

New Conference

Policy Documents to Supplement Bylaws

# **Leadership Accompaniment for Anabaptist Communities**

## **Aligning Ministry Around Conference Priorities: Formational, Missional, Intercultural\***

As Leadership Ministers, we engage pastors and/or congregational leadership teams with an incarnational and pastoral presence, working collaboratively with them to encourage missional engagement in their local context and beyond based upon the teachings of Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament.

### **What We Do**

- Leadership Formation and Care
- Encouragement of Healthy Congregational Relationships
- Congregational Presence
- Resourcing/Networking
- Credentialing
- Pastoral Search
- Pastor/Congregation Reviews

### **Leadership Formation and Care**

- Arrange for new pastor orientation within the first month of ministry
- Connect quarterly with lead pastor of assigned congregations (and other pastoral team member as discerned) for support, care, and accountability
- Ensure a pastoral presence and care for the pastor in times of personal or family crisis
- Pray for and with pastor(s)
- Review growth plans with credentialed leaders
- Assist pastor in transition to end ministry well

### **Encouragement of Healthy Congregational Relationships**

- Cultivate relationship with primary leadership team for support and accountability
- Pray for and with leadership teams
- Meet with leadership teams as requested or contracted
- Advocate for pastor in salary negotiations, scheduling a sabbatical, or maternity/paternity leave
- Attend, coordinate or facilitate leadership retreats as requested
- Coordinate and/or facilitate conflict interventions and transformation
- Assist in pastoral transition—conduct an exit interview with pastor and leadership team

### **Conference Presence in the Congregation**

- Represent the conference in worship, other special services and events
- Preach as offered or requested
- Pray for and with the congregation

### **Credentialing Process**

- Serve as a primary connection for pastor/leader candidate and conference.
- Write a letter of recommendation for candidate's credential addressed to the chairperson of

Ministerial Committee and send to the Conference office.

(A copy will be sent to the chairperson of CBMC and Associate Executive Minister.)

- Coach candidate on the process and how to prepare for interview
- Attend credentialing interview (serving as a supportive presence for the candidate and to pass along any helpful information or counsel to Credentialing Committee interviewers).
- Call candidate following interview to notify of recommendation and again after Conference Board Ministerial Committee (CBMC) action on the recommendation. (An official notification of the CBMC action will be sent to the candidate.)
- Discern a mentor for pastoral candidate if recommended.
- Officiate at licensing/installation/ordination service.

### **Pastoral Search Process**

- Educate and Guide congregational search committee in the search process to discern the best candidate to recommend to the congregation
- Coordinate the search process with credentialing process and keep the Associate Executive Minister informed

### **Pastor/Congregation Review**

- Lead, assist (or delegate leadership to a conference trained leader) a congregational review team in conducting a pastor/congregation review process

### **Resourcing and Networking**

- Assist congregational leaders/pastors in applying for a Missional Operation Grant (MOG) and initiating a follow-up action/reflection conversation once the ministry is complete

### **Staff**

- Attend monthly conference staff meetings for teambuilding, resourcing and networking
- Write articles for Conference newsletters as requested
- Provide reports as requested
- Attend conference meetings (Annual Assembly, Assembly scattered and gathered; equipping/resourcing events; Faith & Life events)
- Attend scheduled staff retreats

\* **Formational** Settings and experiences that touch our hearts and result in emotional, attitudinal, values, and relational change.

**Intercultural** Living out the mission of God across the cultural, racial, economic, ethnic, and national boundaries that tend to divide and stereotype people, toward the goal of being one reconciled people who are transformed by our relationships as we experience now the vision of Revelation 7:9-12.

**Missional** A congregation shaped by participating in the creative love and reconciling mission of God through Christ, where every part of the church and its activities are guided by and focused toward fulfilling God's mission in the world.

## Welcoming New Communities of Christian Faith

The process for welcoming new communities of Christian faith into the Conference is as follows:

**Step 1:** Congregation makes an initial inquiry to Conference staff.

**Step 2:** Leadership discernment takes place at congregational levels.

**Step 3:** Meeting takes place with Conference staff and Conference Board member.

**Step 4:** Honest conversation occurs about alignment of relationships, vision, and values. This may include:

- Review of Conference bylaws.
- Teaching sessions on *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and/or *What We Believe Together* from Mennonite World Conference.

**Step 5:** Relationships are cultivated with other member congregations who may act as a sponsoring congregation, and there is further engagement with the Conference Board.

**Step 6:** The Conference Board discerns the fit of the congregation with the Conference vision and the capacity of the Conference to support the congregation. At this point, or any point in the process, the Conference Board may disengage the conversation or adjust the pace of the conversation as needed.

**Step 7:** Congregation discerns actual desire to join the New Conference and is expressed in writing to the Conference.

**Step 8:** Pastoral staff begin process of credentialing with the Conference.

**Step 9:** Congregation moves toward membership at Annual Assembly or by Conference Board action.

These steps may or may not proceed in a linear fashion. The steps will be guided by a key staff person in working with a congregation, most likely the Executive Minister or other Leadership Ministers as assigned.

### Priorities:

- Mutual respect and a welcoming spirit
- Transparency and ability to walk together.
- Alignment around *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.
- Capacity of pastoral leaders to go through the credentialing process and agree to collegiality and a willingness to give/receive counsel.
- Openness of the Conference to treat new congregations and adopted congregations with grace/truth and full access to Conference resources as well as full levels of responsibility.
- The process will be relational with staff, Conference Board and other key congregations involved.

- An openness particularly to other MCUSA and MWC recommended congregations who seek to find a home with us in ways that honor our global and local connections.
- Active openness to mutual transformation through an intercultural process that values cultural and linguistic diversity.

### **MCUSA on congregations shifting Conferences:**

Seeking to move to another conference within Mennonite Church USA

The Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA has outlined the following process (Article III, 3.b of the Mennonite Church USA Bylaws and Membership Guidelines, Part II, No. 12).

A congregation is required to follow a process of discernment with their conference of origin before another conference may formally consider their application for membership.

- A. Normally this process will require several meetings of the congregation's leaders with leaders of the conference they wish to leave (at least three meetings are suggested).
- B. With their application for membership in the new conference the congregation will present a joint congregation/conference of origin statement to the receiving conference which states:
  1. Reasons why the congregation wants to change area conference affiliation.
  2. When the congregation/conference of origin meetings were held, with a summary of the discussion of the meetings.
  3. How or if this affects any other matters in the conference of origin.
  4. The matters that have been resolved in the congregation and conference of origin relationship along with those that may remain unresolved.

## **Conference Accountability Discernment Policy**

Accountability to the faith community is a necessary aspect of faithful living as followers of Christ. In the event that a member congregation acts in ways divergent with the mission or vision of the Conference, this process is used for discernment with the goal of maintaining unity within the Conference. This process reflects a respect for the priesthood of all believers and the agency of each member congregation through the Delegate Assembly, and respects mutual congregational and Conference discernment.

### **Step 1. Begin the Discernment Process**

Leadership Ministers will work proactively with all Conference member congregations. Ideally, issues of congregational divergence from the mission or vision of the Conference will be worked at with the Leadership Minister before this formal process is initiated.

### **Step 2. Confer, Inform, Report**

If the issue is not resolved in Step 1, the Leadership Minister will *confer* with the credentialed leader and/or congregational leadership of the congregation and *inform* the Executive Minister and Conference Board Chair. The Leadership Minister will then submit a written *report* to the Conference Board.

### **Step 3. Appoint a Review Committee**

When the Conference Board receives a written report of congregational divergence from the mission or vision of the Conference, the Conference Board will appoint a review committee of representatives of the Conference Board plus that congregation's Leadership Minister to conduct an interview with the credentialed leader and/or congregational leadership.

### **Step 4. Listen to the Congregation**

The review committee will listen to the credentialed leader and/or congregational leadership to establish clarity and content of the report, to understand the congregation's intentions, and to hear how the congregation is processing its actions. Future intentions should also be reviewed. It is important to gather all pertinent information that will assist the Conference Board in their discernment process.

### **Step 5. Submit Written Report to Conference Board**

The review committee will give a full report of the conversations to the Conference Board, along with their counsel and recommendations.

### **Step 6. Conference Board Discernment**

The Conference Board, through further prayer and discernment, may decide no additional action is needed, and in so doing, acknowledge that the Conference is a living body. Or, the Conference Board, through further prayer and discernment, may choose to put the question of removal of the congregation from the Conference to the Delegate Assembly at the next Annual Assembly.

### **Step 7. Removal of a Member Congregation**

A member congregation can only be removed from the Conference with a two-thirds majority vote of the Delegate Assembly.

## Welcoming New Conference Related Ministries

The process for welcoming new CRMs into the Conference will be as follows:

Applications shall be made to the Conference CRM Committee, which will discern the appropriateness of each request. The CRM Committee will make recommendations for membership to the Conference Board, who will make final decisions via a majority vote.

**Step 1:** Initial inquiry with the CRM Committee, initiated by a letter of sponsorship from a sponsoring member congregation or independently submitted by an interested organization.

**Step 2:** Meeting with the CRM Committee to discuss alignment of the applicant organization with the Conference, benefits and expectations of membership for both the Conference and the applicant.

**Step 3:** Recommendation for membership by the CRM Committee to the Conference Board.

**Step 4:** Applicant confirms desire to join the Conference and expresses this desire in writing to the Conference Board.

**Step 5:** The Conference Board discerns the fit of the applicant with the Conference vision and the capacity of the Conference to support the applicant. At this point, or any point in the process, the Conference Board or the CRM Committee may disengage the conversation or adjust the pace of the conversation as needed.

**Step 6:** The Conference Board, by a majority vote, votes to accept or reject the Applicant as a CRM.

**Step 7:** The Conference and the newly-appointed CRM agree to a liaison, as outlined in the Conference bylaws.

## **Delegate Assembly Policy**

Delegate Selection. The following delegates shall be voting members of the Delegate Assembly:

1. All credentialed pastors serving in an active pastoral role within a member congregation.
2. All member churches of the Conference may select two (2) additional members of their congregations to serve as delegates. These delegates are chosen at the discretion of each congregation, and may include lay leadership, credentialed leaders who are not serving in a pastoral role, retired pastors, or Conference Board members.
3. Congregations with membership of over 200 persons will choose one (1) additional delegate from the congregation for every 100 members or fraction thereof, over and above 200 persons, up to a maximum of 10 Delegates per congregation, including pastors. For example, a congregation with 2 active pastors and 230 members is eligible for five total Delegates: 2 pastoral Delegates, and three additional Delegates appointed by the congregation. Membership is defined by each congregation.
4. Conference Related Ministries may select one (1) voting delegate per member organization. Delegates shall be members of the CRMs Board of Directors or staff and a member of a Mennonite Church USA congregation.

Delegate Appointments and Procedures.

1. For the purpose of creating the Conference delegate roster, the delegate year begins September 1.
2. It is recommended that lay delegates serve at least one three-year term and congregations stagger their terms.
3. When a lay delegate cannot complete their term due to death, illness, a move to another location, or other circumstances, a replacement should be selected for the unexpired term and communicated to the Conference office.
4. When membership increases such that a congregation is eligible for another delegate, an additional person shall be selected to a three-year term beginning September 1.

Qualifications of Delegates.

1. Delegates shall be persons who are members of a Conference congregation (or a Mennonite Church USA congregation, in the case of Conference Related Ministries).
2. Preferably, Delegates will be actively involved in a leadership role within the life and work of the congregation or Conference Related Ministry (CRM).
3. Manifest spiritual discernment, mature judgement, and a commitment to following Jesus.

Annual Assembly.

1. The Conference will host one formal Annual Assembly, which will serve as the business meeting for the Conference.
2. The primary purpose of the Annual Assembly is for the Delegate Assembly to carry out its role as the chief decision-making and oversight body of the Conference. The Delegate Assembly shall discern the direction of the Conference vision and objectives by conferring together. It shall be the responsibility of the Delegate Assembly to represent member congregations and Conference Related Ministries via Delegates as outlined in the bylaws.

3. The Conference Board shall set the agenda for the Annual Assembly, which shall reflect the intercultural values of the Conference and include the following:
  - a. Collective worship
  - b. Reporting on the work of the Conference Board & Committees, including financial reports
  - c. Discernment around business topics
  - d. Recognition of new credentialed leaders, and those who have passed away
  - e. Appointment of new Board members
  - f. Welcoming of new congregations
4. In years when the Conference Board has elected a new Moderator and/or Assistant Moderator, the Delegate Assembly shall be given an opportunity to affirm the appointment(s) through a ballot process. If the Delegate Assembly does not affirm the appointment (defined as affirmation by less than 50% of the participating Delegates), then this will be understood as a request by the Delegate Assembly for the Conference Board to reconsider the appointment(s) as presented.
5. Great care shall be taken to ensure that the Annual Assembly is accessible to all member congregations, regardless of geographic location or primary language, whether through the provision of travel funds, technologies that facilitate remote participation, translation services, or similar approaches.
6. Voting at Annual Assembly
  - a. For the purposes of voting at Annual Assembly, quorum shall be considered to be 50% of the number of Delegates who register to participate in Annual Assembly in person, remotely, and via submission of a written ballot.
  - b. For those Delegates who are not able to attend in person, the Conference Board may provide a process and procedure for submission of written ballots upon request and approval of a Delegate's absence. If approved, written ballots shall be provided to those who notify the Conference Board of their inability to participate in person. Written votes are to be submitted to the Conference Secretary prior to the Annual Assembly meeting.
  - c. Actions shall be carried by a two-thirds vote of the delegates participating in Assembly.

## **Delegate Ministry Description**

Accepting the role of serving as a Conference delegate means that you are committing to the following:

### **Commitments**

1. **Participate fully** in worship, conferring, actions, and fellowship at all sessions of the Delegate Assembly.
  - a. When scheduled, attend scattered meetings in preparation for the work of Delegate Assembly.
  - b. Prior to Assembly, become familiar with materials sent out in advance and matters for consideration and action.
  - c. In fulfilling your commitments, consider: (1) Your own conscience, (2) The congregation or organization you have been entrusted to represent, (3) Discernment, along with the other delegates.
2. **Represent** your congregation or CRM to the Conference.
  - a. Engage in conversations with your congregation or CRM on issues that will be discussed at Delegate Assembly seeking their input.
3. **Report** to your Congregation or CRM following Delegate Assembly
  - a. Explain the conferring actions of the Assembly and encourage your congregation to support these actions.
  - b. Share stories of how God is at work in the Delegate Assembly and Conference.
  - c. Articulate and interpret the Conference mission statement and priorities to your congregation or CRM.
4. **Act as a two-way communication link** for information and feedback between your congregation or organization and the Conference.
5. **Keep informed** of what is happening in the Conference between Assembly sessions by reading delegate mailings, emails, Intersections (quarterly Conference periodical), and be familiar with the Conference website (<http://www.franconiaconference.org>)

### **Qualifications**

1. Delegates shall be persons who are members of a Conference congregation (or a Mennonite Church USA congregation, in the case of Conference Related Ministries).
2. Actively involved in the life and work of the congregation or Conference Related Ministry (CRM).
3. Manifest spiritual discernment, mature judgement, a commitment to intercultural values, and a commitment to following Jesus.

### **Training and Readiness**

1. Delegates shall be appropriately trained and prepared to carry out their duties.
  - a. Each congregation is responsible for training and preparing its own delegates, including non-pastor delegates.

Congregations shall be assisted in this effort by their Leadership Ministers, who will meet with delegates as needed to provide support, training, or other assistance.