

PNMC Annual Delegate Session – June 24-25, 2011  
Western Mennonite School

**DISCERNMENT SESSION I – Friday, June 24, 10:30-12:30 pm**

1. PNMC Opening Prayer led by District Pastor Duane Oesch
2. Singing led by Jim Wenger
3. Welcome to the Delegates - Moderator Linda Dibble welcomed the assembled delegates to PNMC's 17<sup>th</sup> annual Conference and introduced them to the Table covenant. She asked delegates at each table to introduce himself or herself to the other delegates. She further asked each delegate table to appoint a recorder and a reporter for the table members. Table groups were asked to review the table covenant.
4. Approval of 2010 Minutes - Rod Stafford moved to accept the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Jeanne Rempel and was approved unanimously by the delegates.
5. Roll Call of Congregations - Thirty four congregations were represented by one or more delegates. Five Pacific Northwest Mennonite congregations had sent no delegates. Altogether there were 78 delegates present during the conference, including two chaplains.
6. Affirmation of PNMC Ballot – Candidates on the PNMC Ballot included: Harold Nussbaum, Treasurer (3 year term), Charlotte Derksen (1 year of a 3 year term), Board Member Joseph Penner (2 year term), Board Member, Jerry Barkman (4 year term), Pastoral Leadership Team, Rod Stafford (4 year term); Gifts Discernment Team, Bob Buxman, and Anne Hege (both one year terms). Brent Kaufman moved that those nominated be affirmed; the motion was seconded by Jo Miller. The slate was approved unanimously.
7. Affirmation of Centro Cristiano Pentecostes Menonita as a member of PNMC - Todd Lehman moved to affirm Centro Cristiano Pentecostes Menonita as a PNMC member congregation. The motion was seconded by Lynn Miller and was affirmed unanimously by the delegates.
8. Executive Conference Minister Report - Iris DeLeón-Harstshorn introduced the new District Pastors present and thanked all of the PNMC district pastors for their work this year. She also explained her new position with MCUSA; her time will be divided evenly between PNMC and MCUSA during July and August. Dave Stutzman will be acting part-time Conference Minister for the time being.

9. **Changing Role of Delegates: Table Discussions** - Table discussions were held among the delegates seated at each of the twelve delegate tables. The comments compiled below are taken from the discussions at each of the tables.

**1. How would a shift to a “discernment Model” benefit PNMC?**

- Everyone would be able to speak to the issues at hand.
- It would take more time, which would allow church members to work through the issues.
- This process may allow us to more fully hear what God is saying.
- This model would break the passive-aggressive model and allow individuals to voice opinions.
- It would allow people to feel heard and have their positions heard; everyone would feel included and a part of the process.
- Original objections may be due to not understanding what was intended; this process allows for ample discussion.
- This process would help build relationships, allow people to feel heard.
- It would take away the “win”/“lose” feeling.
- This process facilitates development of trust within the group.
- It would create openings for “holding on to the new.”
- The group might come to conclusions that were not originally options/ideas at the beginning of the discernment session.
- Decisions might not be black and white, but allow for grey areas.
- It would encourage group members to deeper listening and understanding, as we listen to God’s leading.
- If done well it should result in more unity and a stronger sense of community.
- It would allow people of all persuasions and personality types to have their views heard, including introverts and thoughtful persons.
- Group members would recognize that all voices, ideas, perceptions are equal and would spend time discerning God’s leading.
- We would pay attention, over time, to the way God is leading us as a community of faith.
- The process would require that work would need to be done between meetings (preparation, spending time together outside of meetings).
- This process would force an increased level of communication on the issues, before the decision is made; all stakeholders would need education on how the process works.
- This process would allow for a multi-meeting format of the delegate body (in person as well as via technology).
- The most passionate (loudest) speaker would not override others.
- It can create a sense of trust among members of the group.

- By incorporating a “dwelling in the Word” process it should help us to be more “like the mind of Christ.”
- Que las decisiones que se tomen reflejaran mas el deseo de Dios que la politica humana. (That the decisions made reflect the desire of God rather than the politics of humans.)
- Se implementara en la conferencia las disciplinas espirituales. (to implement in the conference spiritual disciplines.)
- We may be forced to be more open about our disagreements/conflicts and actually deal with them.
- We may learn to more habitually “go back to the text” and center on scripture.
- It is hard to take time for this process, so practicing it may teach patience.
- The process would foster a sense not to do just what an individual (or group of individuals) thinks or wants, but a group seeking together what God wants.
- If PNMC shifts to this model, it could be a model for churches.

## **2. What other decision-making models, that fit our theology of community, would you suggest?**

- “High five” – after the discussion, rate group members along a spectrum of 1-5 agree, disagree, neutral, etc
- Place self along a line – “yes” at one end, “not” at the other end . Visually map out where people are. Then group would talk/pray/listen. Then “if you can’t agree with this would you be able to put yourself in a place to move on with decision?”
- Allow for a continuum – far left, far right, and where the middle is; that way group can see direction in which we are skewed.
- Board would discuss the issue, then bring it to the group to make decision, after being worked on in a smaller level.
- Consensus model, however, it may be faster but would not lead group to as strong a sense of unity.
- Does everything have to be decided at the “upper levels”? For example, there is now a lack of knowledge on the part of the delegates regarding the persons on the ballot.
- Use patience to listen for God’s voice among dissenters/minority.
- Quarter models (clearance committee).
- It depends on the context; it is much easier in smaller groups than in larger groups.
- Somehow the voice of the minority needs to be heard.
- Consensus isn’t always the objective, we need to rely on the Holy Spirit to speak through both sides and then apply Scripture to discern His leading.

- Use a combination of consensus, discernment and Robert's Rule of Order for example, for budget specifics, use Robert's Rule of Order and for Conference direction use consensus.
  - Different modes of communication (i.e. written).
  - Create an atmosphere of safe space.
  - ¿como seria el proceso? Tomando en cuenta el factor tiempo que controlan el desarrollo de la conferencia (what would be the process? It is necessary to take into account the controlled time in the development of the conference schedule)
  - ¿Sobre que "asuntos" o "cosas" se usaria el discernimiento? (For which kinds of things or topics would you use discernment?)
3. Other comments
- Discernment brings a new and higher level of commitment.
  - As a conference, PNMC is very scattered; this makes the necessary relationship building harder.
  - Consensus may be best, but takes more time.
10. Blessing for Continuing and New District Pastors - The PNMC district pastors were called to the front. Nancy Kauffmann of MCUSA then blessed those present, with a prayer.
11. Commissioning Service for Continuing and New Board Members  
Continuing: Moderator Linda Dibble, Moderator Elect Jeryl Hollinger, Board Members Isaac Hooley, Joseph Penner, Jerry Barkman, and Secretary, Charlotte Derksen were present. Absent were: incoming Treasurer: Harold Nussbaum, new Board Member Jack Swaim, and Continuing Board members: Mario Bautista, and Jennifer Sottolano.
12. Finance Report - A full Treasurer's report is included in the delegate book. Treasurer Ed Miller presented the highlights. Despite best efforts to contain expenses, actual expenses exceeded income by \$13,000. Ed and the Board have been working and the new board will continue to work to bring the budget into line. The board is also looking for ways to increase income and/or decrease spending. For further information on the budget see conference Notebook.
13. Search Committee – Linda introduce Nancy Kauffmann, MC USA Denominational Minister, who will assist the search committee in its search for an Executive Conference Minister for PNMC.
14. Announcements – Linda announced that a property manager is needed for the Peace Property; she also announced that volunteers are needed to prepare of section of the property for sale and asked attendees to please sign up to help. Jim Wenger is heading up the PEACE Property management team. Linda reminded the group of the upcoming MCUSA conference in

Pittsburgh. Linda thanked the local arrangements committee, the worship planning team for their work. The administration of Western Mennonite School was given thanks for the beautiful campus and hospitality. Linda asked delegates and attendees to thank those who contributed so much to make the conference enjoyable for all.

15. Closing Prayer - Dave Stutzman closed the session in prayer.

**Greetings from Northwest Mexico (CIEMNM)** brought by Gabriel Vasquez, introduced by Simon Rendon

Gabriel came to the PNMC conference, representing the Mennonite people in Sinola and Senora in the Evangelical Mennonite Church in NW Mexico. The churches there have held Celebrated Evangelistic campaigns; the churches there are beginning to grow. Pastors are local people; there has been revival among the young people, who have given themselves to preaching, they are tackling the problems with violence; the young people are marching for peace and having communion together; they are putting on dramas, preaching and leading worship. In that area there is much violence, people have disappeared. He asked for prayers for a daughter who has disappeared. Gabriel is a liaison with other churches. The Mexican congregations are now planning a biannual national conference. He invited PNMC to send a representative to come to that conference.

There has been development of leaders within their conference; there are willing hearts to teach and train, to develop new leaders. The Mexican Evangelical Mennonite Church has received help from PNMC, pastors have come to help from PNMC Gabriel passed on the thanks from all of the conference for all of the help and good will from PNMC. God bless you [PNMC members].

Simon Rendon added that the area suffered the coldest winter this year; many have lost their crops.

### **Conference Visitors**

The Official Conference Visitors were introduced; each said a few words about the work of their respective agency.

Everence - Nathan Graber-McCrae: Everence staff and resources provide Stewardship seminars and Sharing Fund Grants, as well as Building-fund grants. For example, grants have been supplied to local businesses and for a local project in Colorado.

Mennonite Health Services Agency - Rick Stiffney

Mennonite Church USA = Nancy Kauffmann

Mennonite Central Committee – Michael Chapman: Michael thanked the conference attendees for all of the support given to MCC.

Mennonite Education Agency - Timothy Burkholder

Mennonite Mission Network - Marlene Kroeker

Mennonite Publishing Network – Charlotte Derksen

Mennonite Women USA – Kathy Bilderbeck

The MC UWA representatives prayed for Moderator Linda Dibble, Moderator Elect Jeryl Hollinger, Conference Minister, Iris de Leon Hartshorn and Interim Conference Minister Dave Stutzman.

## **DISCERNMENT SESSION II – Saturday, June 25, 10:00-12:15 pm**

Faith and Practice Team Members, Rose Marie Barber, Stephen Obold-Eshleman, Dennis Rempel, and Pat Shaver, demonstrated different ways for a group to work together, including the discernment model. Then they led the whole group of delegates, seated at the twelve delegate tables, in a practice discernment session. At the end of the session Dennis Rempel led the delegates in a discussion of what was done, what worked and what might not have worked. This exercise was partly to help delegates from the PNMC churches to prepare for the delegates sessions at the upcoming MCUSA conference. It was also done to help local congregations to have helpful discernment sessions.