



Rainbow Mennonite Church

1444 Southwest Blvd, Kansas City, KS 66103

www.rainbowmennonite.org

(913) 236-8820

February 27, 2014

Dear Diana Schunn, moderator of Western District Conference:

Please accept this cover letter as a statement of intent on behalf of Rainbow Mennonite Church, Kansas City, KS, to submit the enclosed resolution to the 2014 Western District Conference Assembly.

Thank you for providing a clear policy for composing resolutions that “facilitate discernment, educate, build unity, and provide an area of conference understanding while acknowledging dissenting voices.” This policy creates common ground for continuing conversation on topics where there are divided opinions and tender feelings at stake.

Common ground has been Rainbow Mennonite Church’s central goal in creating the resolution. Its intent, in keeping with the confessional nature of Mennonite polity, is to ensure that individual congregations, with their pastors, will prayerfully seek God’s Holy Spirit and guidance and pastors and congregations will be protected in whatever they discern regarding whom may receive holy consecration in a committed relationship.

A resolution is important to attain this goal because currently, under the 2001 MC USA Membership Guidelines, pastors are subject to credential review by a committee, and the enclosed resolution would not change that. Recognizing that committee membership changes over time and that institutional memory can be lost in the process, this resolution seeks to provide ongoing clarity and guidance to the committee and other parties, and will protect the committee from undue political pressures in future instances of credential review.

In keeping with your instructions, we began with study and discussion within our own congregation. We discerned a position based foremost on a commitment to God’s reconciling love. As you are aware, at Rainbow Mennonite Church, we feel the time is overdue to extend God’s love and ordinances fully to our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters in Christ, and yet, in our resolution we also seek to extend love and understanding to fellow Mennonites who read scripture through a different lens and have come to a different conclusion. Our proposed resolution acknowledges those different views and seeks to provide the same protection to each. We began to put pen to paper in 2011, and we feel our resolution is ready to be brought before the Western District Conference delegate body.

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We at Rainbow Mennonite Church believe that, as followers of Jesus, we must not exclude people based on their sexual orientation. We believe that people in same-sex relationships have God-given gifts to offer the church and world, and we believe that in order to live out our full calling to be a community of grace, joy and peace, we need policies that will permit individual congregations to affirm people in covenanted, same-sex relationships. As followers of Christ, we affirm that all believers should enjoy all the blessings of their chosen congregations to include consecration/commitment/wedding ceremonies regardless of sexual orientation. Further, we believe that the pastors who serve us should also feel safe to welcome them without restriction or sanction. In so doing, we are seeking to follow Christ's teaching as we understand it and attempting to preserve congregational polity.

We realize that some in the Mennonite Church and Western District Conference will disagree with us on this important matter. That is why we have carefully written this resolution to acknowledge differences in scriptural interpretation and allow congregations to express their own discernment regarding these matters. Under the resolution, congregations and their pastors remain free to refuse to perform same-sex unions. We appreciate that no one should be forced to do something that he or she believes is immoral, and this resolution seeks to reaffirm that principle, regardless of where a congregation and its pastor are on this issue.

We anticipate that this statement and resolution will generate thoughtful conversation. We expect that, if approved, it will continue to allow congregations and pastors to accept all their members in loving community, guided by God.

We thank you for your leadership in Western District Conference. We look forward to further discussion and conversation.

Sincerely,

Mary Redmon, past-moderator

Keith Jantz, moderator

Peggy Coriell, moderator-elect

Ruth Harder, pastor

Enclosure



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Resolution from Rainbow Mennonite Church For Western District Conference July 4 – 7 2014

Whereas writers in the Hebrew Bible have condemned certain same-sex sexual relations, as did Paul in the New Testament, and

Whereas promiscuity is universally rejected by the Word and Holy Spirit of the church, and

Whereas Jesus was outspoken on mercy, love and acceptance of and for all, and

Whereas Jesus' transformative incarnation claims superiority over all laws and proscriptions that preceded him or stand at variance with his Word or Spirit, and

Whereas in the texts of the canon Jesus was silent on the topic of homosexuality, and

Whereas the church at large, as well as the Western District Conference of the Mennonite Church USA, lacks consensus regarding the status of homosexuality as it relates to sin, civil unions or marriages, and

Whereas church documents that have attempted to provide clarity on this subject reflect a cultural and historical context that – with considered, respectful theological discernment – puts many believers at variance with the teaching position of the church as represented in those documents, and

Whereas performing a same-sex ceremony may trigger a credential review under MCUSA 2001 membership guidelines, and that review may open pastors to other scrutiny but need not in the Western District Conference subject them to dismissal on those grounds alone.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Western District Conference of the Mennonite Church USA, out of respect for the responsibility and commitment “to seek to understand and interpret Scripture in harmony with Jesus Christ as we are led by the Holy Spirit in the church,” upholds the right of individual congregations to discern how homosexuality will be subject to Biblical interpretation, and

Be it further resolved that pastors, with the affirmation of their congregations, consistent with Mennonite polity, and without fear of censure, may officiate or refuse to officiate ceremonies that consecrate before God monogamous, life-long unions, regardless of the sexual orientation of those being united.