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A letter from the MC USA Executive Board to MC USA constituents regarding a Mennonite World Conference Decision

The first assembly of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) was held in Basel, Switzerland in 1925. There was one delegate from North America, H. J. Krehbiel, the president of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) carries forward the heritage of our predecessor denominations, which means we have been part of MWC from the beginning.

MC USA, through her members, congregations and area conferences, remain strong supporters of MWC to this day through participation, service and generous contributions.

As MC USA strives to live into the work of repentance, healing and transformation with our LGBTQIA+ siblings, we are also committed to MWC's [Shared Convictions](#) of Global Anabaptists which includes No. 7, "*As a world-wide community of faith and life we transcend boundaries of nationality, race, class, gender, and language.*"

We believe, along with MWC, that our Shared Convictions are sufficient for member bodies to walk in harmony while also allowing room for diverse approaches to other matters. *A recent MWC decision raises concerns about the continued application of this principle.*

MWC is currently searching for a regional representative for North America, a part-time staff position. Stanley Green, executive director of Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference and former executive director of Mennonite Mission Network was due to be appointed to this position, according to communications from MWC to the MC USA executive director. In a final step, MWC sought affirmation from all North American member denominations (both full and associate members). Of the five representatives from the United States, three raised concerns, while not vetoing the appointment.

On Oct. 2, Janet Plenart, MWC regional representative coordinator and volunteer development consultant, informed

the leaders of the North American members, including MC USA Executive Director Glen Guyton, of the MWC decision concerning the appointment. She wrote:

“It was clear that those who know Stanley affirmed his personal integrity and leadership. However, there were notable concerns that he is a member of MC USA. Questions were raised as to whether he would – inadvertently or by request of his church – carry or represent MC USA views in his MWC relationships. Several churches in the US noted that this would likely mean more caution in receiving him as an MWC representative and could hinder their approximation to MWC. The key issue of concern is not that MC USA holds a different theological view of human sexuality, but that churches outside of MC USA have read their 2022 statement as judgmental of churches with different views, and they see that MC USA persons are expected to represent the MC USA theological positions in their broader engagements. This makes it difficult for other churches in the US to feel comfortable having an MWC representative who is a member of MC USA.”

We are very disappointed with this decision.

For clarity, MC USA’s 2022 Resolution for Repentance and Transformation invites a process of repentance. It does not pass judgment. It offers confessions made by MC USA that take responsibility for harmful attitudes and actions of MC USA. We believe it is possible for us to “...take the log out of our own eye” without passing judgment on others who discern these matters differently.

As a national body, we do not use theological differences beyond the Shared Convictions as a basis for expressing distrust in other leaders or as a litmus test for MWC appointments. Yet in this instance, MC USA's discerned positions seem to be used as justification for excluding a gifted leader who would benefit the global Anabaptist witness — simply because he is a member of MC USA.

The hard reality is, LGBTQIA+ persons have experienced the church’s rejection for decades. The MC USA delegate body has chosen to stand with them. It is a sad reality that, as a result, some will view our denomination with concern and suspicion. Sometimes, this is what solidarity means. Choosing to chart a path towards transformation and healing with those whom the church has harmed is not only a theological challenge, but a relational one. We are committed to working with MWC on that relational challenge, and we hope and pray that our Mennonite World Conference siblings will not treat our theological differences as a justification for further dividing the global Anabaptist community but will instead continue to trust in the Spirit’s presence in our communities.

As persons in the United States, we also understand that the world is witness to the rapid rise of polarization in our country. The ideological divide between “progressive” and “conservative” viewpoints tears apart our families, communities, government and institutions.

The virtue of forbearance, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit that Paul wrote about in Galatians 5:22-23 and later in Colossians 3:13, is scarce. Even in our own congregations, we struggle to practice this well. We mourn that this divisiveness has now crept into MWC.

Because the rationale for excluding Stanley, as a member of MC USA, referenced the Resolution on Repentance and Transformation passed by the MC USA delegate assembly in 2022, the MC USA Executive Board thought it wise to inform you of this matter.

In response, we ask you to pray – for MWC leadership, the leaders of the North American member denominations, and the whole of MWC bodies and their members. May there be enough room at the table for all of us.

Marty Lehman, Moderator
On behalf of the MC USA Executive Board