



Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

An area conference of
Mennonite Church USA

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Offices at East Goshen Mennonite Church

April 11, 2023

To the people of God in Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, past and present:

The Ministry Credentialing Team (MCT) of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference (IMMC) writes this letter in a posture of repentance and apology.

MCT is tasked with being a point of accountability and support for the credentialed leaders of IMMC. We strive to find a balance between these two responsibilities and want to engage in both. We expect growth from our leaders and want to see them thrive.

In the past year, we have turned an eye of accountability inward. We observe that many ministry calls have enriched the church. The credentialing process within IMMC has been a positive, enriching experience for some. Sadly, we recognize that for others, it was not. Too often, we, MCT, have fallen short, especially—but not exclusively—in terms of past practices regarding how we conduct credentialing interviews.

We acted as gatekeepers of God's call instead of as collaborators seeking, in community, to discern and carry out God's will. We insisted on doctrinal and theological purity instead of listening for the prophetic voice, seeking unison instead of harmony. We expected academic achievement of our leaders instead of remembering that esteemed rabbis had much to learn from the 12-year-old son of a carpenter.

In short, we held a narrow view of what a credentialed leader should look like, and we made the credentialing interview a trial by fire for anyone who did not fit the perceived mold.

And we are sorry.

We hurt people, and MCT hopes to listen, learn, and (where possible) repair and restore what has been broken. It is our intent to open up a listening process to allow anyone who was negatively impacted to share with us in the format that feels most comfortable to them: written or in person, anonymous or named. We acknowledge that people who wish to share with us may not be the interviewee themselves, but their loved one, their mentor, or someone else affected by our unfair practices. We are committed to hearing these stories from those willing to share them.

We intend to use the stories we gather to put together a report of our findings to be shared with IMMC as a means of holding MCT accountable. Unless explicitly told otherwise, we will guard the identity of each person who shares with us in all materials distributed outside of MCT. We hope to have a report to share at Annual Sessions in 2024, but until this process is further underway, the timeline remains tentative.

We also wish to offer ritual and affirmation. We envision a larger ritual acknowledging this process once it is at its conclusion (again, hopefully at the 2024 Annual Sessions), but as the process moves along, we will offer individualized symbols of our repentance and of our commitment to affirming the gifts of our credentialed leaders. For these individualized matters, we are open to hearing suggestions of what each individual feels would be appropriate and desired.

This is MCT's first word on this topic, but we do not intend it to be our last.

Regarding logistical matters, written accounts may be sent to MCT@im.mennonite.net or to Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, ATTN: MCT Listening Process, PO Box 702, Goshen, IN 46527. Anyone wishing to speak to an MCT member in person may reach out to a specific MCT member by getting our contact information from the conference office or by sending a request for an in-person meeting to MCT's email address.

May the Spirit guide this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suella Gerber". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Suella Gerber, MCT Chair
Kelly Carson, MCT Member
Ruben Chupp, MCT Member
Angy Moore, MCT Member
Phil Waite, MCT Member

Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference
is a Community of Congregations
Centered on Jesus,
Guided by the Holy Spirit,
Acting through Grace, Love, and Peace,
Engaging the world God loves.