



Mennonite Church USA
CONVENTION
ORLANDO 2017

Information for Delegates

Every two years, at the Mennonite Church USA convention, the Delegate Assembly convenes to tend to the business of Mennonite Church USA. However, at convention in Orlando, Florida — July 4–8, 2017 — the role of delegates will be anything but business-as-usual. This year we will be trying something new — the Future Church Summit — in conjunction with the regular Delegate Assembly.

Here's how it will work: after a short delegate session for essential business, including the consideration of a [revised resolution on Israel-Palestine](#) that was tabled by delegates in Kansas City in 2015, approximately 300 additional people will join the official delegate body to begin a process of taking stock and imagining an Anabaptist future for Mennonite Church USA — and to begin forging that future together. The summit will be a generative, open space for denomination-wide conversation where participants will dream together, reset priorities and engage one another on the question: How will we follow Jesus as Anabaptists in the 21st century?

Immediately following the summit, the Delegate Assembly will reconvene for an opportunity to officially affirm the outcomes of the process. The affirmation by delegates will be essential for the process moving forward, specifically directing the priorities of the Executive Board.

The number of non-delegate participants in the Future Church Summit will be capped to maintain an approximate ratio of 70 percent delegates and 30 percent non-delegates. We are making intentional effort to ensure the summit is as representative and inclusive of the diversity throughout the denomination as possible.

Delegates — representatives from Mennonite congregations, area conferences and Racial/Ethnic groups all across the country — shape the church by discerning goals for the next two years of denominational work, giving feedback to the Executive Board and Mennonite Church USA leaders, and discussing statements and resolutions that guide the overall work of the church. As participants in both the Delegate Assembly and the Future Church Summit, delegates at Orlando will have an especially important role to play in forging the future of the church.

This year, we are making it cheaper and easier for more delegates to participate. The Delegate Assembly and Future Church Summit will be condensed into three days — Thursday, July 6 through Saturday, July 8 — so that participants have the option of spending fewer days in Orlando, or attending two meeting-free days of convention. Additionally, churches that have not sent delegates for the last three conventions will receive a 50 percent discount on their registration.

But what exactly does being a delegate entail? How do you become one? Below you'll find answers to frequently asked questions about who can be a delegate, how they are chosen and the work that they do.

Leading up to convention, we will continue to add updated information to the Delegate Assembly website: mennoniteusa.org/resource/delegate-resources/

For more information on the Future Church Summit, visit: convention.mennoniteusa.org/future-church-summit/

Who can be a delegate?

In order to be eligible to send a delegate, a congregation must be part of one of Mennonite Church USA's area conferences. Each congregation can choose who they wish to send to convention as their delegate representative. The only requirement is that the delegate be a member of a Mennonite Church USA congregation.

How many delegates does each congregation send?

Every Mennonite Church USA congregation is invited to appoint one delegate for each 100 congregational members (or fraction thereof). For example, a congregation of 1–100 members can send one delegate; 101–200 can send two delegates; 201–300 can send three delegates, etc. [The Mennonite Church USA online directory](#) is the official source for congregational size and guides the number of delegates who can be sent.

When should congregations appoint delegates?

In preparation for the Delegate Assembly and Future Church Summit in Orlando, the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board plans to be in regular communication with delegates, beginning in early 2017. Therefore, it will be important for congregations to begin appointing their delegates as soon as possible and for delegates to register for convention as soon as registration opens on Jan. 17. Early registration ends on Feb. 28.

How are area conference delegates appointed?

Each area conference is eligible to send one delegate for each 1,000 area conference members, or fraction thereof.

How are delegates from Racial/Ethnic groups appointed?

The following Racial/Ethnic groups have been officially recognized by the Executive Board and may send three delegates, plus one delegate for each 1,000 members of the group: African American Mennonite Association, Iglesia Menonita Hispana and Native Mennonite Ministries.

How do I register to be a delegate?

If you have been invited to serve as a delegate, check the appropriate box on your convention registration form to indicate whether you are representing a congregation, area conference or Racial/Ethnic group. This will ensure that you are assigned to a table group for conversation with other delegates. You will also be asked to provide an e-mail address to receive updates and background information in preparation for the meetings in Orlando.

Go to <http://convention.mennoniteusa.org/registration/> to register online. Delegates from churches that have not sent delegates for the last three conventions will receive a 50 percent discount on their registration. A rebate form can be found on the convention registration website.

All registered delegates will automatically serve as participants in the Future Church Summit. Summit participants who are not delegates will go through a separate registration process, which can be found on the convention website: <http://convention.mennoniteusa.org/future-church-summit/>.

How should I prepare for my role as a delegate?

- **Pray.** Begin praying now — individually and with your congregation — for the work that God wants to do among us in Orlando. [Love is a Verb: A one-year spiritual practice resource](#), written by Leo Hartshorn, explores the convention theme through the lens of Richard Foster's six spiritual streams. Consider using this resource in your personal devotions or in a small group.
- **Read.** Over the course of the six months prior to convention, you'll receive lots of background information about the work of the Delegate Assembly and Future Church Summit. Be sure to read all of the materials that are sent and come to convention ready to engage the topics at hand. Also, visit the convention website — convention.mennoniteusa.org and mennoniteusa.org/resource/delegate-resources/ — to learn about our time together in Orlando.
- **Listen.** Talk to members of your congregation about the Future Church Summit and the work that the Delegate Assembly will be doing. Ask for their opinions and thoughts, and listen carefully. You will be representing them in Orlando. Encourage other members of your congregation to consider coming to convention to take part in worship and fellowship with other Mennonites from around the country.

What do delegates do?

The Delegate Assembly is the representative body of the denomination. According to the [Mennonite Church USA bylaws](#) and the [Delegate Job Description](#), a delegate's purpose is to:

- **Discuss, discern and decide** on major issues of policy for the denomination.
- **Speak** to other delegates, as well as Mennonite Church USA leaders, in order to give guidance to the establishment of general policies and the programs that are designed to carry out those policies.
- **Receive reports** from the Executive Board and churchwide agencies regarding the work that they are undertaking on behalf of the delegates and denomination.
- **Review current programs** and act on priorities as presented by the Executive Board.
- **Worship**, fellowship with one another, and find ways to deepen relationships and shared Christian commitment across the church

How does the Delegate Assembly make decisions?

The Delegate Assembly needs to attend to the church's business in a timely manner and with attentiveness to process. Balancing these goals can be difficult, especially for a large decision-making body. Much of the work of this assembly will be done in table groups in a process of biblical/communal discernment. The content of these discussions will be shared both through written feedback and verbal reporting to the assembly by table group representatives.

On several items, however, individual delegates will be called on to vote. During those sessions, we will follow the rules laid out in the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA. Article V, Section 5 sets forth the following directions for the conduct of meetings of the Delegate Assembly:

Bylaw provisions for decision making by the Delegate Assembly:

- Normally floor privileges are granted first to all delegates, Delegate Assembly committee members, and members of the program boards and committees. Floor privileges will be extended to others during a discussion at the moderator's discretion.
- Each assembly delegate shall be eligible to cast one vote. There is no proxy voting.
- A majority of votes cast shall determine any matter, except when the assembly agrees otherwise or when otherwise provided in the bylaws.
- A quorum for conducting official business of the assembly shall be those delegates to the assembly who appear for any duly-called meeting.

Are pastors automatically delegates?

No. Pastors only serve as delegates if they are appointed by their congregations. Some congregations always choose to send pastors as delegates, while others prefer to rotate the role among members.

Is there a minimum age for delegates?

No. If there are young adults who are active participants in the life of your church, you are encouraged to consider sending them as delegates. At convention, a mentoring system helps orient first-time delegates so that they are able to fully participate in delegate sessions.

Can our congregation appoint alternate delegates?

Congregations that have more than 400 members and are already sending five or more delegates may choose to appoint one additional alternate delegate for every five delegates they send (or portion thereof). While alternate delegates won't be able to vote, they will be welcome to participate in all other aspects of the delegate process, including table group conversations.

We do not encourage churches or conferences to make delegate appointments based solely on specific Delegate Assembly topics, agenda or format. Alternate delegates may not switch places with an official delegate for specific topics or resolutions during ordinary Delegate Assembly business, or for this year's Future Church Summit. The role of each delegate is to have an official voice in shaping the church, and we want them to take part in the dreaming and planning at the Future Church Summit. The summit is part of the delegate business, with an invitation extended to additional participants to join delegates for that work.

If your church would like to send additional participants for the Future Church Summit beyond the number of official delegates allowed, please use [this form to apply](#).

Is there a way to cast an absentee vote?

No. A delegate must be physically present at the Delegate Assembly in Orlando to cast a vote.

More questions?

Mennonite Church USA Executive Board staff members are here to help you prepare for your role as a delegate. If you have questions about what it means to be a delegate, contact Shelley Buller: ShelleyB@MennoniteUSA.org



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