

Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference

Mission Policy

Reviewed by Executive Committee on 1/4/06
Affirmed by the Conference Board on 4/29/06
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In keeping with several previous delegate actions, and policy statements¹, it is the policy of the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference (PSMC) that:

I. The PSMC has affirmed Shalom Ministries/Center for Anabaptist Leadership (CAL) as the primary mission and training agency of the PSMC.

- a. Shalom Ministries, and its ministry units, including CAL, provide the PSMC with assistance in developing conference-based mission theology and strategy, implementation of that theology and strategy, expanding extension services for pastoral, theological, and missiological education, and representing the PSMC in conversations with other mission organizations.
- b. The PSMC provides Shalom Ministries with financial resources to accomplish these mission-related activities, including, but not limited to:
 - i. Partial funding for the conjoint appointment of the CAL Executive Director and the PSMC Southern California Regional Conference Minister, who serves as Conference Mission Team Leader.
 - ii. Financial support for maintaining the physical PSMC offices in conjunction with the Shalom Ministries/CAL offices in Pasadena, CA, and,
 - iii. Securing administrative services from the Shalom Ministries/CAL administrative and support staff
- c. The PSMC and Shalom Ministries Boards of Directors develop the common strategic intent and clarify issues of accountability as they arise. The Shalom Ministries Board of Directors governs CAL staff and operations, as well as operations of other units related to Shalom Ministries. The PSMC Board and the Shalom Ministries Board each supervise the conjoint position of CAL Executive Director and Southern California Regional Conference Minister. The PSMC Gift Discernment Committee and Board of Directors collaborate to nominate three (3) persons to serve on the twelve- (12) member Shalom Ministries Board of Directors.

2. The PSMC has created the Conference Mission Team (CMT) to coordinate the mission strategy of the PSMC.

- a. The CMT is comprised of staff from Shalom Ministries/CAL, the PSMC Regional Conference Ministers, a liaison(s) from Mennonite Mission Network, interested mission partners (e.g., West Coast Mennonite Central Committee), interested members of the PSMC Board of Directors, and other invitees.
- b. Within the confines of the PSMC Long Range Plan, and the PSMC Income and Expense Budget, and with the oversight of the PSMC Board of Directors, the CMT is responsible for refining and implementing mission theology and strategy within and through the PSMC.

¹ This document replaces PSMC Policies #2000-21 (as adopted by the PSMC Board of Directors on February 4, 2000) and # 2001-25 (as adopted by the PSMC Board of Directors on June 22, 2001), and expresses as Conference Policy, the PSMC Delegate Assembly actions of June 21, 1997 (Global Mission), June 24, 2000 (Conference Mission Team), and February 5, 2000/June 21, 2003 (PSMC Covenant with Shalom Ministries/Center for Anabaptist Leadership)

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3. The PSMC understands itself as a participant in the Global Mission enterprise.

- a. The PSMC, with the endorsements of the former General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church Delegate Bodies has defined itself as living, “in the midst of a global mission field as well as being a launching pad for global mission.”²
- b. The PSMC is committed to developing partnerships among its member congregations, and with various Mennonite churchwide agencies and area conferences to expand:
 - i. The number of persons being sent into cross-cultural mission and service assignments and,
 - ii. The number of ethnic groups being reached by partnerships which include the PSMC as a participant.

4. The PSMC places a high value on empowering leadership for grassroots Church Planting

- a. **THE VISION:** The PSMC seeks to mobilize God’s resources within the conference and other Anabaptist bodies in helping to fulfill the Great Commission by empowering leaders to plant new churches in Arizona, California, Nevada, and Hawaii, as well as in other places which seem good to us, our partners, and the Holy Spirit
- b. **GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHURCH PLANTING**³
 - i. We are committed to responsible pluralism. A given geographic area may have more than one Anabaptist-Mennonite group ministering within it, and we welcome all Anabaptist-Mennonite bodies to express a portion of their commitment to the Great Commission by planting new churches within Arizona, California, Nevada, and Hawaii.
 - ii. We are committed to mutual respect. Any Anabaptist-Mennonite body seeking to plant new churches where there are already other Anabaptist-Mennonite bodies at work is invited to consult with the leadership of those bodies with an attitude of respect. We assume that a dense population may more reasonably allow different groups to be closer together.
 - iii. We are committed to unity within diversity. There is an intrinsic unity of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ. There is legitimacy for diverse structural and theological distinctiveness within the Anabaptist-Mennonite family of cooperation.
 - iv. We are committed to a team spirit. Workers from different participating bodies serving in a given locality are encouraged to arrange for communication and fellowship, in order to create a team spirit within the Anabaptist-Mennonite family of cooperation.
 - v. We are committed to sharing resources. Each Anabaptist-Mennonite body participating in church planting within an area is invited to make their resources

² See “Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference Global Mission Resolution”, affirmed by the PSMC Delegate Action on June 21, 1997. This Resolution was also affirmed by GCMC Delegate Action at Winnipeg ‘97, and MC Delegate Action at Orlando ‘97

³ These General Principles have been adapted from the book, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations*, by Stuart Murray (Herald Press: 2001)

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- available to support evangelistic and church planting efforts, giving priority to areas or groups where there is no resident gospel witness.
- vi. We are committed to common planning. Anabaptist-Mennonite bodies seeking to plant churches within the same locality should periodically pray and plan together, and share those plans with one another. Every effort should be made to practice reconciliation as needed between Anabaptist-Mennonite groups, in a manner consistent with Matthew 18.15-17, and I Corinthians 6.1-8.
 - vii. We are committed to the congregation as God's mission agency. The centrality of local congregational life and witness is emphasized, while the supportive ministry of parachurch and denominational organizations is recognized. Ongoing consultation between these groups is assumed.
- c. **PSMC Church Planting Guidelines:** We believe God is pleased when the PSMC releases the missional capacity of our congregations to grow leaders who plant new congregations. In order to be effective stewards of the generosity of God, and the limited human and financial resources available within the PSMC, we shall work in the following ways:
- i. The PSMC makes training, coaching, and consulting resources to equip church planters available via a covenant relationship with the Center for Anabaptist Leadership.
 - ii. As of July 1, 2001, every PSMC church planter should be a graduate of the Center for Anabaptist Leadership's Critical Foundations training for church planters, evangelists, and leaders new to the Anabaptist-Mennonite family. Church Planters will complete a business plan for their church planting project to be reviewed and approved by the Conference Minister for the region in which the church is to be planted. After July 1, 2001, no church planting project shall receive PSMC endorsement for any funding (grants or loans) without the lead church planter having graduated from the Critical Foundations training.
 - iii. As of July 1, 2001, every PSMC church planter having graduated from Critical Foundations and presented an approved business plan shall be assigned a coach/mentor (in Southern California, a District Elder) who will work to encourage that congregation toward a full, participatory membership (including financial support) in the PSMC.
 - iv. It is the policy of the PSMC for new church plants to be financially self-sustaining from the beginning, and therefore the PSMC does not provide financial subsidy for new church development. Funding, in the form of a one-time startup grant (in the range of \$5,000 -- \$10,000) **may** be available, contingent on available resources, partner funding possibilities, and demonstrated need as presented in the church planting business plan.
- d. **Cooperative Church Planting in Arizona, California, Nevada, and Hawaii**
- i. We believe God is pleased when Anabaptist-Mennonite groups across the United States and around the world initiate church planting ventures in Arizona, California, Nevada, and Hawaii. We invite all members of the Body of Christ who understand themselves to be within the Anabaptist-Mennonite family of faith to subscribe to the above Statement of Seven General Principles.

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- ii. We further invite our brother and sister church planting leaders to join the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference Mission Team at occasional consultations on the state of church planting in the Pacific Southwest. The consultation would meet for the purpose of intercessory prayer, team building, common planning, and mutual vision casting. The CMT Leader will be responsible for discerning interest and sending letters of invitation to other Anabaptist-Mennonite church planting leaders with known interest in the Pacific Southwest.
- e. **Joint Venture Church Planting in Arizona, California, Nevada, and Hawaii**
 - i. We believe God is pleased when the PSMC and other Anabaptist-related groups across the United States and around the world can create joint ventures for church planting. We invite other Anabaptist-related groups to select and send personnel for church planting as they have capacity to do so, and to maintain ultimate financial responsibility for such personnel.
 - ii. The PSMC will bring to joint ventures the provision for pastoral oversight by means of the Conference Minister staff and the coaching network. The PSMC will invite the church planter and emerging congregation to participate fully in the life of the PSMC. The PSMC will make training, coaching, and consulting resources for church planting available through the Center for Anabaptist Leadership. The PSMC will offer ministerial credentialing according to existing conference polity.
 - iii. We ask that congregations birthed by means of this process be dual members of the PSMC and the sending conference, with attendant privileges and responsibilities. Whenever dual membership for a church plant between two area conferences within Mennonite Church USA may be deemed as inconsistent with the membership guidelines of MC-USA, we ask that any joint venture between two MC-USA area conferences taking place in Arizona, California, Nevada and Hawaii become members solely of PSMC, and maintain a fraternal relationship with the other MC-USA area conference. Likewise, any joint venture taking place in the United States outside the four previously mentioned states will be asked to join the other area conference in the joint venture, and maintain a fraternal relationship with the PSMC.