Berea Mennonite Church

1088 Bouldercrest Road SE, Atlanta GA 30316 404-244-0289

A historic peace church in the Anabaptist tradition
A member congregation of Mennonite Church USA

February 6, 2017

Board of Directors
Central District Conference - MCUSA
C/O Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister
1015 Division Street
Goshen, IN 46528

Brothers and Sisters:

We write on behalf of all the members of Berea Mennonite Church, a small congregation, in Atlanta, GA, that has always been affiliated with Southeast Mennonite Conference (SMC).

We are concerned about the future of our standing as a congregation of Mennonite Church USA (MCUSA), as indicators suggest SMC may vote to leave MCUSA in the near future.

During our church history our community has engaged with SMC by attending meetings, serving on committees and the leadership board, and continuing to pay our annual support, but we have also begun to pray about our connection to SMC and to wonder out loud if we should perhaps find a new affiliation. (Copies of meeting minutes and agendas related to this process are attached).

To that end, we asked our pastor to have an initial conversation with Lois Kauffman, who was then Conference Minister for Central District Conference (CDC). From that conversation we learned that there are MCUSA guidelines for congregations discerning their best conference affiliation. Lois forwarded documents to guide us in that process and invited us to draft letters to SMC and CDC, but we decided to continue praying on the matter for another year. During that time, our relationship with SMC and the MCUSA guidelines were discussed at several of our congregational meetings until eventually a small group was asked to prepare a letter to SMC to initiate the formal discernment process following the MCUSA guidelines. That group prepared a letter which was sent to SMC in March 2016 and we had follow up calls with SMC in the interim. This past month SMC Leadership Board met to consider that process. The result was a letter offering our community leave to explore affiliating with other MCUSA conferences. (Copies of both of these letters are also attached).

We remain committed to our membership in MCUSA. We have chosen to explore a possible relationship with CDC because we know and respect your relationship with our friends at Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship and because we appreciate CDC's place in the on-going conversations in MCUSA.

We would like to begin the process of discernment with Central District Conference as described in the Executive Board criteria for application of Article III, 3, b of the Mennonite Church USA Bylaws Membership Guidelines regarding our possible affiliation with Central District Conference. We understand any such consideration would begin with an invitation from CDC. We also understand that you may request further information prior to your next board meeting in early March. We are willing to share any and all information you request.

We pray all the best for you and look forward to your reply.

Peace be with you.

Joshua Cowan
Elder at Large

Eric Clark,
Conference Affiliation Working Group

Matthew Erdel
Elder at Large

Kathleen Kennel
Conference Affiliation Working Group

Vangie Rodenbeck
Administrative Elder

Kathryn Wierwille
Conference Affiliation Working Group