitor the delegate sessions, worship, youth and adult seminars, and exhibit halls in order to do the following three things:

- Evaluate access of materials, opportunities to speak and representation as speakers in worship, seminars and learning opportunities.
- Be available to hear both compliments and concerns regarding our anti-racism efforts at MennoCon23.
- Provide feedback on how well MCUSA is meeting their anti-racism priorities in these particular settings.

#### Observations:

We observed a strong increase in awareness, effort and intentionality to reflect our denominations racial and ethnic diversity in worship and we believe this modeled what we are working towards. We celebrate the multi-generational presence of our Indigenous siblings. We also celebrate that the Delegate Assembly agenda has included space to hear about the powerful efforts of Project SACRED and MEA's Spanish speaking programs.

We observed that there is room for growth and greater equity specifically regarding the relationship of white male dominance and the impact it can have in co-presentations.

We observed that many session presenters were white and panel sessions that did include racial/ethnic diversity were often BIPOC led.

We observed that there were several sessions wherein culturally specific information was discussed or pertinent, but BIPOC were absent from the discussion due to a lack of diversity in the prep work by the presenter(s).

We observed that in an attempt to create more general languaging, there would sometimes be the use of a corporate "we" throughout various sessions and in Worship. Specific examples of this include phrases like: "we all know this."

We observed that the data and growth concerning the number of women in leadership roles throughout the MCUSA acknowledges the significant improvement in equity and representation

We observed that the synergy that was generated from convention liberally fed into the Delegate Session.

## Recommendations:

We recommend revising the process for approval to present sessions to include presenters learning about: 1) how to craft inclusive presentations, 2) best practices in crafting a presentation, 3) how to integrate technology in your presentation, and 4) how to maximize audience participation and engagement.

We recommend creating more diversity in the skit groups that are presented.

We recommend including a greater variety of songs from other languages and encourage folks to consider songs that were not first written in English and then translated to various languages.

We recommend that worship leaders and speakers are mindful of what language is used - particularly in regard to curses and racial/ethnic slurs.

We recommend that worship leaders and presenters consider places where translation of the Spanish provided is needed for English only speakers.

We recommend that session presenters incorporate a wide variety of feedback mechanisms including the consideration of a QR code that would allow folks to participate in completing a feedback survey.

We recommend that presentation speakers and worship leaders consider utilizing multiple Bible versions to acknowledge cultural differences in the Scripture that may be more easily identified in looking at the same story across various Bible translations.

## Concluding Remarks

Some trends remain consistent including that more progress on these goals was made in worship services versus in the individual sessions. While we have made significant improvement in anti-racism we still have a great deal of work left to do to fully embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of convention and delegate session.