

Bringing Resolutions to the Annual Conference Assembly

Adopted by Conference Council, November 11, 2005

Resolutions may be proposed to delegates of the Annual Conference Assembly (ACA) of the Ohio Conference of Mennonite Church USA (Ohio Conference) for discussion and action after prior review and recommendation of the Leadership Team or the Resolutions Committee at ACA.

The Resolutions Committee, composed of three members, will be appointed by the Gifts Discernment Ministry.

Criteria: No proposed resolution shall conflict or be in disagreement with the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) of Mennonite Church USA.

The following is adapted from the Workbook *Can't Keep Quiet!* Charlotte 2005 Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly (pp 25-26). "Developing Resolutions for the Mennonite Church USA."

Purpose of resolutions

Resolutions are tools of Ohio Conference intended to:

- **Educate** - Resolutions can provide information about issues facing Ohio Conference and can help our congregations and members better understand viewpoints and experiences beyond their current awareness.
- **Build consensus** - While it is not necessary for us to arrive at unanimous approval in order to pass a resolution, careful work toward common understandings and language can build unity in the conference. Resolutions will not be considered binding on members and congregations of Ohio Conference unless they are identified as having that intent from the beginning of the process.
- **Provide an Ohio Conference understanding, while acknowledging dissenting voices** - Resolutions offer church members as well as those beyond our conference a better understanding of our positions. When we are not united in our viewpoints, resolutions can both name our areas of agreement and areas of differing views, in hopes of fostering better understanding and ongoing discernment.
- **Provide a foundation for member advocacy to government** - Rather than viewing the primary purpose of resolutions as statements Ohio Conference sends to the government on our behalf, resolutions can be more effective as resources for individuals and congregations as they address legislative bodies.
- **Communicate a Conference position of public policy directly to appropriate government officials** - With a resolution written for such a purpose and passed by at least two-thirds of voting delegates a letter, signed by the Conference Minister and Moderator, with the resolution shall be sent to the appropriate government official(s).

Preferred process for developing resolutions.

In order to best accomplish the purposes described above, we are committed to:

- **Begin with a careful study process involving congregations** - Major issues will be processed best if study documents are developed and distributed *before* resolutions are crafted.
- **Create a safe space for all voices to be heard** - Honest discernment will not shut off differing viewpoints.
- **Seek to understand the stories behind our differing viewpoints** - Rather than arguing positions, we will search for common ground through hearing how we have come to our various perspectives.
- **Involve significant delegate discussion in small groups** - We will commit adequate time for hearing each other's viewpoints and giving feedback to the whole delegate body.

- **Allow for segmented consideration** - If delegates agree on most parts of a resolution, but not on a particular part, the Leadership Team will have the option of testing delegate response on a section-by-section basis.
- **Set a high threshold for adoption** - The more important we consider a decision to be, the higher our level of agreement should be. If a simple majority vote does not seem appropriate, the Leadership Team will suggest a percentage needed to adopt a particular resolution.

An Alternate Process for Developing Resolutions to Respond to Issues at Hand.

When it is important to respond to a situation of more immediacy, some aspects of this preferred approach might not be appropriate. In these times, the Resolutions Committee may present resolutions for delegate discernment without going through the Congregational study process. However, if it is determined that delegates are significantly divided by an issue, it may still be preferred to delay adopting a resolution until more study and discernment are possible.

The role of the resolutions committee

At each Annual Conference Assembly, a Resolutions Committee appointed by the Gifts Discernment Ministry has the role and authority to receive and edit ideas for resolutions.

The Resolutions Committee, after consultation as needed with framers of the original resolution, will discern which resolutions should be developed for future consideration and which resolutions should be dealt with during the current delegate assembly. Resolutions deferred by the Resolutions Committee will be reviewed by the Leadership Team for any further action.

So that the Committee has time to work, proposals must be received by the Resolutions Committee before dinner on Friday. There are two types of exceptions:

- 1) The Ohio Conference Leadership Team can waive any portion of this rule, by unanimous consent, if deemed necessary for timeliness and expediency.
- 2) Resolutions expressing acknowledgments, thanks and appreciation can be drafted by the Resolutions Committee at any time during Annual Conference Assembly or they can be proposed from the floor by any delegate.

Suggested format for resolutions.

We recommend that resolutions be crafted with the following theological framework:

- **Faith** - what we believe in and affirm.
- **Hope** - our vision of God's intention for members, congregations and conference.
- **Love** - what compassion, justice, and righteousness require of us.

This framework may not serve the purposes of all resolutions, but where possible, the use of this framework can help keep the focus of God's work in our midst.