

**Illinois Mennonite Conference
2008 Annual Assembly Minutes
Saturday, April 05, 2008**

1. Welcome (9:00am): Roy Jimenez, Moderator

2. Approval of 2007 Minutes

Ray Nachtigall reviewed the minutes from the June 1-2, 2007 meeting of the IMC Delegate Assembly by reviewing the actions and noted several minor changes.

ACTION: m/s/c that the June 1-2, 2007 minutes of the delegate body be approved.

3. Gift Discernment Committee Nominees

Pauline Kennel clarified that the committee had agreed among themselves that Susan Sommer would serve a 1 year term, Pauline will serve a 2 year term and Doc Johnson will serve the 3 year term. In succeeding years one person will be selected each year to serve a 3 year term.

There was a comment as to whether or not the bylaws and constitution should be adopted before accepting this gifts discernment committee. Roy responded that the committee was appointed by the MLT therefore this is acceptable for the initial term.

ACTION: m/s/c that the Susan Sommer, Pauline Kennel and Doc (David) Johnson be appointed as the initial Gifts Discernment Committee with them serving 1, 2, and 3 years respectively.

4. Missional Leadership Team Nominees

Roy drew attention to the nominees for the Missional Leadership Team. Michael Dean and Mertis Odom are nominated to each serve 3 year terms. The cycle of terms MLT members were noted on page 20 of the annual report book.

ACTION: m/s/c that Mertis Odom and Michael Dean be appointed to the Missional Leadership Team for a period of 3 years apiece.

5. Proposed IMC Constitution

Wayne Hochstetler discussed how the process of changing the structure of IMC evolved and the development of the “organizational chart.” The chart is about what is important in our function and not necessarily a structural chart. Over the past five years MLT has been figuring out how IMC will be working together as a conference. Wayne clarified a couple of changes that were made to the proposed constitution after the delegate docket went to print.

The changes made to the bylaws by the MLT are:

- (end of line 171) The treasurer shall serve on a financial advisory team.
- (line 172) Add, “The treasurer shall be accountable to the CEM.”

The motion to accept the constitution was made by the MLT and was seconded from the floor. There were some additional comments from delegates during the discussion phase.

- Questions about Article III, Section 3 concerning the application process for membership. Will each congregation have to reapply for membership or will they be grandfathered in? Response – process is only for new and emerging congregations.
- Question Section 11 – Where is the scriptural basis for releasing a congregation from the conference? Did not have section 11 in previous bylaws. Section 11 was included based on the

suggestion of an attorney. Although the anticipation is that this section would not be used frequently, it provides an ultimate option for releasing congregations that have lost all semblance of Anabaptist theology and practice, or that simply have not participated in conference activities in the past nor do not intend to do so in the future. Elaine Bryant from the MLT also responded by saying that principles can be derived from the scriptures – the individual churches of Jesus are in the larger body of Christ therefore, some of the biblical principles that apply to the larger church would also be true for the individual churches.

- Another question was who is responsible for licenses? Although there is a group that helps the CEM with licensing, the ultimate responsibility for this lies with the CEM. This was originally part of the constitution but were then seen as ad hoc committees of the MLT therefore they were taken out.
- Concerning involuntary termination, another safeguard that the conference doesn't act too hastily, might be to consider taking a vote on termination in two consecutive meetings instead of one.
- There should be a change in the language on line 235 to read “financial advisory team” to reflect the change also made on line 172.
- Another delegate expressed strong affirmation for including in the constitution a church life team. Some guidelines should be put in the constitution for this committee so that too much power is not concentrated in the CEM. Response: in order to make sure we are doing the job that needs to be done, we are simplifying the connection with the process of credentialing by making it the responsibility of the CEM with the expectation that this will not negate the “priesthood of believers or that s/he will not consult with other people or committees.
- The Mission Statement on page 1: “IMC will speak and live God's reign.” Might we consider saying “will strive to speak God's reign as defined and taught by Jesus Christ.”?
- Another delegate expressed his hope that the constitution would be adopted as presented with the fact that the MLT and staff has taken note of all these concerns that were raised and discuss them with the possibility that the delegates could make amendments later.
- What will happen with the comments? Staff will take the expressed concerns under advisement and respond to delegates.
- The CLT was an advisory group for the CEM providing good counsel. This committee is under the direction of the CEM. The function will not change, just the structure. It is the responsibility of the staff not the organization. As a staff function any change can be made immediately as opposed to if it were structure it would have to go through the amendment process.
- After the constitution is adopted, there will be staff policies and the CLT is included in the policies. Right now we are working on the basic organization which can be built on. Then the policies will be the meat. The constitution is the framework upon the rest of the structure will be developed.
- There is no need to have a perfect constitution. This will continue to be worked on.

ACTION: m/s/c to accept the constitution as proposed by the MLT.

6. Amendment of the IMC Articles of incorporation.

ACTION: m/s/c to replace the addendum pertaining to IMC dissolution as stated in the current IMC Articles of Incorporation with the process of dissolution as stated in Article X of the constitution adopted on April 5, 2008.

7. Healthy Congregation

Delegates were invited to reflect on what it means to be a “healthy congregation.” Wayne introduced a list of attributes pertaining to healthy congregations. Table groups then discussed the vision of working toward healthy functioning congregations and what is involved in this process using the seven criteria in the paper.

Before participants moved into the table groups, Roy asked to celebrate the decision to pass the constitution and join hands in fellowship and love as Wayne lead in prayer. Participants then moved into their table groups before moving to break.

BREAK

8. Recognition of Menno Haven

Wayne gave some background to the ministry of Menno Haven in recognition of their 50th anniversary and presented Lotus Hershberger, (Board Chair) and Doc Johnson (Camp Director) with a plaque on behalf of the conference.

Doc and Lotus reported on some of the history and more recent ministry activities of Menno Haven. They showed slides comparing the past and present as the camp celebrates their 50th year of operation.

They also reported on the current financial campaign to strengthen the future ministry of Menno Haven and invited participants to become involved in the ministry of Menno Haven.

9. Conference Executive Minister Report

Wayne and Virgil Vogt presented information in addition to what was offered in the delegate reports. Places and persons were introduced who are involved in new ministry work in IMC. Additionally, new ministers in the conference were introduced.

- The Asian Community Mennonite Church and an Hispanic church plant, Roca de Esperanza, were recognized.
- New pastors include Arnie Owens, (Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Janet Rasmussen, First Mennonite Church, Champaign/Urbana), Rick Hiatt – First Norwood Mennonite Church, Samuel Voth Schrag – St. Louis Mennonite Church, Kim Litwiller (Hopedale Mennonite Church), Robert Spicer, (Englewood Mennonite Church), Cyneatha Millsaps, (Community Mennonite Church), Dale Dinterman, and Peter Anderson, (Living Water Community Church)
- Ordinations included: Doc Johnson (Menno Haven Camp and Retreat Center), Glen Rhodes (Arthur Mennonite Church), David Schrader (Freeport Mennonite Church).
- Resignations included Larry Wilson and Joe Maniglia

A standing prayer of blessing was imparted upon all those mentioned above who were present.

10. Acceptance of Grace Community Church

Virgil Vogt presented Grace Community Church as a new member of Illinois Mennonite Conference. William and Lilia Espinoza will be pastors of Grace. Representatives from the church were present. Fred Doering was introduced and gave a brief history of Grace. The congregation is going into their 90th year.

ACTION: m/s/c to accept Grace Community Church into the membership of Illinois Mennonite Conference.

Mike and Char Smith shared a testimony of their connection and love for Grace Community Church.

11. Release of Trinity Mennonite Church

Trinity Mennonite Church in Morton has sent a letter requesting their release from conference membership. Wayne presented a blessing of release of Trinity Mennonite Church, which was read in unison by assembly participants. This blessing will be included in a letter that Wayne will draft for the congregation. Delegates also desired that the letter include an invitation to continue being a part of IMC activities. Trinity intends to relate to Radical Restoration Ministries in Bristol, Indiana.

ACTION: m/s/c that we offer our blessing to Trinity Mennonite Church in the peace of Christ in the form of a letter that Wayne will draft.

12. Financial Reports

Wayne presented the financial reports and the challenges that are currently being faced. He discussed the difficulties with the capacity building campaign which was scheduled to begin in 2007, but which has not yet begun. Therefore, IMC suffered a deficit this past year.

He expressed his gratitude for the advice of the MLT and for their help in finding a way to help cover this deficit. Money to cover the deficit came from the Missional Bequest fund, which is money from an estate to use for missional activities. It is the intention that this money will be repaid as soon as possible.

Wayne noted that the money for operating activities comes from the congregations as noted in the annual report book. IMC has tried to streamline their expenses for the coming year. He noted the urgency for continued congregational financial support. He also wanted to make a note to all that the conference is not bankrupt, there are assets in CDs. There is a need for a restructuring of the funding system and welcomed anyone's suggestion.

The capacity building campaign will go forward headed by Design for Ministry. This campaign has several prongs directed toward individuals and congregations. Wayne distributed a survey that will provide data for the campaign.

Comments:

- A question was raised as to whether we have considered fees-for-services? Response: Yes, although we have chosen not to go this route for relationship issues.

LUNCH

13. Church-Wide Reports

A unified church-wide report from Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Publishing Agency, and Mennonite Education Agency was offered. Unfortunately the PowerPoint presentation was not working, but representatives told interesting stories about how God was working through the many organizations and individuals of the church.

14. Conference Executive Minister Search Report

A report was offered by Tim Schrag (Chairperson). The search committee consists of the MLT minus Rick Martin and the addition of Tim. Looking for a full time person to live in the Chicago area, they have advertised and are now ready to enter into the interview stage.

15. Mennonite Central Committee Report

Stanley Kropf brought a report from Mennonite Central Committee in which he thanked conference participants for the contributions of materials and money. He told several stories that reflected the profound impact of the volunteers and resources that MCC represents. He also announced a new MCC initiative.

16. Arm-in-Arm

Michael Dean reported on the current activities of Arm in Arm, the international relationship that some IMC churches have with churches in the Patagonia area of Argentina. It was out of this partnership that the Southern Illinois initiative began. A work/mission trip is being planned for January 2009. Interested persons are asked to contact Michael or the conference office.

Another opportunity exists for interested persons who will be at Mennonite World Conference next year to participate in a fellowship visit to the Patagonia area.

17. Closing Activities and Announcements

To begin closing the delegate sessions, Roy read from I Corinthians 15:20ff and Chuck and Bonnie led singing.

Wayne read the roll call of congregations, inviting participants from those congregations to stand as the name of their congregation was read.

Sally Schreiner Youngquist led the delegates in prayer.

In lieu of a longer participation module reflecting the discernment practice that IMC is intending to adopt, Don Rheinheimer explained some of the essential elements of the *Day of Discernment*. The next *Day of Discernment* is scheduled for August 23, 2008 in which we will discuss the intercultural nature of our conference. Don reflected on Hebrew 5:14 as instructive for why disciplined discernment needs to be a part of our body life. In brief, *Day of Discernment* is a time of coming together to wrestle with scripture around a particular topic or area.

20. Table Talk

Participants were dismissed to gather into table discussions structured around various shared concerns or to visit informally for the rest of the afternoon.

Katrina Sommer, Recorder

NOTE: All gathered worship and proceedings of the 2008 Illinois Mennonite Conference Assembly are available on the conference website at www.illinois.mennonite.net under the link "Conference Assembly." This includes the business sessions, the worship times, and a copy of these minutes.