**Restructuring for Mission Task Force**

**Discussion of Options for Districts**

**Preamble.**

The Restructuring for Mission Task Force has been engaged in thinking creatively about the way in which districts are structured. There were two significant affirmations for districts in the data that the Polity Task Force provided upon completion of their survey. Respondents affirmed the district’s role in resourcing pastors and leaders, as well as the significant collegial fellowship that occurs when districts gather. In various discussions, we learned that the least enjoyable aspect of district ministry is the amount of administration that is required to sustain Conference’s expectations for district ministry.

The Restructuring for Mission Task Force began looking at ways to think about a District that seeks to facilitate resourcing and collegial experiences. Conversation occurred around the importance of incorporating credentialed leaders and lay leaders in the district meeting. The two models below provide a framework for a possible way forward for Virginia Mennonite Conference. Note the description provides definition to composition, purpose, and organization. Option A provides the least amount of structure for a District, while Option B seeks to slightly modify the current District structure.

The Restructuring for Mission Task Force welcomes your feedback about the strengths and concerns of each model. It will be most helpful to the Task Force if you think in terms of the big picture of how a district shall provide ministry to pastors and congregational leaders in terms of leadership resourcing and collegiality. The new vision and mission statements are provided for the purpose of framing a district structure within the scope of these new commitments.

**Virginia Mennonite Conference Mission Statement** (Winter Delegate Assembly 2018)

***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.***

**Virginia Mennonite Conference Vision Statement (**Summer Delegate Assembly 2017)

***God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God’s healing and hope flow through us to the world.***

Restructuring for Mission Task Force participants are: Elroy Miller, chair, Beryl Jantzi, Pearl Hartman, Ryan Ahlgrim, Joe Longacher, Aaron Kauffman, and Clyde Kratz

**Option A (Ministerial Council Model)**

**DISTRICTS**

COMPOSITION

Districts shall typically be composed of a minimum of four congregations and a preferred maximum of ten to twelve congregations. When this number is exceeded, the formation of a new district is recommended. Consideration shall be given to geographical location, affinity of theological faith understandings, history, and congregational preference.

Congregations may request a change in their district affiliation or propose the formation of a new district. Modifications of district composition shall have the approval of the districts and of Conference Council.

VISION STATEMENT

As expressions of church, districts exist to worship and serve God, resource and support leaders and congregations, and join together in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with neighbors near and far.

PURPOSE

As functional units of Conference, districts shall provide for mutual support and counsel among their constituent members, including information regarding programs and projects beyond the scope of individual congregations, with shared resources as appropriate, including finances, as described below. Leadership within each district will be provided by its Ministerial Council.

ORGANIZATION

Each district shall form a Ministerial Council, composed of all active pastors within the district, a lay leader from each congregation without an active pastor, and all oversight leaders within the district.

1. The roles of the Ministerial Council are to:
2. Provide for fellowship and mutual support among ministerial leadership within the district.
3. Provide leadership resourcing for credentialed and lay leaders.
4. Provide for spiritual discernment of district issues, facilitate missional initiatives within the district, and provide input and guidance for congregational delegates to Conference Assembly
5. Arrange to meet with any Assembly lay delegates within the district who wish to bring a proposal or discuss a particular issue.
6. Establish reimbursement for its District Minister(s), probably through delegation to an ad hoc committee.
7. Recommend a qualified district representative to serve on the recommendations VMMissions to its Board.

b. The Council shall select its own chair.

c. The Council shall meet 6-8 times yearly. District delegates to Assembly will be invited to two of those meetings, scheduled between the summer and winter delegate sessions, to review past Assembly decisions and upcoming issues to be presented at the next Assembly.

**Option B (District Council/Ministerial Fellowship Model)**

**DISTRICTS**

COMPOSITION

Districts shall typically be composed of a minimum of four congregations and a preferred maximum of ten or twelve congregations. When this number is exceeded, the formation of a new district is recommended. Consideration shall be given to geographical location, affinity of theological faith understandings, history, and congregational preference.

Congregations may request a change in their district affiliation or propose the formation of a new district. Modifications of district composition shall have the approval of the districts and of Conference Council.

VISION STATEMENT

As expressions of church, districts exist to worship and serve God, resource and support leaders and congregations, and join together in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with neighbors near and far.

PURPOSE

As functional units of Conference, districts shall provide for mutual support and counsel among their constituent members, including information regarding programs and projects beyond the scope of individual congregations, with shared resources as appropriate, including finances.

ORGANIZATION

Each district shall form a District Council and a Ministerial Fellowship.

1. The District Council shall be composed of all active district pastors, congregational delegates to the Delegate Assembly, district oversight leaders, and additional leadership persons as determined by each district.

1. Each District Council shall be chaired by an oversight leader, and shall also appoint a secretary and treasurer from among its members, with terms determined by the Council.
2. The primary roles of the District Council are to provide for review and discussion of past and future Delegate Assembly agendas and actions, facilitate missional initiatives within the district, and enhance relationships among members of the Council.
3. The Council is also responsible to fund its oversight leader(s) from among its member congregations, and to solicit recommendations from district congregations for appointment by VM Missions to its Board.
4. The District Council shall meet twice yearly between the summer and winter Delegate Assemblies.
5. The officers shall serve as an Executive Committee, authorized to take action between meetings, including the disbursement of funds within limits established by the Council. Such actions will be ratified by the full Council at its next meeting.
6. The Ministerial Fellowship shall be composed of all active pastors, and oversight leaders within the district. Districts in excess of ten congregations shall be comprised of multiple Ministerial Fellowships (clusters) consisting of at least four congregations.
7. The role of the Fellowship is to provide for fellowship and mutual support among ministerial leadership within the district, and, as members of the District Council, to provide specific input to that body as requested.
8. The Fellowship shall select its own chair.
9. The Ministerial Fellowship shall meet 4-6 times yearly, in addition to the twice yearly meetings of the District Council.

**Proposed change regarding qualifications of delegates to Assembly**

The single sentence in the current bylaws describing those qualifications is shown below, followed by a proposed change in that specific section, with different wording for each of the two models shown above.

(We are not presenting any recommendations regarding the many other statements in the current bylaws related to delegates, which we assume will be addressed by our committee later.)

Section 3. Qualifications of Delegates

Delegates to Conference Assembly shall be members of affiliated congregations who are willing to give the time required by the assignment.

**(Ministerial Council Model**) Each congregation shall appoint delegates who are active in a leadership role and committed to attending the summer and winter Delegate Assemblies, as well as two meetings per year of the Ministerial Council for their district. In those appointments a goal of age and gender diversity is recommended.

**(District Council/Ministerial Fellowship Model)** Each congregation shall appoint delegates who are active in a leadership role and committed to attending the summer and winter Delegate Assemblies, as well as the twice yearly meetings of their District Council. In those appointments a goal of age and gender diversity is recommended.