

# Why May's Delegate Assembly Matters

By Conference Moderator Ryan Koch and Conference Minister Amy S. Zimbelman

**What exactly is happening this May?** Mennonite Church USA is holding a special delegate assembly in Kansas City May 27-30, 2022. This is arguably the most important delegate session in over a decade. Logistical information on lodging, registration costs, childcare, etc. can be found in MC USA's FAQ form [here](#).

We strongly encourage every congregation in Mountain States to send delegates. Each congregation is eligible to send one delegate for each one hundred congregational members, or fraction thereof. Also, congregations may send an additional youth delegate (ages 16-21).

If finances are an issue, a scholarship program may be able to help for smaller congregations who have been active in MC USA in the past five years. [Complete this form to request mutual aid](#).

**Why is this meeting so important?** Delegates from around the country will weigh in on various resolutions listed [here](#).

One of the resolutions that will have far-reaching and long-lasting implications for Mennonite Church USA is the [Clarification on Mennonite Church USA Polity and the Role of the Membership Guidelines of Mennonite Church USA](#). This resolution proposes to retire the membership guidelines which currently state: "Pastors holding credentials in a conference of Mennonite Church USA may not perform a same-sex covenant ceremony. Such action would be grounds for review of their credentials by their area conference's ministerial credentialing body."



Retiring these guidelines will reiterate that congregations and conferences make decisions about pastoral credentials, not the denominational body. As the resolution states: “Pastoral accountability is a function of the area conference which holds the credential. It is not the responsibility of the Executive Board. Pastors, congregations, and area conferences discern the appropriateness of performing same-sex marriages in their contexts...In that spirit, we commit to the difficult work of being church together amidst our differences working at Biblical justice and reconciliation where there is conflict.”

Therefore, this resolution does not make any official statement on pastors officiating same-sex marriages—its goal is to ensure that area conferences (alongside pastors and congregations) decide whether or not to review or revoke credentials.

In Mountain States Mennonite Conference, the Leadership Board and Ministerial Council reaffirmed in 2020 that our conference would not review credentials when a pastor performs a same-sex wedding; and would also not take action when a pastor chooses not to perform a same-sex wedding. This gives full autonomy to local communities.

Read the full resolution [here](#).

Watch a webinar [here](#).

Staff summary and impact statement [here](#).

Another resolution with far-reaching implications is [A Resolution for Repentance and Transformation](#). Like the Membership Guidelines, this resolution also has to do with LGBTQIA+ inclusion. It states that “Our denomination’s policies, structures, practices and theologies have excluded LGBTQIA persons from fully sanctioned participation in the denomination and have caused great harm to LGBTQIA Mennonites and their families.” This rejection is a type of violence that has “silenced and denied ministry callings, torn apart families, forced parents to choose between their church and their child, and caused many LGBTQIA people to leave the church.”

In addition to calling for confession, truth-telling, and repentance, the resolution calls for the following:

- Rescind the Membership Guidelines, Section III.
- Include LGBTQIA people and/or representative allies in the creation of any resource, document, or policy produced or distributed by the denomination that specifically affects LGBTQIA people.
- Require that the Executive Board consult with LGBTQIA leaders to create an LGBTQIA constituency group with representation on the Constituency Leaders Council and/or other denomination-wide leadership groups.
- Provide denominational resources for individuals, congregations, and conferences to engage with repentance and reconciliation in their own contexts. Such resources should explore historic harms, encourage truth-telling, and address areas of intersectionality.
- Follow the leadership of LGBTQIA Mennonites to provide support and resources for LGBTQIA leaders in the church. This should involve investment of denominational time and money.
- Formalize and publicize policies for MC USA’s Executive Board, staff, and church-wide program agencies that prohibit the use of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status as criteria to restrict a person’s full participation in the ministries, activities, roles, and committees at the denominational level.
- Embody a theology that honors LGBTQIA people and relationships with all future MC USA theological statements, including but not limited to future revisions of *The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership*. When MC USA partners with other denominations or faith groups, its input into the process will advocate for this theology.

MC USA's Executive Board has decided that this resolution will be presented to delegates at the delegate assembly, who will choose whether to vote on it or whether to table it.

Read the full resolution [here](#).

Watch a webinar [here](#), featuring Boulder Mennonite Church's Pastor Randy Spaulding, who is part of the [Inclusive Mennonite Pastors](#) group.

Staff summary and impact statement [here](#).

Other resolutions include the [For Justice in the U.S. Criminal Legal System Study Resolution](#) and the [MC USA Accessibility Resolution](#).

We encourage Mountain States congregations to educate themselves on all the resolutions and process them as a community to discern together the way forward. Our conference holds many different opinions across churches and within any given church, and our hope is that we will commit to stay in community to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling together" (Phil 2:12). If you'd like to schedule a conversation with the Conference Minister or Moderator to ask questions or hear how we're processing through these resolutions, contact us at [amyz@mountainstatesmc.org](mailto:amyz@mountainstatesmc.org) or [ryank@mountainstatesmc.org](mailto:ryank@mountainstatesmc.org).

Hope to see you at the delegate assembly in May!