

**Allegheny Mennonite Conference (AMC)  
Leadership Council (LC)  
Minutes • September 5, 2012**

**Present:** J. Lorne Peachey (Moderator); Cathy Spory (Moderator Elect); Ken Litwiller (Treasurer); Donna Mast (Conference Minister); Joy Cotchen (Conference Minister of Children & Youth); Kathy Holsopple (Administrative Assistant); Wayne Yoder (Casselman Valley Regional Representative); Thomas Jefferson Teneffoss (Eastern Regional Representative); Karen Howard (Constituency Leadership Council Representative); Chris Lehman (Johnstown Regional Representative );

**Present by Telephone:** Carrie Eikler (Western Regional Representative)

**Absent:** Trevor Schrock (Youth Representative)

**Welcome, Devotional, and Opening**

Moderator J. Lorne Peachey opened the meeting at 3 PM. He shared a devotional from John 17:9-25. He noted that this is the longest prayer of Jesus and shows his heart. Jesus appeals for unity that is based on love for each other, which mirrors the love and unity of the Father and the Son.

**ACTION: The Council agreed to use John 17 to “Dwell on the Word” at our LC meetings this fiscal year.**

Lorne then led the group in a get acquainted exercise where each person shared name, living locale, congregation, vocation, family, position in LC, and style of functioning. He encouraged us to be aware of how we each function and process ideas and information.

**Review of LC Minutes for 7/19/2012**

The minutes were approved. Additional information:

Trustee Dave Mishler has listed the AMC Office Building with a realtor to test the salability. Kathy reported that someone will be looking at the building soon.

Ken Litwiller has been confirmed as the AMC Representative to MCC East Coast beginning in August 2013. Ken will accompany Liz Hunsberger to the October 12, 2012 meeting.

The Johnstown Service Adventure Unit needs a local sponsor to sign their rental agreement. The Crossroads congregation is serving as their host and is considering signing the rental agreement. Could the Johnstown Regional Ministers group be involved?

J. Lorne Peachey received guidelines for conducting a conversation room; they were used for our LC seminar at the Laurelville summer meeting.

We plan to move ahead with an ad hoc committee which focuses on reconciliation.

**Review of AMC Celebration 2012 (at Laurelville, August 3 to 5, 2012)**

We noted that the discussion at the LC conversation room focused on finances rather than on the relationship with Hyattsville Mennonite Church (HMC). Various explanations were offered:

- People are very interested in finances.
- People do not want the HMC issue to dominate AMC procedures.
- There was nothing new to discuss about the AMC/HMC relationship at this meeting.
- People were avoiding the HMC issue.
- People are not as anxious about HMC; they are more at peace.

LC members found Loren Johns messages on love to be very helpful; gratitude was expressed for them being made available by email attachment.

The overall ambiance of the meeting was positive; it felt good to hear us laugh.

For future Celebrations, we recommend that we plan for a 2 hour Sunday morning service after a breakfast at 0900 AM. This could save money, allow people to get away earlier, and make the service and communion the last event of the conference.

For Saturday evening, we would like to encourage the young adults to lead singing, as they did informally this year; we could also consider a talent show.

Traditionally AMC summer Celebration has been planned by the Moderator Elect and the AMC staff.

**ACTION: TJ and Karen will bring suggestions to make this event even more celebrative.**

### **Status of Congregations**

Lorne reviewed the status of AMC congregations whose situation is fluid:

- HMC has been functioning as a “non-voting participating congregation” since a 2005 AMC delegate decision.
- Philippi has also been voluntarily functioning as a “non-voting participating congregation” since 2005 in solidarity with HMC. Lately they affirmed that solidarity with a letter and 2 bricks.
- Gortner’s pastor and council have stated in a letter that if HMC is reinstated, their relationship with AMC will be “in jeopardy”.
- Tressler’s three pastors have sent a letter calling for no further AMC discussion about or with HMC. Tressler has also declined the leadership of a female CM and has requested a male overseer.
- Glade congregation chair and vice chair have also indicated by letter that they are waiting for the AMC decision on HMC and will respond accordingly.

Donna reviewed congregations who do not currently have pastors:

- Crossroads, Glade, and Meadow Mountain do not presently have pastors and are not currently searching.
- Thomas, Hyattsville, Kaufman, and Oak Grove have formed search committees.
- Hyattsville's search committee was oriented by Donna using the Skype technology. They are replacing Adam Tice but developing a different job description.

A support committee is being formed for Matt Pritchard (church planting in Pittsburgh). We considered appointing a representative from the AMC LC but decided not to do so at this time.

### **Staff Reports**

Staff reports had been distributed by email prior to the meeting.

Joy added the information that there were only 6 registrations for Camporee this fall. So Camporee will not be held this year and Joy is not planning for future years either. Young people seem to be too busy.

### **Reconciliation with Hyattsville Mennonite Church (HMC)**

Lorne reviewed the 2005 AMC decision which had the result of HMC becoming a “non-voting participating congregation”. He noted that the term “disciplined” was not used in any of the AMC proceedings. Also, that decision was by a 65% vote, less than a 2/3 majority. Lorne reported that at that meeting, an earlier motion to affirm a common covenant agreement was defeated.

**Question for the AMC LC to consider: How do we relate to congregations who are not in compliance with the Mennonite Church USA Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective? This could include**

**approving same-sex covenant relationships, rejecting female leadership, supporting militarism, or other issues.**

In the case of HMC, the AMC delegates have accepted the LC recommendation to form an ad hoc committee and a facilitator. We agreed to use the name "Reconciliation Exploration Committee" (REC). We discussed who should be on the committee and realized that this is interrelated with the purpose of the committee.

Concerning purpose the following ideas were presented:

- Engage in a process so that the LC can work at vision
- Explore reconciliation and "how we can all be together at the same table" while perhaps eating "different food"?; how can we exist in our differences?
- Explore what we are reconciling to; address causing of divisions rather than damage control after division
- Hear all sides; listen; assist the opposition to find their voice
- Seek buy-in from all sides; locate the common ground in the center of the Venn diagram; focus on our commonality
- Bring a fresh perspective
- Reflect the diversity of the conference
- Not a decision making committee but brings a recommendation to the LC for presentation to the delegates

Thirteen names were suggested for inclusion in the committee. The AMC CM needs to be closely involved with the committee, be the LC liaison, but not be part of the committee.

We discussed the need for a facilitator. Several names were suggested.

**ACTION: We agreed on an assignment before the next AMC LC meeting:**

- 1. Think through and suggest what a congregation needs to bring to the AMC table**
- 2. Define the assignment for the Reconciliation Exploration Committee; be as specific as possible**
- 3. Nominate three people to serve on the REC.**

### **Tressler Oversight**

In response to the request of Tressler MC for male oversight, Steve Sauder has been appointed by AMC and has agreed to serve. Tressler leadership accepted Steve as Overseer at a meeting on Thursday, August 16. On August 19, Steve, his wife, Anna, and Donna went to Tressler for Sunday worship where Steve spoke.

**ACTION: We agreed to follow the previous practice for Overseers and to appoint Steve as Overseer for Tressler for a term of three years. Tressler will be asked to pay his travel expenses.**

### **Phoenix 2013**

The next Mennonite Church USA Assembly will be held in Phoenix in July 2012. There has been considerable debate over the location since the state of Arizona enacted immigration laws that likely lead to racial profiling. We noted that the Iglesia Menonita Hispania (Hispanic Mennonite Church) has

decided not to participate in the conference in person. The Moderator Elect for Mennonite Church USA, Elizabeth Soto Albrecht will attend only on the final day when she becomes moderator.

**ACTION: We decided to send Donna Mast and Karen Howard to the assembly in Phoenix in July. Our third representative, J. Lorne Peachey will participate by internet. We do this in solidarity with Hispanic Menonite Hispania and with Elizabeth Soto.**

### **Christian Workers Training Fund (CWTF)**

This fund was established by the Layman's Fellowship (an organization that no longer exists) for the purpose of providing loans to persons preparing for church leadership at Mennonite colleges or seminaries. Six loans are outstanding with a total of \$11,600. One loan is in repayment; two recipients are in school; three loans are not in repayment. Managing the CWTF has fallen on the CM since the commissions were discontinued. Lorne noted that Everence manages funds such as the CWTF for a fee.

There is currently about \$34,000 in the fund and only one new applicant. Since most schools have financial aid available, there is less need for the fund than at the time it was established. We could begin to explore other uses for the remaining funds in the CWTF.

**ACTION: We agreed to seek ways to relieve Donna of the burden of dealing with CWTF issues. Lorne Peachey will explore this with Everence.**

### **International Guest House (IGH)**

Annabelle Kratz has been managing the IGH; however, she is unable to continue in this role since she needs to care for her husband. Possibly, a transitional team may be formed.

### **Sale of Building for First Mennonite Church of Johnstown (FMCJ)**

The FMCJ building has been sold to Gerald Zidak for about \$8000. Since FMCJ was a nonprofit organization, the funds needed to be distributed for FMCJ outstanding expenses or to other nonprofit organizations. The funds were distributed to the following:

- Love offering to former pastors Bob and Patty Simonsick, who served without pay for 8 months
- New Day in Johnstown
- The YWCA in Johnstown
- Allegheny Mennonite Conference

The contribution to AMC was in the form of a check for \$2000 signed by the buyer, Gerald Zidak.

**ACTION: The AMC LC agreed to deposit the check from Mr. Zidak in the AMC bank account and use it for addressing expenses under the 2012 to 2013 general budget.**

### **November 3, 2012 AMC Fall Delegate Meeting and March 2, 2013 AMC Spring Delegate Meeting**

The AMC Fall Delegate Meeting is an optional meeting although the last time it was not held was in 2006.

We agreed that November will be too early to assess fiscal year 2012 to 2013 finances and too early to report anything new about reconciliation with HMC.

The AMC Spring Delegate meeting is scheduled to be held on Saturday, 3/2/2013.

**ACTION: We agreed to hold an AMC LC meeting on November 3 rather than an AMC Fall Delegate Meeting.**

**ACTION: Carrie Eikler will check with the Morgantown Church of the Brethren calendar to confirm the date and location for the AMC Spring Delegate meeting .**

**Planning of AMC Leadership Council Meetings This Fiscal Year**

**ACTION: We agreed to have 4 in-person LC meeting this year:**

- **Wednesday, 9/5/2012, 1500 to 2000 at AMC Office in Somerset**
- **Saturday, 11/3/12, 0900 to 1600 at AMC Office in Somerset**
- **Friday to Sunday, January 11 to 13, at Deep Creek, Maryland**
- **Thursday, June 6, 1500 to 2000 at AMC Office in Somerset**

We considered scheduling an additional four on-line meetings. However, we decided to share information and make decisions by email in between scheduled meetings.

**ACTION: Ken agreed to take minutes for the four regular LC meetings this year. At delegate sessions, we will ask other people to take minutes.**

**ACTION: For the January retreat at Deep Creek, the offer of Jolene Tennefoss and Carolyn Tice to prepare the food was accepted with gratitude. Donna will confirm on reserving Deep Creek.**

Lorne provided some general guidelines for the conduct of our meetings. LC members are encouraged to claim mileage at the IRS volunteer rate, currently \$0.14/mile. We will aim for shorter meetings by distributing information in advance by email. This will also reduce paper flow. We need to be aware how we each process things; for example, Lorne tends to be an action person and Cathy a process person.

Lorne encouraged us to show a variety of views in the minutes and not show artificial consensus. We should make decisions out of conviction, not out of fear.

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—ken litwiller. recorder