

Minutes of the 45th Annual Conference Assembly (ACA)
Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA
Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio
March 7-8, 2014

Theme —Resurrection Hope

Friday, March 7, 1:15-3 p.m. Business Session #1 (Marbeck Center Commons)

A1. **Call to Order** — Moderator Dean Beck welcomed the delegates and called the meeting to order. He gave delegates several instructions regarding their delegate packets and the facility.

A2. **Opening Song** — Steve Troyer from Pike Mennonite Church led an opening song, “Be thou my vision.”

A3. **Invocation** — Conference Minister Tom Kauffman opened the meeting with prayer.

A4. **“Ohio Conference is...”** — Tom Kauffman showed delegates a PowerPoint presentation titled “Ohio Conference is...,” which included facts about the composition of the Ohio Conference.

A5. **Introduction of New Pastors** — Conference Minister Tom Kauffman and Regional Pastors Ralph Reinford and Wanda Stopher introduced pastors who have begun new assignments during the past year. Pastors in new assignments include Larissa Moore (Victory), Matt Hamsher (Longenecker), Jesse Johnson (Midway), Jim Sutton (Aurora), Ernie Hershberger (Martins), Rocky Carr (Pleasant View), Marilyn Rossiter (Summit), Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg (Zion), Walter Campbell (Sharon), Matthew Williams (South Union), Gary Martin (Central) and Rod Miller (Central). After the introductions, the delegates had a time of prayer for the new pastors, including a blessing from the retired pastors in attendance.

A6. **Moderator’s Opening Comments** — Moderator Dean Beck had several opening comments to share with the delegates, reminding delegates of the things they are asked to do. He stressed that communication needs to happen both from delegates to Conference as well as from Conference to delegates.

A7. **Introduction of Resolutions Committee** — Moderator Dean Beck also introduced the three members of the Resolutions Committee: Dan King, Mel Hathaway and Sara Meyer.

A8. **Introduction in Table Groups** — Delegates took several minutes to introduce themselves to the other delegates in their table groups.

A9. **Drama and Dwelling in the Word** — Seth and Eliot Nofziger presented a drama based on Luke 24, focusing on the angels’ proclamation to the women who came to Jesus’ tomb. Following the drama, the delegates spent time in their table groups reflecting on the passage.

A10. **Minutes of the 2013 ACA** — Moderator Dean Beck led delegates in a review of the minutes of the 2013 Annual Conference Assembly, noting numerous highlights.

Motion – There was a motion to accept the minutes of the 2013 Annual Conference Assembly. M/S/C (none opposed)

A11. **Introduction and Action on Gifts Discernment Slate** — Del Hostetler, chair of the Gifts Discernment Ministry, presented the list of nominees for members of the Leadership Team, etc. He showed a PowerPoint presentation that included photos of those currently in leadership and those up for affirmation. Del asked that ballots be left on the delegate tables at the end of the first delegate session. Del also asked for nominations of possible candidates for the different ministries, noting that there is a box at the registration table for nomination forms.

A12. **Missional Story** — Erin Dye, a chaplain from Adriel School, shared a missional story from Adriel School. She reported on the grant which Ohio Conference gave Adriel. She brought along the candle which she had been given and explained that each person who has a candle at this assembly is representing a congregation or agency which received a grant from Ohio Conference during 2012-13. Adriel serves youth in out-of-home placements. Erin works with the 45 residential youth who are living in group homes on the Adriel campus. Adriel Live is a weekly worship service at Adriel which is often facilitated by local (and other) churches. The grant from

Ohio Conference was used to purchase a digital piano and other musical equipment for the Adriel Live program. Adriel Live has been running since February 2011, and almost all of the youth attend. Erin shared some comments from Tyrese, a 13-year-old youth in the program.

A13. Introduction of Narrative Spending Plan —Lois Bontrager and Keith Hostetler of the Stewardship Ministry introduced the proposed spending plan for 2014-15. Lois reported that 54 congregations responded to an online survey about the progress of the Five-Year Increased Staffing Plan which was approved by Ohio Conference delegates at the 2011 Annual Conference Assembly. Nearly 500 people attended resourcing events since 2011. Conference staff has kept expenses under budget. The trend is toward a leveling or slight decrease in giving. Stewardship visits to individual congregations have been seen as valuable. Some questions which the Conference will need to address were brought up at fall cluster meetings: 1. How do we continue to fund a structure that has been deemed both important and necessary? 2. At what point do we stop using reserve funds to cover deficit spending?

Keith Hostetler presented information about several Conference account balances:

- Capacity Building Fund —\$177,000
- Operating Reserve — \$125,000
- Loan Fund — \$87,650 (Note: there is a roof loan outstanding)
- Short-Term Surplus plus Long-Term Surplus — \$223,000

He noted that \$80,000 has been set aside for shortfalls in the rest of the years of the Five-Year Increased Staffing Plan. As of the end of February 2014, the estimated amount available for new Conference grants in 2014-15 will be \$28,000. The final number will depend on receipts through the end of the fiscal year, which ends March 31, 2014. Lois Bontrager announced that there will be a meeting in the Kreider Room at 3:15 p.m. for anyone who has further questions about the proposed spending plan.

A14. Credentialing Ministry Report —Naomi Engle, chair of the Credentialing Ministry introduced members of the team. She shared examples of questions that the members of the Credentialing Ministry ask pastors during their credentialing interviews. She also reported on numerous activities of the Credentialing Ministry throughout the year. The Credentialing Ministry sponsored a mentor-mentee workshop for pastors, gave scholarships for pastoral education, and dealt with pastoral misconduct. The Credentialing Ministry also developed a document with guiding principles for electronic ethics and distributed copyright questions and answers from MennoMedia. The Credentialing Ministry would like to thank delegates for their feedback on the ethics document. Naomi also mentioned several concerns of the Credentialing Ministry. They feel burdened regarding pastoral self-care. They would like to encourage pastors to take time off and use vacation days, sabbaticals, exercise, etc. She also noted that a retreat for pastors' wives is planned for Nov. 21-23, 2014. "Help Me, Jesus, I am hurting inside," will be the theme, and Mattie Marie Mast will be the speaker. The cost will be \$110 per person. The Credentialing Ministry is encouraging congregations to pay for their pastors' wife to attend.

A15. Introduction of Conference Visitors — Conference Minister Tom Kauffman introduced visitors from various church agencies.

A16. Report of Search for New Coordinator of Volunteers — Tom Kauffman noted that former Coordinator of Volunteers Sherah-Leigh Gerber resigned her position to move to Virginia. A three-person search committee has been formed to find a new Coordinator of Volunteers: Tom Kauffman, Rachel Kauffman and Randy Murray. The search committee is developing a short list of candidates for the position. They are beginning the interview process next week. They hope to have a new coordinator of volunteers by the end of spring or early summer.

A17. Announcements and Welcome — Jim Harder, president of Bluffton University, welcomed delegates. He said that Bluffton's goal is to be the best possible host. He noted that Bluffton has about 40 students from Ohio Conference congregations and three board members from Ohio Conference congregations. The Bluffton staff pledges to take seriously the responsibility of Christian education for the students. They will be launching a joint MBA program with Bluffton, Goshen College and Eastern Mennonite University. Bluffton also is partnering with Central Christian in dual-credit courses. He also noted that the second Ohio Youth Event will take place at Bluffton University this summer. Moderator Dean Beck shared several announcements.

3-3:45 p.m. Displays and Snacks

3:15 p.m. — Spending Plan Question Session (Kreider Room)

Present: Ilene Nofziger, Lois Bontrager, Ann Leaman, Tom Kauffman, Keith Hostetler, Dean Beck, Phil Stauffer

Keith Hostetler explained further about the Conference grants and how the amount of money available is determined.

There was general agreement that delegates need to make sure that people in the congregation understand the financial situation of the Conference.

Tom talked about having stewardship meetings with congregational leaders in a number of congregations.

3:45-5 p.m. — Business Session #2 (Marbeck Center Commons)

A18. **Opening Song** — Steve Troyer led delegates in an opening song, “I bind my heart this tide.”

A19. **Drama and Dwelling in the Word** — Seth and Eliot Nofziger presented a drama based on Luke 24, focusing on Jesus’ appearance to the disciples after his resurrection. Following the drama, the delegates spent time in their table groups reflecting on the passage.

A20. **Discernment on Accepting Congregations into Ohio Conference** — Larissa Moore, church planter, told delegates about the congregation she pastors, Victory Community Church in Solon. She told about how Victory began as a ministry in a nursing home. They still have a worship service at the nursing home on Sunday afternoons, but they have also begun worshipping on Sunday mornings. She asked for financial and prayer support for the church.

Robert Fitzwater from Salem Mennonite Church in Kidron told the delegates about the Salem congregation. The congregation includes a number of young families. Joining the Ohio Conference would allow the congregation to form even closer bonds with other local congregations. Issues of polity and theology in their former conference have made many in the congregation ready for a change. The congregation seeks to be an active member of Ohio Conference, contributing in various ways.

Open Mic Time –

Table 16 — Conversation was supportive and affirming of both congregations.

Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg — She is troubled by the trend of congregations moving to affiliations based on ideology, on “only wanting to be with people like us.” Let us be cautious about how we sort ourselves.

John Fielitz (Kidron) — It seems that Salem processed this decision with Central District and Ohio Conference; he feels good about Salem being united with other local congregations.

Cheryl Vanatsky — Churches still start in places where we never would expect; God is in control.

Jacob Dodson (Table 6) – His table group was blessed by the emphasis of Larissa Moore’s talk on healing; he recognized the renewal going on in the Salem congregation.

Jim Sutton (Table 10) – He noted the difference between the two congregations, and affirmed diversity.

There was a motion to accept Victory Community Church into the Ohio Conference. M/S/C (vote taken by standing)

There was a motion to accept Salem Mennonite Church into the Ohio Conference. M/S/C (vote taken by standing)

Moderator Dean Beck welcomed both congregations and said that we look forward to working with them.

A21. **Release of Congregations** —Tom Kauffman told the delegates about two congregations which have chosen to leave the Ohio Conference. Bethel Mennonite Church in Rittman has chosen to become an unaffiliated congregation, as has Kalida Family Outreach Center.

There was a motion to release Bethel Mennonite Church in Rittman and Kalida Family Outreach Center from the Ohio Conference. M/S/C (by standing)

A22. Missional story — Church Planting Resource Team — Chet Miller-Eshleman, pastor of LifeBridge Community Church in Dover, talked about the planting of maple trees. He thanked everyone who has supported LifeBridge Community Church over its six years of existence. The congregation is seeking to plant another new congregation in New Philadelphia. God is working in the congregation. God is already moving, speaking to people.

Jason Rissler talked about the two years he has been working in church planting in Strasburg. He is seeing God work in neat ways. They are working to see unity in the churches in the area. There are different theological backgrounds, but they come together in various ways, including joint worship services. Revival is coming to Strasburg. An ecumenical group is doing a prayer walk through the streets of Strasburg. He gave thanks for the support of the Ohio Conference.

Ross Miller, chair of the Church Planting Resource Team, noted that 12 congregations are working together at church planting. All other congregations are invited to join in the effort. The resource team is encouraging all congregations to designate a Church Planting Sunday, either April 27 or May 4. A DVD with more information about Church Planting Sunday is coming to all congregations. Ross noted that the church planting work is being held back by finances. They are looking for more financial support for church planting.

A23. Approval of Narrative Spending Plan — Moderator Dean Beck asked for a motion to approve the 2014-15 Narrative Spending Plan for the Ohio Conference.

A motion was made to approve the 2014-15 Narrative Spending Plan for the Ohio Conference. M/S/C (vote taken by standing)

A24. Report of Vote for Gifts Discernment Ballot — Del Hostetler reported that 231 ballots for the Gifts Discernment Slate were received. Ninety-nine percent affirmed all the people on the ballot.

5:15-6:15 p.m. — Workshops/Displays

6:15-7:15 p.m. — Dinner

6:15-7:15 p.m. — Pastor Appreciation Meal (Bob's Place, Marbeck Center)

7:30-8:45 p.m. — Worship #1 — *Laughter is Sacred Space* — Ted & Co. (Founders Hall)

Saturday, March 8

7-8 a.m. — Ohio Mennonite Women's Breakfast (Marbeck Kreider Room)

7-8 a.m. — Mennonite Men's Breakfast (Bob's Place, Marbeck Center)

8:10-8:25 p.m. — Prayer Time (Purple & White Room)

8:30 a.m. — Business Session #3

A25. Announcement — Moderator Dean Beck made an announcement about the delegate checklist.

A26. Opening Song — Steve Troyer led delegates in an opening song, "Brethren, we have met to worship."

A27. Closing of Stoner Heights and the Congregation's Legacy — Lois Bontrager, chair of the Stewardship Ministry, and David Miller of Mennonite Foundation reported on the legacy of Stoner Height Mennonite Church in Louisville. Stoner Heights closed in 2013, and the Stewardship Ministry worked with congregation members following the sale of the church property. Ohio Conference received \$64,000 from Stoner Heights. The funds are to be used in new church growth. David Miller of Mennonite Foundation noted that an additional \$75,000 remained from the sale of assets, and he met with church members to determine how they could use these funds to continue the ministry of who they have been. They set up the Stoner Heights Legacy Fund, which over a 10-year period will benefit three ministries: Lighthouse Ministries in Canton, Camp Luz and Central Christian School in Kidron. If delegates would want to add to this fund, they can donate through Ohio Conference.

A28. Drama and Dwelling in the Word — Seth and Eliot Nofziger presented a drama based on Luke 24, focusing on the Road to Emmaus. Following the drama, the delegates spent time in their table groups reflecting on the passage.

A29. Missional Story — Lighthouse Ministries — Darin Nissley of Lighthouse Ministries told delegates about how an Ohio Conference grant helped Lighthouse Ministries. Lighthouse is impacting youth with the love of Christ, helping parents invest in their children, helping youth unpack the giftedness God has given them. The Ohio Conference grant allowed the Lighthouse staff to purchase a “storying” curriculum for sharing the Gospel. The “storying” method of sharing the Gospel was developed by a missionary dealing with a non-literate group of people. It is now being applied to working with youth. After hearing the Bible story presented orally, the children are asked to consider several questions: What does this story tell about God, about us? How is my story similar to this story? This curriculum was used in the Lighthouse’s summer enrichment camp (day camp).

A30. Denominational Report — Terry Shue from Mennonite Church USA, assisted by several others, gave a report about the denomination. A short summary video was shown, mentioning the different agencies of the denomination and giving a recap of the denomination’s Purposeful Plan. Terry mentioned that he has had many people tell him that they are praying for him. He acknowledged that this is a trying time for the denomination. Sometimes the Fruit of the Spirit seems to be lacking in interactions. Dealing with the “elephant in the room,” how we understand our polity, is the major issue. We are dealing with the question of whether the denomination can stay together, let alone work at missional work. A denominational task force is meeting with Mountain States Mennonite Conference right now. Some say the Executive Board statement was too weak, while others say it was too harsh. Perhaps it did hit the center. This season won’t be resolved through human wisdom. We need dependence on God, and yet He believes in the church. God has ordained the church to be His instrument in bringing healing and hope to the world.

Dean Heisey of Mennonite Mission Network (MMN) — Are we supposed to preach, share, protect, announce, explain, explicate the Gospel? We are called to **be** the Gospel. MMN is working with us to discern what it means to be the Gospel, calling the church to critique itself and evaluate how it is using resources, Christian service programs, and grants to global partners.

Steve Carpenter of MennoMedia — He gave thanks for our support of the *Shine* Sunday school curriculum for children. He has been meeting with churches and individuals. MennoMedia is about two thirds of the way toward the fundraising goal. It is important to have an Anabaptist curriculum.

Lois Bontrager of Everence — Everence continues to work at integrating faith and finances. She highlighted two programs. The Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity program is continuing. A workshop will be held in Smithville in July and in Northwest Ohio in the fall. She would like all Ohio Conference congregations to be a part of this program. Also, Everence has developed a new end of life curriculum. This material consists of six sessions dealing with final wishes. More information can be found on the Everence website (www.everence.com). Contact Lois if you are interested in working with this end of life curriculum.

Terry Shue thanked delegates for their prayers and financial support. He gave a prayer of thanks.

A31. Randy Keeler Youth Ministry proposal — Randy Keeler, an associate professor at Bluffton University, has made a proposal to use his sabbatical as a special resource to Ohio Conference in the 2014-15 academic year. He would plan to spend face-to-face time with congregations. He would focus on discipleship, community, peace and nonviolence, and he would act as a resource to individual churches or groups of churches. He is interested in looking at putting youth groups together and research how has this practice worked so far. He would plan to hold regional workshops in three or four locations throughout the Conference.

Conference Minister Tom Kauffman noted that this proposal received favorable interest at cluster meetings. The cost to the Conference would be \$28,000 for salary, benefits and travel expenses. The Stewardship Ministry has said that this proposal could be funded in a numerous ways. Some sources for funding could be unrestricted bequests, earnings from the Endowment Fund, and the Capacity Building Fund.

Delegates discussed this proposal in their table groups.

Open mic time —

Miriam Zehr (Table 17) — Her table group had lots affirmation for this plan; she noted that Ohio Conference has not had much youth ministry resourcing in the past few years.

Dawn Culler (Table 3) — She and her table group are affirming this plan. She has had experience with joint youth groups.

Jim Bartholomew (Table 7) — He would affirm Randy, but he is wondering whether there would be a lasting effect, and there is a \$28,000 cost. He also requested that voting for this and subsequent issues not be done by standing (as was done in the first two business sessions).

There was a motion for the Conference to affirm the sabbatical proposal by Randy Keeler for youth ministry. M/S/C The vote was taken by ballot. The motion was affirmed by 90 percent of delegates. Of 254 votes cast, 229 affirmed the proposal and 25 did not affirm the proposal.

A32. Introduction of Leadership Team Recommendation to Address Mountain States Mennonite Conference — After Mountain States Mennonite Conference licensed Theda Good, a pastor in a same-sex relationship, the Leadership Team of the Ohio Conference responded to this action in a number of ways. Conference Minister Tom Kauffman reminded delegates that the Leadership Team has taken several steps to respond to the actions of Mountain States.

Two regional meetings with pastors were held during February to discuss this issue. At these meetings, pastors identified their hopes and fears on this topic, shared scriptures on this issue and shared their experiences dealing with homosexual individuals. They used an ethical continuum document (“What Christians Think about Homosexuality: Six Representative Views”). Tom noted that in addition, a polity continuum is being developed. Based on pastors’ responses, the Conference staff developed a composite view of where pastors are on this ethical continuum.

Tom noted that he has also observed another continuum at work in our life together, something that he termed “The Continuum of Certainty and Mystery.” People on the opposite ends of this continuum find it difficult to understand each other.

Tom further outlined a timetable of events:

- Jan. 25 — Ohio Conference Leadership Team sent a letter to Mountain States, asking to engage them in conversation
- Jan. 31 – Mountain States responded to the letter and said they would be willing to send two representatives to discuss how they had arrived at their decision
- Feb. 5 — An Ohio Conference pastor suggested that the Leadership Team send a Paul and Barnabas delegation to Mountain States (as was done in Acts 15) — that suggestion is now on hold
- Feb. 13 — The Leadership Team received a letter from a group of concerned pastors which included a proposed resolution regarding Mountain States
- Feb. 13-Feb.27 — The Leadership Team letter to Mountain States and the letter from concerned pastors were both shared at cluster meetings
- Feb. 17 — The Mennonite Church USA Executive Board released a statement titled “Moving Forward”

Tom Kauffman noted that at cluster meetings there was a general concern that Mountain States had acted in ways that were troubling; the differences were in how to respond. He asked several questions: How are we connected with one another? How do we respond to one another? Is this primarily a denominational issue? Do we want to focus on this issue at a special delegate session re: homosexuality sometime in the summer?

The Leadership Team has put its actions on hold until after delegates vote on the concerned pastors’ resolution. If the resolution passes, the Leadership Team will not move forward with the Paul/Barnabas delegation.

The text of the proposed resolution is as follows:

We, as the gathered delegate body of Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA, do hereby call for our staff, our Leadership Team, and any representatives of our conference at the Constituency Leaders Council or other church-related meetings, to first of all urge Mountain States Mennonite Conference to reconsider and reverse their decision to license a pastor in a committed same-sex relationship. Secondly, if Mountain States Mennonite Conference remains committed to this course of action, we call our conference leadership and representatives to request that the Constituency Leaders Council and Executive Board suspend Mountain States Mennonite Conference membership in Mennonite Church USA and bring a motion for the removal of Mountain States Mennonite Conference from membership in Mennonite Church USA at the delegate assembly during the 2015 National Convention in Kansas City.

The Leadership Team is recommending a 75 percent affirmation for passage of the resolution.

Moderator Dean Beck asked that delegates take a moment for prayer.

10-10:45 a.m. — Displays with Snacks (Burcky Gym)

10:45-Noon — Worship #2 (Founders Hall)

12:15-1:10 p.m. — Lunch

1:10-2:10 p.m. — Workshops/Displays

2:15 p.m. — Business Session #4 (Marbeck Center Commons)

A33. Announcements — Moderator Dean Beck made several announcements. He also reported that the offering for Ohio Conference at the morning worship service totaled \$10,291.20. In addition, he reported the results of the vote regarding Randy Keeler's youth ministry sabbatical proposal.

A34. Opening Song— Steve Troyer led the delegates in an opening song, "I am the Bread of Life."

A35. Resource Advocate Report — Kris Nussbaum, Ohio Conference Resource Advocate, gave a report. She has really enjoyed her work as advocate and asked that people please keep sending her their questions about resources. She noted that in the past year she also has been a part of the Child Protection Resource Team, and she is still open to helping people in that capacity. (Information about child protection resources can be found on the Ohio Conference website: www.ohiomennoniteconference.org.) Kris would be glad to take our questions and suggestions to the next training event for resource advocates, which will take place later this month. She noted that a grant from the Ohio Conference has helped to fund the development of the *Shine* Sunday school curriculum for children. Two training events for use of this curriculum will take place this spring.

A36. Young Adult Resource Team Report — Kathy Wengerd of North Lima Mennonite Church reported that the Young Adult Resource Team has dwindled to just Kathy. She is asking for other people to join the resource team. Skype and email are possible ways of meeting. Those interested in participating should contact her at kathrynwengerd@gmail.com.

A37. Drama and Dwelling in the Word — Seth and Eliot Nofziger presented a drama based on Acts 1, focusing on Jesus' appearance to the disciples before ascending into heaven. Following the drama, the delegates spent time in their table groups reflecting on the passage.

A38. Ministry Development Team Report – Rachel Kauffman, assistant moderator, referred to her written report found in the annual report book. She asked for ideas for ministry development in Ohio Conference. She led in a time of prayer.

A39. Discussion of Resolution from Concerned Pastors regarding Mountain States Mennonite Conference — Moderator Dean Beck asked that during open mic time comments be limited to about one minute per person.

A task force from the denomination is meeting with people from Mountain States Mennonite Conference at the same time as this assembly. Conference Minister Tom Kauffman led in prayer for that situation.

In view of the fact that some congregations have not already spent time processing this question, Conference Minister Tom Kauffman also mentioned that if the delegates decide that the group is not ready to make a decision at this time, the delegates could choose to have a special delegate session sometime in the summer. Tom shared a prayer from Richard Foster from *Prayers from the Heart*.

Dean said that the concerned pastors who had proposed the resolution regarding Mountain States Mennonite Conference wished to make some additional comments. Matt Hamsher was tapped to speak. Matt said that the proposed resolution was not put forward as part of a desire to cause further strife, be unloving or be threatening. However, they felt that we need to talk with one another about these issues. If we have questions, concerns, let's not head away from that conflict, but hear each other.

He also addressed the concern about moving so quickly. He said that they felt that the delegates needed to help discern about this matter. He said that we need to seek the Lord together, and the concerned pastors wanted to get the discussion going, but they realize that speed may not make the best process.

Matt Hamsher said he would propose to table the resolution until no later than this August so that there is time for further study. At a summer meeting of the delegates, a resolution about Mountain States could be considered.

Open mic time —

Dave Maurer (Table 23) — We request an alternate delegate meeting in August. We request Conference resources to help us deal with this issue. The process is as important as the end result.

Michael Mosser (Table 25) — We concur.

Jesse Johnson (Table 8) — They would like to see a blend; they would like to table the current resolution, but would like to see a definite endpoint in sight.

Tim Singenstreu (Table 17) — They would affirm a motion to table this resolution.

Wendell Nofziger (Table 26) — They would affirm tabling this resolution. Some questions their group had: Why this timeline? Why not let denominational leaders deal with this issue? Is Executive Leadership of Mennonite Church USA not able enforce conferences' accountability to the confession of faith?

Dan Hooley (Table 1) — They would affirm tabling the resolution. He had one personal comment: From now until August is not enough time to discern about this issue.

Alan Kauffman (Table 18) — They would affirm tabling. They would like resources from the Conference. An endpoint is desired.

Dick Barrett (Table 2) — They affirm tabling. A definite timetable is needed. The process has seemed very controlled.

Thomas Dunn (Table 5) — Is the Leadership initiative moving forward if tabled? What are questions needed? There is a desire to take a stand.

Chris Foust (Table 10) — They affirm holding things off until August. They see the need to honor another's truth without diminishing our own.

Anita Hooley Yoder (Table 5) — A personal response: Not all of us felt slapped in the face by the Mountain States decision. In fact, some of us felt more slapped in the face by the Ohio Conference letter.

Shannon Martin (Table 3) — They affirm tabling. They don't want to rush into a reactive statement. They would like the Leadership Team meetings to go forward.

Scott Coulter (Table 4) — Question raised at their table: Should we hold Mountain States accountable to us as Ohio Conference, or to another standard outsider of and larger than us?

Joel Shenk (Table 34) — Their group had a variety of opinions. If the resolution is postponed, it could allow delegation to go to Mountain States. A concern: if other issues are going on as well, are we scapegoating homosexuality?

Bill Seymour (Table 29) — They are prepared and ready to vote but are okay with waiting. They spent time discussing polity. They feel that conferences need to hold each other accountable to standards in the Confession of Faith. A personal note: It seems that between now and August is not nearly enough time to work at this issue.

Jacob Dodson (Table 6) — A lot of discussion was about the distinction between theology and process. They had widespread agreement on Confession of Faith, but have questions about process. They are in favor of postponing a vote on the resolution. They would like Ohio Conference to send a delegation to Mountain States.

Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg (Table 28) — They need the time to discern. They would like Ohio Conference to continue the dialogue with Mountain States.

Brooke Aikens (Table 7) — They encourage us to keep staying In the Word. The questions were raised: What will more time bring us? Are we being true to our convictions? Can we agree to fellowship together even if we don't agree on 100 percent of things? We have to stand for what the word of God says. She was discouraged that this was the only time that was given to discuss this issue.

Carl Wiebe (Table 22) — Regarding the question about timing: The next denominational convention will take place in July 2015. Any resolution at that convention needs to be introduced to delegates at least six months ahead of time, so waiting until our 2015 ACA to bring up this resolution would have been too late. The concerned pastors wanted to make sure that the discussion about this topic would happen. They want to speak to our brothers and sisters in Mountain States. He noted that sometimes it is hard to trust Conference leadership.

Nathan Beachy — He felt a nudge to talk regarding Article 4 of the Confession of Faith: "God has spoken above all in the living Word which became flesh." We need to think about what Jesus did when he walked on earth. We should remember that the disciples were surprised by Jesus' actions.

Table 9 — Jesus came full of grace and truth.

No name or table group stated — We are in the position of a parent. There is room for discipline.

James Haar (Table 24) — This issue most directly affects Theda Good. We do have gay people among us; we need to know how to minister to them.

Paul Miller — He asked a question which was raised earlier: Can accountability only be called for by a sister congregation and not by some other structure?

Tom Kauffman responded by saying that there is opportunity for conference-to-conference conversation. There is ambiguity which comes from the blending of polity structures of the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church denominations, which came together to form Mennonite Church USA. The Executive Board does not have its hands completely tied, but at the same time the Executive Board is not arranged to primarily be a policeman of everything that happens in all of our conferences.

Terry Shue — Conferences can call and hold other conferences accountable. Dismissing a conference is a function of the Executive Board.

Paula Snyder Belousek — We can forget about real people when we talk about these issues. What can our loving response be?

Matt Hamsher proposed tabling the resolution pending a special session during this summer so that there is time to clarify. At a summer meeting of the delegates a resolution about Mountain States could be considered.

A motion was made to table the resolution regarding Mountain States Mennonite Conference pending further discussion at a special delegate meeting to happen this summer. M/S/C The vote was taken by paper ballot. A total of 236 votes were cast, with 193 delegates voting yes and 43 delegates voting no (81.78 percent approval).

Open Mic Time —

Scott Coulter — Would the Leadership Team's plan to engage in discussion with Mountain States Mennonite Conference move forward if delegates vote to table this resolution? Moderator Dean Beck said that if the resolution were tabled, the Leadership Team would go ahead with further contacts with Mountain States.

Robb Esh (Table 9) — Some congregations will be frustrated to not move forward right now. We need to discuss this issue.

Bill Beachy — Would we be voting on the same resolution in August? Moderator Dean Beck said that delegates would be voting on the same resolution in August unless the concerned pastors group chooses to amend it.

A40. **Report on Numbers of Delegates and Congregations at ACA** — Dean Beck reported that 64 congregations out of 77 were represented by delegates at ACA. There were 265 delegates present, and a total of 350 people attended ACA.

A41. **Drawing for Delegate Incentives** — There was a drawing for gifts for people who turned in delegate checklists. Those receiving gifts were Glenn Rader of Pike Mennonite Church, Willis Troyer of Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Smithville, Katherine Harris from Friendship Mennonite Church, and Chris Foust of Jubilee Mennonite Church. In addition, the MCC thrift shop had a drawing for fair trade books. Terry McGarry and Nicole Welch both received fair trade books.

A42. **Special Recognition of Judy King** — Judy King was recognized for all her work for ACA. She spoke about her appreciation for all the care expressed for her following the death of her husband, Glen.

A43. **Closing Songs** — Steve Troyer led the delegates in two final songs, “Wonderful grace of Jesus” and “Praise God from whom.”

Recorded by Ann Leaman