

Hearing from each other at the Delegate Assembly

From the Editors

Over Memorial Day weekend, 506 delegates from across our conference and around the country met at the Special Delegate Session in Kansas City. Delegates passed all resolutions presented, including one that affirms making churches more accessible for those with disabilities, retiring the Membership Guidelines, and affirming the Resolution for Repentance and Transformation (regarding LGBTQIA inclusion).

Each resolution was processed in table groups that extensively discussed the issue before voting. Travis Clarke who attends Beth-El and served as a conference delegate said he appreciated this method of processing the resolutions: “I learned that we like to look at issues as binary, but being able to talk around the table with people with different views, it was clear to see it was a spectrum of thought rather than this side versus that side.”



Pictured: Conference delegate Travis Clarke reporting out from his table group.

Connie Shelley, representing Sojourn Mennonite in Greeley and Fort Collins, also appreciated hearing diverse perspectives: “I don’t always have the opportunity to hear from someone with an opinion that is completely opposite of mine and to find myself compassionate with them as they try to muddle through the issues.” She said she didn’t sleep well worrying about her friend who cried at the meeting. “I was sad for him because he was so unsettled.”

During the open mic time on the Resolution for Repentance and Transformation, Conference Minister Amy Zimelman spoke publicly about the importance of hearing from each other and trying to stay together when we disagree.

“We in Mountain States are a small conference, and we have a handful of churches that do not consider themselves to be LGBTQIA affirming,” she shared with the delegate body. “We are also the first conference to ordain an openly gay pastor. It’s been beautiful to see what happens when pastors and congregations who profoundly disagree with one another stay in fellowship together.”

She also stressed extending the table: “When I study the Bible, I see a Jesus who hung out with all types of folks. It did not taint Jesus’ relationship with God’s Spirit to have a drink with diverse people—in fact, it was a sign of the coming Kingdom of Heaven that the marginalized are brought to the center . . . So let’s keep eating and drinking and learning together with our marginalized LGBTQIA siblings.”

The results of the votes were surprising to some, with the closest margin being on the Resolution for Repentance and Transformation—55.7% of the delegates affirmed it.



Pictured: Pastor Randy Spaulding (on the left), one of the drafters of the Resolution for Repentance and Transformation, conversing with his table group.

“Our table group members were surprised by the outcomes,” said Travis. “It gave us hope that there could be more positive surprises as to how this information is disseminated to and understood by the wider body.”

See coverage of the weekend from Anabaptist World here: <https://anabaptistworld.org/delegates-repeal-membership-guidelines-pass-lgbtq-affirming-resolution/>

And MC USA here: <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/delegate22/>