

**Proposed Virginia Mennonite Conference Strategic Plan  
For the Four Years from July 2021 to June 2025  
Affirmed by Conference Council June 30, 2020**

**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.*

**Vision Statement:**

*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.*

As disciples in Virginia Mennonite Conference, we embrace faith with action as both biblical and faithful. We nurture community and individual relationships; we practice mutual accountability to one another. We strive to become people of peace and support patterns of peacemaking among us. We challenge ourselves to speak of our hope in Jesus Christ in all settings and engage in missional outreach. We extend mutual aid to congregations and peoples in and outside of the Conference.

**Values Statements:**

As Virginia Mennonite Conference, we value...

- *Worship that celebrates the transformative power of God*
- *Listening and learning together in communities of discernment*
- *Discernment that includes Biblical and theological discourse*
- *Ethical conduct*
- *Service to others and compassionate care that brings healing and builds peace*
- *Diversity of cultures and peoples, and various expressions of faith within an Anabaptist perspective.*
- *Partnership with Mennonite Church USA and other Christian groups*

**Priority Goals:**

For the next five years (2021-2025), we propose the following goals to achieve our mission and vision...

1. *To renew relationships with God, each other, and creation*
2. *To engage in missional outreach*
3. *To support leaders and multiple modes of ministry while adapting to new realities.*
4. *To hear the voices and welcome the leadership of people of color, the differently-abled, women, and youth*
5. *To provide mutual aid or counsel to struggling congregations*

## **Goal 1: To renew relationships with God, with each other, and with creation**

### Objectives:

- 1.1 Identify a Bible study or theme verse each year for common study by all congregations in the conference. For the first year, we recommend John 1:1-14.
- 1.2 Include a time of discernment for every major conference or district decision-making process, ideally in a setting that includes times of informal fellowship, spiritual reflection, and immersion in nature.
- 1.3 Organize a “sibling congregation” program that matches each congregation in the conference with another congregation in the same or a differing district. The paired congregations would be asked to plan one joint gathering each year, ideally in a natural setting.
- 1.4 Utilize MCUSA resources for renewing relationship with creation. This would serve to build relationships among pastors from multiple districts.

## **Goal 2: To engage in missional outreach**

### Objectives:

- 2.1 Practice the discipline of listening to God and the Holy Spirit to discern where God is at work in our own and other communities.
- 2.2 Assist each member to speak of the reason for their faith, and encourage each member to share the story of their faith journey and its development in a Sunday School or small group setting.
- 2.3 Nurture a culture of evangelism and instill it in everything that congregations do—their vision, their budget, their staff, and programs starting with children and youth.
- 2.4 Train every believer to make disciples, using programs from Virginia Mennonite Mission’s [Cultivate](#) Discovery Bible Studies, and Mennonite Mission Network’s [Missional Discipleship Initiative](#) and [Sent Network](#).
- 2.5 Design new rhythms within congregations to encourage outreach efforts. Begin by evaluating if existing programs are producing fruit of multiplication or just maintenance.
- 2.6 Embrace participation in existing global missional programs that are effective, from both VMissions and MMN.

## **Goal 3: To support leaders and multiple modes of ministry while adapting to new realities**

### Objectives:

- 3.1 Equip *credentialed leaders* with an orientation to the Conference, ministry assessment tools, resource events that focus on ministry formation, publicize inner healing and deliverance ministry opportunities and mandate continuing education.

- 3.2 Provide opportunity for all *credentialed leaders* (pastors, special ministries, youth ministries) to be involved in resourcing, discernments, and conference life.
- 3.3 Provide an orientation to *delegates* to better understand the role of Conference and to establish effective decision-making processes for delegates at Conference Assemblies.
- 3.4 Equip *lay leaders* through resources and networking to fulfill their congregation's vision and mission.
- 3.5 Develop a *working group* to identify, encourage, and begin to equip, future congregational pastors for ministry within VMC and the denomination.

**Goal 4: To hear the voices and welcome the leadership of people of color, the differently-abled, women, and youth**

Objectives:

- 4.1 Name the culture of Virginia Mennonite Conference that has historically privileged white men in leadership and tolerated systemic racism; and commit to building a diverse and inclusive culture.
- 4.2 Use the goal of welcoming diverse leadership as a guide to choose future moderators, task forces, committees, and conference minister to work in mutual relationship.
- 4.3 Encourage districts and congregations to choose their delegates with Objective 4.2 in mind and provide networking opportunities for how they are meeting this objective.
- 4.4 Choose accessible buildings for the differently-abled, provide translation for non-English speakers, sign language for the deaf, and table guidelines for the table leaders.
- 4.5 Choose two or more youth to expose them to Assembly one year and then extend an invitation to serve as a delegate the next year.

**Goal 5: To provide mutual aid or counsel to congregations desiring help**

Objectives:

- 5.1 Encourage Districts to form a Congregational Support Task Force (CSTF) to assist congregations in need. The District Minister, the District Chair, and the Executive Conference Minister shall recommend to congregational leaders a CSTF. The purpose of the task force will be to create resource assessments, respond to specific needs for a congregation, and oversee the administration of support.
- 5.2 Tasks of the Congregational Support Task Force:
  - Meet together to discuss requests prior to meeting with a congregation in question.
  - As with a deaconal needs assessment, meet with the requesting congregational representatives to discuss not only their request but also learn about the financial, social, and historical backdrop of the congregation.

- Meet together to discuss the facets of the presenting situation and underlying factors. Consider the congregation's transparency and cooperation with the assessment discussion. Decide whether to move forward with steps of assistance.
- In cooperation with the congregation, create a set of recommended steps for betterment of the underlying situation.
- Oversee the administration of support and implementation of the improvement steps or recommend a specific mission support team to do so.

*Respectfully Submitted to the Conference Council by Members of the Strategic Planning Task Force: James Akerson, Deb Horst, Moriah Hurst, Clyde Kratz, Armando Sanchez, David Brubaker (facilitator), with input from Pearl Hartman and Aldine Musser during sabbaticals of Deb Horst and Moriah Hurst.*