

Constituency Leaders Council (CLC)
March 7-9, 2016 Meeting in Goshen, Indiana
PNMC Frequently Asked Questions

What Is the CLC?

The CLC is a group of about 70 leaders from various constituencies across MCUSA. Many of the constituencies are area conferences, somewhat similar to our Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference. Other constituency groups are represented as well; some examples include Corinthian Plan, Everence, Iglesia Menonita Hispana, Mennonite Women USA, and Mennonite Mission Network. The CLC meets twice a year in various locations. Relationships built in the CLC foster many other interactions.

What's Its Purpose?

There are several purposes. One purpose is to strengthen relationships and nurture community across the larger church. Another purpose is to serve as denominational elders to the MCUSA Executive Board and the Delegate Assembly by providing discernment and advice (but not by making decisions or setting policy). Executive Board leaders and staff also participate in the CLC, greatly contributing to two-way communication and mutual understanding.

Who Participated From PNMC?

Three people participated. Katherine Jameson Pitts, our Executive Conference Minister, is part of the planning committee that steers the CLC. Jennifer Delanty, our Conference Moderator, is a participant and also a member of the CLC Listening Committee. Jack Swaim, Moderator-Elect, participated too.

What's the Meeting Format?

The meeting format is similar to PNMC's communication council and our annual meeting. There are plenary sessions for worship and sharing, and there are table group discussions for discernment. In addition, conference ministers and moderators meet to share ideas in their respective breakout groups.

What Were the Outcomes?

One theme focused on trust and reconciliation among conferences and congregations where we have diverse views, but where we remain committed to our shared vision of God's healing and hope to the world. A specific outcome was refinement of a "peer review" process to seek deeper understanding and reconciliation among conferences regarding the forbearance resolution.

Another outcome involved new developments to strengthen conferences and congregations. In particular, because financial stress can cause pastors to leave the ministry, the Lilly Endowment has provided a \$1 million grant to help pastors reduce debt and even plan for retirement. Everence will administer the grant in partnership with conferences and congregations. Stay tuned—there is more to follow.

Other outcomes involved sharing views on covenantal relationships, how to live into our missional future, and on the usefulness of resolutions at conference assemblies and at the denominational Delegate Assembly.

What Was Different?

One of the visible differences from previous CLC meetings was the smaller number of participants. Several conferences and congregations have discerned that they will not remain part of MCUSA, and others are continuing their discernment processes. However it was evident that a healing process is underway and people seemed positive about the future.

What Does This Mean To My Congregation and Me?

First, it is encouraging that conferences are working together in loving relationships in support of our shared sense of mission, despite some differences. We all can continue to learn.

Second, as part of informal networking with other western conferences, we're in the early stages of exploring opportunities for increased collaboration and leveraging resources so as to benefit our congregations. Again, there's more to follow.

Third, we may be able to help our pastors reduce financial stress and thus reinforce their calling to be pastors.