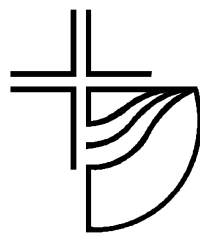


CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

Manual of Organization and Polity

2010



Manual of Organization and Polity
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PREFACE

This manual (revised February 2010) draws together current organization and polity of the Church of the Brethren as approved by the Annual Conference. It supersedes the *Manual of Organization and Polity* that was published in 2001 and all subsequent on-line versions through 2008. An additional section has been added containing *procedures and policies* that do not fit the definition of polity, but are generally accepted by the denomination as standards by which we abide and operate. Direct authorization for the text is found in Annual Conference minutes, unless otherwise noted. In nearly all cases, actual quotations are used. Readers seeking additional information on a particular topic are directed to the full documents in Annual Conference minutes.

Notes lead the reader back to the appropriate reference in the Annual Conference minutes or to explanatory comments by the compilers. The notes have been expanded and improved to aid the researcher and frequently include historical information that shows the evolution of the church's thinking on a particular matter. In some cases, large sections of lengthy Annual Conference statements have been incorporated into the manual. These excerpts generally do not include introductory material and other sections that do not speak directly to organization and polity.

This edition of the polity manual includes new sections on each of the Annual Conference agencies. In some cases, the bylaws of these groups have been abbreviated to make the basic organizational information consistent for each of the agencies. The section on Annual Conference (Chapter 1) also includes a summary paragraph on each agency.

This current edition of the Manual of Organization and Polity is only available on-line. There are no plans to produce hard copies at this date. However, users are welcome to print their own hard copies from the PDF files.

INTRODUCTION

Organization and polity reflect an understanding of the nature of the church and the primary spiritual directive that motivates a religious body. In a letter circulated in 1708, soon after the first baptism, the early Brethren declared that “we must publicly profess that which Christ Jesus taught and did without hesitation or fear. . . .What is then better than being obedient and not despising the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . We (must) begin in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus to live according to His commandments.”¹

This original proclamation by the founders of the Brethren Movement in 1708 has been evident throughout the history of the Church of the Brethren. In 1995, the General Board adopted a pair of “identity lines,” which define the Brethren and thus guide our development of organization, structure, and polity. These were presented to the Annual Conference in 1995 and were accepted, in a manner of speaking, when the delegates accepted the report of the General Board. The first defines the witness of the Church of the Brethren as “another way of living.” The second declares that the message and life of the Church of the Brethren is “Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.” The issue then becomes, “What kind of organization and structure would a church that is dedicated to these goals and purposes have?” We always need to relate structure to function.

Various efforts have been made to classify the governance system of the Brethren in comparison with other systems within the wider body of Christian churches. Even though some elements are comparable to what one finds elsewhere, it seems clear that the early Brethren did not intentionally seek to copy any system existing in their time. They started with a clean slate, so to speak, with just the body of committed followers. They developed new structures and procedures as need arose, and then only after intensive study to see what actually was done in the New Testament church. They tried to take the commandments of Jesus and the practices of the New Testament church as literally as possible.

This primacy of the teachings and example of Jesus, and the subsequent development of the church as described in the New Testament, led the Brethren to develop not only a doctrinal stance but a system of organization and polity patterned after what they discovered within the New Testament. This desire to emulate the beliefs and practices of first-century Christians has been called “primitive Christianity.” To some, there is conflict in trying to be “primitive” and “modern” at the same time. But the Brethren discovered in Acts 15 the way that the church can experience continuity and still make new decisions and set new directions.

For the Church of the Brethren, the whole church—the entire membership, the denomination—has been the focal point and basis of structure and function. The division of the whole body into smaller groups (congregations and later districts) is an adaptation to the increased number of members and their geographical dispersal. Congregations were originally defined in terms of geographical area and were “only laid off for convenience, and not to divide the body.”² These subdivisions were variously referred to as districts, arms of the church, or sometimes just a church. Each body was under the direction of a bishop or presiding elder, also sometimes called an overseer or housekeeper. Gradually, in the nineteenth century, membership became associated with a particular building and the named congregation came into common practice.

We understand from the fifteenth chapter of Acts that the collective body of all members has an identity separate from and an authority higher than the individual congregations. Just as an individual member may be likened to a foot or a hand, or an eye or an ear, but is not the body,³ so the congregation is just a part of the body. An individual congregation is not the church. The Annual Conference of 1853 put it this way: “. . . all the arms of the church [congregations] are but one body in Christ, and each arm stands in the same relation to the other as an individual member stands to the other individual member.”⁴ In 1865 the question was raised, “Can . . . (a local church) be congregational or act independent from all the churches of our fraternity, and still be in full union with the church? Answer: It cannot, according to the gospel and the order of the Brethren.”⁵

For several centuries, the Church of the Brethren has regarded the Annual Conference as the highest (human) authority in the church. This has been said in many ways but none more clearly, perhaps, than this statement in 1968: “The delegate body assembled in Conference is the ultimate authority of the Church of the Brethren. It is composed of the Standing Committee and the local church delegates. It functions primarily as a deliberating legislative assembly, determining the polity and setting forth the primary courses of action and relationships in which the church should be involved. All other agencies of the church should assist the delegate body in the performance of that which it regards as the business of the church.”⁶

This policy was reiterated most recently in 1991 when a committee report declared “The Annual Conference is the final authority of the Church of the Brethren in all matters of procedure, program, polity, and discipline.”⁷ And in 2004, Annual Conference delegates approved a report of a study committee on “Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions” that reaffirms this position. It states, “It is expected that congregations would recognize a foundational covenant within the denomination ‘to support faithfully the program of the Church of the Brethren, recognizing Annual Conference enactments of the Church of the Brethren as having governing force in its life’ and that ‘the congregation has an ethical

responsibility to support the denomination.” The quotes are from the Minutes of Annual Conference 2000, p, 206; and the Minutes of Annual Conference, 1996, p. 331.

Delegates to the Annual Conference should be selected with care and intentionality. Annual Conference is not a place for predetermined points of view representing specific constituencies to be debated, as in a secular political legislative assembly. It is a setting where people come together to consider questions before the church and to seek the will of God through prayerful debate and Bible study. Delegates are to “be chosen on the basis of their qualifications rather than to effect a financial saving for the local church.”⁸ The qualifications of Conference delegates (both Standing Committee and local church delegates) have been clearly stated: consecrated Christian living in home, church, and community; faithful service in local church and district; loyalty to the ideals and the program of the Church of the Brethren; a working knowledge and understanding of the total church program; ability to exercise mature judgment in the solution of Church of the Brethren problems.⁹

The leadership of congregations and district organizations, especially the delegates to Annual Conference (both local church and Standing Committee delegates) are accountable for reporting and interpreting Annual Conference actions.¹⁰

I. Definitions and Guiding Principles

At various times we have approved some definitions to polity and authority that will be useful in the context of the present volume.¹¹

Polity: The ways the church is equipped for service in obedience to its Lord and in an effort to do its job. Polity has to do with those orderly procedures that grow out of the life and work of the church. Jesus appointed disciples to share in his ministry (Mark 3:13-19) and commissioned them in their servant role (Luke 10:1-12). Organizational patterns are neither intrinsically sacred nor unimportant. They are measured by their faithfulness to that purpose of God which was set forth in Christ “as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:10).

Authority: The power to make and carry out decisions that are in accord with Annual Conference actions. In accomplishing its ministry in the name of Christ, the church draws upon the resources of all members. There are various gifts within the Body of Christ that contribute to the carrying out of its work. Each is required for the church's mission, and to prepare believers for their discipleship in the world. The community appropriately designates certain individuals and groups who carry delegated authority in implementing the tasks of the church (1 Cor.16:15; Acts 6:1-6).

Of course, the point where the church touches the life of the individual member most directly is the congregation. In our modern world, it is often difficult to sense the vital interconnection between the local unit and the wider denominational body. This is accentuated by the fact that many large and very well-known religious bodies view the congregation as having full autonomy. Various television ministries represent large, single congregation-type bodies that are totally independent of any denominational context. One Annual Conference committee observed, "Throughout the years the distinctive characteristic of Brethren polity has been the rhythm between local initiative and accountability to the brothers and sisters of the total denomination."¹²

The following are basic guidelines in regulating church polity and authority.¹³

- The highest authority is God, as revealed in Jesus Christ. All human authority is judged with reference to this ultimate standard.
- Authority is exercised both formally through organizational structures and designated individuals and informally through spontaneous groupings and natural leaders. This authority is to be implemented with respect for individual conscience, openness to new light, acceptance of criticism, and the willingness to allow decisions to persuade on the basis of their intrinsic merit.
 - Authority is held accountable within the community, which in turn diligently seeks the "mind of Christ" in study of the scriptures, in dialogue with brothers and sisters, and in openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- The principles of "voluntarism" in membership and belief and "no force in religion," which are firmly rooted in our tradition, make us avoid arbitrary patterns of enforcement that violate the freedom of individuals and local groups.
- The practice of brothers and sisters confronting each other is an

essential part of our serving as a “priest to one another.” Our Anabaptist heritage teaches that “no one enters the kingdom apart from our brothers and sisters.” This leads us to reject unqualified individualism, which denies the place of the community in the shaping of one’s life of discipleship.

- Openness to our brothers and sisters reaches from the congregation to the district, to the denomination, to the ecumenical church. Administrative structures must constantly be measured by this criterion: Do they make possible full and free interchange between members of the body of Christ as the collective means for coming to know God’s will for the church?

II. The Compilation of Organizational and Polity Decisions

The minutes of Annual Conference comprise thousands of pages spanning several hundred years of church history. The first published minutes available to church leaders in 1837 were only a few pages in length and included the minutes in both English and German. By the end of the nineteenth century, the minutes were 15 to 20 pages in length, by this time only in English. Beginning in 1875 a series of full reports, complete stenographic accounts of the floor discussions of each issue, was published until 1930. Volumes of full reports often exceeded 100 pages in length. During this time the briefer, condensed minutes were also published, reaching 40 pages by 1930. By the 1980s the published minutes often exceeded 150 pages. In 2008, the Conference minutes totaled 363 pages!

Numerous compilations of minutes have been published. Beginning with the 1945 Conference, collections of the minutes have been issued in hardcover form every five years and can be purchased from the Brethren Press, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. In addition, there are a couple of indexes of the queries and issues of the recorded Conferences. Researchers who may have interest in this aid are encouraged to contact the Annual Conference Office, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

NOTES

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1. Donald F. Durnbaugh, comp. and trans., *European Origins of the Brethren* (Elgin, Ill.: Brethren Press, 1958), 115-120.
 2. 1849 Minutes (1778–1909), Article 40, 112.
 3. I Corinthians 12:14-31.
 4. 1853 Minutes (1778–1909), Article 26, 138.
 5. 1863 Minutes (1778–1909), Article 20, 222.

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6. 1968 Minutes (1965–1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 318.
 8. 1960 Minutes (1955–1964), “Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee,” 180.
 9. 1947 Minutes (1945–1954), “Brotherhood Organization,” 52-80.
 10. 1976 Minutes (1975–1979), “Brotherhood Understanding,” 205-209.
 11. 1968 Minutes (1965–1969), “Church Polity, Including Referendum on Merger and Coordination of Ecumenical Concerns,” 336.
 12. 1987 Minutes (1985–1989), “Revisions of Brethren Polity,” 482.
 13. 1968 Minutes (1965–1969), “Church Polity, Including Referendum on Merger and Coordination of Ecumenical Concerns,” 337.

CHAPTER 1

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE¹

I. Introduction

Annual Conference is the highest and final legislative authority of the Church of the Brethren in all matters of procedure, program, polity, and discipline. The authority of Conference has its source in the delegates elected by local churches and districts who come together as a deliberative body under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.²

The Conference is the final source of appeal in adjusting difficulties and solving problems that arise in the church. It serves as one of the major channels of information and interpretation of the mission and work of the church. It provides an opportunity for face-to-face confrontation and discussion of major issues that are of vital concern to the church. It serves as a means of building unity, fellowship, and understanding among the Brethren, as laity and clergy, people of all ages, and urban and rural people seek to discover the mission of the church in today's world.³

The actions of Conference are directives for the whole life of the church, and implementation is assumed to take place within a reasonable span of time. This implementation does not depend on acts of enforcement by decree. Rather, education, consultation, and patience are characteristics of Brethren polity. Groups and individuals have channels of review when decisions of Annual Conference are questioned. It is important that there be mutual trust and shared responsibility between local, district, and denominational structures of church order.⁴

The voting body consists of two sets of delegates: those representing congregations and those from the districts who also serve as the Standing Committee. All members of the Church of the Brethren who are present have full liberty to participate in the discussions, but only delegates vote.⁵

II. Frequency, Timing, Location

- A. The Annual Conference is held each year in order to deal aggressively with the issues confronting us in the church and the world.⁶
- B. The Annual Conference is to be scheduled usually sometime during the latter part of June to the early part of July, pending favorable conditions of location and cost.⁷

I. The Annual Conference

- C. Since Annual Conference involves all districts and churches, it is held as close to the population concentrations of Brethren as available facilities, volunteers, and potential attendees permit, rotating every 12 years to the following geographic areas. Conference will be held in the East and Midwest four times respectively in a 12-year period. The other years of the 12-year cycle, Conference would be held in the Southeast once, the Northwest once, the Plains once, and the Southwest once, in years three, six, nine and twelve, respectively. The rotation would thus be:

Year 1	East
Year 2	Midwest
Year 3	Southeast
Year 4	East
Year 5	Midwest
Year 6	Northwest
Year 7	East
Year 8	Midwest
Year 9	Plains
Year 10	East
Year 11	Midwest
Year 12	Southwest ⁸

III. Conference Structures and Relationships

A. DELEGATE BODY

The delegate body assembled in Conference is the ultimate legislative authority of the Church of the Brethren. It is composed of the Standing Committee and local church delegates. It functions primarily as a deliberating legislative assembly, determining the polity and setting forth the primary courses of action and relationships in which the church should be involved. All official agencies of the church should assist the delegate body in the performance of that which it regards as the business of the church.⁹

1. Purposes and Functions¹⁰

- a. It is the final authority of the Church of the Brethren in all matters of procedure, program, polity, and discipline.
- b. It elects the officers of the Annual Conference, the members of the Mission and Ministry Board, one third of the members of each of the other three Annual Conference agencies, and the members of special committees authorized by the church. These elections are made from nominations presented to the delegate body by the Standing Committee.

I. The Annual Conference

- c. It reviews the work of the denomination as presented to Annual Conference in the reports of the Church of the Brethren and other institutions of the denomination.
- d. It acts as the members of the legal corporation, The Church of the Brethren Incorporated, operating as the Church of the Brethren.
- e. It projects the program of the church, determining the new fields of endeavor, plans for advance, size of budget, and all other necessary matters.
- f. It disposes of queries.
- g. It receives the reports of committees appointed to deal with specific problems in the life of the church.
- h. It determines what resolutions shall be the voice of the Church of the Brethren on the problems of the day.

2. The Standing Committee¹¹

The Standing Committee is composed of the district representatives to the Conference and the immediate past moderator of the Conference.¹²

a. *Responsibilities*

The Standing Committee has nominating, legislative, judicial, and envisioning responsibilities.

- 1) *Nominating functions.* Standing Committee serves as the nominating committee for the Annual Conference. Each congregation is encouraged to send suggested names to the nominating committee of Standing Committee. For this purpose the personnel of the nominating committee and the list of vacancies should be publicized immediately following Conference. The nominating committee of Standing Committee shall prepare a ballot early in the year. Standing Committee will submit the first ballot of four names to members of the previous year's Standing Committee members in February. Standing Committee members will vote on the preliminary ballot, reducing the number of nominees to two for each office. This ballot will be shared with the membership of the denomination no later than April. A printed biographical ballot for

I. The Annual Conference

Annual Conference shall be available for the first business session.

- 2) *Legislative functions.* The Standing Committee studies all queries and items of new business and recommends answers to the delegate body.
- 3) *Judicial functions.* The Standing Committee is the judicial body of the Church of the Brethren for decisions on discipline and controversy involving members, congregations, districts, and denomination.
- 4) *Envisioning functions.* The Standing Committee is to involve itself in envisioning the church God is calling forth. During its meeting the Standing Committee is to gather information from its members who listen to individuals, congregations, and districts, concerning new ideas, dreams, and visions for ministry. The Standing Committee is to share the new ideas, dreams, and visions for ministry with the appropriate Conference agencies.¹³

b. *Membership*

The membership of Standing Committee shall be composed of one representative for each district with five thousand or fewer members, and one additional representative for each additional five thousand members or fraction thereof in larger districts.¹⁴

Members of Standing Committee shall be elected by their respective districts to serve a term of three years.¹⁵ They are eligible for re-election to one additional term of three years following a full or partial term of service on Standing Committee. After such service, former members will be ineligible to serve for a period of four years. Upon transfer to another district, Standing Committee members who have not served a term for three Conferences will be replaced by the district they were originally chosen to represent. To them as well as their successors the ineligibility rule will apply.

In the Standing Committee as a whole, and in the districts that send more than one Standing Committee delegate, the principle of staggering of terms shall be applied; the exact method of initiating and regulating this procedure shall be left to the Conference secretary.

I. The Annual Conference

When an alternate Standing Committee delegate takes the place of a regular delegate, the alternate shall continue to serve the remainder of the term in order to provide continuity.¹⁶

Members also serve as a resource for interpreting Annual Conference concerns and actions in their districts.¹⁷ It is recommended that Standing Committee members be ex-officio members of their respective district board.

c. *Eligibility*

Any member of the Church of the Brethren may serve the district on Standing Committee if that member has been in the district for at least one year, fulfills the qualifications as set forth by Annual Conference, and is not a member of the board of an Annual Conference agency or its program staff or an executive/minister or associate executive/minister of a the district.¹⁸

In choosing Standing Committee delegates, districts should give consideration to members of the district board and other people who are actively involved in the district program –including both ministers and lay people.

d. *Qualifications*¹⁹

- 1) Consecrated Christian living in home, church, and community.
- 2) Faithful service in local church and district.
- 3) Loyalty to the ideals and the program of the Church of the Brethren.
- 4) A working knowledge and understanding of the Church of the Brethren and its program of ministries.
- 5) Ability to exercise mature judgment in the solution of denominational problems.

e. *Authorization*

A Standing Committee authorization card, signed by the proper district officers, shall be returned to the Annual Conference Office.

f. *Open and closed sessions*

I. The Annual Conference

Sessions of Standing Committee shall be open except when dealing with personnel and judicial matters and those issues on which Standing Committee would vote to have a closed session.²⁰

3. Delegates from the Local Church²¹

a. *Choice of delegates*

- 1) Congregations are urged to send their full quota of delegates, carefully selected at least six months in advance of Annual Conference, with notification of their selection sent to the Annual Conference Office.
- 2) Congregations should seek ways to involve more lay people as delegates. To this end, it is suggested that when local churches send two or more delegates, at least one of them should be from the laity. It is further urged that delegates be chosen on the basis of their qualifications rather than to effect a financial saving for the local church.
- 3) Congregations should always plan to send their pastors, although not necessarily as delegates.
- 4) Each congregation having a membership of two hundred or fewer may send one delegate; each congregation having more than two hundred members may send one additional delegate for each two hundred or fraction thereof.
- 5) People received into associate membership are not eligible for election as delegates to Annual Conference.²²

b. *Term of service*

Delegates are elected to represent congregations at Annual Conference. It is recommended that congregations consider establishing two-year terms for the congregational delegates.²³

Local Annual Conference delegates should serve as ex officio members of the church board (or leadership team) from the time of their election through Annual Conference and six months following in order to help interpret and implement official statements.²⁴

c. *Eligibility*

I. The Annual Conference

Any member of the Church of the Brethren who fulfills the qualifications as interpreted by Annual Conference is eligible to serve. A non-Brethren minister, serving as pastor of a Brethren congregation, may serve as a delegate if properly elected by the congregation.²⁵

d. *Qualifications*

Local church moderators are personally responsible for seeing that the following qualifications are given careful consideration in the selection of delegates:

- 1) Consecrated Christian living in home, church, and community.
- 2) Faithful service in local church and district.
- 3) Loyalty to the ideals and the program of the Church of the Brethren.
- 4) A working knowledge and understanding of the total church program.
- 5) Ability to exercise mature judgment in the solution of Church of the Brethren problems.
- 6) Reading of church literature.
- 7) Knowledge of past decisions of the church gained by reading of minutes and reports and a continual study of current business.
- 8) Attendance at denominational and interdenominational conferences outside the local church.²⁶

e. *Credentials*

- 1) Authorization cards for delegates from congregations shall be sent, along with other literature, from the Annual Conference Office, to each pastor of each church in order that delegates may be reregistered.
- 2) Proper identification and seating of delegates shall be arranged by such provisions as special badges, a consecration ceremony, and special seating areas.

I. The Annual Conference

f. *Preparation of delegates*²⁷

1) In the local church

- a) Delegates, upon election, should be consecrated for their important tasks by a spiritual commissioning service in the local church.
- b) They shall be preregistered with the Conference Director, Annual Conference Office, and a registration fee shall be paid to cover the providing of a Conference Booklet and other Conference expenses. The Conference Booklet is mailed to each preregistered delegate for use in preparing for Conference.

2) At Annual Conference

- a) Delegates shall be present by the beginning of Annual Conference to confirm their registration and be ready to go into session. It is extremely important that they attend all business sessions and participate fully in the deliberations.²⁸
- b) Consecration. An act of consecration of all delegates is held at the beginning of the first business session.

B. OFFICERS OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE²⁹

The officers of Conference include the moderator, the moderator-elect, and the secretary. The officers of Conference have the authority to act for the church in signing documents that are approved by the Conference. In cases of emergency at any time between Conferences, the officers may call together any representative group in the church to deal with the emergency.

The officers of Conference shall list queries for consideration by Conference that in their judgment have fulfilled the preliminary steps.

They shall have the responsibility of informing the congregations and delegates prior to Conference of the items of business that will come before the Conference.

They shall study the Conference business and allocate the amount of time for each item.

I. The Annual Conference

They shall set the order of the day for business sessions, but these may be adjusted by action of the delegate body if need arises.

The officers of Conference shall appoint messengers, tellers, the timekeeper, and other people as needed for implementing the Conference business. No ratification of these appointments is needed.

The officers shall appoint such committees as are not provided for otherwise.

Specific position descriptions for each of the officers of Annual Conference have been prepared by the Program and Arrangements Committee and may be obtained from the Conference Director's office. They include detailed responsibilities in addition to the general duties outlined below.

1. **The Moderator**³⁰

a. *Term of service*

For three years, the moderator serves one year in three successive offices.

- 1) *Moderator-elect*. The moderator is elected one year in advance of beginning a year of service as moderator. During this time the elected member is known as moderator-elect.
 - 2) *Moderator*. The moderator-elect becomes moderator at the close of the Conference a year following election and continues in that office until the following Conference.
 - 3) *Past-moderator*. The moderator becomes the past moderator after serving one year as moderator concluding with the Conference. The past moderator serves as a voting member of Standing Committee for one year,³¹ and thus should not serve as a member of any of the Conference agency boards.³²
- b. *Eligibility*. Any active member of the Church of the Brethren may serve as Moderator. During the three years of service, a moderator cannot be employed by or serve on the board of directors of Church of the Brethren, Inc., or of any agency reportable to Annual Conference, or be a member of an Annual Conference-elected committee.

c. *Duties*³³

I. The Annual Conference

- 1) To preside over all sessions of Standing Committee and of Annual Conference, and to act as the official representative of the church. The moderator may appoint a parliamentarian.
- 2) To contact district and other Brethren conferences.
- 3) To serve ex-officio as a member of the Mission and Ministry Board in a consultative, nonvoting capacity.
- 4) To represent the church at strategic interchurch conferences.
- 5) To serve as the chairperson of the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee.
- 6) To serve as a member of the Leadership Team.
- 7) To give a “state of the church” address at Annual Conference.

2. The Moderator-elect³⁴

a. *Term of service*

Each Annual Conference elects a moderator-elect to serve a one-year term beginning at the close of the Conference by which that person is elected and to assume the moderatorship during the following year. The moderator-elect is a member of the Leadership Team and a non-voting member of the Mission and Ministry Board.

b. *Eligibility*

Any active member of the Church of the Brethren may be called as Moderator-elect. During the three years of service, a moderator-elect or moderator cannot be employed by or serve on the board of directors of Church of the Brethren, Inc., or of any agency reportable to Annual Conference, or be a member of an Annual Conference-elected committee.

3. The Secretary³⁵

a. *Qualifications and tenure*

I. The Annual Conference

Any member of the Church who has the qualifications required for the duties of secretary is eligible for election to this office. The secretary is elected for a term of five years and is subject to tenure of two terms.

b. *Duties*

The secretary shall:

- 1) Record the minutes of Standing Committee and of Annual Conference;
- 2) Publish the Annual Conference minutes;
- 3) Interpret the actions of the Annual Conference on problems of the church;
- 4) Serve as a member of the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee and the Leadership Team;
- 5) Serve as secretary for the Church of the Brethren Inc. and record the minutes of the corporation;
- 6) Serve as ex-officio member of the Mission and Ministry Board; and
- 7) Serve as counsel to the Standing Committee Nominating Committee.

c. *Secretary's assistant*

The Conference officers shall appoint in advance of each Annual Conference an assistant to the Conference secretary.³⁶

C. THE LEADERSHIP TEAM³⁷

The Leadership Team serves as the executive committee of Annual Conference and acts as a liaison between Annual Conference and Church of the Brethren Inc. It also provides executive leadership for the Corporation and general oversight of Annual Conference. Specific functions of the Leadership Team shall include:

- Coordinate denominational envisioning;
- Delegate tasks from the actions of Annual Conference;
- Interpret Annual Conference decisions and denominational polity;
- Review recommended changes to Annual Conference policies and guidelines;
- Carry fiscal responsibility for Annual Conference, in consultation with the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee and the Corporation treasurer;
- Serve as executive committee for Annual Conference, and

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- Propose and review by-law changes for the Corporation to Standing Committee, in consultation with the Board of Directors.

1. Membership

The Leadership Team shall include...

- a. the current Annual Conference moderator;
- b. the moderator-elect;
- c. the Annual Conference secretary
- d. the General Secretary of Church of the Brethren Inc.

2. Duties

- a. *The interpretation, revision, and publication of denominational polity.*

This assignment includes the maintenance and publication of the denomination's polity manual as well as responding to questions seeking interpretation of the church's polity.

- b. *Oversight of Annual Conference directives to assure that they are lodged with the appropriate agency and that Annual Conference directives are met.*

After each Conference, the Leadership Team is to review Conference's actions, assign them to the appropriate agency (or agencies) and establish a means of seeing that the assignment is completed. If appropriate, a report of the assignment will then be made to Standing Committee and/or Conference.

- c. *Resolve differences between agencies as to jurisdiction, fundraising or other matters.*

The Leadership Team is empowered to act as coordinator or mediator in matters where there is a lack of clarity or authority affecting the Conference agencies. The Leadership Team shall have the privilege of calling for the help of persons skilled in mediation and conflict resolution if it so desires.

- d. *Serve as executive committee for Annual Conference.*

The Leadership Team is authorized to resolve disputes or answer questions when neither the Annual Conference nor the Standing Committee is in session.

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- e. *Assume supervisory responsibility for the planning and arrangements for Annual Conference.*

While the Program and Arrangements Committee and the Annual Conference executive director have hands-on responsibility for planning the Conference program and making arrangements for each event, the Leadership Team is the final authority for making policy decisions. The Program and Arrangements Committee is reportable to the Leadership Team.

3. Meetings

The Leadership Team shall meet as often as needed to handle its agenda.

D. THE PROGRAM AND ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE³⁸

The Program and Arrangements Committee is responsible for arrangements, location, and operation of the Annual Conference. The committee has the responsibility to plan the Conference program, taking account of the work of the church both at home and abroad as administered by the agencies of Annual Conference.

1. Membership

The Program and Arrangements Committee shall include . . .

- a. the Annual Conference moderator, the moderator-elect, the secretary, and the treasurer.
 - 1) The treasurer of the Church of the Brethren, Inc. is designated as the Annual Conference treasurer. In this capacity the treasurer also serves as a voting member of the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee.
- b. three members-at-large, elected by Conference for staggered terms of three years each. They are not eligible to succeed themselves.
- c. the Conference Director provides staff for the Program and Arrangements Committee as an ex-officio member.

2. Duties

- a. Plan the program and arrangements for Annual Conference.

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- b. Administer the policies guiding Annual Conference on-site activities and make recommendations to the Leadership Team regarding any desired changes in the policies.
- c. Prepare an annual budget for Annual Conference, including recommended delegate and exhibit fees and district assessments, and submit the budget to the Leadership Team for approval.
- d. Secure the locations and set dates for future Annual Conferences.

3. Meetings

In order to carry out its functions, the Program and Arrangements Committee holds regularly scheduled meetings each year.

4. Expenses

Expenses incurred in carrying out the functions of the Program and Arrangements Committee are underwritten by the Annual Conference Fund.

E. MINISTRY COMPONENTS OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE

1. Statement of Relationships

Annual Conference, composed of delegates from every congregation and district, is the highest and final legislative authority of the Church of the Brethren. As such, it speaks and acts for every phase of the denomination's life and ministry. Annual Conference is the basic decision-making body for all polity undergirding the mission and structure of the church. It constitutes the members of the Church of the Brethren Inc. which is the primary unit of the denomination for national and global ministries. Annual Conference also embraces the ministries of other agencies of the church that carry out specialized ministries on behalf of the Church of the Brethren. These agencies are recognized by Annual Conference as complementary components of the denomination's ministry, and thus related to Annual Conference, while maintaining their individual incorporations. Thus, the ministry components of Annual Conference are:

1. The Church of the Brethren, Inc.³⁹

Created by Annual Conference and responsible to it, the Church of the Brethren, Inc., also known as the Corporation, is the principal administrative body for program development and implementation for the global mission of the denomination. In keeping with the general

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policies determined by Annual Conference, the Church of the Brethren, Inc., through its board of directors, also known as the Mission and Ministry Board, administers and evaluates all phases of the denominational program, except for programs specifically within the designated purview of other Annual Conference agencies. As an administrative arm of Annual Conference, it carries out, correlates, and unifies the work assigned to it, and reports its stewardship to Annual Conference. In keeping with the Corporation's responsibility, the general secretary is recognized as the principal staff executive reporting to Annual Conference. The relationship of the Corporation to Annual Conference will be strengthened as regular consultation and open communication takes place.

The sessions of Conference should always provide ample time for the Corporation to report to the church on the work we are doing cooperatively in America and overseas, and to share experiences and observations concerning the witness and mission of the church in these times.

The Church of the Brethren, Inc., is organized under the General Not-for-Profit Corporation Act of the State of Illinois, organized September 2, 2008. The members of the corporation are the congregations of the Church of the Brethren, and are represented at the annual meeting by their delegates to the Annual Conference.

2. Bethany Theological Seminary⁴⁰

Bethany Theological Seminary is the graduate school of theology for the Church of the Brethren. Nine of its twenty trustees are elected by Annual Conference from a ballot submitted by Standing Committee. One trustee is nominated by the Alumni Association and confirmed by Annual Conference. Ten trustees are elected by the seminary's board of trustees and confirmed by the Annual Conference.

3. The Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust⁴¹

The Brethren Benefit Trust supports the financial well-being of the Church of the Brethren, providing financial programs and services that respond to the needs and interests of congregations, church members, and church agencies and employees. Four of the twelve members of the board of directors are elected by Annual Conference from a ballot submitted by Standing Committee. Three directors are elected by the Brethren Benefit Trust, subject to the approval of the Annual Conference. Five directors are elected by participants in the Pension Plan.

4. On Earth Peace⁴²

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On Earth Peace provides skills, support, and spiritual basis to individuals, congregations, and communities, helping them face violence with active nonviolence. The agency, which promotes the denominational peace heritage, offers education, organizing, advocacy, and conflict transformation opportunities and equips groups within and outside of the denomination to serve a blessed and broken world with faith-based peace and justice ministries.

Five of the fifteen members of the board are elected by Annual Conference from a ballot submitted by Standing Committee. The remaining board members are chosen by the On Earth Peace board and constituents and confirmed by Annual Conference.

F. USE OF THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN NAME

Only the Annual Conference, Church of the Brethren, Inc., the Brethren Benefit Trust, Brethren Foundations, Inc., Bethany Theological Seminary, On Earth Peace, Inc., a district, or a congregation duly organized by a district shall be entitled to use the name “Church of the Brethren” in its own name or to indicate in any way it is an agent of another Church of the Brethren entity without the express written authorization of the Standing Committee of Annual Conference. Unless expressly recognized as an agent of another Church of the Brethren entity, no institution or interest group should suggest in its documents, publicity, or communications that it is the agent of a Church of the Brethren organization. Consent to use the name “Church of the Brethren” will not, unless otherwise indicated in writing, indicate an intention to create an agency relationship but will merely indicate the involvement of members of the Church of the Brethren in the organization.⁴³

It is recommended that special interest groups seek recognition through the Leadership Team of Church of the Brethren, Inc. It is further recommended that special interest groups shall not raise funds in the name of the denomination unless such solicitation has been approved by a Conference agency and/or the Annual Conference.⁴⁴

G. ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS⁴⁵

1. Committee on Interchurch Relations

A Committee on Interchurch Relations shall be jointly constituted by Annual Conference and the Mission and Ministry Board. This follows a pattern similar to our existing policy of naming representatives to the National Council of Churches and to the World Council of Churches. The Committee on Interchurch Relations is to

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carry forward current conversations and such other activities with other communions as will further the purpose of mutual understanding and the exploration of the question of church union. Competences, balance of viewpoint, and continuity for effective service are important values in the makeup of the committee. Three members will be appointed by the Mission and Ministry Board. They may be Board members, staff personnel, or other individuals. Three members of the committee will be elected from the church at large by Annual Conference upon nomination of the Standing Committee. The general secretary of the Board will be an ex officio member without vote. Whenever a member of the Church of the Brethren is a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, that person becomes an ex officio member of the Committee on Interchurch Relations.⁴⁶

The tenure of the appointed and elected committee members shall be three years with the possibility of serving for a second term.

The committee is responsible both to the Annual Conference and to the Mission and Ministry Board. There will be regular reporting to Conference and to the Board regarding the ongoing activities of the committee. In case of a specific proposal for union of the Church of the Brethren with one or more Christian groups, the committee has the freedom to approach Annual Conference directly.

The committee will have the services of a staff executive who will be employed by Church of the Brethren, Inc.

The full membership of the Committee on Interchurch Relations shall be recorded in the Annual Conference minutes.

2. Role of the Mission and Ministry Board

The Mission and Ministry Board shall give careful attention to basic coordination and integration of ecumenical concerns in the normal course of the Board's work.

The Mission and Ministry Board shall assign other ecumenical concerns, especially efforts to further local cooperation, to ongoing program areas as integral aspects of these efforts, using all the reliable channels of communication and implementation such as . . .

- a. counseling with districts and congregations on their relationships to councils of churches;
- b. ecumenical education;

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- c. interchurch involvements of designated program areas on behalf of cooperative ministries;
- d. coordination by the executive director of all ecumenical staff relationships;
- e. Faith and Order studies and relationships to be related to the Committee on Interchurch Relations or the appropriate units, according to their nature.

The Mission and Ministry Board shall initiate steps to develop a budget as part of the General Ministries Fund for the program of ecumenical concerns and especially for the work of the Committee on Interchurch Relations and staff.

The general secretary of the Corporation represents the Church of the Brethren ecumenically in positions customarily served by denominational executive staff. To enable the moderator to fill his or her role, the executive director will seek opportunities in ecumenical circles for the moderator to give strategic visibility to Annual Conference as the highest authority of the Church of the Brethren. In some circumstances (i.e., the visits of heads of state, major media events, and ceremonial functions), the moderator will represent the denomination.⁴⁷

3. National and World Councils of Churches

Representation of the Church of the Brethren to the National Council of Churches in Christ/Church World Service General Assembly and World Council of Churches shall continue according to present Annual Conference policy. Current policy for representation calls for half the representatives to be appointed by Standing Committee and half by the Mission and Ministry Board.

For the National Council of Churches in Christ/Church World Service General Assembly, Standing Committee nominates half (three) of the representatives, including a representative of the conciliar movement, and the Mission and Ministry Board nominates half, including the general secretary, who, by NCCC/CWS General Assembly and Annual Conference action, serves by virtue of the office. Terms of office are for four years, and attendance at NCCC/CWS General Assembly meetings is assumed for all delegates, with expenses shared equally between the Annual Conference and the Mission and Ministry Board.

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The World Council of Churches stipulated that representatives to the 1975 Fifth Assembly should be divided between lay and ordained people. The Standing Committee nominates one person, and the general secretary serves as the Mission and Ministry Board's representative. Representatives to the World Council of Churches are to be appointed about midpoint between successive Council Assemblies, which follow a six- to seven-year Assembly schedule. Newly appointed representatives will thus have opportunity (for at least three years) to join with other delegates in preparing for the Assembly in which they serve as official delegates.⁴⁸

4. Christian Churches Together⁴⁹

The 2007 Annual Conference approved full participation of the Church of the Brethren in Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT). The newly-formed alliance seeks to provide a new space that is inclusive of Christian families in the United States, especially those Christian communions and national Christian organizations that:

- Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures;
- Worship and serve the One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and
- Seek ways to work together in order to present a more credible Christian witness in and to the world.

Participation in CCT is not intended to hinder the denomination's work with other ecumenical agencies. The National Council of Churches in Christ/CWS General Assembly has given its endorsement to CCT.

The Church of the Brethren will be represented in the meetings of CCT by the general secretary of Church of the Brethren, Inc., the moderator, and moderator-elect.

H. ASSOCIATED RELATIONSHIP WITH ANOTHER DENOMINATION⁵⁰

The Church of the Brethren may wish to extend to another autonomous national church body an invitation to establish an "associated relationship," not as a merger of the two bodies or a form of union, but as a means of developing closer fellowship and cooperation and expanding existing relationships at various levels of church life. (Such an associated relationship with the American Baptist Churches USA was approved by Annual Conference in 1972.) Following are the guiding principles on which an associated relationship may be based:

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1. It is a voluntary relationship of autonomous national denominational bodies, which acknowledges a mutual desire to be in close Christian fellowship and to witness together and cooperate in missions together wherever feasible.
2. It provides a bridge across which associated organizations can move freely in various forms of cooperation at all levels without losing identity as autonomous bodies.
3. It provides a means by which congregations of each organization may enter into fellowship and cooperative endeavor without relinquishing membership in and responsibility to their respective parent bodies.
4. It enables the program agencies of each associated organization to engage in joint projects, which may require joint funding and sharing of personnel.

There should be a periodic review of this relationship by the Committee on Interchurch Relations along with representatives of the other party in any such associated relationship.

I. REFERENDUM ON MERGER⁵¹

As the highest legislative authority in the Church of the Brethren, Annual Conference may supplement its deliberations and actions by encouraging still broader involvement of the larger church in reaching given decisions. Church merger is the kind of exceptional case where such shared responsibility is essential. Any merger proposal should be referred to district conferences for ratification within a specified time. Ratification shall require a two-thirds majority of the total accumulated votes cast at all district conferences. This procedure is fully in keeping with our form of church government. It is a legitimate extension of Annual Conference authority. It ensures district participation. At the same time, it offers additional opportunity for the local congregation to express its views.

In order to provide a uniform plan of representation at district conferences where a proposal on merger is to be voted upon, the latest Annual Conference formula for district conference delegate representation shall be required. To deal adequately with the proposal, it is suggested that special district conferences be called.

J. REVIEW AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Background

I. The Annual Conference

The Review and Evaluation Committee was created by the 1971 Annual Conference as a part of the reorganization of the General Board in that same year. The function of the committee, a.k.a. the “Rev & Ev Committee,” was “to evaluate the work of the General Board in terms of its mandate from Annual Conference and to report on the evaluation both to the Board and to the next Annual Conference.” That first committee, consisting of Carl E. Myers, chairman, Walter D. Bowman, Norman L. Harsh, DeWitt L. Miller, and Earl M. Mitchell, made its report, a very thorough one, to the 1972 Conference. Adopted along with its report was a recommendation from the committee that subsequent review and evaluations be conducted every five years and that the committee be elected two years in advance of the date of reporting. That pattern continued until the 1989 Conference when the frequency of Review and Evaluation Committee reports was changed to ten year intervals. Specifically, the Rev and Ev Committee was to be elected in the fifth year of each decade to “apprise the work of the General Board” and report to Annual Conference in the seventh year of the decade.

With the approval of a new design for the General Board in 1997, Annual Conference authorized the creation of a specially scheduled Review and Evaluation Committee to be elected in the year 2000 and to present its final report to Annual Conference one year later. That interim limited report, focusing primarily on the new design, was then to be followed by a full review and evaluation in the normal 10-year cycle with election of the new Rev and Ev Committee in 2005 and the report scheduled for 2007.

After hearing reports in 1999 which revealed that the new design for the General Board had created a ripple effect raising questions about long-held understandings about polity, practices, and procedures in our denomination, Standing Committee broadened the assignment by recommending that the task of the Review and Evaluation Committee “become one of reviewing the comprehensive effect of redesign of the General Board of the Church of the Brethren.”

The 2001 Rev and Ev Committee therefore examined and responded to such questions as:

Who is the official representative in ecumenical relationships?

Who should maintain and distribute the denomination’s polity manual?

Who should provide clarification on questions of denominational polity?

How should Annual Conference agencies and the Council of District Executives relate to each other?

What should be the role and composition of the Interagency Forum?

What role should the Annual Conference Office play in the denomination’s organizational structure?

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The 2001 Review and Evaluation Committee clearly conceived its task as that of looking beyond one church agency to the interplay between five reportable/accountable church agencies and to the organization to which they are accountable: Annual Conference. It also believed that the task included the relationship between Annual Conference and its accountable agencies and the Council of District Executives. The report of the 2001 Rev and Ev Committee therefore included recommendations for several innovative procedures, including the creation of the Annual Conference Council, an executive committee for Standing Committee. The report was received by Conference delegates in its entirety.

As Annual Conference prepared to elect a regularly scheduled Review and Evaluation Committee in 2005, it assigned the committee an expanded scope, just as that given the specially scheduled Rev and Ev Committee in 2000, believing it also timely to evaluate the effect of the redesign of denominational organization with the passing of another five years of operation.

The Review and Evaluation Committee Mandate⁵²

The 2005 Conference expanded the scope of the Review and Evaluation Committee to include total denominational structure and program, including all agencies reportable to the Annual Conference. The Committee will continue to be elected every ten years, with the election occurring in the fifth year of each decade and the final report of the committee to Annual Conference in the seventh year of the decade.

The Review and Evaluation Task

1. A study of the existing organization and structure of the denomination and their effectiveness for accomplishing the goals and purpose of the church.
2. A study of thoroughness and comprehension of denominational program to include the total denominational structure and programs of Church of the Brethren, Inc., and On Earth Peace.
3. A consideration of the balance and unity of denominational witness and ministry as directed and implemented by Annual Conference agencies.
4. An evaluation of the collaboration, collegiality and cooperation between Annual Conference agencies and the goals and programming of the districts.

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5. An assessment of the interest and involvement of the general membership of the Church of the Brethren in denominational programs and missions.
6. The study of other matters of current relevance to the physical and spiritual effectiveness of the denomination.
7. The committee shall make no recommendations that violate agency bylaws.

The committee shall develop the criteria for conducting its study.

Tools, Methods, and Procedures

While the committee will determine the techniques that are most appropriate for its task, the following may be helpful:

1. Self-evaluation by individual agencies.
2. Interviews with key denominational leaders.
3. Questionnaires for Annual Conference delegates.
4. Hearings and drop-in center at Annual Conference.
5. Examination of documents related to Annual Conference component groups and accountable agencies.

Guidelines

To promote cooperation between the Review and Evaluation Committee and denominational groups and agencies, several guidelines are suggested:

1. The Leadership Team shall ensure that the committee members have an opportunity to be introduced to the leadership and staff of each of the agencies and their role interpreted.
2. Initial inquiries about the programs and activity of the Annual Conference agencies will be channeled through the respective executives of each agency.
3. Committee members are welcome and encouraged to conduct spontaneous interviews of agency employees and denominational members.
4. The committee must observe confidentiality at all times.
5. The committee will keep the Conference Director and the executives of the Annual Conference agencies apprised of its progress.

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6. The committee may make an interim report to Annual Conference after the first year of its study.

IV. Business of Conference⁵³

The usual sources of business for the Conference are the district conferences, the Standing Committee, the Leadership Team, the Mission and Ministry Board, On Earth Peace, the Brethren Benefit Trust, Bethany Theological Seminary, and other boards and committees constituted by Annual Conference.

The Annual Conference elects the officers of the Annual Conference, elects or confirms all of the members of the Mission and Ministry Board, elects one-third of the members of boards of other agencies reportable to Annual Conference, and it elects members of special committees authorized by the Conference. It appoints individuals to represent the church in meeting with other bodies, such as councils of churches.

It reviews the work of the church as presented in the reports of the Mission and Ministry Board and certain institutions and projects of the general program of the church.

It acts upon queries and receives reports of committees appointed to deal with specific problems in the life of the church.

The program of business appears in the Conference Booklet compiled by the Conference secretary, to whom all queries and reports should be sent in ample time.

Inspirational addresses, group conferences, and other features help to make these Conferences a great influence in the life of the church.

A. QUERIES⁵⁴

Any member of the church, or any congregation, has a right to raise questions and concerns that relate to the Christian life or to the mission and work of the church. Counsel and help should be sought from the pastor or the local church board, the district executive/minister, or the district board or commissions, national staff members, the Mission and Ministry Board, or any agency reportable to Annual Conference. When an adequate and satisfactory answer to an important question cannot be found in any of the above channels, then a query may be formulated to go to Conference.

1. Preparation and Processing of Queries

a. *Types of questions that may go to Conference for consideration*

Distinction should be made between different types of questions and concerns. Legislative action by the highest deliberative assembly of the church is necessary in answering some questions, but many of them can be dealt with more effectively in other ways.

- 1) Changes in church polity will always need to be made through legislative action. Questions of this nature and suggestions for change should receive extensive study by the congregations, the district, and the denominational staff before being brought before the Annual Conference.
- 2) Statements on the Christian life and witness, moral problems and positions are usually intended to influence personal and group habits of thought and action. We believe education and motivation are more effective than legislation in dealing with this type of issue. The Annual Conference agencies are constantly working in these areas and can provide literature and program resources. All information on any such questions should be carefully studied before formulating a query to Conference. Legislative action on such issues should be used with restraint.
- 3) Matters of church program and administration do not normally require legislative action. The church employs a staff to assist congregations in program and administration. Books, literature, and program materials are constantly made available to the churches for their use. Such church periodicals as *Messenger* and *Brethren Life and Thought*, and official denominational web sites provide opportunities to communicate and debate ideas concerning the church program and administration. An appeal for new legislative action should be made only when an adequate hearing or action has not been achieved through these means.

On any matter, when legislation by the Conference is felt to be necessary, a query is the means to follow. A query may originate in the local church, in the district, in a Conference agency board, or in the Standing Committee. The procedures outlined below in “Query Procedures” (section 1.b.) should be followed in the preparation and processing of a query.

b. *Query procedures*⁵⁵

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- 1) *In the local church.* When a member presents to the local church board or congregational business meeting a question or concern that merits consideration, the local church should, when it seems appropriate, appoint a working committee to do the following things:
 - a) Define and state clearly the question or concern.
 - b) Evaluate and try to answer the concern through research and inquiry.
 - c) Confer with the district secretary and the denominational staff to get information as to what has been done or is being planned in regard to this particular matter.
 - d) If it is a new concern, the district and denominational staff should be consulted regarding what immediate action might be taken, or whether Conference legislation would be helpful or necessary.
 - e) If the matter does seem to need legislative action, the congregational business meeting should prepare a query to send to the district conference.
- 2) *In the district.* Whenever possible, the district should answer the question or concern presented in the query.
 - a) The query should be reviewed by the district board; or the district can appoint a committee to investigate the merits of the query, hold hearings to evaluate different sides of the question, and seek to find a satisfactory answer.
 - b) If a satisfactory answer is not found and the district conference feels that the query merits legislative action by Annual Conference, or if the concern or question of the query relates to denominational or general church matters directly, the district may send the query on to Annual Conference.
 - c) When a district board or district conference initiates a query, steps should be taken to assure that the concerns expressed in the preceding procedures are observed.
 - d) The district secretary should send copies of the query immediately after approval to the secretary of Annual Conference and to the Annual Conference executive director, accompanied by a letter of explanation of the origin of the

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query and actions taken on the query up to that point. (The printing deadline is February 1.)

- 3) *In the denomination.* Queries that have been processed according to the above procedures shall be listed by the Conference officers for consideration by the Conference.

c. *Recommendations for preparation of queries*⁵⁶

The query should always clearly state the issue, remain open-ended for the widest possible base of judgment and response, and include some of the factual details by which to identify it. The following specific suggestions may prove to be helpful. The query should . . .

- 1) give the full name of the congregation or official body in the district initiating the query;
- 2) state as precisely as possible, *and in question form*, the issue concerning which the query is being presented;
- 3) give briefly the principal reasons or conditions that prompted the query;
- 4) avoid giving answers or proposing a solution to the problem raised by the query, leaving these rather to the outcome of the Annual Conference action. A proposal may be offered, but in the awareness that study may lead to another outcome;
- 5) give the date on which the query was initiated by the congregation or the official body of the district;
- 6) indicate the district conference (and the date and location of its meeting) through which it hopes to have the query passed to Annual Conference;
- 7) have appended the names and positions of the officers of the congregation or official body that is the source of the query;
- 8) have attached the action and the date of the district conference and the name of the district moderator and conference secretary, if the action is to pass the query to Annual Conference.

Queries coming from the Standing Committee will follow as many of the above specific suggestions as apply.

2. Selection of Committees for Study of Queries

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If the decision of Annual Conference is to adopt the query or the concern(s) of the query and to make a study, the assignment should be directed to a committee.

a. *Membership*⁵⁷

Committees chosen to make studies and propose answers to queries shall be elected from a slate presented by Standing Committee.

The slate shall include at least twice as many names as are to be elected. The slate shall also be open to further nominations from the Conference floor. No individuals shall be elected to a Conference study committee until at least one year has elapsed following the termination of any previous service on a study committee.

b. *Procedure*

Annual Conference study committees should counsel with concerned individuals, congregations, and district officers/staff and need always to be aware that a major effort toward bridging the gap in understanding can be made before final action is taken on the paper. Study committees need to make adequate research into the total scope of the problem and its varying viewpoints.

- 1) As often as is feasible and in keeping with good stewardship, study committees in the process of making policy statements are encouraged to hold hearings throughout the denomination to test opinion of statements coming to Annual Conference and to generate input and participation from congregations.
- 2) Consultation should be made with people whose work is involved or who are directly involved in some other way with the area of life that is being studied. These viewpoints should be considered in the forming of the denominational policy.
- 3) Study committees should be in dialogue with the appropriate staff of Church of the Brethren, Inc. and/or other Annual Conference agencies to gain their insights reached through their wide contacts with the denomination.
- 4) Consultation with district staffs just before and after new statements are adopted is encouraged so that where interpretation is needed it can be quickly identified.⁵⁸

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- 5) The Conference secretary shall provide the committee with a set of “Guidelines for Study Committees,” as well as a letter reviewing the task assigned the committee by Conference.

c. Recommendations and official statements

In addition to the query, other forms of new business are statements and recommendations brought to the Conference by one of the agencies responsible to the Annual Conference or by Standing Committee. These normally are the outgrowth of extensive deliberation, although this fact does not of itself preclude such further study as may be determined by the Conference before a decision is in order. These forms of new business normally carry their own proposals and are acted upon when they are presented. However, they are subject to approval on the same basis as any other matter of business before Annual Conference.⁵⁹

B. UNFUNDED ANNUAL CONFERENCE MANDATES

Whereas: Annual Conference is the highest human authority in Church of the Brethren polity, and

Whereas: there are various program and administrative arms of the Church of the Brethren, and

Whereas: program decisions made by Annual Conference should be systematically worked into the program and budget processes of the various agencies reportable to Annual Conference, and

Whereas: careful stewardship of God-given resources is an historic value of the Church of the Brethren,

Therefore,

1. As Standing Committee each year examines all new and unfinished business to be presented to Annual Conference, it shall assess each item for implications of *new* programming or other mandates entailing costs by an agency or agencies that are not included in current budgets. If Standing Committee determines there are such implications mandated by the item, it shall have the option to recommend to Annual Conference that a decision on the business item be delayed for one year in order for a study to be made of the feasibility and costs that may be required of the agency or agencies and any other collateral impacts, such as closure or substitution of other programming that may need to occur in order to implement the program.

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2. That the task of preparing this report be completed by the Program Feasibility Committee consisting of two persons who are members of Standing Committee at the time of their appointments and one person representing each of the agencies who are staff or members of their respective agency boards at the time of their appointment.

The committee shall be appointed in the following way:

- a. Standing Committee representatives will be selected by Standing Committee. Expiration of a term of service on Standing Committee will not require termination of service on the Program Feasibility Committee.
- b. Agency representatives will be appointed by their respective agencies using procedures of their own choosing.
- c. Tenure shall be for one term of four years. The committee members shall have staggered terms in order to keep continuity on the committee.

3. The Program Feasibility Committee will be chaired by the Standing Committee representative with the greater length of service on the Program Feasibility Committee.

4. This committee will conduct a thorough study including consultation with the affected agency or agencies and contact with the group that brought the query or item for further clarification and dialogue, and will bring this report directly back to Annual Conference which authorized the study.

5. When an unfunded mandate involving agency programming *arises from the floor of Annual Conference without having been processed through normal channels*, the action of Annual Conference will not be implemented until the Program Feasibility Committee has conducted a feasibility study and cost analysis of the proposed program. The Program Feasibility Committee will report the results of its study to the next Annual Conference through the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee will consider the item as *new business* and make a recommendation for action to Annual Conference including the study of the Program Feasibility Study.

6. Exception: When an immediate response is imperative, the Program Feasibility Committee, upon completion of the feasibility study and cost estimates, will report to the Annual Conference officers and the officers of the affected agency or agencies. Upon approval by these groups, the program will be implemented without additional action by Annual Conference. A report of actions taken under these circumstances will be made to the next Annual Conference by the Conference officers. In the event the officers and affected agencies cannot agree on the implementation of the program, the dispensation of the item will follow the appropriate process in # 4 or # 5 above.

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7. The expenses of the Program Feasibility Committee will be reimbursed out of the Annual Conference budget.⁶⁰

V. Conduct of Conference Business⁶¹

A. PHYSICAL FEATURES

The Program and Arrangements Committee plans for the most effective physical arrangements, including the placement of microphones, a workable system of recognizing and honoring people wishing to speak, and the training and use of ushers to preserve order and to improve business procedures.

B. VOTING

1. The moderator shall decide when a question shall be voted upon, but anyone from the voting body may move the previous question.
2. A simple majority vote shall decide all matters except where Robert's *Rules of Order* requires otherwise, or on such matters as Standing Committee interprets as involving a change of church polity, in which case a two-thirds majority is required for passage.

C. CONFERENCE RULES

1. The Standing Committee has no authority to change a query or a paper presented as Conference business.
2. The Conference shall have no authority to change the wording or the intent of any paper or query submitted as Conference business; but upon accepting it as business, Conference may alter its scope or redirect its emphasis so long as Conference deals with its original concern.⁶²
3. The Conference may not alter the regular report of one of the boards or continuing committees, but may alter the paper of any board or committee to which it has directed a matter of business for study and report. No report presented by a board or continuing committee may contain business items. If there are recommendations, questions, or a seeking of support of a proposal, etc., they must come as an item of new business and not be included in an informative report.⁶³
4. Each query with its current answer shall be presented by the chairperson of the appropriate committee or another representative.

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Queries and their answers shall not be read unless the Conference officers deem it necessary. Reports shall be presented by their respective representatives after which the moderator shall declare the same the business of the meeting.⁶⁴

5. If the final answer presented in response to a query is totally rejected by the Conference, the query shall be regarded as unanswered and shall be immediately disposed of as though it were an item of new business.⁶⁵
5. If an agenda item determined by Standing Committee to involve a change in church polity comes too late to be included in the Conference Booklet, final action on that item shall be postponed until the following Annual Conference.⁶⁶

D. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

1. No one shall speak more than twice on the same question. The first speech shall be limited to three minutes and the second to two minutes. This shall not include the explanation of a report or a paper called for by the moderator.⁶⁷
2. All appeals from the rulings of the moderator shall be decided by the voting body.
3. Robert's *Rules of Order* shall be the standard for any point not covered by these rules.
4. These rules may be amended at any regular session of Annual Conference.

E. GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL RESPONSE QUERIES⁶⁸

Standing Committee may determine that a query is likely to generate adversarial stances because of deep feelings and strong differences of opinion. It may then choose to recommend that Annual Conference depart from Robert's *Rules of Order* and follow a process that has been developed for dealing with "Special Response Queries."

VI. Financing Annual Conference⁶⁹

The means of financing Annual Conference is the responsibility of the Leadership Team. The following are the principal means for accomplishing such funding.

A. DISTRICT ASSESSMENTS

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District assessments have been a significant part of Annual Conference support since 1907. District assessments shall be “continued as needed,” according to Annual Conference minutes.⁷⁰

B. REGISTRATION FEES

Standing Committee and local church delegates shall pay a registration fee in advance of Conference. This fee is underwritten by the districts and churches sending these delegates. There is a general registration at Conference for non-delegates, and a pre-registration process as well. These fees cover such items as the Conference Booklet and other Conference expenses, the exact amount of these fees to be recommended by the Program and Arrangements Committee to the Leadership Team.

C. OFFERINGS

The Program and Arrangements Committee shall plan for offerings to be taken during Conference worship services to support the Conference expenses.⁷¹

¹ The place of Annual Conference in Church of the Brethren organization and polity has been clarified in such key situations as these: 1947 Minutes of the Annual Conferences Church of the Brethren (1945-1954), “Brotherhood Organization,” 52-59; 1960 Minutes of the Annual Conferences Church of the Brethren (1955-1964), “Study of the Annual Conference,” 162-183; 1968 Minutes of the Annual Conferences Church of the Brethren (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 316-320. Additional references and emendations follow.

² 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 316; “Church Polity, Including Referendum on Merger and Continuation of Ecumenical Concerns,” 337.

³ 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 316.

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⁴ 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “Church Polity, Including Referendum on Merger and Coordination of Ecumenical Concerns,” 337. See also 2004 Minutes (2000-2004), “Query on Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions,” 1270-1280.

⁵ 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 318.

⁶ 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 319. See also 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure,” 276.

⁷ 2007 Minutes, “Updates to Annual Conference Polity,” 251.

⁸ 2007 Minutes, “Update to Annual Conference Polity.”

⁹ 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 318. See also 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), “Brotherhood Organization,” 57.

¹⁰ 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), “Brotherhood Organization,” 57.

¹¹ 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 318. See also 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), “Brotherhood Organization,” 57.

¹² 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure,” 274.

¹³ 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure,” 275.

¹⁴ 1988 Minutes (1985-1989), “Ratio for Standing Committee Representations,” 674.

¹⁵ 1989 Minutes (1985-1989), “Standing Committee Members – Term of Office,” 879-880.

¹⁶ This sentence has been edited to conform with the three-year term.

¹⁷ 1976 Minutes (1975-1979), “Brotherhood Understanding,” 208.

¹⁸ 1987 Minutes (1985-1989), “Dual Membership and Conflict of Interest/Time/Responsibility,” 503; 1989 Minutes (1985-1989), “Eligibility for Standing Committee,” 879.

¹⁹ 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), “Brotherhood Organization,” 55.

²⁰ 1978 Minutes (1975-1979), “Role and Function of Standing Committee,” 469.

²¹ 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), “Brotherhood Organization,” 56; 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), “Study of the Annual Conference,” 180-181.

²² 1985 Minutes (1985-1989), “Membership Study,” 132.

²³ 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure,” 275.

²⁴ 1976 Minutes (1975-1979), “Brotherhood Understanding,” 207.

²⁵ 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 56; 1973 Minutes (1970-1974), "Non-Brethren Ministers as Delegates," 357.

²⁶ 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 56-57.

²⁷ 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Study of the Annual Conference," 180-181.

²⁸ This paragraph edited to conform to new Annual Conference schedule begun in 2000.

²⁹ 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference," 318-319.

³⁰ See also 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 58.

³¹ 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 274.

³² 1989 Minutes (1985-1989), "Eligibility for Standing Committee," 879.

³³ 2005 Minutes, "Updates to Annual Conference Polity," 251-251.

³⁴ 1962 Minutes (1955-1964), "Moderator-Elect," 254. See also 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), "Recommendations from Standing Committee," 102, and 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 273.

³⁵ 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), "Recommendation from Standing Committee," 102; 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 274.

³⁶ 1966 Minutes (1965-1969), "Proposal on Officer Personnel," 176.

³⁷ 2001 Minutes (2000-2004), "Report of the Annual Conference Review and Evaluation Committee," 497-500.

³⁸ 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 275-276. See also 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee," 175-176.

³⁹ 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 273. Updated 2005 Minutes, 241-250).

⁴⁰ 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 79; 1972 Minutes (1970-1974), "Bethany Seminary Study Committee," 235; 1974 Minutes (1970-1974), "A Plan to Establish a Bethany Seminary Fund . . .," 443; 1977 Minutes (1975-1979), "Revision of the Member-at-large Category of the Bethany Board of Directors," 356. See also 1925 Minutes (1920-1930), "Commission on Educational Problems," 5-6.

⁴¹ 1943 Minutes (1941-1950), "Retirement Plan for Ministers and Missionaries," 4-10; 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "Reorganization of the General Brotherhood Board," 343; 1982 Minutes (1980-1984), "Church of the Brethren Pension Plan Restated," 424-434; 1986 Minutes (1985-1989), "General Board/Pension Board Relationship," 319-320; 1987 Minutes (1985-1989), "Pension Board Restructure Committee Report," 476-478; 1989 Minutes (1985-1989), "Brethren

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Benefit Trust Document Revisions,” 906-907; 1990 Minutes (1990-1994), “Ratification of Brethren Benefit Trust Actions,” 131-133; 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Ratification of Brethren Benefit Trust Actions,” 342; 1993 Minutes (1990-1994), “Proposed Change to Brethren Benefit Trust Articles of Organization,” 630; 1998 Minutes (1995-1999), “Changes to the Brethren Benefit Trust,” 791-794.

⁴² 1998 Minutes (1995-1999), “On Earth Peace Assembly Request for....,” 805-806. See also 1983 Minutes (1980-1984), “Request of the On Earth Peace Assembly for....” 587-590.

⁴³ 1987 Minutes (1985-1989), “Revisions of Brethren Polity,” 486.

⁴⁴ 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure,” 281.

⁴⁵ 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “Church Polity,” 338-339. See also “Affiliation with the National Council of Churches,” 324.

⁴⁶ 1971 Minutes (1970-1974), “Report of the Committee on Interchurch Relations,” 116.

⁴⁷ 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure,” 274.

⁴⁸ 1976 Minutes (1975-1979), “Appointment of Representatives to the World Council of Churches,” 220-221.

⁴⁹ 2007 Minutes, “Recommendation Regarding Christian Churches Together,” 293-294.

⁵⁰ 1971 Minutes (1970-1974), “A Proposal of an Associated Relationship....,” 164-165. 1972 Minutes (1970-1974), “A Proposal of an Associated Relationship....,” 253.

⁵¹ 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “Church Polity,” 337-338.

⁵² 2005 Minutes, “The Review and Evaluation Committee – A New Mandate,” 238-240.

⁵³ 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), “Brotherhood Organization,” 57.

⁵⁴ 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), “Report of the Central Committee,” 59-60; 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 317-318, and “Proposal on Query Procedures,” 426-427.

⁵⁵ 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 317-318; “Proposal on Query Procedures,” 426-427.

⁵⁶ 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), “Report of the Central Committee,” 60.

⁵⁷ 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “Selection of Conference Committees,” 348.

⁵⁸ 1976 Minutes (1975-1979), “Brotherhood Understanding,” 208.

⁵⁹ 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), “Report of the Central Committee,” 60.

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⁶⁰ 2008 Minutes (2005-2008), “Revision to Unfunded Mandates,” 1241.

⁶¹ 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), “Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee,” 181-182. See also 2006 Minutes, “Doing Church Business,” containing recommendations for Conference officers and planning committees to consider for modifying the conduct of business in future Conferences.

⁶² 1951 Minutes (1945-1954), “Amendments to the Conference Rules,” 130.

⁶³ 1975 Minutes (1975-1979), “Rules on Business Items in Annual Reports,” 99.

⁶⁴ 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), “Reading of Conference Business,” 45.

⁶⁵ 1967 Minutes (1965-1969), “Disposition of Unanswered Queries,” 260.

⁶⁶ 1982 Minutes (1980-1984), “Methods and Procedures Dealing with Issues that Come to Annual Conference,” 424.

⁶⁷ 1988 Minutes (1985-1989), “length of Speeches in Conference Debate,” 672.

⁶⁸ 1988 Minutes (1985-1989), “A Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues,” 674-681. Revised 2009, 2009 Minutes, pg. 231-240.

⁶⁹ 1990 Minutes (1955-1964), “Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee,” 182-183; 2001 Minutes (2000-2004), “Report of the Annual Conference Review and Evaluation Committee,” 506-507).

⁷⁰ 1907 Minutes, “A Report of Committee to Provide a Plan for Raising Funds for the Annual Meeting Treasury”; 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), “Study of the Annual Conference,” 172.

⁷¹ The 2002 InterAgency Forum agreed that 100 percent of Annual Conference offerings should be applied toward Conference expenses. The decision was reaffirmed by the 2003 InterAgency Forum for an indefinite time. (See minutes of InterAgency Forum, January 30-31, 2003, page 3.)

CHAPTER II

THE AGENCIES OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE¹

Preamble

An agency of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference is defined by:

- having received the approval of Annual Conference on the recommendation of Standing Committee. (Note: If Standing Committee approves the request of an organization to become an Annual Conference agency, that request shall normally become new business for the Annual Conference the following year.)
- having separate entity status established by legal incorporation with official documents such as a charter, articles of incorporation, et cetera. By-law changes shall be reported to Annual Conference, except where the agency's by-laws call for the approval of Annual Conference.
- annual reports to Annual Conference, including but not limited to an independently audited financial statement.
- by-laws and an organizational design that provides for the following:
 1. At least one-third of the agency's board of directors or trustees is directly elected by Annual Conference.
 2. No more than one-half of the agency's board is appointed by the board itself and those appointees are confirmed by Annual Conference.
 3. A commitment to providing ministry that is clearly within the scope of Annual Conference directives.
 4. Being the sole provider of those aspects of its ministry that are requested by Annual Conference and if, alternatively, an agency provides part of a ministry collaboratively with another Annual Conference agency or agencies, it will do so in a way that maximizes stewardship of both the human and financial resources of the denomination more effectively than if acting as the sole provider.
 5. Commits to accepting requests from Annual Conference for program initiatives within its designated realm of mission for the denomination, providing the requests have met the conditions specified by Annual Conference for "unfunded Conference mandates."
 6. Has a commitment that, if the agency engages in either collaborative or solo programming initiatives that are not directly requested by Annual Conference, it will allocate adequate ratios of those resources raised within the denomination to those requested programs as evidenced in the mission statement and by-laws of the agency.

The approved agencies of Annual Conference are:

The Church of the Brethren, Inc. (aka Mission and Ministry Board)

Bethany Theological Seminary

The Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust

On Earth Peace Assembly, Inc.

The Church of the Brethren, Inc.²

Bylaws³

Article One: Name, Offices and Defined Terms

Section 1. Name

The name of the Corporation is Church of the Brethren, Inc.

Section 2. History of the Corporation—Predecessor Organizations

The Corporation is organized in the State of Illinois under the General Not-For-Profit Corporation Act of the State of Illinois, 1986, as amended. The Corporation was organized originally on April 16, 1894, under the name of THE GENERAL MISSIONARY AND TRACT COMMITTEE OF THE GERMAN BAPTIST BRETHREN CHURCH. On June 23, 1908, the Corporation changed its name to GENERAL MISSION BOARD OF THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN. On March 4, 1947, the Corporation changed its name to GENERAL BROTHERHOOD BOARD CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN. On April 8, 1947, all previously incorporated agencies of the Church of the Brethren, THE GENERAL SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD OF THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN, THE GENERAL EDUCATIONAL BOARD OF THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN, and the BRETHREN SERVICE COMMITTEE were merged into the General Brotherhood Board. On September 30, 1957, the House of the Church of the Brethren, the incorporated publishing house of the Church of the Brethren, was merged into the General Brotherhood Board. And on November 19, 1968, the Corporation changed its name to CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN GENERAL BOARD. The ASSOCIATION OF BRETHREN CAREGIVERS was created in September 1991 by merging the BRETHREN HEALTH FOUNDATION and the BRETHREN HEALTH AND WELFARE ASSOCIATION, a voluntary unincorporated association. The BRETHREN HEALTH FOUNDATION was created on September 30, 1987, by merging the BETHANY HOSPITAL FOUNDATION and the BRETHREN HEALTH EDUCATION FOUNDATION, INC. BETHANY BRETHREN-GARFIELD PARK COMMUNITY HOSPITAL FOUNDATION was renamed BETHANY HOSPITAL FOUNDATION on May 25, 1979. On September 1, 2008 the ASSOCIATION OF BRETHREN CAREGIVERS was merged into the CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN GENERAL BOARD and the name was changed to CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN, INC.

Section 3. Offices and Registered Agent

The Corporation shall continuously maintain in the State of Illinois a registered office and a registered agent whose business office is identical with the registered office and may have other offices within or

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without the state.

A. Corporate Office

The registered office of the Corporation shall be at 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, Illinois 60120.

B. Registered Agent

The registered agent of the Corporation shall be the General Secretary unless otherwise determined by the Board of Directors.

Section 4. Defined Terms

1. "Board of Directors," "Board," and "Mission and Ministry Board" mean the board of directors of the Corporation.
2. "Congregation(s)" means the local church (es) of the denomination recognized by the various district conferences.
3. "Denomination" means the Church of the Brethren denomination.
4. "Director(s)" means the member(s) of the board.
5. "District" means the regional grouping of congregations.
6. "Standing Committee" means those delegates elected by the districts and the past moderator with nominating, legislative, judicial and envisioning responsibilities for the Annual Conference.

Article Two: Members

Section 1. Identification of Members

The members of the Corporation are the congregations of the Church of the Brethren denomination. The congregations of the Church of the Brethren are organized into geographic districts, each district being headed by its own independent corporation(s). Elected representatives from each congregation and each district, hereafter called "delegates," meet in an Annual Conference to function as a deliberating legislative assembly, determining the polity and setting forth the primary courses of action and relationships in which the church should be involved. The Annual Conference, which is the highest authority of the Church of the Brethren in all matters of procedure, program, polity, and discipline, also serves as the annual meeting of the Corporation to elect the Corporation board of directors, also known as Mission and Ministry Board, and to transact such other business as may properly come before the meeting.

Additional responsibilities of Annual Conference include:

- electing Annual Conference officers, members of the Mission and Ministry Board of Church of the Brethren, Inc., members of the boards of related Annual Conference agencies, and members of special committees authorized by the Annual Conference. These elections are made from nominations presented to the delegate body by Standing Committee;
- reviewing the work of the denomination as presented to Annual Conference in the reports of the board of directors and other institutions of the denomination;
- projecting the program of the denomination, determining the new fields of endeavor, plans for advance, and all other necessary matters;
- determining the denomination's answer to queries;
- receiving the reports of committees appointed to deal with specific problems in the life of the denomination; and
- determining what resolutions shall be the voice of the Church of the Brethren on the issues of the day.

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Section 2. Voting Rights

Delegates from each congregation shall represent that member and shall be entitled to vote on such matters that are submitted to a vote of the members at the annual meeting. Each congregation shall be entitled to one delegate for the first 200 active members and one additional delegate for each additional 200 active members or fraction thereof of the congregation. Delegates from each district shall serve as members of the Standing Committee that reviews all new business and makes recommendations to Annual Conference for passage. They also shall be members of the Annual Conference voting body. Each district shall send one delegate for the first five thousand or fewer members and one additional representative for each additional five thousand members or fraction thereof.

Article Three: Meetings

Section 1. Annual Meeting

An annual meeting of the members of the Corporation shall be held. The Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren shall be the annual meeting of the members of the Corporation.

Section 2. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the Corporation may be called either by the board of directors of the Corporation, or by at least 40 percent of the members of the Corporation having voting rights, for the purposes(s) stated in the call of the meeting.

Section 3. Notice of Meetings

Written and/or electronic notice stating the place, day, and hour of the annual meeting of the members of the Corporation and, in the case of a special meeting of the members, the purpose or purposes for which the meeting is called, shall be delivered not less than 30 nor more than 60 days before the date of the meeting, or in the case of a removal of one or more directors, a merger, consolidation, dissolution or sale, lease, or exchange of substantially all of the assets, not less than 30 nor more than 60 days before the date of the meeting, by or at the direction of the moderator, general secretary, or Conference secretary, or persons calling the meeting, to each member of the Corporation entitled to vote at such meeting. Additional notices can be provided through denominational communications.

Section 4. Conduct of Meetings

The moderator of the Annual Conference shall preside over the annual and special meetings of the Corporation. The secretary of the Annual Conference shall maintain the records of the meetings.

Section 5. Quorum.

A majority of the delegates present at any meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business, except to adjourn.

Section 6. Standing Committee Members

In recognition that the membership of the Corporation meets only one time during the calendar year, namely at Annual Conference, any action required of members of the Corporation between annual meetings may be taken by the vote of the delegates of Standing Committee. Notice of such a meeting shall be by first class mail to the members of Standing Committee at the address listed in their registration

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for the prior Annual Conference.

Article Four: Annual Conference Officers

Section 1. Annual Conference Officers

The Annual Conference officers include the moderator, the moderator-elect, and the Annual Conference secretary.

The Annual Conference officers shall list queries for consideration by Annual Conference that in their judgment have fulfilled the preliminary steps. They shall have the responsibility of informing the congregations and delegates prior to Annual Conference of the items of business that will come before the Annual Conference. They shall study the Annual Conference business and allocate the amount of time for each item. They shall set the orders of the day for business sessions, but these may be adjusted by action of the delegate body if need arises. The Annual Conference officers shall appoint messengers, tellers, the timekeeper, and other people as needed for implementing the Annual Conference business. No ratification of these appointments is needed. The officers shall appoint such committees as are not provided for otherwise.

The Annual Conference officers serve as members of the leadership team of the Corporation.

Section 2. The Moderator and Moderator-Elect

A. Term of service

The moderator serves three years, serving one year in three successive offices.

- Moderator-elect. The moderator is elected one year in advance of beginning a year of service as moderator. The moderator-elect serves as moderator when the moderator is unable to perform the duties of moderator.
- Moderator. The moderator-elect becomes moderator at the close of the Annual Conference a year following election and continues in that office until the following Annual Conference.
- Past Moderator. The moderator becomes the past moderator after serving one year as moderator concluding with the Annual Conference. The past moderator serves as a voting member of Standing Committee for one year.

B. Eligibility

Any active member of the Church of the Brethren may serve as moderator. During the three years of service, a moderator cannot be employed by or serve on the board of directors of Church of the Brethren, Inc., or of an agency reportable to Annual Conference.

C. Duties

- preside over all sessions of Standing Committee and of Annual Conference, and to act as the official representative of the denomination;
- contact or attend district and other Brethren conferences;
- serve ex officio as a member of the board of directors in a consultative, nonvoting capacity;
- represent the denomination at strategic interchurch conferences;
- serve as the chairperson of the Annual Conference program and arrangements committee;
- give a “state of the church” address at Annual Conference.

Section Three. The Annual Conference Secretary

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A. Qualifications and Tenure

Any active member of the Church is eligible for election to this office. The secretary is elected for a term of five years and is limited to two terms. During service as secretary, the secretary cannot be employed by the board of directors of Church of the Brethren, Inc., nor be employed by or serve on the board of another agency reportable to Annual Conference.

B. Duties

The secretary shall record the minutes of Standing Committee and of Annual Conference and shall publish the Annual Conference minutes. The secretary shall serve as a member of the Annual Conference program and arrangements committee. The secretary shall

- keep the minutes of the board of directors,
- see that all notices are given according to these bylaws or as required by law;
- have custody of the corporate records;
- keep a register of the post-office addresses of each member;
- in general perform all duties incident to the office of secretary and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned by the Annual Conference officers or the board of directors;
- serve as an ex officio member of the board of directors without vote.

C. Assistant Secretary

The Conference secretary may appoint such assistant secretaries as necessary.

Article Five: Leadership Team

Section 1. Purpose

There shall be a leadership team to provide executive leadership for the committees and general oversight of Annual Conference and to be a liaison between Annual Conference and the Corporation. Specific functions of the leadership team shall include:

- coordinate denominational envisioning;
- delegate tasks from the actions of Annual Conference;
- interpret Annual Conference decisions and denominational polity;
- review recommended changes to Annual Conference policies and guidelines;
- general oversight for Annual Conference, in consultation with the Annual Conference program and arrangements committee, the Conference director, and the Corporation treasurer;
- serve as executive committee for Annual Conference;
- propose and review bylaw changes for the Corporation to Standing Committee, in consultation with the board of directors

Section 2. Membership

The leadership team consists of the current moderator, moderator-elect, Conference secretary, and the general secretary.

Article Six: Board of Directors

Section 1. Role of the Board of Directors

The affairs of the Corporation shall be managed by the board of directors, also known as the Mission and

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Ministry Board. The board as a whole shall consider and evaluate all phases of its program and determine the general policies and budget needs in each area of its activities. All questions related to policies, program, and budget needs shall be submitted to and passed upon by the board as a whole.

Section 2. Directors

A. Term of Office and Number

1. Term

Directors shall serve five-year terms. Directors shall not be eligible for another term until two years after completing the prior term. A director who serves less than half of an unexpired term may serve a full five-year term.

2. Number and geographic balance

The board shall consist of 17 voting directors. Ten directors shall be elected by Annual Conference. There shall be five at-large directors elected by the board and affirmed by Annual Conference, to obtain specific skills and gifts needed. The chair and the chair-elect shall also be directors. Of the 10 elected directors, two shall come from each of five areas of the denomination, with staggered terms to ensure continuity. Directors shall represent the entire denomination rather than a specific area. The purpose of election from areas is to ensure geographic balance on the board. If a director moves out of that area while serving on the board, that person shall continue as a director as if living in the original area. There shall be no more than two directors from a district and only one director from a congregation.

3. Area Composition by Districts

- *Area One:* Atlantic Northeast, Southern Pennsylvania, Middle Pennsylvania, Western Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic;
- *Area Two:* Northern Ohio, Southern Ohio, Northern Indiana, South-Central Indiana, Michigan, Illinois-Wisconsin;
- *Area Three:* Atlantic Southeast, West Marva, Shenandoah, Southeastern, Virginia;
- *Area Four:* Northern Plains, Western Plains, Missouri-Arkansas, Southern Plains.
- *Area Five:* Idaho, Oregon-Washington, Pacific Southwest.

4. Number and terms during transition

From 2008 to 2014, the number of directors may vary from 35 to 17. Directors previously elected as General Board trustees shall serve five-year terms, and directors previously elected as ABC trustees shall serve three-year terms. As directors resign or their terms expire, the number will decrease. The Standing Committee nominating committee will manage the transition, maintaining geographic diversity and staggered terms, until the number of directors reaches 17. No new directors will be elected or replaced under Section 2(E) of this Article until the number of directors is 17, unless an election is necessary to ensure continued representation of an area.

B. Ex officio Directors

The chief executive officers of Bethany Theological Seminary, the Brethren Benefit Trust, and On Earth Peace shall be ex officio members of the board. A member of the Council of District ~~of~~ Executives appointed by that organization shall be an ex officio member of the board. The board shall include any other ex officio directors designated by the board. These persons shall serve in a consultative, non-voting capacity.

C. Qualifications

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Persons considered for election to the board shall exhibit qualities of consecrated Christian living in home, church, and community. They shall be persons who are committed to the mission of the church and conversant with issues of the day. They shall possess competencies needed in the work of the board and be willing to give the major time and effort required for active participation in dealing with the concerns before the board and the denomination.

D. Eligibility

Any active member of the Church of the Brethren may serve on the board. The board may from time to time select one person who is not a member of the Church of the Brethren as an at-large director. A director cannot be employed by the Corporation. A director cannot be employed by or serve on the board of an agency reportable to Annual Conference, nor can a director be the executive/minister or associate executive/minister of a district. A director cannot serve as a congregational or Standing Committee delegate to Annual Conference.

E. Vacancies

Any vacancies or unfulfilled terms of elected members on the board shall be filled by the nominating committee of Standing Committee. Any vacancies or unfulfilled terms of at-large members of the board shall be filled by appointment by the board. If the vacancy is in a board position elected from one of the areas, then the new member called to fill that vacancy shall come from the same area. All such appointments shall be ratified by the subsequent Annual Conference.

F. Responsibilities

All directors shall participate in all board activities, except that ex officio members shall not vote. Only the voting directors shall meet to consider personnel matters. Only voting directors shall be eligible to serve as officers of the board.

G. Disqualification of Director

Where information comes to the attention of the board that would reasonably demonstrate that a director is no longer qualified to serve, the information shall be forwarded to Standing Committee of Annual Conference for its consideration.

Section 3. Meetings of the Board of Directors

A. Voting

All voting rights are vested in the board of directors. The board shall exercise all the powers ~~and~~ to perform all acts permitted by the articles of incorporation and these bylaws.

B. Board Organizational Meeting

The annual organizational meeting of the board may be held in conjunction with Annual Conference without other notice than these bylaws. At the organizational meeting, the officers of the Corporation for the ensuing year shall be confirmed.

C. Other Regular Meetings

Unless otherwise determined by the board, the board will hold regular meetings in the spring and the fall at the corporate office or at such other place as the board shall designate. The board may provide by resolution the time and place for the holding of additional regular meetings of the board without other notice than such resolution.

D. Special Meetings

Special meetings of the board may be called at any time or place by the chair or shall be called upon the written request of any five (5) voting directors given to the Annual Conference secretary.

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E. Notice

Written notice of any special meeting of the board shall be given to each director. Whenever notice is required within these bylaws, it may be given either personally, by mail, electronic mail, or fax. Timely actual knowledge of a meeting or action is effective notice. When given by mail, the notice of any proposed meeting shall be given by first-class mail, deposited at least seven days prior to the meeting. Electronic mail, telephone, fax, or personal notice shall be communicated at least three days prior to any meeting. Notice of a conference call in which action is to be taken shall be at least 24 hours prior to the conference call, if practicable. Notice of any special meeting of the board may be waived in writing signed by the person or persons entitled to such notice either before or after the time of the meeting. The attendance of a director at any meeting shall constitute a waiver of notice of such meeting, except where a director attends a meeting for the express purpose of objecting to the transaction of any business because the meeting is not lawfully called or convened. Neither the business to be transacted nor the purpose of any regular or special meeting of the board need be specified in the notice or waiver of notice of such meeting, unless specifically required by law or by these bylaws.

F. Quorum

A majority of the current voting directors shall be present at all meetings to constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business, except to adjourn.

G. Manner of Acting

The act of a majority of the directors present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the board, unless the act of a greater number is required by statute, the articles of incorporation, or these bylaws.

H. Action without Meeting

Any action required to be taken at a board meeting, or any other action which may be taken at a board meeting, may be taken without a meeting if consent in writing, setting forth the action so taken, shall be signed by all the directors entitled to vote with respect to the subject matter thereof.

I. Attendance by Telephone or Electronic Equipment

Directors may participate in any board meeting through the use of a conference telephone or other communications equipment by means of which all individuals participating in the meeting can communicate with each other, and such participation in a meeting shall constitute presence in person at the meeting.

J. Compensation

Directors shall not receive any stated salaries for their services, but by resolution, expenses of the meeting will be paid for each regular or special meeting of the board. Nothing in these bylaws shall be construed to preclude any director from serving the Corporation in any other capacity and receiving reasonable compensation in that capacity.

K. Open Meetings

The board meetings are open to the public, except for executive sessions that deal with personnel issues, litigation, or sensitive matters.

Section 4. Organization of the Board of Directors

A. Executive Committee

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The executive committee shall be composed of the chair and the chair-elect of the board; two members at large called by the board; and the general secretary who shall serve without vote. The Annual Conference moderator shall serve as an ex officio member of the committee without vote. The functions of the executive committee are to:

- facilitate the board's goal-setting and long-range planning, taking into consideration the counsel of the mission and ministries planning council;
- consider recommendations from the mission and ministries planning council;
- develop budget proposals and long-range financial projections for the consideration of the board;
- serve as a human resource committee for the general secretary;
- carry responsibility for the fiscal operations of the board;
- act for the board between regular board meetings on matters that cannot be deferred until the next meeting.

Meetings may be called at any time by the chair, and shall be called by the chair or the general secretary upon the request in writing of any three members of the executive committee. In all meetings of the executive committee, a quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the voting members. Three affirmative votes shall be required on all matters in which the executive committee acts for or on behalf of the board. On other matters a simple majority shall apply.

B. Mission and Ministries Planning Council

1. Composition

The mission and ministries planning council shall be composed of the board chair, one director called by the board, the general secretary, one executive director called by the board's senior staff, Annual Conference moderator, Annual Conference moderator-elect, and two district executives/ministers named by the Council of District Executives (CODE). The district executives/ministers shall serve alternating three-year terms. The general secretary shall chair this council.

2. Function

The primary function of the mission and ministries planning council is to provide a continuous interface between the members, congregations, and districts with the ministries of Annual Conference through the board. The council shall receive and review ideas for new ministries and missions from congregations, districts, and Standing Committee.

Through a process of discernment, the council will then make recommendations to the board. Discernment is to be through prayerfully studying the scriptures, listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit, and facilitating a means for listening to the voices of sisters and brothers in Christ.

C. Other Committees

To facilitate the ability of the board to handle effectively its wide-ranging responsibilities, it shall be authorized to enlist the services of task teams and specialists. These ad hoc appointments shall be directly responsible to the board through the executive committee. The board may organize itself into whatever committees or groups that would most effectively utilize the expertise of the director and meet needs and functions as they arise. The board may also enlist the services of task teams or specialists to facilitate further the capability of the board to handle effectively its wide-ranging responsibilities.

Section 5. Miscellaneous

A. Contracts

The board may authorize any officer, officers, agent, or agents of the Corporation to enter into any

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contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the Corporation, and such authority may be general or confined to specific instances.

B. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Corporation shall begin on the first day of January each year or as fixed by resolution of the board.

C. Waiver of Notice

Whenever any notice is required to be given under law, the articles of incorporation, or the bylaws, a waiver in writing signed by the person or persons entitled to such notice, whether before or after the time stated therein, shall be deemed equivalent to the giving of such notice.

Article Seven: Officers

Section 1. Officers

The Corporation shall have the following officers: the chair, the chair-elect, the Annual Conference secretary, the treasurer, and the general secretary. The chair-elect shall be elected by the board from its current members. Both chair and chair-elect shall serve two year terms. The board will elect the chair-elect every other year. The chair-elect shall automatically become the chair after serving as chair-elect. The chair and chair-elect remain voting directors. No other officer shall be required to be a director. When the chair-elect is elected that board position will become vacant and dealt with under Article 6, Section 2(E). The treasurer is appointed by the general secretary and confirmed by the board.

A. Chair

The chair shall serve as chair of the board of directors and the executive committee and shall preside at all meetings of the board and the executive committee. The chair is an ex officio member, without vote, of all committees, unless otherwise specified.

B. Chair-Elect

The chair-elect shall perform the duties of chair of the board of directors during such period as the chair of the board is absent or unable to perform those duties, or otherwise at the request of the chair. The chair-elect shall perform such duties and have such other powers as shall be assigned by the chair or the board. In the absence of the chair or in the event of his or her inability or refusal to act, the chair elect shall perform the duties of the chair. The chair-elect shall serve as chair of the board development committee.

C. Treasurer

The treasurer shall have charge of and be responsible for the maintenance of adequate books of account for the Corporation; have charge and custody of all funds and securities of the Corporation, and be responsible for the receipt and disbursement thereof; and perform all duties incident to the office of a treasurer and such other duties as may be assigned by the chair or the board. The treasurer, in addition, shall have the authority to receive and to negotiate the receipt of all monies, other personal property, real property and other assets to be distributed to the Corporation by gift, contract, bequest, devise, or otherwise. The treasurer shall have the authority and responsibility to invest all corporate assets, including without limitation the ability to buy and sell stocks, bonds, and other securities; to deliver negotiable or non-negotiable instruments, evidences of indebtedness or other documents; and to pledge, endorse, assign, and transfer any and all documents, stocks, bonds, or other property of the Corporation as

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necessary to effectuate the duties of the treasurer. With the approval of the board, the treasurer may delegate specified duties to an assistant treasurer or other person for the effective conduct of the affairs of the Corporation.

D. General Secretary

The board shall employ a general secretary, whose functions shall include the following:

- carry overall responsibility for planning, coordination, and evaluation of the program administered by the board;
- serve as chief ecumenical officer for the denomination.
- perform such duties usually vested in the president of a corporation;
- serve as the chief executive officer of the board;
- be responsible for hiring such staff as are necessary to carry forward the program of the board;
- serve as an ex officio member, without vote, of the board and the executive committee.
- serve as a member and the convener of the leadership team.

E. Acting General Secretary

Each year the general secretary, in consultation with the executive committee, shall appoint a senior staff member to act as general secretary in the general secretary's absence or inability to perform usual duties.

Article Eight: Indemnification and Insurance

Section 1. Power to Hold Harmless

The Corporation may indemnify any person who was or is a party, or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending or completed action, suit, or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative (other than an action by or in the right of the Corporation) by reason of the fact that he or she is or was a director, officer, employee, or agent of the Corporation, or who is or was serving at the request of the Corporation as a director, officer, employee, or agent of another corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, against expenses (including attorneys' fees), judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by any such person in connection with such action, suit, or proceeding, if such person acted in good faith and in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in, or not opposed to, the best interests of the Corporation, and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. The termination of any action, suit, or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or upon a plea of *nolo contendere* or its equivalent, shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith and in a manner which he or she reasonably believed to be in, or not opposed to, the best interests of the Corporation, or, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, that the person had reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

Section 2. Power to Indemnify Litigant

The Corporation may indemnify any person who was or is a party, or threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed action or suit by or in the right of the Corporation to procure a judgment in its favor by reason of the fact that such person is or was a director, officer, employee, or agent of the Corporation, or is or was serving at the request of the Corporation as a director, officer, employee, or agent of another corporation, as a director, officer, employee, or agent of another corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, against expenses (including attorneys'

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fees) actually and reasonably incurred by such person in connection with the defense or settlement of such action or suit, if such person acted in good faith and in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in, or not opposed to, the best interests of the Corporation, provided that no indemnification shall be made in respect of any claim, issue, or matter as to which such person shall have been adjudged to be liable for negligence or misconduct in the performance of his or her duty to the Corporation, unless, and only to the extent that the court in which such action or suit was brought shall determine upon application that, despite the adjudication of liability, but in view of all the circumstances of the case, such person is fairly and reasonably entitled to indemnity for such expenses as the court shall deem proper.

Section 3. Reimbursement

To the extent that a trustee, officer, employee, or agent of the Corporation has been successful, on the merits or otherwise, in the defense of any action, suit, or proceeding referred to in Sections 1. and 2. of this Article, or in defense of any claim, issue, or matter therein, such person shall be indemnified against expenses (including attorneys' fees) actually and reasonably incurred by such person in connection therewith.

Section 4. Determination if Reimbursement Is Proper

Any indemnification under paragraphs Sections 1 or 2 of this Article (unless ordered by a court) shall be made by the Corporation only as authorized in the specific case, upon a determination that indemnification of the trustee, officer, employee, or agent is proper in the circumstances because he or she has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in Sections 1 or 2 of this Article. Such determination shall be made (1) by the board by a majority vote of a quorum consisting of directors who were not parties to such action, suit, or proceeding; (2) if such a quorum is not obtainable, or, even if obtainable, a quorum of disinterested trustees so directs, by independent legal counsel in a written opinion; or (3) by the members entitled to vote, if any.

Section 5. Advance of Expenses

Expenses incurred in defending a civil or criminal action, suit, or proceeding may be paid by the Corporation in advance of the final disposition of such action, suit, or proceeding, as authorized by the board of directors in the specific case, upon receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the director, officer, employee, or agent to repay such amount, unless it shall ultimately be determined that he or she is entitled to be indemnified by the Corporation as authorized in this section.

Section 6. Non-exclusivity

The indemnification provided by this section shall not be deemed exclusive of any other rights to which those seeking indemnification may be entitled under any agreement, vote of disinterested directors, or otherwise, both as to action in his or her official capacity and as to action in another capacity while holding such office, and shall continue as to a person who has ceased to be a director, officer, employee, or agent, and shall inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of such a person.

Section 7. Right to Acquire Insurance

The Corporation may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any person who is or was a director, officer, employee, or agent of the Corporation, or who is or was serving at the request of the Corporation as a director, officer, employee, or agent of another corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, against any liability asserted against such person and incurred by such person in any capacity, or arising out of his or her status as such, whether or not the Corporation would have the power to

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indemnify such person against such liability under the provisions of this section.

Section 8. Notice to Board

If the Corporation has paid indemnity or has advanced expenses under this section to a director, officer, employee, or agent, the Corporation shall report the indemnification or advance in writing to the members entitled to vote with or before the notice of the next meeting of such members.

Article Nine: Relationship to Denominational Polity

Polity statements approved by Annual Conference are lodged in the Church of the Brethren Manual of Organization and Polity and are binding on the Corporation.

Article Ten: Distribution of Assets

In case of the dissolution of the Corporation, all the remaining funds and property of the Corporation, if any, shall be distributed to such religious and charitable institution or institutions who then qualify as exempt organizations under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as the board may deem appropriate, to be used exclusively for the religious or charitable purposes for which the Corporation is organized, and no part thereof shall accrue to, or be distributed or paid to, any private individual.

Article Eleven: Amendment of These Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended either of two ways:

1. Any member of the Corporation may propose an amendment through the normal Annual Conference query process. The change would require a two-thirds vote of the delegates voting at Annual Conference.
2. An amendment or change may be proposed by the Mission and Ministry Board to Annual Conference as a new item of business. The change would require a two-thirds vote of the delegates.

Bethany Theological Seminary⁴

I. Mission and Purpose

The mission statement adopted by the Board of Trustees defines the purpose of Bethany Theological Seminary as follows:

Bethany Theological Seminary as a graduate school and academy seeks to prepare people for Christian ministry and to educate those called as witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the cities and communities of the world.

Bethany's educational program bears witness to the beliefs, heritage, and practices of the Church of the Brethren in the context of the whole Christian tradition.

To achieve its mission Bethany Theological Seminary

- Grounds its education in the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of the

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world and in the acceptance of the New Testament as our guide to faith and practice.

- Features the historic Brethren testimonies of community, peace, justice, reconciliation, service and simplicity.
- Advocates a learning process that grounds theological education in a spiritual formation within the life and ministry of communities of faith.
- Affirms a style of education that brings us into close relationship with congregation, the world-wide church, the people of the world, and God's creation.
- Seeks to equip the whole church to better discern its faith and calling.
- Invites into the community persons of both genders, and all of the races, nations, and confessions.

II. Educational Programs

As a graduate school and academy, Bethany is responsible to provide programs of theological education and ministry training for leadership in the Church of the Brethren.

A. The Graduate School

The graduate school offers two graduate degree programs, both accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada and the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, accredited agencies recognized by the U. S. Department of Education. The Master of Divinity (M.Div) program is a professional degree program designed to prepare persons for church-related ministries requiring ordination. The Master of Arts in Theology (M.A.Th.) is an academic degree program of theological reflection and research. It serves as the basis for further graduate study in religion and for developing a theological perspective for church and non-church vocations.

The graduate school also offers a Certificate of Achievement in Theological Studies (C.A.T.S.) offering students opportunity to experience the breadth of theological curriculum by taking a series of graduate courses. Another option, called the Special Study Emphases enables students to undertake a special study focus, such as peace studies or youth and young adult ministry.

B. The Academy

The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Training is a partnership of Bethany Theological Seminary and the Church of the Brethren General Board. The Academy provides administrative oversight and programmatic opportunities for certificate-level ministry training within the Church of the Brethren. Among them are Education for a Shared Ministry (ESFM), a three year program combining lay and pastoral training for leadership in small congregations, and Training in Ministry (TRIM), a three year program designed for the person who is not able to participate in the degree programs of the Seminary but who desires training in pastoral leadership. The Academy also provides continuing education opportunities and works with Church of the Brethren districts in designing certificate-level training programs.

III. Organization

A. Trustees

The overall management of Bethany Theological Seminary, Inc. is the responsibility of a Board of Trustees, whose duties include:

- Represent the seminary to its constituencies and solicit adequate financial support to undergird institutional purposes and objectives.
- Control and manage the corporation's affairs, including the property and its funds, for the highest good of the institution.

The trustees perform their duties in harmony with the purposes of the corporation, as declared in the Articles of Incorporation. The trustees may change, alter or amend the Articles of Incorporation at any regular or specially called meeting providing a quorum is present.

B. Membership of the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees consists of twenty-one (21) persons selected as follows:

- The duly authorized and acting president of the seminary shall be ex-officio trustee with vote.
- Twenty (20) individuals elected or confirmed by the Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren, selected as follows:
 - One (1) trustee is nominated by the Alumni Association and confirmed by Annual Conference.
 - Nine (9) trustees are nominated by Standing Committee and elected by Annual Conference: three (3) representing Church of the Brethren colleges; three (3) representing the ministry; and three (3) representing the laity of the church.
 - Ten (10) trustees are nominated by the Development Committee of the Trustee Board, elected by the Board, and confirmed by Annual Conference.

All trustees are elected for a five (5) year term and may be reelected for one additional consecutive term.

There are two ex-officio trustees who serve with voice but without vote. They are (1) the General Secretary of the General Board of the Church of the Brethren, and (2) one District Executive elected by the Council of District Executives of the Church of the Brethren and confirmed by the Board of Trustees.

IV. Officers

The officers of Bethany Theological Seminary include:

- The president, who functions as the chief executive officer of the corporation and discharges the duties that pertain to the office of the president.

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- The academic dean, who is charged with the operation of the academic affairs of the seminary, working under the direction of the president.
- The treasurer, who has the custody of and responsibility for the corporate funds and securities, working under the direction of the president.

The Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust⁵

I. Background

The Brethren Benefit Trust began as the Pension Board in 1943 with the start of the Ministerial and Missionary Pension Plan. It operated as the Pension Board until 1988 when Annual Conference approved a new name, Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust, with a separately constituted board of directors. The Brethren Benefit Trust also operates as the Brethren Benefit Trust, Inc. and the Brethren Foundation, Inc.

II. Purpose

The purpose of the Brethren Benefit Trust is to support a mutual ministry of financial services among members, employees, and affiliated agencies of the Church of the Brethren, and other persons and groups that share the values of the Church of the Brethren.

III. Function

The Brethren Benefit Trust shall provide financial programs and services through Brethren Benefit Trust, Inc., and Brethren Foundations, Inc., which focus on fiduciary responsibility, mutual support, Christian stewardship, and respond to the needs and interests of local churches, church members, church agencies and employees, such as the following:

- Pension benefit plans
- Medical insurance and other welfare plans
- Financial assistance programs
- Tax information
- Financial management consulting and training
- Financial operations administration and support
- Information services and systems development and managements
- Banking and loan services
- Investment management
- Mutual insurance products
- Financial and estate planning
- Deferred gifts development and management

IV. Governance and Reportability

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The Brethren Benefit Trust is an official agency of the Church of the Brethren as authorized by the Annual Conference and shall report to the Annual Conference on matters of organization and function. An annual report, including an audited financial statement, shall be made to the Conference for its review and approval. Reports of programs and services shall also be made to districts, local churches, agencies, employees and the general church membership.

V. Authority

The Brethren Benefit Trust shall have the authority to:

- Establish, modify, interpret, and maintain programs, products, and services that it may elect to develop and implement.
- Develop alliances and subsidiary organizations (either not for profit or for profit, or corporations, partnerships, or limited liability companies) to which it may assign authority and responsibility for programs, products and services.
- Act in any lawful manner to fulfill the purposes of the Brethren Benefit Trust.

VI. Bylaws

The Brethren Benefit Trust shall have authority to develop and implement bylaws for the proper and efficient operation of its organization and sub-organization. The bylaws shall address all pertinent subjects including, but not limited to, board of directors, officers, tenure, frequency of meetings, coverage of expenses, and employment of staff.

VII. Funding for Services

The principal source of funding shall be fees for services, as established by the Brethren Benefit Trust related organizational entities.

VII. Board of Directors

Membership. The Brethren Benefit Trust Board shall be composed of twelve (12) voting members and two (2) ex-officio members without vote. The process of nomination and election of board members is designed to represent and involve key constituents who are most effected by BBT=s programs, as follows:

Four (4) directors are nominated by Standing Committee and elected by Annual Conference.

Four (4) directors are to elected by a majority vote of the members of the Church of the Brethren Pension and Insurance plans under procedures established by the directors of the Brethren Benefit Trust.

Four (4) directors are to elected by the board of directors of the Brethren Benefit Trust under procedures set forth in its bylaws and subject to approval by the Annual

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Conference.

The board may appoint advisory persons who serve as non-voting members on the board and/or board committees.

The president of the Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust and the General Secretary of the General Board shall serve as ex officio members of the board without vote.

Eligibility. The seven board members elected or approved by Annual Conference shall meet the following qualifications:

- Be a member of the Church of the Brethren.
- Have a general knowledge of pension, insurance, and foundation programs.
- Have some expertise in the field of finance and accounting, investments, insurance, health care, law, deferred gift instruments, information systems, employee benefits or personnel administration.
- Have sensitivity to the concerns and values of the Church of the Brethren and to the persons and agencies they represent.

Officers of Annual Conference, members of Standing Committee, and members of the boards of other agencies reportable to Annual Conference shall be ineligible to serve concurrently as directors of the Brethren Benefit Trust.

Terms of Service. Board members shall serve for a period of four years and be eligible for a maximum of two consecutive terms. There shall be a lapse of one year before a director is eligible for election to additional terms. The directors of Brethren Benefit Trust may elect a successor director to fill the unexpired terms of any director in the event of a vacancy due to resignation or death of a director before the end of a term. Partial terms of two years or less shall not be counted in considering eligibility for reelection.

On Earth Peace Assembly, Inc.⁶

I. Name and Background

The legal name of the agency is On Earth Peace Assembly, Inc. The name commonly used in the agency and in the denomination is On Earth Peace. On Earth Peace was founded in 1974 and has its offices in New Windsor, Maryland, at the Brethren Service Center.

II. Mission Statement

On Earth Peace Assembly is a movement grounds in the Church of the Brethren, dedicated to following the teachings of Jesus Christ in renewing and living out our biblical and denominational heritage of peace. Its purpose, through religious and educational activities, is to empower people to discern the things that make for peace in ourselves, within families, in our global environment, among nations and to advocate peace and justice, seeking the realization of God's will on earth as it is in heaven.

III. Program Areas

On Earth Peace Assembly is committed to the following program areas for denominational ministry:

A. **Peacemaker Formation.** On Earth Peace provides educational retreats, training events, and volunteer opportunities for all who seek to develop their faith-based beliefs and skills as peacemakers. Congregations and districts can host peace retreats and training events by inviting On Earth Peace to provide leadership at local, district, and regional gatherings.

B. **Conflict Transformation.** The conflict transformation program of On Earth Peace is called the Ministry of Reconciliation. It is dedicated to encouraging, equipping, and empowering persons to be open to the work of the Spirit in our midst for whole and healthy relationships between sisters and brothers. This program serves the church through educational events, facilitation of meetings and group processes, and conflict intervention.

C. **Peace Witness.** The goal of the peace witness program is to lead the Church of the Brethren, especially at the congregational level, in nurturing Spirit-filled discipleship and active responses to violence. This witness is based on a biblical and denominational grounding in Christ=s way of peace and redemptive love, even love of enemies. The peace witness program educates and moves persons toward nonviolent action and challenges congregations and individuals to play an active role in being a living peace church.

IV. Relationship to Annual Conference

In 1998, Annual Conference adopted On Earth Peace as an agency accountable to Annual Conference. This relationship is carried out in many ways, including the following:

- Annual Conference may assign to On Earth Peace tasks and responsibilities which relate to the agency's mission and program.
- On Earth Peace may bring items of business directly to Annual Conference.
- On Earth Peace is accountable to the larger church through Annual Conference,. On Earth peace will bring written and oral reports to Annual Conference, including an audited financial report, and these are subject to the acceptance of the Conference delegates.
- Annual Conference elects one third of the members of the On Earth Peace Board of Directors.

V. Composition of the Board

The Board of Directors for On Earth Peace shall consist of fifteen (15) members, five of which are elected by Annual Conference delegates from nominations submitted by the Standing

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Committee nominating committee. One of these members shall be elected each year.

The remaining ten members of the Board shall be elected by the Board itself, two members each year, to be confirmed by the following Annual Conference.

The term of service for all Board members shall be five years.

VI. Relationship to Other Agencies

On Earth Peace will work in cooperation with all other Annual Conference-related agencies in a responsible and mutually-supportive spirit, seeking to serve the larger good of the denomination and of God's work in the world. In the same spirit, On Earth Peace will work cooperatively with all other elements of the church, including congregations, districts, and other entities.

¹ 1998 Minutes (1995-1999), "Association of Brethren Caregivers' Request for Reportability/Accountability to Annual Conference," 800-804; "OEPA Request for Reportability/Accountability to Annual Conference," 805-806. These documents set forth the standards for identifying an agency of Annual Conference.

² The Church of the Brethren, Inc. is the successor to the General Board. For historical perspective, the role and organization of the General Board is set forth in the 1968 Annual Conference Minutes (1965-1969), "Reorganization of the General Brotherhood Board," 341-344. A significant restructure took place in 1997 (see Minutes [1995-1999], "The New Design of General Board," 610-617), and polity changes made at that time are footnoted. Another significant revision to the General Board polity was approved by the 2005 Annual Conference: 2005 Minutes, 241-250. In 2008 Annual Conference approved a restructuring that created the Church of the Brethren, Inc.

³ The Church of the Brethren, Inc. is the successor to the General Board, following a restructuring of the General Board and the Association of Brethren Caregivers in 2008. Annual Conference 2008 approved preliminary bylaws for the new Corporation. The version printed here represents a revision of those bylaws that is before the 2010 Annual Conference for approval.

⁴ 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 79; 1972 Minutes (1970-1964), "Bethany Seminary Study Committee," 235; 1974 Minutes (1970-1974), "A Plan to Establish a Bethany Seminary Fund..." 443; 1977 Minutes (1975-1979), "Revision of the Member-at-Large Category of the Bethany Board of Directors," 356. See also 1925 Minutes (1920-1930), "Commission on Educational Problems," 5-6.

⁵ 1943 Minutes (1941-1950), "Retirement Plan for Ministers and Missionaries," 4-10; 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "Reorganization of the General Brotherhood Board," 343; 1982 Minutes (1980-1984), "Church of the Brethren Pension Plan Restated," 424-434; 1986 Minutes (1985-1989), "General Board/Pension Board Relationship," 319-320; 1987 Minutes (1985-1989), "Pension Board Restructure Committee Report," 476-478; 1989 Minutes (1985-1989), "Brethren Benefit Trust Document Revisions," 906-907; 1990 Minutes (1990-1994), "Ratification of Brethren Benefit Trust Actions," 131-133; 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Ratification of Brethren Benefit Trust Actions," 342; 1993 Minutes (1990-1994), "Proposed Change to Brethren Benefit Trust Articles of Organization," 630; 1998 Minutes (1995-1999), "Changes to the Brethren Benefit Trust," 791-794; 2006 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust Articles of Organization, Proposed Revisions," 541-544.

⁶ 1998 Minutes (1995-1999), "On Earth Peace Assembly Request for..." 805-806. See also 1983 Minutes (1980-1984), "Request of the On Earth Peace Assembly for..." 587-590.

CHAPTER III

THE DISTRICT

I. Organization and Function ¹

Preliminary to any plan of district church organization is an understanding of the mission of the church and the place and function of the district in that mission.

The mission of the church is set forth in the great commission of our Lord (Matt. 28:18-20). Although never fully understood, it seems clearly to have an inner and an outer direction. The inner mission of the church is to nurture its members that they may grow more and more into the stature of maturity in Christ. The outer mission of the church is to be related as God's instrument to the problems and needs of the world. These two major functions of the church are effective to the extent that they are undergirded by stewardship of time, talent, and treasure on the part of the membership.

The district is a group of congregations located in geographic proximity to each other and having common purposes. The district enables the member congregations to do together what they cannot do separately and helps them to carry out in better fashion their major functions. The organizational structure of the district should reflect as much as possible the purposes of the district. Above all, the organization should be a helpful means to the achievement of the district's goals and the fulfillment of its functions.

Every district should develop its own constitution and bylaws clearly defining its purposes, its organizational structure, and its working procedures. These need to be in harmony both with congregational purposes and polity and those of the Church of the Brethren. The following outline is suggestive of basic principles and procedures to be incorporated into a district plan of organization. It attempts to conserve the major values already existing in the organizational structures of our districts. Further, it seeks to add to the effectiveness of the work of our church through greater uniformity and simplicity of structure and nomenclature.

Districts are encouraged to explore creative ways of sharing personnel and financial resources to facilitate effective ministries both within and among districts. Districts may initiate dialogue for a cooperative relationship that will resource the needs of district ministries (i.e., Christian nurture and church planting).

A constitution is understood to be a statement of the fundamental principles of government adopted by the district. The bylaws are the detailed rules and regulations that allow for the effective working of the district within its basic organizational

structure.

A. CONSTITUTION

1. Incorporation

The district shall be incorporated under, and pursuant to, the religious corporation act of the state in which its principal office is located. Where feasible, the office of the district executive/minister shall be named as the principal place of business. The affairs of the corporation shall be managed by the district board whose chair, secretary, and/or treasurer shall be the legal officers of the corporation and shall sign all the legal documents.

2. Purpose of the District

The purpose of the district shall be to administer and coordinate the religious and business activities of the Church of the Brethren within the bounds of the district. The district shall have power to own and convey real estate and to be trustee of property and of endowment and other funds. The district shall send delegates to the Annual Conference and may appoint representatives to cooperative religious bodies as need and opportunity allow.

3. Member Churches

All Church of the Brethren congregations that are recognized by the district as organized churches shall be member churches of the district within which they are located. A new church development shall be called a “fellowship” until it has seventy-five² or more members and is chartered as a member church.

4. District Conference

a. Purpose of a district conference

District Conference is a mass meeting to which delegates and others interested from the member congregations come in business sessions to give implementation to district purpose. District Conference is the final authority of the district on policy, program, and procedure. Although worship and fellowship may become part of district conference, the following agenda is indicative of its principal business function:

- 1) to review achievements;
- 2) to analyze procedures and results;

- 3) to survey continuing opportunities and needs;
- 4) to set goals, outline objectives, and determine priorities;
- 5) to approve strategy and adopt policy;
- 6) to organize for action and assign responsibility;
- 7) to dedicate resources;
- 8) to go forth in service.

b. *Conference delegate body*

- 1) All members of the churches and fellowships of the district shall have the privilege of moving and discussing the business of district conference. However, only the official delegates of the member churches or fellowships shall have the right to vote.
- 2) There shall be four delegates for each member church or fellowship³ with two hundred members or fewer. Larger churches shall have one delegate more for each additional one hundred members or major fraction thereof.
- 3) The pastor and church board chair of each member body shall serve as delegates by virtue of their offices. Each congregation or fellowship shall elect the remaining quota of its delegates from its membership at large. Pastors of recognized fellowships shall also be delegates.
- 4) Delegates serving from the membership at large shall be elected for a two-year term with half of their number being selected each year.
- 5) The delegate body shall have the following functions:⁴
 - a) Serve as the final authority of the district in all matters of polity, procedure, and function.
 - b) Elect the officers of the district conference, the members of special committees authorized by the district, and members of the district board.
 - c) Review the work of the district as presented to the district conference in the reports of the elected boards and committees.
 - d) Project the program of the district, determining fields of endeavor, plans for advance, size of budgets, and all other necessary matters;

- e) Dispose of queries that come to the district conference;
- f) receive reports from individuals and/or committees appointed to deal with specific problems in the life of the district;
- g) determine what resolutions shall be the voice of the district on the problems of the day.

c. *Conference officers*

- 1) The officers of District Conference shall be the moderator, moderator-elect, and clerk.
- 2) The moderator-elect shall be elected by District Conference for one year and then shall automatically become moderator for one year. The clerk shall be elected by district conference. The treasurer and financial secretary shall be appointed by the district board subject to the approval of district conference.

d. *Conference committees*

- 1) *Nominating and personnel committee.* There shall be a nominating and personnel committee of five members. Three members shall be elected by district conference for one term (see B.1. in this chapter) and shall not be eligible to succeed themselves. The moderator-elect, who shall be chair of the committee, and the moderator shall complete the committee.
- 2) *District conference program and arrangements committee.* There shall be a district conference program and arrangements committee of five members. The committee shall be constituted in the same manner as the nominating and personnel committee except that the moderator shall be chairperson.

e. *Standing Committee delegates*

Delegates shall be named by District Conference to represent the district on the Annual Conference Standing Committee. The directives of Annual Conference shall be followed in determining their eligibility, the number allowed, and the length of term.

5. District Board

a. *Purpose of the district board*

The district board, hereafter referred to as the board, shall manage and administer the work of the district as authorized by the district conference. The board is the legal agent of the district and shall be empowered to act on behalf of the district conference ad interim except for those actions specifically reserved for District Conference as set forth in its constitution and bylaws.

b. *Board members*

There shall be a board consisting of from fifteen to twenty-three members, including ordained ministers and lay people. The district conference shall elect from twelve to twenty members in multiples of four. The district moderator, moderator-elect, and treasurer shall be ex officio members without vote. If any of these three officers is elected with an unexpired term on the board, the former position on the board shall be declared vacant.

c. *Board officers and organizations*

The board shall be organized annually, following District Conference, by the district moderator. The chair and vice chair of the board and the commission chairs shall be selected by the board from among its elected members. The district executive shall be secretary for the board.

The board shall group its remaining members into four commissions based on aptitude and interest. The board chair shall be an ex officio member of all commissions and committees. The treasurer shall be on the commission of stewards.

6. Commissions

a. The work of the board shall be implemented by the following four commissions:

- 1) Commission on nurture
- 2) Commission on witness
- 3) Commission on ministry
- 4) Commission of stewards

b. The commissions shall be responsible to the board. Each commission shall elect its own vice chair and secretary.

7. Committees

a. *Executive committee*

- 1) There shall be an executive committee of the board consisting of seven members, namely, the chair and vice chair of the board, who shall be the officers of the committee; the four commission chairs; and the district treasurer, who shall be ex officio member without vote.
- 2) The executive committee shall recommend staff for employment by the board and shall counsel with the staff regarding their work and record of agreement. The executive committee shall assist the chairs of the board and commissions in developing their respective agenda. The committee shall serve ad interim when the work of the board can be expedited without infringing upon the board's responsibilities and authority.

b. *Historical committee*

- 1) There shall be an historical committee of three members appointed by the board.
- 2) The historical committee shall be concerned with all matters of historic interest to the district and shall collect, preserve, write, and, as authorized, publish such materials.

c. *Auditing committee*

- 1) There shall be an auditing committee of three members, including at least one qualified public accountant, appointed by the board for one term (see B.1.c. in this chapter) without being eligible to succeed themselves.
- 2) The auditing committee shall review annually the financial records of the district treasurer, the financial secretary, and such other agencies handling district funds as may be requested by the board. The committee shall submit an auditor's report to the district conference.

d. *Discipleship and reconciliation committee*⁵

- 1) A committee of five shall be appointed by the board (one each year) for a term of five years. Tenure shall be limited to two terms. The chair of

the board and the district executive/minister shall serve ex officio.

- 2) The committee shall, on behalf of the board, be responsible for working at discipleship and reconciliation concerns between any member and those with whom the person may have difficulty. It may also be called upon to work at discipleship and reconciliation concerns within a congregation or between congregations and the district.
- 3) The committee shall bring a report of its efforts and experiences to the board, along with any appropriate recommendations it has to make.

e. *Other committees*

The district conference and/or the board may constitute or authorize such other continuing or short-term committees as necessary to assist with the ongoing work of the district. When the specific assignment of a committee is achieved, the committee shall be dismissed.

8. Related Institutions and Interest Groups

- a. The district may enter into relationship with separately organized and incorporated Church of the Brethren institutions such as camps, homes for the aging, colleges, and other institutions of interest to the district. In each instance there shall be mutual agreement between the district and said institution as to the nature of the relationship. The involvement of the district in terms of financial support, selection of trustees, program endorsement, receiving of reports, etc., shall be subject to District Conference action.
- b. No other organization, entity, or body shall be deemed to be the agent of a district, the Church of the Brethren, Inc., or Annual Conference. Only the Annual Conference, Annual Conference agencies, the Church of the Brethren, Inc., a district, or a congregation duly recognized by a district shall be entitled to use the name "Church of the Brethren" in its own name or to indicate in any way it is an agent of another Church of the Brethren entity without the express written authorization of Annual Conference Standing Committee. Unless expressly recognized as an agent of another Church of the Brethren entity, no institution or interest group should suggest in its documents, publicity, or communications that it is the agent of a Church of the Brethren organization. Consent to use the name "Church of the Brethren" will not, unless otherwise indicated in writing, indicate an intention to create an agency relationship but will

merely indicate the involvement of members of the Church of the Brethren in the organization.⁶

- c. As requested or as need arises, the board shall give direction to the formation of special interest and/or age groups within the district. All such organizations shall exist to aid in fulfilling the mission of the church at large in the district and shall be subject to the oversight and direction of the board or its respective commissions.

9. The Section Plan

a. Purpose

The district may circumscribe within its boundaries workable units—geographically and/or numerically defined—in order to facilitate the organization and administration of district affairs. These units shall be called sections and, for purposes of clarity, may be numbered or named.

b. Size

The size of a section may vary according to prevailing circumstances. Where possible a section shall include five to fifteen congregations and/or fellowships within a radius that allows for travel and sufficient time for a meeting within one day.

10. Fiscal Year and District Conference Year

- a. The fiscal year of the district shall be the same as that designated by Annual Conference.

- b. The conference year shall be from the end of one annual district conference to the end of the next annual district conference.

B. BYLAWS

1. Personnel Selection and Tenure

- a. The nominating and personnel committee shall prepare a ballot for the use of the district conference in the election of (a) officers of district conference, (b) members of district conference committees, (c) Standing Committee delegates, (d) board members, and (e) such other officers as are to be elected by district conference.
- b. Elections and appointments shall be conducted in such a way as to secure leadership from all parts of the district. Board membership shall provide a good balance between pastors and lay members.
- c. The term of office for all elected or appointed personnel shall be three years unless otherwise stated in the constitution or bylaws. No one shall be eligible to serve more than two terms in succession. The office of anyone who does not fill the position in a responsible way and is absent from meetings for six months may be declared vacant by the board.
- d. Approximately one-third of the membership of the board and continuing committees shall be elected in any one year.
- e. The prepared ballot shall include only the names of people who have consented to be nominees. Prior to the election, information about each nominee shall be given to the delegates. Immediately following the election, a letter shall be sent to each nominee reporting the results. These duties shall be the responsibility of the nominating and personnel committee.
- f. For the aid of those groups making nominations or appointments, the district office, in cooperation with the nominating and personnel committee, shall maintain a personnel file indicating the training, aptitude, and record of service of individuals showing promise of district leadership.

2. Employed Staff

a. District executive/minister

- 1) The district shall employ an executive. He or she shall be a person qualified by training, experience, and personal dedication to Christ and the church to guide, counsel, and encourage district and local church workers in the development of vital and well-balanced church programs.
- 2) The executive shall be the executive officer of the board and shall give general oversight to the implementation of district work. He or she shall serve as secretary of the board, arranging for someone to record the minutes, and shall be custodian of all official papers of the district. He or she shall be an ex officio member without vote of the board, the commissions, and the committees of the district.
- 3) The executive shall give guidance and assistance for pastoral placement in the district.

b. Additional professional staff

When the work and size of the district warrant it, additional qualified staff shall be considered.

c. Office secretary

The district shall provide sufficient secretarial assistance for the employed staff and district office.

3. Staff Employment Procedures

- a. The selection and employment of an executive and other professional staff people, as well as the termination of such services, shall be the responsibility of the board in keeping with approved pastoral placement procedures and in consultation with the Church of the Brethren, Inc. through its coordinator of district ministries.
- b. The office secretary shall be employed by the board upon the recommendation of the executive. The office secretary shall be responsible to the executive.
- c. The terms of employment for all employed personnel shall be carefully stipulated and reviewed annually. When the terms have been mutually

accepted, such terms shall be set forth in writing on approved forms and shall be considered an agreement between the contracting parties.

- d. When there are multiple staff, the division of responsibility and the lines of authority shall be clearly defined and periodically reviewed by the appropriate district officials. Although there must be close cooperation and harmony among staff members, in the final analysis all personnel are responsible to the board.
- e. There shall be a written position description for each employee.

4. District Conference Officers' and Delegates' Qualifications and Duties

- a. All officers and delegates shall be members in good standing of a member church or fellowship and shall serve faithfully in their respective offices.
- b. The moderator shall preside at business sessions of the district conference, be an ex officio member of the board, and serve on one of its commissions. He or she shall be chair of the conference program and arrangements committee and shall serve on the nominating and personnel committee. The moderator shall study the needs of the district and give interpretation and counsel regarding them to the board and district conference and to any other appropriate district agency.
- c. The moderator-elect shall perform the duties of the moderator in the moderator's absence or at the moderator's request and shall become familiar with the program of the district in preparation for moderatorship. The moderator-elect shall be an ex officio member of the board and shall serve on one of its commissions. He or she shall be chair of the nominating and personnel committee and a member of the district conference program and arrangements committee.
- d. The clerk shall record the minutes of District Conference and shall, in cooperation with the district executive/minister, prepare them for publication and distribution to the churches.
- e. The treasurer shall be custodian of all district funds, disbursing them as authorized by the district conference and the board. He or she shall be an ex officio member of the board and shall serve on the commission of stewards. The treasurer shall make written reports to the board and to the district conference as requested and submit the accounts for an annual audit.

- f. The financial secretary shall receive all current district funds, acknowledge receipt of such, and deposit said funds promptly in a depository designated by the board. The financial secretary shall prepare at least quarterly a report of the giving from member churches and of all other receipts. Said reports shall be made available to the commission of stewards, the board, and the churches. The accounts shall be submitted for an annual audit.

- g. Congregational delegates shall be elected only from among the active, informed, and committed membership of the church. Delegates shall be expected to attend all business sessions of District Conference and all meetings of the delegate body. They shall report and communicate actions and concerns from district to congregation and vice versa.

Delegates shall strive to be alert to the work and opportunities of the Church of the Brethren at all levels of its organization and program. A delegate shall be expected to attend the business meetings of one's congregation.

Delegates shall be elected at the time of general elections in the church and shall serve on a year-round basis. When elected, delegates' names and addresses shall be reported to the district office to be included on the mailing list for newsletters, financial reports, and other pertinent information. Delegates shall register at District Conference to indicate their presence.

5. District Board Functions

The board shall . . .

- a. fulfill the directives of the district conference and make an annual report to the conference;
- b. assign, supervise, and coordinate the work of the commissions;
- c. interpret rules of procedure for commissions and committees;

- d. study the member congregations and strive to help them meet their needs and to fulfill their mission (see section V, “Congregational Evaluation,” in this chapter);
- e. project long-range planning, set goals, and initiate new program;
- f. promote, administer, and supervise through the commissions the total church program in the district;
- g. employ and direct the work of a district executive/minister and such other personnel as may be authorized by the district conference;
- h. make all appointments for which the board is responsible;
- i. fill vacancies in elective district offices occurring between district conferences, and fill such other vacancies not provided for otherwise;
- j. have custody of all district capital funds, endowments, and annuities, and hold title to district properties. Distribute district current funds and invest permanent funds as authorized by the district conference. Negotiate the purchase and sale of property and the borrowing and lending of money in behalf of the district;
- k. prepare the district budget for presentation to the district conference;
- l. provide for the annual audit;
- m. allocate and define authority with respect to the establishment of bank accounts and the signing of checks and other legal documents;
- n. arrange for bonding the district treasurer and financial secretary;
- o. receive, consider, and make disposition of concerns brought by any individuals or church group;
- p. coordinate the district program and prepare the district calendar;
- q. bring queries or other business to district conference, and process queries from local churches for district conference action;

- r. plan or otherwise provide in-service training opportunities for board members, employed staff, and other district personnel;
- s. when problems of discipline arise, the board shall follow the procedures and suggestions outlined in chapter V, section IV, of this manual, “Discipleship and Reconciliation,” especially the instructions for the appointment and functioning of a district committee on discipleship and reconciliation;⁷
- t. nominate candidates for ordination to the ministry (the local church may also nominate candidates);⁸
- u. exercise its authority for licensing and ordaining ministers;⁹
- v. act on nominees for ordination recommended by the district commission on ministry, and present those approved to the local church for action;¹⁰
- w. assign to an appropriate group or commission (such as ministry or nurture) the responsibility for training and resourcing of deacons.¹¹

6. Commission Responsibilities

a. Commission on nurture

The commission on nurture shall initiate and stress such program and work in the churches as fosters the spiritual growth and development of members. This commission shall stimulate the congregations to have a vital encounter with God, promote the total cause of Christian education, provide opportunities for training church leaders and workers, supervise the camp program, counsel and coordinate age and interest groups, maintain audiovisual and book libraries, and do whatever else may nurture the inner life of the church.

b. Commission on witness

The commission on witness shall be responsible for directing and undergirding the witness of the churches to the world. The commission shall urge each congregation to share the love of God and the gospel of Christ with all people everywhere through the work of evangelism, to support missions at home and abroad, to send and maintain service workers, to give material aid, to act on social concerns, and to proclaim and use the power of God to meet the needs of the world. This commission shall direct the work of church extension through the

development of new congregations, the growth of existing ones, and the receiving of unrelated congregations. When needed, guidance shall be given to the merging or disorganizing of churches. In these and other outreach ministries, the commission on witness shall encourage and assist the congregations toward the fulfillment of the great commission of our Lord.¹²

c. *Commission on ministry*

The commission on ministry, comprising ordained ministers and lay people, shall give counsel and guidance to all ministerial affairs in the district. This commission shall seek ways to strengthen the relationships and understanding between congregations and pastors, provide training for local people responsible for church-pastor relations, encourage pastors in their professional growth, and in various ways strive to increase the joy and effectiveness of the pastoral ministry. This commission shall counsel and assist churches and individuals in the various phases of extending and receiving a call to the ministry, becoming equipped and trained for the ministry, and licensing and ordaining ministers. This commission shall review the ministerial list periodically and shall make recommendations to the board regarding those ministers who no longer appear to show interest or dedication in their ministerial calling.

Along with the congregation, this commission, on behalf of the district board, has the authority for licensing individuals to the ministry.¹³

This commission shall review all nominations for ordination to the ministry and recommend nominees to the district board. The commission shall proceed with ordination when the district board and the congregation vote approval.¹⁴

d. *Commission of stewards*

The commission of stewards shall aid and challenge the congregations and all district agencies to be good and faithful stewards of God's resources. This commission shall promote a program of general stewardship education and enlistment in the churches, supervise the financial interests of the district, safeguard and utilize the property of the district, assist in preparing the annual budget, and in other ways solicit support for the basic work of nurture, witness, and ministry throughout

the district.

7. Business Meetings

a. District Conference

1) The district conference shall convene once a year at such a time as to allow district organization and program to be in readiness for the new church year. Special meetings may be called at the discretion of the conference officers in consultation with the board. Generally, the conference should convene at a place offering facilities conducive to attendance and providing adequate and comfortable arrangements.

2) The time of the week for the conference should be as free as possible from conflicts with work schedules. Business sessions shall be at the hour when the delegates are most free to attend.

3) The district conference program and arrangements committee shall be responsible for planning the conference program, obtaining leadership, determining the place of meeting, securing facilities, providing for exhibits, registering delegates, and making other necessary arrangements for the conference. Suggested scriptures, hymns, litanies, and worship themes may be offered to the churches for their use locally on District Conference Sunday.

b. The board shall meet at least quarterly. Special meetings of the board may be called by the

c. The commissions and committees shall meet regularly or as the board may direct.

d. Adequate advance notice of all business meetings shall be given to the membership involved.

8. Quorum

a. It is desirable to have as many delegates present as possible for the district conference. No quorum shall be required except as may be specified by rules of order or state corporation law.

b. For meetings of the board and commissions, a majority of the elected members shall consti

9. Rules of Order

Unless otherwise specified in the bylaws, Robert's *Rules of Order* shall be the official rules of order for the district conference and the board meetings.

10. Amendments

The constitution and bylaws of the district may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the delegates present and voting at any regular session of the district conference. Written notice of the proposed amendment shall be given with the call of the meeting issued at least thirty days prior to the meeting.

This plan of organization is to become effective one year after its adoption by the district conference. All former decisions in conflict herewith are hereby rescinded.

II. Structuring and Restructuring Congregations¹⁵

The district board through its appropriate commission shall direct the work of church extension through the development of new fellowships and congregations, the growth of existing ones, and the receiving of unrelated congregations. When needed, guidance shall be given to the merging or disorganizing of congregations. Procedures to be followed in organizing and dividing congregations have been summarized as follows:

A. ORGANIZATION OF NEW CONGREGATIONS

A body of members or the district board through its appropriate commission may call for organization when, in the judgment of the said commission, conditions of the place from which the call comes justify such organization. Area councils of churches should be notified and their counsel sought and considered.

The call for organization shall be the responsibility of the district board through its appropriate commission. A moderator shall be selected by the responsible commission. The commission shall provide assistance and counsel in establishing a plan of organization. It shall also assist the organizing congregation in the election of such officials as may be deemed advisable.

The new organization shall then be reported to the district conference and, after its acceptance as a fellowship or congregation by that district conference, its delegates shall be seated in the district conference.

B. RECEIVING UNRELATED CONGREGATIONS

When an organized congregation seeks to affiliate with the Church of the Brethren, the district board shall initiate a series of exchange visits and conversations with the congregation to explore the theological, biblical, and ecclesiastical perspectives and beliefs of each. If there proves to be potential for mutual compatibility and supportive participation, the district board shall recommend to District Conference that the district and congregation enter into a year of dialogue and fellowship. During the ensuing year, the district board will review and evaluate the relationship and make recommendation to District Conference for final action.

C. MERGING ORGANIZED CONGREGATIONS

When two or more congregations desire to merge, they shall seek the counsel and assistance of the district board. After procedural details have been determined regarding property and other assets, liabilities, organization, and identity, and a plan of merger has been approved by the congregations and the district board, the board shall recommend the merger to the district conference. Following acceptance of the merger, the new congregation shall be received and its delegates seated.

D. DIVIDING ORGANIZED CONGREGATIONS

If a majority of an organized congregation decides to divide into more than one Church of the Brethren congregation, the congregation shall notify the district board of that decision and the date of the congregational business meeting to determine lines, division of church property, etc., and to elect a moderator for each of the new congregations and other officers, if deemed advisable. The district board shall then send at least one member of the appropriate district commission to the meeting to assist the congregation in those tasks. The new organization(s) shall be reported to District Conference and recognition shall be obtained, after which the delegates of the newly formed congregation(s) shall be seated.

If a minority of a church desires to be organized, they may petition the district board. This board shall call a business meeting of the congregation and after hearing the reasons for and against a separate organization, shall make a report of its findings. If this report is favorable to the petitioners and is accepted by the

congregation, the new organization shall be effected and reported to the district conference as above.

If the report of the district board favoring the new organization is rejected by the congregation, the district board may, if deemed advisable, organize the petitioners as outlined above, provided two-thirds of the petitioners support the new organization.

If the report of the district board is unfavorable to the petitioners, they shall be counseled to work in harmony with all the other members in a spirit of love for the best interests of the congregation and to exercise patience until such time as conditions may be more favorable.

E. DISORGANIZING CONGREGATIONS

Requests for disorganization of a congregation shall be made to the district board. The board shall appoint a committee to consider the request. This committee shall examine the circumstances of this request, consider carefully the spiritual welfare of all involved, and report their findings to the board. Upon receiving this report, the board shall determine the advisability of such disorganization and make a recommendation to District Conference. If the recommendation is approved by the conference, the district board shall arrange for a transfer of membership of the then remaining members of the congregation. The district board shall also recommend to District Conference a plan for the use or disposition of the property of the disorganizing congregation according to the guidelines in this manual (Chapter VI, "Property Holdings and Financial Resources").

Special care shall be taken to ensure that the official records of the congregation as listed above are transferred to the district. In addition, related information on the life of the disorganizing congregation, if available, should be transferred to the district. Such information may include . . .

1. photographs taken in connection with special events or collected from members;
2. newspaper and periodical articles documenting church activities;
3. manuscript histories of the congregation or any of its subunits or activities;
4. information about special achievements or honors attained by the pastor or lay members;
5. biographical material on the minister and other church leaders;

6. artifacts connected with the history of the church.

III. Procedures in Adjusting Districts¹⁶

A. SEPARATION FROM EXISTING DISTRICTS TO FORM A NEW DISTRICT

1. The new district must have the approval of the district or districts from whose territory it is to be formed.

2. New districts shall be formally recognized as bona fide district units at the opening session of the first Standing Committee meeting following the formation of the new district.

B. MERGER OF EXISTING DISTRICTS

1. As a basic administrative and legislative unit in our church, a district should be strong enough in total membership and in number of vital, active congregations, and well enough contained geographically, to be able to accomplish functional tasks effectively and to maintain high standards.

2. When districts are ready to effect merger, notification shall be sent to the officers of Annual Conference, together with a request to the moderator that the new district be acknowledged as a de facto district and its members seated in Standing Committee. (Technically, the seating of Standing Committee members has been regarded as tantamount to recognition of the newly formed district.)

3. Records of defunct districts may be deposited at the Brethren Historical Library and Archives or one of the Brethren college libraries for preservation and to enable their availability for historical research.

C. DISTRICT BOUNDARIES¹⁷

1. Districts shall accept responsibility for initiating the realignment process. All plans involving realignment of district boundaries, mergers of districts, or changes in district names should have the support of the district boards affected by the changes and the approval of their district conferences. These changes will be submitted to Standing Committee for recognition and be reported to Annual Conference.
2. All undesignated territory within the United States and beyond not presently included within the boundaries of existing districts shall be under the

jurisdiction of Standing Committee. If districts wish to expand into presently undesignated territory, they should consult with the officers of Annual Conference, representing the Standing Committee. If districts wish to relinquish or remove territory from the district as presently constituted, they should consult with the officers of Annual Conference.

3. A congregation established in any undesignated territory is understood to belong to and to be responsible to the sponsoring district. Establishing a congregation in undesignated territory is not itself sufficient to claim that territory for a district or to prevent another district from initiating work there.
4. A district may decide to annex adjacent undesignated territory (i.e., expand its boundary). Such proposals, after being supported and approved at the district level, shall be reported to the Standing Committee.
5. If a congregation or group of congregations wish(es) to realign with another adjacent district, the district boards of the two districts shall consider the request. The proposed realignment between the two districts shall be submitted to the two district conferences for approval. If the congregation(s) or districts are not in agreement with the action taken, they may appeal to Standing Committee.

IV. Ecumenical Relationships¹⁸

When a district desires to relate to another denominational body organically or in shared administration, the following procedures should be followed. There are three potential levels of relationship and hence three levels of complexity and necessary authorization. A district should follow the procedure most appropriate to the level of relationship that is anticipated.

A. YOKING

In a yoked relationship, two or more districts operate essentially separate programs. They maintain separate identities but have shared leadership with single or multiple denominational relationships.

1. In developing proposals for a yoked relationship with another denominational body, district leaders should consult with the coordinator of district ministries of the Church of the Brethren, Inc. staff and the executive of the Committee on Interchurch Relations.

2. The proposal will need the approval of the district conference and the equivalent body of the other denomination or denominations involved.
3. After the proposal has been approved, the action should be reported to Standing Committee.

B. FEDERATION/AFFILIATION

Federation is defined as two or more districts with joined programs. They share leadership but retain separate denominational identities. *Affiliation* is defined as two or more districts with a single identity and program. The organizational unit is affiliated with two denominations.

1. In developing such a plan, there should be adequate time for preparation, study, and interpretation of a proposal. Related denominational staff should be consulted.
2. Approval of the proposal requires a two-thirds favorable vote by the district conference and the favorable action of the equivalent body of the other denomination or denominations according to their polity.
3. These actions should then be submitted to Standing Committee for ratification and reporting to Annual Conference.
4. Implementation of the approved plan should follow as rapidly as possible after ratification by Standing Committee.

C. UNION

Union, or merger, is defined as two or more districts adopting a single new identity or one district uniting with another judicatory in a new organizational unit, which has a single denominational relationship.

1. Initiative in proposing study and action toward union may be taken by a local church in the district or by the district board.
2. Adequate time should be taken to involve local church leaders, district officials, Church of the Brethren, Inc. staff, and other related parties in the preparation of a plan of union. (Some of the elements of a plan of union are listing of all assets; a plan for transferring titles to property; satisfying the requirements of

endowments and trusts; validity of membership and ministries; concern for dissenting opinion; administrative relationships.)

3. When the district conference approves a plan of union, it shall arrange for a referendum within three months in each congregation. Local rules on advance notice and eligible voters shall apply.
 - a. The congregational officers shall report the results of the referendum in writing to the designated district officers.
 - b. Approval shall require two-thirds of the total accumulated votes cast in all of the duly held referenda.
4. Based on a favorable referendum, the district officers shall petition Annual Conference through Standing Committee to ratify the proposed union. The petition must be presented at a time to allow it to be printed in the Annual Conference booklet of business.
5. Standing Committee will receive the petition, certify that proper procedures were followed, and forward the petition with its (Standing Committee) recommendation to the Annual Conference delegate body. Approval by the delegate body shall constitute ratification of the district's action.
6. Following Annual Conference ratification and similar appropriate action by the sister denomination(s) involved, the union shall be consummated, the transfer of property titles and administrations effected as rapidly as possible, and official relationship with the Church of the Brethren adjusted accordingly.

When a plan of union results in an administrative unit solely related to another denomination but provides for individual congregations to continue relationship with the Church of the Brethren, Annual Conference, upon recommendation of Standing Committee, shall assign the congregation(s) to an adjoining district(s).

V. Congregational Evaluation¹⁹

We recommend that each district, through the district board, examine all its congregations in light of the following criteria:

- Public worship every Sunday in which the corporate nature of the church is realized (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).
- Periodic celebration of communion (1 Cor. 11:23-26).
- An aggressive evangelistic effort by the members.
- A closely graded Sunday church school with several students in each grade.
- Enough people in age-group activities to provide individuals with opportunity to establish primary peer relationships within the church.
- A building adequate to house these activities.
- Financial participation in a non-local ministry of at least thirty percent of the total budget exclusive of building fund.
- No member carrying more than one major institutional chore at any one time.
- A program of service to the immediate community of the congregation directed to economic, social, and educational, as well as to spiritual, needs.
- A capable pastoral ministry for which the master of divinity degree is the standard education and the district-administered training is the absolute minimum education.
- Pastoral support according to Annual Conference standards.
- Participation in the denomination's life through district conferences, workshops, camps, retreats, etc.

The committee realizes that such a list of criteria does not always indicate the effectiveness of a congregation in every particular situation. It also recognizes that many responsible congregations will not qualify in every regard. Although this list can be only approximated in many situations, we believe that districts can use it to help determine the proper action for particular congregations.

We further recommend that . . .

- if, in the judgment of the district board, the criteria can be more nearly met by the merger of adjoining congregations, the district board shall assume the initiative for conversations regarding mergers;

- where the merger of Church of the Brethren congregations with congregations of other denominations may seem, in the judgment of the district board, to be in the best interest of the church, the district board shall work with the congregations and the planning and strategy committees of the councils of churches toward such mergers;
- the district board shall supervise and counsel with congregations with fewer than one hundred members in the appointment of the pastor and the moderator when necessary;
- enough congregations shall use the same pastor as is necessary to extend his or her ministry over a minimum of one hundred family units. Two hundred family units may be considered the maximum. The district board should also feel free to enter into arrangements with other denominations to share pastors where this seems advisable and possible. The ratio of pastor to congregation need not always be one to one. With modern transportation and communication facilities, availability does not require residency.
- lay people can be trained to direct worship so that congregations may have worship each Sunday even though the pastor is not present. Extensive use should be made of reading courses and the continuing education sessions provided by Bethany Theological Seminary. We reaffirm the spiritual leadership role the deacons have played in our denomination's history and call the church to use them in a manner similar to that in which lay ministers and lay readers are used in many other denominations (Acts 6:3; Acts 8:12). Pastors assigned to pulpits they cannot occupy every Sunday can aid the lay leadership by providing them with worship and sermon materials and assisting them in preparation;
- substantial grants and aid should be considered by the district and the denomination to those congregations willing to cooperate in a program using these criteria and recommendations in attempts to deal constructively with the problem;
- pastors serving one congregation of fewer than one hundred units should be used by the denomination in other areas such as study, writing, and administration so that their talents may be challenged to the maximum.
- wherever possible and necessary, the district board should encourage congregations in areas of major sociological change to use every resource available to try to rebuild the community.

We realize that not all circumstances can be cared for by these criteria and recommendations. However, we believe that if districts will originate positive action and give major attention to their congregations, using the guidance of these criteria and recommendations, major steps will be taken in helping every congregation mature in service to our Lord Jesus Christ.

VI. Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions

Annual Conference 2004 approved the report of a study committee assigned to examine a query asking how “congregations can disagree with Annual Conference decisions yet remain, as much as possible, in unbroken fellowship with their sister congregations, including how District Boards should respond in these situations.”²⁰ The paper needs to be read in its entirety to get the full background and impact of the report. The following is the section giving guidance to the district for its response to disagreeing congregations.

There is an expectation that within the context of ongoing district ministries and congregational relationships, awareness of disagreement with a specific Annual Conference action might emerge early on. District leadership should anticipate potential congregational disagreement with any particular Annual Conference action before receiving official notice in the form of a letter from the congregation, and review district procedures for processing congregational disagreements. Once official notice is received, the district is encouraged to review the matter and determine a response as soon as possible. Response measures might be to:

- send a letter of response from the district executive, the district board chair, board commission chair, district Standing Committee member, or some other appropriate individual;
- schedule a visit to the congregation for respectful dialog, discussion, and interpretation;
- appoint a group or committee to meet with the congregation to discuss the disagreement;
- utilize the skills of the district Shalom Team and other reconciliation workers to give guidance and facilitate dialog;
- call for a day of prayer and fasting to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and for appropriate spiritual conduct;
- facilitate a forum at which the congregation in disagreement might present its position or understanding;

- consult with resource persons outside the district, including mediation leaders, On Earth Peace staff members, Mission and Ministry Board members, Annual Conference officers, Leadership Team, and others;
- bring the matter to the district conference only if all attempts at reconciliation have proven unsuccessful or unsatisfactory, and if the issue is such that it represents a threat to the overall unity and effective ministry of the district. Specific recommendations to the district conference might include
 1. a statement acknowledging that the congregation in question is “out of harmony” with the denomination on the particular issue, but remains in support and in fellowship with the district and Annual Conference;
 2. a call to prayer for all congregations within the district seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit regarding the issue, and seeking a spiritual anointing that would express love, tolerance and patience (Col. 3:12) rather than judgment and avoidance.

Each district is encouraged to put in place framework for processing a congregational disagreement with an Annual Conference action, in keeping with these suggestions. The process should be flexible enough to allow for the wide variations of each case, yet specific enough that it has accountability and direction. Each district should establish such a process prior to the recognition of the need for said process. The goal of the district response process should be to help the congregation move to an understanding of the Annual Conference action and willingness to support the action, or at least a willingness to refrain from taking any action that would be interpreted as being defiant or insubordinate. If this goal is unattainable and there is a lack of reconciliation, an acknowledgment should be made that the congregation continues supporting the larger church in other aspects of its life while disagreeing with Annual Conference in the particular matter. It is expected that reconciliation attempts will continue.

Finally, within our current polity ¹Standing Committee continues to serve as the appeals body. Any decision that is made by a district board or a district conference can be appealed to the Standing Committee, and the congregation in disagreement retains that right. The decision of Standing Committee is final.

NOTES

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1. 1965 Minutes (1965–1969), “District Organization and Relationships,” 23-30. A historical overview of district organization appears in the 1971 Minutes (1970–1974), “Merger

- Procedures,” 151.
2. This number was one of the guidelines in a revised statement on church extension policy adopted by the General Board in November 1966 and reported to the 1967 Annual Conference in 1967 Minutes (1965–1969), 201.
 3. 1967 Minutes (1965–1969), “Recognition of Church Fellowships,” 257.
 4. 1947 Minutes (1945–1954), “Brotherhood Organization,” 64.
 5. 1977 Minutes (1975–1979), “An Addition to 1976 Discipleship and Reconciliation Paper,” 372.
 6. 1987 Minutes (1985–1989), “Revisions of Brethren Polity,” 486.
 7. 1987 Minutes (1985–1989), “Revisions of Brethren Polity,” 487. See also 1967 Minutes (1965–1969), “A New Basis of the Eldership,” 235; 1976 Minutes (1975–1979), “Discipleship and Reconciliation,” 199-204; and 1977 Minutes (1975–1979), “An Addition to 1976 Discipleship and Reconciliation Paper,” 372.
 8. 1967 Minutes (1965–1969), “A New Basis of the Eldership,” 235.
 9. 1999 Minutes (1995–1999), “Church of the Brethren Ministerial Leadership,” 992-1011
 10. 1967 Minutes (1965–1969), “A New Basis of the Eldership,” p. 235.
 11. 1997 Minutes (1995–1999), “Deacon Ministry in the Church of the Brethren,” 570.
 12. 1987 Minutes (1985–1989), “Revisions of Brethren Polity,” 487.
 13. 1967 Minutes (1965–1969), “A New Basis of the Eldership,” 235.
 14. 1967 Minutes (1965–1969), “A New Basis of the Eldership,” 235.
 15. 1987 Minutes (1985–1989), “Revisions of Brethren Polity,” 487-489.
 16. 1987 Minutes (1985–1989), “Revisions of Brethren Polity,” 489; 1991 Minutes (1990–1994), “Denominational Structure Review,” 271-272; 1961 Minutes (1955–1964), “Some Procedures on Merger of Districts,” 212.
 17. 1991 Minutes (1990–1994), “Denominational Structure Review,” 271-272; 1961 Minutes (1955–1964), “Some Procedures on Merger of Districts,” 212.
 18. 1971 Minutes (1970–1974), “Merger Procedures,” 150-151, 153-154.
 19. 1964 Minutes (1955–1964), “Problems Confronting Small Congregations,” 343-345.

CHAPTER IV

THE LOCAL CHURCH

I. Congregational Structure ¹

A. ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION

Preliminary to any plan of local church organization is an understanding of the mission of the church. This mission, set forth in the great commission, though never fully understood, may be defined as having an inner and an outer direction. The inner mission of the church is to nurture its members, seeking ever to bring them more and more to the stature of maturity in Christ. The outer mission of the church is to be related, as God's instrument, to the problems and the needs of the world. These two major functions of the church are achieved to the extent that they are undergirded with stewardship of time, talent, and material resources.

The congregation is a basic unit of the church at work in the world. Servants of the Lord must be alert to the needs and the opportunities about them. They must make their ministry relevant to the changing times and should always be creative in communicating the Word and the love of God.

To these ends each local congregation should develop its own articles of incorporation (where applicable), constitution, and bylaws, clearly defining its organizational structure and working procedures in harmony with Church of the Brethren and district polity. Articles of incorporation are the formal legal document filed with the state of incorporation. A constitution is regarded as a statement of the fundamental principles of government adopted by the church. The bylaws are detailed rules and regulations that allow for the effective working of the congregation within its basic principles and procedures to be incorporated into a local church plan of organization. This organization plan is a model only and should not necessarily be taken as legal articles of incorporation. If the church is to be duly incorporated by the state in which it is located, the congregation shall consult the district office for proper compliance to state corporation laws.

B. ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

Articles of Incorporation should provide the information required by the state of incorporation. It is usually preferable that the articles contain only information required by state law.

C. SUGGESTED CONSTITUTION

(While a constitution is not legally required for an incorporated congregation, it has often been used even by such a congregation to designate fundamental positions. If a constitution is not used, the kinds of information described in this section may be contained in the bylaws.)

1. Name of the Congregation

The local church shall have an official name. The church is deserving of a Christian name.

2. Affirmation of Faith and Purpose

This congregation . . .

- a. is founded upon the faith that there is but one God who is a personal God who in holy love creates, sustains, and orders all;
- b. confesses Jesus Christ as the Lord of the church and of all life;
- c. believes that the Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts and minds of believers, creating and sustaining the church through the gospel, giving guidance and comfort, and uniting believers with their Lord and with one another;
- d. maintains the New Testament as its only creed and rule of faith. In the Holy Scriptures is recorded God's search for all people, which is climaxed in God's redemptive act in and through Christ. Through the Bible God still speaks and continues to accomplish God's redemptive purposes;
- e. believes that the gospel is the good news that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Through the gospel God's sovereign will and Christ's redeeming grace are revealed;
- f. holds that the church is the body of Christ and is under the Lord's mandate to be faithful in accepting and transmitting the gospel by word and deed;
- g. considers that all members of the congregation, of the body of believers, are responsible for the total ministry of the church;

- h. accepts the ministry of the church to be the proclamation and fulfillment of the gospel for all people both near and far, and the nurture of individual believers in the Christian faith and life.

3. Mission and Vision Statements

The congregation should discern, develop, and implement mission and vision statements. The mission statement defines the primary purpose of the church, why the congregation exists, and its understanding of what God is calling it to be. The vision statement defines the specific ministries to which the congregation understands God to be calling it, what God is calling it to do. The mission statement should be reviewed at least every five years and the vision statement every three years.

4. Relationship to the Whole Church

a. *The church universal*

The local church is part of a larger whole, which comprises the complete body of Christ. The local church, therefore, shall recognize other Christian bodies and denominations and shall seek to cooperate with and give direction to the united efforts of the church.

b. *The church denominational²*

The congregation shall covenant to support faithfully the program of the Church of the Brethren, recognizing Annual Conference enactments of the Church of the Brethren as having governing force in its life, and shall remain a member of the Church of the Brethren or its successor. The congregation shall send delegates to those official conferences of the Church of the Brethren in which it is entitled to have representation. In case of strife or division, if any part of the congregation refuses to abide by its obligation as a member of the Church of the Brethren, that part of the congregation, whether a majority or minority of its membership, that continues in unity with the Church of the Brethren shall be recognized as the lawful congregation and shall continue in possession of all the property of the congregation.

If the congregation (a) disbands, (b) departs from membership in the Church of the Brethren, or (c) so decreases in numbers and financial strength as to render the congregation unable to fulfill its purpose, the district of the Church of the Brethren in which it is located, or the

successor, shall have the right to take charge and control of all property and thereafter to hold, manage, and convey the same at the discretion of the district. All action taken by the district relating to the property of a congregation shall be in conformity with the provisions of the Church of the Brethren Manual of Organization and Polity (chapter VI of this manual, “Property Holdings and Financial Resources”).

5. Membership³

a. Meaning of membership

According to the New Testament, life in Christ means life in the body of Christ. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13), so that we, “though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another” (Rom. 12:5). Membership in a local fellowship of believers, the congregation, is the way in which we affirm and live out our membership in Christ’s larger body, the church universal. In our interrelatedness with other Christians in the local church, we experience the fullness of the gifts of the Spirit, we discover ways to be faithful to our covenant with God and each other, and we’re able to support one another in carrying out our common calling as the people of God. So it was in the house churches of the earliest Christians, and so it is in the life of God’s people today.

From the time of its beginnings, the Church of the Brethren has affirmed the importance of church membership and sought ways to make church membership more meaningful. It is appropriate, therefore, for the congregation and its members to reflect on their mutual accountability to one another. On the one hand, the congregation has a covenantal responsibility to care for its members, to encourage growth in freedom and discipleship, to help members discover their gifts and find ways to serve, and to provide ministries that respond to both spiritual and physical needs. On the other hand, each member has a covenantal responsibility to participate regularly in the life of the congregation, to seek the counsel of the church in living out the way of Christ, to challenge the church to greater accountability to its calling, to respond to opportunities to serve in the congregation and beyond, and to contribute to the church’s ministries in every way possible. Congregations may use these general guidelines as a basis for developing more specific expectations for their membership.

At the heart of our calling as members of Christ’s body is the summons to follow Christ as his disciples. Christians do not live unto themselves

but are called to seek first the kingdom of God, to risk themselves for Christ's sake, and to take up the way of the cross. It is no easy task to accept and practice the costly grace of radical discipleship. In the community of faith, however, we find courage and strength to live out our discipleship in solidarity with others.

b. Entering into and renewing church membership

Membership in the local church is open to all people who by their own act of faith say yes to God's offer of new life in Christ and accept the vocation of the covenant community, as taught and practiced by the Church of the Brethren. One of the responsibilities of the congregation is to reach out to people irrespective of race, national origin, or status in life, to share with them the good news of God's grace in Jesus Christ, and to invite them to enter into the life of Christ's body.

When individuals respond to this invitation, the church shall take steps to prepare them for membership. Part of this preparation should consist of classes of sufficient length on the meaning of church membership. Such classes offer an opportunity for people to explore the faith and history of the wider Christian community, to study the particular story and distinctive emphases of the Church of the Brethren, and to become familiar with the life and expectations of the congregation they will be entering. In addition to providing membership classes, the congregation may choose to identify people who will serve as sponsors of new members to assist in their orientation into the life of the church. In whatever ways the congregation chooses to prepare people for membership, the pastor or minister has a key role to play here.

When those seeking membership have completed their period of preparation, the deacons⁴ shall recommend them for membership in the congregation. Following a congregational confirmation of acceptance as members, individuals may be received into the church in one of three ways:

- 1) Confession of faith and baptism by trine immersion as practiced by the Church of the Brethren.

- 2) A letter transferring membership from another congregation of the Church of the Brethren or of another Christian denomination.
- 3) Reaffirmation of faith and renewal of the commitment to membership made at an earlier time in another congregation.

Whatever the particular mode of reception, the act of receiving new members should be a festive moment in the life of a congregation. It is a time for old and new members to affirm their relationship with one another, a time to celebrate the joys and responsibilities of living in covenant in Christ's body, and a time to lift up the lifelong process of growth to which baptism should lead.

The sequel to entering into membership is the renewing of membership. Only as we regularly renew our covenant with God and with one another does that covenant function in a vital way. Historically, Brethren worked at renewal of membership through an annual visit by the deacons to the homes of members to reflect on the health of each person's relationship with Christ and the church—and through the love feast, which traditionally followed that visit. Whether through its practice or through other models of calling one another to accountability, the congregation shall provide its members with annual opportunities to examine their faith and calling and to renew or reaffirm their relationship with the church. As a part of this process, members may be invited to make specific commitments related to their participation in the life and work of the church.

c. Membership classification

Members shall be classified in one of three ways for statistical purposes and reported accordingly on annual report forms:

1) Members

Members of the congregation shall consist of those people who have been received into the church by baptism, letter, or reaffirmation of the faith, and who choose to continue their membership when the congregation invites them to examine and renew the covenant relationship, thereby confirming their intention to fulfill the responsibilities of members as described above.

In congregations that are aligned with two or more denominations, members shall be regarded as full members of each of the related

denominations, nurtured in and oriented to the traditions of each church, and encouraged to enrich one another through their differences, seeking strength and unity together. Annual report forms shall provide a way for such congregations to identify their multiple affiliation, so that statistics on membership and giving can be understood in the light of dual or multiple commitments.

2) Associate members

Congregations may grant associate membership to two categories of people:

- a) temporary residents, such as students and winter residents who participate in the life of a congregation on a seasonal or short-term basis, and who continue to hold membership in another congregation in the community of their permanent residence;
- b) former residents, such as people who have moved to a new location in which there is no Church of the Brethren, and who wish to continue a relationship with the Brethren at the same time that they become members of another Christian community.

Associate members have the right to vote and hold office in the congregation granting their associate status and have a responsibility to contribute resources to support the ministries of that congregation. Associate members are not eligible to serve on the leadership team or to represent the congregation as delegates to district or Annual Conferences. (For more detailed guidelines on the rights and responsibilities of associate members, see Section III.2. of the 1985 Annual Conference Membership Study Committee report.)

3) Separated members

Separated members consist of those people who were received into the church as members, but who no longer participate in the church's life or carry out the commitments expected of members, and who for three consecutive years fail to respond to invitations to reaffirm or renew their relationship with the congregation. Whether the causes of separation have to do with the individual, the congregation, or both, the congregation shall continue to explore ways to restore the broken relationship. (Guidelines for working at reconciliation and restoration may be found in the 1976 Annual Conference statement on

“Discipleship and Reconciliation”; also see chapter V, section IV of this manual.) For statistical purposes, members whose residence is unknown and cannot be ascertained for three consecutive years will also be designated as separated members.

d. Membership termination

Membership in a congregation of the Church of the Brethren may be terminated in one of the following ways:

- 1) Death
- 2) Transfer of membership by letter. A letter of transfer is the property of the congregation and shall go from the granting to the receiving congregation. Either the letter or the accompanying note should indicate whether the member for whom the letter is being sent is a member or a separated member.
- 3) Withdrawal. This action shall be taken by the congregation at the written request of the individual.
- 4) Removal. The congregation may act to remove a person’s name from the list of members when . . .
 - a) a member has joined another church, but failed to request a letter of transfer;
 - b) the congregation determines that all attempts at reconciliation have failed.

6. Congregational Forum

In the Church of the Brethren, the congregational forum is understood to be the final authority and governing body within the local congregation; it is the church in business session. The congregational forum shall be a place of open dialogue where members hear reports, discuss new ideas, envision and approve goals, evaluate past accomplishments, make decisions for future direction, and record the voice of the congregation on current issues where Christian witness is urgent. Names used for this gathering should reflect the congregation’s understanding of itself and might include congregational forum, congregational business meeting, church council, or congregational gathering.

The congregational forum shall call officers, deacons, ministry team chairs, a pastoral relations team member, and the two at-large members of the gifts discernment team. The congregational forum shall also adopt budgets, rule on policy and organizational matters, and authorize church officials to act on behalf of the congregation. Separated members shall not be eligible to participate and vote in the congregational forum. The congregational forum should strive for prayerful consensus and unity in its decision-making.

7. Officers of the Church

The officers of the congregational forum shall be the moderator, the church clerk, the treasurer, and the chair of the leadership team (who also serves as assistant moderator).

The congregational forum officers shall make decisions on behalf of the leadership team at their direction or in emergency situations between regularly scheduled leadership team meetings. Decisions of the congregational forum officers shall be made by consensus. If consensus cannot be achieved, the decision must be made by the leadership team.

8. Legal Officers/Trustees

Local congregations need to identify and empower legal officers/trustees as required by the state in which the congregation is located.

9. Leadership Team

There shall be a leadership team consisting of the leadership team chair, chairs of the ministry teams, and the moderator, who serves as vice chair. The pastor(s), the church clerk, the deacon chair, and the treasurer shall be *ex officio* without vote.

The leadership team shall be invested with administrative powers to plan, coordinate, integrate, and supervise the ongoing program of the congregation. The leadership team is primarily responsible for program, long-range planning, initiation or discontinuation of programs, and the setting of goals and objectives. The leadership team shall be empowered to act on behalf of the congregational forum *ad interim*, except for those actions specifically reserved for the congregational forum as set forth in this constitution and bylaws.

The leadership team is accountable to the congregational forum. The

leadership team shall assure that the mission and vision of the congregation are fulfilled by encouraging and empowering the development of new ministries by individuals and groups and also by evaluating existing ministries and modifying or discontinuing them. These ministries shall aid in fulfilling the mission and vision of the congregation and shall be faithful to the Church of the Brethren heritage and its understanding of the New Testament as the rule of faith and practice.

The chair of the leadership team shall be called for a three-year term by the congregational forum. The moderator shall serve as vice chair and the church clerk as secretary of the leadership team. The leadership team shall strive for prayerful consensus and unity in its decision-making.

10. Ministry Teams

Ministry teams shall be created by the congregational forum and are accountable to the leadership team. Each team shall be composed of three or more members, including a chair called by the congregational forum. Other ministry team members shall be called by the leadership team and the gifts discernment team. The moderator, leadership team chair, and the pastor(s) shall be ex officio members without vote on all ministry teams. Each ministry team shall choose from its membership a vice chair and secretary.

As needed, depending upon the workload and the size of the congregation, additional ministry teams or short-term project groups shall be created to carry out specific assignments. The number of ministry teams will be based on the identified core functions of the congregation.

In smaller congregations, if there are fewer than four voting members on the leadership team, ministry teams need not be created as such, in which case the leadership team shall function as a whole, delegating various responsibilities among its members. In this case, all leadership team members, including the chair, the moderator, the church clerk, the deacon chair, the treasurer, and the pastor, shall be voting members.

11. Deacons⁵

Deacons may be called for a term or for a continuing succession of three- to five-year terms. After each three- to five-year period of ministry, opportunity should be given for deacons to review their ministry experience. Following a positive review and affirmation, the deacon may enter into another period of ministry.

IV. The Local Church

The deacon body's central interest is the spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being of the church family. Its duties differ significantly from the tasks of ministry teams, whose responsibilities are expressed in programs aimed to support, nurture, teach, and direct the ministry and mission of all the congregation. In contrast, the deacons serve as caregivers of the congregational members.

Congregations determine the number of deacons needed to meet their needs. When deacons' duties include a caregiving ministry to every household in the congregation, a suggested guide is one deacon caregiver for every ten active households. (See 1997 Annual Conference Statement on "Deacon Ministry in the Church of the Brethren.")

The deacons shall serve as the membership team. They shall recommend individuals for membership. They shall consult with the pastor(s) regarding the listing, classification, reporting, and termination of membership.

The deacons shall receive the names for the at-large positions on the gifts discernment team and shall discern, call, and present the people to the congregational forum for affirmation.

The deacons shall appoint a deacon representative to serve on the pastoral relations team.

The deacon body chair serves as a member of the leadership team by virtue of office without vote. The deacon body representative serves as a member of the gifts discernment team with vote. A deacon body representative also serves on the pastoral relations team. The deacon body is accountable to the congregational forum, to whom it will report directly.

The office of deacon is a congregational office and does not automatically transfer when a deacon moves to a new congregation. The call to participate in

the deacon body comes as a decision of the congregational forum based on the individual's qualifications and the needs of the congregation.

12. Gifts Discernment Team

The gifts discernment team shall . . .

- a. oversee the gifts discernment process and talent/interest/skill inventories;
- b. keep accurate records of member profiles;
- c. serve as a consultative group to church leadership in securing people for ministries in the church;
- d. develop descriptions for every position in the church using a standardized form to include position, title, term, tenure, group to whom accountable, budget resources, duties, and appointments;
- e. oversee the calling of the congregational forum officers, the deacons, the chairs of the ministry teams, the two at-large members of the gifts discernment team, a pastoral relations team member, and delegates to district and Annual Conference using the following process:
 - 1) At least six weeks prior to the congregational call, the gifts discernment team shall announce the positions needing to be filled and their corresponding responsibilities.
 - 2) During that six-week period, the gifts discernment team shall be responsible for educating the congregation on discernment of spiritual gifts and the call process.
 - 3) The moderator shall convene a congregational forum following a Sunday morning worship service, at which time the gifts discernment team shall distribute a blank ballot with a listing of positions to be filled.
 - 4) Names of those people who are ineligible (church officers and leadership team members serving unexpired terms) shall be shared with the congregation.
 - 5) After a time of prayer and discernment, the members of the congregation shall be instructed to write the name of the person they

believe should be called to each position that is open.

- 6) The gifts discernment team shall receive these names and, based upon these names from the congregational forum, the spiritual gifts inventory, and prayer, issue a call on behalf of the congregation to the individual for the position.
 - 7) The deacons shall receive the names for the at-large positions on the gifts discernment team and shall discern, call, and present these individuals to the congregational forum for affirmation.
 - 8) When all positions are filled through this process, the people who have accepted the call for their respective positions will be affirmed by the congregational forum.
 - 9) In the event of an unclear call or a call that is not accepted, the gifts discernment team, after consultation with the leadership team, shall issue the call to another individual.
- f. in the event of a vacancy, together with the leadership team, appoint a person to fill the unexpired term;
 - g. serve as the congregational contact team for district and denominational groups responsible for calling leaders. This team shall have the responsibility for suggesting people for district and denominational leadership;
 - h. consist of the following people: pastor or member of the pastoral team, moderator (shall serve as chair), a deacon body representative, two at-large members (one woman, one man). The at-large members shall serve three years with staggered terms. All members of the gifts discernment team shall serve with vote.

13. Pastoral Relations Team

The pastoral relations team shall . . .

- a. meet with the pastor(s) quarterly, or more often as needed, in an advisory capacity and serve in maintaining good ministerial relations with the congregation;
- b. not fulfill administrative functions. Administrative functions, such as

negotiating contracts and salaries, will be the responsibility of the leadership team;

- c. consult with the pastor(s) regarding vacations, professional growth, and training opportunities;
- d. consult with the pastor(s) regarding requests from outside individuals or groups for special appeals, programs, services, or other community or wider church involvements;
- e. assist the pastor(s) in coordinating and giving balance to the various program aspects within the congregation's organizational structure;
- f. consist of one person appointed by the leadership team, one person appointed by the pastor(s), a deacon representative appointed by the deacon body, one person called for a two-year term by the congregational forum. (A second term may be served.) Those appointed shall serve an indefinite term until replacement or resignation.

14. Project Groups

The congregational forum, the leadership team, or ministry teams may constitute or authorize short-term project groups to carry out specific assignments. Such groups may also be constituted by a group or individual within the congregation if the project to be done, as discerned by the leadership team, falls within the stated mission/vision and policies of the congregation. When the specific assignment is achieved, the project group shall be dismissed. Short-term project groups are accountable to the ministry team constituting them or to the leadership team.

15. Records⁶

- a. Official documents

The following official documents related to the ongoing activities of the congregation shall be preserved:

- 1) Deeds, contracts, and other legal and governing documents.
- 2) Minutes of the congregational forum, leadership team, ministry teams, project groups, and other active groups within the congregation.
- 3) Records of members, including name, date received into membership,

and date and reason for removal from roll; of ordinations, baptisms, weddings, deaths; worship and Sunday school attendance; annual statistical reports; financial statements; significant correspondence by and to called, appointed, and employed officers that documents congregational program and activity.

- 4) Publications, such as weekly worship bulletins, newsletters, bulletins or programs for special events, directories, books, pamphlets, and brochures published by the congregation.

b. Ownership of records

All correspondence and records created by people called or employed to act on behalf of the congregation while acting in that capacity are the property of the congregation held in trust for the use and benefit of the Church of the Brethren. Congregations are urged to arrange for the responsible and safe care of their records and documents.

c. Transfer of records

Church records no longer in active use may be transferred by action of the congregation to a depository approved by the district board, where they can be protected from damage by fire and where, under proper restrictions, they may be open to examination.

Attention is called to the Brethren Historical Library and Archives at Elgin and to each of the Brethren college libraries as appropriate depositories for church records.

16. Structuring and Restructuring Congregations

The district board through its appropriate commission shall direct the work of church extension through the development of new fellowships and congregations, the growth of existing ones, and the receiving of unrelated congregations. When needed, guidance shall be given to the merging or disorganizing of congregations.⁷ Procedures to be followed in organizing and dividing congregations have been summarized as follows:

a. Organization of new congregations

A body of members or the district board, through its appropriate commission, may call for organization when, in the judgment of the said

commission, conditions of the place from which the call comes justify such organization. Area councils of churches should be notified and their counsel sought and considered.

The call for organization shall be the responsibility of the district board through its appropriate commission. A moderator shall be selected by the responsible commission. The commission shall provide assistance and counsel in establishing a plan of organization. It shall also assist the organizing congregation in the election of such officials as may be deemed advisable.

The new organization shall then be reported to the district conference, and, after its acceptance as fellowship or congregation by that district conference, its delegates shall be seated in the district conference.

b. Merging organized congregations

When two or more congregations desire to merge, they shall seek the counsel and assistance of the district board. After procedural details have been determined regarding property and other assets, liabilities, organization, and identity, and after a plan of merger has been approved by the congregations and the district board, the board shall recommend the merger to the district conference. Following acceptance of the merger, the new congregation shall be received and its delegates seated.

c. Dividing organized congregations

If a majority of an organized congregation decides to divide into more than one Church of the Brethren congregation, the congregation shall notify the district board of that decision and the date of the congregational forum to determine lines, division of church property, etc., and to elect a moderator for each of the new congregations and other officers, if deemed advisable. The district board shall then send at least one member of the appropriate district commission to the meeting to assist the congregation in those tasks. The new organization(s) shall be reported to district conference and recognition obtained, after which the delegates of the newly formed congregation(s) shall be seated.

If the report of the district board favoring the new organization is rejected by the congregation, the district board may, if deemed advisable, organize the petitioners as outlined above, provided two-thirds of the petitioners support the new organization.

If the report of the district board is unfavorable to the petitioners, they shall be counseled to work in harmony with all the other members in a spirit of love for the best interests of the congregation and to exercise patience until such time as conditions may be more favorable.

d. Disorganizing congregations

Requests for disorganization of a congregation shall be made to the district board. The board shall appoint a committee to consider the request. This committee shall examine the circumstances of this request, consider carefully the spiritual welfare of all involved, and report their findings to the board. Upon receiving this report, the board shall determine the advisability of such disorganization and make a recommendation to district conference. If the recommendation is approved by the conference, the district board shall arrange for a transfer of membership of the then remaining members of the congregation. The district board shall also recommend to district conference a plan for the use or disposition of the property of the disorganizing congregation according to the guidelines in chapter VI, "Property Holdings and Financial Resources."

Special care shall be taken to ensure that the official records of the congregation as listed above are transferred to the district. In addition, related information on the life of the disorganizing congregation, if available, should be transferred to the district. Such information may include . . .

- 1) photographs taken in connection with special events or collected from members;
- 2) newspaper and periodical articles documenting church activities;

- 3) manuscript histories of the congregation or any of its sub-units or activities;
- 4) information about special achievements or honors attained by the pastor or lay members;
- 5) biographical material on the minister and other church leaders;
- 6) artifacts connected with the history of the church.

D. SUGGESTED BYLAWS

1. Personnel Selection and Tenure

- a. The gifts discernment team shall maintain a personnel file indicating the interest, giftedness, and record of service of all members. This team shall develop a process for discerning spiritual gifts of all the members of the congregation and find appropriate ways to use those gifts for the ministry and mission of the church. The team shall oversee the calling of individuals for special duties in the church, such as the officers of the congregation, members of the leadership team, deacons, delegates to district and Annual Conferences, and other positions required by the congregational forum.
- b. The term of office for all officers of the congregational forum shall be three years. Officers shall not be eligible to serve more than two terms in succession.
- c. The term of office for the chairs of the ministry teams shall be three years. They shall not be eligible to serve more than two terms in succession. The other members of the ministry teams shall have a term of two years. They shall not be eligible to serve more than three terms in succession. If any leadership team or ministry team member is absent from meetings without cause for six months, that office shall be declared vacant.
- d. Approximately one-third of the membership of the leadership team and one-half of the ministry team members shall be called in any one year.

2. Employed Staff

a. *Pastor(s)*

The congregation shall employ a pastor(s) when needed, a person whose faith, aptness to teach, preach, counsel, and administer, and whose educational qualifications have been examined in consultation with the appropriate authorities in the Church of the Brethren.

The pastor(s) shall be properly ordained.⁸ (In special interim situations, a licentiate, or a minister from another denomination, may serve upon approval by the district board.) The pastor(s) shall accept and adhere to the faith and practices of the Church of the Brethren and the local congregation as set forth in this constitution. The pastor's life and conduct shall witness to Christian faith.

The pastor(s) shall be the spiritual shepherd of the congregation and the executive director of the church program. The pastor(s) shall be an ex officio member of the leadership team, ministry teams, and project groups as needed. Normally the pastor(s) shall preach and teach, administer the ordinances, visit and counsel, and in various other ways aid the congregation in worshiping and serving God.

b. Additional professional staff

When the congregation has grown to sufficient size, the employment of additional trained staff shall be considered so as to assure the continued growth of the congregation and to provide adequate leadership for the congregation. Other staff members suggested include a director of Christian education, a director of Christian witness, an associate pastor, a minister of music, an administrative assistant, a congregational visitor, a youth minister, or others.

c. Office secretary

The local church shall provide secretarial assistance for the pastor(s) and the church office. Part-time secretarial assistance shall be provided until such time as the workload requires full-time service.

d. Custodian

Custodial services shall be provided for the care and supervision of the church buildings and grounds.

3. Staff Employment Procedures

- a. The selection and call of a pastor(s) and other professional staff, as well as the termination of their services to the congregation, shall be done in keeping with approved Church of the Brethren procedures and after seeking consultation and guidance of authorized officials of the Church of the Brethren.

A two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting in a duly called congregational forum shall be regarded as sufficient to express the will of the congregation in extending a call or in voting to continue the leadership of a pastor.

- b. The office secretary shall be employed by the leadership team in consultation with the pastor(s). The office secretary shall be responsible to the pastor(s).
- c. The custodian shall be employed by and be responsible to the appropriate ministry team or leadership team.
- d. The terms of employment for all employed staff shall be carefully stipulated and reviewed annually. When the terms have been mutually accepted, such terms shall be set forth in writing on approved forms and shall be considered an agreement between the contracting parties.
- e. When there are multiple staff, the division of responsibility and the lines of authority shall be clearly defined and periodically reviewed by the appropriate church officials. Although there must be close cooperation and harmony between staff members, in the final analysis all personnel are responsible to the congregation for the conduct of their offices.

4. Church Officers

- a. All officers shall be members in good standing of the Church of the Brethren.
- b. The moderator shall be the official head of the congregation but shall recognize the pastor(s) as the spiritual and executive leader. The

moderator shall preside at the congregational forums and serve as vice chair of the leadership team and chair of the gifts discernment team. The moderator will be an ex officio member with vote at leadership team and gifts discernment team meetings but without vote at ministry team and project group meetings.

Special Note: Many congregations have had difficulty incorporating the preceding paragraph regarding the moderator in their church organization. This resulted in a query to Annual Conference in 2003, asking for a study of the office of moderator and an update of the role, qualifications and selection of local church moderators. After a two-year examination, Annual Conference approved a document entitled “The Functions and Qualifications of the Local Church Moderator.” That document is reproduced in this Manual as Section II of this chapter and while it does not negate the validity of the suggestions of the 2000 Annual Conference paper on Congregational Structure, it does supersede any previous polity regarding the local church moderator.

- c. The chair of the leadership team shall serve as the assistant moderator.
- d. The church clerk shall keep accurate minutes of the congregational forum and the leadership team meetings. Minutes shall be kept in a volume provided for that purpose and they shall be and remain the property of the congregation.
- e. The treasurer, who shall be an ex officio member without vote of the leadership team and the ministry team related to financial issues, shall keep a book of accounts of the congregation. The treasurer shall receive the financial secretary’s bank deposit slips for all contributions, disburse funds upon proper “order on the treasury,” make written reports of all transactions to the leadership team and to the annual congregational forum, or at such intervals as the leadership team may decide. The treasurer shall report the general state of finances to the leadership team and shall also submit accounts to an audit annually at the direction of the leadership team.
 - 1) The financial secretary shall receive, keep records of, and deposit in the bank for the treasurer all contributions from the members and other public and private offerings, and all other receipts. At least two people shall count and verify in writing all public offerings. The financial secretary shall report periodically to the ministry team

related to finances.

- 2) All financial personnel shall give corporate surety, in amounts determined by the leadership team, for which premiums shall be paid by the congregation.

5. Leadership Team

The leadership team shall . . .

- a. provide an atmosphere of worship and invite personal sharing with one another at the beginning of each leadership team meeting;
- b. share resources and opportunities for leadership development offered by district, denominational, and ecumenical agencies;
- c. fulfill the directives of the congregational forum;
- d. assign, supervise, and coordinate the work of the ministry teams;
- e. supervise and coordinate the work of project groups not under the supervision of a ministry team;
- f. project long-range planning, set goals and objectives, and recommend the initiation or discontinuation of programs;
- g. interpret rules of procedure for ministry teams and project groups;
- h. with the gifts discernment team, make all necessary appointments;
- i. with the gifts discernment team, fill all vacancies in elective offices occurring between congregational forums and such other vacancies not otherwise provided for;
- j. act on recommendations from the appropriate ministry team on staff vacancies and present recommendations on personnel and terms of employment to the congregational forum for all professional staff personnel. Nonprofessional staff may be employed by the appropriate ministry teams or leadership team as in harmony with local church practice;
- k. prepare the agenda for the congregational forum;

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- l. establish self-allocation proposals for outreach giving and recommend guidelines to ministry teams for budget planning;
- m. review the proposed budget for presentation to the congregational forum;
- n. approve and supervise, within the limits established by the congregational forum, the expenditure of all funds;
- o. provide for the annual audit;
- p. allocate and define authority with respect to the establishment of bank accounts and the signing of checks and other legal documents;
- q. receive, consider, and make disposition of concerns brought by any group or individual member;
- r. report its activities and actions to the congregational forum;
- s. bring recommendations to the congregational forum when major church policy needs revision;
- t. advise and consult with the pastor(s) when there is no pastoral relations team;
- u. enlist the help and consultation of the district executive/minister and/or other district personnel in program planning and handling of special concerns.

6. Ministry Teams

- a. *Core functions and structure*
 - 1) Mission and vision statements, core functions, size of the congregation, and available resources will determine the number of teams needed.
 - 2) Basic areas of church life will be covered by ministry teams. Ministry teams will be added and dissolved as new areas of ministry are identified, as the congregation's needs change, and as individuals and groups discern ministries in which they want to be involved.
 - 3) Each team will be chaired by a person called by the congregational

forum for a three-year term, with a limit of two successive terms.

- 4) The gifts discernment team and the leadership team will interact to call others to complete the team. They shall serve two-year terms with a maximum three-term tenure.
- 5) Each ministry team shall have at least three members.
- 6) Each ministry team will . . .
 - a) identify its goals as related to the mission and vision statements;
 - b) identify the gifts and skills needed on the team to carry out its ministry;
 - c) report to the leadership team on a regular basis;
 - d) appoint a vice chair and secretary;
 - e) meet regularly or as needed;
 - f) work cooperatively with those carrying out specific ministries, empowering them with the appropriate authority to fulfill their responsibilities (e.g., Christian education teachers, choir director).

b. *Ministry development*

Ministry teams shall be responsible for developing ministries in areas such as . . .

- 1) fostering the spiritual life of the congregation through worship, music, education, and fellowship;
- 2) securing leadership for special meetings and providing pulpit supply when needed;
- 3) directing the congregation's witness to the world through evangelism, church planting, ecumenical relations, missions, social action, and ministry to the needy;
- 4) acquiring, holding, and conveying property in accordance with the decision of the leadership team and/or the congregation;
- 5) caring for, protecting, and maintaining all church property;

- 6) receiving, disbursing, and recording all funds of the congregation;
- 7) building the annual budget for leadership team review;
- 8) planning stewardship emphases;
- 9) recruiting, training, and mentoring leaders in cooperation with the gifts discernment team.

c. *Duties*

Specific duties based upon the core functions for ministry teams are as follows:⁹

1) Worship

- a) Assist in planning varied corporate worship experiences.
- b) Consult with the pastor(s) regarding the ministry of preaching.
- c) Plan for seasonal events and special historical celebrations.
- d) Develop proposals and provide guidance for the ministry of music.
- e) Give consideration to the use of fine arts in the congregation's program.
- f) Provide opportunities and suggestions for personal and group meditation and reflection.

2) Education

- a) Provide opportunities and resources for formal study in Christian education classes, membership classes, short-term courses or seminars in specific interest areas, and training courses for group leaders.
- b) Encourage people to participate in formal study beyond the congregation by taking related courses in adult education at area colleges, short-term summer schools, or in lay training programs

sponsored by church/interchurch agencies.

- c) Provide opportunities and resources for informal study through house groups, intercultural groups, community affairs groups, other small groups, outdoor education efforts, camps, retreats.
- d) Develop a library that offers an adequate guided reading program for all members.
- e) Give consideration to educational values in talk-backs or discussions of sermons.

3) Fellowship/hospitality

- a) Assist the congregation in creating a hospitable environment where strangers are welcomed and new people are effectively assimilated into the life of the church.
- b) Plan congregational social opportunities.
- c) Give consideration to fellowship occasions for the community surrounding the church.
- d) Provide guidance for needs of specific fellowship groups such as adult, youth, and Christian education classes.
- e) Develop plans and secure leadership for interest groups such as hobbies, parents, recreation, therapy.

4) Evangelism and church planting

- a) Work with congregations in other communities for mutual helpfulness and shared ministries, such as youth ministries, between suburban and inner-city congregations, or between predominantly white and predominantly nonwhite congregations.
- b) Plant a new congregation, or work with other congregations or the district to plant new congregations.
- c) Discover those people in the community who are not actively related to a church.
- d) Plan and carry out appropriate forms of evangelism such as

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personal evangelism, visitation evangelism, fellowship evangelism, educational evangelism, or preaching evangelism.

- e) Prepare, encourage, and support members in speaking up for Christian values and concerns in vocational, neighborhood, community, and civic groups.

5) Social education and action

- a) Lead out and involve the congregation in social education and action on issues in the areas of peace, international relations, citizenship and political life, economic life, anti-poverty, race relations, religious freedom, and temperance.
- b) Send delegates to conferences and seminars on social concerns for purposes of information and training.
- c) Interpret the church's peace position and alternative service, and counsel all young people regarding military recruitment.
- d) Actively involve the congregation in the ministry of reconciliation and interpersonal peacemaking in the church, community, and family.

6) Social service

- a) Interpret service opportunities, such as workcamps, resettlement of refugees, disaster relief, volunteer service, to the congregations and recruit people for service.
- b) Plan volunteer service projects in the community and congregation, and recruit for summer projects elsewhere.
- c) Aid and support community welfare institutions for the poor, homeless, aged, dependent children, mentally and physically impaired, and those dealing with addiction problems.
- d) In cooperation with appropriate social welfare agencies, help people in crisis.
- e) Offer help and counsel to members of the congregation when needed.

- f) Collect material aid for relief abroad and disasters at home.
 - g) Sponsor overseas people-to-people projects such as student exchanges, resettlement of refugees, tours, and sending members to overseas seminars and work camps.
- 7) Stewardship of time and abilities
- a) Recruit for set-apart ministries.
 - b) Enlist and train people for the congregation's ministries.
 - c) Work with the gifts discernment team to maintain a personnel file indicating the interest, aptitude, and record of service of all members.
- 8) Stewardship of financial resources
- a) Educate and encourage members to be good stewards of their resources, and encourage Christian giving.
 - b) Encourage members to tithe.
 - c) Administer the funds of the church.
 - d) Be concerned for an adequate corporate stewardship of the congregation, including the ratio of resources going to outreach.
 - e) Give counsel to the leadership team on anticipated resources and expenditures in annual budget preparations.
- 9) Stewardship of property
- a) Supervise the care, maintenance, and development of church property.
 - b) Provide adequate insurance coverage.
- 10) Communications
- a) Publish a periodic newsletter.

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- b) Prepare and distribute a brochure introducing the congregation to the community.
- c) Promote the use of denominational publications.
- d) Encourage the use of audiovisuals for interpretation and education, and provide adequate equipment.
- e) Interpret local, district, and denominational ministries.

11) Work with the pastor(s) and staff

- a) Recommend suitable personnel for employment as church secretary and/or custodian.
- b) Represent the congregation in screening and nominating all professional personnel for employment by the leadership team and/or by the congregational forum, such as the pastor(s), associate pastor(s), administrative assistant, youth minister, director of Christian nurture, director of Christian witness, or minister of music. The employment of the pastor(s) and other professional staff shall be in keeping with approved denominational placement procedures and in consultation with the district executive.
- c) Stipulate carefully and review annually the terms of employment for all employed personnel. When the terms have been mutually accepted, they shall be set forth in writing and considered an agreement between the church and its employees.
- d) Recruit capable men and women for the ministry, giving them encouragement and guidance during their training and making recommendations to the congregation and district regarding licensing and ordination.
- e) Arrange for pulpit supply and other ministerial services during the absence of the pastor(s).

d. Financial responsibility

Each ministry team shall prepare annually a tentative budget for its program area and submit it to the leadership team for its use in preparing the full church budget.

e. Reportability

Along with the responsibilities listed herein, additional duties and instructions may be assigned to the ministry teams by the leadership team when deemed to be in the best interest of the congregation. The activities of the ministry teams are subject to review by the leadership team, and regular reports shall be made to the leadership team.

f. Suggested ministry team models

Under 50 members: leadership team acts as a whole or two ministry teams

50-100 members: three ministry teams

100-200 members: four ministry teams

200-300 members: five ministry teams

300-400 members: six or seven ministry teams

400-500 members: seven or eight ministry teams

Over 500 members: eight or more ministry teams

Each congregation will add or dissolve ministry teams as determined by the mission of the church.

7. Program and Fiscal Year

Congregational leaders shall assume their duties January 1 with the exception of Sunday school leadership. The fiscal year for congregations shall be the same as the calendar year. Salaries and extended contracts shall be negotiated at the regular budget-building time for the upcoming fiscal year.

8. Business Meetings

- a. An annual congregational forum shall be held. Other regular meetings may be held as determined by the congregational forum. Special meetings may be called by the moderator or the leadership team upon giving seven-day written notice. The date of the annual congregational forum and other special meetings shall be given to the district office as requested.
- b. Adequate advance notice of all congregational forums and their agendas shall be given to the membership involved.
- c. The leadership team shall meet regularly. Special meetings of the

leadership team may be called by the leadership team chair or the moderator.

- d. Ministry teams and project groups shall meet regularly or as the leadership team may direct.

9. Quorum

- a. Although it is desirable to have as many members present as possible for congregational forums, no quorum shall be required except as might be specified by law.
- b. For meetings of the leadership team and ministry teams, a majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

II. The Functions and Qualifications of the Local Church Moderator Church of the Brethren 2004

Background

The office of local church moderator in the Church of the Brethren originated following the decline of the free ministry and the advent of the paid ministry. Accompanying that change was the disappearance of a position formerly called “elder-in charge.” The elder-in-charge was usually one of the free ministers, normally one with the most experience, who was recognized as the official head of the congregation. He presided at business meetings of the congregation. During the transition to paid pastors, some churches retained the position of elder, and he also functioned as an advisor to the pastor.

The 1955 Annual Conference adopted the term “moderator” for the presiding officer of the local church and indicated that moderators could be either ministers or laypersons. The action recommended that “the moderator...be a resident member of the church which he serves where there is a person available who meets the qualifications... Otherwise, the moderator should be chosen from outside the church which he serves.” Additionally, terms of service were established for the position of moderator: “The moderator shall be elected by a majority vote for a term of one, two, or three years. He shall be eligible to serve not more than six successive years in the same church, but after one year shall be eligible for election again.” At the beginning of the calling of local church moderators, approval of the person called had to be given by the district before the person could assume office. Some districts still retain that practice.

The 1955 Annual Conference identified the moderator as “the official head of the church, working through the church board and church council in (the) formulating of policies, transacting of business, and approving of the plans for the work of the church.” The pastor was identified as the “executive head” of the church, with leadership responsibilities in the church program and as the congregation’s spiritual counselor and pastor. Moderator and pastor were to work amiably and closely together, supporting and respecting each other’s roles.

Historically, the office of moderator was filled by ordained elders who were part of the district elders body and answerable to that group in the district. When the elders body was dissolved by Annual Conference action (1967), the responsibilities formerly cared for by the elders body were transferred to the district board.

The policies and procedures relating to the local church moderator that were instituted by the 1955 Annual Conference basically have been followed by congregations for nearly fifty years. In isolated cases there has been disregard for tenure and occasionally a moderator has assumed an excessive or ill-advised amount of control over the program and nature of the church. That the vast majority of congregations have found the 1955 model for moderators congenial and workable affirms several valid points in that model.

The current design for the organization of a Brethren congregation, “Congregational Structure,” approved by Annual Conference in 2000, proposes a role for the moderator that is consistent with one of the duties proposed for moderators in the 1955 paper. The Conference delegates in 1955 adopted a statement that said, “He (the moderator) should be a member of the church board, church cabinet, or board of administration, and when a resident member, may serve as chairman.” The 2000 “Congregational Structure” paper calls for the moderator to not only preside at business meetings of the congregation when the entire membership is assembled but also to act as vice-chair, with vote, of the principal administrative group of the church (named the Leadership Team in the current structure; similar in nature to a church board or its executive committee). The moderator also serves as an ex officio member without vote of the Leadership Calling Team (a.k.a. nominating committee) and all project group (committee, commission, or task team) meetings. It is recognized that congregations are not required to automatically adopt a new organizational design, and churches in which it may not be feasible for the moderator to be so integrally involved in the day-to-day functions of the church may define the duties of the moderator in a way that best serves their objectives and mission.

The current congregational organization model still recognizes the moderator as the organizational and official head of the congregation and the pastor (or pastors) the executive head and spiritual counselor and shepherd of the congregation.

Qualifications for a Local Church Moderator

The local church moderator can be a woman or a man, from laity or clergy, who

exhibits in faith and character Christ-like qualities, including love, encouragement, wisdom, graciousness, faithfulness to Christ, and dedication to the church. More specific considerations might be consecrated Christian living in home, church, and community; faithful service and leadership experience in the congregation; understanding and commitment to the traditions, ministries, and polity of the Church of the Brethren; familiarity with parliamentary procedure and models for consensus-building and discernment; and listening skills which seek and invite open, forthright sharing and a willingness to strive for reconciliation of differing points of view.

Annual Conference has been consistent in suggesting that congregations look first to their resident membership for candidates for moderators. However, a person from outside of the congregation could be called if there are no qualified or willing persons for the office within the church, or if circumstances within the congregation would suggest that a more “neutral” party would be desirable to conduct the congregation’s decision-making. It is suggested that the moderator always be a member of the Church of the Brethren, preferably from the same district. The district may also make available a list of potential candidates who are pre-approved to serve as local church moderators. (The selection of a non-Brethren moderator should be made only after consultation with the district executive and/or district board.) It is further suggested that the moderator be considered “a member of the assembly” over which he/she presides, giving the moderator the privilege of voting on all items decided by the congregation. The moderator may exercise his or her privilege to vote only in the event when the moderator may choose to break or create a tie in the best interest of the church.

Selection and Term of Service

The process of selecting a local church moderator should follow the same process used in selecting other church leadership persons, whether that be a call process or by election. The term of service and tenure for the moderator should be specified in the congregation’s organizational documents. The traditional term of service for moderators is three years, eligible to be re-elected to a second term; with no more than six years in succession.

Training

Since there is limited information available to describe the dynamics of the moderator’s position and role, congregations may wish to consider providing for a time of overlap in terms when the time approaches to select a new moderator. The outgoing moderator could thus provide some mentoring for his or her successor. It also may be helpful, where convenient, for the immediate past moderator to serve as a parliamentary advisor for congregational business meetings for one year beyond their term of service.

It is further recommended that districts provide at least one training workshop for local church moderators annually. The workshop could include such topics as the

role and function of the moderator, the development of listening skills and methods of facilitating a business meeting, appropriate counsel for use by moderators in business meetings, relationship between moderators and pastors, and mediation and reconciliation skills.

Accountability

The moderator is chosen by a local church and is primarily accountable to the congregational business meeting. The local church moderator also is accountable to the district board and should seek the counsel of the district, through the district executive, in regard to all problems emerging within the congregation related to district and denominational programs, policy, and polity.

New Fellowships

The above descriptions and recommendations for local church moderators are applicable to established congregations. Denominational guidelines for the organization and development of new fellowships and church projects call for the moderator to be named by the district until such time as the new group is recognized as a self-sustaining congregation.

III. Ethics for Congregations¹¹

A. INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to speak to congregational actions, or the collective body of believers gathered at one place and acting as a whole, rather than to individual ethics. The paper on “Ethics in Ministry” notes that “God calls all members, including those in leadership, to live by the high standards upheld in the scriptures.” That paper recommends the standards of ethical behavior as applicable to *all* individual members of the church, with the added responsibility for the leaders and ordained ministers to be role models.

B. RELATIONSHIP TO THE LARGER CHURCH

All Church of the Brethren congregations are encouraged to adopt the model constitution and bylaws for congregations passed by Annual Conference in 2000. That constitution states that “the congregation shall covenant to support faithfully the program of the Church of the Brethren, recognizing Annual Conference enactments of the Church of the Brethren as having governing force in its life, and shall remain a member of the Church of the Brethren or its successor. The congregation shall send delegates to those official conferences of the Church of the Brethren in which it is entitled to have representation . . .” (see I.C.4.b. in this chapter).

The congregation has an ethical responsibility to support the denomination.

IV. The Local Church

There may be rare instances in which the congregation may conclude that conscience will not permit participation in a particular aspect of denominational program. A decision *not* to participate in a denominational program should occur *only* after the congregation has engaged in a responsible process of study and prayer and open and honest dialogue with denominational representatives. Congregations constantly need to examine and renew their covenant with the denomination and to follow the counsel of the church. The prayerful conclusion not to support a denominational position or program should be a matter of anguish, not competitiveness.

Disagreement with particular actions of the denomination does not give a congregation the right to disparage the whole church. Responsible children who disagree with their parents' counsel do not belittle them in front of other children nor find reason to withhold their love from them. The congregation, as part of the denominational family of Christ, must deal with its family kindly, respectfully, and lovingly.

The same principles apply to the congregation's relation to the district. Annual Conference has defined several specific responsibilities to the district organization that are directly related to congregational life, such as the authorization, discipline, and placement of ministers; the coordination of outdoor education; and the training of lay and ministerial leadership. The district is solely dependent upon the support and participation of the congregations within its boundaries for the continuation and effectiveness of its program. Congregations are to help establish, support, and abide by the policies and decisions of the district. They are to welcome and work with the district executive or other appointed representatives of the district. They are to cooperate with and give encouragement to other congregations within the district.

The Church of the Brethren at the denominational and district levels, as in the congregation, permits and encourages a high degree of member participation. The gathered body, such as Annual Conference and district conference, is the place for discussion and differences to be handled. After that process is employed, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, congregations should seek faithfully to comply with the decisions.

The local church also is part of a larger whole which comprises the body of Christ. The Church of the Brethren has a long and productive history of working with other Christian communions in the interest of Christian solidarity, witness, and service. Brethren congregations endeavor to know and relate to churches of other denominations in their communities. Our one Savior and Lord, Jesus

Christ, prayed for unity within the Body (John 17) and demonstrated that effective disciples can come from different Christian perspectives (Luke 9:49-50).

Ethical accountability in relation to other communions calls for the congregation to contribute the uniqueness and strength of its particular witness toward a common goal, rather than seeking to impose sectarian bias. It also supersedes a judgmental stance toward people and groups of a different orientation, and it decries underhanded or self-righteous means of luring members away from other communions for its own cause (proselytizing).

On the other hand, the congregation must guard against promoting or aligning with any interest groups or programs that may disrupt or pull away from the covenantal life and mission of the congregation.

C. RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMMUNITY

Jesus seemed to make it clear that taxation that was fair is justified (Luke 20:20-26), and Peter suggested that the mission of civil authorities is a part of God's plan for society (1 Pet. 2:13-17). Congregations should guard against inappropriate use of their tax-exempt status and should honor in letter and spirit laws that clearly are applicable to them, such statutes as relate to copyrights, safety codes, employee rights, discrimination, accommodation of people with disabilities, etc. Even when churches are exempted from the requirements of some of these laws, the church should aspire to compliance, where appropriate. In regard to neighborliness, the congregation in its programs and activities, as well as in the maintenance of its property, will respect the environmental safety and appearance of the community in which it is located. And it will model peace and justice in its relationship to the community, in its respect for individuals from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds, and in the method(s) by which it may publicly oppose or agree with an issue with strong political or emotional overtones.

Already discussed is the congregation's role in representing the message and the truth of Jesus Christ. Often in its history, the church has not been sensitive to the kind of image it projects in society, or it has demanded privileges and considerations from its environment beyond its reasonable due. It has sometimes expected to be served, rather than to serve.

The congregation must deal ethically with its community. A violation of that duty occurs if the congregation infringes upon the rights of local businesses by repeatedly selling the same or similar products for profit, at a price that undercuts the merchants. Businesses understand, and often assist with,

occasional car washes, bake sales, auctions, etc. The congregation must be sensitive to the effect its fundraising activities has on others. The church also must guard against abusing discount privileges and soliciting gifts and gratuities with coercive methods. The church also should examine the ethical implications of expecting or requesting free professional services. It is perfectly appropriate to accept services and products as gifts. Requesting these gifts, however, should be done in a non-coercive way, not an expectation or assumption that they represent no sacrifice. An ethical congregation will seek to make payment for services and products received by the date the bills are due.

The question of litigation in matters in which the congregation may feel its own rights or privileges have been violated is a difficult one. Traditionally, the Brethren considered it not in keeping with biblical counsel to take a dispute into the civil court (Matt. 5:33-37; 1 Cor. 6:1-8). While that conviction may not be as strong in the modern era, there is still a clear ethical problem for Brethren resorting to public courts to handle a matter that the congregation ought to be able to handle itself, or to settle by more amicable means (cf. Matt. 18:15-17). Both in terms of complying with biblical directives and to model the peace of Christ, the Brethren must seek to resolve disputes in love and harmony.

Another ethical issue for the congregation, in relation to both the local and wider community, is its responsibility to preserve the environment and natural resources. The congregation should model good stewardship of the environment through recycling practices, avoiding waste of energy, and making choices that minimize refuse.

D. RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

There are many New Testament scriptures that admonish congregations to maintain kind and considerate relationships among the members and the leaders of the church. Indeed, the congregation should be the model for relationships that build up one another and that show respect and admiration for each person's unique gifts. In that regard, the congregation is to strive for harmony and unity in all it does. Any action or statement that does not first seek the best interests of all its members raises the appearance of an ethical breach and requires scrutiny.

This criterion also applies to the congregation's organizational and decision making methods. A characteristic of a Brethren congregation is a democratic approach to choices and direction. For nearly two centuries, denominational decisions at Annual Conference were made only by consensus. The wisdom of the collective whole is valued as the closest we can get to the best answer on any question. Thus, a congregation shows lack of respect for a majority of its

members by allowing decision making to fall into the hands of a few. Each member of the congregation must guard against written or oral statements that appeal to those people's positions or authority or that are based on incomplete or misleading information. This problem arises in calculated attempts to swing or manipulate attitudes and decisions. Full communication and dialogue should be encouraged at all times, and complete records and minutes of all meetings, decisions, finances, etc., kept and made available to all members.

The constitution for Brethren congregations gives appropriate direction regarding the mutual accountability of members in the congregation:

On the one hand, the congregation has a covenantal responsibility to care for its members, to encourage growth in freedom and discipleship, to help members discover their gifts and find ways to serve, and to provide ministries that respond to both spiritual and physical needs. On the other hand, each member has a covenantal responsibility to participate regularly in the life of the congregation, to seek the counsel of the church in living out the way of Christ, to challenge the church to greater accountability to its calling, to respond to opportunities to serve in the congregation and beyond, and to contribute to the church's ministries in every way possible. (See I.C.5.)

Sensitivity is to be given to the needs of individuals in the church. The congregation shall provide an environment where personal tensions and difficulties can be shared in full confidence of trust, loving response, and confidentiality. There need to be in place such attitudes of concern, forgiveness, and reason as will readily and effectively provide for the settling of disputes and for reconciliation among conflicting parties. Handling disputes through petitioning, letter writing, and anonymous communications is unethical if done to circumvent open dialogue and proper decision making.

The church's facilities are to be available to all people seeking to participate with the congregation. There are ethical ramifications whenever anyone is denied the privilege to worship or to participate in other opportunities of the church, whether the denial is a neglect to update policies and facilities (such as in the case of accessibility for the disabled) or outright prejudice.

The church is to be conscious of the need for its lay leadership to model Christian lifestyle, just as for its ministers. The congregation is to nurture and encourage a Christian lifestyle for all its members and call to leadership those people who seek conscientiously to live out a Christian lifestyle. When matters of personal lifestyle arise, in a Christlike spirit the congregation is to do everything possible to nurture and restore the person to a Christian lifestyle.

The congregation is to be sensitive in respecting the functions to which it has called its leaders and ministers. For example, it is improper to invite former pastors to perform pastoral functions or visitation in the congregation when another pastor is currently employed. Serving in leadership or other highly visible roles by former pastors should be carefully evaluated as to its effect upon the ministry of the current pastor and upon the harmony of the church. It also is unethical for individuals and/or groups in the church to usurp the authority and tasks of officially elected leaders or committees.

E. RELATIONSHIP TO PASTOR(S) AND OTHER STAFF

In surveys conducted among delegates to Annual Conference and in much correspondence the committee has received, it is evident that often serious ethical issues are raised in the way congregations treat their staff, especially in matters relating to compensation, benefits, and personal support. The committee discovered that the denomination has very clear policies that advocate and define fair and appropriate considerations of pastors, in particular, and we need only to give some brief reminders in this paper.

Congregations and districts need to give very careful attention to the call and recruitment of ministers. Congregations should treat with utmost seriousness the calling of qualified persons to the ministry and make provisions to support them in receiving adequate education and preparation for the vocation of ministry. The tendency to judge a person's ability before he or she has had adequate time to learn and demonstrate proficiency for ministry should be guarded against. Similarly, one person's ability or performance should not be compared with another's in such a way as to disparage the first.

Issues related to the search for and placement of pastors present several ethical considerations. Denominational polity is to be followed in all searches. (See "Guidelines for Pastoral Placement.") Congregations and district executives are to consider the questions of fairness and adequate information to candidates when more than one candidate is being interviewed for a pastoral vacancy at the same time. Confidentiality for the interviewee is very important, especially in cases where the candidate has not resigned from a current position or is not definite about seeking the new position. Pastoral profiles are to be kept in utmost confidentiality by members of search committees.

The congregation needs to establish clear understandings with the new staff members as to performance expectations. Those expectations should be equitable.

Congregations have been slow to recognize the ethical issues relating to adequate compensation and benefits for their employees. In regard to pastors and associate pastors, there is a recommended minimum scale maintained and revised by Annual Conference for providing compensation. The scale is a gauge for congregations to measure ethical responsibility in dealing fairly with their pastors. In most cases, abiding by the scale can be assumed to meet the congregation's duties to the pastor as to compensation. The guidelines for providing medical and life insurance, pension, and other benefits, as recommended by the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, are to be followed as nearly as possible. If congregations find it impossible to meet the scale or to provide benefits, there is an ethical obligation to discuss the reasons and their implications with the pastor and to seek in good faith to take steps toward achieving the recommended scale and benefits as soon as possible.

Another even more critical issue relates to the emotional and spiritual support of the pastors and other church staff. There should be in place a committee or group that regularly relates to the staff regarding their spiritual, physical, and emotional health and well-being. There should also be a regular evaluation of the pastor and the church program that will cite weaknesses *and* strengths of both staff and congregation. The congregation is to encourage the staff to take adequate vacation and leave time. Sometimes the congregation is too dependent on the staff for functions that members of the congregation could do. Congregations need to work with staff to see that physical and emotional health are not jeopardized by the staff member's load.

Sometimes congregations are not considerate of the families of their pastors. For example, often a pastor's spouse is expected to take certain responsibilities in the church, or it is expected that the parsonage is a public meeting place. The privacy of the pastoral family should be respected.

The maintenance of the parsonage is a responsibility that the church sometimes neglects. The congregation needs to have a strategy by which repairs to the parsonage are made swiftly and competently when breakdowns or problems occur. The appropriate congregational committee should develop clear understandings with the pastoral family regarding the monitoring and administration of the parsonage maintenance.

A further consideration of the pastor and family relates to their need for an extended family. Pastors' families often are geographically separated from their relatives. As holidays are busy times in the life of a congregation, these pastors and their families are often prevented from visiting their own relatives. The congregation has a unique opportunity to become the extended family, providing

them with support and friendship that will help them find fulfillment and acceptance. Each of us needs the support of family, or others; the congregation should seek to provide this nurture to the pastor and his or her family.

When it appears that criticisms or other observations of the pastor might adversely affect his or her effectiveness in the church, the executive committee or other appropriate group needs to communicate these concerns to the pastor and provide opportunity for response. Clearly, before conversations are conducted about the possible severance of a pastor, dialogue with the pastor is to take place. Except in cases of blatant misconduct by the pastor, it is unethical for a pastor to be approached with a severance notice without the attempt on the part of the church to engage in such dialogue. The “Ethics in Ministry Relations” paper provides detailed procedures for handling matters involving allegations of ethical misconduct.

When it is appropriate for a pastor or other staff member to leave the employment of a congregation, there are several very important concerns. If the separation is amicable, then it is important that the congregation find appropriate ways to express appreciation for the person’s service, as well as recognition of his or her family.

If the separation is not a pleasant one, due to unsatisfactory performance of the employee or circumstances caused by the congregation that led to the person’s resignation, then steps are to be taken to protect the reputation and the peace of both the congregation and the employee. Neither is to take advantage of the other, financially or in any formal or informal evaluations made of each other. There should be an attempt to resolve any and all grievances, taking advantage of the resources of the district or the denomination’s Ministry of Reconciliation to accomplish an amicable separation.

In all cases of severance, adequate notice (as set forth in the “Pastoral/Congregational Agreement”) is to be given by either the employee or the congregation and severance compensation awarded when appropriate. The district executive is to be consulted early in the separation process and remain involved as appropriate.

F. THE CONGREGATION AND SEXUAL IMPROPRIETIES

A major section of the “Ethics in Ministry Relations” paper is devoted to dealing with sexual improprieties on the part of the clergy. The investigation and discipline in such cases are an assigned responsibility of the district, which is charged with the oversight of licensed and ordained ministers. But charges of

sexual improprieties are not lodged exclusively against the clergy. There are incidents of harassment and other sexual misconduct involving lay workers and members, as well. Sometimes this behavior is directed toward the pastor, particularly where that person is a female.

The covenant relationship is broken if members engage in conduct of a sexual and coercive nature directed toward another brother or sister. Sexually harassing behavior in the congregational family could include a range of behaviors: sexual jokes and innuendoes; sexually offensive telephone calls; sexual propositions or repeated unwelcome requests for dates; sexually suggestive staring or leering; unwelcome and uncalled-for comments or insinuations about a brother or sister's sex or private life; unnecessary physical familiarity or physical contact involving touching in a sexual way; sexually suggestive comments about a sister or brother's appearance or body; offensive remarks; obscene gestures; indecent exposure; sexual assault and rape.

These behaviors of sexual impropriety are inherently violent and rely on the premise that an individual has the right to impose his or her sexuality on another. As Christians, we need to acknowledge sexually harassing behavior as unethical in all its forms and respond appropriately with compassion and accountability. Victims need to be recognized as victims and given the support needed to recover from their experience. Perpetrators also need support and counseling, but they need to be held accountable for their actions. Clearly, the conduct must be stopped and all reasonable steps taken to avoid any repetition.

Steps to prevent sexual harassment in the congregation include creating an environment free of power imbalances that make sexual harassment possible; nurturing relationships in which congregational members value one another as individuals in their own right; providing education on the unacceptability of sexually harassing behavior; and providing counseling and support for members dealing with this problem. Attention should be given to avoiding activities or events that set up circumstances that might lead to misconduct or the perception that improper behavior will occur.

It is urgent that *each* congregation have in place a process for dealing with allegations of sexual impropriety. Unless a congregation is able to design a more appropriate process for itself, it is recommended that the procedures outlined in the "Ethics in Ministry Relations" paper (see chapter V, section V) be adapted by the congregation, with the executive committee serving as the assessment team. The executive committee should take into consideration and utilize as needed the resources available to them, including deacons, district or congregational reconciliation teams, the district executive, and professional caregivers available to the congregation.

Of special concern must be instances of improper treatment of children. Psychological or physical abuse of children is unethical and immoral. Children are vulnerable and have a right to protection from all forms of abuse. Child abuse includes the misuse or perversion of the privilege of caring for children. Examples include physical abuse; emotional abuse involving verbal abuse, belittling, teasing or terrorizing; and sexual abuse. In cases of the physical abuse of children in states where the law requires reporting, the church shall comply. In addition, the congregation must move aggressively to stop the behavior and protect against repetition; minister to the affected child and the child's family; and tend to the need of the perpetrator for treatment.

In addition to a process for dealing with incidents of child abuse, the congregation is to have written policies in effect for the interviewing, hiring, supervision, and reporting of both lay employees and volunteers having child-care duties. Congregations also are advised to explore the feasibility of securing liability insurance to cover instances of sexual abuse allegations. (For detailed guidelines, see *Child Abuse Prevention Handbook: A Manual for the Church of the Brethren*, Association of Brethren Caregivers, Elgin, Ill., 1991.)

G. ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE CONGREGATION

Each congregation is called to comply with these ethical guidelines. Moreover, each congregation needs to engage in a thorough self-assessment on a regular basis, using this paper as a guide. The district executive may be consulted for advice and assistance.

When the district board receives credible information that a congregation in the district is in violation of these ethical guidelines, the board should look into the matter and offer its counsel. If the congregation refuses to cooperate with the district board in its review or refuses to adjust its conduct to be in compliance with the guidelines, the board shall report that situation to the next district conference. Thereafter, if the congregation continues non-cooperation, a Standing Committee delegate from the district shall inform the Standing Committee of the non-compliance. The Standing Committee may give such counsel as it thinks appropriate.

The congregation's self-assessment and any counsel of the district or of the Standing Committee are intended to nurture the congregation in its efforts toward faithfulness to the will of God so that the Body of Christ can better live in obedience and unity.

NOTES

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1. This section is taken from the “Congregational Structure” paper approved by the 2000 Annual Conference (2000 Minutes, 198-240), which offers congregations a new model of organization. Key differences are 1) emphasis on mission, vision, and core functions; 2) a leadership team instead of a church board; 3) ministry teams instead of commissions; 4) a gifts discernment process rather than elections; 5) integration of the deacon ministry into the structure of the congregation; and 6) formation of a pastoral relations committee.

Sections unchanged by this new model come largely from the 1964 Minutes (1955–1964), “Congregational Organization and Polity, 306-318. In section C, “Suggested Constitution,” paragraphs that are completely new in 2000 are 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. In section D, “Suggested Bylaws,” paragraphs that are new or significantly changed in 2000 are 1, 4, 5 (adapted from the prior list of responsibilities of the church board), and 6.

2. 1987 Minutes (1985–1989), “Revisions of Brethren Polity,” 489-490.
3. 1985 Minutes (1985–1989), “Membership Study,” 129-131.
4. 2000 Minutes, “Congregational Structure,” 208.
5. 2000 Minutes, “Congregational Structure,” 213-214; 1983 Minutes (1980–1984), “Office of the Deacon,” 560-571, especially 570.
6. 1987 Minutes (1985–1989), “Revisions of Brethren Polity,” 490. Based on 1954 Minutes (1945–1954), “Keeping Church Records,” 215.
7. 1965 Minutes (1965–1969), “District Organization and Relationships,” 29.
8. See Chapter V: The Ministry.
9. The list of duties of the ministry teams (IV.F.3.) is based on guidelines developed by the General Board in 1974, in response to a request that the brief descriptions in Annual Conference minutes be expanded and clarified. Additional guidelines appear in *Developing New Congregations in the Church of the Brethren: A Manual for New Church Planters* (Church of the Brethren General Board, 1983) and *Releasing the Power: A Manual of Policies and Guidelines Assisting Congregations in Development and Renewal* (Church of the Brethren General Board, 1986).
10. For background, see 1971 Minutes (1970–1974), “Study of the Church Year,” 156-157; and 1973 Minutes (1970–1974), “The Pastoral Year and the Church Year,” 352-353.
11. This section of Chapter IV is taken from the 1996 “Ethics for Congregations” paper, a companion statement to the 1996 “Ethics in Ministry Relations” paper. The complete “Ethics for Congregations” paper includes a much fuller introduction, a list of ethical guidelines, and an inventory for congregations. It is available from Brethren Press.

CHAPTER V

THE MINISTRY

Because the notes are an integral part of the “Ministerial Leadership” paper, the notes in this chapter of the polity manual appear as footnotes instead of endnotes.

The implementation of denominational statements on the ministry is managed by the Church of the Brethren’s Office of Ministry.

I. Ministerial Leadership¹

The “Ministerial Leadership” paper contains the polity and procedures for the licensed and ordained ministry, calling to and advancement within the ministry, and receiving ordained ministers from other denominations. The polity included here is a revision of the most recent Annual Conference actions.²

The Church of the Brethren has two degrees³ for its ministerial leadership: the licensed ministry and the ordained ministry. The policies for both apply equally to

1. While the term “ministerial leader” may be a new way of identifying those who are licensed and ordained to the ministry in the Church of the Brethren, this paper affirms an understanding of ministry held dear by the Brethren since the very beginning in Schwarzenau. As stated in the 1992 and 1996 ministerial ethics papers, “We in the Church of the Brethren regard believers’ baptism into Christ Jesus to be enrollment into ministry.” In an effort to enhance and more nearly fulfill the ministry of all baptized believers, the Church of the Brethren throughout its history (in keeping with scriptures like Ephesians 4:11-12) has identified the gifts of some as special and beneficial to the church. These ministerial leaders have been variously identified over the years as the “called out” and “set forward” for servant leadership; those identified by the church as the “weighty” members; or the “set-apart” leaders. The called out, the set forth, the weighty members, and the set-apart leaders were always understood as those set *within* the community of believers who differ from the whole body of the baptized only in their recognized gifts for leadership. (For further reading on the theology of leadership in the Church of the Brethren, see the polity papers on ministry listed under footnote 2 and the ministerial ethics papers mentioned above.)

2. The 1986 Annual Conference paper on “Licensed and Ordained Ministry” is a compilation of polity and other relevant ministry issues from several other Annual Conference papers: “The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life” (1975), “Discipleship and Reconciliation” (1976 and as amended in 1977), “Marriage and Divorce: Special Problems for Leadership” (1977), and “Calling and Ordination” (1985). In an effort to have one official statement on ministerial leadership, this 1999 paper *replaces* the 1986 paper and *eliminates* the sections on licensing and ordination in the 1975, 1976, 1977, and 1985 papers. The 1998 Annual Conference paper on “Plural Nonsalaried Ministry,” which provides for a different calling and placement process, is included in this chapter.

3. 1967 Minutes (1965–1969), “A New Basis of the Eldership: 1966 Report,” 235.

men and women.⁴ The church has upheld scriptural qualifications for ministerial leaders, such as those found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9:

Living above reproach; exercising self-control; having the gift of teaching; living so as to be well thought of by outsiders; being a lover of goodness; living a life that is just, upright, spiritual, faithful, and dignified; being a lover of hospitality.⁵

Additional biblical passages that are significant for Brethren ministerial leaders include . . .⁶

2 Corinthians 5:17-18: in Christ, the believer is a new creation; 2 Corinthians 3:18: the believer is being changed into the likeness of Christ; Ephesians 4:13: the believer grows toward maturity; Matthew 5:33-37: followers of Christ live with integrity; Matthew 5:21-24: Christians believe that all of life is sacred; Matthew 5:25-26, 43-48; 6:12, 14-15; 18:15-17; Romans 12:14-21: sisters and brothers in Christ strive for healing and reconciliation; Matthew 5:27-32: living with moral integrity and marital fidelity; Matthew 6:19-24: believers are committed to high values; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: the body is a temple for God's indwelling Spirit; therefore, followers of Christ abstain from those things that harm and destroy the body; Galatians 5:19-24: new life for the believer is defined as changes from old behaviors; 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4: sisters and brothers live in a caring community, where each part of the body is valued.

A. THE LICENSED MINISTRY

1. Delegated Authority

The authority for licensing granted by Annual Conference rests with the district board and is delegated to the district ministry commission.⁷

4. 1958 Minutes (1955–1964), “Women in the Ministry,” 113.

5. 1957 Minutes (1955–1964), “Functions of an Elder,” 62.

6. 1975 Minutes (1975–1979), “The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life,” 62-68.

7. The district ministry commission may appoint committees to act on its behalf; however, it is understood that the district board and the district ministry commission are responsible for licensing and supervising all licensed ministers.

2. Purpose

The licensed ministry is the designation given to the person who has been called by the church to consider ministerial leadership. This degree exists for these reasons:⁸

- a. It gives time and opportunity for the person and the church to test their preliminary judgment regarding the call to ministerial leadership.
- b. It authorizes the person to participate in many services of ministerial leadership while engaged in an approved educational program.
- c. It enables the person to have time to work at educational preparation.⁹

3. Responsibility for Licensing

The responsibility for licensing people to ministerial leadership rests with the district ministry commission and is carried out with the candidate's congregation. Both parties must be in agreement to license.¹⁰

4. Authority of the Licensed Minister

- a. A candidate for licensing must be an active member of a Church of the Brethren congregation.
- b. The licensed minister functions under the guidance of the district ministry commission and the pastor of his or her congregation.
- c. A licensed minister who is in an approved educational program may serve as pastor of a congregation. This special "Approval for Employment" requires a letter of recommendation by the district ministry commission,¹¹ and the licensed minister shall be under the guidance of the district ministry commission until all requirements for ordination are met. Under such district guidance and counsel, the licensed minister may fulfill all the services of the ordained ministry, including officiating at weddings where the law recognizes the church's authority to grant such privilege. These pastoral

8. 1951 Minutes (1945–1954), "Advancement and Standards in Ministry," 128.

9. Educational requirements for ordination are printed in section I.B.2. of this chapter.

10. 1951 Minutes (1945–1954), "Advancement and Standards in Ministry," 128.

11. If the licensed minister is relocating from another district, the letter of recommendation is provided by the sending district.

services are limited to the specific congregation where the licensed minister has been called and approved for service.

5. Calling Candidates to the Ministry

Before considering ministerial leadership in the church, men and women should seek to discern God's call to serve. God's call may come in the following ways:

- a. *Personal initiative.* A person who feels led by God to explore whether he or she may be called to ministry can begin the discernment process through conversation with his or her pastor or the district executive/minister. The individual should also submit a letter of interest to the appropriate group in the congregation where the individual is a member.
- b. *Congregational initiative.* Congregational leaders are expected to observe the spiritual maturity and commitment of all people within their congregation, anticipating that some will be ready to answer God's call to ministerial leadership. After prayerful discussions with the potential ministerial candidate, the appropriate congregational group should communicate with the district executive/minister to report that the named individual is interested in testing his or her call to the ministry.
- c. *Initiative by the church at large.* Leaders throughout the denomination are expected to observe the spiritual maturity and potential of individuals to serve as ministerial leaders. In particular, camps, colleges, seminaries, Brethren Volunteer Service, youth conferences, mission projects, district boards, and other agencies of the church will be able to identify many such individuals. When such a person is identified, the appropriate congregational group and/or the pastor should be informed.

6. The Process of Licensing

The congregation is critically important in the *calling* process. Through its appropriate representatives, the congregation must determine whether or not it wishes to nominate an individual to the district ministry commission for ministerial leadership. When the leadership of a congregation affirms that an

individual should be recognized as a candidate for ministerial leadership, the congregational leaders shall notify the district executive/minister.

The district ministry commission and the congregation then take the following steps:

a. *Pre-licensing interview*

The district ministry commission, or another appropriate group, arranges for and conducts an interview with the candidate.¹² The “Pre-Licensing Interview Guide” provides the format for the interview, including the candidate’s aims for the ministry, natural ability, moral and spiritual fitness, and willingness to prepare for the duties of ministerial leadership.

b. *Congregational action*

If the candidate is approved for licensing by the district ministry commission, the congregation will be informed so that a congregational vote can be taken to affirm the candidate. The affirmation by the congregation is by simple majority vote. If the congregation votes before the pre-licensing interview, its recommendation is subject to approval by the district ministry commission.¹³

7. The Licensing Service

Upon approval of the candidate for licensing by the district ministry commission and the congregation, he or she shall be licensed in the congregation, preferably during a Sunday morning worship service. A representative of the district ministry commission, after consulting with the candidate and the local pastor, should conduct the licensing service.

8. The Term of License

The term of license shall be for the current year, with all expirations being on December 31. The license may be renewed annually at the initiative of the district ministry commission, following a consultation with the licensed minister and approval by the appropriate group responsible for ministerial leadership in the congregation.¹⁴ Licensed ministers who show no inclination to fulfill the

12. The Council of District Executives (CODE) recommends a “Readiness for Ministry” process prior to the interview by the district ministry commission.

13. This statement refers to the “free ministry” congregations, which follow a different “calling” process.

14. Some congregations desire to conduct an annual vote in a congregational business meeting before a person is relicensed for another year.

purpose of licensed ministry and to pursue the requirements for ordination shall not be relicensed. The license may be terminated at the initiative of the licensed minister, the congregation, or the district ministry commission, if satisfactory progress is not being made.¹⁵ Once a license has been terminated, the individual may reapply as a candidate for the licensed ministry, following the same procedures that are outlined above.

9. Records and Reports

- a. Within thirty days of a licensing service, the district shall submit the “Ministry Report Form” (MRF) to the Office of Ministry of the Church of the Brethren.
- b. Annually, the district shall provide an update of the district’s ministerial list for the denominational yearbook.¹⁶
- c. A ministerial file¹⁷ is maintained in the district office on each licensed minister of that district. If the licensed minister relocates to another district, the file is sent to the office of the receiving district once the sending district has been notified that the individual has been relicensed by the receiving district and his or her church membership has been moved to a Church of the Brethren congregation in that new district.¹⁸ In addition to the ministerial file, the ministry commission of the sending district shall send a letter to the receiving district, stating the status of the individual’s educational preparation.
- d. Within thirty days of the termination of a license, or upon the death of a licensed minister, the district shall send the “Ministry Report Form” (MRF) to the Office of Ministry of the Church of the Brethren.

15. 1957 Minutes (1955–1964), “The Ministry,” 61.

16. 1961 Minutes (1955–1964), “Guidance Program for Licensed Ministers,” 198.

17. The ministerial file contains a biographical folder that provides the licensed minister’s name, address, congregation, date of license, family connections, education and other pertinent biographical and professional information; the “Pre-licensing Interview Guide”; annual reviews; and readiness for ministry documents that the licensed minister has authorized for placement in the file. The file belongs to the district where it is located; however, the licensed minister may access his/her file by contacting his or her district executive/minister. The licensed minister’s file is confidential, is held in a secured place in the district office, and it is transferred from one district office to another when that is appropriate.

18. The licensed minister’s file is not automatically sent to another district when the individual changes his or her place of residence. The licensed minister must be relicensed in the new district and transfer his or her church membership before the file is transferred; otherwise, the license remains in the district where it was located prior to the relocation, and it will expire on December 31 of that year.

e. Should the licensed person move his or her membership to another congregation in another district, the sending congregation and district ministry commission, through the services of the district executive/minister, shall inform the new congregation and district ministry commission of that person's ministerial standing. The receiving congregation and district ministry commission may decide whether or not to relicense and must be in agreement to do so.

f. Should the licensed minister relocate to another district for educational purposes and be called into pastoral services while a student, the receiving district and the sending district will sign an "Approval for Employment" agreement that will clarify ministerial accountability. The licensed minister's church membership and license will remain with the sending district. The licensed minister is free to seek an associate membership with the congregation he or she serves as a student.

10. Recommended Support Systems for Licensed Ministers

- a. The congregation, through its executive committee or another appropriate group charged with ministerial concerns, can be helpful in the following ways:
- 1) Provide ample opportunity for the licensed minister to participate in a wide variety of meaningful congregational activities under the guidance of the pastor.
 - 2) Give encouragement to him or her for adequate educational preparation for ministerial leadership.
 - 3) Be alert to the financial needs of the licensed minister in his or her educational preparation by assisting in securing grants or loans. Congregations should consider making funds available to licensed ministers as one way of supporting them.
 - 4) Arrange for the licensed minister to attend at least one meeting annually of the executive committee or another appropriate group of the congregation related to ministerial concerns. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the licensed minister's progress and his or her involvement in the life of the congregation. The executive committee (or the appropriate group that met with the licensed minister) is expected to make a recommendation to the district ministry commission relative to relicensing for another year.

b. The district also has important responsibilities in the care of licensed ministers and therefore needs to participate in their support. The following are ways districts may be involved and supportive:

- 1) Establish ongoing contact with the licensed minister by appointing a counselor/mentor (who may be his or her pastor) for mutual sharing of activities and concerns. In light of this contact and regular sharing with the district ministry commission, judgment can be made regarding the licensed minister's progress toward ordination.
- 2) Make financial assistance available for educational preparation.
- 3) Be responsible for annual consultation with the licensed ministers and make recommendations to relicense, terminate the license, or to ordain.
- 4) Supervise the educational program for licensed ministers.

B. THE ORDAINED MINISTRY

1. District Board Authority

The authority for ordination granted by Annual Conference rests with the district board.

2. Requirements for Ordination¹⁹

- a. A candidate for ordination must be an active member of a Church of the Brethren congregation.
- b. A candidate for ordination must satisfactorily fulfill the scriptural qualifications in the opinion of the district and his or her congregation.²⁰
- c. A candidate for ordination must fulfill one of the following educational requirements:
 - 1) Complete four years of study in an accredited college and three years in an accredited seminary leading to a master of divinity degree.²¹

19. The completion of the "Requirements for Ordination" does not automatically lead to ordination. The candidate for ordination is subject to "The Process of Ordination."

20. The scriptural references are given at the beginning of this chapter.

21. Accreditation shall come from a nationally recognized agency for post-secondary education and/or the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, or an equivalent accreditation outside the North American context.

2) For those who because of age, family responsibility, or other circumstances find it impossible or impractical to complete college and seminary, an alternative is provided by the Training in Ministry (TRIM) program through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.²²

3) Still another alternative for those eligible individuals and congregations is Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM) which features ministerial training in the context of a congregation through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

4) In special cases that have the approval of the district ministry commission, and where provision is made for accountability and supervision, another alternative is a district-administered program of ministry education certified by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

5) In assessing the readiness for ordination, the district ministry commission takes account of the gifts and training appropriate to a given area of service.

d. The candidate for ordination must articulate, via the “Pre-ordination Interview Guide,” a statement on his or her faith journey, and provide statements that indicate his or her obedience to God, commitment to Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord, openness to the continual infilling of the Holy Spirit, understanding the nature and mission of the church and the meaning and purpose of scripture. The district ministry commission shall be responsible for discerning the candidate’s faith and spiritual formation and, when deemed necessary, shall provide content and supervision to help fill a need that is lacking.

e. The candidate for ordination must demonstrate leadership ability and maturity of judgment.

f. The candidate for ordination shall give evidence of a thorough knowledge of and commitment to the history, beliefs, and polity of the Church of the Brethren. The district ministry commission shall be responsible for evaluating the candidate as to this knowledge and, when deemed necessary, shall provide content and supervision to help fill a need that is lacking.

22. The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership is a cooperative effort between the General Board and Bethany Theological Seminary.

g. The candidate for ordination shall affirm the expectations and commitments of ministerial leadership, including a declaration of intention to make church service a major concern of one's lifework.²³

h. The candidate for ordination must have a specific ministerial call as defined under the "Areas of Service for Ordained Leadership," which follows.

3. **Areas of Service for Ordained Leadership**²⁴

The Church of the Brethren affirms that ordination for ministerial leadership, through the "laying on of hands," is a lifetime commitment to the church and its ministries. Ordination is a commissioning of a person for leadership in a recognized "area of service." The following "areas of service" are recognized and monitored by the district boards:

- a. Pastor of a congregation.
- b. Person serving a congregation in self-supporting ministry.
- c. Administrator or teacher in a theological seminary.
- d. Teacher of religion in a school, college, or university.
- e. Staff with districts, the Church of the Brethren, Inc., and other Annual Conference agencies.
- f. Missionary assigned to pastoral or evangelistic duties.
- g. Chaplain (e.g., chaplaincy in a hospital, hospice, long-term care facility, campus, prison, or industrial setting).
- h. Person serving in a specialized ministry (e.g., youth ministry, Christian education, camp administrator, ecumenical ministries, spiritual direction, pastoral counselor).²⁵

23. 1957 Minutes (1955–1964), "The Ministry," 62.

24. 1957 Minutes (1955–1964), "The Ministry," 62.

25. This may also include specialized new ministries not yet foreseen, for which ordination would be a needed affirmation. These are individual situations, and each individual would need the affirmation of the congregation where he or she is an active member and the district board of that district. Individuals in this specialized area of service must fulfill all the ordination requirements and expectations addressed in this paper.

- i. Ministers retired from their area of service.²⁶

In exercising their discernment and their designations in relation to ordained ministry, district ministry commissions are requested to view the listing above as a guide rather than an inflexible standard.

4. Authority of Ordained Minister

- a. An ordained minister has the authority to perform all ministerial services and preside at the ordinances practiced by the denomination. If the ordained minister is not the pastor, these activities should be carried out in cooperation with and under the direction of a pastor and/or a district ministry commission.
- b. An ordained minister, by both word and deed, is a representative of the faith community. In denominational and ecumenical settings, the ordained individual symbolizes the spirit that the Brethren believe to be important about themselves.
- c. An ordained minister, who believes in the ministry of the whole people of God, will understand *ministerial leadership* as a call to serve with and among brothers and sisters who are not licensed or ordained, but who are also called to ministry and service through the rite of baptism.

5. The Process of Ordination

The process may be initiated by the licensed minister, by the licensed minister's congregation, or the district ministry commission and shall consist of the following:

- a. *Pre-ordination examination.* The district ministry commission and representatives of the congregation shall consult with the licensed minister in a personal interview as he or she nears completion of requirements for ordination. The use of the "Pre-ordination Interview Guide" can help to determine the candidate's growth and development since licensing. Recommendations from various sources, including college and/or seminary

26. This statement on ministerial leadership affirms that one's call to the ministry is for life. Those who retire from one of the eight areas of service listed above may continue an active ordination classification. Generally speaking, the term *retired* refers to those who are receiving pension and/or Social Security benefits. Therefore, this paper eliminates the "inactive" and "emeritus" classifications. All ministers in this ninth area of service must fulfill the basic requirements of ordination, be an active member in a Church of the Brethren congregation, and be accountable to the district board in the district where his or her membership is located. Retired ministers are also subject to the "Ethics in Ministry Relations—2008" paper.

personnel and the candidate's congregation, following normal clearance procedures, should be obtained.²⁷

b. *Recommendation to the district board.* When in the judgment of the district ministry commission the licensed minister has met the requirements of ordination, the commission shall report its recommendation to the district board for approval. The approval by the district board is by simple majority vote.

c. *Recommendation to the congregation.* Upon approval by the district board, the district ministry commission shall notify the pastor, board chair, or other appropriate people in the candidate's congregation of the district board's action so that a congregational vote can be taken to affirm the ordination of the candidate.²⁸ The affirmation by the congregation is by two-thirds majority vote. A representative of the district ministry commission should be present for the congregational business meeting to take the vote.

d. *An ordination service.* If the district board and the congregation approve the candidate for ordination, the person shall be ordained to ministerial leadership with the laying on of hands during a regular or, preferably, specially called worship service by a representative of the district ministry commission after consultation with the candidate and the local pastor.

6. Records and Reports

a. Within thirty days of the ordination service, the district shall submit the "Ministry Report Form" (MRF) to the Office of Ministry of the Church of the Brethren.

b. The districts shall submit to the Office of Ministry an annual update of the district's ministerial list for the denominational yearbook.²⁹

27. "Normal clearance procedures" is defined to mean that the district ministry commission secures a list of potential references from the candidate for ordination.

28. "Free ministry" congregations follow a different "call" process. For details, read the 1998 Annual Conference paper on "Plural Nonsalaried Ministry," which is excerpted in this chapter and appears in its entirety in the *Ministerial Leadership Manual*.

29. See footnote 16 of this paper.

- c. A ministerial file³⁰ is maintained in the district office on each ordained minister of that district. When an ordained minister is called to serve another congregation within the same district or in another district, he or she is expected to move his or her church membership to that congregation on a date no later than the day of installation. The ministerial file is sent to another district once the sending district has been notified by the receiving district that the individual's membership has been properly transferred.
- d. Within thirty days of the retirement of a pastor, the district shall submit the "Ministry Report Form" (MRF) to the Office of Ministry of the Church of the Brethren.
- e. Annually, the districts shall submit to the Office of Ministry of the Church of the Brethren the names of those ordained ministers who retired from non-pastoral forms of service.
- f. Within thirty days of the termination of an individual's ordination, or upon the death of the ordained minister, the district shall send the ministerial file and the "Ministry Report Form" (MRF) to the Office of Ministry of the Church of the Brethren. The Office of Ministry shall transfer the file to the Brethren Historical Library and Archives.

7. Guidelines for Discontinuing the Call to Ordained Leadership

Based as it is upon the Spirit's empowerment but also upon a process of discernment and designation by the church, ordained leadership is not seen as a *right* as much as a *gift* and a naming of gifts and, as such, it may be terminated by the district board when the board determines that the individual is no longer fulfilling the guidelines for ordained leadership.³¹ Regular reviews of ordained individuals by district ministry commissions are encouraged in order to assist the district boards in assessing whether, in specific instances, there has been a change in the relationship between the ordained person and the Church of the Brethren, and these reviews may be synchronized with the renewal of ordination cards every five years. The conditions for review of ordination are varied. Among them are the following:

30. In addition to the material mentioned in footnote 17 earlier, the ordained minister's file may contain the "Pre-ordination Interview Guide," the "Ministry Report Form" (MRF) that documents previous places of service and changes in ministerial status, continuing education information, citations for achievements, and any and all necessary documentation relative to ethical misconduct. Documentation in ethical misconduct cases will follow the due process described in the "Ethics in Ministry Relations—1996" paper. The file belongs to the district where it is located; however, the ordained minister may access his/her file by contacting his/her district executive/minister. The ordained minister's file is confidential, is placed in a secured location in the district office, and it is transferred from one district office to another when that is appropriate.

31. 1985 Minutes (1985–1989), "Calling and Ordination," 121.

- a. The ordained person voluntarily chooses to discontinue his or her ministry to enter into another type of calling for which ordination is not designated or desired.
- b. The ordained person, for reasons other than illness or diminishment due to aging, ceases to be active in the life and work of the church.
- c. The ordained person cuts himself or herself off from the ministry through some indiscretion so that usefulness for the leadership services designated by ordination is no longer tenable in the Church of the Brethren. In the event of indiscretion, after due process according to the paper on “Ethics in Ministry Relations—2008,” ordination may be terminated by the district board. The “Discipleship and Reconciliation” paper should be consulted for further information on reconciliation methods as supported by the Church of the Brethren.
- d. The ordained person’s ordination may be terminated by the district board if the individual fails to fulfill his or her vows of membership and ordination.³²

In summary, the authority to terminate ordination rests with the district board. The process leading to termination can be initiated by the ordained person, the congregation, or the district ministry commission. Ordination is the commissioning of a person for ministerial leadership. The laying on of hands for ministry has been considered a lifetime commitment by the church. However, a person’s ordained status is neither permanent nor automatic. If an ordained minister ceases to fulfill the purposes of ministerial leadership, as defined and described in this paper, his or her status should be reviewed by the district ministry commission in consultation with the congregation and the ordination should be terminated when such action is warranted.³³

8. Reinstatement of Ordination

Once an ordained status has been terminated by the district board, an individual may seek to become a candidate for reinstatement by following the normal procedures for ordination outlined in this paper.

9. Term of Ordination

32. 1975 Minutes (1975–1979), “The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life,” 64-65; 1976 Minutes (1975–1979), “Discipleship and Reconciliation,” 203.

33. 1986 Minutes (1985–1989), “Church of the Brethren, Licensed and Ordained Ministry,” 336.

Ordination is the commissioning of a person for ministerial leadership and, except for termination reasons discussed above, one's ordination remains active until death.

10. Accountability

- a. The Annual Conference paper "Ethics in Ministry Relations—2008" is the ethical and moral guide for all licensed and ordained ministers and lay speakers,³⁴ especially the Code of Ethics in Part III. District ministry commissions will provide regular (a minimum of one every five years), district-wide training sessions to keep ministerial leaders informed about ministerial ethics.³⁵
- b. Each district ministry commission will hold all ministerial leaders under its jurisdiction accountable for their ethical misconduct and to take appropriate action when violations are reported to them.
- c. Each district ministry commission is expected to promote continuing education expectations for every ministerial leader serving under its jurisdiction.³⁶

11. Receiving Ordained Ministers from Other Denominations³⁷

- a. Members of other denominations who wish to enter ministerial leadership in the Church of the Brethren have two primary routes before them.
 - 1) Those who are not ordained in another denomination should seek membership in a Church of the Brethren congregation and follow the normal call process for licensing and ordination, as outlined in this paper.

34. 1977 Minutes (1975–1979), "Proposal for Creation of the Lay Speaker," 370-371.

35. Congregations that call people to ministerial leadership positions, including those who are not licensed or ordained, are legally liable for their ethical misconduct. To lessen legal liabilities and other risks, congregational leaders should consult with their district executive/minister.

36. Ministerial leaders (lead pastors, associate pastors, pastors in special ministries, etc.) serving congregations in pastoral roles influence the lives of parishioners in significant ways. These leaders need to pay special attention to their "spiritual health" and continue to improve their professional skills. Contact the denominational Office of Ministry for specific accountability guidelines developed by the Council of District Executives. The guidelines include information about sabbaticals and many other professional growth opportunities.

37. The word *denomination* refers to nonprofit religious organizations that have established standards and procedures, similar to those in the Church of the Brethren, for calling, educating, and ordaining people for ministerial leadership.

2) Those who are presently ordained in another denomination who wish to serve as ordained ministers in the Church of the Brethren may do so without re-ordination, subject to certain standards and procedures.

b. The following *standards* are established for those seeking ministerial leadership positions in the Church of the Brethren:

1) Those seeking ministerial leadership positions must have documentation of ministerial standing and satisfactory assurance from the appropriate ordaining group within the minister's denomination as to his or her moral, spiritual, leadership, and educational qualifications required by Church of the Brethren polity.

2) Those seeking ministerial leadership positions must accept a discipline of study and orientation to the Church of the Brethren with the guidance and support of a district-appointed counselor/mentor.³⁸ These ministers may be asked to complete such study and orientation prior to being received as an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren.

3) Those seeking ministerial leadership positions must be willing to teach and uphold the beliefs, practices, and polity of the Church of the Brethren through a verbal commitment in the initial interview and a public commitment at the time of installation.

4) Those seeking ministerial leadership positions will provide a written acceptance of the ordination polity and policies of the Church of the Brethren in completing the "Pre-ordination Interview Guide."

c. The following *procedures* are to be followed for those seeking leadership positions³⁹ in the Church of the Brethren:

1) An inquiring minister who desires to become a ministerial leader in the Church of the Brethren should make an official contact with the district executive/minister in the district of interest.

2) The district executive/minister shall supply the inquiring minister with a set of appropriate documents on the basic beliefs and practices of the Church of the Brethren⁴⁰ and make a timely follow-up contact with regard to interest in ministry in the Church of the Brethren.

38. The format for such a discipline is available from the denominational Office of Ministry.

39. Hereafter referred to as "inquiring minister."

40. Contact the denominational Office of Ministry for a packet of material.

- 3) The district executive/minister shall, in timely fashion, convene the ministry inquiry committee⁴¹ to meet with the inquiring minister. At this meeting, the standards and procedures for bringing an ordination into the Church of the Brethren will be explained, a copy of the “Pre-ordination Interview Guide” will be provided and explained, and a conversation about mutual understandings for ministerial leadership will be conducted.
- 4) If the ministry inquiry committee and the inquiring minister agree that the process shall continue and the standards outlined above are met, the committee shall submit a recommendation to the district ministry commission, suggesting an interview with the inquiring minister.
- 5) If the district ministry commission affirms the ministry inquiry committee’s recommendation, it may schedule and conduct an interview with the inquiring minister. The district ministry commission must be given a completed copy of the “Pre-ordination Interview Guide” prior to the interview.
- 6) If the district ministry commission affirms the inquiring minister’s desire to become a ministerial leader in the Church of the Brethren, it may recommend to the district board that the inquiring minister’s current ordination be recognized and that he or she be granted permission to enter the placement process.⁴² Those called to serve under their current ordination must fulfill the district’s orientation program, with a waiting period of at least one year before a transfer of ordination to the Church of the Brethren can be considered. During this period of orientation, the inquiring minister is subject to the guidelines under “A Recognized Ordination for Term of Service” (see I.B.13. In this chapter).
- 7) After the period of orientation is completed, the district ministry commission may recommend to the district board that the inquiring minister be received as an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren.
- 8) Upon approval of the district board, the district ministry commission may provide the inquiring minister with a certificate of ordination, showing that he or she is now recognized as an ordained minister in good

41. See section I.B.12. for a description of the ministry inquiry committee.

42. If the inquiring minister, through the denomination’s placement system, is called to serve a congregation in another district, a waiting period for a minimum of one year remains operative, beginning with the date of placement in the receiving district. The inquiring minister, during this period of orientation, is subject to the guidelines under “A Recognized Ordination for Term of Service.”

standing in the Church of the Brethren and is afforded the same privileges and is subject to the same discipline as are all other ministerial leaders in the denomination.

9) The minister's letter of membership shall be placed in a Church of the Brethren congregation prior to receiving the certificate of ordination. An appropriate service of worship should be scheduled in the congregation, celebrating the reception of ordination and the reaffirmation of faith.

12. The Ministry Inquiry Committee (MIC)

The MIC shall consist of a representative of the district ministry commission⁴³ in the district through which the inquiring minister is seeking to have his or her ordination recognized, the district executive/minister of that same district, and a representative of the denominational Office of Ministry, appointed by the Church of the Brethren's director of Ministry. The MIC shall be convened by the district executive/minister who had initial contact with the candidate. The inquiring minister will be responsible for his or her personal expenses relative to the interview with the MIC.

13. A Recognized Ordination for Term of Service

If a minister in another denomination is interested in serving a Church of the Brethren congregation, he or she may be approved for a "term of service" in that congregation, provided . . .

- a. the district ministry commission recommends the "term of service" to the district board;
- b. the minister satisfies the first three *standards* appearing in the section "Receiving Ordained Ministers";
- c. the minister becomes an associate member in the Church of the Brethren congregation he or she will serve;
- d. it is understood that the "term of service" is for the period of one year. The "term of service" may be extended, with annual reviews, so long as the minister, the congregation, and the district board are in agreement.

The minister's present ordination will be recognized, and he or she will be accorded full authority for pastoral ministry, including serving as delegate to district conference and Annual Conference, for the duration of the term of service

43. See footnote 7 of this paper.

in that congregation. When that term of service ceases, the minister may seek ordination in the Church of the Brethren through the normal procedures for receiving ordained ministers from other denominations.

14. Multiple Standing

An ordained minister who is called to serve a dual ministry (an approved ministry in his or her denomination and an approved ministry in the Church of the Brethren) and who elects to maintain membership and ordination in his or her denomination, may be recognized as an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren for the duration of that dual ministry, so long as the following conditions are met:

- a. That the minister become a member or an associate member of the Church of the Brethren he or she is serving.
- b. That the district ministry commission be assured of the good standing of the person within his or her denomination and make the appropriate recommendation to the district board.
- c. That the minister express a willingness to teach and uphold the beliefs, practices, and polity of the Church of the Brethren, including the requirements for ordination in the Church of the Brethren, through a verbal commitment in the interview with the district ministry commission and a public commitment at the time of installation.⁴⁴

15. The Authority of the District Board

The district boards have been given the authority for ordination in the Church of the Brethren. They ordain people on behalf of the denomination. Therefore, a congregation, with the guidance of the district executive/minister, is free to call as pastor a presently ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, because ordination implies approval of the district board.⁴⁵

A congregation is not free to call a pastor from another denomination without following, under the guidance of the district executive/minister, the *standards* and *procedures* for “Receiving Ordained Ministers from Other Denominations” (see I.B.11. in this chapter).

44. Except for the section related to the ministry inquiry committee, guidelines for receiving ministerial leaders from other denominations were approved by the 1987 Annual Conference.

45. Those people called as *interim* pastors are also accountable to the district board and are subject to the “Ethics in Ministry Relations—1996” paper.

With the guidance of the district executive/minister, a congregation may call an ordained minister from another denomination as interim pastor.⁴⁶ This individual is not required to seek membership and ordination in the Church of the Brethren, but must agree to fulfill the expectations expressed in standards b.1. and b.3. in the section “Receiving Ordained Ministers from Other Denominations.”

Under special circumstances, a congregation may call as pastor a licensed minister in the Church of the Brethren and enter into an “approval for employment” agreement, provided the licensed minister serves with the approval and guidance of the district ministry commission, which acts on behalf of the district board.⁴⁷

16. Ministerial Status and Seconded Ministerial Leadership⁴⁸

“Seconded ministerial leadership” refers to those who are assigned to or accept the call to serve in ministry beyond the denomination. Types of seconded leadership include the following:

- a. Missionary personnel serving indigenous churches and other denominations often feel the necessity to hold membership in a congregation in the geographical area in which they serve, but wish to remain recognized as ordained ministers within the Church of the Brethren.
- b. Ordained ministers of the Church of the Brethren are sometimes called to or assigned to ministry in the broader Christian community or to ecumenical positions such as national, state, or city councils of churches and find they wish to retain their status as an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren.

17. Guidelines for Seconded Leadership

- a. When ordained ministers assume seconded ministries beyond their own congregations, districts, or the denomination and desire to be recognized as ordained in the Church of the Brethren, they may do so as long as they continue to hold membership in a Church of the Brethren congregation. Where membership in the church related to the ecumenical or seconded ministry is beneficial or required, individuals carry membership in both denominations.

46. Contact the denominational Office of Ministry for guidelines, “approval for employment” forms, and other relevant information about “term of service” and “interim” ministries.

47. 1986 Minutes (1985–1989), “Church of the Brethren Licensed and Ordained Ministry,” 333.

48. 1973 Minutes (1970–1974), “Church of the Brethren Ministerial Status and Seconded Leadership,” 81-82.

b. District boards are allowed to accept and hold the ordination of those individuals serving seconded ecumenical ministries, so long as . . .

- 1) the person requests the district board to do so;
- 2) the person's ordination is in good standing;
- 3) the seconded ecumenical ministry is acceptable to and confirmed by the district board;
- 4) the person holds active membership in a congregation in the district where his or her ordination is held;
- 5) the person continues in the seconded ministry.

c. Such people are answerable to the district board regarding their ordination and their professional conduct relative to the "Ethics in Ministry Relations—2008" paper.

d. The district board is responsible for listing such people in the official listing of ordained ministers in the yearbook.⁴⁹

II. Plural Non-salaried Ministry⁵⁰

A. CALLING TO SET-APART MINISTRY

1. To Serve the Calling Congregation

The calling process in "free ministry" churches traditionally has been done to meet the specific ministry needs of the calling congregation, and it is affirmed. This assumes that the initial call is issued before the licensing steps (interviews and testing) are completed.

2. To Serve the Wider Church

The "free ministry" congregations are encouraged to periodically (every three to five years) call people with demonstrated gifts and spiritual maturity, even when

49. See footnote 16 of this paper.

50. 1998 Minutes (1995–1999), "Polity for Free Ministry," 781-788.

a local need does not exist, in order to make them available for the leadership pool of the wider church.

3. To Affirm the Self-identified Call

Such congregations should consider the inner calling of the Spirit that comes to individuals and provide a supportive nurturing and mentoring context for such individuals.

B. LICENSING

1. Pre-licensing steps include . . .

- a. “Readiness for Ministry” testing as required by districts;
- b. completion of the “Pre-licensing Interview Guide”; and
- c. pre-licensing interview with the district ministry commission.

2. Licensing Service

When approved for licensing by the congregational call and favorable decision of the district ministry commission, the licensing service will be conducted, and the newly licensed minister shall function in keeping with congregational expectations.

C. TRAINING AND SUPPORT

1. An educational plan and schedule should be initiated under the guidance of the district ministry commission, taking into account the training the licensed minister has already completed.
2. Opportunities for training may include completion of college and seminary. If this is not feasible, other options include Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership programs: Training in Ministry (TRIM), Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM), or the district-administered training (which replaces the Three-Year Reading Course).

NOTE: Some adjustments in training expectations may be necessary when dealing with ethnic congregations and leadership.

3. The respective congregation and district will arrange for ongoing ministry service, mentoring, evaluation, and support.

D. ORDINATION

1. Ordination may be considered when the prescribed training plan has been satisfactorily completed and when there is a call to service in keeping with the polity guidelines for all ordained ministers.
2. A pre-ordination interview is conducted by the district ministry commission subsequent to completion of a pre-ordination interview guide.
3. Approval for ordination requires favorable action by the district ministry commission, the district board, and the candidate's congregation.
4. Ordination takes place in the congregation with the laying on of hands, under the direction of the district ministry commission (or its appointee), in consultation with the candidate and the local pastor/moderator.

E. ACCOUNTABILITY AND REVIEW

1. Authority for ordination lies with the district board. A review of the ordination is required every five years and includes issuance of a new certificate of ordination.
2. Non-salaried ministers, as all set-apart ministers, are subject to the Annual Conference "Ethics in Ministry Relations—2008" statement.

F. CONTINUING EDUCATION

Non-salaried ministers are strongly encouraged to engage in a discipline of continuing education as opportunities are offered by the denomination and are available in keeping with location and time available. Examples include workshops, seminars, conferences, Annual Conference events, etc.

III. The Lay Speaker⁵¹

Recognizing that preaching has always been open to lay people, the lay speaker designation recognizes the commitment of individuals for preaching after training and development of skills have taken place.

The lay speaker designation attempts to . . .

1. distinguish between lay leadership and ordination;
2. provide training for lay leaders who wish to regularly assist in preaching;

51. 1977 Minutes (1975–1979), "Licensed and Ordained Ministry," pp. 370-371.

3. provide an office/calling for lay preachers who have no desire or intention to prepare for ordination.

A. QUALIFICATIONS

1. An active and supportive leader of the local church.
2. A commitment to the larger church (community, district, denomination, and worldwide).
3. A willingness to study and read under supervision.
4. A desire to grow spiritually.
5. An expressed official support from the local church.

B. TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

1. Each lay speaker will complete the district-administered training.
2. Each lay speaker will attend the annual retreat for fellowship and training.
3. Each lay speaker will participate in district and denominational events as schedule permits.

C. DUTIES

1. Provide pulpit supply in the absence of a pastor.
2. Assist in the preaching schedule of yoked parishes to enable weekly preaching in all meeting places.
3. Provide interim pulpit supply during a pastoral change.

D. TERM

Term of service shall be for three years (expiration date December 31) and shall be renewable at the recommendation of the district board following review and consultation with the lay speaker.

E. COMMISSIONING SERVICE

An appropriate service of commissioning shall be held for each lay speaker in his or her local church under the direction of a representative of the district board in consultation with the pastor.

IV. Discipleship and Reconciliation⁵²

Counseling and discipline have been part of the teaching and practice of the Church of the Brethren.

Their forms, however, have changed. Overt, public, and stringent forms practiced earlier are now in minimal use. Considerable counseling and some discipline in a more informal and confidential manner occur almost continuously. Much of it is done by pastors and district executives/ministers or small ad hoc committees and does not involve the larger bodies of the church.

Guidelines are needed to enable members of the body of Christ to confront, instruct, support, admonish, hold accountable, and discipline one another. This is for the welfare of one another and for the covenant community.

In the spirit of recent definitions of the set-apart ministry, these guidelines seek to instruct this leadership group specifically in matters of function, but include it with the entire faith community in reference to Christian living.

The study committee has decided to use the words *discipleship* and *reconciliation* instead of *counseling* and *discipline*. The word *discipline* carries widely varying meanings and has become associated frequently with negative, unloving, and punitive overtones. *Counseling*, as traditionally used in this context, often implies “pressuring” and “advice giving” rather than the way the word is understood professionally. Discipleship and reconciliation, biblical and positive words, are consistent with our heritage. Our understanding and interpretation of these two words are included in the body of this report.

A. DEFINITION AND FUNCTION OF DISCIPLESHIP

The church consists of people who have responded to Christ’s call to discipleship. Membership is voluntary, intentional.

1. Personal Discipleship

Personal discipleship is . . .

- a. giving loyalty to Christ as Lord (Matt. 16:13-27; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 John 4:15);

52. 1976 Minutes (1975–1979), “Discipleship and Reconciliation,” 199–204; and 1977 Minutes (1975–1979), “An Addition to 1976 Discipleship and Reconciliation Paper,” 372.

- b. striving for Christlikeness (Luke 6:40; Eph. 5:1-2);
- c. witnessing to the good news of Christ (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

2. Community Discipleship

When disciples become a part of the community of faith, they . . .

- a. accept as their creed the New Testament as interpreted by the Church of the Brethren;
- b. accept the call to be ministers in the New Testament sense (Eph. 4:11-13);
- c. accept the responsibility for forming and enhancing the covenantal, corporate life of the local and larger church (1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:11-16);
- d. interpret to each other the mind of Christ through the study of the scriptures, in dialogue with one another, and in openness to the Holy Spirit (Phil. 2:5);
- e. accept the ministry of accountability in the faith community for growth toward spiritual maturity and increased ability to minister (Rom.15:14-16; Col. 3:12-16).

3. Set-apart Discipleship

When disciples accept responsibilities for leadership or set-apart ministries, they are . . .

- a. to exhibit, in relation to their special calling, growth in terms of training, skill, maturity, insight, integrity, and commitment (1 Tim. 4:6-10);
- b. to exhibit spiritual, moral, and ethical values that are exemplary and challenging in the Christian community (Gal. 5:16, 22-26);
- c. to be accountable to their brothers and sisters (Col. 3:12-13; 1 Pet. 5:2-4, Jerusalem Bible).

B. CAUSES OF BROKENNESS

When brokenness occurs within the life of the church, it is God's will for all to be healing agents (2 Cor. 5:18-20). Discipleship entails sincere attempts at reconciliation involving self, others, and God through prayerful confrontation and

loving acceptance and concern. Out of such encounters people experience change and reconciliation and the faith community grows spiritually (2 Cor. 2:5-11).

“If [one] should be detected in some sin . . . the spiritual ones among you should quietly set [that person] back on the right path, not with any feelings of superiority but being yourselves on guard against temptation. Carry each other’s burdens and so live out the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1-2, Phillips).

1. All Members

All members of the body of Christ are responsible for self-discipline and growth and for the maintenance and strength of that body (1 Cor. 12:14-26).

Occasions do occur when there is brokenness or a radical departure from the norms of the covenantal community and when people must be confronted regarding their accountability to one another and to the values, beliefs, and practices of the church. Examples of brokenness include . . .

- a. apparent failure to make a conscientious effort to live up to the teachings of the New Testament as interpreted by the Church of the Brethren in its Annual Conference decisions;
- b. acts of infidelity, dishonesty, deception, divisiveness, insubordination, lovelessness, rejection, and violence, which break relationships and militate against personal, family, and group relationships;
- c. prejudicial attitudes and acts toward other people based on sex, race, religion, or economic and cultural backgrounds;
- d. irresponsible use of global resources;
- e. inadequate or superficial efforts to resolve differences and controversies with other people or the church according to Matthew 18, and failure to contribute responsibility to the strengthening of community ties;
- f. unwillingness to pursue professional counsel when it could improve family and other fragmented relationships;
- g. actions and habits that are destructive to self in terms of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

2. Members in Leadership or Set-apart Ministries

Occasions occur when those who are called to set-apart leadership experience brokenness and must be confronted regarding their accountability. Examples, in addition to those for all members, are . . .

- a. neglect or misuse of the responsibilities of the office;
- b. rejection of the basic beliefs and practices of the Church of the Brethren as determined by the Annual Conference;
- c. failure to grow professionally and in Christian discipleship;
- d. adoption of behavior patterns that prevent effective leadership within the congregation, district, and/or denomination (Rom. 14:13-21; 1 Cor. 8:9-13; 10:23, 31);
- e. failure to maintain an exemplary Christian lifestyle in harmony with the teachings of 1 Timothy 3:1-9 and Titus 1:5-9.

C. PROCESS TOWARD GROWTH IN DISCIPLESHIP AND IN RECONCILING BROKENNESS

1. The Faith Community Shall Facilitate Discipleship . . .

- a. by providing training to acquaint all members with the meaning and the significance of Christian behavior. Each congregation should be responsible for offering literature, study/discussion groups, training sessions, and other contacts. These tools and opportunities should help each member to . . .
 - 1) know what commitment to Christ and to a particular local faith community means;
 - 2) be informed about the biblical beliefs, historical and organizational structure of the Church of the Brethren, and to understand its pronouncements on current issues;
 - 3) accept the self-discipline inherent in the call of Jesus: “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness . . .” (Matt. 6:33a); “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30-31; also 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:15-22; 2 Pet. 1:5-7);
 - 4) be recognized as having individual, unique gifts in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:4-31; Eph. 4:11-14; 1 Pet. 4:8-11);
 - 5) be a witness to God’s good news (Acts 1:8).

- b. by encouraging support groups for personal acceptance, confrontation, and interaction; and by groups involved in set-apart leadership situations to share mutual expectations, clarify role assignments, develop position descriptions, and engage in performance reviews in order to develop positive pastor-church relationships.
- c. by reviewing membership expectations of the local faith community at least yearly. Individual members should be confronted with a specific annual opportunity to evaluate themselves in relation to the church's expectations. Materials to assist congregations in this endeavor are available from the Office of Ministry of the Church of the Brethren.
- d. by developing in the faith community a warm, joyful climate of life, support, prayer, and sensitivity to the guidance of God (Rom. 12:6-21; Gal. 5:22-25).

2. The Faith Community Shall Facilitate Reconciliation

- a. Any member experiencing brokenness or difficulty should be approached by or feel free to approach the pastor or any other member. This relationship should be open and understanding, caring and trusting (Matt. 18:15-22).
- b. If it is necessary to involve additional people, sensitive and accepting members should comprise a committee of reconciliation. The pastor should be involved in these appointments. Open communication will encourage the person to express feelings of hostility, hurt, or guilt and make acceptance possible.
- c. If these procedures should fail to effect reconciliation, the difficulty should be referred to the church board, the congregation, or the district board.
- d. After all efforts have been exhausted and reconciliation cannot occur or the person refuses to be in fellowship and harmony with the corporate body, the action counseled in Matthew 18:17 may be necessary.

The biblical teaching of Matthew 18, traditionally practiced in the Church of the Brethren, can be misinterpreted. It can be insensitively and hastily employed. However, when verse 17, "let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (RSV), is understood within the context of the total chapter, it reflects the openness and unending compassion of Jesus. Gentiles and tax collectors ("heathen and a publican," KJV), as well as other rejected people, were the focus of his compassion and forgiveness (Matt. 9:9; 21:28-32; Luke 5:28-32; 7:34-50; 15:3-32; 18:9-14; 19:1-10; and John 4:7-26; 8:3-11).

e. Appeal by any member can be made to the district board and, if not satisfied with its decision, to the Standing Committee of the Annual Conference.

f. If a person has become disassociated from the church, either voluntarily or by action of the local congregation or the district, it is understood that there is always an invitation to be reinstated. This implies an understanding of and a desire to comply with the requirements for Christian discipleship.

3. Members Set Apart by Licensing or Ordination

Set-apart members, in addition to being responsible to their primary covenantal community for their call and function, are also accountable to the district responsible for their ministry.

a. A pastor or set-apart minister should have open, supportive, and trusting relationships with the congregation and with some designated group within it.

b. Pastors and other set-apart ministers are encouraged to be involved in local community or district peer support groups. Districts should facilitate such groups. They may be denominational or interfaith.

c. District executives/ministers are resource people used by many pastors for counseling and support. Inasmuch as they are involved in the placement process, their effectiveness sometimes may be limited. Therefore, districts are encouraged to provide a “pastor to pastors,” financial assistance for professional counsel, and involvement in the Office of Ministry-sponsored counseling network for set-apart ministers.

d. Many times reconciliation is accomplished informally and confidentially. If this is not possible, the concern should be brought to the district. A report of any alleged offense shall be presented in writing to the district executive/minister, chairperson of the district board, or the district moderator, setting forth the concerns.

e. In order to act quickly and aggressively to implement procedures to effect reconciliation, we recommend that districts appoint a continuing committee on discipleship and reconciliation, which shall be on call to the district board, the executive committee, the district ministry commission, or the district executive/minister to resolve problems in the area of discipleship and reconciliation, which may come to the board either informally or officially.

- 1) The committee of five shall be appointed by the district board (one each year for a term of five years). Tenure shall be limited to two terms.
 - 2) The chairperson of the board and the district executive/minister shall serve *ex officio* and shall have the responsibility of calling the committee to meet at least once a year for review of its purposes if it has not been otherwise required to meet for special concerns.
 - 3) The committee shall, on behalf of the district board, be responsible for working at discipleship and reconciliation concerns between any member and those with whom the person may have difficulty. It may also be called upon to work at discipleship and reconciliation concerns within a congregation or between congregations and the district.
 - 4) The committee shall bring a report of its efforts and experiences to the district board, along with any appropriate recommendations it has to make.
 - 5) The committee does not have authority to implement recommendations for official action on discipleship and reconciliation concerns. The committee must report to the district board for their final action.
- f. All shall have the privilege of presenting any written or oral statement in their behalf.
- g. The district board shall have the authority to review and weigh the cause of brokenness presented to it and, if necessary, to make further investigation. In cases where the concerns are severe and reconciliation difficult, the district board shall determine the accuracy of the charges and decide how the matter shall be resolved. District board actions may include exoneration, continued reconciliatory attempts, temporary suspension of licensing or ordination status, removal from the ministry or from membership in the church, or recommendation to a local congregation for removal from a pastorate or set-apart ministerial functions.
- h. Individuals have the right to appeal district board actions, which they feel are unfair, to the Standing Committee of the Annual Conference. Until the Standing Committee reverses the decision of the district board, the board's decision stands.
- i. The district board shall be open to receive and consider a request for reinstatement into the set-apart ministry when . . .

- 1) there is satisfactory evidence that the district board's decisions were made on misinformation; or
- 2) there is satisfactory evidence that repentance, forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, and growth are being experienced.

The district board is empowered to grant reinstatement when the confidence of the faith community in which ministry is to take place can be reestablished.

- j. People involved in the reconciliation process, whether as individuals or as members of committees, will treat confidentially the information they receive.

V. ETHICS IN MINISTRY RELATIONS—2008¹

I. Introduction

In the Church of the Brethren we believe that all members of the body of Christ are responsible for self-discipline and growth and for the maintenance and strength of the body (1 Cor. 12:14-26). We also understand that when individuals are called forth and accept responsibilities for ministerial leadership,² they are...

- To exhibit, in relation to their spiritual calling, growth of training, skill, maturity, integrity, and commitment (1 Tim. 4:6-10).
- To exhibit spiritual, moral, and ethical values that are exemplary and challenging in the Christian community (Gal. 5:16, 22-26).
- To be accountable to one another in the body of Christ (Col. 3:12-13, 1 Pet. 5:2-4).

Recognizing the importance of articulating an ethical code of conduct, the church has established a code of ethics and polity, policies, and processes for dealing with complaints of ethical misconduct. Occasions do occur when there is brokenness or departure from the norms of the covenantal community and when ministerial leaders must be confronted regarding their accountability to one another and to the values, beliefs, and practices of the church.³

¹ Minutes 2008 (2005-2008), "Update to Ministerial Ethics," 1205-1231. This paper replaces the 1996 "Ethics in Ministry Relations" paper and all previous ethics papers.

² The term "Ministerial Leadership" was introduced in the 1999 Ministerial Leadership Paper. A ministerial leader refers to any credentialed minister in the Church of the Brethren.

³ Introductory paragraphs are taken and revised for this document from the "Discipleship and Reconciliation" paper approved by the 1976 Annual Conference and amended by the 1977 Annual Conference.

In 1988 a statement, “Ethics in Ministry Relations,” was prepared by a special committee for Standing Committee, which offered beginning reflections on ministerial ethics and on the effectiveness of the church’s current polity and structures for guiding and overseeing clergy in relation to ethical matters. The Standing Committee paper was rather general and addressed few specific ethical issues confronting clergy and other church leaders.

A query from the Oregon/Washington District to the 1991 Annual Conference was adopted and a study committee was directed to develop a code of ethical principles for clergy in the Church of the Brethren and a process for dealing with complaints of ministerial sexual misconduct. In 1992 the study committee presented a revised and expanded paper to Annual Conference, which adopted it. While the paper specifically addressed the above issues, there was concern on the part of the Council of District Executives that the paper did not sufficiently deal with the risk and liability issues that can occur with ministerial sexual misconduct. In 1993, Standing Committee heard these concerns and took interim action clarifying the use of the paper and appointing a subcommittee to work with legal counsel to revise the paper.

The 1995 Standing Committee adopted the revised paper presented by the subcommittee as the interim statement and directed that it be taken to the delegate body in 1996. The paper was officially approved in 1996 with several amendments and has been used by the denomination and its districts since then.

This paper attempts to carry on and expand the previous work. What follows is...

- II. A Theology of Ministerial Ethics
- III. Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leadership⁴
- IV. Process for Dealing with Complaints of Ethical Misconduct
- V. Additional Recommendations
- VI. Glossary of Terms

The “Theology of Ministerial Ethics” section is intended to undergird the integrity of the ministerial relationship with parishioners, clients, students, colleagues, and others who are served by ministerial leaders. Biblical insights into ministry, calling, expectations, and discipline for leadership are included.

The first Ethical Code for Ministers and Congregations appeared in the pastor’s manual of 1940 and was also included in the 1946 edition. It was noted that the code in the 1946 manual was approved by the General Ministerial Board. The Manual of Worship and Polity published in 1953 and 1955 both contained an enlarged version of what appeared in the 1946 Minister’s Manual. The minister’s code dealt mainly with the conduct of the minister in congregational relationships, such as maintaining confidentiality, avoiding exerting influence in congregational decisions, maintaining good relationships with other church staff and pastors of other churches, and not interfering with ministerial affairs in a congregation after leaving it. The Code of Ethics contained in the Ethics in Ministerial Relations (1996) paper was based on what was included in

⁴ The 1999 Ministerial Leadership Paper defines “ministerial leadership” as licensed and ordained ministers, both salaried and self-supported, and designates nine categories for ordained ministers.

the Pastor's Manual of 1978. It was revised and expanded, adding specific references to sexual conduct.

The Code of Ethics in this paper divides and expands the code into three categories: "Integrity of the Ministerial Life," "Integrity of the Ministerial Call," and "Integrity of the Ministerial Relationship." "I" language is used to declare the individual's conviction that the Code of Ethics is a statement the minister will agree to and follow as part of accepting the call to ministry. Furthermore, though the focus of this paper is on ministerial leaders, it is hoped that all called and elected leaders of the church will embrace the Code of Ethics as a call to accountability. It is recommended that this Code of Ethics be adopted by all Church of the Brethren agencies and institutions.

The fourth section of the paper, "Process for Dealing with Complaints of Ethical Misconduct," is intended to demonstrate the church's commitment to the integrity of ministerial relationships and to justice, fairness, and compassion for all those involved in cases of complaints of misconduct. It describes the church's way of responding to complaints of misconduct. When those who are called into ministry experience brokenness or adopt behavior patterns that prevent effective leadership, they must be confronted regarding their accountability. It underscores the importance of responding immediately to complaints and providing assistance to aggrieved persons, as well as to ministers, congregations, and others who are affected.

The fifth section of the paper outlines additional recommendations for Annual Conference delegates, individuals, congregations, ministerial leaders, districts, the Council of District Executives, Bethany Theological Seminary and the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, and the Office of Ministry of the Church of the Brethren.

The final section of the paper is a glossary of terms.

II. A THEOLOGY OF MINISTERIAL ETHICS

A. Our Ministry to the World

We in the Church of the Brethren regard believers' baptism into Christ Jesus, an outward sign of our inner experience before the community of faith, to be enrollment into ministry. The synoptic Gospel stories of Jesus' baptism are the foundation on which this is built. According to these accounts, Jesus launched his mission immediately following his baptism and subsequent testing in the wilderness. Being baptized with the baptism of our Lord implies that we, too, are being commissioned into ministry. We have entered into a covenant relationship with God. While baptism symbolizes much for the believer, our richest understanding includes the conviction that baptism is the believer's covenant to ministry.

In affirming the covenantal ministry of all baptized believers, we remember that we are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9). As such, we are under love's directive: "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received" (1 Pet. 4:10). Effective ministry

demonstrates good stewardship of our gifts. The varied gifts described in Ephesians 4 come from Christ for enhancing the church's ability to accomplish its mission (Eph. 4:11-13). Good stewardship leads the believer/minister to exercise these gifts in service to God. We have become covenanted members of Christ's incarnate, living body, God's agent to save creation. We live under the covenant sealed in baptism to minister—to serve God with our whole lives.

From our earliest beginnings, sisters and brothers have sought to live as Jesus' faithful disciples, guided by the conviction that whatever we do to others we do to Christ and therefore to God (Matt. 25:40, 42-43). This is symbolically acted out by the community of faith at the love feast, where we recall that we are ministers sent to serve as Christ served (John 13:15-17). In the act of washing one another's feet, we both serve and are served. As we eat the common meal together, we participate as brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. In the service of the bread, we recall our covenant with Christ to be his body, broken for others. In the service of the cup, we renew our covenant of love and ministry to God and God's children everywhere.

We recognize that initiation into ministry and discipleship by baptism are not so much an appointment to elevated position and prestige as they are an invitation to obedient faithfulness. It is a call to so rely on Christ that we model a lifestyle pointing to God. "Whoever says, 'I abide in him,' ought to walk just as he walked" (1 John 2:6). Because of our relationship with Christ, we are called to live by the highest ethical standards. "As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct" (1 Pet. 1:15).

Our covenant is not only with God, but with each other in the body of Christ. The covenantal nature of our relationship with God and with each other is particularly applicable to ethics. We stand in direct violation of our covenant with God and each other when our actions betray trust or intentionally violate the person of a sister or brother. We are one and are therefore "members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). We are members of Christ's body, called to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice" so that "we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another" (Rom. 12:1, 5).

Being part of the body of Christ necessitates ethical behavior not only with other Christians, but with people outside the church. As Christ's ambassadors, we are sent to reconcile the world to God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19-20). We subvert the cause of the Christ we serve when we exploit or betray the trust of people outside the church. We are called to live lives worthy of the covenant granted us by God's good grace. In this way we bear witness to God, who is self-giving love (1 John 4:14-16).

God calls all members, including those in leadership, to live by the high standards upheld in the Scriptures. In various Annual Conference statements over the last few decades, the Church of the Brethren has spelled out how it understood these standards.

B. Called to Leadership

To help us achieve the ministries of our calling and covenant, we accept that God has granted leadership gifts to certain individuals. We have recognized these persons by calling them to guiding roles in the church. In Schwarzenau, seven of our tradition cast lots to see who would baptize Alexander Mack, whom the others called to baptize them in turn. Our congregations have nurtured various forms of specialized leadership, including self-supported pastors, salaried pastors, and chaplains. We call to ministerial leadership those who show themselves able to discern the mind of Christ in the context of our lives and who have skills to encourage us to faithfulness.

While no arbitrary rank is held by our leaders, pastors and other credentialed leaders are worthy of respect and attentiveness by virtue of the confidence placed in them. “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing—for that would be harmful to you” (Heb. 13:17). This scripture should in no way be interpreted to justify submission to unethical conduct by a church leader. Rather, the Bible links respect for leaders with their lifestyle, role, and gifts. Many leaders may feel uncomfortable being role models; yet such modeling has been part of the expectation for church leaders since biblical times.

Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith (Heb. 13:7).

I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock (1 Pet. 5:1c-3).

Show yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured; then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us (Tit. 2:7-8).

C. Unique Roles Have Unique Expectations

We expect some things from our leaders that are not necessarily applicable to all members. Scripture alludes to this reality when it says, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Although ethical standards are universally applied to all Christians, spiritual leaders have a higher degree of accountability for maintaining the ethical norms than apply to all believers. When a ministerial leader breaks the bonds of trust and accountability, it does harm to the body of Christ.

The Old Testament suggests that, while God calls all people to live with high moral standards, additional responsibility is placed upon persons in leadership roles. The responsibility of leaders was difficult and demanding, for unfaithful leaders brought

danger to all Israel. We recall how the leaders of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms disregarded God in their hearts. The results for Israel and Judah were chaos and exile.

The degrees of expectation set forth in Israel's story appear again in the New Testament. During Jesus' life, many people followed him while some sought an apprenticed relationship with him. Upon his death/resurrection and the formation of the church, only a few were church leaders and fewer still were apostles. The faith of the leaders greatly affected the shape of faith and life in the larger church. The whole community suffers when a false spirit is in the hearts of ministerial leaders.

The biblical witness invites us to understand that standards for leadership in the church are important.

The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop (ministerial leader) desires a noble task. Bishops must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, nor quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. They must manage their own households well, keeping their children submissive and respectful in every way—for if someone does not know how to manage their own household, how can they take care of God's church? They must not be a recent convert, or they may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, they must be well thought of by outsiders, so that they may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:1-9).

The Church of the Brethren has consistently affirmed a similar expectation for all our ministerial leaders. These affirmations have included calls for accountability in ethical behavior.

While this is the ideal, we recognize the difficulty in living in full accord with these standards; we have all "fallen short" of God's ideal, yet maintain usefulness solely by the grace of God.

D. Ethics of Discipline

Realizing that the biblical ideal is not always maintained, the church needs to have in place a procedure for calling leaders to accountability. We must use great care in approaching any member whose behavior has been called into question. "My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness" (Gal. 6:1). Through any proceedings designed to deal with unethical behavior, we must exercise compassion as well as judgment.

Ethical misconduct requires serious response. Each situation is different and will require careful examination and discernment. Some actions may prohibit reinstatement into ministerial leadership, even though a person may be forgiven and restored to the body of Christ. In other situations, under circumstances of full repentance a person might be restored to a position of ministerial leadership (2 Tim. 2:21).

- In situations where complaints are substantiated, consequences will be determined by the nature and seriousness of the misconduct.
- In situations where complaints are unsubstantiated, care will be given to issues of full exoneration and restorative justice for the ministerial leader.

E. Congregational Ethics

Our statement of theology began by recalling our conviction that all baptized believers are ministers. Ministerial ethics, therefore, are related to congregational ethics. Scripture is persistent in its expectations for appropriate support of leadership.

But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor (or compensation), especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; for the scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves to be paid" (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

Your leaders . . . are keeping watch over your souls. . . . Let them do this with joy and not with sighing—for that would be harmful to you (Heb. 13:17).

Congregations and individual members are called to support, uphold, and strengthen ministerial leaders. Additional guidance may be found in the Congregational Ethics Paper (1996).

III. CODE OF ETHICS FOR MINISTERIAL LEADERS

We believe that we have been called by God, through the church, to the set-apart ministry in the Church of the Brethren. It is our calling and our function to lead and facilitate the church in its mission to obey and serve Christ and to witness to the good news of the gospel. We are committed to fulfilling the trust the church has placed in us by maintaining a high standard of Christian conviction, by sincerity of purpose, by nurturing and sharing our gifts, and by integrity of our character. We are dedicated to upholding the dignity and worth of every person who seeks or is reached by our care and proclamation. In order to uphold our standards we, as ministers in the Church of the Brethren, together and individually covenant to live out the following:

Integrity of the Ministerial Life

- A. I will be true to the Judeo-Christian scriptures in my preaching, teaching, and manner of living.
- B. I will be true to Christian convictions as revealed in the Bible and interpreted, taught to, and nurtured in me by the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- C. I will live with integrity, upholding my commitments to God, to others, and to the church.

- D. I will exercise a lifestyle consistent with the teachings of Jesus, giving serious attention to Annual Conference statements.
- E. I will assume responsibility for my physical and emotional health and for my spiritual growth and enrichment. I will strive to maintain reasonable expectations for myself and not allow others' unreasonable expectations to endanger my well-being.
- F. I will treat members of my family with Christian love and respect.
- G. I will treat my congregation and parishioners with Christian love and respect.
- H. I will be a good steward of all of my resources, managing them to live within my income.

Integrity of the Ministerial Call

- I. I will support the basic beliefs and practices of the Church of the Brethren as determined by Annual Conference.
- J. I will respect the privacy of individuals and will not divulge information obtained in confidence without expressed permission. However, when an individual is a danger to self or others, I will take appropriate action, even when this breaks confidentiality.
- K. I will report all cases of suspected child abuse. I will be knowledgeable of and act in accordance with the mandated reporting requirements of professionals within my state.
- L. I will not exchange or tolerate scandalous, malicious, or inaccurate information concerning others.
- M. I will give credit for all sources quoted or extensively paraphrased in sermons and prepared papers. I will honor all copyrights.
- N. I acknowledge that education is a lifelong process, and will seek out opportunities to continue to grow spiritually and in ministry skills.
- O. I will honor the ministry of clergy colleagues in our denomination and in the larger Christian community, striving to work with them in a collegial manner. I will not proselytize⁵ people from other churches. I will only perform ministerial services, such as weddings, funerals, baptisms, anointings, pastoral counseling, and critical pastoral care, in another congregation at the request of the current pastor and that build up the ministry and mission of the body of Christ in that place.
- P. I will honor the ministry of pastors in my former parishes. It is inappropriate to be involved in the pastoral ministry of a congregation after leaving it or upon retirement, or to perform ministerial services, or to cultivate such relationships with former parishioners, if it hinders the ministry of the congregation and pastor. I will only perform ministerial services, such as weddings, funerals, baptisms, anointing, pastoral counseling, and critical pastoral care at the request of the current pastor.⁶
- Q. Whenever serving in a category of ministerial leadership other than pastoral or congregational ministry (i.e., chaplain, professor, denominational leader, retired, etc.), I will honor the ministry of my pastor and congregation by being aware of my informal authority. I will not exert undue influence in the internal workings of my congregation.
- R. In the event of a complaint against me, I will participate in the denominational process for dealing with complaints of ministerial misconduct.

⁵ See Glossary of Terms

⁶ See Guidelines Ministerial Service and Membership in a Former Parish, Office of Ministry, 2000

Integrity of the Ministerial Relationship (Fiduciary Responsibility)⁷

- S. I will not misuse the trust placed in me and the unique power inherent in my role by exploiting in any way those who seek my help or care.
- T. I will not use my office or authority to apply influence upon a parishioner or others in order to secure bequests, gifts, loans, or financial gain that would personally benefit me.
- U. I will not expect nor seek financial favors or gratuities because of my position.
- V. I will be responsible and honest in the management of all resources and funds entrusted to my care in the course of my employment.
- W. I will not enter into “dual relationships” with parishioners that result in a “conflict of interest” that could personally benefit me.⁸
- X. I will not engage in pastoral counseling that extends beyond the limits of my training and experience. I will use appropriate consulting and referral services.
- Y. It is unethical to take advantage of the vulnerability of any person by causing that person to engage in sexual activity or conduct with me. I will not engage in sexual activity with any person other than my spouse. Such behavior would be especially egregious within the church or ministry agency I serve.
- Z. I will not engage in any form of child abuse—sexual, physical, or emotional.

IV. PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS OF MINISTERIAL MISCONDUCT

This section outlines the process recommended for dealing with situations involving clergy ethical misconduct. Any ethical violation of the ministerial relationship is destructive to the body of Christ. A violation of the “Integrity of Ministerial Relationship (Fiduciary Responsibility),” including sexual misconduct, causes enormous harm to individuals, families, and communities of faith, and is a betrayal of the sacred trust between ministerial leaders and their parishioners.

It must be stressed that this is a procedure to be conducted within the confines of the church’s structure and polity. It is an ecclesiastical, not legal, procedure outlining the way in which ministerial leaders are held accountable to the church in matters related to ethical misconduct.

We are bound by our commitment to justice, fairness, and compassion for all concerned, as well as by our desire to live in keeping with the spirit and teachings of the New Testament. These values call us to respond to complaints of ministerial misconduct. We are concerned about upholding the integrity of our church’s witness and ministry. Awareness of ministerial misconduct helps us to do so. Therefore, we take seriously all reports of this nature.

Our church also protects the rights of those accused of misconduct. Our willingness to respond immediately to complaints and to provide assistance to aggrieved persons is not to be construed as a “conviction” or judgment of accused persons. The process calls for a support system to be in place for the accused as well as the aggrieved.

⁷ See Glossary of Terms

⁸ See Glossary of Terms

Because every case is different, the intent of the process outlined below is to establish guidelines for district personnel and others who deal with complaints of ministerial misconduct. The intent is not to create legal rights or legal relationships. While all parties involved are almost always best served by adhering closely to agreed-upon guidelines, we recognize that there are times when the church may need to vary from the recommended process. Therefore under certain rare circumstances a district executive/minister in consultation with the district board chair and the ministry commission may prayerfully discern whether to handle a complaint directly. At such times the process shall be managed by the district executive/minister in consultation with appropriate district leadership and the coordinator of district ministries and/or the executive director of ministry.

This process is also commended to camps, districts, and the denominational agencies for use with their credentialed staffs. In addition, other church-related agencies, such as colleges and retirement homes, may wish to follow the process if the need arises to deal with complaints of ethical misconduct by Church of the Brethren ministers on their faculty or staff. We recognize that such institutions have their own personnel policies for use in employment practices, while this process applies specifically to ministerial credentialing. The authority and responsibility for ministerial credentialing in all instances belongs to the district board and the district ministry commission or equivalent body.

Prompt response to any claim of ministerial misconduct is imperative, regardless of when the alleged incident occurred. The incident may have occurred years earlier; guilt and repression can delay the act of reporting. Efforts should be made to protect the integrity of all parties involved, including the congregation. Equally important is the need for careful follow-up of any accusations of misconduct, as well as concern about the possibility of false accusations.

Where it is determined that ethical misconduct has occurred, efforts to respond should take into account the need for long-range healing for victims, offenders, and their families; the life and ministry of the affected congregation; and, where possible, the hope for reconciliation and restoration.

Complaints of ministerial misconduct involving children, substantiated or not, should be of special concern. Each district should have clarity about its states' laws within the district relative to reporting child abuse. In addition, some states have laws related to the abuse of vulnerable adults; these laws should also be known and followed. (See Section V. "Recommendations for Further Information.")

Appropriate district personnel should be prepared to receive complaints. The district executive/minister, ministry commission chair, and commission members; all members of the assessment team and the ethics committee; and any others designated to receive and process complaints, should understand the dynamics of ministerial misconduct. In addition, information about procedures for making a complaint and about how the district will respond should be clearly stated and well publicized to congregations and individuals in the district. (See Section V. "Recommendations for Further Information.")

It is the responsibility of the district executive/minister and ministry commission chair to receive a complaint and together to initiate the process for dealing with the complaint. The ministry commission should name two alternates to ensure that there is at least one man and one woman to receive a complaint and to have someone available in case of absence or conflict of interest of the district executive/minister and/or ministry commission chair.

Insofar as possible, response will be made to every complaint of ministerial misconduct. However, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to follow through on anonymous complaints. Such complaints will not be ignored, but the person receiving the complaint will encourage the person making the complaint to identify him/herself and/or the alleged victim.

It is essential that confidentiality be maintained at all times. Careful and full documentation should be maintained throughout the process.

A. Roles and Responsibilities

The Congregation

The congregation is the community of faith in which love of God and love of neighbor are exercised in worship and in relationships. It calls/employs a pastor or ministry team when needed. In consultation with the district executive/minister, the congregation selects a person who is properly credentialed and whose educational qualifications, faith, and aptness to teach, preach, provide pastoral care, and administer has set him/her apart for this responsibility. The congregation and pastor or ministry team work together to carry out the ministry of the congregation. The district provides guidance and support to the congregation, to the pastor or ministry team, and to other staff employed by the congregation.

The District Board⁹

Denominational polity assigns authority for the credentialing of ministerial leadership to the district board. This includes the licensing and ordination of ministers. From time to time, the district board may delegate authority to various officers, commissions, and committees to act on its behalf. The district board delegates authority to the ethics committee to make decisions related to misconduct of the ministerial leader. When the ethics committee recommends termination of a license, it is approved by the district ministry commission and reported to the district board. When the ethics committee recommends termination of ordination or termination with the possibility of reinstatement, the district board makes the final decision. Overseeing the process for an ethics case will consume a great deal of the time and energy of the district executive/minister, and other district leaders may have to take on additional responsibilities during this time.

The Ministry Commission¹⁰

⁹ See Glossary of Terms

¹⁰ See Glossary of Terms

On behalf of the district board, the ministry commission, or its appointed committee, gives counsel and guidance in matters related to ministerial leadership in the district.

The commission, in consultation with the district executive/minister and with the approval of the district board, appoints an assessment team and, in consultation with the district executive/minister and with the approval of the district board, also appoints an ethics committee. It is suggested that different people comprise the assessment team and the ethics committee. The ministry commission chair may serve on the ethics committee. The ministry commission will see that both the assessment team and the ethics committee receive regular training in ministerial ethics and the process. This training will be repeated at least every three years.

Qualities desired for service on an ethics committee and assessment team include listening skills, maturity of faith and character, ability to maintain confidences, sensitivity to people, objectivity, courage to face the issues and confront individuals, and a willingness to become familiar with Church of the Brethren polity and practices. One or more individuals with expertise in understanding human behavior, such as pastoral counselors, social workers, psychologists, or family therapists, should be included. In addition, there should be a balance of men and women.

The Assessment Team

The assessment team consists of two or three people (at least one man and one woman) plus the district executive/minister. Under the auspices of the district ministry commission, the assessment team will participate in regular training on ministerial ethics and the process. It determines whether there is at least reasonable cause to believe that ministerial misconduct has occurred. The assessment team appraises and evaluates complaints and has the authority to bring a recommendation to the ethics committee of a) a negotiated settlement mutually agreeable to all parties, b) no reasonable cause, or c) reasonable cause¹¹ to pursue a full-scale, formal complaint. Any member of the assessment team who cannot be fair for any reason, or whose participation may give rise to the appearance of unfairness, should excuse him/herself from the committee, be excused by the majority vote of the other committee members, or be removed by the district executive/minister or designated alternate.

The Ethics Committee

The ethics committee consists of three to five people with a balance of gender and ethnicity plus the district executive/minister. Under the auspices of the district ministry commission, the ethics committee will participate in regular training on ministerial ethics and the process. The ethics committee receives recommendations from the assessment team. When the recommendation is to pursue a formal complaint, it conducts a review meeting and makes decisions about the disposition of cases, except in instances concerning termination of ordination or license. Where termination is recommended, final decisions must be made by the district board or ministry commission as stated in denominational polity. It is also responsible for follow-up, monitoring progress toward resolution for all parties involved, and

¹¹ See Glossary of Terms

establishing an end point for the case. With the exception of any delegated follow-up procedures, the ethics committee's findings and recommendations constitute the church's official resolution of the case. Any member of the ethics committee who cannot be fair for any reason, or whose participation may give rise to the appearance of unfairness, should excuse him/herself from the committee, be excused by the majority vote of the other committee members, or be removed by the district executive/minister or designated alternate.

The District Executive/Minister

The district executive/minister or designated alternate receives complaints, works with the ministry commission chair to activate the assessment team and ethics committee, and manages and coordinates the process. Since one person cannot care for pastoral, ecclesiastical, and legal concerns, the district executive/minister should solicit assistance from qualified persons to ensure that all parties involved have the opportunity to receive appropriate pastoral care from the outset. The district executive/minister also arranges for adequate record-keeping and documentation, including the keeping of a log of important telephone calls and meetings pertaining to the complaint from the first time it is shared. He/she also ensures that all affected parties are kept informed, particularly in terms of their roles, responsibilities, and options within the proceedings. It is recommended that the district board chair, the executive director of ministry, and the coordinator of district ministries be kept informed as the case develops. The district executive/minister attends meetings of both the assessment team and the ethics committee. He/she ensures that follow-up occurs.

Legal Counsel

Even though this is the church's process, parties involved are likely to consult with attorneys. The role of any attorney must be clearly defined and communicated. The aggrieved, the accused, and/or the district may request to have counsel present at the meetings, including the meeting where the complaint is reviewed. While such requests will be received, it is the prerogative of the ethics committee, in consultation with the district executive/minister, to allow or disallow the presence of any attorney. If attorneys are present, it is recommended that they participate in the role of supporter, friend, or advocate. In any of these roles, attorneys have none of the rights and privileges accorded to attorneys in the secular courts. If either the accused or the aggrieved threatens a lawsuit against the church or each other, the district's attorney should be notified of this threat so that he/she may protect the legal interests of the district by, for example, notifying the district's insurer of the threat.

B. Using the Process

Making a Complaint

Anyone with a concern about possible ministerial misconduct can make a preliminary phone call to the district executive/minister. Without giving a name, the person may describe the concern in general. Sharing one's name gives more credibility to the complaint and facilitates the process. The district executive/minister will explain how the district responds to such a complaint. (If the complaint is against the district executive/minister, the complaint should go directly to the ministry commission chair or designated alternate. In this case, the executive director of ministry should be notified immediately for consultation and assistance in giving

oversight to the process.) Anyone who has knowledge of possible ethical misconduct by ministers can make a complaint in several ways, including . . .

1. Calling the district executive/minister, ministry commission chair, or designated alternate. The names of these people are available through the district office. A caller need not give his/her name.
2. Writing a letter marked “personal and confidential” to the district executive/minister, ministry commission chair, or designated alternate. The letter should indicate by what means the writer expects a response to be given (by phone, by letter, in an arranged meeting).
3. Making an appointment to meet with the district executive/minister, ministry commission chair, or designated alternate.

Anonymous, third party, or email complaints will be considered seriously, but will be given careful scrutiny to determine whether the complaint is authentic and merits further follow-up. If follow-up is merited and there is no “aggrieved” party or there is a third party on behalf of the “aggrieved” (the congregation, a friend, a colleague, etc.), the district executive/minister and the district ministry commission evaluate and assess at what point in the process to begin.

Responding to a Complaint

The district executive/minister and the ministry commission chair together consider the information given in the complaint to initially determine whether there are enough verifiable facts to proceed. Once this is determined, the district executive/minister and the ministry commission chair activate the assessment team and alert the district ministry commission that the assessment team has been activated. If the nature of the complaint involves suspected child abuse, the local child protection agency should be notified immediately.

In addition the following persons should be informed...

1. The district board chair.
2. The executive director of ministry and/or the coordinator of district ministries of the Office of Ministry.
3. The board chair and moderator of the accused’s congregation or ministry agency. The district executive/minister works with the congregation’s leadership to consider carefully if, when, what, and how to tell the congregation. In some cases, it may be in the best interest of all parties for the congregation to grant the accused a leave of absence with pay and without prejudice of ministerial standing until the matter is resolved.
4. The accused’s employer, when the accused is not serving in a pastoral setting. The district executive/minister works collegially with the employing agency, carefully weighing the timing and/or appropriateness of sharing the information.
5. The district’s legal counsel and liability insurance carrier.

The district executive/minister has the authority and responsibility to act in the best interests of all parties in situations where there is the potential for criminal charges to be filed. If criminal charges have been or are filed, the church’s process may need to be suspended pending the outcome of the criminal proceedings. The district’s attorney should be consulted.

C. The Work of the Assessment Team

The assessment team determines whether there is at least reasonable cause to believe that ministerial misconduct has occurred. The assessment team appraises and evaluates complaints by holding separate closed and confidential meetings with the aggrieved and accused and gathers pertinent information and documentation to determine whether to proceed with a recommendation to the ethics committee. The assessment team has the authority to bring a recommendation to the ethics committee of a) a negotiated settlement mutually agreeable to all parties, b) no reasonable cause, or c) reasonable cause to pursue a full-scale, formal complaint.

The Initial Meeting of the Assessment Team with the Aggrieved

The aggrieved is invited to meet with the assessment team as soon as possible after the initial report of the grievance. He/she should be invited to bring an advocate or support person to the initial meeting and to any subsequent meetings during the process.

The purposes of the initial meeting with the aggrieved are to . . .

1. Hear the aggrieved's story as both the first step in pastoral care and the first step in an appraisal and evaluation of the complaint.
2. Determine the extent to which the aggrieved is willing to participate in formal proceedings. The assessment team should request that a clear and concise written statement be provided by the aggrieved as soon as possible. While a statement prepared and signed by the aggrieved is preferred, if the aggrieved person is not willing or able to place his/her complaint in writing, he/she may sign or initial the district executive/minister's written summary of the meeting.

Follow-up to the Initial Meeting with the Aggrieved

Promptly after the initial meeting, the district executive/minister facilitates the preparation of a factual written summary of the meeting. The assessment team considers the possible need for gathering additional information and carries out any further appraisal and evaluation in a confidential manner.

Initial Meeting with the Accused

The goal, at this point, is to create a situation with the greatest potential for learning the truth. The purposes of the initial meeting with the accused are to . . .

1. Notify the person that an accusation has been made and is being taken seriously.
2. Share the nature of the complaint. The complaint is shared verbally at this time with the accused.
3. Provide an opportunity for the accused to respond to the accusation.
4. Invite the accused to prepare a written response to the accusation. Such a written response becomes part of the confidential record of the case.
5. Express the pastoral concern of the team and the church for the accused and offer through the district executive/minister the opportunity for the accused to receive ongoing pastoral care by someone who is not involved in the case. It is important to clarify that the district executive/minister cannot provide this pastoral care.

Follow-up to the Initial Meeting with the Accused

Immediately following the initial meeting, the district executive/minister facilitates preparation of a factual written summary of the meeting.

Assessment Team Follow-up to Both Initial Meetings

After careful appraisal and evaluation of the information received in relation to the complaint, the assessment team comes to agreement on its recommendation and prepares a written document to be presented to the ethics committee.

1. The recommendation may be to accept a negotiated settlement.
If so, the assessment team, in consultation with the district executive/minister, prepares a written statement explaining the case, the nature of the negotiations, and the agreements supported by the aggrieved and the accused. The statement is placed in the minister's permanent file. The recommendation is reported to the district ministry commission.
2. The recommendation may be that there is no reasonable cause to believe that misconduct occurred.
If so, the assessment team, in consultation with the district executive/minister, facilitates preparation of a statement to the ethics committee explaining the case (the nature of the complaints, the appraisal and evaluation that occurred, the determination that no reasonable cause was found, and other appropriate supporting information). As much as possible, the statement should be written in such a way as to protect the minister from prejudice related to this experience in future employment. The statement is placed in the minister's permanent file. The minister has the prerogative of preparing a personal statement to be made part of his/her permanent file. The recommendation should be reported to the district ministry commission and the board chair and/or moderator of the congregation or ministry agency.
3. The recommendation may be that there is at least reasonable cause to believe that misconduct may have occurred. Working together, the district executive/minister and the assessment team shall . . .
 - a. Prepare the formal complaint for presentation to the ethics committee. The formal complaint is a statement of the alleged offense. It is to be accompanied by any written statements of the aggrieved and accused, the summary statements of each of the initial meetings, and any other relevant documentation.
 - b. Contact the aggrieved and the accused to inform them that a formal complaint will be brought and that they will be provided with relevant materials prior to the ethics committee meeting to review the complaint. They should receive copies of the formal complaint and all supporting materials.

D. The Work of the Ethics Committee

The ethics committee receives recommendations from the assessment team. When the recommendation is to pursue a formal complaint, it conducts a review meeting and makes decisions about the disposition of cases according to polity.

The ethics committee receives the assessment team's statement, reviews all information gathered to that point, and decides on the procedures to be followed to resolve the complaint.

If a meeting to review the complaint is deemed necessary, the ethics committee, in consultation with all parties, sets the date. Attention should be given to whether or not all parties should be in the same location.

The aggrieved and the accused are informed about the meeting procedure and their right to present their statements and supporting materials.

Decisions should be made about who should attend the meeting. The meeting might include the assessment team, accused, aggrieved, their support persons, and legal counsel acting as support persons.

The committee may obtain information or documents pertaining to the situation and may interview persons who are knowledgeable about details of the complaint. All information obtained from these meetings is held in strictest confidence.

1. *The Review Meeting*

The ethics committee is responsible for the character and conduct of the meeting. Every attempt should be made to ensure that the process is fair, impartial, and confidential. In preparation for the meeting, any person involved is allowed to seek whatever counsel is appropriate, including legal counsel. The following outline is offered as a guideline for conducting the meeting:

- a. Gathering and introduction of participants.
- b. Invoking God's presence through scripture and prayer. Romans 12:1-3 is suggested.
- c. Explanation of purpose and process for the meeting.
- d. Reading of the complaint.
- e. Presentation of information and statements from individuals supporting the complaint.
- f. Presentation of information and statements from individuals refuting the complaint.
- g. Time for silent reflection.
- h. Time for ethics committee to ask questions for clarification.
- i. Opportunity for those making the complaint to respond.
- j. Opportunity for those refuting the complaint to respond.
- k. Time for silent reflection.
- l. Time for ethics committee to ask questions for clarification.
- m. Closing comments by those making the complaint.
- n. Closing comments by those refuting the complaint.
- o. Prayer for continuing guidance and comfort for those involved in this situation and for those who are given the responsibility to come to a decision.
- p. Executive session of the ethics committee. Deliberations and discussions are informal and not recorded or transcribed, with careful consideration given to the material

presented. However, the committee's findings and recommendations must be put into writing.

2. *Follow-up to the Meeting*

Following the meeting, the ethics committee carefully reviews and evaluates the information obtained in the review meeting. The ethics committee comes to agreement on its recommendations. It then promptly prepares a written report of its actions and recommendations. This report and all other documentation should be gathered into a permanent record of the case. Possible actions include . . .

a. Full exoneration.

A statement is placed in the minister's permanent file explaining what occurred. The district executive/minister and others, as appropriate, should meet with congregational leaders to determine how information will be shared with the congregation and to plan steps to restore confidence in pastoral leadership.

b. Exoneration, but with censure for poor judgment.

c. Substantiation of charges.

The ethics committee will substantiate the complaint if it determines that it is "more likely than not" that the charges are true.¹² Disciplinary action should reflect as much as possible the misconduct and circumstances of each particular case. Possible actions include one or more of the following:

- 1) Substantiation of charges with warning. Care should be given for outlining steps for appropriate counseling, mentoring, or restorative action.
- 2) Termination of ordination with possibility of reinstatement and continuing covenanted relationship with the ministry commission. The termination of ordination is for a period of time in order to implement a program to underscore the seriousness of the offense and to provide an opportunity for rehabilitation. Termination of ordination with the possibility of reinstatement must be approved by the district board. This action terminates the individual's ministerial privileges. Elements of a program with the goal of reinstatement into ministerial leadership may include one or more of the following:
 - a) Personal counseling/therapy by a professional approved by the committee or chosen by the minister from a referral list provided by the committee.
 - b) Voluntarily leaving ministerial service.
 - c) Payment or reimbursement of all or part of the costs of counseling/therapy for the aggrieved for a specified time period.
 - d) Career evaluation.
 - e) Early retirement.
 - f) Relevant educational experiences.
 - g) Peer support and supervision.
 - h) Leave of absence.
 - i) Other appropriate directives.
 - j) Once the program of restoration has been satisfactorily completed and an appropriate period of at least five to seven years has passed, reinstatement to

¹² See Glossary of Terms

ministerial leadership may be requested by the individual and may be granted by action of the district board.

- 3) Termination of ordination. This requires approval by the district board. In these cases, misconduct is so egregious that the person can be restored to the body but not restored to ministerial leadership.
 - 4) Termination of license. This requires action of the ministry commission or its designated representative. In these cases, misconduct is so egregious that the person can be restored to the body but not restored to ministerial leadership.
3. *Follow-up with the Accused*
The ethics committee is responsible for follow-up with the accused. Follow-up should include appropriate care and support of the minister and his/her family including opportunities for healing, reconciliation, and restoration into the body of Christ.
 4. *Follow-up with the Aggrieved*
The ethics committee on behalf of the district board is responsible for initiating ways for the church to offer ongoing support and concern to the aggrieved for the purpose of healing and restoration.
 5. *Follow-up with the Congregation*
The district executive/minister works with the leadership of the congregation to assess what is needed for healing, reconciliation, and restoration in the congregation.

E. Concluding Matters

Disclosure

The process of healing for individuals, the congregation, and the wider church is enhanced through appropriate disclosure of information. At each step in the process, determination needs to be made of who needs to know and how much information should be shared.

In cases in which charges are judged to be unsubstantiated or false, the district executive/minister, in consultation with the assessment team and the accused, decides how much information should be shared with the board chair and moderator and whether any information should be shared with its members. Depending on the individual circumstances, leadership needs to carefully weigh what, and how much, information will be disclosed. For example, if rumors are circulating, it may be helpful to state that the case has been investigated and a determination made.

In cases in which the assessment team finds that there is reasonable cause to believe misconduct occurred, disclosure at that point to at least the leadership of the congregation is almost always appropriate. The district executive/minister, with the assistance of the assessment team, will inform the board chair and/or moderator of the accused's congregation and make plans to meet the leadership to discuss notifying the congregation as a whole. At that meeting, those present assess the situation. If the accused is granted a leave of absence, the process for disclosure will be one of informing the congregation that a complaint of

ethical misconduct has been made and explaining the process that is underway. The congregation should be made aware that congregational leadership will be kept informed as the case develops. Again, every effort should be made to ensure appropriate confidentiality for all parties involved.

Following the review meeting, the district executive/minister reports the results of the meeting to the congregational board chair and/or moderator. If the accused was exonerated, the decision needs to be made as to how much, if any, information is to be shared with the congregation. If complaints were substantiated, a plan of disclosure to the congregation should be established.

Experience has demonstrated that where disclosure is made to the congregation, the healing within the congregation is better realized, even though the initial trauma may be greater. Also, disclosure may help other victims of misconduct to be found. Disclosure should not involve revealing the identity of the aggrieved or facts that would make the aggrieved readily identifiable, unless he/she specifically requests to be identified.

Decisions as to how complaints or admissions of ethical misconduct by a minister should be disclosed to the congregation must be made on a case-by-case basis. Experience has shown the usefulness of sending letters to the membership, holding congregational meetings and educational forums, and involving professional counselors. It is important that shared information be as accurate and as factual as possible.

Decisions regarding disclosure to the wider church and the community should be made in consultation with the denominational Office of Ministry, Communications, and Congregational Life Ministries, following denominational guidelines.

Records

Statements about any complaints of misconduct are to be documented and recorded in the minister's personnel file. Such statements should include the facts relevant to the complaint and an explanation of how the complaint was resolved. If the complaint has been unsubstantiated, the statement may be removed from the minister's file after five years.

The district executive/minister maintains the records while an inquiry is in process, and such records shall be kept confidential. All records of cases, regardless of the outcome, are to be kept indefinitely and considered confidential.

Copies of the primary documents of a case are to be kept in the minister's permanent personnel file. When a decision is made for the ordination to be "terminated with the possibility of reinstatement," the personnel file stays in the district as long as the individual continues in "covenant relationship" with the ministry commission of the district, working at a program of reinstatement. If during that time, the individual moves to another district, joining a congregation there, the individual's personnel file should be transferred to the new district. When the minister's ordination is terminated, the personnel file is sent to the Office of Ministry.

The district executive/minister is responsible for the safe-keeping of the “detailed file” of the case. When the minister or district executive/minister leaves the district, appropriate determination should be made about the “detailed file” of the case, in consultation with the executive director of ministry. Other than the district executive/minister, no participants in the proceedings may make any of the written records available to others.

Sharing Information

For purposes of placement, the executive director of ministry and district executives/ministers who have information regarding complaints of ethical misconduct must provide it to colleagues as they are assisting search committees in arranging interviews. This includes the confidential summary of any complaint, the minister’s statement(s), and a statement of the district’s disposition of the complaint. If the complaint has been unsubstantiated, after five years the minister may omit any reference to a former complaint on the pastoral profile.

When a congregation’s search committee indicates an interest in interviewing a candidate, decisions must be made about what is to be shared from the minister’s personnel file. What is shared will depend on the circumstances. If the district executive/minister is unsure about what should be shared, the decision should be made in consultation with other appropriate persons, such as the ministry commission chair or the executive director of ministry.

Appeal

The aggrieved, the accused, or the congregation through its official board has the right to appeal whether the process was followed and conducted fairly by the ethics committee or district board.

- In cases decided and implemented by the ethics committee, written appeal may be made to the executive committee of the district board within thirty (30) days of the ethics committee’s action. The district board chair and/or moderator are responsible for overseeing the appeal process in consultation with the Office of Ministry. Executive committees shall handle all appeals within 45 days of receipt. In the meantime, the action will be implemented.
- In cases involving termination of license by the ministry commission or ordination by the district board, written appeal may be made to Standing Committee of Annual Conference within thirty (30) days of the district action. Annual Conference officers are responsible for overseeing the appeal process in consultation with the Office of Ministry and the denomination’s risk management officer. Standing Committee will hear such appeals received forty-five (45) days prior to its next regularly scheduled meeting. If the appeal is received less than forty-five (45) days prior, it will be heard at a subsequent meeting of Standing Committee. In the meantime, the action will be implemented.

The task of those hearing an appeal is not to repeat the deliberative process of the committee, but to review and evaluate whether or not the disciplinary process was properly carried out.

V. Additional Recommendations

A. To Annual Conference Delegates:

1. That Standing Committee delegates receive training within their districts in the process outlined in this paper to prepare for appeals that might come before them.
2. That congregational delegates ensure that this report receives attention and study within their congregations so that all members of the church are aware of the content and process of this paper.

B. To Individuals and Congregations:

1. That attention be given to providing spiritual and emotional support for ordained and licensed ministers. A mutually defined position description, ample salary, benefits, and continuing education and Sabbath rest opportunities are also critical.
2. That local church bodies charged with pastoral relations become familiar with this paper.
3. That congregations take measures to ensure a smooth transition when there is a change of pastors.
4. That individuals or congregations not use the process outlined in this paper as a tool to initiate termination of the pastor when there is no ethical misconduct.
5. That congregations be required to engage in a study of the Congregational Ethics paper prior to submitting a congregational profile, and at least once every five years during extended pastorates.

C. To Ministerial Leaders:

1. That ministerial leaders pay attention to their own well-being, including spiritual disciplines, self-care, life-long learning, and developing networks of support beyond the ministry setting,
2. That ministerial leaders attend a mandatory training on ministerial ethics once every five years within the ordination renewal timetable.

D. To Districts:

1. That credentialing committees become familiar with this paper.
2. That candidates for ministry and ordained ministers coming from other denominations be required to study and affirm the Code of Ethics.

3. That credentialing committees require that each candidate sign the statement that he/she has not been involved with nor charged with ethical misconduct at any time, or that, if charged, has been cleared of such charges or has achieved reconciliation.
4. That districts provide training in ministerial ethics at least once every five years, within the ordination renewal period.
5. That the district ministry commission designate and provide training for the assessment team, ethics committee, ministry commission, district board, and Standing Committee delegates, a minimum of once every three years.
6. That district ministry commissions and ethics committees be provided adequate financial and personnel resources.
7. That districts consider establishing a revolving fund to provide counseling for victims abused by clergy, or provide for counseling by making competent therapists available to victims.

E. To the Council of District Executives:

1. That the council encourages districts to follow the procedures in this paper in order to provide consistency throughout the denomination.
2. That arrangements be made for careful training of their members so that they can skillfully counsel with individuals and congregations in the various aspects of ethics included in this paper, and so that they can guide inquiries and disciplinary processes toward eventual healing of brokenness.

F. To Bethany Theological Seminary and Other Clergy Training Programs:

1. That Bethany Theological Seminary offer training in ministerial ethics, including the material contained in this paper.
2. That the clergy training programs of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership require full knowledge of this paper.

G. To the Ministry Office of the Church of the Brethren:

1. That the Office of Ministry in cooperation with the Ministry Advisory Council of the Annual Conference and Council of District Executives take measures to ensure that there is greater consistency in requirements for credentialing and the ordination renewal process.

2. That copies of this paper, including appropriate translations, be made available to all Brethren-related institutions and agencies and, upon request, to any church member, church officer, employee, or volunteer.
3. That the Office of Ministry and the Council of District Executives work toward greater consistency in the utilization of the congregational ethics paper as part of the pastoral placement process.

VI. Glossary of Terms

Conflict of Interest:

A **conflict of interest** is a situation in which someone in a position of trust has competing professional or personal interests. Such competing interests can make it difficult to fulfill duties impartially. Even if there is no evidence of improper actions, a conflict of interest can create an appearance of impropriety that can undermine confidence in the ability of that person to use his/her position with proper ethics. A conflict of interest can exist even if no unethical or improper act results from it. This is seen as a “conflict of roles” where the interest of one’s self differs from that of others.

District Board

District board is used consistently in this document to refer to the district’s leadership structure. Many districts now have leadership teams or use other terms to define this group.

Dual Relationship

A dual relationship is one in which a person attempts to fulfill two roles with the same person—for example, to have a professional and a personal relationship with the same person.

Examples of dual relationships in ministry:

- a minister who seeks financial advice from one of his/her parishioners who is a financial planner
- a minister who becomes a close family friend of a family in the congregation
- a minister whose child’s teacher is a member of the congregation
- a minister whose physician is a member of the congregation

Some dual relationships are inevitable, because a minister often lives, works, and socializes in the same community. The minister is responsible for monitoring dual relationships to maintain the integrity of the ministerial relationship and ensure that parishioners are not harmed.

Fiduciary Responsibility

“**Fiduciary**” means “held in trust for another”; its root is the Latin verb for “to trust,” the same root as the root of “faith.” It is a term that has traditionally been used legally to describe the responsibility of professionals to act in the best interests of their clients. A fiduciary responsibility for someone is a responsibility for safeguarding the interests and well-being of

that person, for protecting that person and his/her interest against any danger, threat, or harm. See the Code of Ethics section on fiduciary responsibility for examples.

A fiduciary responsibility may derive from a contract or role. It has both a legal and an ethical dimension. Ministerial leaders have a fiduciary responsibility. This is both an ethical responsibility that derives from the ministerial role as well as a covenantal responsibility that derives from their ordination and hiring.

Ministry Commission

Ministry Commission is used consistently in this document to refer to the district's duly appointed committee charged with the responsibility for carrying out the calling and credentialing responsibilities of the district.

More Likely Than Not

This is a legal phrase defined as there being a better than 50-percent chance that the misconduct happened.

Proselytize

Proselytizing within the Christian community is to intentionally induce or cause someone to leave their current church in order to move their membership to one's own church.

Reasonable Cause to Believe

Reasonable cause to believe is to have knowledge of facts which, although not amounting to direct knowledge, would cause a reasonable person, knowing the same facts, to reasonably conclude the same thing.

CHAPTER VI

PROPERTY HOLDINGS AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES ¹

I. In the Congregation

All references to property in this manual shall include real and personal property unless otherwise specified. Personal property shall include such items as the contents and equipment of buildings; official records of organizations, such as minutes, membership, statistical and financial records, and publications; and materials collected on behalf of the congregation or district documenting its program and activities. Records created by people elected, appointed, or employed to act on behalf of the organization are the property of the organization, not of the individual.

Many congregations own property to aid in teaching and disseminating the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the beliefs, practices, and doctrines of the Church of the Brethren as set forth and promulgated from time to time by Annual Conference. For the sake of uniformity and continuity in the ownership of Church of the Brethren property, all property held by or for the use of a congregation, whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, an unincorporated association or any other capacity, and whether the property is used in programs of the congregation or retained for the production of income, is held, in trust, nevertheless, for the use and benefit of the Church of the Brethren.

A. TRUST RELATIONSHIP

All property owned by a congregation, whether incorporated or unincorporated, shall be held, in trust, for the use and benefit and in conformity with practices and beliefs of the Church of the Brethren. All documents shall conform to the legal requirements of the various states, territories, or other possessions of the United States or foreign countries.

B. GIFTS, BEQUESTS, ETC.

When a congregation receives real or personal property by gift or bequest, it shall be the duty of the congregation to take title to same and hold the property, in trust, as in the case of property purchased by the congregation.

C. RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS

Restrictive covenants should be contained in all deeds of conveyances, as follows:

1. That if the property ever ceases to be used in accordance with the provisions set forth in this chapter, or in cases where the congregation has been closed or the property abandoned, the district conference may, upon recommendation of the district board, assert title to the property and have the same vested in the district board, in trust, for the district.
2. That before a legal title to the property can be conveyed, consent of the district board must first be secured, and the deed of conveyance must have affixed thereto the signatures and acknowledgments of its executive officers.

D. TRANSFER OF CONGREGATIONAL PROPERTY

1. Voluntary Transfer

When it is deemed wise or advantageous to a congregation to sell or otherwise dispose of real property, the documents of conveyance shall be executed by the appropriate persons authorized under its form of organization, in their trust capacity, under the direction of the congregation's board, with the consent of the district board. Where the title to church property is held by legal trustees, they shall promptly execute all appropriate documents of conveyance when directed by the congregation. Legal trustees holding title to congregational property shall serve at the will of the congregation.

2. Closed or Abandoned Church Property

When assuming responsibility for and control of property of a congregation that has been closed or abandoned, the district board shall give aid and counsel to the congregation. If a congregation is closed or its property has been abandoned by the removal of membership to other places, by death or for any reason, or otherwise ceases to exist or function as a congregation of the Church of the Brethren, any property that it may have shall be within the control of the district board of the district in which the church is located. The property shall be held for the designated purposes or disposed of in such manner as the district board, in its sole discretion, may direct.

3. Disorganizing or Withdrawing Congregation

If a congregation is disorganized by the district pursuant to the powers granted in chapter IV (I.C.16.d.) of this manual, or if it attempts by either majority or unanimous vote to withdraw from the Church of the Brethren district in which it is located or otherwise ceases to exist or function as a congregation of the Church of the Brethren, any property that it may have

shall be within the control of the district board and may be held for the designated purposes or sold or disposed of in such a manner as the district board, in its sole discretion, may direct. When assuming responsibility for the control of disorganizing or withdrawing congregations, the district board shall give aid and counsel to the congregation.

4. Dividing Congregation

The relationship of a congregation to a district of the Church of the Brethren can be severed only by action of district conference. If there is a division within the membership of a particular congregation, the district board, through the appropriate district commission or committee, shall make every effort to effect a reconciliation within the congregation or divide into separate congregations within the Church of the Brethren.

5. Congregational Loan Obligations to Other Brethren Entities²

In the event a local congregation obtains a real estate loan, or a guarantee or a co-signature on same, from another Brethren entity (e.g., Church of the Brethren, Inc., district, a partner congregation), the following procedures are recommended:

- a. The parties should execute all documents appropriate in the jurisdiction for establishing a loan and for providing proper security for it in favor of the creditor/guarantor/co-signer. Assistance of legal or appropriate financial counsel is strongly urged.
- b. Schedules and procedures for regular payment should be documented.
- c. Key representatives of each side should meet prior to closing the arrangement, carefully review the reciprocal rights and obligations, and examine the scenarios for how deterioration in payment performance will be handled.
- d. In the event payment performance does lag, the parties should meet promptly to explore alternative or remedial measures. In the event of clear default, the parties may wish to utilize the dispute resolution procedure set forth below in "Unresolved Disputes," although neither party shall be deemed to have an absolute right to demand such.
- e. While the parties are encouraged to resolve any default in as reconciling a manner as possible, nothing in this paragraph shall be construed as

abridging the right of the creditor/guarantor/co-signer to exercise its full rights under controlling civil law of the jurisdiction as it may, in its sole discretion, find necessary.

6. District's Rights to Congregational Property

The rights described in this polity for the district board to take control or to approve the voluntary transfer of congregational property shall be exercised solely for the purpose of assuring that the property or its proceeds are not diverted from use for the Church of the Brethren and shall not imply a right on the part of the district board to otherwise affect or control the use of the property by a congregation of the Church of the Brethren.

7. Unresolved Disputes

Annual Conference Standing Committee or officers shall appoint a dispute resolution committee. This committee shall be composed of (a) a Mission and Ministry Board member; (b) a Church of the Brethren, Inc. staff member; (c) a district executive/minister; (d) and (e) two additional people not holding any of the above capacities to be chosen by the Church of the Brethren, Inc. These individuals should preferably have skills and understanding in the bringing about of reconciliation through negotiating and mediating the differences. If any matters in this section are not satisfactorily resolved between the district board and the congregation, they may be referred to the dispute resolution committee.

The committee shall function under the following guidelines:

- a. Upon written request from a district conference, district board, or any member of a congregation involved in a question related to the ownership of property, the committee shall assume responsibility to gather information and render a decision in the property dispute.
- b. Upon receiving a request to act, the committee shall, within ninety days, hold a hearing at a neutral site in the district where the dispute is located. All parties in interest shall be given notice of the hearing and shall be permitted to appear and give testimony.
- c. The committee shall establish a procedural guideline for conducting the hearing and make these guidelines available to all parties.
- d. If the hearing is not completed at the initial meeting, it shall be continued for a period not in excess of sixty days. Upon completion of the hearing,

VI. Property Holdings and Financial Resources

the committee shall render a decision within sixty days. Notice of the decision shall be given to all parties.

- e. The decision of the committee shall be binding on all parties.

E. RETURN OF PROPERTY TO CONGREGATIONS

In cases where the aforementioned restrictive covenant providing for the divestiture of title to property owned by a congregation results in the title being vested in the district board, in trust, it is understood that this action is taken only as a means of preserving property for the purposes of the Church of the Brethren. This property has been purchased and developed by consecrated effort, and in many cases at great sacrifice, by individuals who have been loyal to the principles of the Church of the Brethren. If the district board determines that circumstances warrant, the district board may return the property to the congregation. If the district board determines that circumstances do not warrant the return of the property to the congregation, the district board shall use or dispose of the property in the best interests of the Church of the Brethren.

F. CONGREGATIONAL DOCUMENTS

The articles of incorporation, charter, constitution, bylaws, deeds to real property, and other governing papers of the congregation, or copies of them, shall be kept at the district office.

When there is a question as to the sufficiency of legal title or other records, the congregation shall request aid from the district board to secure the assistance of competent legal counsel to remedy the discrepancies. The documents of congregations shall conform to the restrictive covenants set forth in I.C. of this chapter.

II. In the District

The title to all district property should be held by the district board, in trust, for the teaching and dissemination of the gospel of Jesus Christ, according to the beliefs, practices, and doctrines of the Church of the Brethren, as set forth and promulgated from time to time by Annual Conference.

A. GIFTS, BEQUESTS, ETC.

When the district receives property by gift or bequest, it shall be the duty of the

district board to take title to the same and hold the property, in trust, as in case of property purchased by the district.

B. DISTRICT PROPERTY

When it is deemed wise or advantageous to the district to buy, sell, or otherwise dispose of real property, the conveyance shall be executed by the district board, in its trust capacity, with the approval of district conference.

C. CLOSED OR ABANDONED CONGREGATIONAL PROPERTY

When a church has been closed or the church property abandoned for any reason, the district, through the district board, shall intervene in the matter and take title to the property. The district shall hold the property, in trust, for the benefit of the Church of the Brethren. The property shall be used or disposed of pursuant to the guidelines in I.D. of this chapter.

D. RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS

Restrictive covenants shall be contained in all deeds of conveyance as follows:

1. That if any property of the district ever ceases to be used in accordance with the provisions set forth in I.D.3. of this chapter or abandoned, the said property shall vest in and revert to the Church of the Brethren Inc.
2. That before a legal title to the property can be conveyed, consent of the district conference must first be secured and the deed of conveyance must have affixed thereto the signatures and acknowledgments of the moderator and the clerk of district conference, in addition to the duly authorized signatures and acknowledgments of the members of the district board.

E. DISTRICT AND CONGREGATIONAL DOCUMENTS

The district shall maintain a records file including the district's articles of incorporation, charter, constitution, bylaws, deeds to real property, and other governing papers. The district shall also maintain a records file for congregational records and titles. When there is a question as to the sufficiency of legal title or other records and legal counsel is needed to clarify the records, the district board shall secure the assistance of competent legal counsel to remedy the discrepancy.

VI. Property Holdings and Financial Resources

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1. 1987 Minutes (1985–1989), “Revisions of Brethren Polity,” 492-495. Based on 1947 Minutes (1945–1954), “Brotherhood Organization,” 75-79.
 2. 1997 Minutes (1995–2000), “Property and Stewardship Issues,” 589-590.

CHAPTER VII

CONGREGATIONS, DISTRICTS, AND CONFERENCES OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES AND PUERTO RICO ¹

I. Global Structure

A. PREAMBLE AND DEFINITIONS

1. The purpose of these polity guidelines is to enable the development of the Church of the Brethren as a global church. By this is meant the extension of the Church of the Brethren witness around the globe and the creation of close partnerships with emerging Brethren groups that enables two-way mission—and the mutual challenge and encouragement that this brings. It is assumed that such efforts will lead to the establishment of autonomous Brethren groups in different areas of the world; these should be seen as branches from the same vine whose ultimate rootage is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The polity that follows is intended to provide guidance so that the Brethren witness may be carried out with integrity and accountability, while allowing for a high degree of flexibility to accommodate cultural and social patterns, special needs, and problems not yet identified. It is also intended that there should be active participation by the new Brethren, new congregations, and international districts. Covenantal relationships with other church bodies and principles of indigenization, empowerment, and mutuality are to be honored in every situation.

2. As used in this document, these terms are defined as follows:
 - a. *New Brethren* are people residing outside the United States and Puerto Rico who wish to be members of the Church of the Brethren. These people are considered full Brethren, with their membership held in their congregation or fellowship, and eventually in the international district where they are located.
 - b. *New congregations* are congregations of new Brethren outside the United States and Puerto Rico. Such congregations could eventually cluster to form international districts.

- c. *International districts* are clusters of congregations of new Brethren initially recognized as districts and announced as such by US Annual Conference Standing committee. International districts will have the same kind of functions and responsibilities in carrying out their US counterparts. Relationships with the US Annual Conference will be maintained by exchanges of observers and visitors.
- d. *Regional conferences* are formed as districts expand their membership and activities and consequently wish to achieve a greater degree of autonomy from the US Annual Conference (itself a “regional conference” according to this terminology). The term “regional conference” is not intended to require that particular name, but is a possible title for the emerging structure. A regional conference might be formed by an association of districts located in a geographic region outside the US, such as “The Church of the Brethren in the Caribbean” or “The Church of the Brethren in Nigeria.” It might also be formed by association of another Christian body with the Church of the Brethren. A regional conference will organize itself in the way that facilitates its mission and ministry.
- e. *Global church* means to imply the spiritual community of Brethren regional conferences from different parts of the world. As regional conferences are formed as autonomous bodies, they should aim to maintain close fraternal relationships with other regional conferences; seek to be of one mind with other regional conferences as to matters of faith and belief; participate in periodic world assemblies of the Church of the Brethren; and, when appropriate, cooperate with other regional conferences for activities and programs such as disaster relief, leadership training, church planting, and ecumenical activities.

B. ESTABLISHMENT AND RECOGNITION OF NEW CONGREGATIONS

1. When there is a proposal to evangelize or to plant new congregations outside the US and Puerto Rico, those projects not initiated by the Church of the Brethren, Inc. shall be directed to the Mission and Ministries Planning Council (MMPC).
2. The Church of the Brethren should invest its spiritual and financial resources in mission projects that hold the potential for meaningfully extending the Brethren witness. All relevant data pertaining to the proposal should be considered.

Where the proposal involves an “adoption” of an existing fellowship, the following considerations shall also guide:

- a. The compatibility of the group and leadership with the beliefs, ideals, and practices of the Church of the Brethren.
 - b. Whether there are sufficient number of households and strength of leadership to maintain an ongoing program of worship, nurture, fellowship, and service.
3. Parameters of each mission partnership shall be defined by consultation and covenant prior to any fundraising. All fundraising shall be coordinated by the Church of the Brethren, Inc.
 4. Projects approved by the Church of the Brethren, Inc., including those recommended by the Mission and Ministries Planning Council, shall be reported to Standing Committee at its next meeting. Until such time as these should develop into autonomous national Brethren bodies, they will be reported to Standing Committee on a yearly basis. They shall be listed in the Church of the Brethren Yearbook (its alphabetical order by nation).

II. Leadership and Ministry Training

- A. Each mission project that is launched should have capable leadership on hand to give direction to work and witness. Ideally this would be indigenous leadership, with a mentor who has knowledge of and commitment to Brethren history, heritage, and polity. The appropriate Church of the Brethren, Inc. staff shall provide oversight for the project and facilitate open communication. In cases where there are multiple sponsors supporting a project, it is important that the role of the Church of the Brethren, Inc. staff be respected in order to prevent contradictory directions or mixed messages to the new congregations or their leadership.
- B. A plan for calling and recognizing people who will serve in set-apart ministry in each mission project shall be a part of the final proposal presented to the Mission and Ministries Planning Council and the Church of the Brethren, Inc. This plan shall remain in effect until the time when the mission project shall develop into an autonomous national Brethren body. The following steps shall be taken in granting ministerial status in the Church of the Brethren:
 1. An interview by a committee to be appointed by the director of Ministry and the director of Global Mission Partnerships, to be conducted in the

language of the candidate. When feasible the committee shall include representation from the mission project. At least one member of this committee shall be an ordained minister of the Church of the Brethren chosen for depth of experience and knowledge of ministerial polity and practice.

2. Licensing shall be preceded by at least one year of preparation and training except for cases involving transfer of ordination from a recognized denomination.
 3. Ordination or transfer of ordination shall follow the completion of the training course outlined below and shall not occur until at least one year has elapsed since licensing.
 4. A service of licensing or ordination to the set-apart ministry shall be conducted by Church of the Brethren, Inc. staff with assistance of others as appropriate.
 5. All licensings and ordinations shall be reported to the Church of the Brethren, Inc. and Standing Committee of Annual Conference.
 6. All ministers, ordained and licensed, shall be listed by country in the Church of the Brethren Yearbook until such time that indigenous structures are recognized.
- C. Training shall be provided for people called to set-apart ministry and other leadership positions in the new congregations. The course of study shall include Brethren history, heritage, and polity. Curriculum materials and instruction shall be offered in the language of the area. The outline and resources for the course of study shall be approved by a committee, which shall include the director of Ministry and the director of Global Mission Partnerships. This course shall at least approximate the Three-Year Reading Course. The cost of the training shall be included in the budget for the mission project. Ordination shall not occur before completion of the prescribed educational program.
- D. Issues of accountability, discipleship, and reconciliation shall be handled according to guidelines developed by the director of Ministry in consultation with the director of Global Mission Partnerships. These guidelines shall be subject to review by the Standing Committee of Annual Conference, which shall be the final arbiter concerning these.

- E. It will be necessary to make provision for variations and exceptions from denominational polity to accommodate special social, cultural, and other concerns. However, it is intended that even when exceptions and variations occur, denominational polity should be followed as closely as possible.

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1. 1998 Minutes (1995–1999), “World Mission Philosophy and Global Church Structure,” 765-768. See also 1993 Minutes (1990–1994), “Structure to Deal with Global Denomination,” 612-615.

CHAPTER VIII

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This chapter is like an appendix to the previous polity. *Policies* and *procedures* do not fit the definition of polity, but are generally accepted by the denomination as standards by which we abide and operate. This listing is not meant to be exhaustive. As additional policies are identified, they will be added to the chapter.

Annual Conference Nominating and Election Procedures

Annual Conference delegates elect persons to significant leadership positions in the denomination, including moderator-elect, Annual Conference secretary, one-third of the members of the boards of Annual Conference agencies, and significant denominational committees. Nominations are received in the Annual Conference office between August 1 and December 1 for the positions that are open at the next Conference. Any member or group in the denomination can submit names for nominees. For each name submitted there must also be a signed form of consent by the nominee.

The Nominating Committee of Standing Committee reviews the nominee information forms in January and chooses four names for each vacant position. This preliminary ballot is distributed to current Standing Committee members, who then pare the ballot to two persons for each vacancy.

That ballot becomes the one submitted to Annual Conference delegates during the business session at the following Conference.

Brethren Tag Line and Logo

The Brethren “tag line”: *Doing the Work of Jesus: Simply, Peacefully, Together* and the Church of the Brethren logo are copyright items that are to be used only by Church of the Brethren congregations and recognized denominational groups. For more information about these identifying marks, contact the Church of the Brethren, Office of Interpretation, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

Controversial Issues

Annual Conference in 1988 adopted a procedure for dealing with “highly controversial issues” when such matters come before the Conference delegate body. That plan was revised in 2008 and adopted by the 2008 Annual Conference. When Standing Committee determines that an issue before Conference is potentially controversial, the SC can recommend that Conference use the procedure. The plan essentially calls for two years of dialogue and study of the issue before Annual Conference takes an action on the question. ¹

Council of District Executives

The Council of District Executives is an informal organization consisting of all of the district executives, both executives and associate executives, who meet twice or more a year to discuss common tasks and approaches, and to share concerns and joys about the denomination.

Funding Parity

The Annual Conference agencies and the denominational districts work together to coordinate

funding efforts among mutual constituents in the denomination. The emphasis is focused on how the church can be about its whole task. Congregations and individuals are encouraged to see all of the program agencies as being vital parts of the denominational ministry.

Honor Designated Giving

The Annual Conference agencies are all committed to honor the wishes of the individual donor or congregation in the designation of gifts for specific ministries.

Homosexuals and Ministry

The 2002 Annual Conference responded to a query regarding whether it is appropriate for districts to license and ordain persons to the ministry who have homosexual orientation by answering that “we consider it inappropriate to license or ordain to the Christian ministry any persons who are known to be engaging in homosexual practices, and will not recognize the licensing and ordaining of such persons in the Church of the Brethren.”²

Location of Denominational Facilities

While the denominational office facilities in Elgin, Ill., and the Brethren Service Center facilities in New Windsor are operated by the Church of the Brethren, Inc., and while the Bethany Theological Seminary facilities in Richmond, Ind., are maintained by the Bethany Board of Trustees, decisions to dispose of or relocate these facilities are brought to Annual Conference for ratification.

Moderator/Staff Honoraria Policy

The officers of Annual Conference and the staff members of Annual Conference agencies are available to districts and congregations in the denomination for workshops, information sharing, and other tasks related to their areas of responsibility, subject to mutual scheduling. Check with the appropriate agency, or the Annual Conference Office in the case of Annual Conference officers, regarding expectations related to the expenses of the leader’s transportation, meals and lodging.

Outdoor Education

The Church of the Brethren has long had a commitment to providing outdoor education to its members. This responsibility is designated as that of the individual districts that maintain and staff outdoor education facilities and camps. Most of the Brethren camps have separate incorporation and management teams. However, the denomination encourages support of outdoor education as part of its total ministry.

Pastors Salary Scale and Benefits

Annual Conference in 1985 formally organized the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee to recommend to congregations a pastors salary table and other benefits that would be standard for the compensation of pastors in the denomination. It is understood that all congregations should be endeavoring to meet the annual recommendations of this committee to have all pastors adequately employed.

Relationship of Colleges and Homes

The six Brethren colleges and universities and the numerous retirement and nursing homes of the denomination are independently governed but are considered very much a part of denominational mission and focus. Both the higher education institutions and the homes and hospital have a network of communication and collaboration that keeps them in contact with the denomination and with one another. The Association of Brethren Caregivers also facilitates the communication among the homes.

Relationship to Other Brethren Denominations

The Church of the Brethren continues to relate to the denominations who share a common history through Alexander Mack and the original Schwarzenau group. Many of those efforts have been extended by Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc., a group not organically related to denominational structure, but assured of the support of Annual Conference and its agencies. In 2002 Annual Conference adopted a resolution on the Brethren Church (Ashland) calling for forgiveness for actions that have divided the churches and expressing the desire to work with the Ashland Brethren “in Christ’s service wherever possible.” Subsequently, the Church of the Brethren and the Brethren Church (Ashland) held simultaneous annual conferences in Richmond, Va., July 12-16, 2008, in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the first Brethren baptisms in Schwarzenau.

¹ 1988 Minutes (1985-1989), “A Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues,” 674-681. 2009 Minutes, “A Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues,” 231-240.

² 2002 Minutes (2000-2004), “Query: Licensing/Ordination of Homosexual Persons to the Ministry in the Church of the Brethren,” 744-745.