**DECLARATION OF HISPANIC PASTORS**

Western District Conference of Mennonite Church USA

November 15, 2014

**Regarding Human Sexuality**

We consider sexuality as a gift of God granted to all living creatures. We, human creatures as rational beings, express our sexuality conditioned by a large number of human, physiological, cultural or religious factors.

We do not consider ourselves experts about human sexuality. We recognize that this issue is by its very nature a matter that touches each person very closely no matter one’s sexual preferences.

In our conversation we agreed about four essential points according to our Christian understanding:

1. Sexuality concerns us all, emotionally, spiritually and physically. Therefore, we cannot separate it from our reality and existence without endangering our spiritual integrity.

2. In this conversation about sexuality among Mennonite Church USA in general and WDC in particular, we believe it is clear that there are two ways to interpret the matter of homosexual and lesbian relations: one that openly declares that the Bible does not endorse that behavior and another one that affirms that the Bible does not legislate about this issue.

3. We recognize that presently at the pastoral leadership level, some men and women pastors have decided that a way to show the love of Christ is to bless monogamous relations between same sex persons, thus contradicting the guidelines for membership of Mennonite Church USA and the Confession of Faith of the church. Some churches have declared themselves open as communities that welcome homosexual persons and have written documents affirming that.

4. Western District Conference has experienced divisions, separations and heated discussions, and so far it is not clear if we aim to reach a healthy conclusion for all, or if this is just a long exercise to discover who gets tired first.

We, Hispanic Mennonite Christians, committed to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and members of Western District Conference (WDC), in view of the situation described, affirm the following:

In our view, we agree that the Bible gives us enough scriptural basis for saying that sexual relations should be expressed between a man and a woman within the sanctity of marriage. This agrees with our Confession of Faith:

 *We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life. (p. 72 in English)*

It is of great spiritual and emotional concern for us that the church in general and in particular WDC is spending so much time discussing this issue as if it were all that has to do with the life of the church. We do not mind the conversation about homosexuality. What disturbs us is the great investment of energy just to keep the issue "on the table" without showing signs of improvement or advancement.

Because we Hispanics have made ​​it clear for some time what is our feeling is, we decided to express the following:

In the spirit of Christ we confess:

That our position about homosexuality has not changed. However, knowing that God has called us to live in peace and unity, we declare with fear and respect that if people, pastoral leaders or individual congregations, perceive homosexuality differently and in consequence declare solidarity with or minister covenant ceremonies between same sex persons, we will respect what they decide and will not impose an obligation to change or criticize their decisions, let alone question their Christian values. At the same time, we hope that our position will be respected and that we always will be considered as valid partners when it comes to talk about the mission of the church, the witness of Christ and the celebration of brotherhood.

In the love of Christ this is our word and we offer it as a fraternal contribution.

In Christ, Lord of all,

Antonio Caceros, Iglesia Menonita Monte Horeb

Jaime Cazares, Iglesia Menonita Casa Betania

Isabel Hernandez, Iglesia Menonita Casa de Dios

J. Natividad Hernandez, Iglesia Menonita Casa de Dios

Juan Limones, Iglesia Luz del Evangelio

Byron Pellecer, Iglesia Menonita Aposento Alto

Jorge Quintanilla, Iglesia Cristiana Menonita Mi Redentor

Damian Rodriguez, Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Esperanza

Moises Romero, Iglesia Camino de Santidad

Blanca Vargas, Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Vida