

2006 PNMC Delegate Sessions
Mountain View Mennonite Church – Kalispell, Montana
June 23-25, 2006

Friday – June 23, 2006

Session 1, 9:00 am – 10:30 am

Welcome

John Willems opened the first session with a welcome to the delegates, non-delegates and guests, and an opening prayer. A short time was given for the delegate table groups to get acquainted and review the Table Group Covenant. John then continued with some comments to the group.

Receiving of Iglesia Mennonita Cristana Roca de Salvacion as a Member Church

Victor Estrada, Wendell Amstutz and other congregation members from Iglesia Mennonita Cristana Roca de Salvacion were asked to come forward as the Conference received them into membership. All of the requirements for membership have been met and the Board approved the membership request. The church began in 1998 and they are presently meeting in Calvary Mennonite Church, with about 35 people attending. *The recommendation to receive IMCRS as a member church in PNMC was put before the delegates. Audrey Lowen moved we accept the recommendation, seconded by Anne Hege. Unanimous approval.* John Willems led in a prayer of blessing.

Minutes of the 2005 Annual Sessions

John asked for any additions or corrections to the Minutes of the 2005 Delegate Sessions. Seeing as there were none, *Jon Snyder moved to accept the Minutes as written, seconded by Steve Kimes. Motion carried.*

Recognition of Churchwide Guests

John invited representatives of church-wide agencies to come forward and introduce themselves to the delegates. The following representatives were present:

Janet Plenert – Mennonite Church Canada Witness Executive Secretary and invited speaker

Marlene Kroeker and Neil Richer – Mennonite Mission Network

Dale Schrag – Bethel College

Gary Prieb – Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary

Bob Buxman – West Coast MCC

Leroy Willems – MCC Disabilities

Larry Martin – Hesston College

Gilberto Flores – Mennonite Church USA

Phil Bergey – Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership Board

Ron Rempel – Mennonite Publishing Network

Greetings from MCUSA Executive Board

Phil Bergey brought greetings from the broader church and the MCUSA Executive Leadership Board. He shared the 4 priorities of MCUSA – being a missional church, growing leaders for the church, focusing on anti-racism training, and developing global relationships.

Mennonite Publishing Network

This year the featured agency is Mennonite Publishing Network. Executive Director Ron Rempel introduced himself and the agency. He shared how he came to be the director and what MPN is about, mainly providing resources to equip the church. Ron made further comments on different resources available and their financial situation as they continue to remain stable and pay down their debt.

Action on the Ballot

John presented and reviewed the ballot. The Nomination Committee worked very hard, with John's assistance, to fill the vacant positions on the ballot. The candidates were recognized and the *motion to approve the ballot as presented was made by Cleon Classen and seconded by Simon Rendon.* Cecil Miller raised the question of whether there are any women on the Pastoral Leadership Committee. John answered there were not. Merlin Aeschliman, member of the Nominating Committee, reported that some were asked, and the committee tried to maintain a geographical and gender balance, but it has been difficult this year to get people to say yes. It would be helpful to have more input from the congregations in filling the positions. Another item pointed out on the ballot was that the Board appointed Audrey Lowen to complete Jack Knox's

Director at Large position as he has accepted a member position on the Peace and Justice Committee. *The ballot was approved.*

Announcements

John announced that there would be a discussion on immigration concerns today at 4:30 for 20-30 minutes.

Friday – June 23, 2006

Session 2, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Sam Adams, pastor at River Mennonite Church in Bend, Oregon opened the second session with prayer.

Structure and Vision Task Force Recommendations

Audrey Lowen, Chair of the Structure and Vision Task Force gave a PowerPoint presentation on the purpose, vision and activity so far of the SVTF. The next step in this process is identifying the structure of PNMC, which will be the round table discussion today. The goal is to have a proposal at next year's annual conference of what PNMC should/could look like. Table groups spent time discussing the following questions, based on the core values and processes:

- 1) Is there anything missing?
- 2) Is there anything you absolutely do not accept?

After discussion, the following recommendation by SVTF was presented for affirmation:

It is the desire of PNMC, originally created in 1994, to review and renew our direction together. The conference affirms the following foundational beliefs, vision, mission, core values and core processes, and offers encouragement to the Task Force during the coming year as they work with others across the conference to discern the impact of these directional statements on the work and structure of the conference.

Motion to accept was made by Jon Dilbone and seconded by Merlin Aeschliman. Motion carried.

Phil Bergey shared some thoughts on why most area conferences are making significant changes. Congregations are changing, the denomination that we are a part of is changing and we need to be more focused, prioritized, and connected. The structure and vision process has been going well so far. The Board has responded well, placing their trust in the SVTF. This group has been working with integrity and needs our encouragement to be direct, directive, and to feel empowered to come to us next year with a structure recommendation.

May Mae Hardt presented the following questions to the group, which were discussed over the next 30 minutes:

- 1) Based on the mission, vision, core values, and core processes, what does the work of PNMC look like in the next 5 years?
- 2) Based on the mission, vision, core values, and core processes, what does the structure of PNMC look like in the next 5 years?

Responses:

- Work: include our youth and young adults in the work of the conference; Structure: conference youth pastor.
- Work: cross-cultural partnerships.
- Increase racial, cross-cultural involvement.
- Teach core values to congregations so they are on board with them; have 2 conferences each year – worship, business.
- Spanish churches, leadership development, continuing education.
- Core values – mission being more Bible-centered in our authority.
- Encourage congregations to assign lead delegate to be point of contact for information.
- Poll congregations to identify 3-5 issues they struggle with and structure staff to address those issues; instead of Board of Directors, have more of a constituency council model.
- Intentionally communicate, teach identity.
- Recognize the cultural and language scope of our conference; find new ways to communicate without stretching finances.
- Utilize camps more to get to know each other better.
- Hold retreats for specialized groups.
- Be proactive on difficult issues to discuss in a healthy manner.
- Teach on the issues, such as immigration, having regional meetings.
- Church planting.

- Growth for existing churches; how to promote growth, new mind set and passion for growth.
- Look at positions of Conference Ministers, Moderator, Executive Secretary – restructure by combining duties?

Overview of 2006-07 Budget

Treasurer Don Bacher made comments on the current Balance Sheet and budget, and the proposed budget for 2006-2007. This year, the conference received \$35,000 from the Joe Jantz estate. There were no directions from the Estate as to how the money should be used so the Board of Directors decided to split it three ways - \$10,000 to the Sharing Fund, \$10,000 to the Oregon Mennonite Historical Society as a matching grant for their new facility, and \$15,000 held in reserve until the Structure and Vision Task Force completes their work in 2007.

The Sharing Fund is a new item this year and its purpose is to provide short-term assistance for medical expenses, including mental health, incurred by PNMC under-insured pastors and their immediate family members. Funding for this will come from contributions, fund raising efforts and other undesignated funds received by PNMC and designated by the PNMC Executive Committee.

In looking at the 2006-2007 member congregation pledges, there has been very little increase in pledges. Most all of the pledges have been confirmed. However, we again face a budget that is overwhelmingly out of balance. By moving the Hispanic Conference Minister and Conference Teacher positions into the budget and increasing our Hispanic Conference Minister's time, we have added a significant amount to the expense side of the budget that has not been balanced on the income side. The current projected income, including pledges from Conference churches, is out of balance by approximately \$85,000.

Three issues will be discussed at tomorrow's session – 1) Do we move the Hispanic Conference Minister and the Conference Teacher into the regular budget? 2) Do we increase the Hispanic Conference Minister's time? 3) How close to a balanced budget do we want to have?

Friday – June 23, 2006

Session 3, 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm

Simon Rendon introduced Manuel Ruiz, our invited guest from NW Mexico. Manuel brought greetings from the 12 Mennonite churches in NW Mexico. He led in prayer as we moved into our next session.

PNMC/CIEMNM Covenant Recommendations

Richard Mickelwright, Chair of the Mexico Transitional Committee presented information and a recommendation on PNMC/CIEMNM Covenant, as printed in the Delegate Handbook, pages 55-58. The committee took the comments the delegates shared at last year's conference and made some changes to the recommendation. Simon took it to NW Mexico last fall and discussed it with the leadership there. They requested we put a definite timeframe on our financial contributions by requesting a 7-year period of financial support, beginning with \$5,000 for the 2006-2007 budget year and then decreasing every year by \$750/year. This support would then end in the 2013-2014 budget year. Additional funds needed would be \$6,000/year to fund the exchange of leadership.

Richard asked the table groups to have a short time of discussion, listing any questions they might need clarification on regarding the goals and commitments documents of the CIEMNM Covenant of Relationship.

Responses:

- At the end of 7 years, do we anticipate continuing the \$6,000 support?
- Why does NW Mexico need a resource person from PNMC? Answer: This person is needed to bring concerns from both sides and help both groups work together, to continue the relationship.
- Does NW Mexico have resources that we need?
- Will there be an oversight committee or is that expected to be the Mexico Transitional Committee?
- Would like to see our Mexican sisters and brothers come to the USA as frequently as our folks travel that direction.

After discussion, the *motion was made by Jeannie Zook to approve the Commitments of the CIEMNM Covenant of Relationship as presented, seconded by Miriam Hooley.*

Further discussion: there was a concern that the way the relationship is now, we are being seen as a "parent" and would like to see something in the Covenant that we are equal partners. John Willems responded that this has been discussed among the MTC and Board, and they are working at it. *Upon no further discussion, the motion carried.*

The next item of discussion was the issue of congregational involvement and what the committee would look like. This will be discussed by the current MTC committee, the Board and SVTF over the next year, but wanted input from the delegates. The table groups spent 5-10 minutes discussing what this committee should look like in the future and what the congregational involvement should be (i.e. how to encourage more congregational involvement).

Responses:

- Have committee make assignments between churches in the US and Mexico.
- We need to know each other's stories; we need to have continuing opportunities to hear each other's stories.
- Need to be better educated on the churches in NW Mexico – see where the money is going.
- Create partnerships, youth trips to Mexico, etc.
- Hearing stories from both sides is more helpful than discussing finances – how do these life changing experiences help relationship?
- Establish seminars about immigration, poverty, etc. for NW Mexico and us to meet together.
- What is the history of the relationship?
- Congregation to congregation relationships.
- Evangelism of NW Mexico to PNMC for an extended period of time.

Immigration Concerns

Wendell Amstutz presented “A Proposal for Responding to Immigration Issues” from the Council of Hispanic Anabaptist Churches of the Northwest (CIHAN). How is the issue of immigration affecting our lives, our families, our church? How does this present an opportunity to engage in mission? The purpose of the proposal is to form an inter-agency agreement between CIHAN, MCC West Coast, Peace and Justice Committee of PNMC and Immigration Counseling Services of Portland, Oregon to field a team of advocates/educators to visit both Anglo and Hispanic churches in PNMC to 1) provide information and counsel and 2) help guide dialogue on immigration issues in the church. The delegates responded favorably to this proposal.

Saturday – June 24, 2006

Session 4, 9:00 am – 10:15 am

Pastor Jeff Long from Filer Mennonite opened the session with prayer.

Announcements

Carl Hege from Aberdeen, Idaho shared about a new book “Through the Years” written by Aberdeen First Mennonite member Eldon Harder. The book is about how churches change throughout the years.

Audrey Lowen announced that the SVTF posters were on the walls around the gym and encouraged delegates to use the provided post-it notes to add comments.

Roll Call of Churches

Diane Isaak called the roll of member churches, with delegates from each congregation standing to be recognized.

Proposal for Faith and Practice Forums

Pat Hershberger presented the proposal “Faith and Practice Issues in PNMC” and explained that this is something that has come out of the work of the Pastoral Leadership Committee over the past several years in their dealing with difficult issues. She reviewed the proposal and gave a brief background. Duncan Smith then read through the proposal, as printed in the Delegate Handbook on pages 59 and 60. The table groups then spent 15 minutes discussing a list of questions.

Responses:

- Affirms the concept, recognizing the importance of finding new ways to wrestle with issues. Will formation of this group add another layer to the committee? Could this replace something rather than add?
- Limiting it to congregational leaders – have regional teaching sessions to bring more people in than just leaders.
- Affirm model of this kind of forum – who would all be involved? Is a group of 8-10 too big? Should have good diversity – geographically, gender, philosophy, etc.
- When, where – could add a Thursday meeting to annual conference.
- When correspondence needs to go out to churches, send to delegate rather than just church – sometimes information isn't received by all.
- Affirm idea – suggest adding 1 day to annual meeting – think tank should be diverse, not just leadership.

- Affirm – creating safe space for discussion of issues, could add extra time to annual meeting, have congregational exchanges, ongoing discussions throughout the year.
- Who – not just leaders but those who have a passion for the issues.
- Affirm – start with a session on discernment – make it available to reach all congregations, not just those who come to conference – possibly use electronic medium.
- Who – adult Sunday School teachers. Should be done in a respectful environment; potential to develop personality that could turn people off, important that it initially be set up right; helpful if it were held outside of annual conference.
- Adding a day to annual conference might be a problem in that it may distract from the rest of conference; bring in people from outside the church with expertise to facilitate discussions.
- Need additional teaching on discernment in our congregations via small groups, workshops, etc.
- How do we discern together? How do we include those congregations on the fringes, i.e. those who don't have email, have multiple languages, etc.?
- Great forum to invite a community for discussion – need vehicle for discussing things that we cannot discuss in our own congregations; opportunity for possible training to take back to our local communities.
- Come back with something we can put into practice.
- Doing this means not doing something else – small groups with appropriate expertise. How do we nominate people, how does it get going? Does this group get together and “practice” so they know what to do when an issue arises?

Pat Hershberger moved that the proposal be adopted, seconded Don Bacher. Further discussion – who would be involved in processing the issues? Answer: it would go back to the Board of Directors. Even though talking about process can take so long, sometimes it's not the problem that is important but the process. *Motion to accept the proposal was approved.*

Weldon Nisly Update

Pat Hershberger (representing PLC), Weldon Nisly and Seattle Mennonite presented a “Joint Statement of Understanding Between Pastoral Leadership Committee and Weldon Nisly” to the delegates. The following has been mutually agreed upon:

1. We commit to mutual yieldedness (*gelassenheit*) before God through Jesus Christ and to remaining in fellowship with each other.
2. Pastoral Leadership Committee (PLC) will return Weldon's ministerial credential to a designation of “at variance” to be reviewed in one year.
3. Weldon will refrain from performing same-gender covenant ceremonies during this year.
4. PLC will challenge PNMC to provide forums to discuss issues of faith and life, such as the discernment of faithful dissent to the Confession of Faith.
5. Weldon and PLC will practice respectful representation when speaking about the credential status process in broader venues of communication.

A closing prayer was offered.

Saturday – June 24, 2006

Session 5, 1:00 pm – 2:45 pm

Doug Peterson, Youth Pastor from Calvary Mennonite Church opened with prayer.

2006-07 Budget

Don Bacher asked that the delegates consider 3 questions:

1. Whether or not to move Victor Vargas and William Higgins positions into the budget (currently are funded through Vision Giving Fund).
2. Do we increase the amount of time for Victor Vargas? If yes, how much?
3. How do we want to handle the deficit in the budget?

The table groups spent time in discussion of these questions and any other general questions of clarification on the proposed budget.

History of Conference Teacher and Hispanic Minister positions – in the beginning enough vision funding was established through fund raising to fund half-time positions for at least 2 years. Conference has produced enough funds over the last several years to continue in this manner. Salary dollars for these positions have come from outside of the budget (donation, fund raising, Vision Funding Giving). The other 2 conference minister positions are part of the regular budget.

Member church contributions – Don gave a history of how it was originally set up. Member churches were asked to pledge 6% of their annual budget. Some churches are giving 6%, some are giving more or less. Don sends information to the church treasurers and gives a suggested giving amount for each year, usually more than the previous year. This year he sent out information that included what they pledged and what they actually gave, and left it up to them to decide how much to pledge.

Pat Hershberger moved we reaffirm the motion that was made last year regarding moving these 2 budgets into the regular budget. Seconded by Cecil Miller. Motion carried.

Table comments regarding Question 2: Do we increase the amount of time for Victor Vargas? If yes, how much? The current proposed budget is based on him moving to half-time. If we move him to 1/3 time, it would be approximately \$10,000 less and keeping him at 1/4 time is \$15,000 less.

- This is a justice issue – 21% of our churches are Hispanic. Church plants and growth are coming from the Hispanic sector.
- 100% in favor of going to 1/2 time.
- Victor is already working at least 1/2 time, he should be compensated.
- General support of moving to 1/2 time, but with some concern for the source of funds.
- Support 1/2 time but wonder if 1/3 time is an option.
- Have a hard time dealing with this decision without knowing where funds are coming from.
- If we were talking about Anglo pastors, would we be struggling with this issue?
- How will it affect Victor's time with his own congregation? (Simon Rendon said the church is presently going through the process of looking for an Associate Pastor to help Victor.)

Don pointed out that there is a new item under income in the budget – CIHAN has pledged \$1,200 a year towards Victor's salary.

Table comments regarding Question 3: How do we want to handle the deficit in the budget? Our options include 1) approving the proposed budget with an \$85,000 deficit, 2) pull money from our reserves (Stocks and Bonds or Revolving Loan Fund), 3) Endowment – while funds were originally earmarked for different things, it has been used for other spending; the delegates can take action as how to spend the endowment funding.

- Do some education – maybe young adults don't have the same commitment to church giving.
- Janet Buschert has been helping with fund raising and would like to see that revived again. The money is out there, it just needs to be asked for.
- Feels comfortable with the deficit budget.
- Phil Bergey offered the following observations: 1) he is not confident this is the best group to deal with these types of decisions. Can we trust the Board to make the final decision? 2) A group this big can't make this kind of decision with limited knowledge. 3) Allow the SVTF to work on structure and give some direction to the Board to grapple with it.
- Clarification on the \$85,000 that was moved into the budget – where does it show up? Answer: it initially went into Net Assets Available.
- Where is the \$300,000 from the Revolving Loan Fund? Answer: It has been invested in stocks and bonds. We have the option of moving that money to something that would yield higher interest.
- We need to challenge ourselves in giving for Vision. For example, the change we spend every day for a newspaper, coffee, etc. can add up very quickly.

The motion was made to pass the 2006-2007 budget as presented with admonition to the Board to make every effort to increase Vision Giving to come into the budget. Motion was seconded and carried (not unanimous).

The suggestion was made that we start our giving right now by passing a basket around. A total of \$2,149.56 was collected.

Steve Kimes moved to amend the previous motion to give a mandate to the Board this year that delegates not be given another deficit budget to pass next year. There was no second and the amendment died.

Steve then made a separate *motion that this body give a mandate to the Board that next year they do not give us another deficit budget. Motion was seconded.*

Table groups comments:

- In the past the Board has cut programs to balance the budget, then at annual conference the delegates voted to put programs back in the budget.
- Not comfortable with the word mandate.

- Mandate includes any kind of fund raising.
- We could have a balanced budget today if church giving could increase by 20%.
- Mandating is not a good idea at this point – we don't want to hamstring the SVTF – this is a transitional time.
- Don't think this commitment is a very good one.
- In general feel this is not a good amendment we want to approve.
- The Board is a group with integrity – they will not go wild.
- Give the Board the freedom and direction to move money in the Endowment to a higher interest bearing account.

The motion failed.

In a final comment, Don encouraged churches to adjust their budgeting year to be in line with conference.

John Willems reported that Harold Snyder and Ike Kauffman reviewed the treasurer's books for fiscal year ending June 30, 2005 and it is their "opinion that the records and reports accurately reflect the financial activities of the PNMC for the fiscal year indicated."

Saturday – June 24, 2006

Session 6, 3:15 pm – 4:15 pm

Bernie Wiebe, interim pastor at Portland Mennonite opened the session with prayer.

Sheldon Burkhalter introduced Sam Adams to the group by asking Sam a few questions. Sam is involved in a church plant in Bend, Oregon. A core group has been formed and have started meeting. They are very committed and are holding services on Sundays. Their focus right now is on forming the core group and inviting others in to grow. They want to be a missional church and are waiting to see what God is bringing them. Sam requested that we would pray for people to join into their core group and be 100% committed, and wisdom in discerning who those people might be, and using their money, time, resources, etc. wisely.

Dialogue with Conference Ministers/Board

- Jeannie Zook encouraged the SVTF to keep on communicating during the year so the congregations can be informed.
- Kathy Bilderback asked what the timeline/process would be on what we agreed to have as a new commission.
Answer: the first of those events could happen within the next year to look at how a first gathering can happen.
- Paul Miller asked if Weldon is in remorse for what he did? Are we just giving credentials back to him with no changes? He feels it hasn't been brought back to his church in a way they can deal with the right answer. Answer: Duncan encouraged him to talk to Weldon and that we should seek to work together as we deal with these difficult issues. We are not changing the Mennonite Church's position. Weldon stated that he does not want to respond much at this point and that his commitment as a pastor to his church continues.
- Matt Friesen announced that the Peace and Justice Committee is working with Zion and others in the Pacific Northwest to sponsor seminars with Perry Yoder this fall. They are also hosting a Peace Gathering to be held at Albany, Oregon on October 26-28.

John asked the delegates if they would like to continue the table arrangement for discussion in the future and the response was in favor of continuing.

Dave Stutzman, Aberdeen First Mennonite interim pastor offered a prayer of blessing for all committee chairs and members, Board members and Conference Ministers, past and present.

John Willems thanked various people for serving in PNMC and for this conference sessions and announced that next year's conference – Albany/Corvallis 2007 – will be held at Albany on June 22-24, 2007. Matt Friesen and David Hockman-Wert extended an invitation and welcome to come to Albany.

Charlotte Hardt and Don Bacher thanked John for his years of service as Moderator with a "This is Your Life" presentation and a plaque. John expressed his gratitude for this gift and for the privilege of serving.

John closed the sessions with a blessing:

"May the love of our Lord Jesus Christ draw you to Himself.

May the power of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you in His service.

May the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ fill your soul. Go in the joy and peace of Christ!"

The 2006 PNMC delegate sessions were adjourned at 4:15 pm.

Respectfully recorded,
Diane Isaak
PNMC Secretary