

**Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference**  
**Zoom Board Meeting**  
**Saturday, September 20, 2025**

**Members Present:** Karla Morton - Moderator; Eric Massanari - Executive Conference Minister; Dave Hockman-Wert - Treasurer; Dan Smith Derksen - Secretary; Nellie Moran-Ascencio, Gary Jewell, Megan Ramer, Emily Toews, Janette Wisseman - Moderator-Elect

**Members missing:** Deren Kellogg, Libbie Lapp

**Sharing time** - Members shared a highlight/significant experience from their summer. Karla talked about the support they experienced while in Chicago to care for their son Ian, who'd had a sudden, serious health episode. The experience was so hard, but the care they felt from very many people was so positive. Emily talked about the positive family times experienced together while on sabbatical this summer. She was so impressed and proud of her children telling others about being on "sabbatical" not vacation, and telling them how "everyone is welcome" at Menno Mennonite church. Megan R. shared about the pain she is feeling from the sudden death of a friend Sheila Baker Johnson who taught her the gift of receiving blessings

**Opening prayer** - Karla opened meeting with prayer.

An update was given about Deren's parents who had suffered a severe car accident.

**Review of 4/12/25 BOD Minutes:** Minutes were passed.

**Annual Meeting Review:** (Eric)

- Eric asked for feedback on anything coming out of the experience to apply towards next year's meeting?
- An overview of the expense report was shared noting that PNMC came out about even (expenses to income). Some hear folks reflecting this format probably was less expensive in the long-run.
- Positive reviews were received from many about the location, though some shared concerns about the room arrangements and challenges of needing to share space.
- Positive reflections given of accepting Community of Hope into full membership status. Accepted resolution on Christian Nationalism.
- Special guests of Glen Guyton and Sarah Augustine were the keynote speakers.
- Hosting by Mt. View MC. BOD affirmed the Thursday - Sunday format.
- Question raised on how to take learning from annual meeting and apply/use it at the CCC. Feedback shared positively to see an action group already formed around this intention.
- Overall great appreciation of staying at an all-inclusive site. Will continue to explore those types of options. Eric reflected on how positive it was to have that format of sharing so much time together, and what a gift that was. Would like to be able to use Mennonite camps, but they are so much more rustic. Many places like Flathead Bible Camp, are too expensive, but will keep searching out options.

- Next year's annual meeting is planned to be hosted by Albany Mennonite Church, OR. Seattle is a strong possibility for 2027.

#### **Executive Conference Minister's Report: (Eric)**

- Gift to be part of the MCUSA Convention again this year. Hadn't been to one in a decade. Left with a sense of joy and hope in who we are as a church, with presence of welcome, and being many voices.
- Meeting with Shelby Boese, Regional Church Pastor for MC British Columbia discussing the potential for partnering and church connections across the US/CA border (49th parallel). Karla talked about formation of "sister" congregations within the conference. There have been some who've expressed interest. BOD members responded as liking this idea. Megan mentioned how there had been someone from BC who had reached out to Seattle after the US elections last year just to let them know they were praying for us. Eric will have follow-up conversations.
- Dwight Freisen, professor of practical theology at The Seattle School shared about resources for the next quarterly Lay-led churches. Will present input at their next quarterly meeting. Eric thought he would also be a great person to consider as an invitee for the CCC.
- Eric will be serving on the mentoring team at AMBS for student Ruth Harder.
- Eric will also be taking part with his son in a Mennonite delegation to Palestine from Feb. 2-19, 2026. Will be an intergenerational group. Also including two other parent/child pairs from PNMC. He asked the BOD how he should consider his time while on the trip. The BOD affirmed that he needs to think of it as work time that PNMC considers his time there valuable and part of his ministry to the conference as our representative. Karla asked whether PNMC has any kind of possible stipend for this, but Eric also clarified this is not what he's asking for or expecting.
- Worship resources are being produced to go with the Resolution on Christian Nationalism. Coming together as about a six-Sunday series. Possible those will be ready and usable between Christmas and Lent.
- Eric was on vacation 8/30 - 9/9, and will go on a Prayer retreat Oct. 6-10., which includes silent meditation and writing.
- The CLC has decided to only meet on Zoom only Saturday, 10/25.
- Healthy Boundaries - led by Michael Danner and Nancy Kauffman. There is a registration fee.
- Meetings in Portland with a former Four-Square pastor who has reached out inquiring about possible affiliation.
- Idaho Treasure Valley churches collaboration with Drew Strait.
- Eric will participate on 10/2 in a meeting with MAST (MCC Abuse Survivors Together) Steering Committee. Follow-up connected to the letter the BOD sent to MCC.
- Website re-vamp work. Current website having glaring problems. Will not be able to continue working with Flint Hills. Have looked into other options. Light Box out of Goshen has been the most impressive option so far. They have proposed a website design for around \$7500, which is about our full budget. However, they also have \$250/month hosting fee. They will provide regular maintenance, data and consulting. We would be

able to make updates ourselves. Current staff are not overly technology savvy. PNMC does have volunteers, but Eric noted a strong hesitation to involve volunteers too much because of how easily it is to require too much and have things go sideways. The tool of a well-performing website is too important in this day-in-age. A reflection was noted that affirmed Eric's reasoning, but also added the idea of a possibility of some option that still makes use of volunteers. Eric noted how this is a staff decision, but because of how important it is, that's the reason he brought it to the BOD for input. It remains the staff decision unless the BOD decides they want to take it on as theirs

**Conference Safety Liaison Position: (Eric)**

- MCUSA has adopted new Abuse Prevention and Accountability guidelines. All conferences have agreed that we are committed to follow these guidelines. It is on the MCUSA website under Safe Church. Encourages all to read the document, especially pastors. Shift from current methodology, primarily as putting the responsibility on the denomination to act and respond, rather than on the conferences. Eric noted some of the specific responses. One totally new plan is a new position of a Conference Safety Liaison (CSL). This person will assure the conference is following the policy, may provide education around the policy, ensure healthy boundaries trainings are implemented and happening.. Most conferences can't afford making this a new staff position, so most are making it a volunteer position with a stipend. Eric presented a draft. For PNMC, this includes a stipend of \$250 per month, which would be new in our budget. Additional costs as part of the denominational oversight, such as the CSL attending national trainings, would be paid by the denomination and not come out of the PMC budget.
- Eric submitted his draft of the PNMC position for BOD consideration. Option mentioned to add to District Pastors jd. Question raised about any projected expense beyond the stipend. Possible workshop attendance and visitation within the conference, similar to the District Pastors. Would there be term-limits? Currently the District Pastors do not have term-limits, but with this new position, then it might be good to have a set review or term. 2-3 years as term noted as reasonable. BOD members affirmed the conception of the position.
- Motion made to accept the proposal for the CSL. Eric noted that he will add a 3-year review to the description. The motion carried.

**Moderator's Report: (Karla)**

- ECM review got about a 50-55% response rate on the survey sent out in the summer. Used the survey sent by MCUSA, which was all narrative answers. Karla would like to adapt the survey for the future to a Likert scale and narrow down to fewer key questions. She will be sending out the report of narrative responses to Eric and the BOD. There will be a meeting Monday September 29 to review the responses with Eric.
- Met with the Constituency Leaders Council of moderators and was asked to send out our resolution. One thing that came through in the ECM review were pointed statements about the BOD. One thing she heard was that Conferences are setting a "Vision" for the conference. Pointed out that PNMC BOD needs to set a vision and figure out how we're going to "evangelize" for lack of a better word. Karla asked for feedback or questions.

- Question raised about what happened at Zion MC. There had been some vandalism, further details were not shared, but are more detailed in the written report. Mentioned that other sources had already reported on the incident.
- Karla is now relocated from Boise to Salem, OR and is pastoring at Salem MC.

#### **Finance Team and Treasurer Report: (Dave)**

- Met in August. Considered questions from Everence about whether the investments should be kept at the same levels. Discussions affirmed the Moderate/Conservative level of risk.
- Dennie LeFevre and Jonathan Harnish shared at annual Meeting about congregational giving. Offered some practical ways to encourage more giving. Finance Team will think further about how to share those more broadly within the conference.
- Finance Team is seeking feedback from BOD on:
  - Do we want to bolster the investment fund? Still doing fine with current stock market
  - Do we want to ask for contributions more proactively than we've done so far?
  - How should we ask or make it more easy for people to give to the conference?
- We always want Finance Team to be working at the direction of the BOD. If there are any questions, those are welcome. One question asked was "What does "bolstering the investment" mean? Difference between sustaining or adding to.
- 6% of church budgets being given to PNMC as a recommendation would be an increase for most congregations.
- Right now investment fund is still at \$1.2 million.
- Finance Team has good relationship with the Everence reps and Dennis L. has shared with them how to review and use the tools they have.
- Reflections offered that we need to bring these questions back to our congregations.
- Karla noted that these questions might be part of the visioning process/discussions.
- Question asked whether there is much individual giving to PNMC. Difference noted between giving to a "project" vs. giving to a bureaucracy. Answered by Dave that, Yes, there is a strong degree of individual giving, which also increased after direct appeal. Dave moved to his Budget report.

#### **Budget Report: (Dave)**

- Review of the Balance sheet. Quick overview shared.
- Income/Expense sheet: Holding fairly steady on contributions. Mostly wanted to focus on the individual giving increase of \$8,000 almost all of which came after the CCC meeting where there was a direct appeal.
- Still in the black for net operating for this year. Expenses still a bit lower than budgeted at this point of the year.

Karla asked if the Finance Team was wanting the BOD to answer or address the specific 3 questions during this meeting. Dave answered that they would like response, or if no full answer is possible at this time, then to make sure the BOD is still reflecting on those questions. Affirmation given that these questions should be bumped up in importance in the agenda for future meetings. Another reflection was added about the option of contributions that could be given as a type of "legacy" giving. How could PNMC create a format that illustrates the possibility of honoring someone through a gift to the conference.

#### **CIHAN Report: (Nelly)**

- Pastors are still meeting once a month in prayer and conversation with one another.

- Asks for prayer for Pastor Jesús Fuentes whose mother passed away which was hard because he wasn't able to travel to be with the family during the funeral service.
- Eric added a note about a report from IMH coming out and speaking which was in conjunction with Villa Nueva's anniversary. The report mentioned about how the guest coming was going to speak about the congregation's PNMC conference affiliation. This note was a surprise as Eric hadn't heard about that, so he talked with Pastor Samuel about it, who confirmed that the message was confusing. It so happened that the speaker also worked with the Mosaic Conference and how they had an assumption that all Hispanic churches were reconsidering their conference affiliations. The presentation was essentially an invitation for the congratulations to join Mosaic conference. Eric noted that Pastor Samuel brought his questions to Eric himself. Eric reached out to Mosaic leadership to inform them about what happened and what confusion it caused. Not certain that there was a satisfactory response from Mosaic. Nelly mentioned she had read about it in Noticias Menonitas.
- Karla mentioned how much stress families from the CIHAN churches have been feeling due to the recent US govt. actions.

#### **Discussion on Resolution about Christian Nationalism:**

- At the annual meeting where the resolution was adopted, there were two takeaways:
  - Creation of some study/worship resources - that's being done
  - It needed a clarification on what is meant by Christian Nationalism added as a footnote.
- Eric got some information from Drew Strait about a possible definition and brought to BOD for discussion. "Christian Nationalism is a worldview where one's God-given theological imagination is co-opted by state power. It is a form of cultural Christianity with a deep nostalgia for crusader Christianity." Shared with a link to Drew's website.
- Noted by some BOD members that this definition sounds very academic and might not be very well understood by many constituents.
- From the website, there were additional points highlighted that could be taken to help round out the definition. A working group could be recruited to remove some of the theological language and make it more understandable and useful in daily lives.
- Eric did not think Drew would feel offended if we chose not to use his words or if we edited his words.
- Karla mentioned her husband Craig having also worked with Drew and extensively on this subject and might be well-suited to help formulate this for our PNMC context. Sam Adams mentioned also as someone who could work with Craig on this.
- Motion made to ask Craig and Sam to work together to formulate a more succinct, more accessible definition of Christian Nationalism for this resolution.
- BOD affirmed asking these two for their help on that. Karla will ask them.
- Solidarity Statement from Mennonite Action also shared into the meeting chat by Megan to be an additional resource.

#### **Discussion about MAST and Board letter sent to MCC:**

- Karla invited Eric to share about what happened at the CLC meeting.
- Eric summarized what's happened since sending our letter to MCC. Prior to the CLC meeting, he and Doug Luginbill from Central District contacted the CLC chair to ask if conversations could be held at the CLC meetings around the topics of alleged MCC abuse of staff. There were some email exchanges, shared with Glen Guyton. It was shared that Ann Graber-Hershberger was going to be invited to the CLC meeting, but then that changed and it was reported that Michelle Armister from the Central States was going to come and share about their work in the region where the meeting was taking

place. No formal space given to have discussions about the concerns raised by these two Conference Ministers. In the CLC meeting, one person stood up to ask about these abuse allegations. Michelle acknowledged that she as a regional director is somewhat removed, but then she went on to comment in ways that did not help further the conversation. Eric noted how PNMC never did get a response to its letter from the MCC Board leaders, only one from Anne GH, and that came very late.

- Invited Dan to share about a request from MAST (MCC Abuse Survivors Together). Dan informed the BOD that 3 conferences have written to MCC on these concerns. The other two have permitted MAST to share their letters on the MAST website. MAST is asking if PNMC would also allow them to post their letter on the MAST website. Megan motioned that we allow it.
- Nelly spoke up to share that she will abstain from a vote since she is on the West Coast MCC Board. Emily 2nd the motion.
- Discussion: There was nothing private about the letter, so it would be good to share publicly to elicit more awareness. Also mentioned about how the BOD make-up continues to change. Nelly had talked with former moderator about signing, and elected to not sign. The letter had been signed by individual members (via a digital signing service). All signers are still on the BOD, plus ECM, Eric. Is everyone okay with their signature being out there? Discussion around whether this refers to the whole BOD or just members. Could there be a statement about who exactly the letter comes from be added? In reviewing how the CDC letter was posted, it was seen that a statement could be added as an intro to the letter which would enable clarity around the fact that there is one member who had abstained.
- BOD agreed to allow MAST to post the letter with the addition of the intro statement, "This letter was adopted by the PNMC Board through a consensus process in October 2024, including one abstention."

#### **Report about Western Mennonite Church leaving the Conference:**

- Eric reported about the church's decision to leave the conference. Eric, Karla will go on Oct. 26 to meet and affirm the relationship with them, like was done with Filer MC.
- Eric asked BOD about how to share the news with the conference. Could be as part of the E-Bulletin. Suggested there could be a follow-up by email to churches to assure that folks had seen this news in the E-Bulletin.

#### **Ending: (Karla)**

- Eric asked about feedback or questions about the invitation he received from Glen Guyton to be part of the MCUSA restructuring committee. Eric is still processing, but feels it's important. Participation has a clear time limit and structure.
- Question asked about the purpose and need. Eric answered about the need based on how much has changed since MCUSA was conceived and formed. Very glad to see they will also be using an outside consultant.
- It was affirmed that Eric's participation would be very valuable, a gift and a blessing.

#### **Closing prayer and adjournment: (Karla)**

Voices Together Sending Prayer 1058

Submitted by:

Dan Smith Derksen, PNMC Board Secretary