

February 23, 2016
INDIANA-MICHIGAN MENNONITE CONFERENCE
for March delegate meetings

Regarding breadth of variance we are willing to live with.

Missional Leadership Team (MLT) wants to invite pastors and congregations to a more comprehensive vision than simply a position on breadth of variance we are willing and able to live with. Looking down the road as best we can we want to set in place a few things to shape conference direction without creating structure that inhibits the Spirit:

- **Center conference life around Jesus**
- **Create a new covenant organized around beliefs and spiritual practices**
- **Identify a discernment process**
- **Incorporate the Unity and Variance recommendations into this larger picture for moving ahead.**

Therefore we present to delegates in draft form these two documents, “Pieces of a Vision,” and “Regarding Breadth of Variance We are Willing to Live With.” We have been helped by the work of staff, feedback at the January conference leadership retreat, and by receiving the report of the Unity and Variance Trask Group.

While questions of clarity and potential change were initially spurred by issues of sexuality, other areas include biblical authority, peace and nonresistance, polity, discipline related to congregational and clergy practice, the role of the Confession of Faith, women in leadership, and membership guidelines.

Given the current state of the church, both in our conference and in the denomination, we offer these 3 thoughts for your feedback as it specifically relates to LGBT matters:

- 1) Individual congregations may, without fear of censure, receive or not receive LGBT people as members and non-credentialed leaders in their congregations.*
- 2) When a pastor or congregation is considering officiating a same-sex covenanted union, they must enter into our discernment process as would be appropriate with any beliefs or practices that differ from our core beliefs and practices.*
- 3) Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference will not credential or hold credentials of a person in a same-sex relationship unless Mennonite Church USA changes its practice and IN-MI Conference delegates affirm the change.