

## 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 Leadership<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

The Church of the Brethren has two degrees<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

Additional biblical passages that are significant for Brethren ministerial leaders include . . .<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup>

---

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:<sup>8</sup>

- 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.<sup>9</sup>

## **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.<sup>10</sup>

## **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,<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

## 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>
- c. A ministerial file<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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 Ordination<sup>19</sup>**

- 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.<sup>20</sup>
- 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.<sup>21</sup>

---

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.<sup>22</sup>

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.<sup>23</sup>
- 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**<sup>24</sup>

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).<sup>25</sup>

---

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.<sup>26</sup>

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.<sup>27</sup>

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.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup>

---

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 file<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup>

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.<sup>33</sup>

## **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,<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup>
- 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.<sup>36</sup>

## 11. Receiving Ordained Ministers from Other Denominations<sup>37</sup>

- 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.<sup>38</sup> 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 positions<sup>39</sup> 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 Brethren<sup>40</sup> 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 committee<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup> 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 commission<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup>

#### 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.<sup>45</sup>

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.<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup>

## **16. Ministerial Status and Seconded Ministerial Leadership**<sup>48</sup>

“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.<sup>49</sup>

## II. Plural Non-salaried Ministry<sup>50</sup>

### 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 Speaker**<sup>51</sup>

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 Reconciliation<sup>52</sup>

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—2008<sup>1</sup>**

### **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,<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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 Leadership<sup>4</sup>
- 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

---

<sup>4</sup> 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 proselytize<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>
- 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.

---

<sup>5</sup> See Glossary of Terms

<sup>6</sup> See Guidelines Ministerial Service and Membership in a Former Parish, Office of Ministry, 2000

**Integrity of the Ministerial Relationship (Fiduciary Responsibility)<sup>7</sup>**

- 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.<sup>8</sup>
- 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.

---

<sup>7</sup> See Glossary of Terms

<sup>8</sup> 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 Board<sup>9</sup>**

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 Commission<sup>10</sup>**

---

<sup>9</sup> See Glossary of Terms

<sup>10</sup> 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 cause<sup>11</sup> 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

---

<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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

---

<sup>12</sup> 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.

*V. The Ministry*

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.