



Mennonite Church USA
3145 Benham Ave., Suite 1
Elkhart, IN 46517

April 14, 2025

Dear Angela, Roy, and the Mosaic Conference Board,

The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus be with you! Thank you for your April 2 letter. I recognize that communicating in writing about such complex challenges is not always the easiest but given the number of people involved in this process, I believe this does help us work toward clarity and mutual understanding. Thank you.

I was grieved to read about the many challenges Mosaic has faced since the merger of Franconia Conference and Eastern District, and the pain that you have experienced along the way. I remain convinced that together, we can resolve nearly all of these challenges, and that deep reconciliation can take place by the power of the Holy Spirit.

MC USA and Mosaic have already taken steps to address some of the concerns that you have raised. This includes initiating the *Mennonite Church USA v. Department of Homeland Security* litigation, which seeks to reestablish legal protections for houses of worship from immigration enforcement actions and is a tangible expression of solidarity with BIPOC and immigrant communities within MC USA. We also have worked to strengthen communication around the Ministerial Leadership Information process, as well as implement technical changes that will make it easier to offer the MLI form in more languages.

The Resolutions Committee and Executive Board have both affirmed that since MC USA is part of Mennonite World Conference, all area conferences have access to the seven *Shared Convictions* and are welcome to use that statement in any ways they see fit, including as part of a ministerial credentialing process.

As we've reflected on the additional concerns Mosaic has expressed, we've categorized them into three areas: issues that can be addressed with MC USA EB staff, issues that can be addressed with the Executive Board, and areas where we can stand in solidarity together, even as mutual transformation takes time.

The concerns that EB staff are willing and able to work with you to develop a process to address include communication and relational breakdown, as well as credentialing and access issues (as noted above, processes are already underway to address credentialing questions.)

The concerns that the Executive Board are working to address include structural and systemic challenges, complexities of global credentialing, and pain from the 2022 Delegate Assembly. We would welcome further dialogue around what a reconciliation process that addresses this pain might look like.

Areas where we can stand together in solidarity and seek mutual transformation include cultural and identity issues, including the privileging of white Mennonite norms. The recent *Hope for the Future* gathering that celebrated thirty years of the Damascus Road initiative offers a tangible example of ways that we are better together.

We would welcome the opportunity to develop a mutually agreeable, structured process working toward greater healing and hope, recognizing that some of this would take significant time.

In reflecting on Mosaic's proposal to become a program entity, I struggle to see a viable path forward. (Note that I am only expressing my personal perspective here; the Executive Board has not met since this proposal was introduced. The EB meets the second week of May.)

I believe there are at least four significant challenges, any one of which may prove insurmountable:

1. Communication and relational challenges between Mosaic and MC USA staff. Program entities of MC USA are expected to respond directly to initiatives of MC USA EB staff, as well as be directly accountable to them. A program entity relationship requires a level of collaboration between Mosaic leadership and EB staff that does not seem possible without significant reconciliation processes taking place beforehand.
2. To act as a program entity of MC USA, Mosaic would need to "prohibit the use of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status as criteria to restrict a person's full participation in [...] ministries, activities, roles, and committees." As an area conference, Mosaic is not obligated to abide by this aspect of the delegate-approved *Resolution for Repentance and Transformation*, but as a churchwide entity it would be.
3. Withdrawing as an area conference of MC USA would remove Mosaic Conference's and congregations' standing in *Mennonite Church USA v. Department of Homeland Security*.
4. Becoming a program entity does not provide a means of membership in MC USA for those congregations in Mosaic that seek to retain one.

I recognize that we have differing perspectives on point 4, with Mosaic leaders seeing this as an example of the Executive Board's inflexibility and emphasis on structure rather than relationship. I hear that frustration. At the same time, the Executive Board is obligated to abide by the current structures of the denomination, which were affirmed by both Franconia Conference and Eastern District at the formation of MC USA.

The Executive Board has tried to demonstrate as much flexibility as possible, including accommodating Mosaic's proposal to allow congregations to remain members of Mosaic without acknowledging their membership in MC USA.

MC USA's structures are always intended to foster healthy relationships. Even the process of changing those structures is designed to require relational collaboration. If you believe that those structures are not serving their intended purpose, Mosaic is welcome to work with other area conferences to bring a proposal through the resolutions process for delegates to reconsider or change our denominational structure, but the Executive Board is unable to enact a direct membership model without delegate approval. Such a change would require careful churchwide consideration, since derived membership forms the basis of the entire denominational structure.

I continue to believe that Mosaic and MC USA are better together, and that our diversity and differences can be a source of strength, rather than pain. Since reconciliation and navigating conflict are a pillar of your strategic plan, let's find ways to work together, rather than pulling further apart. In the words of Scripture, I appeal to you to join with the rest of MC USA in making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Blessings on your continued discernment.

In Christ,



Jon Carlson

Moderator, Mennonite Church USA