

VMC Rationale for Restructuring for Missions
February 3, 2018 VMC Delegate Session
FINAL

Introduction. Virginia Mennonite Conference has been well served by an organizational structure that was implemented by the Delegate Assembly, March 26, 1994. At that time, Laban Peachey, was Conference Moderator and David D. Yoder was the Conference Minister. This organizational structure provided hope for a generation of leaders that sought to empower lay leaders in the governance structure and provide clarity about the role and function of oversight leaders. This organizational structure provided opportunity for women to serve on Conference Council and the Faith and Life Commission. It has served the congregations of Virginia Mennonite Conference for a generation.

Leaders of Virginia Mennonite Conference in 2016 recognized that there are new challenges on the horizon for which the current organizational structure is inadequate. The list of challenges includes: a) Mennonite Church USA transitioning authority from the denomination to conferences on membership criteria, ministerial credentials, and Christian practices; b) a desire for greater incorporation of women in governance; c) the necessity to incorporate ethnic persons in governance; d) the vast amount of volunteers needed to sustain the current structure in an age when volunteers are more difficult to secure, and e) an acknowledgement that the current organizational structure is becoming antiquated. Conference Council acted to create a Polity Task Force to address these challenges for the health of our ministries and stakeholders.

The Virginia Mennonite Conference Polity Task Force submitted a written report to Conference Council on November 11, 2017.¹ The report sought to make recommendations to meet four basic goals:

- Clarify roles, authority, and decision-making in conference.
- Strengthen accountability within the conference.
- Simplify the conference structure.
- Strengthen conference unity in mission and spiritual practice.

In seeking to meet these four basic goals, the Polity Task Force developed a set of recommendations.

¹ Polity Task Force members were: Phil Kniss, chair, Ryan Ahlgrim, Nancy Heisey, Alicia Horst, Wendy Malvaez, and Craig Maven. David Brubaker served as a process coach.

At its November meeting, Conference Council affirmed the significant work of the Polity Task Force and invited representatives of the Polity Task Force to make their report to the Winter 2018 Delegate Session.

Following the report and Q&A, delegates will have an opportunity to respond to the findings. Delegate feedback will inform any adjustments to the direction set by the Report.

Conference Council is committed to developing an organizational structure that reflects the polity growing out of our proposed mission statement:

Virginia Mennonite Conference equips pastors, lay leaders, and congregants for worship and service, and to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to neighbors near and far (approved by Conference Council at its September 22 & 23, 2017 meeting, and coming to Delegate Session for approval at the Winter 2018 Delegate Session).

Conference Council, in response to the PTF report, authorized a committee called “VMC Restructuring for Missions (RFM). It will include members from Conference Council, Faith and Life Commission, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, and the Polity Task Force. The proposed committee members are: Joe Longachre (Bylaws Committee), Aldine Musser (FLC), Elroy Miller (Council), Clyde Kratz (Staff), Beryl Jantzi (FLC), Ryan Ahlgrim (Council & Polity Task Force), & Aaron Kauffman (VMMissions).

The RFM will collect feedback from CC, FLC and Delegates and:

1. Present a draft VMC reorganization plan, and obtain delegate feedback at the July 2018 delegate session; and
2. Present a final reorganization plan for delegate affirmation at the February 2019 delegate session.