



2023 Winter Delegate Assembly

February 4, 2023

Washington Community Fellowship
907 Maryland Ave NE
Washington, DC 20002



Virginia
Mennonite
Conference



Moderator's Invitation to VMC Winter Assembly

January 1, 2023

Dear VMC family,

It is the first day of a new year as I sit down to write this letter of invitation. While the sun rose and will set on this day, like every other day in the history of humankind, we think of it as the start of a brand new year—2023—which indeed it is.

Beginning a new year evokes a sense of possibilities. Many of us use this opportunity to take stock and resolve to re-set our priorities. We may think of it as a fresh start not unlike the ways we live our Christian lives. Out with the old. In with the new. Sins named and confessed. Sins forgiven. Life's purpose refocused. Love and joy renewed.

In these months, we have also been taking stock as a conference. We asked consultants from Gilliam & Associates to listen deeply throughout the conference in order to help us identify the sources of harm, mistrust and anxiety many of us experienced in recent years. By listening, we hope to get a clearer sense of the work we need to do so we can experience a fresh start as a conference: Truth spoken. Sin and brokenness acknowledged. Confession and forgiveness invited. Conference mission refocused. Love and joy renewed among us.

I hope you will join VMC brothers and sisters in Christ at our February 4, 2023 Winter Delegate Assembly, meeting at Washington Community Fellowship, Washington DC. Take time to look over the agenda. We have important work to do, grounded in worship. We will receive and discuss the Gilliam & Associates report. We will discuss and act on two proposed by-law changes: to involve youth delegates in our annual assemblies; to reorganize conference council for greater diversity of gifts and perspectives. We will hear reports from the interim Conference Leadership Team, the Racial Justice Task Force, VMC's treasurer, and VMissions. We will have opportunity to elect a moderator elect and others gifted to serve. We will release one precious VMC congregation. And we will hear about inspired ways to live into VMC's strategic missional priorities.

I invite us to pray for each other and for our conference assembly—that the illuminating Holy Spirit will guide us. And to paraphrase Psalm 51: that transgressions will be named; that we will hear truth in our inner beings and learn wisdom in our hearts; that we will be washed and made clean so the bones that have been crushed will rejoice; that we will be freed to experience joy and gladness.

May we all be renewed in this new year, and in this new season of conference life, as the Spirit awakens a new and right spirit within each of us, and in our life together. May it be so, Lord Jesus.

Sara Wenger Shenk
VMC moderator

Table of Contents

Agenda	3
Actions for Delegate Approval	4
2022 Summer Delegate Assembly Minutes	5
Gifts Discernment Nominees	9
Conference Council Appointment	11
Bylaw Revision: Youth Delegates	12
Bylaw Article III	
Bylaw Revisions: Conference Council reorganization	14
Bylaw Article II	
Bylaw Article IV	
Constitution Article VI	
Treasurers Report	20
Winter Delegate Report	
Year End Report	
Strategic Plans: History and Mystery	22
Release of the Exchange	23
Letter from Northern District Chair	

Winter 2023 Assembly Agenda

- 9:00 Welcome and Call to Order
 - Introduction of Guests and welcome of youth observers
 - Host Church Welcome
 - Review and Approval of Previous Minutes
- 9:15 Worship
- 9:30 Gilliam & Associates Report
- 10:00 Table Discussion
- 11:00 Break
- 11:15 Interim Conference Leadership Team (iCLT) Sharing
- 11:50 Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF) Sharing
- 12:00 Lunch
- 1:00 Gifts Discernment Committee Nominees
- 1:45 Bylaw Revisions:
 - Youth Delegates
 - Conference Council reorganization
- 2:30 Break
- 2:45 Treasurer's Report
- 2:55 VM Missions Sharing
- 3:10 Mennonite Church USA Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) Sharing
- 3:20 2020 Strategic Plan: Practical Action Plans
- 3:35 Release of the exchange
- 3:45 Acknowledgement service / Closing Worship
- 4:20 Adjourn

Actions for Delegate approval

Action 1: After reviewing the minutes from the 2022 Summer Delegate Assembly, do you approve the minutes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Action 2: As recommended by Conference Council, do you approve the following nominees: Andrew Buckwalter Fairfield as Moderator-Elect until August 31, 2023 and Moderator from September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2025?

☐ Yes ☐ Yes, with reservations ☐ No

Action 3: As recommended by Conference Council, do you approve the following nominees: Steve Pardini for Chair of the Congregational Life Committee for the September 1, 2022 until August 31, 2025 term?

☐ Yes ☐ Yes, with reservations ☐ No

Action 4: As recommended by Conference Council, do you approve the following nominees: Gwen Lantz for Congregational Life Committee for the September 1, 2022 until August 31, 2025 term?

☐ Yes ☐ Yes, with reservations ☐ No

Action 5: As approved by Conference Council, do you approve the bylaw changes in Article II which add a youth delegate for each congregation?

☐ Yes ☐ Yes, with reservations ☐ No

Action 6: As approved by Conference Council, do you approve the bylaw Article II changes for conference council reorganization?

☐ Yes ☐ Yes, with reservations ☐ No

Action 7: As approved by Conference Council, do you approve the bylaw Article IV changes for conference council reorganization?

☐ Yes ☐ Yes, with reservations ☐ No

Action 8: As approved by Conference Council, do you approve the Constitution Article VI changes for conference council reorganization?

☐ Yes ☐ Yes, with reservations ☐ No

Summer Delegate Session
July 14-16, 2022
Zion Mennonite Church, Broadway, VA
Virginia Mennonite Conference

Session 1 (RE)ALITY CHECK

1. Welcome. Sara welcomed the group and expressed gratitude to the vision team for the work of planning the assembly. She read Psalm 133 expressed her hope for a gathering in the spirit of this text.

1 How good and pleasant it is
 when God's people live together in unity!
 2 It is like precious oil poured on the head,
 running down on the beard,
 running down on Aaron's beard,
 down on the collar of his robe.
 3 It is as if the dew of Hermon
 were falling on Mount Zion.
 For there the Lord bestows his blessing,
 even life forevermore.

2. **Greetings.** Pr. Sarah Piper extended greetings from Zion Mennonite Church and noted that although Zion has hosted the summer assembly 14 times beginning in 1887, this was the first time since 1965 that the delegates have gathered here for the event.
3. **Introduction of Theme.** Moriah Hurst, with help from an overburdened traveler played by June Miller, presented the “(RE)PACKING” theme and invited table group members to introduce themselves to each other by reflecting on the things that we carry; are they useless baggage or useful luggage.
4. **Music and worship.** The group engaged in a meaningful time of worship lead by Chad Miller, Mackenzie Miller and Christa Hoover.
5. **Stories.** Sarah Piper, Gerald Shenk and Alfonso Alavarado Ayala, Pastor of Iglesia Mennonita Monte Moriah in Rockingham Ct. VA, told stories of hope in times of uncertainty and anxiety.
6. **Reflection and Scripture.** Lorie Friesen shared reflections on Luke 10:1-9 focusing on vs 4 as a metaphor for a tendency to ‘overpack” and take more than we need in the journey of sharing the good news.
7. **Table Groups** spent about an hour reflecting on Lori’s presentation.

11:30 a.m. VMC Business Session

1. Moderator's Report Sara summarized Conference Council's (CC) work over the last few months. She and Jim Hershberger, CC Secretary meet monthly with Joe Longacre, FLC chair and Pearl Hoover, FLC vice chair, to discuss conference issues. Sara values the opportunity for increased communication with the Faith and Life Commission. Based on District feedback, CC is enlisting the aid of a consulting group to work with a group of 12 VMC persons to resolve on-going issues of trust and accountability that culminated with the resignation of Clyde Kratz, Executive Conference Minister, in March of 2022. There is a committee reviewing VMC bylaws in the event of restructuring VMC governance bodies. The Interim Conference Leadership Team is in place and will meet in August to get organized.

2. Approval of Minutes In the absence of Jim Hershberger, CC Secretary, Sara reviewed minutes from the Winter Delegate Assembly on February 5, 2022

Action 1. That the minutes of the February 5 Winter Delegate Session are approved. PASSED.

3. Finance Report. Leroy Kauffman, CC Treasurer, referenced his written report that covers September 1, 2021, through May 31, 2022. He is deeply grateful for those that provide resources. He noted that although revenue is less than hoped for, expenses are down also.

4. Nominations. Steve Carpenter, Chair of Gifts Discernment, reported that he has "termed out" and Howard Miller, pastor at Huntington Mennonite in Newport News, VA is joining the committee. Glen Kauffman, committee member, will serve as chair. Steve introduced the current slate of candidates: Jim Hershberger, second three-year term as secretary and Theresa Shifflett, second three-year term on the Congregational Life Commission. There are still vacancies on Gifts Discernment and Congregational Life, and he invited suggestions to fill these roles.

Vote Results: Jim Hershberger was affirmed for another 3-year term as CC Secretary and Theresa Shifflett was affirmed for another 3-year term on the Congregational Life Commission.

5. Blessing Zion Hill Mennonite: James Ackerson, District Minister for Central District, expressed regret that Zion Hill was leaving VMC but is grateful that the separation was amicable. James led in a prayer of blessing for the church.

Session 2 (RE)CLAIMING THE SHARED VISION

Friday, July 15, 1:00 p.m.

1. **Guest Introduction.** Sara introduced these guests and others Rachel Miller, MC USA Ministerial Leadership, Eric Frey Martin, MMN Constituency Engagement Representative, Bob Yoder, AMBS Development Director, Lana Miller, Everence Stewardship Consultant, Pam Miller, Pleasant View Inc, Development Director, Luke Schrock-Hurst, MCC, Paul Layman, Eastern Mennonite School, David Gingerich, VMissions Congregational Representative, Elwood Yoder, VMC Historian.
2. **Music and Worship.** Chad Miller and Mackenzie Miller, Leaders
3. **Stories**
 - **MC USA Report Back** VMC delegates to the MC USA special assembly, Mary Beth Moore, Marian Buckwalter, Andrew Cheung and Andrew Buckwalter Fairfield shared stories of their engagement at the assembly.
 - **Vision for Youth** Moriah Hurst reported that the Youth Council has been keeping youth events going with a view toward a larger goal of fully incorporating youth, ages 16-25 in VMC. She pointed out that this level of engagement does not just happen, it needs education, mentoring and cultivation to flourish.
 - **Racial Justice Task Force** Caleb Schrock-Hurst, RJTF director, referenced his recent trip to Mennonite World Conference in Indonesia as an illustration of how the Anabaptist understandings of following Jesus can transform cultural barriers of fear and mistrust into bridges of understanding. RJTF has engaged with most Districts in the IDI training. The task force has sponsored and are planning several racial justice events in the Harrisonburg area and beyond. Much of the RJTF work falls into the following actions:
 1. Change the narrative, speak the truth
 2. Stay hopeful, this is long-term work
 3. Be uncomfortable, stand with the least
 4. Prioritize proximity

Following Caleb's presentation, the table groups convened to reflect on 3 questions: What resources and actions are your faith community involved in? How is your faith community taking advantage of proximity? What barriers is God calling you to cross and what is preventing you from crossing them.
4. **Reflection and Scripture, Mary Beth Moore, Lori Friesen.** Mary Beth led a guided reflection on Luke 10:1-9 and invited the group to imagine themselves as one of the 70 that was sent out or as one of the villagers. Lori asked the group to consider how we have become sidetracked from the primary mission of sharing the good news with neighbors, near and far. Do we see ourselves as gatekeepers or emissaries of good news.
5. **Table groups spent an hour or so reflecting on the scripture and reflections.**

Session 3 (RE)NEWING RELATIONSHIP

Saturday, July 16 8:30 A.m.

1. **Welcome and prayer** Sara welcomed the group with Psalm 133: “How very good it is...” and shared some of her call to moderator. Some would characterize the role with the metaphorical expression “stepping into minefield”. Although there have been many challenges, Sara sees the space, not as a terrain with hidden dangers but as a place too discover a hidden treasure trove. She concluded by asking persons to voice single words or short phrases that represented valuable take-aways from the assembly. Sara closed by acknowledging the indigenous folk who once lived on this land and had prayer.
2. **Strategic Plan Action Steps** Sara Bixler, FLC Cluster Leader of Ordained Teachers, outlined the strategic plan action steps that FLC is recommending for faith communities, Districts and assembly planners and encouraged engagement with them. (See Attachment)
3. **Interim Conference Leadership Team (CLT)** CLT members, Caleb Schrock-Hurst (expanded role as RJTF leader), June Miller (Director of Communication and Administration), Craig Maven (Church Relations), Maren Hange, (Formation and Soul Care), Bishop Leslie Francisco, (Diversity and Inclusion) and Duane Beck, (Consulting with Pastors) shared a brief statement of call and vision. The team will be meeting in August to finalize assignments.
4. **Music and Worship.** Chad Miller, Mackenzie Miller and Crista Hoover, leaders.
5. **Reflection and Scripture** Lori reviewed her presentations and expressed her hope that VMC can go forward, without baggage, with urgency and a spirit of healing and being with, proclaiming “The Kingdom of God has come near to you”.
6. **Table Groups** The table groups convened to discuss what was presented.
7. **Commissioning**
8. **Music and Worship** Chad Miller, Mackenzie Miller and Crista Hoover, leaders.
9. **Closing**

Submitted by Michael Shenk, III

Gifts Discernment Nominees

Andrew Buckwalter Fairfield

Moderator-Elect February 4, 2023 – August 31, 2023

Moderator September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2025



Conference Council Officers are elected by delegates.

Hello my kindred in Christ,

I was born and raised in Rockingham County; some of my earliest memories are of Park View Mennonite Church and the friends I made there. I attended Eastern Mennonite High School and then Goshen College, graduating in the spring of 2007 with majors in Spanish and Bible & Religion and in the summer marrying Molly Buckwalter, one of those friends from Park View.

By 2010 we'd been married long enough for Mennonite Central Committee to consider taking us on as service workers, and we shipped out to China under a secondary organization, Mennonite Partners in China. There we were trained to teach English at the college level for students whose English abilities were very adept at taking tests but very inexperienced at actually communicating. After two years of teaching in Sichuan Province, MCC and MPC kindly gave us a six-month hiatus to study Mandarin full-time at the Sichuan University of Finance and Economics in Chendgu. After that, our third year of service was spent in Nanjing volunteering to provide translation and English-language communications for Wang Xuefu, a Christian psychotherapist and author whose work at healing generational trauma in Chinese churches has been supported by MCC.

Before China I had begun classes at Eastern Mennonite Seminary. As we prepared to return in 2013 I applied to a variety of schools to finish my MDiv, and finally settled on Princeton Theological Seminary. At that point I had about a decade of Mennonite education under my belt, and thought I might serve the Church better with at least a bit of exposure to other denominations. After 2 years I had finished my degree but Molly was halfway through hers, so we moved to Menno House on 19th St. in Manhattan for her to complete her Master of Public Administration at New York University. We had our first child, Simon, in New York that fall. In the spring Molly graduated and that summer we moved to Christiansburg, Virginia, where I have served as pastor for the five years since. Here we have been joined by a daughter, Sarah, in 2018, and a second son, Moses, this year.

It's an honor to be asked to serve as Moderator-Elect for Virginia Mennonite Conference. It's a conference that I grew up in, that I have a great deal of affection for and loyalty to. I've seen so much Kingdom work done through VMC, and experienced so many joyful moments. I realize there are plenty of folks who've had much more negative experiences than I, but if I can be a small part of building VMC towards its "higher calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14) then I am eager for the task.

God's grace be with you all,
Andrew Buckwalter Fairfield

Steve Pardini**Congregational Life Commission, Chair**

Term September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2025



CLC members are selected by delegates

Steve Pardini has a Doctorate in Physical Chemistry and worked for 37 years as a material scientist. After retirement, Steve entered Eastern Mennonite Seminary, where he graduated with an MDiv degree in the Spring of 2022. Steve enjoys engaging as a scientist with biblical and theological questions. Steve is a member of Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, where he is a lay leader and teaches adult discipleship classes. He is also active in the Virginia

Mennonite Conference where he currently serves as Co-chair of the Harrisonburg District Executive Committee. Steve has been married to his wife Deb for 31 years and they have three grown children.

Gwen Lantz**Congregational Life Commission**

Term September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2025



CLC members are selected by delegates

Gwen Lantz enjoys life in Harrisonburg, VA where she works as a part-time school librarian, Airbnb operator, writer, and family coordinator. She has a Master's degree in Education with a School Library certification. Gwen enjoys gardening, keeping chickens, hanging out with her family and writing. She is a mother of two and is married to Doug Lantz. She is a member at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Conference Council Appointee

Debbie Katz

Gifts Discernment Committee

Term September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2025

GDC members are appointed by Conference Council.



As I write this bio I'm preparing to enter my fifth year as the High School Counselor at Eastern Mennonite School. When I was hired it was an answer to years of prayer. I thoroughly enjoy being at EMS and supporting students, caregivers and faculty and staff. In addition to my school counseling duties I service on the chapel planning committee and the racial equity group. My previous professional positions were in mental health at various capacities ranging from counseling high-risk middle/high school students, facilitating prevention trainings (suicide, bullying and mental health), prescreening in emergency services and crisis stabilization. In addition I've held positions in child protective services as a social worker conducting investigations and case management to forensic interviewing and managing crisis hotline calls. I have a MSW and am working to LCSW.

I was born in Ethiopia and in 1975 my family immigrated to the United States. I've lived in various states since first arriving in Michigan. In 1998 I became a US Citizen along with my family members. At the age of 13 I gave my life to Christ and committed to forming a relationship with and deepening my faith. Since high school I've been involved in some form of ministry. I started out being an elementary Sunday school teacher and loved sharing Christ with little ones. Then I progressed to being a middle and high school sponsor or youth leader. Off and on over the years I did not stray too far from teaching Sunday school from elementary to high school. Currently I'm on the Board of Elders at Lindale Mennonite Church and just finished a term with a ministry response team for a summer intern. I also have the privilege of being on a search committee for a youth pastor and for the past couple of years I've been helping on the special events committee. For one year I've been the secretary for Northern District executive team.

I have two daughters ages 16 Hanna and 14 Samara who have embraced their teenage years with joy. I am excited to serve on the Gifts Discernment Committee in order to grow spiritually and use my giftings to help others to spread the good news of Christ.

VMC Bylaws Article III *REVISION*

*Revised by Constitution and Bylaws Committee 11/4/22
Approved for delegate action by Conference Council 11/17/22*

ARTICLE III: ASSEMBLY

Section 1. Composition of Delegate Body

1.1 Congregationally-appointed delegates; Congregationally appointed delegates shall be selected on the basis of one delegate for each 100 members or fraction thereof.

Congregations may send a youth delegate (ages 16-21) in addition to the delegates determined by their membership number. Substitutes ~~delegates~~ are allowed, provided they are appointed by an appropriate congregational ~~body representative and not the involved congregational delegate.~~

1.2 Ordained and licensed ministers and deacons actively serving in the pastoral ministry of Conference congregations or "Congregations in Formation" (alternates for credentialed leaders are not permitted);

1.3 Persons commissioned for pastoral ministry in their congregation with endorsement by the oversight leader;

1.4 Up to four members from each district council executive committee who are not otherwise delegates;

1.5 Active oversight leaders serving Virginia Conference;

1.6 Persons licensed or ordained by Conference and active in special ministries who are not members of a special ministries cluster; if designated as delegates by their respective district councils;

1.7 One delegate for every ten members or fraction thereof from each special ministries cluster;

1.8 One delegate from each Conference Ministry and Conference Endorsed Ministry;

1.9 Members of Conference Council;

1.10 Non-credentialed members of the Faith and Life Commission;

1.11 Conference Staff Officers as non-voting participants.

Section 2. Delegate Terms

Congregational delegates will typically serve three-year terms coinciding with the Conference year or as specified by the sending congregation. Delegates are eligible for reappointment.

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.

Section 4. Duties of Delegates

4.1 Attend all meetings of the Conference Assembly and their respective district councils;

4.2 Share perspectives in accordance with biblical principles;

4.3 Represent the convictions of their constituents faithfully;

4.4 Provide reports and promote decisions to their respective congregations, districts, agencies and boards;

4.5 Perform other duties as assigned by the Conference Council.

51
52 Section 5. Meetings

53 Conference Assembly shall convene a minimum of twice annually at times and places
54 determined by Conference Council. Special sessions may be called by Conference Council.
55 Delegates shall have a minimum of thirty days' written notice for all Assembly meetings.
56

57 Section 6. Motions

58 Delegates may submit motion(s) for consideration by assembled delegates, via Conference
59 Council, in advance of Assembly or the Winter Delegate Session. All motions must be signed
60 by at least 3 delegates and be received by the moderator no later than the day before
61 Conference Council meets. Motions made from the floor may be received for consideration
62 but may only be acted upon at the next delegate assembly.
63

64 Section 7. Decision Making

65 7.1 Each delegate shall be eligible to cast one vote. There is no provision for proxy voting.
66 7.2 A majority of votes cast shall determine any matter, except when the Assembly agrees
67 otherwise or when otherwise provided in the Constitution or By-Laws.
68 7.3 Forty percent (40%) of delegates shall constitute a quorum. Approval of actions shall
69 require a simple majority of those present.

VMC Bylaws Article II *REVISION*

*Revised by Constitution and Bylaws Committee 11/4/22
Approved for delegate action by Conference Council 11/17/22*

ARTICLE II: OFFICERS

Section 1. Elected Officers

Conference officers shall be:

- 1.1 Moderator;
- 1.2 Moderator-Elect;
- 1.3 Secretary;
- 1.4 Treasurer.

These officers shall be elected by Conference Assembly from a ballot presented by the Gifts Discernment Committee of Conference.

Section 2. Terms of Office

Terms of office shall be two years for the moderator and moderator-elect, and three years for the treasurer and secretary. The treasurer and secretary may serve a maximum of two consecutive full terms. Terms of office shall coincide with the Conference year.

Section 3. Duties

3.1 The moderator shall:

- 3.1.1 Act for the purposes of Conference as “president” to perform generally accepted functions of the office of president on behalf of the Virginia Mennonite Conference.
 - a. Convening the moderator-elect and secretary in order to carry out the designed duties of the Conference Council Executive Committee, delineated in Article VIII, Sections 1.1.1. and 1.1.2;
 - b. Providing counsel to the Executive Conference Minister on leadership, legal, and personnel matters facing the Conference.
- 3.1.2 Assist the Conference in determining and articulating vision and mission;
 - a. Initiating a discernment process with Conference Council periodically to review the vision and mission of the Conference;
 - b. Communicating the vision and mission through written presentations in Conference publications, i.e. Pathways and the Annual Report.
- 3.1.3 Serve as a spokesperson for Conference;
 - a. Articulating the strategic initiatives and official policies of the Conference to constituency upon request by a District or congregation;
 - b. Encouraging the Faith and Life Commission and credentialed ministers in their respective roles within the Conference.
- 3.1.4 Preside over all sessions of Conference Council and Conference Assembly.
 - a. Reviewing and being familiar with the agenda and supporting documents for Conference Council members and Delegates;
 - b. Reviewing the minutes of Conference Council and Conference Assembly for accuracy of information and experience;
 - c. Conducting the Delegate Assembly as Moderator within the stated procedures of the Conference.

3.1.5 Serve as a member of the Mennonite Church USA Constituency Leaders Council by:

- a. Attending and representing Virginia Mennonite Conference by providing counsel consistent with Conference discernments.

3.2 The moderator-elect shall:

~~3.2.1 Act for the purposes of Conference as “vice president” to perform generally accepted functions of the office of vice president on behalf of the Virginia Mennonite Conference.~~

3.2.1 Serve as a member of Conference Council and its Executive Committee.

3.2.2 Provide counsel to the moderator;

3.2.3 Substitute for the moderator in the moderator’s absence;

3.2.4 Chair meetings at the request of the moderator;

3.2.5 Serve as ex-officio member of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

3.3 The secretary shall:

3.3.1 Keep and distribute accurate minutes of all proceedings of Conference Council, Conference Assembly and other conference-related meetings;

3.3.2 Correspond on behalf of Conference as requested by Conference Council.

3.4 The treasurer shall:

3.4.1 Chair the Conference Finance Committee;

3.4.2 Regularly review investment decisions for conference assets.

3.4.3 Provide financial advice and reports to Conference Council and Assembly as requested.

Section 4. Staff Officers

4.1 Executive Conference Minister

The Conference Council shall appoint an Executive Conference Minister reporting to the conference moderator, with term, responsibilities and compensation as established by Conference Council. The Executive Conference Minister shall exercise general supervision over the administration, financial matters and fundraising, while also serving as a resource to conference overseers and pastors and shall provide staff services for the Faith and Life Commission, and other conference standing committees.

4.2 Virginia Mennonite Missions (VMM) President

VMM shall appoint a president reporting to the Chair of the board, with term, responsibilities and compensation as established by the VMM board. The VMM president shall serve as the Chief Executive Officer of VMM. The VMM president shall provide staff services to VMM, the mission commission of Virginia Mennonite Conference.

VMC Bylaws Article IV *REVISION*

*Revised by Constitution and Bylaws Committee 11/4/22
Approved for delegate action by Conference Council 11/17/22*

ARTICLE IV: CONFERENCE COUNCIL

Section 1. Composition

Conference Council shall consist of:

- 1.1 The elected Conference officers;
- 1.2 One representative from each district council executive committee (which may include officers);
- ~~1.3 The chair and secretary from each commission. Exceptions to having these officers serve in this capacity require specific action of the commission;~~
- 1.4 Virginia Conference representatives to the Constituency Leaders Council of Mennonite Church USA;
- ~~1.5 A substitute when a member is unable to attend;~~
- 1.6 ~~3~~ Staff officers The Executive Conference Minister serving as a non-voting participants participant;
- ~~1.7 Heads of Conference Ministries invited as non-voting participants.~~
- 1.4 An Oversight Leader selected by the Faith and Life Commission.
- 1.5 Two at-large members.

Section 2. Selection

District representative and at-large members of Conference Council shall be:

- 2.1 Nominated by a Governance Committee consisting of the Executive Conference Minister, the Moderator, and three Conference Council members approved by Conference Council, following consultation with and approval by their respective district councils;
- ~~2.2 Selected through consultation with and approval by their respective district councils;~~
- 2.2 Selected for specific skills desired for the Conference Council;
- 2.3 Selected for diversity with a goal of: 50% representation by gender, 25% persons of color, 25% under 40 years of age.
- 2.4 Conference Council shall approve nominations provided by the Governance Committee.

Section 2 ~~3~~. Personal Qualifications

Conference Council members shall be:

- ~~23.1~~ Fully committed to Jesus Christ, the church and congregational life;
- ~~23.2~~ Persons of vision, spiritual discernment, maturity and leadership;
- ~~23.3~~ Knowledgeable of their district, its congregations and programs;
- ~~23.4~~ Positive in attitude toward the Mennonite Church, Virginia Mennonite Conference, and their districts;
- ~~23.5~~ Willing to devote the time required by the assignment including attendance at meetings;
- ~~23.6~~ Able to work effectively collaboratively with bishops district ministers, overseers oversight leaders, district chairpersons, congregational leadership and their colleagues;
- ~~2.7~~ Able to contribute creatively and productively to the work of Conference Council;

~~2.8 Skillful in communication;~~

~~2.9~~ 3.7 Able to work in contexts of diversity.

3.8 Active participants in their district councils with expectation of regular reporting.

Section 4. Terms

District representative and at-large members of Conference Council shall serve:

4.1 Three-year terms with a recommended maximum of two consecutive terms.

Section 3 5. Corporate Duties

Conference Council as a corporate unit shall:

~~3.5.1~~ 5.1 Serve as the ~~executive body~~ governing board of Conference, holding legal and fiduciary responsibilities;

~~3.5.2~~ 5.2 Act as the “operational body” for VMC personnel and VMC property/real estate acquisition and disposition;

~~3.5.3~~ 5.3 Project vision, define direction and promote unity in coordinating the work of Conference;

~~3.5.4~~ 5.4 Decide what issues shall be brought to Conference Assembly;

~~3.5.5~~ 5.5 Define the functions, responsibilities and lines of accountability of conference officers, commissions and conference committees;

5.6 Approve policies of the Conference;

5.7 Develop task forces to achieve ministry objectives;

~~3.6~~ 5.8 Provide for staffing of Conference;

5.9 In consultation with Faith and Life Commission, hire, support, and terminate the Executive Conference Minister;

5.10 Following the triennial performance review of the Executive Conference Minister (initiated by the Executive Committee and led by the Chair of the Faith and Life Commission), provide an Executive Summary to the delegates.

~~3.7~~ 5.11 Facilitate the work of Conference Assembly between sessions;

~~3.8~~ 5.12 Arrange for an inspirational component of Conference Assembly;

~~3.9~~ 5.13 Prepare the agenda for business meetings of Conference Assembly;

~~3.10~~ 5.14 Receive reports from commissions, Conference-related ministries, and agencies;

~~3.11~~ 5.15 Evaluate the work of Conference commissions and agencies annually;

~~3.12~~ 5.16 Develop plans to meet the financial needs of Conference, including adoption and supervision of the annual budget;

~~3.13~~ 5.17 Prepare minutes for Conference Assembly delegates to review and approve;

~~3.14~~ 5.18 Commission three representatives (typically including the Moderator and Executive Conference Minister) to the Constituency Leaders Council of Mennonite Church USA as provided in the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA.

~~3.15~~ 5.19 Appoint Conference based delegates and alternates to the Delegate Assembly of Mennonite Church USA as provided in the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA.

Section 4-6. Meetings

Conference Council shall meet at least quarterly, at least one of those meetings being in-person.

Additional meetings may be called by the moderator and the secretary. All meetings, except for

89 executive sessions, are open for observation. For participation, prior arrangement shall be made with
90 the ~~conference coordinator~~ Moderator.

91 Section ~~5~~ 7. Quorum

92 Two-thirds of the voting members of Conference Council shall be present to constitute a quorum.

93 Actions shall require a seventy-five (75%) affirmative vote of members present for implementation.

94
95 Section ~~6~~ 8. Appeals

96 Conference Council shall serve all conference committees, ministries and subsidiary organizations as a

97 final level of appeal. Congregations desiring counsel, assistance or resolution shall first contact their

98 respective district councils. When resolution is not achieved at this level, the congregation may appeal

99 to Conference Council through the officers of Conference Council. Such appeals must be supported by at

100 least five members or ten percent (10%) of the congregation, whichever is greater. The officers of

101 Conference Council will determine further processing of appeals including consultation with appropriate

102 commissions and district councils.

VMC District Councils Constitution Article VI *REVISION*

Revised by Constitution and Bylaws Committee 11/4/22
Approved for delegate action by Conference Council 11/17/22

ARTICLE VI: DISTRICT COUNCILS

All member congregations shall participate in a district council which serves as a regional administrative unit of Conference. District councils shall include all ordained and licensed leaders exercising active assignments recognized by Conference, congregational delegates to Conference Assembly, and additional persons as determined by each district council. Each district shall be represented on Conference Council by a member of the district council executive committee as determined by the respective district council **as determined in the VMC bylaws.**

Virginia Mennonite Conference
Unrestricted Operations
For fiscal year to date - 9/1/22-11/30/22

	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Variance
1 Revenues			
2 Contributions:			
3 Contributions - Individuals	10,995.00	14,500.03	(3,505.03)
4 Contributions - Congregations	25,565.86	23,250.00	2,315.86
5 Transfer from Conference Assembly			-
6 Bequests			-
7 Total Contributions	36,560.86	37,750.03	(1,189.17)
8 Other income:			-
9 Congregational Membership fees	1,020.00	4,750.03	(3,730.03)
10 Associated Ministries	391.00	750.00	(359.00)
11 Endowments	7,279.67	11,444.06	(4,164.39)
12 Archive reimbursement	62.50	499.97	(437.47)
13 Forwarding fees	345.00	475.03	(130.03)
14 Miscellaneous income	282.31	75.00	207.31
15 Total other income	9,380.48	17,994.09	(8,613.61)
16 TOTAL REVENUES	45,941.34	55,744.12	(9,802.78)
17			
18 Expenses			
19 Salaries and related expenses	40,889.27	39,675.00	(1,214.27)
20 General administration	6,315.64	8,720.06	2,404.42
21 Staff directed offices	2,790.40	3,612.47	822.07
22 General churchwide expenses	-	1,075.03	1,075.03
23 Conference minister's office	964.49	1,900.03	935.54
24 Racial Justice staff	-	500.06	500.06
25 Other expenses	92.76	-	(92.76)
26 Total expenses	51,052.56	55,482.65	4,430.09
27			
28 Net income	(5,111.22)	261.47	(5,372.69)

Virginia Mennonite Conference
Unrestricted Operations
For fiscal year 9/1/21-8/31/22

	Actual	Budget	Variance
1 Revenues			
2 Contributions:			
3 Contributions - Individuals	45,902.21	58,000.00	(12,097.79)
4 Contributions - Congregations	101,676.85	93,000.00	8,676.85
5 Transfer from Conference Assembly	1,889.42		1,889.42
6 Bequests	825.00		825.00
7 Total Contributions	150,293.48	151,000.00	(706.52)
8 Other income:			-
9 Congregational Membership fees	14,720.00	19,000.00	(4,280.00)
10 Associated Ministries	4,188.52	3,000.00	1,188.52
11 Endowments	35,987.60	45,776.00	(9,788.40)
12 Archive reimbursement	1,962.50	2,000.00	(37.50)
13 Forwarding fees	1,515.00	1,900.00	(385.00)
14 Miscellaneous income	736.12	300.00	436.12
15 Total other income	59,109.74	71,976.00	(12,866.26)
16 TOTAL REVENUES	209,403.22	222,976.00	(13,572.78)
17			
18 Expenses			
19 Salaries and related expenses	161,692.89	158,700.00	(2,992.89)
20 General administration	31,579.49	34,880.00	3,300.51
21 Staff directed offices	9,773.82	14,450.00	4,676.18
22 General churchwide expenses	1,651.20	4,300.00	2,648.80
23 Conference minister's office	3,162.85	7,600.00	4,437.15
24 Racial justice staff	90.59	2,000.00	1,909.41
25 other expenses	338.81	-	(338.81)
26 Total expenses	208,289.65	221,930.00	13,640.35
27			
28 Net income	1,113.57	1,046.00	67.57

Strategic Plans: History and Mystery

Strategic planning, which came into common business use in the 1960's, is **a process in which an organization defines its vision for the future and identifies its organizational goals and objectives**. The process often establishes the sequence in which those goals should be realized.

Once a strategic plan is created, the next step is—you guessed it—an action plan. An action plan puts your strategy into the heads, hearts, and hands of the people who will make a real, measurable difference by implementing your strategic plan

Strategic planning is not limited to secular organizations. Here is the timeline for the origin and next steps of VMC's Strategic Plan:

June 2020 - A Strategic Plan was developed and recommended to the delegates of VMC by a Task Force comprised of James Akerson, Deb Horst, Moriah Hurst, Clyde Kratz, Armando Sanchez, David Brubaker (facilitator), with input from Pearl Hartman & Aldine Musser during sabbaticals of Deb Horst and Moriah Hurst.

February 2, 2021 - Following a few suggested revisions the Plan was adopted at our Winter Delegate Assembly. The VMC Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Values Statement were included in the motion adopting the 5 Priority Goals (2021 - 2025), which can be accessed on the VMC website at virginiaconference.org, under Resources.

November 10, 2022 - The Faith and Life Commission, which had been asked to develop Action Plans for the 22 Objectives for the 5 Goals, delivered them to Conference Council as requested.

February 4, 2023 (Our Winter Delegate Session) - A sample of the completed action plans will be introduced to the delegates, along with a spontaneous expression for their need, heard from one of our pastors.

Because of other urgent business at our Winter Delegate Session, we will not have time to present and discuss the Action Plans in full, but you will see an example or two of how they will work and hear from a pastor regarding how eager they are for these aids in implementing our Goals.

Spring and Summer, 2023: The Faith and Life Commission will oversee dissemination of the various Action Plans to appropriate individuals and organizations within the Conference, monitor responses, and suggest adjustments.

Joe Longacher, for the VMC Faith and Life Commission

the exchange

A Virginia Mennonite Conference congregation that has been part of Northern District, the exchange, located in Winchester and pastored by Chris Scott has informed us that they are moving their membership from VMC to Allegheny Conference. We have had the privilege of walking and working with Chris through the church planting and congregation-in-formation stages of their development and growth.

In a letter to the District ministers and Sara Wenger Shenk on June 19, 2022 they stated that, “we believe it is time for the exchange to exit Virginia Mennonite Conference as a congregation and realign our community with the Allegheny Conference. Allegheny seems like a much better fit for the exchange. At the exchange, we support the full inclusion of LGBTQIA persons in our church’s whole life, ministry and ordinances. It does not seem that VMC does, or ever will”.

The conference leadership’s slow, or lack of processing the implications of the resolutions passed in Kansas City in May is also cited as a reason for their decision to leave at this point. “Esteem for those of us who hold progressive views is virtually non-existent in VMC”. The letter also describes painful relationships they have experienced within VMC that included name-calling.

The letter concludes by stating, “we don’t see anything changing in VMC’s exclusionary approach to our LGBTQIA siblings, and so this is where the road divides for us to authentically be the congregation that God is calling the exchange to be. We have loved our time in Virginia Conference, but it would not be in anyone’s interest for us to remain. Our leaving is a move from pastoral faithfulness and ministry commitment. Listening to the Holy Spirit is what causes us to go. Thank you for the support and connection. We wish you well”.

Chris shared at our last Northern District meeting on behalf of the congregation. In response, we gathered around Chris (and the exchange) and offered prayers of support, lament and blessing.

Conference Council has processed this information and will provide time and space at the Winter Delegate Assembly to acknowledge the ministry of the exchange in VMC and offer prayers of support, lament and blessing.

Dave King, Northern District Chairperson