

LANCASTER MENNONITE CONFERENCE  
**GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING CONGREGATIONS  
FROM OUTSIDE THE MENNONITE CHURCH**

**RATIONALE:**

In the past number of years the vision and ministry of Lancaster Mennonite Conference has expanded, particularly in urban areas, and LMC leaders and congregations are finding ways to partner and network with churches of other denominations. Sometimes other-than-Mennonite churches request a connected relationship with Lancaster Mennonite Conference.

**PROCESS**

So that the relationship is beneficial for the vision and ministry of the requesting congregation and Lancaster Mennonite Conference, the following guidelines have been setup to assist in the decision-making process.

- A.** The requesting church will receive an **Introduction to Lancaster Mennonite Conference** packet from the district bishop. Included in the packet will be:
- \* *1995 Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*
  - \* A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership
  - \* Conference Constitution
  - \* Structure Chart of the Interrelationships of the Anabaptist-Mennonite Family
  - \* Information-Fact Sheet (*membership, # of congregations, location, website, etc.*)
  - \* Mission Statement
  - \* Conference Core Values
  - \* Vision 2010 Information
- B.** The requesting church pastor(s) will begin to meet and become acquainted with the district leadership.
- C.** The church will submit a letter of introduction to the Bishop Board Executive Committee and the district bishop. The letter of introduction should include the following information about the church:
- Location
  - Current denominational affiliation
  - Name and credential of pastor(s)
  - Membership and attendance
  - Vision
  - Ministry programs
  - Reasons for requesting a connection with LMC
  - How a relationship with LMC will enhance the congregational mission/vision
  - How their church will enhance LMC mission/vision
  - Affirmation of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*
- D.** After appropriate congregational discernment, the congregation will affirm the change of affiliation by its usual manner (i.e. vote, consensus). If the church is affiliated with another denominational body, the church will request a written letter of release.
- E.** If the congregation can affirm affiliation with Lancaster Mennonite Conference, the *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, the conference mission and core values, the district bishop will invite the district leadership to recommend to Bishop Board, through Executive Committee, the acceptance of the congregation as an associate congregation for a period of two years.
- F.** Bishop Board will review the recommendation from the bishop and district leadership and make a decision. If accepted, the congregation will be an associate congregation for a two-year period.

- G.** The associate congregation will be introduced at the Celebration of Church Life. The Associate congregation will be expected to participate fully in the life of the district and conference.
- H.** At the end of the two-year period, the district bishop and associate congregation will mutually evaluate the relationship with LMC and discern together about an ongoing/permanent relationship with LMC. The district bishop will report this change from associate congregation to full congregation to the Conference Office so that this change can be reported in the REPORT to credentialed leaders. This change of congregational status could be part of the covenant ceremony of the pastor(s).

### **LMC AND ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION AGREE**

- 1. To accept the 1995 Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective as our guide for mission and ministry.
- 2. To keep this relationship mutually beneficial for the mission of the associate congregation and Lancaster Mennonite Conference.
- 3. To give and receive counsel in a Christ-like manner with openness and respect.
- 4. To review this relationship in two years.

### **LMC AGREES**

- 1. To recognize the congregation as an associate congregation of Lancaster Conference for two years.
- 2. To make available resources that will enhance the mission and ministry of the congregation and its leaders.
- 3. To invite the associate congregation and its leaders to fully participate in conference and training events.
- 4. To provide opportunity for feedback on matters of decision that congregations and leaders are involved.
- 5. To encourage on-going relationship with the district bishop for the purpose of supporting the congregational leaders and their related ministry.
- 6. To include the associate congregation and their leaders in mailings from the Conference Office (*Lancaster Conference NEWS, Growing Leaders Newsletter, RESOURCE Packet, etc.*).
- 7. To encourage involvement of the associate congregation with conference agency and fraternal organization resources and services.

### **THE ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION AGREES**

- 1. To have the credentialed leaders be accountable to the district bishop on matters of church polity and ministry, as well as matters related to personal needs.
- 2. To affirm the mission, vision, and core values of LMC.
- 3. To support the ministry of LMC through prayer and financial support.
- 4. To participate in the district by contributing to the financial support of the district bishop.

LANCASTER MENNONITE CONFERENCE  
**GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING CREDENTIALLED LEADERS  
FROM OUTSIDE THE MENNONITE CHURCH**

**RATIONALE:**

This guideline is intended to assist bishops in working with leaders who are credentialed in another denomination and are considering a call to an established Lancaster Mennonite Conference congregation. These guidelines can also apply to a person who is a member of an established LMC congregation and is ordained in another denomination but is currently not being considered for a pastoral assignment. For the sake of accountability it is helpful to have the credential lodged with the conference where the leader is a member.

**PROCESS**

1. The bishop should assist the leader in understanding the conference procedures as well as making sure the person is in agreement with all conference statements as well as a Mennonite Confession of Faith.
2. The leader should be given the conference packet and proceed with making sure a background check is in place and fill out the ministerial information forms.
3. The bishop should review with the person their knowledge and agreement with the history, faith and life of the Mennonite church. The bishop should help determine if additional study and reflection might be needed. In some cases the transfer of the credential may have some provisions stated which the leader will need to fulfill.
4. The leader and the bishop will also need to meet with the Lancaster Conference Credentialing Commission for official action related to the transfer of the credential. The commission and the bishop will work together in stating any additional requirements the leader may need to do.