

Resolution adopted by IMC delegates February 15, 2020.

Illinois Mennonite Conference (IMC) is a network of churches, and a member conference of Mennonite Church USA (MCUSA). We are called to continually engage and discern faith and life issues together. *Like the Christ-followers who gathered in Jerusalem in Acts 15, we are called to unity, to engagement with each other, and to be a living witness to the reconciling power of the Good News.*

*IMC member congregations and leaders are called to a renewed forbearance¹ with each other, with no expiration date attached. This active forbearance listens to others, looks for common affirmations of faith², and works to **understand how we each arrived at positions where we differ**. Also, member congregations and leaders are asked to **commit to a year of study**, to hear Scripture and the Spirit from each other's perspective, to explore areas of common ground, and understand positions with which we disagree.*

IMC, as a member conference of MCUSA, credentials persons discerned and called by member congregations for leadership. IMC will seek to demonstrate mutual accommodation and forbearance toward both viewpoints by following these practices:

1. Local congregations have the freedom and responsibility to discern criteria for membership and participation in their congregations.
2. Local congregations have the freedom and responsibility to discern the specific responsibilities and privileges of their pastoral office concerning same sex marriage. Pastors may officiate same sex weddings with the affirmation of their congregations and pastors may decline to officiate same sex weddings. *The Church Life Team will engage in discussion with congregations and pastors who are considering whether or not to host or officiate same sex weddings. A review of credentials will occur if a pastor may have acted outside of congregational discernment and support.*
3. *In the spirit of forbearance, during this interim period of listening and study, **IMC will neither remove nor confer credentials to pastors in same sex marriages.***

These practices seek to demonstrate mutual accommodation and mutual forbearance between conflicting convictions among IMC churches in relation to same sex marriage. *The proposals included above commit IMC, and its member congregations and leaders, to active listening and learning together, in expectant prayer that God's Spirit will show us a way forward that demonstrates God's work among us.*

If we do this, "...the watching world may see a church that cares deeply about one another and has more to bind it together than its agreement about this one issue — and would need more than disagreement on this one issue to tear us apart."¹

Our hope and prayer is that we will gain a trust and understanding of each other that will enable us to continue in fellowship and in our common calling to the mission of God in our communities.

¹Mennonite Church USA (2015): Resolution: Forbearance in the Midst of Differences

²Chuck Neufeld (2014): Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in IMC