

## DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION WORK GROUP ACTIONS

The Denomination Affiliation Work Group (DAWG) was charged by Conference Council in May 2023 to:

Examine VMC's relationship with MC USA in order to map a future relationship that provides delegates with options to consider. Do whatever research the work group deems helpful, such as learning from other conferences like Ohio and Mosaic, possibly hiring a consultant to gather VMC delegate input, and reviewing legal and by-law ramifications. Report back to CC with options for further deliberation about what to bring to delegates for action. Timeline to be decided by the group.

And by the Delegate Action at the 2023 Summer Delegate Assembly to:

[E]xamine the legal and practical implications of VMC seeking to leave (the delegate body of) MC USA and asks that the Task Force bring their recommendation of decisive action forward for delegate approval by no later than VMC Summer Assembly 2024.

In fulfillment of the dual mandates DAWG submits the following motions:

*(NOTE: The motion numbers do not directly correspond to the Action item numbers in the delegate packet. Corresponding number is noted by each.)*

### **Motion #1 - Suspend Article III, Section 7, 7.3(b) (Action 10)**

*For the purposes of open discernment and participation, the delegates suspend VMC Bylaws Article III, Section 7, 7.3(b) "Approval of actions shall require a simple majority of those present." This applies only to Motion #2 - Affirmation of VMC Membership in MCUSA.*

#### Explanation

The purpose of this motion is to enable full participation of all VMC delegates in the vote on Motion #2 only, by allowing all delegates to participate whether present or not at the 2024 Summer Delegate Assembly.

This allows the votes of delegates unable to attend to be gathered prior to the 2024 Summer Delegates Assembly and to be counted and entered into the record as part of the vote in Motion #2, Affirmation of MCUSA Membership.

This motion was developed by DAWG (Denominational Affiliation Work Group) and is commended to the delegates by Conference Council for approval.

### **Motion #2 - Affirmation of VMC Membership in MCUSA (Action 11)**

*Virginia Mennonite Conference shall remain a member conference of Mennonite Church USA.*

#### Explanation

If Motion #2 passes, VMC will not continue discussions of membership in MCUSA.

If Motion #2 does not pass, VMC Conference Council will take steps necessary to develop a plan of action for VMC to terminate membership in MCUSA that will be approved by 75% of delegates at a future Delegate Assembly. Leaving MCUSA requires changing VMC's constitution, hence the 75% threshold. Leaving MCUSA will require VMC to become a 503(c) Non-Profit corporation and secure its own tax-exempt status with the IRS.

Motion #2 is framed as a positive affirmation (maintaining the status quo) in order to avoid the scenario where the majority of delegates express a direction that is thwarted by the minority as this motion does not require a 75% threshold. It also avoids the immediacy of Executive Board Staff policy which terminates a conference's membership and enters "Withdrawn" in MennoData for all credentialed persons as of the day of the passed vote to leave.

Motion #2 not passing allows VMC the time to develop protocols for leaving MCUSA and allows churches that wish to remain part of MCUSA to discern their paths collectively or individually.

If Motion #2 passes, then VMC will walk with churches who wish to leave collectively or separately.

This motion was developed by DAWG and is submitted by Conference Council to the delegates for discernment and decision.

**Motion #3 - 1995 Confession of Faith as the Teaching Position of VMC (Action 12)**

*The 1995 Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective is the teaching position of Virginia Mennonite Conference. It is expected that all credentialed leaders know the content of the 1995 Confession and commend the Confession as the positions held by Virginia Mennonite Conference.*

Explanation

This motion clarifies what is meant by "teaching position."

This motion was developed by DAWG and is commended to the delegates by Conference Council for approval.

**Motion #4 - Suspend VMC Bylaws Article 1, Section 1.2 (Action 13)**

*Virginia Mennonite Conference will extend the suspension of VMC Bylaws Article I, Section 1.2 "Ready to function within the Constitution and bylaws of the Virginia Mennonite Conference and the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA." regarding the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA Article III, Section 3 through the end of 2027.*

*(See Addendum Action 13)*

Explanation

There is confusion as to whether the resolution passed by the delegates at the 2023 Summer Delegate Assembly continued beyond SDA 2024. This clarifies that the suspension of the above-named section of VMC bylaws will continue through the end of 2027.

If Motion #2 passes, Motion #4 allows the work called for in Motion #5 to be done while allowing VMC congregations who already have dissociated or who wish to dissociate from MCUSA to continue as full members of VMC.

If Motion #2 does not pass, Motion #4 allows for the development of a way for VMC to terminate membership in MCUSA that will be approved by 75% of delegates while continuing to allow disassociated (from MCUSA) VMC congregations to continue as full members of VMC.

This motion was developed by DAWG and is commended to the delegates by Conference Council for approval.

**Motion #5 - Proposal To Amend MCUSA Bylaws (Action 14)**

*VMC leadership will work on a resolution for Mennonite Church USA delegates to consider changing MCUSA Bylaws Article III, Section 3 Congregational Derived Membership in Mennonite Church USA.*

**Explanation**

There are at least 2 other MCUSA conferences who allow for member congregations not to be part of MCUSA. These conferences may be interested in working on a proposed MCUSA bylaws amendment that would be amenable to the delegates of MCUSA. If the bylaws change is approved, then any VMC congregation wishing to remain with VMC but not be part of MCUSA will no longer be in variance. If MCUSA delegates disapprove of changing the bylaws regarding derived membership, then VMC will need to decide if it wishes to continue at variance or bless those congregations who do not want to be part of MCUSA in separating from VMC.

The vote on Motion #5 will be entered into the record only if Motion #2 passes.

This motion was developed by DAWG and is commended to the delegates by Conference Council for approval.