



Resolution

Forbearance in the Midst of Differences

For consideration by the Delegate Assembly at KC2015

Background

Chicago Community Mennonite Church and Reba Place Church, Evanston, Ill., wrote the following as an explanation for their submission of the resolution at the end of this document, to be considered for adoption by the Delegate Assembly at Kansas City.

Mennonite Church USA is at a critical point — a Kairos moment. As a national church, we are mired in conflict. Many believe a split is inevitable, given our polarization specifically on issues of human sexuality and scriptural interpretation. Conrad Kanagy's report on the recent survey of credentialed leaders concluded by wondering about the dismantling of our church. Might a path forward exist that can be embraced by a significant portion of the church?

The reason we are submitting our resolution is that we believe it will allow us all to move forward as Mennonite Church USA and be church together in the midst of our disagreements. The intended consequence of adopting this resolution is that churches of differing convictions about same-sex covenanted unions may remain together within Mennonite Church USA rather than feel they must separate or be excluded by others. Specifically, this resolution allows us to confess our mishandling of this conflict, affirm ongoing ethical boundaries, name the centrality of Jesus Christ and Scripture to our collective discernment, acknowledge that we do not have consensus on matters related to same-sex covenanted relationships, and affirm terms for moving ahead together. The watching world may see a church that cares deeply about one another and has more to bind it together than its agreement about this one issue — and would need more than disagreement on this one issue to tear us apart.

We believe that many in Mennonite Church USA share our desire for the above outcomes, and wish to have their own congregational processes and convictions respected by the rest of the church, and would therefore support our resolution. Many of us desire to remain in fellowship with one another despite our differences and would welcome the opportunity to repent of the ways in which we've failed one another in these decades of conflict. Many of us desire to be liberated from the entrenched nature of this conflict so that we may be freed to join together in mission, service, witness and joining God's work in the world, allowing God's healing and hope to flow through us to all the world.

We anticipate that some may reject our resolution because they do not believe the status of same-sex covenanted unions can be considered a biblically disputable issue and that the differences in our convictions related to human sexuality are too insurmountable for ongoing fellowship. However, we believe a far greater majority is eager to embrace ongoing fellowship centered on our core Anabaptist Mennonite conviction of walking in the way of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for prayerfully considering our resolution. We are Chicago Community Mennonite Church of Central District Conference and Reba Place Church of Illinois Mennonite Conference. Our two congregations and members thereof find ourselves along the theological spectrum present within Mennonite Church USA; we are not all of one mind on these matters. And yet we have come together to share with you our hope, our counsel and our commitment to remain together as a diverse, discerning body of Mennonite Christ-followers. We are geographical neighbors here in Chicagoland but also represent two area conferences. We are united in our hope that the Holy Spirit will be faithful in completing the good work being done within and through Mennonite Church USA.

Resolution

The ways in which we have engaged the decades-long conflict in the church over issues related to human sexuality have diverted us from our central mission, divided us from each other and damaged the name of Christ in the world. While acknowledging different interpretations, we affirm the centrality of Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture as an essential part of our collective discernment. We also affirm the goodness of marriage, singleness, celibacy, sexual intimacy within a marriage covenant, and fidelity for all people, and we acknowledge that there is currently not consensus within Mennonite Church USA on whether it is appropriate to bless Christians who are in same-sex covenanted unions. Because God has called us to seek peace and unity as together we discern and seek wisdom on these matters, we call on all those in Mennonite Church USA to offer grace, love and forbearance toward conferences, congregations and pastors in our body who, in different ways, seek to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ on matters related to same-sex covenanted unions.

Sponsors: Chicago (Ill.) Community Mennonite Church (Central District Conference), Reba Place Church, Evanston, Ill. (Illinois Mennonite Conference) and North Baltimore (Md.) Mennonite Church (Atlantic Coast Conference). Endorsed by 12 pastors.