

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Common Ground 2008, the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference Annual Meeting!

This is an exciting year for the delegates of PNMC as we meet to put flesh to the structural changes that complement the Vision Statement adopted by the Delegates in 2006. The Transition Team approved by the Delegates last year has worked diligently under the direction of Moderator Elect Dave Hockman-Wert, appointing an Operations Team (which will be the new Board) and a Personnel Committee, developing by-laws and a concept for passion based ministries.

We have heard and heeded the concerns of the Delegate Body who had instructed the Board to develop a balanced budget for the conference. We have been utilizing revolving funds to balance the budget for many years and we all realize that these funds will eventually run out. This year we are presenting to you one budget that is in two phases. The first phase runs from July 1, 2008 through January 31, 2009 and honors our commitments to present staff. The second phase of the budget is in our new budget year starting on February 1, 2009 through January 31, 2010. The budget will be presented to the delegates (and is also in this delegate book) on Friday with affirmation scheduled on Saturday. If you are one of those interested in the details of the budget, be sure to attend the Budget Seminar on Friday with Treasurer Don Bacher and Dave Hockman-Wert!

The second phase of the budget shows the staffing changes that we will be making in order to have the budget in balance. We will have a fulltime Executive Conference Minister who will be working with up to 10 District Pastors. These District Pastors will each relate to 3-4 nearby congregations and will have a small travel stipend. We are anticipating that the District Pastors will work ten hours per month. The District Pastors may be current or retired pastors or other respected elders who will be in close communication with their assigned congregations and the Executive Conference Minister. This model is also being used by other conferences in Mennonite Church USA. We are already working to begin identifying possible District Pastors.

In order to help smooth the transition, our two current Conference Ministers will be taking on new roles for the remainder of their terms. Victor Vargas and Sheldon Burkhalter will divide up the conference congregations between them following Duncan Smith's retirement from PNMC at the end of June. CIHAN is going to provide oversight to the Hispanic congregations so that Victor may be freed up to assist with the others.

Honoring the Structure and Vision Task Force's recommendation to make the Annual Meeting more interactive with more sharing, singing and celebrating, we will only be having two Delegate Sessions this year. We have moved a few of the things we normally do in the Delegate Sessions to either Worship or Celebration times. **But what this means is that, as a prepared delegate, you will have to be sure to carefully read the various reports of the Transition Team and its subcommittees as well as the budget so that you are up to speed and ready for discussion!**

I would also ask that you be in prayer for the PNMC's Annual Meeting, for your role as a delegate, and for those who have been doing the planning and are in leadership. Prayer for guidance from the Holy Spirit is our most important task!

I'll see you soon as we meet as "Fragile Pots and Ordinary Lives: Testifying to God's Grace" at Canby Grove Conference Center!

Shalom,
Charlotte Hardt
PNMC Moderator