

Please read these materials in preparation for the Congregational Meeting to be held after both worship services on Sunday, February 22. Council will be presenting this resolution for CMCL to consider sponsoring for the Mennonite Church USA Assembly in Kansas City. The resolution calls for denominational LGBTQ inclusion.

CMCL Congregational Council and Pastors

Dear Supportive Communities Network Members -

As you know, the MCUSA conference in Kansas City is fast approaching. There is a considerable amount of tension and anxiety already surrounding the conference; sentiments that I suspect will only grow as the event grows nearer.

While the actions of the conference will not drastically change the nature of our work, they will have the potential to make the realization of our vision either easier or more challenging for us. For that reason, it is important that we attempt to work within the institutional structures as much as we are able. Thus, I am grateful to Joanna Harader, pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kansas, for taking the lead in drafting a resolution to submit to the Resolutions Committee.

According to the new rules regarding resolutions, "any area conference, congregation or constituency group may propose a resolution for action by the Delegate Assembly." Resolutions should be submitted four months prior to the Assembly in order to avoid additional requirements for submission.

At a meeting of Inclusive Pastors prior to the *Fabulous, Fierce and Sacred Conference* in November, we discussed how resolutions can serve various purposes, including staking out a visionary and prophetic claim. That is the moral ground upon which this particular resolution rests.

I ask that you look over the attached resolution and take it your congregation for their consideration. We think it would send a strong and powerful message if all of the SCN congregations were to sign on to this resolution.

If you would like to sign the resolution, and/or if you have questions about it, please contact Joanna at peacemennopastor@gmail.com.

Thank you so very much for considering this request. Thank you also for the variety of ways in which you embody a theology of hope and hospitality. Truly it is a gift of love to a church that is struggling to find its way.

Courage,

Carol Wise
Executive Director, BMC

p.s. Perhaps you have read that BMC has been approved for a booth at the Assembly! This marks the first time since 1983, when the conference leadership forced BMC to dismantle the booth just a few hours after the opening of the Assembly. Our goal is to have a very positive, welcoming and strong presence in the exhibit hall. Please consider doing a shift at the booth - I'll be in touch with you in the coming months. Exciting!

Becoming a Just Church Resolution
for Mennonite Church USA Convention
Kansas City, Missouri, July 2015

Whereas "the Bible is the essential book of the church,"¹ the foundational document for Anabaptist/Mennonite Christians

Whereas

- God delights in the diversity of Divine creation and created humankind in the Divine image (Genesis 1)
- The Hebrew prophets proclaim that God desires justice and seeks to free those who are oppressed (Micah 6:8; Amos 5:24; Isaiah 1:17)
- Jesus, who is the "center and fulfillment"² of the whole of Scripture, offers radical hospitality to those traditionally despised by the religious institutions of his day and teaches that love is the fulfillment of the law (Matthew 22:37-40)
- The earliest church struggled with questions regarding inclusion of Gentiles and was led by the Spirit to fully and enthusiastically include this group that had long been outsiders to the Jewish people (Acts 15.)³

Whereas the current policies of MCUSA do violence to the personhood of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) people by forcing them to choose between full acceptance by their denomination and living into the abundant life to which God calls them

Whereas the current policies of MCUSA communicate demeaning and destructive messages that contribute to many LGBTQ people leaving their beloved denomination and even their faith in Jesus Christ

Whereas the current "teaching position" of MCUSA falsely labels all physically intimate same-sex relationships as "sinful," thus leading some Christians to question their worth in the eyes of God and, in some cases, to attempt/commit suicide

Whereas the ongoing conversation and discernment around issues of sexuality is being perpetrated at the expense of LGBTQ Christians

Whereas "justice delayed is justice denied"⁴

Whereas LGBTQ Christians are gifted by the Holy Spirit to contribute to the body of Christ as MCUSA seeks to "grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world."

Whereas the exclusion of LGBTQ people and their gifts harms the life and mission of the denomination

1 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, Article 4

2 Ibid.

3 Many of these points are gleaned from the paper "Response to IMMC Statement of Charge against Karl Shelly" by Karl Shelly.

4 Martin Luther King, Jr.

Whereas the oppressions of sexism, racism, and heterosexism are inextricably linked

Therefore, be it resolved that as members of MCUSA we will

- Repent of the violence our denominational documents and policies have done to LGBTQ people and those who have sought to support them
- Amend all church documents as needed to support full inclusion of LGBTQ people in the life and ministry of the denomination at all levels of participation and service; such amendments will include but are not limited to: the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, the Membership Guidelines, and a Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership
- Welcome LGBTQ Mennonites as a recognized constituency group at Constituency Leaders Council meetings
- Provide a generous seminary scholarship fund for LGBTQ students who are called to ministry and committed to the Mennonite church; this is as a means of offering reparations for the many called and gifted people who have been refused pastoral leadership in our denomination
- Extend grace and forbearance to those individuals, congregations, and conferences that will choose to remain in fellowship with MCUSA despite being at variance with the inclusive position of the denomination

