



**To: Congregational leaders of Mennonite Church USA**  
**From: Terry Shue, Director of Leadership Development**  
**Date: November 2, 2010**

Over the past number of months we, on the cabinet of Mennonite Church USA, have heard from a number of congregations with concerns about our upcoming convention, Pittsburgh 2011.

Conventions, in the life of the church, are an important and exciting time for all ages. It is a stirring experience, gathering with several thousand worshipers and seeing God's Spirit move among us. Yes, these times are highlights, but they can also be encounters with real life. Community life in the real world involves people—people who have differing perspectives on what it means to follow Jesus.

Most of you who attended the last Convention in Columbus were aware of groups petitioning to be acknowledged. Many of those efforts were done in respectful and appropriate ways, some of them were not. While we acknowledge the diversity which is present in the church today, we also acknowledge that there have always been various points of view which have stretched and sometimes strengthened the church.

One topic that creates division in the church today is the issue of human sexuality. We believe our sexuality is a gift from God and MC USA has discerned and affirmed the boundaries which accompany and sustain this gift which is one man and one woman for life in marriage.

At the same time these documents, "Saskatoon" and "Purdue," call on us to remain in conversation as a church on these very issues. The Executive Board has proposed a "Conversation Room" as a place to have healthy and helpful dialogue with those who choose to be a part of the conversation.

A skilled mediator will always be present when the room is open to help us grow as a community of faith in times of conflict. Rather than the world's model of angry voices yelling from the edges, we hope for a higher standard of love and respect as disciples of Jesus.

Those advocating varying views on this issue are not sanctioned by MC USA staff. But many of them are members of Mennonite congregations, brothers and sisters, who offer a word to the church at large which we must test with all the spiritual maturity available.

As has been the practice in the past, at Pittsburgh 2011 all formal presenters of workshops and organizations with booth space will agree to be in line with the teaching positions of MC USA. Though we do encourage conversations, we also appeal to a common sense of decency and community. Therefore we ask groups to refrain from advocacy targeting youth specifically about human sexuality. Our hope is that within youth groups and already existing relationships, young people can discuss these issues in a healthy way.

Through these other issues, may our unity as a church grow through humility, patience and gentleness with each other as the Spirit guides us. (Eph 4:2)

We look forward to seeing many of you in Pittsburgh this summer. If there are issues you would like to talk about further, feel free to contact me directly at [TerryS@MennoniteUSA.org](mailto:TerryS@MennoniteUSA.org).

Partners in the call,

**Terry W. Shue**  
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