



“How Did We Get Here?” by Matt Hamsher, Executive Director

How did the church that raised and nurtured me in the faith, called me into ministry, and provided so many mentors, friends, and meaningful interactions end up in a place that seems so alien to my own faith convictions and commitments? Observing the Mennonite Church USA special delegate session in Kansas City, Mo., from afar has led to a strange and surprising mix of shock, grief, and gratitude.

Shock, because prior to the meeting, I did not expect the “Resolution for Repentance and Transformation” to pass. Admittedly, I was not surprised that the resolution to retire the membership guidelines was affirmed, since it had never really been implemented in Mennonite Church USA and had basically been rendered meaningless with the passage of the “Forbearance in the Midst of Differences” resolution in Kansas City in 2015. Yet over and over, I (and others who left MC USA to join the Evana Network) heard that the theological identity of the church had not changed and that the commitment to forbearance simply made room for differing perspectives at the table. Affirmation of the “Resolution for Repentance and Transformation” does not end the practice of forbearance, but it indisputably changes the church’s theological commitments, directly calling for any future theological statements to reflect this change. And thus, the Mennonite church has effectively departed from two thousand years of orthodox Christian teaching, a plain sense reading of Scripture, and the majority witness of the global Anabaptist fellowship.

More surprising to me personally, has been the profound sense of grief that following the proceedings in Kansas City has evoked in me. Easiest to recognize, has been the awareness of the dilemma now facing many pastors and conference leaders of mixed, moderate, and conservative constituencies. And some of the sadness is certainly due to the widening gulf I feel between myself and beloved and respected friends and acquaintances still in MC USA.

However, the deepest sorrow lies in what appears to be a deepening captivity of the church to the politics, theology, and cultural norms of the Left. That is not to suggest that the Right is any better, but if Anabaptism is at its best when it embraces a holistic understanding of salvation, discipleship, and mission, then abandoning this holism to embrace either side of the current culture war is deeply troubling and problematic. This accommodation to the Left could be seen in the report on the denominational survey which reported among other things that only 18% of respondents indicated that evangelism was a very important faith commitment, the total commitment to General Conference polity as “the” Anabaptist understanding of polity, and the support of leaders and speakers for liberal assumptions and perspectives.



Yet amid shock and grief, there is also gratitude. I applaud the leadership and delegates of MC USA for their courage to enter into difficult conversations and not ignore them or postpone them. The discernment of the delegates brings clarity to the identity and direction of the denomination, giving individuals and congregations the information they need to determine their future

affiliation. Perhaps it is time for the conflict within the church to end so that healing and reconciliation can take place and so that all are free to work toward their vision of the Kingdom of God, freeing up time and resources for more positive endeavors.

Ohio “ReGenal” Worship Event

June 11-12, 2022

Kidron Mennonite Church, Kidron, OH

Saturday Worship at 6:30 PM
Saturday Ice Cream Social at 8:00 PM
Sunday AM Breakfast at 9:15 AM
Sunday AM Worship at 10:00 AM
Sunday Closing Session 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

Worship Duo “Marcus & Marketo” Win Regional Talent Show

Evana Network Board member and pastor Marketo Michel and her musical partner Marcus Clingaman have been singing together since 2017, brought together by shared experiences and a deep love of Jesus held in common. Just this May, they received the honor of winning Oaklawn’s Got Talent, a fundraising competition among Northern Indiana performing acts.



According to Marketo, it began with a literal dream. She says, “I had a dream that I was in my church and singing and practicing with these musicians, and I opened my eyes and the church was full of people soaking in the sound and soaking in the presence of the Lord.”

“How Did We Get Here?” (cont.)

The events of this past weekend have led some people to ask what all this might mean for the Evana Network and for clarification on what we believe, teach, and practice as a network. While we do not want to be a source of strife and division in MC USA or any other denomination, we do stand ready to receive congregations and individuals who might share our Spirit-led evangelical Anabaptist convictions and commitments. And it may be helpful to share what those convictions are, the rationale behind them, and how we are striving to be faithful to the Kingdom of God without falling into the polarizing forces present in the secular politics of our day.

While it is not humanly possible to ever find a church in which everyone shares the same exact beliefs and perspectives, our common life together and ability to share the gospel does depend upon some essential shared group convictions, starting with a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, a commitment to a high view of biblical authority, an expectation not just of acceptance, but redemption and transformation of our thoughts and actions by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the clear call to invite others to follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior as the deepest expression of our love for God and our love for others, including our enemies. As a result of these commitments, we are called to stand against personal sin and structural injustice, violence, consumerism, and individualism.

None of these should be surprising as they are consistent with what Menno Simons wrote about true evangelical faith five hundred years ago:

“True evangelical faith is of such a nature it cannot lie dormant, but spreads itself out in all kinds of

When she had that dream, she was an air traffic controller, including a stint in the Air Force. She left that career to focus on music, and in 2015 she put out a call via Craigslist for musicians “passionate about intimate worship.” Among the responses, she heard from Marcus Clingaman, another worship pastor who was looking for something more than regular congregational worship.

Over the next few years, Marcus and Marketo would host worship gatherings, experiencing songs from each of their experiences. Gatherings around other people’s songs morphed into writing and singing their own songs together. One of their shared bonds is that of being combat veterans. Both had experienced war within the first decade following 9/11, and has shaped their music towards a focus on helping others.

For more info, visit www.adorationworship.com. And for videos of the winning performance as well as other selections, visit <https://www.youtube.com/c/MarcusMarketo>

righteousness and fruits of love; it dies to flesh and blood; it destroys all lusts and forbidden desires; it seeks, serves and fears God in its inmost soul; it clothes the naked; it feeds the hungry; it comforts the sorrowful; it shelters the destitute; it aids and consoles the sad; it does good to those who harm it; it serves those that harm it; it prays for those who persecute it; it teaches, admonishes and judges us with the Word of the Lord; it seeks those who are lost; it binds up what is wounded; it heals the sick; it saves what is sound; it becomes all things to all people. The persecution, suffering and anguish that come to it for the sake of the Lord’s truth have become a glorious joy and comfort to it.”

Menno Simons on “Why I Do Not Cease Teaching and Writing,” (1539).

Support for Regional Pastor Training

Evana Network has an opportunity to provide a training and retreat event for Staff and Regional Pastors. Amplio, a national church consulting and coaching organization has agreed to facilitate a special gathering in late August 2022.

Since this is an above-budget event, we’re inviting individuals and congregations who would like to contribute to the ongoing work of Evana, to consider helping underwrite our time together. We need around \$5,000 for more than 12 people to spent 3 days together in central Michigan. The rest of the costs are generously underwritten by Amplio and their donors.

Please consider clicking “Donate” on EvanaNetwork.org or send a contribution via mail.