



## **Report from the ad hoc committee on structure**

**Jan. 31, 2015**

At its September 2014 meeting, the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (EB) appointed an ad hoc committee to study the structure of Mennonite Church USA and to discern whether there would be adjustments that would allow people holding differing points of view in the church to work together more effectively. Our committee included representatives from the EB and the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC). Joy Sutter, EB member from East Norriton, Pa., chaired the group. Other committee members included Isaac Villegas, EB member and pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship; Katherine Jameson Pitts, executive conference minister for Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference, Portland, Ore.; Keith Weaver, executive conference minister for Lancaster Mennonite Conference; and Ervin Stutzman, executive director for Mennonite Church USA, Harrisonburg, Va.

Our committee met for 11 sessions over four months via videoconference. During our meetings, we reviewed documents associated with the 2001 merger of the Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church; feedback from the fall 2014 CLC meeting; reports of restructuring efforts within other denominations; and data from Conrad Kanagy's [August 2014 survey of credentialed ministers](#) in Mennonite Church USA. During our discernment process, we developed and debated various models of revising the structure of connections among area conferences and congregations and between delegates and the EB. We also examined how all these pieces in the system relate to one another.

In our deliberations, we concluded that there is not a structural change that would resolve the current tensions in Mennonite Church USA. Within our denomination, diverse understandings exist regarding what was agreed upon when the Old Mennonite Church and the General Conference merged, and about the binding nature of our existing agreements.

Our committee recommends that the current Mennonite Church USA structure be maintained. We also recommend that the board clarify, in consultation with the Delegate Assembly, its understanding of how ministerial credentials function in our system, and how the EB understands its leadership function in relationship to area conferences and congregations.