

# Youth & Young Adult Delegate Proposal

## Embracing the Future with Youth Participation

Dear Congregation of Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference,

We stand at a pivotal moment in the life of our conference, one that invites us to embrace the energy, insights, and spirit of our youth. This moment is underscored by the increasingly noticeable trend of graying heads at Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference (IMMC) gatherings. While this reflects the wisdom and experience of our long-standing members, it also highlights the urgent need for younger voices and perspectives in our midst.

This need was vividly illustrated by the positive impact of youth delegates at the Mennonite Church USA (MCUSA) convention this past summer. Their engagement and fresh perspectives were not only refreshing but also pivotal in key discussions. Most notably, their passionate and thoughtful contributions played a significant role in influencing the decision to continue meeting biannually. This decision, rooted in a desire to maintain strong community ties and ongoing dialogue, was a testament to their commitment to the church and its future.

With great enthusiasm, we present a proposal to amend our conference constitution bylaws, integrating youth delegates (aged 16-25) into the heart of our decision-making processes. This initiative marks a significant step toward fostering intergenerational dialogue and reinforcing the sense of belonging and purpose among our younger members. By doing so, we ensure that the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference remains a vibrant, dynamic, and inclusive community, capable of evolving and growing with each generation.

## What This Means for Our Conference

- **Inclusive Representation:** The inclusion of youth delegates in conference activities ensures that their voices are not only heard but also have an impact.
- **Empowerment and Engagement:** By actively participating as delegates, our youth will gain valuable experience and contribute meaningfully to our collective journey.
- **A Dynamic Future:** This change reflects our commitment to a vibrant and evolving community where every member plays a role in shaping our path forward.

## How to Get Involved

1. Understand the Proposal and Vote:
  - **Pre-Spring Summit (Now to Early March):** Familiarize yourself with the key aspects of the proposal, including the role and responsibilities of youth delegates. Detailed information and resources will be provided to ensure all members are well-informed.
  - **March 9 & 16, Spring Summit:** Be prepared to vote on this proposal. This vote is crucial in shaping the future involvement of our youth in the conference.
2. Participate in Post-Vote Discussions, Planning, Support, and Mentorship (March to May):
  - Engage in post-vote congregational discussions to explore the benefits and implications of this initiative. These discussions will serve to refine our approach and address any concerns from the congregation.
  - Develop a strategy for the selection and mentoring of youth delegates. This includes creating a nomination process, establishing criteria for youth delegate eligibility, and planning for their integration into the conference's activities.
  - Begin the process of nominating and selecting youth delegates. Encourage and support our youth as they consider these significant roles.
3. Implementation:
  - **June 7 and 8, Annual Sessions:** Officially welcome the first cohort of youth delegates. This will mark the beginning of their active participation and contribution to the conference's decision-making processes.

## Our Commitment to You

- **Clarity and Support:** To facilitate each phase of this transition smoothly, we commit to providing the following detailed information and resources:
  - **Informational Guide and FAQs:** Easy-to-understand guide and frequently asked questions (FAQs) documents that explain the role, responsibilities, and significance of youth delegates in the conference.
  - **Online Resources:** A dedicated section on the conference website with all relevant information, including digital copies of the guide and FAQs.
  - **Webinar:** Organize a webinar focusing on the importance of youth involvement in church leadership, the details of the amendment proposal, and the process of integrating youth delegates.
  - **Guidelines for Nominations:** Clear and detailed guidelines on how to nominate youth delegates, including eligibility criteria, the nomination process, and the selection methodology.
  - **Mentorship Program Outline:** A comprehensive outline of the mentorship program detailing how experienced delegates will support youth delegates, the objectives of the mentorship, and the expected outcomes.
  - **Communication Channels:** Establish dedicated communication channels, such as email newsletters or a private social media group, for ongoing updates and to address queries from the congregation.
- **Open Dialogue:** We welcome ongoing questions, insights, and feedback throughout this process, recognizing the importance of every voice in our community. Open forums and dedicated Q&A sessions will be organized to facilitate this dialogue.

## Proposed Bylaw Amendments

The highlighted sections below directly address the inclusion of youth and young adult delegates, specifying their representation, term lengths, and the intent to broaden inclusivity within the Conference Assembly. These amendments ensure the active participation and representation of a diverse age group, promoting intergenerational dialogue and decision-making within the Conference.

In order to make amendments to the Bylaws, delegates must receive notice 60 days in advance of a vote. This document was released on February 27, 2024. Assuming the delegates gathered for the Spring Summit are in agreement, an e-vote will be taken to make the proposed amendment. Delegates will be able to cast their votes from April 27 to May 4, 2024.

*Bylaw amendments are highlighted below ...*

### ARTICLE 5. CONFERENCE ASSEMBLY

Section 1. Role and Function. There shall be a Conference Assembly convened as the gathered units of Conference and representing all member congregations and Conference leaders. The Conference Assembly shall provide for mutual fellowship, accountability, worship, deliberation, and discernment. It shall review programs, establish policies, and select leaders as provided in these Bylaws and in harmony with the purposes for which the Conference was established.

#### Section 2. Voting Delegates.

A. Voting delegates to the Conference Assembly shall include the following:

1. All ordained and licensed ministers with active congregational assignments;
2. One (1) elder or comparable leader from each congregation;
3. One (1) delegate representing financial matters for each congregation;
4. One (1) additional delegate for each 150 members or fraction thereof from each congregation;
5. All members of the Conference Missional Leadership Team;
6. Any other Conference positions as designated in the Bylaws;
7. **Up to two (2) youth or young adult delegates aged between 16 and 25 from each congregation, reflecting the Conference's commitment to intergenerational dialogue and inclusion.**

B. If the congregation has a congregationally approved pastoral position that requires a ministry credential, and no one is currently named to that position, they may appoint an alternate from within the congregation with a ministry credential to serve until a credentialed person is named to the position.

- C. Delegates shall be members of sound faith and judgment with responsible congregational participation. Ideally, delegates shall be broadly representative of their congregation, including women and men, older and younger. **This inclusivity is further emphasized by the addition of youth and young adult delegates to ensure a broad spectrum of perspectives within the Conference Assembly.**
- D. **Each congregation shall determine the length of terms for delegates named under Paragraph A (2), (3), (4), and (7) above and may appoint alternates for the delegate positions. For youth and young adult delegates, the term shall be one year, with eligibility for renewal, to foster continuous engagement and representation of young voices in the Conference.**

*End of Bylaw Amendments*

### **Conclusion**

This proposal represents more than an amendment in bylaws; it is a reaffirmation of our faith in the younger generation. As we embark on this exciting journey together, let us celebrate the fresh perspectives and boundless potential that our youth bring to the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference.

With anticipation and hope,

Missional Leadership Team of the Indiana Michigan Mennonite Conference:

Steve Slagel (moderator)  
Becky Helmuth (moderator-elect)  
Duane Yoder (treasurer)  
Naomi Yoder (secretary)  
Rolando Sosa Granados (member-at-large)  
Joanne Gallardo (conference co-minister)  
Sharon Yoder (conference co-minister)