

**INDIANA-MICHIGAN MENNONITE CONFERENCE  
SOUTHERN REGIONAL MEETING**

Howard-Miami Mennonite Church, Kokomo, Indiana  
March 12, 2016

**TABLE WISDOM**

**What could “centering around Jesus” look like for you and your congregation?**

Table #1 – Themes were our activism, and work with prisoners was a sub-theme of congregation’s activism. It was noted that this is a good “Mennonite” way to answer, but we are likely doing inner work as well, and we hope that we are!

Table #6 – 1) Emphasizing aspect of being one body. 2) Reaching out to others in immediate / surrounding community. 3) Loving others – the hungry, the poor, the educated and uneducated, undocumented, criminals. 4) Great worship! 5) Raising cattle, crops to be shared with others. 6) Overseas partnership in mission – global work.

Table #7 – 1) Different interpretation "Jesus as center" – often it is "Jesus as disciple." Jesus is big enough to hold us together but our individual opinions of how that is lived out separates us.

Table #8 – 1) Verse: "We love Jesus (each other) because He first loved us." 2) First Mennon new mission statement – "working as the hands, heart, and voice of Christ." 3) Being Jesus-centered means setting aside time for worship / "devotion" as well as daily practice. 4) Being Jesus-centered can lead into uncomfortable situations. Those who come to our churches (conference) may not look / sound like us, but they can bless us.

Table #9 – 1) Diversity – desire for more economic, racial, cultural, generational – what can we learn? 2) Daycare – sharing gifts in community. 3) Keeping global church / conference and national church before us – sharing the stories. 4) Sharing more about conference with average persons – using intercessory prayer email sheet. Pastors / leaders have important role – this also shows love. 5) Creative ways of being together as pastors – many have jobs during week. New way to hold VBS, one-day events.

**What could “centering around Jesus” look like for conference?**

Table #1 – What key ideas and characteristics do we all see Jesus as? How do we find and share these? – 1) Unity, not just uniformity, is key... e.g. allowing for variety. May need to discuss how much to hold tradition. How did Jesus hold it? 2) How do we define/articulate this idea (of centering around Jesus)? Many of us find this harder than showing this idea with our actions. 3) How do we help people on the fringes feel they are valued and part of Jesus’ body (e.g. different backgrounds and walks of life)? How do we understand fringes? This is broad! (Includes those on the fringes of our congregation, those on fringes of society, etc.) (Are we asking new Mennos to conform to our cultural norms in adversity?) (Instead give people responsibility and ownership!) 4) How do we bring margins and traditions together? How do they fit? Example of key characteristics, fr. Pentecostals, savior, healer, leader, revealer. We discussed margins or fringes as similar ideas and as a flip side of traditions. How these fit together and how to be relevant in our culture is a long topic. Are we holding to tradition too much, such that those on the margins are lost? Is staying together the goal? Or identifying who we are? Are we using Anabaptist processes to process ideas, including the hot-button topics?

Table #2 – 1) Become more dynamic vs. static – He (Jesus) is the “Living Word” moving and functioning in this world. Not just agreeing on 20-30 items of Faith. 2) We (MCUSA) read scripture through the love

of Christ. 3) Need to be accepting of all. 4) Must accept congregations will NOT come to complete consensus on all issues.

Table #3 – 1) When congregations have good ideas – how to share with other congregations through conference? 2) Conference as a table – Jesus invited everyone – our conference should have that attitude all the time. 3) Young people leaving church because popular culture defines church as anti... How to address this? 4) Congregational interaction – get to know each other – build intentional relationships between congregations. 5) Meet and mingle with our brothers and sisters / don't have to agree but we need to love each other – Camfell helps this. 6) Meeting disagreement with comprehensive Jesus led discernment. 7) Meet community needs with outreach. Are we being seen as healers / places of healing? How to address burnout when trying to meet spiritual needs, for those who would abuse churches meeting physical needs?

Table #4 – 1) Painful that churches have left (agree and disagree). 2) How to be community when we disagree. "I know what I believe, but I may be wrong." 3) We tend to believe only one or two issues – but ignore others. 4) Asking the question, "How would Jesus respond to any issue?" Jesus is not about rules – He is about relationships. "Blessed are the flexible, for they shall never break." What unites us? What is important? What are the core issues? Core beliefs are important but allowing flexibility in living out beliefs.

Table #5 – 1) As we already do with individual members within congregations, we need to respect the integrity of congregations within conference and commit to listen to each other. 2) We need to give and receive admonition with a listening ear, being open and honest. 3) Scripture needs to be the basis of all we do – search scripture together. 4) We need to be clear on what we believe, but open to welcome those who disagree. 5) We need clarification on what we believe so we can make room for those who disagree without compromising our core values.

Table #6 – 1) Eucharist – Lord's supper – brokenness & healing. 2) Sermon on the Mount – teaching the gospels (not just Pauline and Old Testament). 3) Free Dan to relate more regularly (entirely?) with congregations and release him from much of his administrative responsibility. 4) Inter-congregational conversation, gatherings, partnership. 5) Focus on Christ's teaching. 6) Don't worry about losing our culture – the core of who we are, what God is will not change and will survive. 7) Where is the world hurting around us? Where can we bring healing? 8) Increased emphasis on Christology. 9) Better balance between conversion (baptism) and living Christ-like lives. We're very good at the latter, but not the conversion piece.

Table #7 – 1) Intra-congregational practices? We don't do at conference level. Congregations operate individually. Even within our churches we have differences in worship – to worship with congregations. 2) IN-MI Conference allowed individual conferences to decide on women in leadership. 3) Is it time to simply make a decision and let congregations fall where they may? 4) Specific question about sexuality is wrong question. Formation first instead of responses to current events is critical. 5) Need broad definition of "us" – female perspective more thoughtful than male perspective.

Table #8 – 1) Jesus is the uniter. Jesus accepts us, saves us by grace. Focus on grace. 2) Jesus is a person whom we can relate to. 3) Characteristics of Jesus to emulate: accepting folks, focus on people who were hurting. Counter-cultural, healing, non-violent. He was about transformation, both humble and with authority. 4) Credential process ensure candidates are Christ-centered. 5) Conference is a support to churches to live out Christ-centered mission. Help with networking. 6) Jesus was teacher. Affirm conference continue to teach, equip, encourage leaders and others (ex. Journey). 7. One person wondered why becoming credentialed is so important to new Mara churches.

Table #9 – 1) To learn from one another / LISTEN. 2) Celebrate in worship, like today but even more! Coming closer to God, then we come closer to each other. 3) Practicing Fruit of Spirit – Putting on mind of Christ. 4) Love the church (in its fallibility) as God does. Showing God's love to each other. 5) Follow scripture as did today with lectio divina – words of Jesus and Old Testament as well. Sharing with someone don't know well (yet). 6) Listen to millennials.

**Here is our best thinking as a table group about how belief and practice fit together (or not):**

Table #1 – Which comes first? (e.g. teach kids to pray first, belief comes later, but used to see as writing the list of beliefs first.) Question of integrity too. Do learners see teachers doing what they are teaching? Sometimes an experience changes people's theories, or the other way, where believing something makes a person want to experience them. Are our beliefs held in concrete, or can God help us change them? How have some things in our "Confession of Faith" documents changed over the years as a result of practices and understanding shifted? Theme – there is tension, and movement is not linear – more spiral - of belief and practice. It moves and is constantly changing.

Table #2 – 1) Beliefs and practices are critically related – we naturally behave according to our beliefs. 2) Trouble exists when loving individuals disagree on issues. Can these people truly co-exist?? 3) Spiritual practices must enhance the fruits of the Spirit, creating a more "Christ-like" individual congregation.

Table #3 – 1) People may want the same thing (vision) but differ on how to get there. 2) Need to stop "demonizing" the opposition because of differing viewpoints. 3) Belief and practice must fit together – best tool to evangelize – live your faith. 4) Practice follows belief –how you act shows what you really believe. 5) Congregation to congregation – differences in meeting community needs – we cannot all fit in the same mold. Serving the same God in different ways. 6) When Jesus changes your life, there are expectations of you.

Table #4 – 1) Belief and practice do fit together. 2) Can we read the same Bible scriptures and come to different beliefs. 3) Extending hospitality that Jesus gives reshapes our beliefs. 4) Accept everyone – clearly be in relationship. Practice –willing to confront.

Table #5 – Our beliefs and practices should fit together; it is a problem when they don't.

Table #6 – There needs to be congruity between belief and practice. 2) Often we don't notice when the two diverge (e.g. Bible study or fasting...). 3) How are we engaging scripture intently? 4) We need accountability – e.g. in small groups. We need to resist autonomy as individuals and congregations. 5) Does the pastor live out what he / she preaches? Not: We are acting independent as congregations – self sufficiency.

Table #7 – 1) Practice and belief always fit together! Has to do with conviction of beliefs. 2) HARD work to do all of the proposed spiritual practices. Most of our congregations not taking part. 3) Hard to find time for formative practices. 4) Generally like the idea of spiritual practices coming from conference, but need more specificity.

Table #8 – 1) Belief and practice should be same, but sometimes are different. 2) Beliefs lead into practices (ex. believe in "love" but how do we act out love). 3) One person sees document as way to hold belief and practice together in more intentional way. 4) Noted that our practices also shape / form belief. 5) Need to add or incorporate Sabbath, Lord's supper, footwashing, baptism. 6) Practice number

five – affirms emphasis on mission / outreach, but wonders if need to not limit connection to neighbors and strangers to "Bible study." Maybe number five flows (is linked to) number four.

Table #9 – 1) Asking questions – openness!! 2) Christ revealed! Being open to new learning from Christ. It may all come back to serious Bible study... congregation might be quite far along in its discernment, then has to start over with conference discernment. Caution not to be "policing." 3) We will always have different interpretations. With new issues manifesting, how can we hang on to central concepts of these practices. 4) Discernment clear in broad way. 5) Need place (relationships) to talk, hold us together. 6) Do we spend as much time talking about what holds us together as what separates?

### **Feedback and questions that we have about spiritual practices or process of discernment.**

Table #1 – In this document there is a question of if there is a respect for the discernment process. What if congregations and MLT work through the process but don't come to agreement and don't want to end the relationship, then what? In this situation, does the process bring any clarity? Do we need to honor the process? How do we get clarity without needing to chisel anything in stone? 2) There could be difficulties knowing how to interpret and go forward with results of the process (middle p5, para starting with 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>) sounds good but could be difficult to make this decision for a small group of people to do. Could be hard to be consistent from situation to situation. 3) This process (communal discernment) is very counter-cultural in the U.S. (because of individuality), plus we have a Menno "tradition" of splitting! – but not well. So this could be difficult both being in U.S. and being Menno. 4) Can we learn to split well when/if we split? 5) Can we show love to those who leave? We have those traditions in our families, even if it takes a long time. 6) Are there alternative ways to deal with strong but opposing beliefs? ① For example, agreeing to disagree when remaining together in Jesus' love. An example was given from a prior congregation – discernment ended this way and was powerful, lasted a long time together. Or ② remain in relationship even after a separation or ③ while going through numbers one and two on the five-step discernment process, could relationships be strengthened? If make it through the steps, MLT's work may become easier, because these may build relationship. Folks were affirming of this part of the discernment process. 7) The six practices don't include communion (but is in a footnote). This is very important to us as a group, especially when folks disagree. Worshipping together is important in this instance through communion especially. \*\*\*We would like to see baptism, communion, and footwashing as more than a footnote in this part of the document because they are so important and transforming. 8) This is an ambitious process (discernment). Is it feasible? We appreciate that something is spelled out, though, even if it is complex. 9) \*\*\*Number six (p4) Could "reconciliation" be included to broaden the idea of forgiveness to include other folks.

Table #3 – 1) Not enough outward focus – we can't wait for the world to come to us. 2) Appreciate the focus on peacemaking / forgiveness to brother / sister / neighbor / enemy. 3) Appreciate naming basic elements of worshipping God – prayer, fasting, stuff central to us interacting with each other and reaching out to others. 4) Studying Bible with neighbors / strangers – reaching out opportunities. 5) Expand cultural norms – practice what Bible says – miracles / signs / wonders / changes in behavior – allows for transformation. 6) Appears to be a well thought-out, comprehensive God-led discernment process that actually has a conclusion statement in regard to handling "irreconcilable differences." 7) Shows accountability – don't walk by yourself. 8) Listen to others as we work together. 9) Number three articulate new belief – listen to others – listen carefully to all parties. 10) Goal is not termination of relationship but that everything possible has been done to try and not let that happen.

Table #4 – 1) We have to be in conversation. 2) We have to hear each other. 3) We need to extend grace when we disagree. 4) Holy Spirit is at work in all – speaks differently to different people. 5) Concern:

Doesn't include other congregations. MLT shouldn't just engage congregation, but congregations to each other.

Table #5 – 1) Question about practice number five (Bible study with neighbors/strangers) – How does this work on a practical level? Coercive? Wording seems awkward. Maybe "watch for opportunity" (maybe inviting to a "deeper relationship with Jesus"). Do we do this with "strangers"? 2) (p.5) Question about number five discernment – Who is a "qualified teacher"? Needs defined and clarified. 3) (p.5) Should conference ever decide that a congregation should not be a part of conference? But how far can we go? Sometimes we may need to separate. 4) How does it look to the outside world when we differ in some beliefs and practices?

Table #6 – 1) Where is the line between individual practices and congregational practices – meaning can we name individuals' practices as part of the mission of the congregation? 2) Biblically – How do we get to the point where a liberal can respectfully summarize a particular belief of a conservative (and vice versa) and continue in relationship without agreement? 3) The existence of the process is helpful, as opposed to no process. What happens if it doesn't go well? Unfortunately puts a lot on the MLT. 4) Can there be something included in case a congregation can't agree to everything in the process? 5) What happens if a congregation feels so strong about their practice that they aren't willing to engage in the process? 6) Are individual congregations (i.e. that fully support the discernment process) willing to be called to help discern?

Table #7 – 1) Broader church? 2) Critical issues? 3) Process feels top-down. We as conference are going to "tell you." (Difference of opinion at our table.) (MLT has a lot of power.)

Table #8 – 1) We processed a question for clarification of wording of two options at the end of discernment process. 2) The process isn't clear on role(s) of second congregation and MLT. 3) Challenge: discernment built on relationship – difficult for remote churches. 4) Notice: seems to shift responsibility from MCT to MLT.

Table #9 – 1) Practice number 5 – who is meant by neighbor / strangers? 2) How would we go about this? 3) What does it mean by qualified teacher? 4) Who decides / initiates this process? 5) What would this process actually look like? 6) Lot's of time / energy!! 7) What is overarching goal? Is it reconciliation or punitive? Sense of mutual learning, with no preconceived outcome? 8) Where does power of decision reside? 9) Page five – outcomes of discernment – desire the last two steps used as last resort.

### **Discussion: Covenanting Together**

Table #1 – 1) QUESTION: How many congregations are in the "uninvolved" category? Likely similar to what some congregations do already. Periodic renewal makes sense to us. Keeps current. We like pairing congregations – a new one with an old one. QUESTION: Difference between congregation and pastor signing on? Could have two sign-ons – one for pastors and one for congregations. Also, p6 could move "attend Annual Sessions" to the congregation section. Timing – if too frequent, loses its value. Two years? Five years? Could this be similar to, in history, that missing communion too many times caused a person to lose church membership. Could do as part of Annual Sessions, as part of joint worship. What is the benefit of it? (Or loss, if don't sign on?) And who upholds this, and how? Who follows up with congregations? Would we move into this quickly? Grace period? Who would police this? Could take a lot of time. What about congregations who want to be involved but don't have funds to give? Can they be involved in other ways? (We are reading this as yes, this would be OK.) Working with others in the congregations is a nice and important thing. QUESTION: Is there a way to tie in work with

the great Church (not just Menno)? Could conference encourage pastors and congregations to have these connections too? Same for inter-conference relationships if in same geographic location. Where are world-wide, denomination-wide priorities in this document? We would like to see that in some form here. Could include pairing pastors for “continuing ed” groups (from L.E.T.) or “pastoral coach” ideas.

Table #2 – 1) Reasonable expectations for congregational commitment. 2) Appreciate efforts to enhance connections. 3) Offers an opportunity for congregations to give ideas for ministry/growth/nurture. 4) We appreciate the newsletter/websites that assist communication amongst conference congregations. 5) Should it include a financial commitment? 6) Many positives happen during conference activities.

Table #3 – Discussing options. 1) Other groups teachers, sign contracts, pay dues, receive services. Why not conference? 2) Thinks covenant good idea, not however financial support. 3) The document makes sense, if you claim to be part of it, you should participate. 4) Membership commitment, relationship. 5) God tells us to give to His work. 6) Invite – do not single out – invite all to participate. 7) Hopefully do with personal relationships / in order for conference to hold pastors accountable, must have connections. 8) Conference loses out when all are not represented. Those who not attend don’t value the larger church. How do we make it financially affordable? 9) Could more affluent congregations with larger ministry teams be willing to act as a conference representative to reach out to the isolated congregations that do not send representative to conferences, etc.?

Table #4 – 1) Signing a covenant forces you to think about who and what you are and want to commit to. Builds relationship with others. Formalized way to connect or disconnect. 2) Every two years is too often. Congregations are slow to connect. Church attendance is changing – Is signing the covenant a downside? Too much of “us and them.” Creates confusion and anxiety.

Table #5 – 1) Like idea of partnering with another congregation – both those in proximity and those large distances away. 2) Really affirm the idea of strengthening relationships and covenant. 3) Support idea of "covenant" in the sense that it invites participation and reminds us of that. 4) As it is now, we don't really know what is happening in other conference congregations. We need to strengthen relationships. 5) Should we address dual-conference congregations? 6) Need to clarify whether "responsibilities" under "pastors" are requirements.

Table #6 – 1) General affirmation of this covenant. 2) Like the inter-congregational emphasis. 3) In Elkhart County pastors are already connecting. 4) In other areas or some groups (e.g. racial) pastors also have full time jobs outside of pastoring. 5) Affinity groups by congregation or pastor is and will be helpful. 6) Some pastors (focusing on common beliefs, goals) need to connect across denominational lines. 7) Pastors would benefit from having a congregational coach (formerly overseer). 8) Inter-Anabaptist support (esp. where there are not large Menno populations). 9) Pulpit exchange should fall under congregational list – the congregational would benefit from and be challenged by such an exchange (e.g. it can be intercultural exchange). 10) Signifi. 11) If congregations choose not to "sign on" to the covenant, does that mean they are no longer a part of the conference? 12) Renewal every two years might be good enough, but maybe three to four years would be better.

Table #7 – 1) Shift from static to dynamic – re-covenant feeds into that. 2) Is this punitive or welcoming? Some want punitive; some want welcoming. 3) Looking outward instead of inward. 4) Would like to see covenant reflecting earlier part of document (practices). 5) Draft is way too long. Congregations are where lifeblood is. 6) Language of draft doesn't fit; needs cohesive thesis.

Table #8 – 1) Sounds sort of voluntary and sort of mandatory. What do you do if don't feel comfortable signing? 2) Affirm having / building ownership. 3) Some logistical issues especially for remote (isolated)

churches (the closest church geographically may not be best fit). 4) Regarding pastors: would it be OK to commit to meet with other pastors but who aren't part of IN-MI Conference if geography is an issue? 5) Overarching challenge: to build relationships. 6) Overarching joy: "We're not alone," support and networking. 7) Will this fix the problem? How to articulate "the problem." 8) One person feels kind of "top down." Idea in response: try to word it so the covenant is between / with other congregations (vs. conference) and then together we form a "community of congregations."

Table #9 – 1) We do this in our congregation – make covenant important / meaningful / in person. 2) Opportunity for congregation to renew sense of purpose. 3) Movement toward intentionality – expectation. Not huge process each time. Coordinate with church budget process. 4) Need teaching on biblical covenant. 5) Timing of covenant? First need quite a bit of discernment, then maybe when have significant changes. 6) Three to five years adds importance – and should look at vision at these intervals. 7) Some appeal for one year but may lose significance. 8) Have everyone speak to why signing – could be very inspiring. 9) Will need follow-up if haven't signed. Administrative time needed. 10) Maybe do at pastor cluster meetings. 11) Congregations having fun? VBS, several congregations slip and slide, picnic in summer. 12) Like affinity groups for pastors. 13) Pastors in covenant: instead of attending area council "every time meet" to "on regular basis." 14) See as a menu and encouraged in area councils. 15) Need for relational intentionality and accountability – modeling strong relationships. 16) New emphasis on relationship. 17) Area councils can play major role in this caring accountability. 18) Sharing resources / encouragement across congregations. 19) Four churches coming together to plant a new church?

### **Discussion: Breadth of Variance**

Table #1 – 1) What is or should be the role of MCUSA and conference – to make policies or to gather as a larger body - allowing congregations to work out their own policies/Beliefs on some topics? 2) Do any of these three items put us at variance with MCUSA documents? (Per Dan, we don't think so, although that could change as MCUSA clarifies their two resolutions from Kansas City, and IN-MI is not trying to push the envelope.) 3) This assumes that pastors know what their congregations think. And also puts it in the hands of the discernment process. 4) This document doesn't differentiate between LGBT identity and practice. 5) What about other sexual practices? Are we OK advocating for multiple partners, open marriages, etc.? This document doesn't address questions of covenant even within heterosexual relationships. 6) We don't do a good job of addressing sexuality in general. FEEDBACK: It seems that this allows congregations to hold membership and conference to hold credentialing. We wonder if number one is needed. To some of us, number one seems to not differentiate between people intentionally being sinful and those who are trying to change from sins (e.g. all of us, since we have all sinned). For some of us, number one makes two "classes" of citizens in the church, but some of us think that being able to be a member should mean that one is also able to be a credentialed leader. Omitting number one may eliminate some of these concerns.

Table #2 – 1) How is this different than what we currently do? 2) Variance produces anxiety; anxiety produces discomfort; discomfort causes people to leave. 3) We would not tolerate an adulterous member to continue an openly adulterous relationship and welcome leadership / membership / responsibility in a congregation.

Table #3 – 1) Questioning number two: If you already accept a same-sex couple into membership, can you then require a discernment process? Number 1 – does this include in same-sex relationship? Numbers two and three should have to go into a discernment process – us not MCUSA. What does MCUSA practice mean? MCUSA doesn't credential people. MCUSA changes Confession of Faith, not practice? Number 3 – just about credentials. Would prefer MCUSA not be mentioned. Doesn't practice credentialing. What they are saying is we should abide by MCUSA standards. This can't change

overnight. We believe they are loved even in disagreement. We are in relationship not because of one issue. 2) Relationships are a congregational decision. Discussion about marriages with multiple spouses from foreign countries.

Table #4 – Affirm: Believe homosexuality is sin, but would welcome the person. Agreement in welcoming but not in leadership. Jesus called us to love. LGBT – no issue, but marriage should not be allowed. Let congregations decide – agreement shared.

Table #5 – 1) Affirm with a caveat – fear that if we draw lines right now, we may regret it (but don't think this is doing that). 2) Are we moving away from a commitment to monogamy. We need to make this clear. 3) Hard to accept number one, hesitant. This issue of receiving as members goes contrary to how we understand marriage. 4) Ready to accept this as written. 5) How can we be one body? 6) Our table was mixed in regards to accepting number one: three comfortable with it as written, two opposed to it, one can affirm it with reservations.

Table #6 – 1) Affirmation for thought number one by some, but not all. 2) Can a credentialed pastor perform a wedding for LGBT couple when the couple does not and will not be a part / member of a conference church? Can we create a discernment process for this situation? Or the situation when a credentialed pastor is not performing the wedding on behalf of the congregation? 3) Are we saying we are done censuring people / congregations? 4) Group is happy to see something /these thoughts in writing. 5) Conservatives and liberals in our group passionately support the idea of being in relationship across our differences in this area (LGBT). 6) Some concern regarding number three and our dependence on MCUSA practices. We should be able to change regardless of what happens at MCUSA level. 7) We need to know what the critical issues are because that influences response to the three thoughts. There is a "gray" in every congregation.

Table #7 – 1) Several different viewpoints. 2) Five can support, two not support. Will lose more churches.

Table #8 – 1) One person likes how it's written up. Can see how some congregations this wouldn't be an issue, while others is a big issue. 2) One person personally OK with number one (but still has questions about what "membership" means. 3) Is number one contrary to denominational guidelines? 4) Feeling tension between membership guidelines vs. forbearance. 5) Affirms rest of vision doc helps us get unstuck; but this variance doc still feels like we're stuck between two "visions." Feels this is moving toward acceptance of LGBT. 6) This feels "middle of the road." Would be better to make a decision one way or the other. Otherwise keep beating each other up. 7) There were seven churches represented at this table. Two voiced their church most likely wouldn't like this direction (I guess a third in that camp). Two of the seven are formally or informally "welcoming," and two others I guess are "middle."

Table #9 – 1) "My congregation is moving toward welcoming to come – membership not sure," but seem OK with language as is for congregation localized decisions. 2) Important learning that come from the dialogue. Strong feelings both sides – some congregations could NOT affirm this statement. Reiterate Leadership Polity guidelines here. 3) "If MCUSA made change my congregation would leave." We lump MCUSA and conference together in these situations.