



Welcome to delegates and friends of Virginia Mennonite Conference!

On July 18, 2020, you are invited to attend our Summer Delegate Assembly “Living As Those Made Alive In Christ.”

Our theme is of utmost importance in the time we are living. Over the last number of months, we have lived into the uncertainty of a pandemic COVID-19. This medical crisis has placed us on high alert concerning our interactions with other people and has led to physical distancing. With the necessity for physical distancing, meetinghouses, businesses, educational institutions, and not-for-profit organizations have closed their facilities. This has also impacted economic realities. In the midst of these challenges, there is a public reckoning on how Black lives have been unjustly impacted by systemic racism—which is reflected in unjust social and economic policy towards African Americans and Black immigrants.

“Living As Those Made Alive In Christ” theme was generated by the Vision Team of Debra King, Aaron Kauffman, Jim Hershberger, Luke Schrock-Hurst, and Clyde Kratz. The vision for our Assembly is based on Colossian 3:12-17.

*<sup>12</sup>As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. <sup>13</sup>Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup>Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup>And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

As the challenges of a pandemic were new in our minds, we saw the value in the importance of reflecting on the necessity of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience as we began to navigate the unknown impact of the pandemic. The writer of the book of Colossians offered an account of instruction to the Colossian faith community, and the message resonated with our 21<sup>st</sup> century need to imagine ways that we shall relate to people in the midst of uncertainty, demands for adaptations, and the unknown realities that were unfolding right before our eyes. This vision has been a guide for my own adaptations in the midst of the unfolding challenges of the three simultaneous crises: the pandemic, economic realities, and the crisis of a public cultural reckoning with our past as it relates to people of color.

An important part of our goal in planning the Delegate Assembly was to provide an opportunity to celebrate Mennonite Central Committee's 100 year celebration. MCC is known for its international compassionate ministry that has organized our faith community to respond to humanitarian need throughout the world in the name of Christ. It was our desire to showcase the breadth of MCC's work knowing our constituency's affinity for the ministries that grew out of the leadership of MCC. MCC remains a vital presence in many countries. Ron Byler, Executive Director of MCC, has agreed to address our Assembly with two presentations.

Activities of the virtual Assembly include:

- Worship experiences to begin and close each session
- Ron Byler, Executive Director of MCC, will make two presentations
- Missional stories from MCC and emerging congregations
- Commissioning of VM Missions workers and credentialed ministers in new assignments
- Opportunity to make donations to MCC, VM Missions, and Virginia Mennonite Conference
- Strategic Planning Task Force report by David Brubaker
- Race Relationships within Virginia Mennonite Conference, a presentation by Alicia Manning
- Gifts Committee nominations, including Richard Early as moderator for a three-year term

As the impact of physical distancing loomed over our planning, the Vision Team made a decision to plan a virtual Assembly. Jerry Holsopple, Professor of Visual and Communication Arts at Eastern Mennonite University, agreed to provide expertise in developing a program that includes live and prerecorded aspects of our Assembly. Musicians Dr. Ben Bergey, Joel Ross, and Seth Crissman were invited to plan the worship aspect of our assembly by involving members of our congregations in worship activity. Jon Trotter, Communications Manager of Virginia Mennonite Conference, has provided significant technical support to achieve this brand new experience of a virtual Assembly.

On behalf of Virginia Mennonite Conference, I invite you to join us as a **Congregational Delegate** to register on our website (<https://virginiainconference.org/events/conference-assembly-2020/>) whereby you will have access to the Zoom meeting entry data. Additional delegate information will appear on our website for your use. Please make every effort to be familiar with the information provided. As a **friend** of Virginia Mennonite Conference, I invite you to join us on Facebook Live (<https://www.facebook.com/virginiainconference>) on July 18, 2020 beginning at 8:20 a.m. for the beginning of our event.

Shalom,



Clyde G. Kratz  
Executive Conference Minister



Welcome to delegates of Virginia Mennonite Conference!

On July 18, 2020, you are invited to attend our Summer Delegate Assembly “Living As Those Made Alive In Christ,” a virtual assembly.

The idea of a virtual Assembly was a difficult decision, because as a group we value the interactions with leaders from across the Conference. Many of these conversations occur in the foyer of the meetinghouse, walking the aisles between the tables, seated at table groups, and over a meal. We believed it was important for us to meet rather than not meet. The virtual Assembly became the way forward.

The schedule for the day:

- Prelude music – 8:20 a.m.
- Worship
- Ron Byler presentation
- Missional Story
- Strategic Planning Task Force – David Brubaker
- Missional Story
- Gifts Committee Report
- Worship

Break at 10:00 with access to Zoom Rooms for informal fellowship  
10:30 Second Session

- Worship
- Ron Byler presentation
- Missional Story
- VM Missions Report
- Missional Story
- Race Relationships within Virginia Mennonite Conference – Alicia Manning
- Faith and Life Commission Report – Joe Longacher
- Commissioning
- Worship

12:00 End of Virtual Assembly  
Opportunity for informal fellowship via Zoom

As a delegate, there are a number of documents that are on the website that I invite you to be familiar. These documents are:

- **Winter Delegate Assembly Minutes of February 1, 2020.**  
In the event you would like to make a recommended correction, contact Clyde G. Kratz immediately at [clyde.kratz@vmconf.org](mailto:clyde.kratz@vmconf.org) with your recommended change. Clyde will review your recommendation with the Conference Council Executive Committee. The outcome of their review will be reported at the Delegate Assembly.
- **Strategic Planning Task Force Recommendations.** The Strategic Planning Task Force Recommendations have been presented and embraced by Conference Council. David Brubaker will make this presentation. Opportunity will be given for feedback through electronic means via email.
- **Strategic Planning Implementation Process Statement.** David Brubaker provided an overview of the next steps for the Strategic Planning process decisions making and next steps.
- **Welcoming Congregations into Virginia Mennonite Conference.** Conference Council approved two congregations for congregation in formation status and one congregation as a congregation in Virginia Mennonite Conference.
- **Gifts Committee Recommendations for Moderator.**
- **Race Relationships within Virginia Mennonite Conference.** There are two documents on this theme. The first document is an overview by Clyde Kratz concerning the process that led to a meeting with non-white leaders of Conference. The second document is a letter from non-white leaders to Conference Council and Delegates.
- **Commissioning of Leaders.** This document lists the Virginia Mennonite Missions workers and credentialed leaders in a new assignment that will be commissioned.

There will be a number of actions that will be taken as a Delegate Body:

- Approval of the February 1, 2020 Winter Delegate Session minutes
- Strategic Planning Task Force recommendations
- Statement of welcome to two congregations in formation
- Vote to approve Monte Moriah as a congregation
- Gifts Committee recommendations
- Race relationships within Virginia Mennonite Conference

These delegate actions will occur through a Zoom poll process.

Shalom,



Clyde G. Kratz  
Executive Conference Minister

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# “The Unity of the Spirit”

Winter Delegate Session

MINUTES

February 1, 2020

Waynesboro Mennonite Church

1. **Fellowship & Welcome.** After fellowship time at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 1, 2020, Moderator Elroy Miller, at 8:30 a.m. welcomed all who attended 2020 Winter Delegate Session of Virginia Mennonite Conference. Including 109 credentialed and congregational leaders (which met the quorum requirement of 78, or 40% of 195 delegates), a total of 121 signed in.

Host Pastor Clair Good welcomed all to Waynesboro Mennonite Church, provided logistical announcements, and introduced Armando and Veronica Sanchez. Armando and Veronica are pastors of Iglesia Shalom, a church plant also housed in this church building.

2. **Worship:** Northern District Leaders led delegates in worship through singing, a responsive reading, and prayer.
3. **Session 1: “The Unity We Keep”.** Tom Yoder Neufeld, Professor Emeritus at Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo, was keynote speaker. He has also written *Ephesians* (Believers Church Bible Commentary; Herald Press, 2002); *Recovering Jesus: the Witness of the New Testament* (Brazos, 2007); and *Killing Enmity: Violence and the New Testament* (Baker Academic, 2011).

Tom brought greetings from César Garcia, Secretary of Mennonite World Conference, and spoke on the topic of “The Unity We Keep”, using the book of Ephesians. His PowerPoint presentation and video of his messages today will be posted on Virginia Mennonite Conference’s website:

<https://virginiacconference.org/past-events/>

4. **Table Conversations, and Questions and Answer Time.** Delegates at their tables discussed the following questions:
  - What do you see as most challenging in this vision of unity and the role of the Spirit for you and your church?
  - How might this vision help you to see those in your church, whether congregationally or denominationally, with new eyes?

After the table discussions, Tom responded to questions. Themes included:

- Embracing all things is not the same as “universalism”, which is actually a “type of alienation”, where no one does the hard work of evangelism and welcoming.
  - Ephesians reminds us of what God did to bring us in, a welcome we need to pass along.
5. **Minutes from Summer Delegate Session 2019** (attached). After a 30-minute break, Edith Shenk Kuhns, Secretary, highlighted actions taken during Summer Delegate Session 2019 held on July 19 & 20, 2019 at Eastern Mennonite School. Worship was held at Lindale Mennonite Church.

# “The Unity of the Spirit”

Winter Delegate Session

MINUTES

February 1, 2020

Waynesboro Mennonite Church

## **ACTION 1. Delegates revised the minutes from the July 19 & 20, 2019 Summer Delegate Session:**

- “the exchange” “meets at The Hideaway at the south end of Winchester’s walking mall”, not the Hiding Place (page 4, missional story at the bottom of the page)
- Isaac Villegas’s credentials were suspended, not terminated (page 5, #12, first pearl).

## **ACTION 2. Delegates approved the minutes from the July 19 & 20, 2019 Summer Delegate Session as revised above.**

6. **Gifts Discernment Committee Report** (attached): Steve Carpenter, Chair of the Gifts Discernment Committee, distributed a ballot, which delegates completed and returned (see page 6, #12).

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** Moriah Hurst, co-leader of Youth Council, announced the March 13-15, 2020 Senior High Retreat at Highland Retreat; the theme is “Peace I Leave with You; My Peace I Give You.” Informational flyers were also placed on tables.

7. **Strategic Planning Committee Report** (attached). Executive Conference Minister Clyde Kratz introduced Strategic Planning Task Force members: David Brubaker, Facilitator; James Åkerson, District Minister of Central District and Pastor of Beldor Mennonite Church; Deb Horst, Assistant Moderator and Pastor at Lindale Mennonite Church; Moriah Hurst, Pastor at Park View Mennonite Church; and Armando Sanchez, Pastor of Enciende una Luz and Church Planter at Iglesia Shalom.

Moriah introduced “Timmy”, a teak elephant, and encouraged members to ignore him and any other “elephants” in the room and focus on the strategic planning process. She invited participants to share their hopes and dreams for VMC with their neighbors.

Deb and Armando summarized the Task Force’s discussion and learning process, and the themes gleaned from those discussions (see “Report from the Strategic Planning Task Force”).

David stated that the Strategic Planning Task Force completed the listening process (a complete summary will be on the VMC website: <https://virginiacconference.org>), and plans to have VMC’s Strategic Plan ready for Conference Council review in May, and delegate review at Summer Delegate Session 2020, July 16-18, 2020.

# “The Unity of the Spirit”

Winter Delegate Session

MINUTES

February 1, 2020

Waynesboro Mennonite Church

James Åkerson introduced questions for delegates to discuss at their tables:

- Note the five “themes” in the summary report from the Task Force. To what degree do these themes resonate with your experience in Virginia Mennonite Conference?
- What are you hearing that goes beyond these themes?
- What questions does your table have for the Task Force Members?

Task Force members answered questions and heard comments. Themes included:

- Youth Council leaders do not go through the Gifts Discernment Committee process; it is an organic ministry. Might we do more of this?
- It will be disappointing if the way forward does not include youth ministry, cultural and ethnic diversity, and greater support for women in leadership.
- Anyone, including cluster group members, who did not participate in a focus group are encouraged to provide feedback to the Task Force, whose names and contact information are included in the Strategic Planning Task Force report.
- It was noted that focus group participants included lay leaders as well as pastors.
- The Faith and Life Commission should be included in the process.
- One way to work at trust issues is to work at VMC culture.
- Will VMC’s demographics be considered?
- Equipping pastors is good; how might we also work at helping potential leaders hear the call to pastoral leadership?
- Smaller congregations have special needs, and we need to pay attention to those needs.
- It is important to emphasize relationship over structure.
- The next generation expects more clarity and specificity, especially around issues resolution, than VMC’s 25-year-old Bylaws provide.

Armando ended the Strategic Planning Report with prayer.

**Lunch.** Delegates dismissed for lunch at noon; Delegate Session resumed at 1:15 p.m.

8. **Session 2: “The Unity We Seek”.** Tom Yoder Neufeld continued his presentation on unity; the afternoon’s topic was “The Unity We Seek”. How do we walk as Jesus walked? How do we see each other as brothers and sisters in God, and make peace with our brothers and sisters.
9. **Table Conversations, and Questions and Answer Time.** At their tables, delegates discussed the questions:
  - How does the uneasy relationship between inclusion and mutual engagement for faithfulness play out in your experience?
  - How might baptism be made more central to the keeping and seeking of the Spirit’s unity?

# “The Unity of the Spirit”

Winter Delegate Session

MINUTES

February 1, 2020

Waynesboro Mennonite Church

Tom answered questions; themes included:

- Instead of seeking the easy “how”; we need to embrace our imaginations. Our history is the ban, shunning; this is a new way, and it is hard.
- When leaders are asked for our position on an issue, perhaps we can engage the questions, and clarify that we are a people with diverse thoughts.
- This is easy to hear, but very hard to actually do. Romans indicates Paul also struggled with unity, and exhorted, “Welcome as Christ welcomes you.” When our sons and daughters mess up, we help them move on and invite them for Sunday dinner. We don’t say, “You’re not my child anymore.”

10. **Executive Conference Minister Report.** Clyde Kratz, Executive Conference Minister, reported on his work since the July 2019 Delegate Session. He thanked all who participated in the home building for the Walker family, whose West Virginia home was destroyed in a flood. The Walkers received the keys in December, and accepted a wall hanging, letter of blessing, and comforter from Mennonite Women of Virginia.

**Summer Assembly, July 16-18, 2020** will be in the Harrisonburg area. On Thursday, July 16, we will celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mennonite Central Committee, and are considering a Friday evening hymn sing using the new hymnal, *Voices Together*.

Clyde also distributed the **financial report**, which Treasurer Scott Beachy prepared (see attached). VMC ended the 2018-2019 financial year with a deficit of \$21,530, which was balanced by an estate gift of \$22,406. The Finance Committee requested that Clyde consider staffing changes and facility relocation as a way to balance the budget without relying on estate gifts.

The Commonwealth of Virginia passed a new law regarding **mandatory reporters of child abuse**; Clyde is seeking clarity as to how that law applies to VMC’s credentialed leaders in Virginia.

A task force is also working at procedures that would provide greater clarity regarding the **supervision of retirees**.

**Withdrawal of Community Mennonite Church.** Clyde reported that Community Mennonite Church voted (89% in favor) to withdraw from VMC and realign with Allegheny Conference. CMC and VMC worked together at a withdrawal process that included conversation with CMC’s leaders, developing a shared statement from the congregation and Conference, a testimony of the congregation’s contributions to our conference, and a liturgy of transition.

Lead Pastor Jennifer Davis Sensenig introduced CMC members: Jason Gerlach, Pastor; Mike Brislen and Lee Good, representing CMC; Nancy Heisey, representing Eastern Mennonite University; and Veva Zimmerman Mumaw and Lonnie Yoder, representing the Teaching Cluster.



# “The Unity of the Spirit”

Winter Delegate Session

MINUTES

February 1, 2020

Waynesboro Mennonite Church

Clyde and Jennifer read a shared statement from CMC and VMC.

Phil Kniss, Lead Pastor at Park View Mennonite Church and a former pastor at CMC, shared an autobiography of his time at CMC, CMC’s history, and an exhortation to work hard at unity. He expressed immense gratitude for CMC’s 50 years of innovative ministry as a member of VMC.

**Action 3: “We the delegates of Virginia Mennonite Conference acknowledge with regret the withdrawal of Community Mennonite Church from formal membership with VMC. We are grateful for its ministry, and pray that God bless and guide the congregation in its new affiliation.”** **PASSED**

Paula Stoltzfus, Pastor at Park View, led delegates in a litany (attached) honoring Community Mennonite Church’s decision and lamenting their departure.

Elwood Yoder (Zion Mennonite Church Delegate, and History and Bible Teacher at Eastern Mennonite School) and Harvey Yoder (Pastor of Family of Hope) expressed gratitude for CMC’s ministry as well. Elwood also thanked Lee Good, Science Teacher at Eastern Mennonite Middle and High Schools, for his support as a colleague.

11. **VMMissions Report.** Aaron Kauffman, President of VMMissions, shared ministry highlights from the past year, and celebrated his ability to attend this year. Last year he was awaiting surgery after being hit by a car; this year he is preparing to run the Boston marathon.

Aaron also introduced Jason Showalter, who will join VMMissions staff as Global Ministries Director on Monday, February 3, 2020. A graduate of Goshen College and Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Jason has had 15 years of cross-culture service, and speaks Arabic, Spanish, French, and English.

Art McPhee, VMMissions Board Member, prayed for Jason and his family.

Sarah Piper, Pastor at Zion Mennonite Church, prayed for Clyde.

Harvey Yoder prayed for the Conference.

12. **Results of the Gifts Discernment Committee Ballot** (see page 2, #6).

**Action 4. Phyllis Martin reported that 104 ballots were cast, and the following officers are elected:**

- **Jim Hershberger** was elected Virginia Mennonite Conference Secretary (first term: September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2022).
- **Anna Janzen** was elected member-at-large of the Faith and Life Commission (first term: September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2022)

**“The Unity of the Spirit”**  
**Winter Delegate Session**  
**MINUTES**  
**February 1, 2020**  
**Waynesboro Mennonite Church**

**Delegates affirmed the following VMissions Board of Directors members:**

- **Art McPhee** (2d term: July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021)
- **Reuben Horst** (5<sup>th</sup> term: July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021)
- **Juan Carlos Malvaez** (1<sup>st</sup> term: July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021)
- **Shelley Abline** (1<sup>st</sup> term: July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020)

VMissions President Aaron Kauffman clarified that Reuben, though not a member of VMC, has faithfully served his congregation and the Missions Board, thus his recommendation for a fifth term.

13. **Worship & Adjournment:** Northern District Leaders led delegates in a responsive reading, singing, and prayer. Winter Delegate Session 2020 adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edith Shenk Kuhns  
Secretary

# Strategic Planning Task Force unveils process and findings

By DAVID BRUBAKER

In March of last year, Conference Council authorized the formation of a Strategic Planning Task Force, with the mandate to “develop strategic initiatives (for the conference) for the next three to five years.” Council appointed five voting members—James Akerson, Deb Horst, Moriah Hurst, Armando Sanchez, and Clyde Kratz—to the task force, and contracted with consultant David Brubaker to guide the process.

## Process and Findings

The task force has convened ten times, beginning with an initial organizing meeting on July 25 and continuing through our most recent meeting on March 13. Members of the task force also met with all eight districts, partner agency heads, and business leaders on ten other occasions between September and February. Altogether, 125 persons participated in these meetings, an average of 12 per session.

Five themes emerged from these sessions, which we shared with participants at the Winter Delegate Session on February 1. The themes follow:

1. *Focus Outward* (on mission and service)
2. *Support Leadership* (especially pastors)
3. *Prioritize Relationships* (not structure or policies)
4. *Increase Support and Belonging*
5. *Improve Processes* (of dialogue, discernment, and decision-making)

In addition to these five themes, emphasized by multiple groups, we also noted concern from some groups for more attention to supporting



David Brubaker shares an update on the process and timeline of the Strategic Planning Task Force at Winter Delegate Session in Waynesboro, Va, February 1, 2020.  
Photo: Jon Trotter

women in leadership. There was also an explicit call from the floor of Winter Delegate Session to attend to racial diversity and inclusion in the conference.

## Next Steps

In April and May, we will focus on drafting a strategic plan that addresses the major themes we heard during the listening phase of our process. We anticipate bringing a draft plan to the Conference Council meeting in May, and then a proposed strategic plan to the July Conference Assembly for discussion and approval.

One of the clear themes we heard this past fall was a call to listen not only to current VMC members, but also to future VMC members and to God. We are committed to doing so, and invite your prayers and ongoing input. If you have not had an opportunity to share your thoughts and ideas with a task force member, please send them to one or all of us prior to April 30. We also invite your prayers, that God might guide us as we seek to discern God’s voice.

**James Akerson**, Central District Minister; Pastor at Beldor (james.akerson@gmail.com)

**Deb Horst**, VMC Assistant Moderator; Pastor at Lindale (deb@lindale.org)

**Moriah Hurst**, Pastor at Park View (moriah@pvmchurch.org)

**Armando Sanchez**, Pastor at Enciende Una Luz and Shalom (sama41870@gmail.com)

**Clyde Kratz**, VMC Executive Conference Minister (clyde.kratz@vmconf.org)

**David Brubaker**, Consultant with Cooperative By Design (dmbrubaker@verizon.net)

**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.*

## **Next Steps in the Strategic Planning Process**

### **Virginia Mennonite Conference**

### **July 2020 through June 2025**

#### **Background:**

Conference Council authorized the formation of a “Strategic Planning Task Force” at its March 15-16, 2019 meeting. The mandate of the task force was as follows:

*The Strategic Planning Task Force’s mandate is to design and implement a strategic planning process with input from all key stakeholders. The strategic planning process will build on VMC’s mission and vision, and develop strategic initiatives for the next three to five years.*

Task force members were James Akerson, Deb Horst, Moriah Hurst, Armando Sanchez, and Clyde Kratz, with David Brubaker serving as consultant to the process. (Pearl Hartman and Aldine Musser served on the task force during the spring sabbaticals of both Deb and Moriah.) Members of the task force met with all eight districts in the conference, as well with partner agency heads and business leaders. After coding the input from the listening sessions, the task force presented five themes to delegates at the Winter Delegate Session on February 1, 2020.

Based on additional feedback from delegates and further discernment, the task force drafted a strategic plan and presented it to Conference Council on May 16. With additional comments from Conference Council, members of the task force revised the document and presented a final draft to Conference Council on June 30, 2020. This is the proposed plan now submitted to participants in the Conference Assembly on July 18.

#### **Future Timeline:**

The proposed strategic plan for the next five years is coming to the delegates on July 18 for your review, with adoption proposed for the Winter Delegate Session in 2021 and implementation to follow. Here is the proposed timeline:

*July 18, 2020:* Delegates asked to “receive” the document and invited to pose questions.

*July 19 to October 31, 2020:* Delegates invited to submit comments and proposed revisions to Conference Council.

*November 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021:* Conference Council reviews comments and makes appropriate revisions.

*February 2021:* Delegates to the Winter Delegate Session asked to adopt the strategic plan.

*March to May 2021:* VMC Staff and District Ministers develop an Action Plan to implement the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan.

*July 2021 to June 2025:* Strategic Plan implemented according to the timeline in the Action Plan, with annual monitoring and an evaluation at the end of the implementation period.





## **New Faith Communities In Virginia Mennonite Conference**

The Spirit of Christ is moving among us in very tangible ways. Three Districts introduced the presence of emerging faith communities in their District to Conference Council on May 16, 2020. Each of these Districts approved the respective faith communities to be part of their District and recommended that Conference Council receive and approve their request.

Virginia Mennonite Conference has two ways for a group of people to be affiliated with our Conference and receive leadership support through a District and the Conference.

- **A Congregation in Formation.** See Attached Document.
- **A Congregation.** See Attached Membership By-Laws.

The Tennessee Carolina Kentucky District (TCK District) presented “**Iglesia Cristiana Renuevo**” as a **congregation in formation**. This faith community is led by Juan Jose Logas and is located in Winston-Salem, NC. See the letter of request to Conference Council. **Conference Council approved Iglesia Cristiana Renuevo as a Congregation in Formation.**

The Harrisonburg District presented “**Mosaic of Grace**” as a congregation in formation. This faith community is led by Michael Metzler and is located in the Harrisonburg area. See the letter of request to Conference Council. **Conference Council approved Mosaic of Grace as a Congregation in Formation.**

The Northern District presented “**Iglesia Mennonita Monte Moriah**” as a congregation that met the requirements as stated in the Constitution and By-Laws of our Conference. This congregation is led by Alfanso Alverado and is located in Lacy Springs, VA. **Conference Council approved Iglesia Mennonita Monte Moriah as a congregation.**

- Iglesia Mennonita Monte Moriah is recommended to the Delegates as a congregation in Virginia Mennonite Conference. Action required.

It is a joy to welcome these leaders and faith communities into Virginia Mennonite Conference.

Shalom,

Clyde G. Kratz  
Executive Conference Minister

## **Procedures for Forming a Congregation in Formation (CIF)**

These procedures are for potential congregations with a core group (or critical mass) of about four or five families or households (10-15 people) wishing to create a formal partnership with Virginia Mennonite Conference as a congregation in formation (CIF).

- I. THE CRITERIA FOR A “CONGREGATION IN FORMATION” (CIF)
  1. A group will have been meeting on a regular basis for Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and mutual caring.
  2. The group of believers will consist of at least four or five households (a core group of at least ten to fifteen persons) who desire to become a new congregation.
  3. An established congregation will be enlisted as a partner or sister congregation for the CIF. The leadership of this congregation may provide counsel and resources as discerned to be appropriate, and carry the church membership of the credentialed leader and core group leaders.
  
- II. STEPS TO BECOMING A CONGREGATION IN FORMATION
  1. The CIF will select a name for its own identity.
  2. The core group, as defined in I, will contact their district’s oversight leader, and provide a written report showing the projections and plan for this developing congregation.
  3. The Oversight Leader, along with other leaders in that district, shall review the group’s plans and projections-
  4. The district council will take action to establish the group as a “congregation in formation.”
  5. District Council shall forward to VMC for Conference Council approval a copy of the minutes showing the action taken by the District Council
  
- III. THREE-YEAR REVIEW
  1. CIF status will normally be in effect for up to three years.
  2. Near the end of the first three years, the leaders of the partner or sister congregation and the CIF shall discern whether-to apply for congregational status (process outlined in the VMC bylaws), request an extension of the CIF status from the district and Conference Council, or disband.

Revised January 2007 and adopted by Conference Council (CC 07:04) for use by district leadership  
Revised with counsel from Faith & Life Committee, 4/10/15.

/apm



## **ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1. Eligibility**

Applications for membership in Conference may be received from congregations or groups who are:

- 1.1 A covenanted group of believers, typically composed of at least ten households, gathering regularly for worship, fellowship and Christian ministry.
- 1.2 Ready to function within the Constitution and bylaws of the Virginia Mennonite Conference and the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA.
- 1.3 Directed by clearly designated leadership, recognized by both the congregation and Conference.

### **Section 2. Privileges of Conference Membership**

- 2.1 Recognition as a covenanted group of believers functioning within the fellowship and bylaws of Virginia Mennonite Conference.
- 2.2 Credentialing and mutual support for ordained leadership.
- 2.3 Access to fellowship and resources provided through conference assembly, conference council, districts, commissions, and agencies.
- 2.4 Representation in the conference assembly by the congregation's ordained/licensed leaders and other commissioned delegates as provided in Bylaw III, Section 2.
- 2.5 Access to denominational fellowship and resources provided through assemblies and agencies of Mennonite Church USA.
- 2.6 Representation in the Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly by the conference's and congregation's commissioned delegates as provided in the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA.

### **Section 3. Responsibilities of Conference Membership**

- 3.1 Gathering regularly for worship, fellowship, and Christian ministry as a covenanted group of believers.
- 3.2 Promoting mutual nurture and discipline in harmony with the stated purposes of the Conference.
- 3.3 Giving and receiving counsel through congregational, district, conference, and denominational structures.
- 3.4 Designating and supporting ongoing congregational leadership, recognized by both the congregation and conference.
- 3.5 Functioning within the constitution and bylaws of the Virginia Mennonite Conference and the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA.
- 3.6 Providing generous prayer, emotional, and financial support for conference and denominational ministries, including prayer and financial backing for congregational representatives to delegate assemblies.

#### Section 4. Application Process

- 4.1 The leadership of a group or congregation desiring affiliation with Conference will engage in discussion with the oversight leader (formerly recognized as bishop/overseer) of the district/cluster with which they wish to identify.
- 4.2 The oversight leader will meet with the group to further explore their commitment to their district and to Virginia Mennonite Conference and their response to the constitution and bylaws of Virginia Mennonite Conference, the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective and the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA.
- 4.3 When the group is organized, it will present a written request to the oversight leader for affiliation with Conference. The application will include a statement of faith, a statement of acceptance of the principles contained in the documents listed in item 2, and a statement of organization.
- 4.4 The oversight leader will arrange with the respective district's chairperson to have the request considered by the district for action.
- 4.5 The response of the district will be reported to Conference Council which will bring a recommendation for action by Conference Assembly.
- 4.6 Upon approval by Conference Assembly, the fellowship will be recognized as a congregation affiliated with Virginia Mennonite Conference.

## **Iglesia Cristiana Renuevo**

1732 Stonewood Dr.

Winston Salem NC 27103

March 15, 2020

Re: Church in Formation

Iglesia Cristiana Renuevo is the name chosen for the new Hispanic church plant efforts in Winston Salem NC. The Winston Salem area has a Spanish speaking population of over 50,000 persons. Many of these persons do not know the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. Juan Jose and Cecilia Lagos have accepted the mission to evangelize and disciple people of this population demographic as well as anyone else whom the Lord may bring into their influence.

VMMissions has endorsed this project. A Mission Support Team has been working to support Juan Jose and Ceci in this project with spiritual support and fundraising. This project is receiving the support of local churches, interested persons in the broader church and by the Tennessee Carolina Kentucky District of Virginia Mennonite Conference.

People have been responding to this witness. There has been a core group meeting regularly on Saturday evenings. Additionally there are at least three discipleship groups meeting at various times; Friday nights, Saturday night, and Sunday. There are currently approximately 25 persons involved in the total of these groups. If this group could find a suitable Sunday meeting place this would provide a time and place where they could all assemble together as one group.

We are hereby asking the TCK District and Virginia Mennonite Conference to designate Iglesia Cristiana Renuevo as a church in formation. Jesus said: "I will build my church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." We believe our Lord is building Iglesia Cristiana Renuevo here in Winston Salem and we all want to be a part of this process.

Grace & peace,

Juan Jose Lagos, Church Planter

David Kindy, Pastoral Care Coordinator

Vernon Moyer, MST Chairman

December 4, 2019

Dear Roy, Greta, and Matt,

The peace of Christ be with you and your families. I am writing to request that the church plant Risha and I have been helping to lead, Mosaic of Grace Church, be given "Congregation in Formation" status within the Harrisonburg District of Virginia Mennonite Conference.

During my transition from pastoral leadership at Zion Mennonite Church in the summer of 2019, a group began to come together for prayer, fellowship and care. After I finished my role as pastor of Zion at the end of July, our family visited extended family and made space to grieve the losses associated with the end of our time at Zion. I explored several pastoral ministry possibilities in VA and PA, but I sensed God calling us to stay in Harrisonburg and inviting Risha and me to give leadership to this new group.

So, we began taking deliberate steps towards becoming a new congregation. Risha and I called members of the group to serve as provisional Elders; we serve together with them on Mosaic's Vision Team. After receiving ideas from participants of Mosaic, the Vision Team decided on a name, Mosaic of Grace Church, and legally organized as a church so that we could begin receiving and receipting tithes and offerings from participants and supporters. Members of the Vision Team have also affirmed Risha and me as co-pastors/church planters. They are supporting us and the church plant through prayer and generously sharing their finances, gifts and words of encouragement. The Vision Team also approved moving forward with weekly worship on Sunday mornings, which started last Sunday, December 1st.

Along with this support from lay leadership within Mosaic, Risha and I have been grateful for the support and counsel that we've received as church planters from leaders outside the congregation. Skip Tobin has coached us and helped us explore the appointment process with VMissions. On November 18, we were officially appointed as church planters through VMissions. We've also been meeting regularly with Roy who has listened to us, prayed for us and eaten meals with us. We look forward to getting to know Roy and Maren and how they've served together in pastoral ministry. We consider Roy our pastor and are grateful for his prayerful presence and support of us and our ministry with Mosaic. Risha and I, along with two members of Mosaic's Vision Team, have also met with Pastor Peter Eberly and several of the Elders from Eastside to prayerfully explore a sister congregation relationship with Eastside. The leadership of Eastside plans to decide tomorrow evening whether or not God is calling them to stand beside us in this way.

The leaders of Mosaic of Grace Church are eager to join with what God is doing in the Harrisonburg District of VMC. We welcome the district's support through prayer, finances and relational connections. And we're eager to share what we see God doing in our midst. Please contact me at 540-246-6435 or [pastormike133@gmail.com](mailto:pastormike133@gmail.com) with any questions about this request. May God give you wisdom, courage and joy as you provide leadership for the district.

Blessings in Christ,

Mike Metzler (on behalf of Mosaic of Grace Church)

Elroy Miller

Chair VMC Conference Council

Dear Elroy,

It gives me great joy to request that **Iglesia Mennonita Monte Moriah** be recommended for affiliation with Virginia Mennonite Conference.

IMMM was planted by Pr. Alfonso Alvarado in Spring of 2017 as a joint initiative of VM Missions and Northern District. Pr. Alvarado was employed by VM Missions as church planter for a two-year quarter-time assignment and recently given another 2-year half-time assignment. Pastor Alfonso is credentialed (licensed toward ordination) by VMC.

The church is in its fourth year and reaches the Latino community in the Harrisonburg/Rockingham area, IMMM has affiliated with Northern District since its inception.

The IMMM faith community meets on Sunday afternoons at Grace Mennonite Fellowship in Lacy Spring with an average attendance of 25 persons. On a given Sunday at least 7 different nationalities are represented.

I have been impressed with Pr. Alfonso's commitment not only to his parish but to the District and conference. He has preached in numerous churches and is an inspiring presence in the monthly District Pasto Meetings. In fact, Pr. Alfonso takes vacation time from his work at Cargill to attend these gatherings.

IMMM is deeply committed to Anabaptist/Mennonite theology and practice and in full agreement with the constitution and bylaws of VMC.

IMMM has a sound organizational structure that includes, at Pr. Alfonso's request, fiscal accountability through an arrangement with Grace Mennonite Fellowship that handles the church's finances. He is also accountable to an active MST through VM Missions.

Due to Covid19 the Northern District has not met since January and is unable to process my request until the June meeting.

I have no doubt that the District will be unanimous in their decision to request Conference Council to recommend that IMMM be officially affiliated with VMC.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work along side IMMM as they minister in their unique setting.

Sincerely,

Michael Shenk, III

District Minister

Northern District, VMC



**Position:  
Virginia Mennonite Conference Moderator**

**Candidate Profile: Richard K. Early**



Richard K. Early is a seasoned pastor with 43 years of pastoral experience in the following congregations:

Charlottesville Mennonite Church, Charlottesville, Va.  
Zion Mennonite Church, Souderton, Pa.  
Zion Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va.  
Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Lacey Spring, Va.

Richard served for nine years on the General Board of the General Conference Mennonite Church and worked for six years on the Mennonite Church-General Conference Mennonite Church (MC-GC) Integration Exploration Committee.

Richard is a graduate of Madison College, Wesley Theological Seminary and Princeton Theological Seminary. He also attended Eastern Mennonite Seminary. At age 19,

as a Madison College student, Richard embraced the “Anabaptist vision” and joined Broad Street Mennonite Church in 1972. Richard and his wife Kay are currently members of Grace Mennonite Fellowship.

He has served as a delegate to Virginia Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. He has also served in mission in Uruguay, the Philippines, and Honduras, in addition to church planting work.



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

June 26, 2020

Dear Conference Council and Delegates of the Virginia Mennonite Conference,

Amidst the backdrop of renewed societal attention to racial injustice in America, Executive Conference Minister Clyde Kratz was emboldened to invite leaders in Virginia Mennonite Conference (VMC) to share their individual experiences as non-White participants in the conference in an effort to learn how the VMC could better demonstrate respect, equity, and justice to all people within the conference. Hence, on Friday, June 19, 2020 (the historical Juneteenth holiday commemorating the emancipation of America's enslaved) African American, Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White leaders met regarding the topic of "Race Relations Within Virginia Mennonite Conference." The group recognized the pivotal opportunity Virginia Mennonite Conference has to urgently and strategically address the barriers established and maintained by racism, racial injustice, racial insensitivity, and a lack of racial consciousness.

Although many in VMC profess not to be racist, that is simply not enough. The opposite of racist is **anti-racist**. In contrast, as identified in the discussion on race relations on June 19, 2020, there are several things that Virginia Mennonite Conference and the Conference Council can do to begin eradicating racism throughout the conference including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Review VMC documents and bylaws to remove racist language and undertones and to incorporate clear statements that the congregations, conference, and its affiliates are anti-racist.
2. Provide mandatory training to all credentialed leaders on racial sensitivity, racial consciousness, anti-racism, and inclusion.
3. Provide mandatory training opportunities for all credentialed leaders to complete the Intercultural Development Inventory.
4. Provide training at the congregational level to all congregations on racial sensitivity, racial consciousness, anti-racism, and inclusion.
5. Take steps to ensure that there is equitable representation of non-White leaders, constituents, or stakeholders in initial planning groups.

Furthermore, as white congregational leaders and constituents participate in the continued dialogues on race the group recognized the need for white leaders and constituents to:

1. Show up and truly participate in the continued conversations on race relations.
2. Change their conversational posture from debating and/or dismissing the voices and information shared by persons of color to genuinely listening to understand the experiences and perspectives shared by persons of color.
3. Identify and hold constituent groups/congregations accountable for discontinuing racist practices and policies.
4. Remain vigilant to removing the barriers caused by systemic racism.
5. Shoulder the responsibility to effect change in partnership with non-White race leaders and constituents.

At this time, Virginia Mennonite Conference has yet to transparently render absolute veracity on its stance concerning racism nor has it acknowledged in writing or otherwise that it is an anti-racist organization dedicated to abolishing all systemic policies and practices which contribute to and foster racism in the conference. The time to do so is now! Continued inaction or the claim to simply not be racist resonates only as a refusal to dismantle racism and a failure to promote anti-racism. In the years and generations to come, where will history show Virginia Mennonite Conference stood in this matter...in support of racism or in support of anti-racism? We urge the latter.

Prayerfully,

Armando Sanchez, Pastor, Iglesia Enciende una Luz and Iglesia Shalom  
Basil Marin, Pastor, New song Anabaptist Fellowship  
Bishop Leslie Francisco, III, Oversight Pastor, C3 Hampton  
Dr. Lesley Francisco McClendon, Senior Pastor, C3 Hampton  
James Rhee, Pastor, CrossWay Mennonite Church  
Veronica Sanchez, Pastor, Iglesia Enciende una Luz and Iglesia Shalom

cc: Clyde G. Kratz, Executive Director of Virginia Mennonite Conference  
Joe Longacher, Chair of Faith and Life Commission