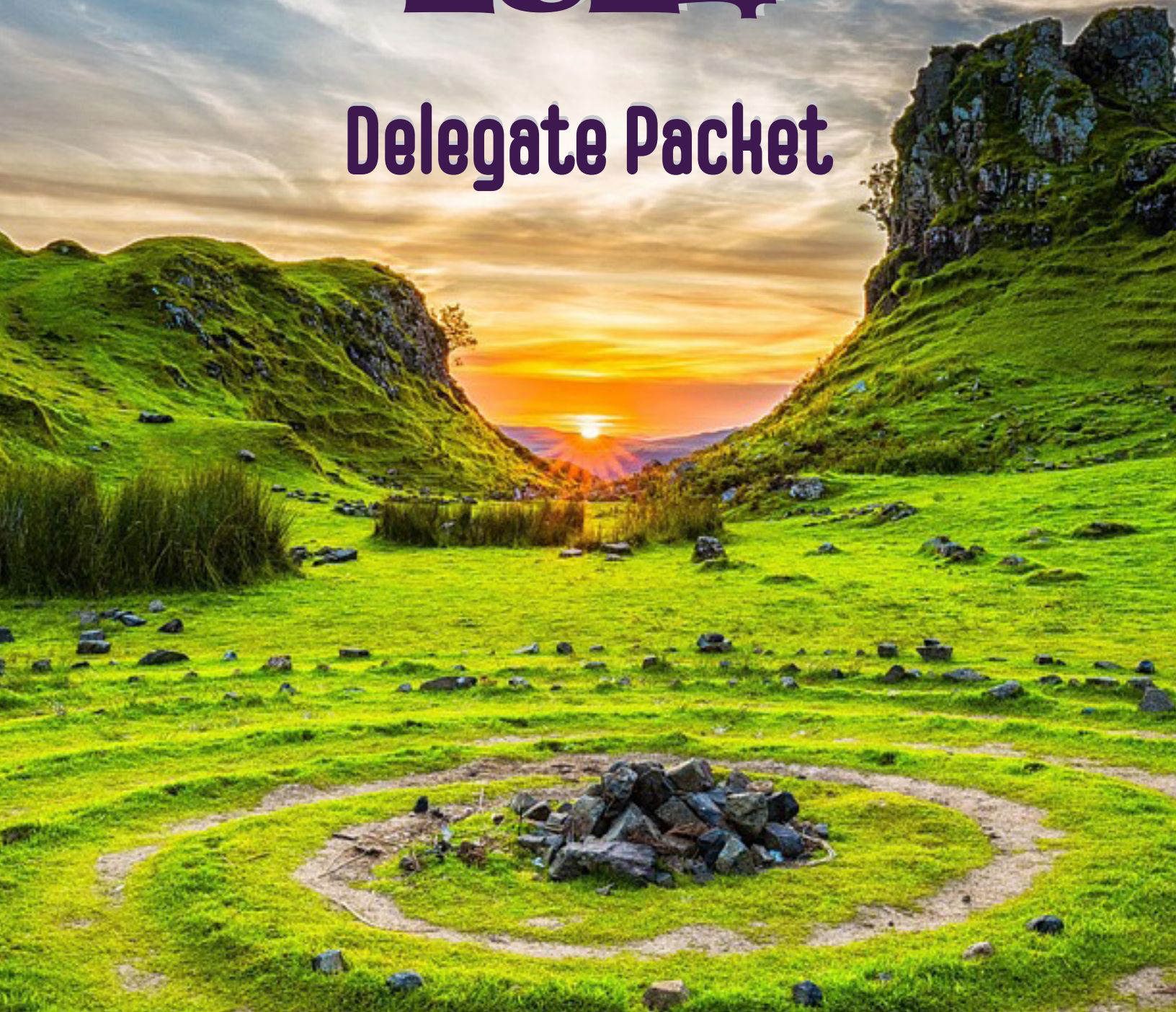


LIVING STONES 2024

Delegate Packet



And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. 1 Peter 2:4.

2024 Summer Delegate Assembly
Harrisonburg Mennonite Church • July 18-20

Table of Contents

Community of Faith Statement	2
From the Moderator	3
Schedule	4
Workshops	4
Evening Services	6
Minutes	7
Gifts Discernment Nominees	15
Action Items	16
Congregation Transitions	17
DAWG Motions	20

Addendum

Congregation in Formation Process	23
Mail-in Ballot option	24
Action 10 - Bylaws	25
Action 15 - Bylaws	26

Interim Conference Leadership Team (iCLT)

Duane Beck,
Consultant to Pastors on Leadership and Local Ministry

Bishop Leslie Francisco, III,
Minister of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Maren Tyedmers Hange,
Minister of Formation and Soul Care

Craig Maven,
Minister of Administration and Church Relations

June Miller,
Director of Administration and Communication

Caleb Schrock-Hurst,
Church Relations and Racial Justice Minister

Staff

Sarah Layman,
Administrative Assistant and Event Planner

Conference Council Officers

Andrew Buckwalter Fairfield, Moderator

Jim Hershberger, Moderator-Elect

Mary Jo Veurink, Secretary

Leroy Kauffman, Treasurer

Community of Faith Statement

As an Anabaptist community, we commit to one another with Jesus at the center of our lives, giving witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and making every effort to maintain the unity God has given us while seeking to trust each other as we minister in our local contexts.

We pledge to support and work together through these commitments:

We will do our best to **practice mutual trust and respect** in thought, word and deed, giving each other the benefit of the doubt when we perceive there to be inconsistencies. We will move toward conflict with curiosity, expecting the Holy Spirit to illumine us.

We will seek to **draw from each other's strengths and support each other** as we grow together, seeking to publicly and privately support and honor each other.

We will seek to **be in touch with our own feelings and to express them clearly and appropriately**, while recognizing the validity of each other's feelings and experiences.

We will attempt to **clearly communicate** our own needs and expectations and **listen carefully** to each other with ears, mind, and heart before speaking critically to an issue. (James 1:19)

We will do our best to **provide a safe and brave place** to express differing opinions and ideas, and make space for everyone to contribute. (Ephesians 4:15)

We will **seek to represent** the love, grace, and reconciliation of **Jesus Christ** in all we do.

Community of Faith Statement was passed by VMC delegates July 15, 2024

From the Moderator

Dear friends in Virginia Mennonite Conference,

Welcome to the 2024 Summer Delegate Assembly packet! Within these weighty pages you'll find some truly important decisions, particularly DAWG Motion #2 which will chart our course as it relates to MCUSA and DAWG Motion #1 which would allow us to include mail-in ballots for that significant decision.

As you consider all 15 of the actions presented here, and as we gather together, I pray that God grants each of us an awareness of Christ's presence in the worship and community of those who meet in-person and via Zoom, in those who are with us in Spirit by their prayers and ongoing support for our work, in the cloud of witnesses who have gone before us and gifted us the privilege of being part of this gathering, and in the hopes of the generations to come that will continue to benefit from the ongoing ministry and historic legacy of Virginia Conference.

I have faith that Jesus will indeed give us eyes to see and ears to hear all of these people and beyond, to a world that aches for the gospel of peace.

May God's love hold and enfold you,

Andrew Buckwalter Fairfield
Moderator, Virginia Mennonite Conference

Introducing Sarah Layman

Administrative Assistant and Event Planner



Sarah grew up overseas as a missionary kid and had spent time in China and Thailand. She is currently working on a dual masters in counseling and divinity at EMU. Before moving to VA, she worked as a children's pastor at a large church in Washington State. Her heart

is in ministry and building resilient communities with strong families and healthy churches. In her free time, she enjoys reading, crafting, and taking walks through nature.

Pre-Assembly Webinar

Denominational Affiliation Work Group Motions



Join Craig Maven, Chair of the Denominational Affiliation Work Group (DAWG) at 7pm on June 10 for a question and answer time about the resolutions we will vote on at this Summer Delegate Assembly (these resolutions will be released early next week once

approved by Conference Council). Delegates are highly encouraged to attend this webinar so they can begin discerning how to best represent their congregation; it will be recorded for those who can't attend on the 10th. Register at virginiaconference.org/events.

Schedule

THURSDAY, JULY 18

- 9 a Workshop I*
10:15 Workshop II*
1:00 p Workshop III*
2:15 Workshop IV*
(See Workshop Schedule for details)
4:30 Pastor & Credentialed Leader Appreciation Dinner
7 p Worship Service @ Lindale Mennonite**

*Workshops are open to anyone at no charge, however registration is requested. Deadline Monday, July 15.

**Evening Worship Services are open to all. No registration required.

FRIDAY, JULY 19

- 8 a Doors Open
Session I
8:30 Welcome & Opening Worship
10:30 Break
10:40 Congregational Transitions
12 p Lunch
Session II
1:30 Opening Business
Moderator's Report
Approval of Minutes
Finance Report
Gifts Discernment
Racial Justice Task Force
2:45 Break
3:05 Resuming Business
Denominational Minister
DAWG
Closing Worship
4:15 Adjourn
7 p Worship Service @ Lindale Mennonite

SATURDAY, JULY 20

- 8 a Doors Open
Session III
8:30 Opening Worship
Personnel Committee
DAWG motions
Congregational Life Commission
Faith & Life Commission
10:30 Break
10:50 Voting results
Discussion
Closing Worship

Workshops

Open to anyone. Register at virginiacommunity.org/events.
Version 3 - Jun 5, 2024 - schedule updated

WORKSHOP I 9:00 am

Growth, Good Feelings, and Fragmentation, 1990-2005, Elwood Yoder

Membership in the Virginia Conference grew by 46% during the 1990s, with an all-time record membership of 9,639 by 1999. New congregations were added during the decade. Good feelings, volunteerism, and a desire to help others fostered a sense of unity and shared purpose. However, by 2005, the Virginia Mennonite Conference grappled with significant challenges. Membership dropped considerably as eighteen congregations departed from 1995-2005. There were deep-seated doctrinal and theological differences, which were further complicated by the Integration of the Mennonite Church and General Conference.

Peace with Creation, Steve Pardini

This workshop examines how God has entrusted humans with the responsibility to care for the Earth, explores how human activity has contributed to climate change, discusses our current efforts in addressing climate change, and explores ways to further reduce human impact on the climate.

Celebrate Recovery: Enjoy the Holy Spirit in our life!, Jim Hershberger, Duane Beck, Margaret Michael, Nathan Carr

Celebrate Recovery is a Sermon on the Mount, Christ centered recovery program for anyone struggling with hurts, habits or hangups of any kind. This church ministry is a safe place to find community, accountability and freedom from the issues that are controlling our life. It helps us recover and strengthen our relationship with God, our families and our church brothers and sisters.

WORKSHOP II 10:15 am

Seeking to Make an Impact: Race, Faith and Finance, Leonard Dow

Leonard Dow is VP of Community & Church Development. Leonard will be sharing about his own life journey and how his Anabaptist faith and life experiences intersect with his current work at Everence, where he engages historically underserved and low to moderate income communities. What can be done, how is Everence seeking to respond, how are/can you participate in making an impact? It promises to be a time of sharing, learning, listening and equipping.

Christ-centered Identity and Inclusion (Acts 10-15), Mark Thiesen

Given the Jewish context of the original Jesus movement, there is no question but that which happens in Acts 10-15 is unexpected and radically re-defining. What had previously been seen as "unclean" meat, forbidden for faithful Jews, is now rendered clean.

Moreover, God had required circumcision of every male in Israel (Gen. 17), and now Paul and other Jewish leaders among the followers of Jesus the Messiah are saying that circumcision is no longer required of every male to be in a faithful, covenantal relationship to the God of Israel and His people. Centuries-old, God-ordained requirements were made optional. How can we understand these six chapters as they relate to being Christ-centered and inclusive today? And how might they help us in our current discernment regarding our identity and disagreements?

Cultivate: How to Sow the Gospel in Your Circle of Relationships,

Lizzette Hernandez and Kierston Kreider, VMissions

This workshop will introduce you to 10 fundamental paradigms of a missional church, alongside introducing a highly practical framework for making disciples anywhere and everywhere called Four Fields. Expect an engaging and hands-on experience, offering a glimpse into two multi-day trainings VMissions will provide for missional leaders this fall. Additionally, VMissions is offering a cohort-based opportunity to receive coaching and peer-mentorship for pastors and leaders wanting deeper engagement with these paradigms.

WORKSHOP III 4:00 PM

From Non-Resistance to Justice: A Mennonite Shift to Active Peacemaking, Ervin Stutzman

This workshop examines the transformation of progressive Mennonite theology and practice over the last several decades. This change came about through modernization and a shift in the spiritual life in congregations.

Mission: a dying colonial experiment or our intentional way of showing up in the world?, Eric Frey Martin, Mennonite Mission Network

Depending on what circles you run in, mission can feel like an outdated word fraught with the fear of being implicated in a system of colonialism, racism, or cultural insensitivity. Certainly, there is a history that informs us that Christian mission has been co-opted by these pervasive systems in the past. The temptation for us can be to walk away from any endeavors that resemble "mission". However, we can also recognize that following Jesus demands that we show up in certain ways in this world. So how can we embrace a mission that is reflective of the liberation and reconciliation seen in Jesus' ministry?

In this session we will look at:

- Dominant narratives that surround our lives and effect how mission has and is done
- Pre-conceived notions we have around mission
- Personal experiences with mission

- Ways in which we can envision a liberating and reconciling mission

Return to Hope: Inner Healing in Congregational Life, Paula Stoltzfus, Roy Hange, Juan Carlos Malvaez, Peter Eberly (Double session, workshops I & II)

Jesus spent much of his ministry healing persons and the early church had a 3 year catechism that included emotional and spiritual mentoring and transformation. In this workshop the four pastors will tell how inner healing ministries has become a core part of congregational life and a source of hope.

WORKSHOP IV 2:15 PM

Will Our Children Have Faith? Urgent Questions about Faith Transmission, Sarah Bixler

In 1976, theologian John Westerhoff published *Will Our Children Have Faith?* Over the past 50 years, pastors, congregations, families and researchers continued to ask this question. As church attendance declines in the U.S. and young people are less interested in organized religion, the question feels all the more urgent. This workshop explores connections between key factors that impact the transmission of faith to the next generation, emphasizing new research findings about the importance of relational security. Participants will reflect on networks of belonging in their congregations that support children growing in faith and align with the core Mennonite value of community.

Introduction to Mindful Self-Compassion, MaryBeth Moore

In this workshop, we will explore how to be kind and caring towards ourselves during difficult times, just as we would be towards a treasured friend. This simple yet powerful practice can help us develop inner strength, reduce self-criticism, and thrive in ministry. The session will include a guided meditation centered on receiving God's abundant loving-kindness and sharing it with others.

Return to Hope: Inner Healing in Congregational Life (continued)
(See description under Workshop I)

Evening Services

@Lindale Mennonite Church

6225 Jessee Way, Linville, Va 22834
Thursday, July 18 and Friday, July 19 at 7pm.

Join us for two nights of worship with our VMC family.

THURSDAY, JULY 18

Where Do We Go From Here?

Leonard Dow will join us Thursday evening in worship. Speaking about moving forward in difficult times.

Hebrews 10:23-24 & 1 Peter 2:4-8

You can also hear him at his Thursday morning workshop, *Seeking to Make an Impact: Race, Faith, and Finance*.



Leonard Dow is Vice President of Community and Church Development for Everence® - leading the effort to serve emerging diverse communities and churches that historically have been underserved. Dow also leads the Everence team in Philadelphia. He is a member of the Everence Senior Leadership Team, as well as

President of Everence Community Investments, LLC.

Leonard joined Everence in April 2017 after nearly 20 years as pastor of Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia. He was a founder of Oxford Circle Christian Community Development Association, which launched many programs to benefit children and adults. Dow also worked in the retail banking field for 12 years.

He currently serves on the board of directors for The City School, Missio Seminary, The Brooklyn Peace Center and The Common Place.

Leonard earned a bachelor's degree from Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia and was recognized with EMU's Distinguished Service Award for 2017. Dow lives in Northwest Philadelphia with his wife, Rosalie, and three adult children.

FRIDAY, JULY 19

Living Stones Among Us

On Friday we will hear inspiring stories of God at work among us. Pastors and congregants from various congregations will share the hope, excitement, and inspiration experienced, felt, and lived through the Spirit's work. Stories will be interwoven with songs and prayers to mark these living stones among us.



Virginia Mennonite Conference Winter Delegate Assembly Minutes
Waynesboro Mennonite Church
Saturday, February 3, 2024

9:00 Session I

Call to Order & Welcome

Andrew Buckwalter Fairfield, Moderator and Pastor of Christiansburg Mennonite Church, opened the meeting with a greeting from Romans and a welcome to all.

Host Church Welcome

Phil Lehman, pastor and Conference Council Rep for Southern District, gave a welcome from Waynesboro Mennonite Church, to those in the building and on Zoom.

Music & Worship

Maren Tyedmers Hange, interim Conference Leadership Team (iCLT), Co-District Minister - Harrisonburg, Co-Pastor at Charlottesville Mennonite Church, and Co-Chair Racial Justice Task Force, welcomed everyone into a time of worship. The theme of the day is taken from artwork by Brenda Blank, the first piece, "The Invitation," pointing us to our Vision and Mission statements. (Second piece is "Just Follow" and third piece "Always More.") We stand at the threshold and there is light beyond the threshold. As we follow Christ, we walk in hope, being led by Christ. Rachel & Andry Stutzman, members at Weavers Mennonite Church, then led a time of singing. Maren closed the worship time by reading from 2 Corinthians.

Moderators Report

Andrew Buckwalter Fairfield began by explaining that the churches that will be leaving Virginia Mennonite Conference (VMC) (many in the Confessing Leaders group) have been going through the proper process and are joining together. More details to come in Summer 2024 or Winter 2025. Despite this hard news, he stated there is an enormous amount of good work being done within congregations and the conference and groups within (Racial Justice Task Force, the Conference Council Self-Evaluation, etc.). When taking on the Moderator position he braced for nastiness, but has not experienced that. He has encountered grace transformed into love, and has been uplifted. Stating that he is hopeful today can be a joyful assembly.

Craig Maven, iCLT, introduced Jon Carlson, Moderator of Mennonite Church USA (MC USA). John stated that leadership of MC USA is reframing what it means to be part of MC USA. We are together constituent parts of MC USA. They are lamenting strain, pain and irreconcilable differences, but God is present to us through the "other."

Rachel and Andry led several more songs before the break.

9:55 Break

There were technical difficulties with a video that was to be shown, so Rachel and Andry led several songs and Maren closed in prayer before the next session began.

10:30 Session II

Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF)

Caleb Shrock-Hurst, iCLT and RJTF, first mentioned three events that are upcoming in the Harrisonburg area. Reported that most pastors have gone through the Intercultural Development Inventory. He also gave reflections on speaking of racial justice across congregations and has not been met with pushback or nastiness. It has been a joy. He challenged us to think of what steps we can all take in our church and communities? His highlights from being on the task force: 1) Enjoyed many congregational visits (in 40 of 60 churches), preaching sermons on racial justice. Most times he visits churches outside of Harrisonburg, he hears, “Our church is the ugly stepchild of VMC that no one cares about.” The RJTF is working hard to make events available to all; 2) Led a trip to the African-American History Museum and is hoping to plan a trip to Hampton to the Calgary Community Church (C3) Churches. Caleb expressed thanks to churches who are pursuing racial justice in their communities. VMC has previously convened groups for racial justice but they have dissolved within several years. How do we make it a priority and something that we all do? RJTF is looking for a way forward and clear next steps, and feel it is hopeful that we dedicate VMC time to this subject. We still need to do more for black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) churches, and more can be done in all areas to provide opportunities for these congregations. Also pointing out that pastors of color are unwilling to serve based on disagreements regarding sexuality within VMC. Caleb closed with a quote from St. Ambrose on his deathbed, “Be at peace, we serve a good master.” We need to continue to serve and remember that God is in control.

Time was given for table discussions with several questions for consideration. These notes were collected.

In closing Caleb shared the RJTF Vision Statement and stated the members of the RJTF.

Faith & Life Commission (FLC)

Ervin Stutzman, FLC Chair, gave a report on the vision of FLC. The quality of our vision depends on the quality of the light around us—not only when you’re looking forward, but also when you’re looking back. We want to understand our past with new light, and we look for light through our common commitment to Jesus Christ.

Slides of the job description of the FLC were shared. It seems like a big task. People have been doing very hard work within the conference; what are we called to BE together, not just DO? How do we develop a vision that would draw us all together as a conference? How can the conference support the work that the congregations are doing on their streets and in their congregations? How is God at work?

Conference Counsel (CC) Self-Evaluation Report

Duane Beck, iCLT, and Cliff Brubaker, Retired Minister, former conference Pastor in Ohio, shared from the CC Self-Evaluation Report. (Hard copies of the report were given to tables as a confidential document that could be looked at during their presentation.) Duane and Cliff felt that people shared openly, honestly and emotionally, and without bitterness. Information gathering was done through 34 interviews with the people involved, including 13 women, and the focus was on CC only, not all of VMC. The report was written to the Conference Council, looking at the system and what was happening at the time, not placing blame, but asking CC to take responsibility and making recommendations. They gave a timeline of events and talked about the components of corporate culture. Together they gave suggestions of the attitudes that should be taken by CC; recommended specific actions; and clarified structures.

Andrew followed up, speaking on behalf of CC, that the report brought to the forefront personal responsibility. He gave a statement bearing responsibility for good as well as problematic actions. Looking to the future there needs to continue to be self-evaluation within CC, and he extended a call to all of us to take on collective responsibility because we live together as one body in Christ - that we move forward with transparency, accountability and health into the future.

VMC in Prayer

Maren opened a time of 5 minutes of silence in prayer to reflect on all that we have heard. After that time scripture was read by Maren (English) and Veronica Sanchez (Spanish), church planter and ordained leader. Time was given for table discussions to discuss what has happened and the way forward for VMC and CC. At the end of discussion, tables shared a time of prayer and Maren ended the prayer time.

Next were announcements from June Miller, iCLT, regarding the delegate packets and highlighting information and events.

Lana Miller, Church Relations, Everence (lunch sponsor), prayed for the meal.

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Session III

June Miller, iCLT, prayed before an offering time.

Video of Bishop Leslie Francisco, III, iCLT and District Minister - Calvary, was shown (rescheduled from earlier in the morning). He stated that the phrase that comes to mind is "hope in the midst of crisis." When we feel overwhelmed it's easy to lose sight of hope. WE are the ones called to be beacons of hope, and read 2 Corinthians 3:18. Three things come to mind, 1) we must embrace transformation and change by renewing our minds, crisis can be a catalyst for change; 2) and when we embrace transformation we receive hope in the middle of crisis, God is with us, 3) then we will move forward with a divine purpose and determination. He challenged

us to step boldly into the future, knowing that God is with us every step of the way. “They will know we are Christians by our love” for one another.

Denominational Affiliation Work Group (DAWG)

Craig Maven, iCLT, Pastor at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church and Chair of DAWG, shared the group’s report and proposals that had been given to Conference Council (and distributed in Delegate packet). He summarized that the group talked to other conferences, asked questions, and took answers back to the group. They briefed each other on what they learned, and created proposals for VMC. They are now asking for feedback on those proposals through table discussions. Delegates were asked to fill out the provided questionnaires.

After discussion time, tables shared their responses:

Table 15: Sarah Bixler, VMC teaching cluster and delegate from Eastern Mennonite University.

What does it mean to hold the confession as our “teaching position?” Confusion here. Concerns about suspending the bylaws – might happen where there is already low trust, if we take structures away? Couldn’t that lead to greater abuse of power?

Table 16: Jake Lee, Pastor at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church

Affirmation to continue with Confession of Faith (CoF), but also affirmation for staying together despite differences in views of CoF. Worries about suspending bylaws if we lack commitment for staying together. What if we start with, “Who wants to continue as we’re going on before we start rebuilding stuff?”

Table 14: Dave Yutzy, Delegate from Trissels Mennonite Church

Divided on these views, some churches already left MC USA, others really value MC USA. Some desire to reaffirm stance on CoF. We need each other – not sure how, but realize we still need each other

Table 13: Moriah Hurst, Pastor at Park View Mennonite Church

Would step one affirm what we are right now? Some feel we need to reaffirm CoF before we can have other discussion. Concern over suspending bylaws. Can we be creative if we don’t have trust? Are we ready for this right now?

Table 12: Penny Driediger, Delegate representing the Teaching Cluster

Vigorous conversation and light on note taking. Much discussion over suspending bylaws – do wonder about the efficacy of it. How do we then have a clear process for allowing the creativity to be unleashed? What would suspending the bylaws actually mean? All for creativity, but not sure this is what gets us there. What are really the core values, the non-negotiables, for us as Anabaptists? Can we live with difference on sexuality?

Table 11: Pearl Hartman, Pastor Big Spring Mennonite Church, Chaplain’s Cluster Leader, Vice Chair of the Faith and Life Commission, member of DAWG

Sense of relief that we weren’t being asked to take an either-or vote by DAWG. Glad we’re trying to stay with stability - but also looking forward in creativity. Where are the spaces for

healthy conversation? How can it get any worse if we suspend the bylaws? Seems like the average person at congregational level isn't affected by current chaos—what if we take two years to name what isn't working any more? What really needs to be kept? Seems like DAWG is still addressing structural piece, when we really need to be at the attitude piece.

Table 10: Phil Helmuth, Guest, speaking for the table of guests.

Several new-to-conference folks, and some Hispanic delegates, who feel much of this conversation doesn't make much sense. What does it mean for folks within MC USA who aren't in MC USA but do want to be in VMC? And how does that impact our decision making process? How does that impact the work and priorities that we have as a conference in relation to MC USA.

Table 9: Matthew Bucher, Pastor of Immanuel Mennonite Church

"I feel depleted, but the last 30 minutes have been life-giving." If we suspend the bylaws, we could do X – this would be helpful to let us know what is actually gained in this. How do we keep doing deep scriptural wrestling? And actually listening, face to face, about our differences? (aka more listening needed)

Table 8: Paul Yoder, Delegate and Board President of Virginia Mennonite Mission (VMM)

Good to hear different conversations at different tables – difference in congregations and how they send representatives to conference. What is negotiable? Metaphor: marital issues and leaky issues. What are the marital issues, what are the leaky faucets? Let's categorize our issues. What needs focus because it's foundational to relational trust, and what are the items where we can be more flexible across our differences?

Table 7: Chuck Hostetter, District Minister - Tennessee, Carolina, Kentucky (TCK), Faith and Life Commission

Somewhat concerned DAWG didn't fulfill its mandate; we still want more guidance around what our affiliation will be, thought this was part of DAWG's mandate to clarify. We like the idea of re-imagine what could be and be creative, but felt like suspending the bylaws would just be creating more confusion. If we suspending the bylaws around who could vote, more issues could arise

Table 6: Matt Schwartz, Pastor at Eastside Church

Feel like suspending bylaws creates more issues, need to know more about what would happen in the next two years. Doesn't feel like this actually gets at our issues. Teaching Biblical lifestyle is in our constitution – why not start with addressing those differences?

Table 5: Beryl Jantzi, Auxiliary District Minister for Southern District

How do we put guardrails around suspending bylaws? Could just say new ideas have to go to the next layer – church, district, conference. Some idea of new outside-the-box thinking. We could put in guardrails. We found it helpful when people said "this is my preference" or "this is my congregation" – clarity around who we are speaking for.

Table 4: Rhyan Alghrim, District Minister - Eastern, Faith and Life Commission

We liked the DAWG proposal, at least because we mostly talked about something else. Feels like honest work of engaging the issues without inflaming, opening fresh approaches for the future. Some same questions as raised by other groups. Need more clarity around what the teaching position actually means – does it mean leaders affirm that the CoF is the overall official position, or does it mean leaders may not publicly disagree? More definition needed for teaching position.

Table 3: Glen Kauffman, Delegate from Ridgeway Mennonite Church

Similar as above concerns. Maybe there should be more emphasis on the missional aspect of the gospel message.

Table 1: Daniel Martin, Commissioned Pastor at Weavers Mennonite Church

Some happy with DAWG work, some felt like it fell short of mandate but that you did some creative work. Liked the idea of “reflecting on the center” – if we start with God at the center, do we continue to walk clearly enough? Again, moderator, moderator-elect, these are all named in bylaws. What happens after the 2 years but then nothing new passes, do they just come back? What if we just sent some folks to go through the bylaws?

Zoom Room 1: Vivian Stevens Lyons, Delegate, Conference Council - Calvary Rep, Co-Chair RJTF

Big question of how do we move forward, seems like both sides of the pendulum will leave a pretty big gray area, seems like much further conversation is needed, seems like folks on both edges are. When was the CoF last modified? More time for rebuilding trust is needed. How does VMC actually move forward with some in, some out of MCUSA? Seems like progressive framing of conversation. If we can't all sit at the table because one foot is out the door, feels like those congregations get too loud a voice. Need opportunities for people to honestly and safely share so that everyone is valued and appreciated.

Zoom Room 2: Sarah Piper, Pastor Zion Mennonite Church

Appreciation for what DAWG has done. Mixed review on proposal 1, others felt like it just matched in-congregation decisions. Same concerns around bylaws. Feel more lament and longing is needed. Most tables had concerns and questions about the recommendation of suspending the bylaws, but there was overall agreement that the table conversations that happened were beneficial in representing congregations. There were also many comments about the 2-year timeline and what happens during that time. Priority should be put on listening, not just sharing our personal opinions.

2:30 Break

2:45 Session IV

Review and Approval of Minutes (Action 1)

Jim Hershberger, former Secretary and current Moderator-Elect, presented the minutes of the 2023 Summer Delegate Assembly. Elwood Yoder had several corrections:

- Page 1, Everence is misspelled
- Page 2, Zach Dey's name is misspelled
- Page 2, Juan Carlos Malvaez's name is misspelled
- Page 3, the Secretary put the name of the District following Rocky Mount, but not with New Song. New Song, though it was in Harrisonburg, was Northern District, and should be noted in parentheses, as was Rocky Mount.
- Page 4, "Open mic comments" paragraph. The response, "Another answer is No, it is not a call for forbearance," doesn't make sense with a question mark. This was my comment in the meeting and I made a statement: I didn't ask a question, So the sentence should end with a period.
- Include the number of delegates in attendance and the name of the Secretary.

Action 1: After reviewing the minutes from the 2023 Summer Delegate Assembly, we approve the minutes with amendments brought by Elwood Yoder. *Action passed unanimously.*

Finance Report

Leroy Kauffman (via Zoom), VMC treasurer, presented a budget comparison from last year (receipts and expenditures) pointing out that an increase in expenditures was seen in the salaries category due to modest wage and benefit increases. Overall receipts were approximately \$20,000 less than projected. Expenses were a bit over budget, ending the year with a deficit. Caleb Schrock-Hurst of the iCLT is working on fundraising efforts. Time for questions followed.

Q: Were 2022-23 expenses budget or actual?

A: First slides were budget, last two slides were budget vs. actual.

Gifts Discernment Ballot (Actions 2 & 3)

Gloria Leaman (delegate from Lindale Mennonite Church) and Glen Kauffman of the Gifts Discernment Committee (GDC) presented individuals up for a vote.

Action 2: As recommended by Conference Council, we approve nominee Mary Jo Veurink for the position of Secretary for 3-year term Sept. 1, 2023 - Aug. 31, 2026. Ballots were submitted.

Action 3: As recommended by Conference Council, we approve nominee Veronica Sanchez for the position of FLC Member-at-large for 3-year term Sept. 1, 2023 - Aug. 31, 2026. Ballots were submitted.

Gloria and Glen also presented the need for a person to serve on the Finance Committee, as well as someone for the Historical Committee, and as Chair of the Gifts Discernment Committee. Suggestions can be written on ballots or given to the GDC.

Virginia Mennonite Missions (VMM) Status Change (Action 4)

Aaron Kauffman, VMM President, presented that VMM is wanting to change their relationship with VMC from “ownership” to “partnership.” They want to expand their table, because of others who are wanting to be at the table. Reasons: 1) growth, 2) administrative update, 3) to put in writing how VMM is actually operating. Paul Yoder, VMM Board President, also shared, explaining how VMM has changed over the years, and wanting to serve people who are not always connected to VMC. The process has been deliberate and has taken some time. Paul acknowledged this change may be painful for some or be felt as a loss. But he hopes that this will define how VMM works more accurately for both groups. He expressed thanks for VMC’s support of VMM.

Andrew spoke in support of the recommendation, stating that CC has processed this and is endorsing the action. Joe Bontrager, Delegate from Christiansburg Mennonite Church, made a motion, Howard Miller, Pastor at Huntington Mennonite Church, seconded the motion.

Action 4: As recommended by Conference Council, we approve the status change of Virginia Mennonite Missions from a Commission & Conference Ministry to a Conference Endorsed Ministry. And we also approve the Constitutional changes. Ballots were submitted.

Acknowledgements

Congregation & Ministry Updates

Duane Beck, iCLT, brought the following:

Acknowledgement 1: We, the delegates of Virginia Mennonite Conference, acknowledge with regret that Roberta Webb Child Care Center, due to legal implications, has voluntarily not renewed their Covenant Agreement as a Conference Endorsed Ministry.

Music & Worship

Maren (English) and Caleb (Spanish) shared a closing scripture, from 2 Corinthians, and Rachel and Andry led final songs.

Ballot Results

Action 2: Approved unanimously, 79 in favor, 1 abstention

Action 3: Approved unanimously, 79 in favor, 1 abstention

Action 4: Approved 97%, 76 in favor, 2 opposed, 2 abstention

Maren shared a benediction.

4:05 Adjourned

Number of delegates in attendance: 98

Recorded by Mary Jo Veurink, Secretary

Gifts Discernment Nominees



Pearl Hartman,

Member-at-Large, Faith and Life Commission

Pearl Hartman is the pastor of Big Spring Mennonite Church in Luray, VA, Cluster Minister of the Chaplain's Cluster of Virginia Mennonite Conference and the Vice Chair of the Faith and Life Commission of VMC. Prior to moving to the Shenandoah Valley, she has been a pastor or chaplain in Newton KS, Madison WI and Fairfax, Virginia. What she loves most about pastoral ministry is listening to how God is at work in people's lives, preaching practical sermons and watching the church grow in love by using everyone's gifts. She loves cooking, gardening and music. She was happily married to Dwight Hartman for nearly 10 years. She finds the work of Faith and Life to be energizing, challenging and vital.

Amanda Swartly,

Congregational Life Commission

Amanda grew up in Newport News, VA and came to Harrisonburg by way of EMU. While at EMU she earned a BS in Early Childhood Education and met her husband, Michael. Amanda is the Minister of Congregational Life at Lindale Mennonite Church where she finds meaningful, life-giving work in meeting people exactly where they are in all ages, stages, and phases of life.

She also enjoys ministering in a variety of ways as she looks to increase ways to connect through Bible study, small group ministry, children's ministry, and developing curriculum for use in the church setting. Amanda enjoys spending time with her family, walking/hiking with her goldendoodle (Penny), baking, reading, swimming, and playing flute and piano.



Ron Stoltzfus

Treasurer, Conference Council

I am retired from a career of teaching accounting at the collegiate level, thirty-two years at Eastern Mennonite University and five years at York College of Pennsylvania. Currently I work part-time for an attorney who specializes in tax planning.

Bonnie and I are members of Park View Mennonite Church where I currently serve as Building Maintenance Coordinator. Additionally, I am Treasurer of the Virginia Wilderness Committee with a goal to promote the congressional designation of Wilderness and Scenic Areas in our national forests.

I am an avid hiker and spend hours maintaining trails in the Shenandoah Mountain. I am part of a cohort of hikers who love birds, flowers, butterflies, and being in nature. For me trail maintaining is a practical way to work for the common good of society. Always leave the trail better than you found it!



Action Items

Action 1: We the delegates of Virginia Mennonite Conference acknowledge with regret the withdrawal of Knoxville Mennonite Church from formal membership in VMC. We are grateful for its ministry, and pray that God bless and guide the congregation in its realignment with Central District of Mennonite Church USA.

Action 2: We the delegates of Virginia Mennonite Conference acknowledge with regret the withdrawal of the following congregations from formal membership:

Early Church in Harrisonburg, VA;
Eastside Church in Harrisonburg, VA;
Iglesia Encienda Una Luz in Harrisonburg, VA;
Grace Mennonite Fellowship in Harrisonburg, VA;
Greenmonte Mennonite Fellowship in Stuarts Draft, VA;
Mosaic of Grace in Harrisonburg, VA;
Powhatan Mennonite Church in Powhatan, VA;
Trissels Mennonite Church in Broadway, VA;
West Liberty Mennonite Church in West Liberty, KY.

We are grateful for their ministry, and pray that God bless and guide the congregations in it's new denominational affiliation.

Action 3: We the delegates of Virginia Mennonite Conference acknowledge the closure of Signs of Life in Staunton, VA. We are grateful for its ministry, the legacy it leaves, and the fruit that is yet to come.

Action 4: We the delegates of Virginia Mennonite Conference acknowledge the closure of Asheville Mennonite Church in Asheville NC. We are grateful for its ministry, the legacy it leaves, and the fruit that is yet to come.

Action 5: That we approve the minutes from the 2024 Winter Delegate Assembly.

Action 6: We the delegates affirm Amanda Swartley as a member at large of the Congregational Life Commission.

Action 7: We the delegates affirm Pearl Hartman as a member at large of the Faith and Life Commission.

Action 8: We the delegates affirm Ron Stoltzfus as treasurer of Conference Council.

Action 9: We the delegates of Virginia Mennonite Conference welcome Iglesia Shalom-Nuevo Comienzo in Waynesboro, VA as a Congregation in Formation supported by the Southern District.

Action 10: (DAWG motion #1) 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.

Action 11: (DAWG Motion #2) Virginia Mennonite Conference shall remain a member conference of Mennonite Church USA.

Action 12: (DAWG motion #3) 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.

Action 13: (DAWG motion #4) 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)**

Action 14: (DAWG motion #5) VMC leadership will work on a resolution for Mennonite Church USA delegates to consider changing MC USA Bylaws Article III, Section 3 Congregational Derived Membership in Mennonite Church USA.

Action 15: Based on the Constitutional change approved by the delegates on February 3, 2024 where VMMissions transitioned to a Conference Endorsed Ministry, Article IX, Section 4 will be deleted to reflect the changes and Section 5 will become Section 4. **(see addendum Action 15)**

Each vote can be answered as: Yes, Yes with reservations, or No. Comments can be added at the bottom.

Mail-in Ballot option

The passing of Action 10 (DAWG motion #1), a temporary bylaw suspension, permits mail-in ballots for Motion 11 (DAWG motion #2), affirming our membership to Mennonite Church USA. Pre-emptively, a delegate may mail-in their ballot (post, email, or drop off at the VMC office) through July 8. If Motion 10 passes, they will be tallied along side the in-person ballots. If it fails, the mail-in ballots are invalidated. **(see addendum mail-in)**

For a ballot to be eligible, a delegate's name must be on the master delegate list held at the VMC office. A congregation is permitted 1 delegate for every 100 members or fraction thereof. (e.g. 101-200 = 2 delegates) in addition to any credentialed or commissioned pastor on staff. Each district may appoint up to 5 delegates. Every Conference Endorsed Ministry is eligible for one vote. Any member of Conference Council or Faith and Life Commission is automatically a delegate and is not counted towards a congregation's or district's eligible delegates. One person=one vote.

If you have questions about your delegate status, please check with your congregation, district, or endorsed ministry. If you still have questions, contact June Miller (june.miller@virginiacommunity.org).

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, laments, reflections and blessings. The following ac-

tion 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, laments, & 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 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

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



DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION WORK GROUP MOTIONS

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.

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



Mail-in Ballot option.

The passing of Action 10 (DAWG motion #1) on July 20, 2024, a temporary bylaw suspension, permits mail-in ballots for Action 11 (DAWG motion #2), affirming our membership to Mennonite Church USA. Pre-emptively, a delegate may mail-in their ballot (post, email, or drop off at the VMC office) through July 8. If Motion 10 passes, mail-in ballots will be tallied along side the in-person ballots. If it fails, the mail-in ballots are invalidated.

For a ballot to be eligible, a delegate’s name must be on the master delegate list held at the VMC office. A congregation is permitted 1 delegate for every 100 members or fraction thereof. (e.g. 101-199 = 2 delegates) in addition to any credentialed or commissioned pastor on staff. Each district may appoint up to 5 delegates. Every Conference Endorsed Ministry is eligible for one vote. Any member of Conference Council or Faith and Life Commission is automatically a delegate and is not counted towards a congregation’s or district’s eligible delegates. One person=one vote.

If you have questions about your delegate status, please check with your congregation, district, or endorsed ministry. If you still have questions, contact June Miller (june.miller@virginiaconference.org).

Action 11: *Virginia Mennonite Conference shall remain a member conference of Mennonite Church USA.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Yes, with reservations
- ☐ No

Comments:

Name (print)	Delegate appointed by...*	Date	Signature

*Add one: name of congregation, district, or endorsed ministry; or Conference Council, Faith and Life Commission

BYLAWS

VIRGINIA MENNONITE CONFERENCE

GENERAL

All matters hereinafter contained in these bylaws shall be subject to such provisions in regard hereto, if any, as are set forth in the constitution. All references in these bylaws to the constitution shall be construed to mean the constitution as from time to time amended. The name, place of business and purposes of Conference shall be as set forth in the constitution.

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. [\[Suspended through 2027\]](#)
- 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. Communicate regularly throughout the Conference to cultivate an awareness of the biblical teachings about peace and embodied expressions of peacemaking.
- 1.6.3 Tenure

The Chair or Co-Chairs shall serve three year terms and may be reappointed once. District representatives and congregational advocates serve at the pleasure of their sending entity.
- 1.7 Retired Church Worker Aid and Enrichment Distribution Committee
 - 1.7.1 Composition/Appointment

The Retired Church Worker Aid and Enrichment Distribution Committee shall consist of a person appointed by the Faith and Life Commission and a person appointed by the Congregational Life Commission.
 - 1.7.2 Duties
 1. Process applications for assistance from the Fund.
 2. Distribute funds as available and in line with established criteria for distribution.
 - 1.7.3 Tenure

Appointed members shall serve three-year staggered terms, and may be reappointed once.

Section 2. Ad hoc Committees

Conference Council, Commissions, and Conference Assembly may appoint ad hoc committees or task forces for specific assignments. Such committees shall report to the appointing body to whom they are accountable.

ARTICLE IX: COMMISSIONS

Section 1. Functions and Duties

The programs and activities of Conference shall be the responsibility of commissions as determined by the Conference Assembly. The functions and duties shall be outlined by Conference Council and approved by Conference Assembly. All commissions are accountable to Conference Assembly through Conference Council.

Section 2. Qualifications

Persons serving on commissions shall give evidence of Christian character and spiritual discernment. They shall have both interest and competence in the area of the commission's responsibility. Persons may not serve on more than one commission concurrently. Conference staff persons are not eligible to serve on commissions.

Section 3. Faith and Life Commission

- 3.1 Composition/Appointment

The commission shall be composed of all active oversight leaders of districts or clusters plus three members at large elected by Conference Assembly.
- 3.2 Organization

The commission shall provide for its own organization. It shall elect a chairperson, assistant chairperson and secretary. These officers will constitute its executive committee. The chairperson may be co-opted from outside the commission. The commission may establish subcommittees from among its members to fulfill its mandate.
- 3.3 Duties
 1. Provide leadership for Conference in spiritual, doctrinal and faith and life issues.
 2. Establish guidelines for ministerial leadership within the Conference.
 3. Exercise responsibility for granting, maintaining, and discontinuing ministry credentials.
- 3.4 Terms of Office

Officers and members at large shall serve three-year terms for a maximum of two full consecutive terms. One officer and one member at large shall be elected each year on a rotating basis.
- 3.5 Meetings

The commission shall meet quarterly with the privilege of the chairperson to call additional meetings.

Section 4. Virginia Mennonite Missions

4.1 Composition/Appointment

~~This commission shall be composed of representation from Conference districts and up to six members at large selected and appointed by the board upon affirmation by Conference delegates.~~

4.2 Organization

~~The chairperson shall be elected or appointed by the board and may be a non-board member. Other officers and committees shall be elected or appointed as outlined in the bylaws of Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions, Inc.~~

~~4.3 Duties~~

~~This commission shall provide missions leadership for the Conference.~~

~~4.4 Meetings~~

~~The commission shall meet quarterly with the privilege of calling additional meetings as determined by the officers of the commission.~~

Section 45. Congregational Life Commission

45.1 Composition/Appointment

The commission shall be composed of the chairperson and up to eight persons elected by the Conference Assembly through the Conference gifts discernment process. Consideration shall be given to the constituent groups served by the commission.

45.2 Organization

The chairperson shall be appointed by Conference Council from a slate developed through the Conference gifts discernment process, specifying the term of service. Chairpersons may serve a maximum of six consecutive years in this role, not including previous service as a regular commission member. The commission shall elect a secretary from its members. It shall have the privilege of appointing committees as required to fulfill its responsibilities.

45.3 Duties

1. Listen to and understand congregations and their needs, issues and solutions.
2. Connect congregations to Conference and appropriate organizations to congregations.
3. Resource congregations on issues related to worship, peace advocacy, phases of life and other topics as they are identified.

45.4 Terms of Office

Members of this commission shall serve three-year terms for a maximum of two full consecutive terms.

45.5 Meetings

The commission shall meet quarterly with the privilege of calling additional meetings as determined by the officers of the commission.

ARTICLE X: CONFERENCE MINISTRIES

Conference Assembly may establish, appoint, or officially recognize particular Conference Ministries, and charge them with the responsibility to fulfill specific ministries of Conference. Sharing a similar constituency with the Conference, such ministries shall be governed by their separate articles of incorporation, constitution and/or bylaws. All such governing provisions shall be subject to review and response by the Conference Council before they are enacted or amended by the particular Conference Ministry.

At least seventy-five (75) percent of the board of each Conference Ministry shall be members of Virginia Mennonite Conference, including those appointed by the Conference Council or one of the conference districts. The officers of respective Conference Ministries shall report to district chairpersons the names of persons from their districts who have been appointed to the ministry's boards. They may request Conference Council to assist in selecting additional board members.

Each Conference Ministry shall present a report annually to Conference Assembly, including a financial accounting. One staff or board leader shall represent the ministry as a voting delegate in the Conference Assembly. Ministry representatives are invited to meet with Conference Council in regular session as non-voting participants. In a spirit of giving and receiving counsel, boards of each Conference Ministry shall meet with Conference Council every three years for an In-Depth Review of the ministry's programs and relationships.

ARTICLE XI: CONFERENCE ENDORSED MINISTRIES

Conference Council may recognize specific programs or agencies, including organizations associated with Mennonite Church USA, as Conference Endorsed Ministries, thereby affirming the respective ministries as