

Congregation Transitions

DEPARTING CONGREGATIONS

Eastern District

Powhatan Mennonite Church : Last night the Eastern District of the Virginia Mennonite Conference approved a motion to acknowledge and release Powhatan Mennonite Church from membership in our district and conference.

After receiving an official letter of withdrawal from Powhatan Mennonite Church, I, on behalf of the executive committee of the Eastern District, sent an email to John Engle, the pastor of Powhatan Mennonite Church, with this message:

"Thank you for leading your congregation through a thoughtful discernment process to determine the right path forward for affiliation and fulfilling your church's mission. I have shared your letter with the executive committee of the Eastern District, and they have all authorized me to extend to you an acknowledgement with regret concerning your congregation's decision to leave the Eastern District and Virginia Mennonite Conference. We are made poorer without your congregation's fellowship and spiritual perspective, but you will enrich whatever fellowship of congregations you now decide to join. We extend to you God's blessing."

Ryan Ahlgrim, Eastern District Minister, May 7, 2024

Harrisonburg District

Eastside Church, Mosaic of Grace, and Early Church : I greet you with the grace and peace of Jesus. As per the process laid out by iCLT for congregations seeking realignment, Harrisonburg District Executive of Virginia Mennonite Conference, send you the details of our most recent action.

On April 16, 2024 Harrisonburg District Executive acknowledged the letters received from Eastside Church, Mosaic of Grace, and Early Church congregational leaderships requesting to realign with LMC in Pennsylvania. The delegates were informed by email and subsequently voted to affirm this request by email.

With a great deal of sadness, and a heavy heart, we accept these requests and free them to follow where they feel led.

Paula Stoltzfus and Steve Pardini, Co-Chairs, May 7, 2024

Northern District

Grace Mennonite Fellowship: Dave read a letter from the Grace Mennonite Leadership requesting release from membership in VMC with the intention of aligning with L.M.C. There was a time of question/answer,

lamentations, reflections and blessings. The following action was taken by the council (15 affirming, 0 not-affirming and 1 abstention). Our action will be taken to Conference Council who will send it on to the delegates for action at the Summer Delegate Assembly.

We receive the letter from Grace Mennonite Fellowship requesting release from VMC with regret and sadness. We have valued our relationship with them and appreciated their contributions to the district. We pray God's blessing on their journey.

Northern District Minutes, January 22, 2024

Iglesia Enciende Una Luz: A special meeting of the Northern District delegates was held via zoom on Thursday, May 16, 2024 to deal with the request from Iglesia Enciende Una Luz to withdraw their membership with Virginia Mennonite Conference and seek membership in LMC. A copy of their letter was shared with delegates via email along with a motion to accept, with regret, their decision to leave, along with thanksgiving for their contributions to Northern District.

Those attended the meeting via zoom or who responded via email were Kathy Yoder, Elwood Yoder, Marian Buckwalter, Sarah Piper, Joan Kulp, Gloria Lehman, Linda Wenger, Randy Sweitzer, Pearl Hartman, Erin Hess, Michael Shenk Joe Friesen, Aldine Musser and David King. The motion was approved unanimously.

Submitted by Dave King, May 16, 2024

Trissels Mennonite Church voted on March 10, 2024 to leave Virginia Mennonite Conference.

Harold Miller read a letter from Trissels Mennonite Church requesting release from membership in VMC with the intention of aligning with LMC. There was a lengthy time of question/answer, lamentations, & reflections. District Minister, Mike mentioned that there was a lack of involvement of the District Ministers in the decision to leave the conference.

The following action was taken by the council (12 affirming, 0 not-affirming, 2 abstention)

We receive the letter from Trissels Mennonite Fellowship requesting release from VMC with regret and sadness. We have valued our relationship with them and appreciated their contributions to the district. We pray God's blessing on and appreciated their contributions to the district. We pray God's blessing on their journey.

Northern District minutes, March 18, 2024

Tennessee, Carolina, Kentucky District

Knoxville Mennonite Church: On October 28, 2023 the TCK district, (meeting at Durham Mennonite Church), took action to receive Knoxville Mennonite Church's letter of withdrawal from Virginia Mennonite Conference. TCK's official action from the minutes is as follows,

Chuck Hostetter read the letter from Knoxville Mennonite Church regarding their request to transfer their membership from Virginia Mennonite Conference to Central District Conference. *Action – We received this letter with a sense of sadness and loss. We have valued the relationship we have had with them in the past. We wish them God's blessing as they go forward.

TCK District Minutes Oct 28, 2023

West Liberty Mennonite Church: Please find the following statement from TCK District in regard to the withdrawal of West Liberty Mennonite Church, West Liberty Kentucky:

It is with sadness and regret that we acknowledge the withdrawal of West Liberty Mennonite Church from The Tennessee Carolina Kentucky District of Virginia Mennonite Conference. We have appreciated the fellowship we have shared for these many years. We trust that you will find God's leading and direction for your future affiliation. The Lord Bless you and keep

you, now and forever more.

It is our assumption that this withdrawal will become effective upon recognition at VMC Summer Assembly July 2024.

May 8, 2024, Submitted by Vernon Moyer

Southern District

Greenmonte Mennonite Church: At the February 8, 2024 meeting of the Southern District council, we released Greenmonte congregation from membership in the Southern District with the following action:

Southern District Council acknowledges the receipt of the letter from the Greenmonte Fellowship congregation informing the district and the conference that the congregation has decided to withdraw from VMC/MCUSA.

With regret and grief, we release Greenmonte Fellowship from membership in Southern District. This action will be sent to Conference Council and VMC Delegates for their action.

We pray God's blessing, guidance and peace on the Greenmonte Fellowship congregation as they go forward.

Kevin Gasser, District Minister, Southern District, February 15, 2024

CONGREGATION WELCOME

Iglesia Shalom-Nuevo Comienzo: Appeal for Congregation in Formation



Armando and Veronica Sanchez, Church Planters

Iglesia Shalom-Nuevo Comienzo has been meeting as a church plant at Waynesboro Mennonite for over five years. During this time, Armando and Veronica Sanchez have proven to be gifted pastors, spiritual mentors, and innovative leaders to not only the Spanish-speaking population of Augusta County, but to all of us who have been blessed with the opportunity to get to know them and their ministry.

Representatives of Iglesia Shalom have asked to move into a more formal relationship with the Southern District and Virginia Mennonite Conference. Four of these dear brothers and sisters in Christ were able to join our district council meeting last evening, and after reviewing various church metrics and considering future plans, we would like to recommend that Virginia Mennonite Conference Shalom-Nuevo Comienzo as a "Congregation in Formation."

Waynesboro Mennonite Church has agreed to serve as Iglesia

Shalom's "sister congregation," as is explained in the conference's published documents on this procedure. Armando and Veronica, as well as the congregation, intend to relate to the Southern District as they continue to minister in and around Waynesboro.

Our district council has unanimously approved the request from Iglesia Shalom to move to "Congregation in Formation" status with the intention of becoming a full member in the near future. We recommend that Virginia Mennonite Conference would also officially welcome Iglesia Shalom as a Congregation in Formation. (see addendum on CIF Process)

Kevin Gasser, District Minister, Southern District, May 3, 2024



CONGREGATION CLOSURES

Signs of Life Fellowship

Signs of Life Fellowship (SLF), a member congregation of Virginia Mennonite Church, has officially disbanded and is no longer meeting for worship or other church-related activities.

SLF began out of an observed need for ministry in and around the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind. After meeting as a Bible study for a period of time, this group grew and developed into an active and influential part of the Southern District and Virginia Mennonite Conference. However, the pandemic, changes in leadership, and other factors proved to be a challenge for this young congregation. Other congregations in the area have begun worship services in American Sign Language and have welcomed former SLF members into their community.

With this information, the Southern District recommends officially recognizing the gift of ministry provided to our community through SLF as we also recognize that they are no longer active as a congregation.

Kevin Gasser, District Minister, Southern District, May 3, 2024

Asheville Mennonite Church

Please find the following statement from TCK District in regard to the dissolution of Asheville Mennonite Church, Asheville NC.

It is with sadness and regret that we acknowledge the closing of the Asheville Mennonite Church from The Tennessee Carolina Kentucky District of Virginia Mennonite Conference. We have appreciated the fellowship we have shared for these many years. We trust that as the various members find other church families, they will continue to thrive and grow in the Lord without losing their Anabaptist values.

Vernon Moyer, District Chair, Tennessee Carolina Kentucky (TCK) District, May 8, 2024