

# Survey at Zion regarding Conference / Denominational Polity

(March, 2015)

## Straw Poll: Congregationalism Statements

(from WDC Reference Council, November 15, 2014)

For the 3 statements below, indicate to what degree you agree or disagree, using the following choices on a scale of 1 - 10: 1. I fully support this statement. ... 10. I fully oppose this statement.

**Statement #1:** Each WDC congregation has the unrestricted privilege of local discernment regardless of previous understandings or decisions by the congregation or conference.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

**Statement #2:** The WDC delegate body may ask a congregation to practice consultation (to be defined by the leadership of WDC) when a congregation is making a decision that affects others.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

**Statement #3:** The WDC delegate body may name certain issues about which they do not recognize the privilege of congregations to make decisions on their own.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

## Sample questions from MCUSA Delegate Survey

February-March 2015

**#10.** Which of the following best captures your sense of a preferred future for the organization of Mennonite Church USA? (Mark just one choice.)

- Mennonite Church USA should be reorganized with greater authority being held by the Executive Board and denominational agencies.
- Mennonite Church USA should be reorganized so that area conferences are fully the centers of authority for credentialing and other matters and the denominational staff are largely in the role of resourcing area conferences and congregations.
- The current organizational structure of Mennonite Church USA is satisfactory and should not be changed.
- I prefer a model where congregations are the centers of authority (e.g. hold credentials, make membership guidelines), but the denominational and area conference staff are available for consulting and resourcing.
- I support the dissolving of Mennonite Church USA and its area conferences as they currently exist, allowing congregations full autonomy.
- Other. (Please describe in a sentence or more.)
- I'm not sure.

**#12.** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

"It is essential that congregations continue to be granted a delegate voice in the decisions that govern the life of the national conference." (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree)

1                  2                  3                  4                  5

**#13.** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

“The national Delegate Assembly is well- suited as a place to debate/decide our denomination’s theological approach to controversial social issues (i.e. abortion, immigration, same-sex marriage, gun control, national health care, Israel/Palestine).” (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**#14.** Which of the following choices best reflects your view of the resolutions (decisions) passed by the Delegate Assembly?

- These should be binding on all area conferences and congregations.
- These should only be binding if ratified by one’s area conference.
- These should only be binding if ratified by one’s congregation.
- All decisions made by the delegates should be considered as guidelines, not binding decisions, for area conference and congregational interpretation and discernment.

**#16.** In current Mennonite Church USA ministerial leadership polity,

- congregations call local pastors,
- area conferences provide ministerial credentials,
- the national conference (the denomination) provides a shared understanding of the standards for credentialing, and
- the national conference, via the Delegate Assembly, may discuss and decide major issues of policy for the denomination.

In light of the above polity, which of the following choices do you prefer for the future of Mennonite Church USA? (Mark only one choice.)

- Mennonite Church USA should maintain the current commitments for credentialing described above.
- The national conference (denomination) should have greater jurisdiction over the credentials approved by area conferences.
- Each area conference should have greater independence over the credentials they approve.
- Congregations should have local authority to credential the leaders they call.

**#17.** What should be the consequences (sanctions), if any, when an area conference does not abide by the decisions made by the delegate assembly? (Mark all that apply.)

- The delegate body should vote on the rights of the area conference to have continued membership in Mennonite Church USA.
- The area conference should lose its right to appoint delegates to the biennial Delegate Assembly.
- The area conference should have a voice, but not vote, at the Delegate Assembly.
- The area conference should be designated as “at variance.”
- There should be no consequences.

**#Rainbow Menn. Ch.-Resolution** (adapted for focus on polity; this is not the actual resolution...):

“Individual congregations have the right to discern faith and practice within their contexts. Pastors are free to carry out the discernment of their congregation without fear of censure from area conference or denomination.” (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5