



Church of the Brethren

May 2018

Though the Brethren as a group have existed for nearly three hundred years, we subscribe to no formal creed. We simply try to do what Jesus did. Jesus brought a message of life, love, and hope. But he offered much more than inspiring words: He understood that people's spiritual needs also include day-to-day human ones—food, health, rest, comfort, friendship, and unconditional acceptance. "I am the way," he told his followers. He showed them how to trust, how to care, and how to help. Steadily, lovingly, even radically, Jesus went about saving the world—by serving its people. Because we believe his message, we seek to do the same.

– Church of the Brethren Identity Pamphlet

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings to you in the name of Christ our Savior!

Once again I want to express my gratitude for the many ways your district and local congregations faithfully strive to live out the Gospel—to simply try to do what Jesus did. The vital ministries of our Church of the Brethren congregations, small to large, are at the heart of our Church. We should never diminish the essential role that each unique part of the body plays in our common ministry together.

It has been an exciting and challenging year for the Church of the Brethren. I have spent significant time working alongside the Leadership Team, district executives, and other leadership to address the challenges before the Church. While it is easy to be consumed by our struggles, I am heartened by the incredible ministries and programs that are happening in your congregations and districts, as well as denominationally. I count it a privilege to work with an incredible team of staff working on your behalf to help us all continue the work of Jesus.

Denominationally we have been working to refocus our efforts and adapt to meet the changing needs of the church. As has been reported via Newslines, there have been a number of staffing changes and ongoing internal structural adjustments. From an outside perspective these changes may appear cosmetic, but they represent a shift toward a more holistic approach to our ministries, grounded in mission and discipleship.

Our mission seeks to serve as Christ's presence in communities, establishing local churches, both in the United States and globally, that offer a cup of cold water to a thirsty world. Where there is conflict, it offers peace. Where there is suffering, it offers healing. Where there is hunger, it offers food. Where there is ignorance, education. Where there is despair, fellowship. Brethren mission stands as Christ's light in the world, challenging the Church to be more than a mere mouthpiece of the gospel, but also a doer of good works that demonstrate God's love to a desperate world.

Through our discipleship, we embrace Jesus' call to go make and be disciples, sharing our lives more fully with others. This emerging vision of discipleship has its emphasis on making and growing disciples, forming and developing leaders, and transforming communities. As we strive

Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.

1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, Illinois 60120 847-742-5100 800-323-8039 Fax: 847-742-6103

to support new and renewing congregations, we are recovering a Brethren way of evangelism, helping congregations to disciple new people—more **diverse people**, more **young people**.

While intentionally grounding our ministries in mission and discipleship, we are also assessing our efforts at intercultural ministries. We as a church must more fully live into the 2007 Annual Conference statement, “Separate No More; becoming a multi-racial church.” This must be more than just a commitment. It must become our desire. A desire not fabricated through advocacy but grown out of Christ’s commandment to love our neighbor. A desire that finds its grounding in mission and discipleship. I believe that we must begin nurturing this kind of desire in the hearts of others—into the heart of the church—because it is this kind of desire that will open us to new possibilities to thrive.

My friends, I do hope you believe that our struggle together is worthwhile. We are doing good ministries together locally in our congregations and districts, and denominationally. Our efforts at offering the cup of cold water model to the world that we are about another way of living—the way of Jesus. May we not forget that through our simple acts of service we, too, are working to save the world—in Jesus’ name.

I invite you to join me in another way of living.

Your servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Steele". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Steele" clearly distinguishable.

David Steele
General Secretary