

April 17, 2020

Dear Leadership Team,

As District Moderator 2020 I've been wondering about our meeting time for District Conference in McPherson, Kansas. The global surge of Covid 19 now considered a pandemic is quite concerning. At this present time we in Colorado we are told to stay home, wear masks in public and to self-quarantine if we show symptoms of this novel coronavirus. Schools are closed. We have been holding all our church gatherings in a virtual space over the Zoom platform.

To provide discernment about the wisdom of actually meeting for District Conference in July, a group of seven persons met today. The three different constituencies, who provide space, food, lodging, and leadership, were represented to discuss meeting in July. McPherson College, McPherson Church of the Brethren, and Western Plains District leadership and planning representatives met to discuss concerns, needs, and interests regarding our in-person District Conference.

Each representative spoke to their respective institution's responsibilities. Each group representative has strong concerns about the logistics and safety of all attendees to District Conference in McPherson.

*We discussed the vulnerable populations that attend District Conference. Many attendees fall into health and age categories that are at-risk for contracting the virus.*

*Persons who travel to McPherson from different states spreading the virus. Each area and state is progressing through different phases of the virus' cycle.*

*The need to sanitize all meeting spaces and the capacity to do so.*

*Lodging accommodations that are not available as students' property is still in their rooms even though students are gone.*

*Space in dorms that is distanced; students who are still on campus in dorms*

*The availability of food service, staffing, and food supply chains*

*The availability of testing, vaccines, and prevention or cures for the virus.*

This is a brief summary of our concerns. By consensus we agreed that holding District Conference in person at McPherson, KS is not worth the risk to individuals or groups. There is great regret that we arrived at this conclusion but it is done out of an abundance of concern and caring for all persons who attend and all 3 of the above groups that serve the district and district conference.

We are confident that there are creative alternatives to holding an in-person conference. It could be a virtual conference, it could be paused until next year, or it could be cancelled entirely. We all saw different opportunities to enhance our district, our worship experiences, and how we gather across a thousand miles. Of course not meeting in person is a loss. We also think there is much creative energy for finding new ways to do the work of the district.

This is brand new territory we have ventured into, particularly regarding procedure for holding District Conference. As Moderator, I ask the Leadership Team to discuss the viability of holding district conference this year. I hope that you will affirm the conclusion and consensus of these different constituencies for not holding a face-to-face District Conference 2020. Additionally the District

Conference Planning Team requests direction for how to proceed in our planning for this year's district conference.

Many thanks for the work that you do! And the leadership that you share with the entire district!

I look forward to moving forward with the district as we sail these uncharted waters. We are confronted with a challenging context for doing God's work. I'm confident that we will be faithful disciples of Christ in these extraordinary times as we pray, study, and discern God's direction for us.

Yours in Christ,

Vickie

Vickie Samland

2020 District Conference Moderator