



ZING!

Calm, Slow, Productive November Moderator Report

By Ryan Koch

Calm, Slow & Productive: These three words are how I would describe the last two months for Mountain States Mennonite Conference. And these are the exact words I hoped for in this time of transition. A special thanks is warranted to Barry Bartel for staying on as transitional conference minister at ¼ time to bridge the gap and to help Amy get adjusted.

I cannot tell you how excited the Leadership Board is for Amy to begin her ministry as our next conference minister. I'm also thankful that the delegates unanimously and excitedly approved her for this role. I have complete confidence that Amy is going to flourish as our CM and that is going to enable her to explore different gifts and passions which God has blessed her with. I know her leadership will challenge our conference while also pulling us together, in new ways. I can't wait for November 12th when she officially begins. And I encourage everyone to send Amy a welcome email or card (AmyZ@MountainStatesMC.org). Please do continue to hold her in your prayers.

A few weeks ago, in mid October, Barry Bartel, Amy Zimbelman, Randy Spaulding and I attended the first virtual Constituency Leaders Council meeting of 2020. For those not familiar with the CLC, this body functions as the elders of the denomination. During a normal year, this body gathers twice. Unfortunately, the spring meeting was cancelled due to the pandemic, which meant we had a completely jammed agenda during our two days of meetings.

Most critical for the churches was the discussion on the retirement of the denomination's membership guidelines. The CLC is not a decision-making body. Ultimately the delegates in 2021 at the national convention will determine what changes might come. However, I found it interesting to hear the voices of each conference and constituency group about the potential changes. And yet, I heard a deep love and appreciation for our unique faith and our denomination. I also heard a deep desire for us to find ways to move forward, together. For those who have not read the CLC report, I encourage you to do so. You can find it [here](#).

Overall, I found the CLC meeting to be very encouraging. Apart from that conversation, we devoted a considerable amount of time and energy to doing anti-racism work together. Iris de León-Hartshorn led an

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insightful conversation on power and race and how the hidden forms of power have often been misused within the Mennonite Church. She really pushed our conferences to think about how we are responsible and accountable for the power that we have and what we do with it. This presentation reinforced, at least to me, the important work which the RACE taskforce is doing to help our conference recognize how white supremacy is supported and sustained through our organization.

Lastly, CLC reminded me that great things are happening all throughout the Mennonite churches. Amid this pandemic time which is full of uncertainty, churches and agencies are being creative in exploring new ways to proclaim the good news of Jesus and to bring peace to a world set on violence. I mentioned my thanksgiving for how adaptive we have been as a small conference, and how I believe this will be a springboard for helping us find new ways of being a conference together in the years ahead. I'm looking forward to 2021 and all that is in store for MSMC.