

An Open Letter from Stanley Green with regard to his disinvitation from a role with MWC

Nov. 14, 2025

A brouhaha such has erupted over my being “disinvited” from a role by Mennonite World Conference (MWC) over concerns that my being a Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) member proves the point that the worst exigencies always happen at the most untimely moments (I am on sabbatical till mid-January).

Since, however, none of those providing coverage in my absence are well placed to respond to the issues raised by the letter from MC USA to the MWC (12 Nov. 2025), I will forgo my commitment to not be drawn back into work during the sabbatical period.

I feel it would be appropriate to make my response via this open letter which I share with any interested audience.

I thank MC USA leadership for the clarity with which they expressed their position and concern. It is a position that I affirm, along with the accompanying sentiments expressed in their letter regarding MC USA’s commitment to fellowship and collaboration with sister communions in the MWC. Their posture is rooted in the common commitment with other MWC communions to the “Shared Convictions” statement of the MWC. These convictions have served us well for many years now as a basis for cohesion and fellowship, allowing for unity in essentials and diversity and nuance on other contested particulars. Furthermore, in recent times, I, and thousands of others around the world, have found particularly compelling the articulation by Palmer Becker of the essence of Anabaptist identity and witness: Jesus is the center of our faith, community is the center of our life and reconciliation is the center of our work/mission. I presume that all MWC affiliated churches would affirm the centrality of Jesus in our life and witness. The differences among us are not about whether Jesus is the key to our faith and spirituality. We often differ on the aspects of Jesus’ ministry we choose to accent and emulate.

Important in my conversion that led to me becoming Mennonite in identity and conviction was the Anabaptist embrace of Jesus in the fullness of his teaching, ministry and witness. It is interesting that other two points by Becker address dimensions of our unity discovered in our solidarity in community and our pursuit of reconciliation.

In my current role I minister with churches who differently accent what is primary in our commitment and mission. The churches of the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference reflect a rich diversity of faith and conviction. Some of our churches believe evangelism requiring repentance, transformation and reorientation as the primary work of the disciplined community. Everything else is regarded as secondary, a distraction even or a tool to be used to accomplish the goal of personal transformation. Others are drawn to the extravagant welcome by Jesus to all people that make the imperatives of justice and inclusion of all who desire to be a part of God’s family through him as highlighted in his own ministry charter (Luke 4:16-21); his own clarification of the marks by which his ministry should be evaluated (Luke 7:22) and his listing of criteria that will be the basis of our judgment. To these should be added Mary’s Magnificat

Jesus' relentless solidarity and seeking out the despised, rejected and ignored in the face of the hierarchy of value assigned by both Roman and Jewish societies. Jesus announced a new ordering of society (which he called the kin-dom of God which centered the marginalized, dignified the devalued and shared with the destitute.

I eagerly affirm the different accents upheld by the diverse parts of our community in the Pacific Southwest. I find myself in lament, however, when either of these parts of our body chooses to derogate the witness of the other and adopt an either/or reductionist posture vis-a-vis Jesus' example. Jesus models for us a sharing of God's extravagant love and boundless welcome for all people in word or deed.

Thankfully, after the 2019 adoption by the PSMC of its own version of a Forbearance statement, congregations here have listened respectfully to each other, discerned faithfulness carefully together and separately, and as a consequence have happily engaged with each other in fellowship that is mutually beneficial. As we learn to forbear, I have witnessed a genuine walking with each other in the way of humility rather than a brash dismissal of the other's perspective and interpretation of the biblical text. We do not share unanimity of interpretation, but we do take seriously each other's commitment to follow Jesus.

I was, to be sure, saddened by the decision to withdraw the invitation to me to serve as MWC Regional Representative for North America. I had served MWC in a volunteer capacity in the past and appreciated the connections I made with leaders from different contexts and differing perspectives from around the world. I was looking forward to do so again in my new half-time role.

I affirm the expression of concern that originated with MC USA leadership. I must state very clearly that I was informed after the fact of the letter sent. In no way did I request or cajole MC USA leadership to make any expression of how this affected me. I am, nevertheless, grateful for their concern. Moreover, I am comforted that, at least in my perception, this imbroglio is not primarily about me. As I understand it, the MC USA concern revolves around an understanding that the MWC decision seems to indulge a confounding misconception that reduces MC USA members to single-issue agenda. Reducing MC USA members to a single focus and passion is unfortunate and unfair.

I have served alongside pastors and congregations in the PSMC who care deeply about sharing God's love through Jesus in its fullest expression including: affirming the full value and dignity of every person; inviting repentance and an openness to the Holy Spirit's transformation that aligns us with God's purposes in the world, rather than conformity with the hierarchy of the world that accords value which is assigned to persons differently based on wealth, education, power and race/culture or other externals; encouraging compassion and care for the marginalized and justice for the downtrodden and oppressed; seeking healing for those who are shackled by unhealthy beliefs, who are victims of trauma or systemic exclusion from access to healthcare; and, demonstrating empathy and solidarity with those facing suffering, struggle or rejection.

The foregoing testimony to what I have witnessed leaves me deeply saddened when it appears, to me at least, that we allow ourselves to accommodate attempts to create a global

fellowship, or communions, which insist on uniformity of interpretation and conviction beyond the essentials which affirm in the Shared Convictions when we become a part of the MWC. I believe with my whole heart that diversity is the essence of God's creative energies. I also believe that respect, forbearance and humility in the face of our limitations in comprehending the vast mystery of God is the essence of what should guide the church's witness and way in the world.

Had I been appointed to the role, these are the parameters that would have shaped my ministry in the role.

Stanley W. Green