

**GENERAL SYNOD 2016
RESOLUTION**

Resolution Number A 140

Subject: Ecumenical Relationships – Anglican-Mennonite Dialogue

Moved By: The Rt. Rev. Bruce Myers

Seconded By: The Ven. Douglas Fenton

Be it resolved that this General Synod:

- welcome the establishment of a new bilateral dialogue with Mennonite Church Canada for a period of five years;
- direct the Faith, Worship, and Ministry Coordinating Committee, in consultation with Mennonite Church Canada, to determine the size, membership, and mandate of this dialogue.

Source: Faith, Worship, and Ministry Coordinating Committee

Submitted By: Faith, Worship and Ministry Coordinating Committee

Does this motion contain within it any financial implications? Yes **No financial implications**

If yes, has the General Synod Expenditures Committee considered the implications? Yes No

EXPLANATORY NOTE/BACKGROUND

One expression of Christianity with which our church has never engaged in formal conversation is the Mennonite tradition. This is despite the fact that the English Reformation and Anabaptism both emerged out of sixteenth-century Europe, and today many Canadian Anglicans and Mennonites live and work as neighbours.

Why Mennonites, and why now?

- The Anglican Church of Canada is in the process of acknowledging and adapting to a new context, one characterized by a diminishment of resources, influence, and status. No longer holding a privileged place in Canadian society, we exist as simply one religious option among others in a society that is increasingly embracing no religion at all.
- In contrast, Mennonites have often existed as a church on the margins, both historically and in the contemporary Canadian context. Their conviction that *conformity to Christ necessarily implies nonconformity to the world* has over the centuries put them in conflict with wider society and other churches, sometimes resulting in persecution. The Mennonite tradition's particular commitment to peace, justice, and non-violence frequently puts it at odds with the predominant culture, yet it remains a faithful and vibrant expression of the Christian faith.
- As the Anglican Church of Canada enters a new stage of its life, we ask if there is something we

can learn from our Mennonite sisters and brothers about living faithfully as disciples of Jesus on the margins of society, recognizing that “to live old patterns in this new reality trifles with the truth of our circumstances.”

An ecumenical ‘gift exchange’:

- Adopting the open and humble stance the receptive ecumenism method demands would allow us to ask our Mennonite brothers and sisters what we may have to learn from them about being a church in ‘exile.’ Mennonites have been attempting to live out their Christian faith outside the privileged confines of Christendom for their entire 500-year history. Are there gifts Anglicans can receive from Mennonites as we learn to move beyond being a church of the ‘empire’ or dominant power?
- The ecumenical gift exchange is mutual, and it would be for Mennonites to discern which gifts Anglicanism may have to offer their tradition. One possible area that has been mentioned by Mennonites is to explore would be the rich liturgical and sacramental life characteristic of Anglican Christianity, at a time when many Mennonites are seeking to reclaim a deeper understanding of these aspects of an ancient common Christian tradition.

The proposal:

- Our conversation partner in this proposed dialogue is Mennonite Church Canada. The largest organized expression of the Mennonite tradition in this country, it has 31,000 members in more than 225 congregations. It is a church with whom we already share ecumenical relationships as fellow members of the Canadian Council of Churches and KAIROS (through the Mennonite Central Committee).
- An initial and informal overture about initiating this dialogue has been positively received by Mennonite Church Canada’s Executive Director, Dr. Willard Metzger. We envision a face-to-face dialogue meeting once annually for a fixed period of approximately five years, with the possibility of virtual meetings in the interim. The dialogue would consist of five suitable representatives from each church, plus the support of a staff person from each denomination.
- Recognizing the need for good stewardship of our churches’ resources, we would explore creative ways for the dialogue to meet physically, including partnering Anglican and Mennonite institutions of higher learning found in the same city, such as in Winnipeg and Waterloo.
- If initial planning and approvals are put in place in the coming months, both churches could be in a position to formally launch this new bilateral ecumenical dialogue with motions at their respective national gatherings (the Anglican Church of Canada’s General Synod and Mennonite Church Canada’s Assembly), both of which meet in the summer of 2016.

PROCEDURE FOR ADOPTION (G)

In the normal course, an ordinary motion must be passed by a majority of the members of synod voting together.

Six members of General Synod may, prior to the question being put, require a vote by Orders, with a majority of each Order being necessary to pass.

If a question passes on a Vote by Orders, any six members (two from each of three different dioceses) may require a vote to be taken by dioceses. A motion passes if a majority of dioceses (or a tie) vote in favour.

Source: Section 4 of the Declaration of Principles and sections 18, 19 and 20 of the Rules of Order and Procedure