

Spring Assembly Celebration

Saturday, April 22, 2017

Minutes

Present: 129 attendees, including 66 delegates, 3 youth delegates, 52 general attendees, 5 staff members and 4 children

Welcome & Worship

1. Welcome – Jon Carlson welcomed all to the conference. He thanked Bob Murr and Bethel for their hospitality and Brook for behind-the-scenes details that have been put together. Jon gave an update on John Denlinger who is currently in the hospital and encouraged prayer for the family and for John. Greetings from Merv who just had spinal fusion surgery. Jon read Merv's greetings and updates. Jon referenced the Conference announcements on the back of the paper. Jon led the group through MC USA's vision statement. We will reflect on what it means to be a growing community of faith and what it means to and what it means to be communities of healing and hope as we talk about how to respond to sexual abuse in the church.
2. Pastor Bob Murr gave some house-keeping announcements. The theme of the day is "Communities of grace, joy, and peace." Bob read from Col. 3. We are to clothe our selves, bear with one another, and put on love. However, if we do all the things mentioned in that Scripture we just become "nice people." God has called us to be far more than "nice people." The word, "therefore" points back to the beginning of the chapter, which reminds us that the world is not our home but we are called to impact the world by setting our hearts and minds on things above, empowered by the Holy Spirit. We are reminded through MC USA's Purposeful Plan, that by the power of God we can be communities of God's grace and peace. Also that God will use us to bring people to Jesus. Bob closed his reflection in prayer.
3. Bethel worship team led us in four songs: "Because We Believe," "Indescribable," "Everlasting God," "Mighty to Save."
4. An offering was taken as "Be Unto Your Name" was sung.

Conference Reporting 1

5. **Puerto Rico Mennonite:** Jon started with the business portion. Jon gave the background of the Puerto Rico Mennonite Convention relationship and how they became Associate Member in 2011. Jon also mentioned the LGBTQ conversations are stretching Puerto Rico Mennonite churches as well. Jon invited leaders to bring greetings from Puerto Rico. The greeted the group and mentioned the Spirit is here and invites us to

continue in the spirit of praise and they are honored to be here with us. Leaders offered apologies for the lack of relationship that could have been built and hopes to modify their relationship with ACC. He named that different cultures understand things differently, but God is powerful and works among all of us. Jon C. Also apologized to leaders for not effectively cultivating a relationship and asked on behalf of ACC for their forgiveness. Jon brought Exec. Comm's recommendation to discontinue their associate member status with ACC. (Jon proposed, Nancy Souder second) Elizabeth Soto led a prayer in Spanish. A candle was presented to Puerto Rico leaders.

6. **Intro. Of New Congregations:** Jon reviewed the logistics of what has led up to four new churches hoping to join ACC. He read from the ACC bylaws of what is required of Conference Membership and invited members of each congregation to come up and introduce the delegates to each congregation. Order of sharing was: James Street, Landisville Mennonite, Laurel Street Mennonite Church, Rossmere. Jon went over recommendation from Executive Committee (Jon C. motioned, Ann Chapin Second). Vote was collected.
7. **Nickels for Neighbors:** Jon introduced the next Nickels for Neighbors recipient, which is the New Holland Early Learning Center. A brief introduction video was shared complete with information to what coins will go to: a fenced-in play area for the smallest children.
8. **Vote Reporting & Welcome** The vote 100% affirmed the four churches. Joanne led us through a call and response litany welcoming the new churches. Candles for each church were lit by the lead pastors of the four congregations. Individual ivy plants will be given to each congregation as a symbol of our need, as ACC churches, to care for and connect with each other, together or apart. The worship team led "The Church of Christ in Every Age."
9. **New Minister Introduction:** Dick Thomas, chair of Min. Leadership Committee, introduced new leaders in ACC. He named that it has been a rich time of listening to the stories of these leaders and their passion and love for the church and Anabaptism. Dick Thomas and Dawn Ranck-Hower read through the list. Dave Greiser led in prayer and encouraged laying on of hands by those around the new leaders.
10. **Receive Fall 2016 Minutes:** Minutes were included in the delegate packet. (Motion J.W. Sprunger, second Clair Sauder) Questions? None asked. All in favor.
11. **2017-18 Budget:** Ken Martin mentioned that it's an exciting time to be a part of the conference with new members and new life. Referencing the budget document, he explained how the budget is organized: the first page represents activity through the fiscal year, which is currently running a deficit of \$12,106. He is hoping to break even by the end of fiscal year in June. Ken also recognized the hard work of Larry McJunkin who keeps track of finances. The second page represents the balance sheet as of March 31, 2017. The third page is the coming year's proposed budget. Budget for coming year is \$355,000. We are anticipating a surplus in the coming year, which will be helpful to build up the reserve. Samantha Lioi wondered about the possibility of increasing staff time to keep up with the additional congregations? Ken answered staff time will be increased slightly, but that ACC would also like to use more money to help other congregations. Someone wondered about receiving the Currents publication via email to help save money. Ken made note of that. Elizabeth Soto wondered if staff and financial committee

would consider returning the \$1,200 to the Puerto Rico church as an act of faith? Ken will make note to discuss with Exec. Committee. Bob Petersheim commended Ken for the committee's intent to build up conference financial reserves. He wondered if it was defined what the target figure would be to retain in reserves. Ken responded with 3-6 months of reserves (approximately \$80,000) would be the target. Todd Gusler noticed that Rossmere is not listed. Ken responded that when budget was prepared their cong. Had not yet made their decision about joining. Ken motioned to approve as is, Jesus Cruz second) All in favor.

12. **2017 Leadership Solicitation:** Jon gave some background on the Gift Discernment Committee's process of presenting a leadership slate at the upcoming Fall Assembly. He invited all to prayerfully consider nominating individuals from churches who may be able to serve in ACC capacities.
13. **Final Update:** Ministerial Leadership Committee chair, Dick Thomas recognized that LGBTQ questions are the biggest thing being discerned in the Christian church these days. The Ministerial committee has been reviewing the credentials of a pastor who did a same-sex marriage. They met with representatives of Community Mennonite to hear their discernment process to how they came to their decision. They listened to one another, the Holy Spirit, and the broader church in their decision to perform the marriage ceremony. A circle process is being explored as they look how to proceed. They are taking into account MC USA and ACC guidelines. He asked for prayer for this committee as they move towards a conclusion. Caring and praying for one another is essential, but don't let this distract us from our purpose in Christ. Jon C. spoke from Exec. Comm. saying this review process is not done TO Susan but WITH Susan and it was approached as sisters and brothers in Christ.

Afternoon Session

14. **Opening:** Jon Carlson recognized the Youth Delegates and encouraged each congregation to send a youth delegate to our assemblies. Jon also recognized Clair Umble who recently passed away by reading his obituary. Joanne introduced this afternoon's presenters who will be discussing the prevention and response to abuse in the church. We will also be looking at and discussing the church-wide statement that was approved on the denominational level at Kansas City in 2015
15. **Sharing from Presenters:**
 - Dick Thomas & Theresa Mongiovi presented together about their experience with a sexual abuse case at Lancaster Mennonite School. They gave details of how they communicated the incident, how they supported the victims, basic PA laws about child safety, and policies to put into place when a sexual abuse case occurs.
 - Linda Gehman Peachey presented on power that adults or church leaders have, protection of each person, and prevention of sexual abuse. She also gave a definition of what grooming means.
 - Steve Musselman shared about his experience at Zion Mennonite maintaining a safe-space for children while welcoming those who have had sexual offenses in their past.

16. **Discussion Group & Q&A Panel:** Conference attendees broke up into small groups and had 20 minutes to answer the following questions based on the previous presentations and the recommendations for congregations in the *Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse*:

- What aspect of these commitments does your congregation do well?
- What aspects of these commitments could your congregation improve on?
- Share what questions your group members would have for the presenters? As a group prepare 1 or 2 to ask the panel publicly.
- Groups then had opportunity to ask questions to the panel.

17. Sylvia Shirk, Ruth Wenger and Lilliana Potes prepared a closing song, “May the Blessing of God Go Before You.”

*Recorders: Rachel Mast, Executive Committee Secretary
Brook Musselman, Conference Coordinator*