

To those who are gathered for the lament service at AMBS:

We are writing on behalf of Mennonite Church USA to express our heartfelt empathy for those who are gathered for worship and lament this weekend, and to express our deep longing that God's healing and hope may flow through this special assembly.

In many Psalms, the writer and the praying community cry out to God. Psalm 5:2 says "Listen to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you I pray." We recognize that for many decades our sisters and their families have cried out for justice or simply for the abuse to stop. Victims cried, not knowing if there would ever be a communal response to their pain.

But just as God listened, God's people too have listened and believed. As leaders of Mennonite Church USA, we seek forgiveness for delaying our response and acknowledge that the silence has hurt us as a body, clouding our witness to true peace. Further:

We grieve with the victims who were abused, and the circles of people around them who have also suffered as a result

We applaud the survivors of abuse who courageously persisted in exposing the abuse by vulnerably telling their own stories

We applaud President Sara Wenger Shenk for her courage in addressing the long legacy of cover-up for the abuse which John Howard Yoder perpetrated on students at AMBS and beyond

We commend the AMBS community for rallying around the call to openness, transparency, and discernment regarding Yoder's legacy, which is so intimately tied to the AMBS campus

We grieve the way in which church leaders at various levels in our denomination have at times looked the other way or wrung their hands, without stopping abusive behaviors

We commit ourselves to provide a gathering for worship, lament and hope at our denominational convention this summer, with specific acts of confession, repentance, and plans to help our church become a safe place for all people from sexual abuse and all types of violence. Psalm 5:7 voices our communal prayer of hope: "But I[we], through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house."

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht  
Moderator

Ervin R. Stutzman  
Executive Director