

A Resolution on Unity in a Time of Disagreement

Call to unity. As Mennonite disciples, we believe we have been called by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live in unity. We believe that our unity is in Christ, brought about through his life, death and resurrection. We believe that God has promised that all things will be gathered into Christ Jesus, and that God is at work in the church to bring that promise to fruition.

We believe that Christian unity is not ours to create, but is a gift from God already given. We are aware that we often lack faith in that promised and already-given unity. We are aware of our human tendency instead to seek uniformity of belief and practice through the setting of boundaries and the creation of rules. We are aware that this tendency is most evident in times of disagreement and stress. We are aware that we are currently living in such times.

It is our hope that we will continue to grow in faith, and so learn how to inhabit the unity that is ours in Christ Jesus. It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will be poured out on our congregations, conferences and denomination, making that growth possible. We pray that we will love one another as Christ loved us, and that we will be known to the world by that love.

Our ongoing anxiety. The current disagreement regarding the credentialing of a pastor in a same-sex committed relationship has once again raised the anxiety about inclusion in our denomination. Questions of theology, polity, faithfulness, and discernment of the Holy Spirit's leading are being asked across our denomination.

Respecting each other's discernment. We believe that the answers we seek are best found in dialogue and mutual discernment, rather than denunciation and separation. We ask our sisters and brothers in the broader church to remember our common "*commitment to ongoing dialogue and discernment and 'agreeing and disagreeing in love,'*" as affirmed by MC USA delegates in Columbus (2009).

We believe that a strength of our denomination has been its understanding of accountability as being relational rather than punitive. Current calls by some to reverse the credentialing of Theda Good seem to us to work against that understanding. We are concerned that such action would set a troubling precedent, moving us toward a polity that is based on a centralized and hierarchical understanding of Christian unity. And we believe that calls to the Executive Board to discipline Mountain States Conference, or risk losing other area conferences, run counter to our denominational commitment to agree to disagree in love.

Therefore, as the MC USA Executive Board engages in conversation with Mountain States Mennonite Conference leaders, we call on them to help us be a denomination that continues the practice of relational rather than punitive accountability, no matter the strength of our disagreement. We commit ourselves to remaining in relationship with our sisters and brothers in Mountain States Conference, as we will with other area conferences, regardless of the outcome of their conversation with MC USA Executive Board. We commit ourselves to prayer for all concerned. And we will continue to do our part to help us, as a denominational body of believers, to live into the unity already ours in Christ.