

To Conference Council
June 30, 2020

Recently we have seen the public reckoning in our culture about racism. This public outcry by the African American community to all of us including the faith community has led many of us to assess our own culpability and reflect on our acts of omission for not doing more to work on anti-racism. Following the writing of my own personal letter, it became clear to me that I welcomed a conversation with leaders representing people of color within our Conference to learn about their experiences and their desire in light of the outcries being heard around the country.

At my request, Alicia Manning, a member of C3, facilitated a conversation with leaders representing people of color on Juneteenth. Elroy Miller, moderator, Joe Longacher, chair of the Faith and Life Commission, and I listened to these brothers and sisters discuss their experiences and aspirations. As a result of this conversation, Alicia constructed a letter to the Conference Council and the Delegates of Virginia Mennonite Conference representing this conversation. The report is enclosed "Race Relationships within Virginia Mennonite Conference." It is my desire for the Conference Council to take an action to receive this report and embrace the actions recommended by this group of leaders representing people of color within our Conference.

While I made a personal statement about my learning as a leader, it does not represent the Conference Council's commitment to similar resolve to work against racism by embracing anti-racism. I invited Elroy and Joe to draft a statement that could potentially represent the Conference Council's commitment to anti-racism. This draft letter "Proposed statement from the Conference Council of Virginia Mennonite Conference" is the beginning of Virginia Mennonite Conference's move to pledge to work to become a Conference that demonstrates respect, equality, and inclusion for people of color. It is my hope that Conference Council members can take this challenge seriously, contribute to embracing this future, and take actions that can be shared with the delegate body as our governing board's commitment to anti-racism.

As members of the Conference Council, I am appealing to your sense of communal justice on behalf of our brothers and sisters representing people of color among us. It is my desire and hopefully our desire to make a profoundly bold statement that we support "Black Lives Matter" and work for a more just and equitable culture.

Shalom,

Clyde G. Kratz
Executive Conference Minister