



Expressions of Lament and Hope: Summary of Delegate Comments

The responses from the table groups demonstrated a very high degree of support for this resolution, as did the vote to adopt it. Delegates were both saddened by the state of affairs in our culture and aware of the need for such a church statement to denounce the violence committed against racial groups. There were a few comments that wished the resolution would not have needed to come from AAMA itself but from the dominant culture of the church. Delegates also expressed a desire to have had more time for congregations to talk about the resolution at home before being asked to vote on it in Kansas City. Several table groups noted that it would be very difficult to not vote in favor of this resolution.

Comments from delegates asked for proactive, concrete steps to provide opportunities for congregations to move this resolution forward. It was noted that it would be important to connect the undoing racism priority in the Purposeful Plan with the outcomes of this resolution. Delegates asked for congregational study guides to explore topics such as intercultural competencies and white privilege.

Many persons made comments that the resolution did not go far enough and did not have any measurable concrete steps for individuals and congregations to take. In a similar way there were persons desiring that the language be “stronger” in the resolution and that “leaders of Mennonite Church USA need to speak up more quickly and decisively on behalf of the church regarding acts of racism.” Several wondered and asked if a letter would be sent to the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston as an expression of this resolution.

There was a desire to see the racism in our country as negatively affecting more than just the African-American population. There was also a call to name racially motivated violence other than what took place in South Carolina.

A number of participants asked about the use of the phrase, “stand in solidarity with the African-American community.” What does that look like, and how will we know if it is actually achieved?

Several comments that seem worth quoting:

“We suggest that paragraph six be amended by changing “To” to “We” and introducing the word “that” in order to clarify the language to the following: “We confess that our complicity in this through our silence, when commentary and media reports become our image of people of color, is unconscionable.”

“The resolution utilizes the word ‘covenant’ very loosely. Covenants are a big deal with ceremonies and things you do to remember. Is this a casual use, or will we act according to its meaning? What will be the sign of this covenant? Covenants are also more safeguards for relationships, not just agreement. Would like this agreement to use another word than covenant.”

There was an often-voiced desire for Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) to take on the project of rebuilding one of the church buildings that was burned.

Summary compiled by Terry Shue, Aug. 18, 2015

