

Unfinished Business

1. Query: Doing Church Business

- Whereas** it has been very important in our heritage to seek the mind of Christ together in order to do it; 1
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- Whereas** *Robert's Rules of Order* work well in dealing with many issues, yet there are limits to their usefulness in dealing with some issues—particularly in the light of God's New Order (often referred to in Scriptures as the Kingdom of God); 4
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- Whereas** the secular *Robert's Rules of Order* tend to make issues adversarial, possibly even accentuating the extremes on a spectrum rather than drawing out voices more from the middle of a spectrum or encouraging both ends of a spectrum to do more affirming of each other; 8
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- Whereas** some have concerns that in a culture of democratic politics we may too often reflect worldly assumptions where majorities, money, and might make right, rather than reflecting Acts 15 and faithfully following Jesus in ways of mercy, justice, and peace; 13
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- Whereas** the 1988 Annual Conference adopted A STRUCTURAL FRAME- WORK FOR DEALING WITH STRONGLY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES which gives Standing Committee the responsibility to decide if a controversial query will be called a Special Response Query needing at least a two-year procedure, yet it seems not to have flexibility and practical helpfulness for some controversial issues; 18
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- Whereas** some issues are not resolved by legislative votes; 24
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- Whereas** the process of dealing with an issue is often as crucial as the issue itself; 26
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- Whereas** when we are not of one mind, we sometimes have difficulties respecting loyal persons and groups who hold minority positions; 28
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- Whereas** there are tensions at times between the consciences of individuals and some of the processes and actions of the wider church; and 31
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- Whereas** when persons or groups feel sinned against by processes and actions of Annual Conference it is unclear what steps might be taken by them and the people who stand with them; 34
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- Therefore** we the members of the Turkey Creek Church of the Brethren, gathered in council meeting on November 10, 2002, petition the Annual Conference through Northern Indiana District Conference to have a committee appointed to study how 38
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1 Annual Conference can enhance and model doing church business in the spirit of
2 Christ as we discern the mind of Christ in order to continue the work of Jesus.

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4 Hurbert L. Krull Sue Brock
5 Church Board Chair Church Board Secretary

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7 Beth Krull Timothy Sollenberger Morphew
8 Treasurer Moderator

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10 The Northern Indiana District conference, meeting at the Elkhart County
11 Fairgrounds, Goshen, Indiana, on September 19-20, 2003, approved the query for
12 consideration by Annual Conference in Charleston, West Virginia, in 2004.

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14 Carol Spicher Waggy, Northern Indiana District Moderator, 2003
15 Shirley Braner, Northern Indiana District Clerk, 2003

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17 **Action of the 2004 Annual Conference:** The delegates approved the recommenda-
18 tion from Standing Committee that the query be adopted *and that Annual*
19 *Conference elect a committee of five to answer the query and report back to the 2005*
20 *Annual Conference.* Elected to the committee were: Joe Detrick, Matt Guynn,
21 Verdena Lee, Dale Posthumus, and David Shetler.

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24 **Study Committee: Doing Church Business**

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27 **Progress Report 2005**

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30 The query from the 2004 Annual Conference requests “a committee appointed to
31 study how Annual Conference can enhance and model doing church business in the
32 spirit of Christ as we discern the mind of Christ in order to continue the work of
33 Jesus.” The delegates approved the recommendation from Standing Committee that
34 the query be adopted and that Annual Conference elect a committee of five to
35 answer the query and report back to the 2005 Annual Conference. Elected to the
36 committee were: Joe Detrick, Matt Guynn, Verdena Lee, Dale Posthumus, and
37 David Shetler.

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40 The committee gathered for their first meeting September 30 - October 2, 2004 at
41 the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Illinois. Dave Shetler was
42 called as chair and Matt Guynn as scribe. Through times of worship, review, dis-
43 cussion and study, the committee came to recognize that to adequately study the
44 query, to gain the counsel and input of the denomination and to prepare a report
45 with recommendations, that an additional year of work will be needed. At the time
of the writing of this progress report, the committee does have several additional
meetings scheduled and has prepared an outline to complete the task, including a
hearing scheduled for this Annual Conference.

The committee anticipates presenting a full report to the delegates at the 2006 Annual Conference and thereby requests the delegates of the 2005 Annual Conference receive this progress report.
Joe Detrick
Matt Guynn
Verdena Lee
Dale Posthumus
David Shetler

Action of the 2005 Annual Conference: Annual Conference received the 2005 report of the Doing Church Business study committee and granted the committee an additional year of study.

Report to the 2006 Annual Conference

Response

Introduction

The query from the 2004 Annual Conference requested that a committee be “appointed to study how Annual Conference can enhance and model doing church business in the spirit of Christ as we discern the mind of Christ in order to continue the work of Jesus.” The delegates approved the recommendation from Standing Committee that the query be adopted and that Annual Conference elect a committee of five to answer the query. Elected to the committee were Joe Detrick, Matt Guynn, Verdena Lee, Dale Posthumus, and David Shetler.

The committee called Dave Shetler as chair and Matt Guynn as scribe through a discernment process. The committee’s work took place in face-to-face meetings and conference calls, including times of worship, review, discussion and study.

The committee came to recognize that to adequately study the query, to gain the counsel and input of the denomination and to prepare a report with recommendations, an additional year of work would be needed. The 2005 Annual Conference granted the additional year to complete the task.

The committee recognized the awesomeness of this assignment and approached the work in an attitude of prayer, seeking together the guidance and wisdom of the Spirit in responding to the query. The study of Scripture and consideration of our heritage were included in our preparation of this paper. The committee also sought to discern the mind of Christ in hearing from the denomination through listening sessions, surveys, and interviews. The paper is organized in several sections: Scriptural Reflection; History of Decision-Making and Brethren Heritage; What We Heard (in surveys and interviews); Conclusions and Observations (our summary of findings); Response & Recommendations; Final Remarks; and Recommended Reading. The committee offers this paper for consideration by the 2006 Annual Conference.

1 **Scriptural Reflection**

2 Throughout the history of the Church of the Brethren, scripture has been a guiding
3 and grounding element in faith and practice. In the process of discernment,
4 Scripture continues to be a guiding and grounding element for us today. The Spirit
5 of Jesus has much to teach us about community, discernment, and guidance through
6 Scripture.

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8 Mentioned in the query itself, Acts 15 has many implications for doing church busi-
9 ness. Faced with a difficult issue, the early church came together for prayer, dia-
10 logue, debate, discernment and decision-making. Believers spent significant time
11 listening to one another on the issue, not in order to win an argument, but to listen
12 for the voice of the Holy Spirit for guidance in building up the church. There were
13 elements of worship in the discernment time: moments of prayer and moments of
14 silence, celebrations of joy, telling the stories of God at work in and through them.
15 As they sought the mind of Christ, they listened to those deemed wise and respect-
16 ed in their midst. When all had been taken into account, they reached a decision
17 “which seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (v. 28) and shared their discern-
18 ment in written form with the rest of the church. Acts 15 provides a framework and
19 a pattern for our doing church business, for discernment, which has been incorpo-
20 rated into this paper and the recommendations of this committee.

21
22 In our continuing study of scripture on the issue of discernment and decision-mak-
23 ing, the committee was also led to scriptures that not only describe how the church
24 of Acts made decisions, but the spirit in which those decisions were made.
25 Philippians 2:1-11 speaks of our having the same mind and attitude of Jesus in our
26 relationships with one another. Being transformed and living up to ethical standards
27 in our relationships is the message of Romans 12. 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 admonish-
28 es us to be mature in our faith, seeking God's wisdom in order that we might know
29 the mind of Christ, thus being empowered to be a community able to make deci-
30 sions in a spiritual rather than human fashion. Passing judgment on one another is
31 not to be the way of the Christian community, according to Romans 14:10-13, 19.
32 We leave the judging to God so that we might “pursue what makes for peace and for
33 mutual upbuilding” (v. 19). Jesus also addresses judging and self-righteousness in
34 Matthew 7:1-5. We are called to use good judgment without being judgmental.
35 1 Corinthians 12-14 speaks of our being gifted for service to one another and the
36 church, working together for the strengthening of the body while being led by the
37 “more excellent way” of love. Growing in grace, love, and faith is the substance of
38 Ephesians 4:1-16. As we exhibit growth in grace, practice love in our relationships,
39 and experience faith in the One “who is above all and through all and in all,” the
40 work and ministry of Jesus continues, growing and thriving in the Body. The
41 church is built up and God is glorified as we love and respect each other and recog-
42 nize that we all have been gifted by the God of grace.

43
44 Ultimately, we turn to the words of Jesus as we seek to be faithful in our relation-
45 ships, discernment, and decision-making. Jesus clearly instructs us to go to each

other for conversation and dialogue in the pattern of Matthew 18. But above all, Jesus tells us that love for God and love for each other are the greatest and guiding commandments for everything else: all relationships, all discernment, and all decision-making (Matthew 22:34-40).

We believe that through the power, wisdom and presence of the Holy Spirit, God still speaks to us through the Scriptures. God offers guidance and direction through the Word as we seek a discernment process that provides a way of entering into and honoring respectful, loving relationships and at the same time allows us to discover the mind of Christ for the issues we face. Adhering to the greatest commandments as defined by Jesus, this paper and the recommendations encourage us to listen to one another and to speak to one another in love as we discern through prayer, Bible study, preaching, and visions that which Jesus would have us be and do.

History of Decision-Making and Brethren Heritage

The teaching of Christ which encourages us to love God and neighbor, including even our enemies, has been the basis of a sense of community among Christians. The early church made an effort to consider the thoughts of the community, as exhibited in Acts 15, as it worked through a controversial issue of the day, being at all times led by the Holy Spirit.

The first Brethren understood Scripture leading them to promote a community of mutuality and accountability as an expression of the heart of Christ's love. Esteeming others higher than self, and placing an emphasis on the body of believers, the first Brethren drew lots to specify who would baptize Alexander Mack in order to avoid status or position as they entered the Eder River in 1708. Love Feast became a way to cultivate unity among the Brethren through visits by deacons and community discernment regarding conflict and conciliation. At a point early in the development of Annual Conference, Love Feast was observed as a part of opening worship and attendees were encouraged to cultivate a heart for discernment of the mind of Christ. Other practices of the Brethren set us apart from a secular form of accountability in relating to one another. Practices such as the deacon visit and mutual aid still leave their imprint on our communities today.

In early Brethren congregations, local elders and bishops were trusted to determine what was best for a community. They discerned the moving of the Holy Spirit within the context of a rapidly growing country. The unity of faith was maintained by face-to-face dialogue and care for one another as the family of God.

As the church grew, large annual meetings were encouraged when church leaders sensed a need for centralized fellowship to maintain unity. During the annual gathering, there were opportunities to address weighty concerns in the company of like-minded Christians. At times this involved deep division, disagreement, and rancor, but the context remained a common search for the mind of Christ.

1 Brethren thought and discernment have prevailed against the tide of simple major-
2 ity rule in society for almost three centuries. Eventually, the common use of parlia-
3 mentary procedures of the eighteenth century influenced the Brethren to elect a
4 clerk for the annual meetings. The role of the clerk was similar to the moderator of
5 today. Yet discernment continued to be guided by a desire to reflect the sense of the
6 entire gathered body.

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8 Henry Kurtz, the translator and editor of the first collection of Annual Meeting
9 Minutes, became the clerk of the Annual Meeting in the mid-1800s. He was instru-
10 mental in creating the Annual Conference as we know it today. After studying the
11 Yearly Meeting conducted by Quakers in London, which had been practiced since
12 1666, Elder Kurtz suggested seven principles to guide the formation of Brethren
13 annual meetings:

- 14
- 15 1) Simplicity
- 16 2) Liberty
- 17 3) Order
- 18 4) Subordination of our reason to the word of God
- 19 5) Due regard to previous decisions
- 20 6) Love of the Brethren
- 21 7) A constant aim for union in the body of Christ

22
23 These principles guided the Brethren of the nineteenth century as they met each
24 year to discern the mind of Christ in matters of daily living in a rapidly changing
25 world that was at times hostile to the Christian journey.

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27 As the world around the Brethren continued to change, democratic procedures
28 became a primary model for secular governance. Annual Conference adopted 2/3
29 majority voting in 1847. However, after a brief trial, the conference returned to a
30 consensus model the next year.

31
32 In the year 1856, district organizations were proposed. However, in 1866 the
33 Brethren held an annual meeting that unified the districts. Despite these smaller
34 geographic divisions, the Brethren sought and prized a sense of the larger, gathered
35 whole, and laid the foundation for Annual Conference as a cohesive community of
36 Christians.

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38 In the early 1880s, permission was granted to use majority vote. Consensus as a
39 process for discerning the mind of Christ did not survive the painful division of the
40 Brethren body in 1881-1883. Hence, majority rule was used until an adapted form
41 of *Robert's Rules of Order* was formally adopted by the Annual Conference around
42 1915 (records are unclear).

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44 Annual Conference minutes that followed this vote would seem familiar to those
45 who attend conference today. Though initially there was more attention to an atti-

tude of worship, respect for opposing opinions expressed, and time for prayer and the reading of scriptures, the model of parliamentary procedure is the same as we have today. The Church of the Brethren had successfully emulated secular forms of governing.

As time passed and the encroaching American culture increasingly polarized on faith issues, a change came to the Annual Conference floor that was not anticipated by our predecessors. Dissension and arguments over varying opinions have crept into discussion that was once reserved for discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst. If one simply reads the titles of Annual Conference statements and resolutions throughout the twentieth century, it becomes clear that the body of the Church of the Brethren, like many other Christian fellowships, began to struggle with the questions of leadership, identity, and the way we conduct business. Language indicating disagreement and the need for further discernment is found throughout queries and statements over the last several decades, including those dealing with biblical authority, patriotism and the flag, and sexuality, among other issues.

During and since the 1990s, a number of congregations, districts, and denominational agencies have experimented with other models for decision-making, including Worshipful Work, Formal Consensus, sense of the meeting (Quaker) process, and others.

This query on “Doing Church Business” was accepted by the Annual Conference delegate body in 2004. It is a plea reflecting the frustration of Brethren across the theological and social spectra who sense the changing tide of relationship among those who follow Christ. Earnest time has been spent by the Committee to listen to the concerns of our brothers and sisters as we all struggle to be heard clearly, received lovingly, and treated respectfully.

What We Heard

As a part of its study, the Committee gathered information by listening to the body through interviews with individuals and groups including the following: Annual Conference participants and delegates, past and current moderators, the Cross Cultural Ministries Consultation, the Council of District Executives, scholars, lay leaders, conflict experts, agency staff, and respondents surveyed at the 2005 Annual Conference. What follows are themes that continuously arose in our conversations.

- We heard that Brethren are a people of the Book, trying to be faithful disciples, from many different theological perspectives, with a strong desire for all to be more patient and forbearing with each other.
- We heard comments regarding confusion about the power and authority of Annual Conference and why Annual Conference exists. What is the prime function and role of Annual Conference regarding faith and polity statements?

- 1 • We heard affirmations that matters of faith and practice are individual
2 preferences as well as corporate understandings. Spiritual growth
3 comes when we gather to discern the mind of Christ, and agree to act
4 as one.
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- 6 • We heard deep concern and pain about the adversarial style of conver-
7 sation and discussion at Annual Conference. At the same time, we
8 heard exhortation to continue conversation even in difficult times.
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- 10 • We heard that quiet voices and minority or marginalized positions are
11 often left out of conversation. There is a desire on the part of some to
12 find ways to hear from these individuals.
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- 14 • We heard that the process we use to make decisions is as important if
15 not more important than the decision being made. We heard calls for
16 creativity in format and physical setup, while not abandoning what
17 works in current practice.
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- 19 • We heard that an overwhelming majority desire more faith-based tools
20 for discernment (e.g., formal or informal consensus processes, small
21 groups, silence, Worshipful Work) which could complement and
22 enhance current practice, but that, lacking clear and efficient alterna-
23 tives, there is not sufficient support to move away from *Robert's Rules*
24 *of Order*.
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- 26 • We heard persons stating that different kinds of discernment and deci-
27 sion-making may require different processes.
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- 29 • We heard that there is sometimes a lack of education about what dis-
30 cernment means for Brethren, and that there is a desire for leadership
31 training related to discernment for delegates, moderators, secretaries,
32 and others in leadership roles.
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- 34 • We heard that many congregations are already using a modified ver-
35 sion of *Robert's Rules of Order*. Although they do take recorded votes,
36 often there is also open space for conversation and discussion.
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- 38 • We heard that some congregations and at least three districts and/or
39 district boards (Illinois/Wisconsin, Oregon/Washington, and Mid-
40 Atlantic), and one agency (On Earth Peace) are already practicing
41 alternative forms of discernment.
42
- 43 • We heard expressions of concern that Brethren seem to have been
44 seduced by the dominant culture and have lost sight of the power of
45 prayer and the value of community discernment.

- We consistently heard that the shortened length of Annual Conference may have done a disservice to the quality of conversation and discernment. 1
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- We heard a number of requests for small-group discernment opportunities. 5
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- We heard questioning whether Annual Conference is an appropriate place or a safe place to share deeply held beliefs, personal understandings, and experiences. 8
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- We heard a strong affirmation that tinkering with the machinery of conference is useless, that it will take a real and significant shift of perspective and belief to refresh the body's ability to discern together. 12
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- We heard that quality delegate preparation before conference and strategies for reporting and follow-up after conference are often lacking. 16
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- We heard strong encouragement to learn from and utilize the wisdom of the senior members of the church. 20
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Survey Results from 2005 Annual Conference 23

Our committee prepared a survey for delegates and non-delegates, distributed at the 2005 Annual Conference in Peoria. There were 709 responses. What follows is a summary of results. 24
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More than 80% of respondents shared that they read the AC business items in the booklet; 29% attend district-level briefings; 31% talk with their congregations about business items before coming to conference. 27
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83% shared that some, but not many, or none of Annual Conference decisions made a difference in the life of their congregations. It is the perception of respondents that the decisions of Annual Conference have little impact on congregational life. 31
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92% shared that, as a result of AC discussion, they rethink their positions at least sometimes (36% responded, yes, it usually does; 56% responded, yes, but not very often.) 36
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65% agreed that, lacking sufficient time to process an item of business, they would prefer to continue the discernment until the body reaches a greater sense of unity. 40
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1 73% agreed that Annual Conference should continue to make decisions about belief
2 and faith practices AND should also address organizational matters of the denomi-
3 nation.

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5 **Comments and Observations**

6 Based on our listening and research, the current usage of an adapted *Roberts Rules of*
7 *Order* does not appear to adequately allow us to lovingly and respectfully hear one
8 another or to truly discern the mind of Christ in the most efficient and spiritual way.

9 There is a loss of a sense of community or trust in the process of discernment when
10 it comes to the business sessions at Annual Conference. The Committee wrestled
11 with the question of why this is so. It seems that we have not done well at fostering
12 a sense of Christian community or preparing to truly discern together as we gather
13 for business.

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15 We have observed and heard stories of pain and loss, of persons feeling disenfran-
16 chised and left out of the process. We also heard of “winners” gloating over a victo-
17 ry after a vote, and “losers” feeling marginalized, rejected and put down. A process
18 that produces these kinds of experiences would seem to undermine the guidance of
19 the Spirit, the love of God, and the mind of Christ.

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21 The Committee also recognizes that simply changing the model of how we do busi-
22 ness will not address or solve any underlying problems or issues. Appropriate tools
23 are needed so that we can do business and discern the mind of Christ, but we also
24 must come to Annual Conference prepared through Bible and other study, prayer,
25 prior discussion and dialogue, and with openness to the leading of the Spirit through
26 the community of faith.

27

28 Although the Committee greatly respects and appreciates the past leadership of
29 Annual Conference, we also recognize that as a church we have not sufficiently edu-
30 cated, trained and coached those called to leadership to facilitate discernment
31 among the gathered church - especially relevant here are Standing Committee, mod-
32 erators and conference officers. The system and the process have at times failed us
33 through insufficient preparation and training.

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35 Delegates and Conference attendees have also expressed a sense of loss in the
36 amount of time to meet together for discernment, according to the current time
37 frame of Annual Conference. The former schedule of Tuesday evening through
38 Sunday morning allowed more time for discussion and discernment on matters of
39 faith and practice. More time was also available for informal dialogue and conver-
40 sation.

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42 The committee recognizes that the 1988 paper, “A Structural Framework for
43 Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues,” is intended to address divisive situa-
44 tions in the life of Annual Conference, and that it has not been applied in recent sit-
45 uations that might have called for it. As it is currently under review by a commit-

tee of Annual Conference Council, we have restricted our recommendations to over- 1
all business practices of Annual Conference, trusting that the committee reviewing 2
that framework will bring clarifications and recommendations about its use. 3

Concerns Requiring Further Study 4

We have not incorporated all concerns into the recommendations and response of 5
our committee. Two concerns have arisen repeatedly in interviews that we feel are 6
outside the scope of our work. We include them for the edification of the body. The 7
first is the frequency and focus of Annual Conference. Should Annual Conference 8
meet every other year, out of concern for stewardship of finances and human labor? 9
Should some years be focused more on teaching, fellowship and worship, and less on 10
business? The second is the process of calling and election used by the delegate body. 11
Would it more truly serve God and our heritage to use a process other than popular 12
election? We leave these for further examination by the body. 13
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As we prayed, as we studied Scripture, as we considered our history, and as we lis- 15
tened to sisters and brothers, we have come to the conclusion that for the spiritual 16
health and well-being of the body, and to enhance and model discerning the mind of 17
Christ, changes need to be made in our manner of meeting. 18
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Response and Recommendations 20

“Annual Conference is not a place for predetermined points of view repre- 21
senting specific constituencies to be debated, as in the secular political legislative 22
assembly. It is a setting where people come together to consider questions before the 23
church and seek the will of God through prayerful debate and Bible study” (from 24
“Accountability to One Another” in recent Annual Conference booklets). 25
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“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and things 27
wherewith one may edify another” (Rom 14:19). 28

“Discerning the mind of Christ means that you start out not knowing it” 29
(Interviewee). 30

31
There is a clear need for significant change, from the level of delegate preparation, to 32
training of moderators, to the format of Annual Conference itself, in order to 33
enhance and model a discerning Christian community and the reign of God. In pur- 34
suing together the mind of Christ, we must set aside the contentiousness of main- 35
stream culture in order seek “the glory of God and our neighbor's good.” 36

The Purpose of Annual Conference 37

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“Annual Conference is the highest and final legislative authority of the 39
Church of the Brethren in all matters of procedure, program, polity, and discipline. 40
The authority of Conference has its source in the delegates elected by local churches 41
and districts who come together as a deliberative body under the guidance of the 42
Holy Spirit....It provides an opportunity for face-to-face-confrontation and discus- 43
sion of major issues that are of vital concern to the church. It serves as a means of 44
building unity, fellowship, and understanding among Brethren, as laity and clergy, 45
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1 people of all ages, and urban and rural people seek to discover the mission of the
2 church in today's world" (Church of the Brethren Polity Manual, Chapter One).

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4 "Annual Conference exists to unite, strengthen, and equip the Church of
5 the Brethren to follow Jesus" (AC Mission Statement, 2004).

6

7 In order to accomplish these ends, Annual Conference needs to be a spiritual train-
8 ing ground for the skills of spiritual discernment and joyful Christian community.
9 How can Annual Conference exemplify these traits in the way it processes discern-
10 ment and decision-making?

11

12 Annual Conference has used various models of discernment and decision-making
13 throughout its history. Any process must be proven by its ability to help the body
14 discern the mind of Christ. We recognize that any human model we use will fall
15 short of full discernment of God's will. The challenge for the body of Christ is to
16 balance the need for some measure of efficiency and structure, with yearnings for
17 patient discernment.

18

19 It is our perception that the delegate body at this time is not prepared to move into
20 a formally structured discernment model, and wishes to continue to use and adapt
21 *Robert's Rules of Order* primarily out of concerns for efficiency in large group process.

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23 Therefore we exhort the body to freely adapt its use of *Robert's Rules* as recom-
24 mended below to adequately serve the purposes of discernment.

25

26 **Delegate Preparation (Congregational).** To enhance our search for the mind of
27 Christ, we recommend the following practices on the district, congregational, and indi-
28 vidual levels.

29 *District.* The Council of District Executives will consult together about
30 best practices for orienting delegates within their respective districts. The
31 district leadership will offer significant briefing opportunities for delegates
32 that will include Bible study, background and discussion about current
33 items of business, orientation on how we discern together at Annual
34 Conference, and spiritual and practical preparation for speaking and lis-
35 tening in controversial conversations.

36

37 *Congregational.* Congregations will provide time in advance of Annual
38 Conference for discernment about upcoming items of business. Delegates
39 need to be adequately informed of their congregations' perspectives on
40 upcoming business items. Delegates must walk a careful line between rep-
41 resenting their constituencies' expressed positions and participating in the
42 movement of the Spirit during the business of the gathered body.
43 Congregations will provide time for returning delegates to report on the
44 spirit and content of Annual Conference business, and to consider togeth-
45 er the impact on congregational life.

Individual. We will hold ourselves and one another accountable for tone and attitude in the midst of discernment processes, using the direct approach recommended in Matthew 18. The spirit of Christ does not lead to insult, backbiting, politicking, or dismissing other Christians for any reason (for example, based on background, affiliation, or their place on the theological spectrum).

Delegates are commended to the statement on “Accountability to One Another,” published annually in the Annual Conference Booklets, as part of their personal preparation.

Study Questions. To enhance our search for the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* a few key study questions be provided related to each query or new business item, well in advance of Annual Conference. This is to assist the church in preparing to discern the mind of Christ together. Standing Committee will carry the responsibility for developing these study questions. The Annual Conference Office will coordinate their distribution to the church at large.

Process Counselors. As we seek more fully to discern the mind of Christ, we recognize that learning to discern the mind of Christ takes mentoring. To enhance and model seeking the mind of Christ, we recommend the establishment of a group of three process counselors. These individuals will be available to the moderator and other officers during business sessions. Process counselors will serve in addition to the parliamentarian currently available, who typically consults about conference rules and/or *Robert's Rules*. Process counselors join the parliamentarian in providing spiritual support and practical suggestions for planning and facilitating Annual Conference business, in order to enhance our discernment of the mind of Christ.

Process counselors will serve a term of three years, with staggered terms and no term limits, in a volunteer capacity. Criteria to consider in calling a balanced team include wisdom, spiritual centeredness in the midst of controversy, experience with observing and leading discernment processes in small or large groups, and ability to provide practical ideas for a group to move ahead. Process counselors will have or receive training and coaching in large group discernment processes and *Robert's Rules of Order*. This may include participation in training events for group facilitation, observation of the discernment processes of other traditions in order to compare and contrast, or other suitable experiences.

Process counselors will be called by the Nominating Committee of Standing Committee in consultation with the Ministry of Reconciliation and the Annual Conference Council.

Delegate Preparation (Standing Committee). To model and enhance the search for the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* Standing Committee members spend at least one session of their regular meeting in training and preparation for discernment and business, to be led by the process counselors.

1 **Training for Moderator and Moderator-Elect.** The assumption across our denomi-
2 nation has been that the moderator provides spiritual leadership. So that they might
3 help model seeking the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* moderators be called
4 specifically for gifts in helping the body discern. Along with the polity description of
5 the duties of conference moderator, key responsibilities of moderators with regards to
6 discernment include the following:

7

- 8 1) Hearing, clarifying and synthesizing opposing viewpoints,
- 9 2) Observing the flow of group process,
- 10 3) Encouraging the engagement of divergent views in search of unity,
- 11 4) Listening and calling for voices not yet spoken (the margins or the quiet
- 12 voices) in order to hear the full voice of the body, and
- 13 5) Leading the body in seeking the movement of the Spirit in our midst.

14

15 To enhance our common search for the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* modera-
16 tors exercise their role by encouraging Annual Conference participants to engage each
17 other and God, beyond merely speaking “in support” or “against” (which can some-
18 times establish a lamentably contentious tone).

19

20 In many cases, space is made for discernment, but only informally or based on per-
21 sonal inspiration. Examples of possibilities for enhancing *Robert's Rules* are times of
22 worship; silent reflection or prayer; song; a pair or small group working on behalf of
23 the body, in front of the body, to seek solution; and conversations in pairs, clusters, or
24 discernment groups. To more effectively model a variety of discernment processes
25 that could enhance *Robert's Rules of Order*, *we recommend that* a simple handbook of
26 facilitation options that support discernment be compiled for the moderator to use.
27 This handbook will be created by the Ministry of Reconciliation, with counsel from
28 former moderators.

29

30 To enhance our search for the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* at times of deep
31 contention or when the body lacks sufficient time to process an item of business, the
32 moderator be empowered to name the fact that the mind of Christ has not been
33 reached and recommend to the delegates that the issue be postponed until a future
34 year.

35

36 To more adequately guide our search for the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* the
37 moderator and moderator-elect receive training and coaching in large-group discern-
38 ment processes and *Robert's Rules of Order*. This may include participation in training
39 events related to group facilitation, observation of the discernment processes of other
40 traditions in order to compare and contrast, or other suitable experiences. The
41 Process Counselors will encourage the facilitation of this training and coaching.

42

43 **Discernment Groups During Annual Conference.** To model the intentional and
44 intimate work of seeking the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* all delegates and
45

interested non-delegates participate in discernment groups. Small-group discernment is essential to the character and quality of our recommendations as a whole. 1
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3

Delegate groups, no larger than ten people, will meet at least once daily and additionally as needed, for sufficient time to engage one another. Program and Arrangements Committee will form groups to maximize engagement with persons from different backgrounds and geographic regions. 4
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The intention of these groups is to provide a place of conversation and prayer in which each can speak and be heard and in which discernment is fostered. Each group will include a trained volunteer facilitator and will choose a spokesperson. 9
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Non-delegates interested in participating in discernment groups may use this kind of structured group or a different format, such as informal clusters, larger hearing sessions, or other formats as dictated by interest and need. 13
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As has been the practice of Conference, the opportunity for all persons to share comments from the floor continues to be a significant part of our shared discussion. In addition, to enhance the discussion of the entire body, and upon the request of the moderator, spokespeople from delegate groups will concisely represent the range of views within their group. This may or may not entail hearing from each group individually; emphasis is on hearing the variety of views in the body, not necessarily each individual opinion. Suggestions for the relations between discernment groups and large-group discussion will be included in the moderator's handbook (mentioned above). 17
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Annual Conference officers will contract with an appropriate agency to provide training and process suggestions for discernment groups. 27
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The Committee recognizes the complexity of this undertaking. However, observing the small group models used at other conferences and large group events, we have reason to believe that this kind of effort is both logistically possible and spiritually nurturing. We believe that small-group discussion is essential to creating an environment of true conversation at Annual Conference. 30
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We recommend that discernment groups be seated for business in circles or semicircles on the conference floor, or some other arrangement conducive for both small group discussion and participation in the larger whole. We recognize that, in venues over the transitional years, this may not always be possible. However, in future planning, consideration should be taken for finding locations that allow for discernment groups to meet together on the business floor. 36
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We recommend that the Annual Conference staff, Program and Arrangements Committee, and the Process Committee (see below), be given the care of the specific details related to necessary arrangements. 43
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1 **Format of Annual Conference as a whole.** Creating time for discernment groups
2 will necessitate a shift in the daily schedule for Annual Conference. *We recommend*
3 *that* Program and Arrangements Committee work with the Annual Conference
4 Director to make these adjustments.

5
6 *We recommend that* Program and Arrangements Committee consider format changes
7 to hold space for discernment related to specific items in some of the slots normal-
8 ly reserved for Insight Sessions, and to encourage that some Bible studies and Insight
9 Sessions relate to business items.

10
11 **Acknowledging Various Voices for the Purpose of Posterity.** It is current Annual
12 Conference practice that all discussions are recorded in their entirety for the
13 Conference archives. We recommend that this practice continue.

14
15 After decisions are taken, we recommend that the Annual Conference officers to the
16 best of their ability, summarize major dissenting opinions for the minutes. The con-
17 ference officers will author simple one or two-sentence summaries, which will be
18 offered for approval to the delegate body before the close of the year's business.

19
20 We recognize that even when we believe Annual Conference has discerned the will
21 of God, our understanding is still incomplete. We also recognize that as humans we
22 are imperfect, and therefore wish to acknowledge voices not reflected in the deci-
23 sion, so these perspectives will be available to inform future discernment. All that
24 has gone before may be vital for future discernment. The fullness of the mind of
25 Christ will reveal itself in the fullness of time.

26
27 **Love Feast.** To model and enhance our search for the mind of Christ, *we recom-*
28 *mend* the retrieval of the previous Annual Conference tradition of bread and cup
29 communion and foot-washing to open each Conference. We believe this will bring
30 the body of Christ into a sense of unity and remind us of the magnitude of our
31 charge to maintain the unity of spirit in the bonds of peace (Eph 4).

32
33 **Length of Conference.** In the effort to enhance discernment, adequate time must
34 be provided for discussion and engagement.

35
36 To that end, *we recommend that* Program and Arrangements Committee along with
37 Standing Committee develop a five-year plan to expand the length of Annual
38 Conference. The current schedule, Saturday through Wednesday, allows approxi-
39 mately two days for business. *We recommend* an expanded schedule, not unlike the
40 former schedule (Tuesday night through Sunday morning), which permitted four
41 days for business.

42
43 Time together is an essential component of enhancing discernment. There is a great
44 deal of time and expense already involved in Annual Conference; adding a day or
45 two to make possible the very important work of discernment is minor in compar-
46 ison.

Implementation and Review. *We recommend that an Annual Conference Process Committee be formed to coordinate the paper's implementation, appointed by Annual Conference Council. Standing Committee will provide a review of the implementation and impact of this paper to the delegates of the 2009 Annual Conference and every three years thereafter.*

In the interest of moving to a discernment model, *we recommend* a new review of the process of calling versus election for officers and positions accountable to Annual Conference.

Final Remarks

The Committee recognizes that the depth and breadth of these recommendations constitute a significant change in the way we do business together as the Church of the Brethren at Annual Conference. As we have at times struggled to be faithful to our understanding of peace and justice in relationships with one another in the midst of controversial decisions, to be faithful to our understandings of Scripture and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and to be sensitive to our heritage of discerning the mind of Christ together as the body of Christ, it became clear in the minds and hearts of the members of this committee that a modified way of doing business together needs to be offered in response to the concerns raised in this query. It is the prayer of this committee that the delegates of the 2006 Annual Conference will prayerfully and carefully consider how we might best discern the mind of Christ together. It is the committee's prayer that this paper will support the transition toward a new way of doing business in the Church of the Brethren.

The Committee offers its appreciation to all those who have helped in the research and writing of this paper. Without the contributions and assistance of many persons, this paper would not have been possible. This paper is offered “for the glory of God and our neighbors good.”

Doing Church Business Study Committee

Joe Detrick
Matt Guynn, scribe
Verdena Lee
Dale Posthumus
Dave Shetler, chair

Recommended Reading

Brown, Dale W. *Another Way of Believing: A Brethren Theology*. (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 2005) Chapter 11, *Unity and Dissension*.

Butler, C.T. Lawrence and Amy Rothstein. *On Conflict and Consensus: A Handbook on Formal Consensus Decisionmaking*. Portland, ME: Food Not Bombs Publishing, 1987.

1 Glick, Sally Weaver. *In Tune With God: The Art of Congregational Discernment*.
2 (Scottsdale, PA: Faith & Life Resources, 2004). Useful theological and practical
3 guide including help for facilitators.

4
5 Mallott, Floyd E. *Studies in Brethren History*. (Elgin, IL: Brethren Publishing
6 House, 1954) Chapter 19, *Annual Meeting and Church Polity to 1848*.

7
8 Morley, Barry. *Beyond Consensus: Salvaging Sense of the Meeting*. Pendle Hill
9 Pamphlet # 307 (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1996).

10
11 Morris, Danny E. and Charles M. Olsen. *Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual*
12 *Practice for the Church*. Alban Institute, 1997.

13
14
15 **Action of the 2006 Annual Conference:** Annual Conference received the 2006
16 report of the Doing Church Business study committee and referred the report to the
17 Annual Conference Program Feasibility Study Committee. An amendment to
18 delete from the report the section titled "**Length of Conference**" on page 509 was
19 on the floor at the time the motion to refer was made. The Feasibility Study
20 Committee will report back to Annual Conference in 2007 and the Conference will
21 then resume its discussion of adoption of the study committee's original report at
22 the point of the amendment.

23

24 **Committee Expenses for Travel, Lodging, Meals, and Misc.**

25 July, 2004 to July, 2005	\$2,533.00
26 July, 2005 to July, 2006	\$504.00
27 July, 2006 to December, 2006	\$81.00
28 Unfunded mandate	\$1,475.00
29 Total Committee Expenses	\$4,593.00

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2. Query: Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church “of every nation, tribe, people, and language” Rev. 7:9

Whereas Isaiah prophesied of a time when “the sons of the foreigner” would “join themselves to the Lord and to serve Him” speaking the words of the Lord: “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:6&7), and;

Whereas Jesus has called upon his followers to “go...and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19), and;

Whereas Peter observed that God had given the Holy Spirit to Gentiles “and made no distinction between us [Jewish followers of Jesus] and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9), and;

Whereas Christ gave to John a vision of the heavenly congregation at worship: “a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes, with palm branches in their hands.” (Revelation 7:9), and;

Whereas the 1835 Annual Meeting instructed the Brethren to “make no difference on account of color,” and;

Whereas the 1991 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren expressed the hope that “we may be able to move toward becoming a denomination that is more representative of the whole family of God...,” (1991 paper on *Brethren and Black Americans*), and;

Whereas increased travel, ethnic migrations, and advances in communication technology have opened up new opportunities for fulfillment of the “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:19&20) bringing closer the possibility of our becoming a global church of every nation, tribe, people, and language, and;

Whereas Brethren have historically welcomed people of every color with the right hand of fellowship, we have, in practice, often failed to extend the holy kiss (2 Corinthians 13:12), to one another, indicating something less than full fellowship, and;

Whereas Sunday morning remains for many Brethren, one of the most segregated times of the week;

Therefore we, the Miami First Church of the Brethren, ask Annual Conference through the Atlantic Southeast District Conference: What action must we take, in our lives, in our congregations, in our districts, in our denomination, and globally, to bring us into conformity with the biblical vision of a church from every nation,

1 tribe, people and language, united in worship before the throne of God? How are
2 we to become the church John saw in Revelation 7:9?
3 A motion to send foregoing “Query on Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church” to the
4 Atlantic Southeast District Conference passed unanimously by a special congrega-
5 tional meeting of the Miami First Church of the Brethren held on June 8, 2003.

6
7 Brad Ginter Karen Sutton Wayne Sutton
8 Moderator Secretary Board Chair

9
10 The Atlantic Southeast District, meeting at Camp Ithiel, Gotha, Florida, on
11 Saturday, October 11, 2003, voted unanimously to pass this query on “Becoming a
12 Multi-Ethnic Church” to Annual Conference.

13
14 Charles J. McGuckin, Atlantic Southeast District Moderator, 2003
15 Victoria L. Ehret, Atlantic Southeast District Clerk, 2003

16
17 **Action of the 2004 Annual Conference:** Annual Conference adopted the concerns
18 of this query and linked it to Query # 3 in its answer. See the action recorded for Query
19 # 3.

20
21 **Action of the 2005 Annual Conference:** See the action recorded for Query # 3.

22
23 **Action of the 2006 Annual Conference:** See the action recorded for the Query:
24 The Need for Cross-Cultural Ministries

25 26 27 **3. Query: The Need for Cross-Cultural Ministries**

28
29 **Whereas** the Church of the Brethren historically welcomed people of color
30 including freed slaves like Samuel Weir with the right hand of fellowship but did not
31 extend the holy kiss (2 Corinthians 13:12, “Greet one another with the holy kiss”);
32 and

33
34 **Whereas** the 1991 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren passed the
35 *Brethren and Black Americans* paper which expressed the hope that “we may be able
36 to move toward becoming a denomination that is more representative of the whole
37 family of God and toward a society that is just”; and

38
39 **Whereas** the words of Jesus have historically called the Church of the Brethren,
40 as they call us now, to “go. . . and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the
41 name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19); and

42
43 **Whereas** the changing demographics of our nation have brought the nations of
44 the world to our doorsteps; and

45

Whereas the opportunities for fulfillment of this great commission of outreach to the nations now reside within our communities, offering opportunity to enjoy the blessings of inclusion and richer fellowship in Christ; and

Whereas the Cross Cultural Ministries Team has striven to make the denomination aware of the joy of our unity in Christ as people of color and has encouraged the denomination to include, intentionally, people of all colors and ethnic groups and languages, bearing in mind Revelation 7:9b, “from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages”; and

Therefore, we the Wenatchee Brethren-Baptist Church United petition the Oregon/Washington District for assistance in identifying and naming the barriers that exist in the Church of the Brethren which are preventing the biblical vision of Revelation 7:9 from happening within our congregations and districts and to outline specific steps which can enable congregations and districts to overcome them.

Adopted by the Wenatchee Brethren-Baptist Church United Church Board on July 23, 2003, and passed on to Oregon/Washington District Conference.

Lael Vickery, Board Chair
Merry Kay Shaw, Church Clerk

The Oregon/Washington District conference, meeting at Camp Koinonia, Washington, on August 9, 2003, unanimously approved the query for consideration by the Annual Conference meeting in 2004 at Charleston, West Virginia.

Carol Bowers, Oregon/Washington District Moderator, 2003
Patrick Fiegenbaum, Oregon/Washington Recording Secretary, 2003

Action of the 2004 Annual Conference: *Annual Conference approved the concerns of the Queries, “Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church” and “The Need for Cross-Cultural Ministries,” and voted to have a committee of eight that is ethnically diverse to respond to the questions asked by the queries. The committee will report to the 2005 Annual Conference, along with suggestions on how Annual Conference can continue to receive a progress report on multi-ethnic and cross-cultural ministries each year until 2010. Annual Conference will then reassess the denomination’s progress toward becoming a more inclusive church. Meanwhile, Annual Conference encourages districts, congregations, denominational agencies, and other interest groups to assess the present state of cross-cultural and multi-ethnic relationships in their ministries, so that an increased priority to do cross-cultural ministries might be pursued.*

The study committee was to be chosen as follows: six persons were elected by Annual Conference, an African-American was to be chosen by the six elected persons from those on the original ballot who are of African-American descent, and the eighth person was to be an ex-officio member from the American Baptist Churches USA. The Annual Conference Council is to determine how the ex-officio member shall be named. The six

1 *elected persons on the committee are: Darla Kay Bowman, Reuben Deoleo, Nadine L.*
2 *Monn, Neemita Pandya, Gilbert Romero, and Asha Solanky.*

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1 **Study Committee: Multi-Ethnic Church/Cross-Cultural Ministries**

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4 **Report to the 2005 Annual Conference**

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6 **Background**

7 The 2004 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren, meeting in Charleston,
8 West Virginia, received two queries: one from the Atlantic Southeast District, enti-
9 tled *Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church*, and one from the Oregon/Washington District
10 entitled *The Need for Cross-Cultural Ministries*. The two queries are very similar in
11 their intent. They desire to address issues of becoming an inclusive church, but their
12 requests in getting to that action are stated quite differently. The query from the
13 Atlantic Southeast District, entitled *Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church*, asks “What
14 action must we take, in our lives, in our congregations, in our districts, in our
15 denominations, and globally, to bring us to conformity with the biblical vision of a
16 church from every nation, tribe, people and language, united in worship before the
17 throne of God? How are we to become the church John saw in Revelation 7:9?” The
18 query from the Oregon/Washington District, entitled *The Need for Cross-Cultural*
19 *Ministries*, asks “for assistance in identifying and naming the barriers that exist in the
20 Church of the Brethren which are preventing the biblical vision of Revelation 7:9
21 from happening within our congregations and districts and to outline specific steps
22 which can enable congregations and districts to overcome them.” Additionally,
23 Annual Conference action also requested that the committee formulate a plan by
24 which the progress made toward multi-ethnic and cross-cultural ministries be report-
25 ed to Annual Conference each year until 2010 (Fred W. Swartz, Annual Conference
26 Secretary’s letter to the committee members).

27 Annual Conference approved the concerns of the queries and named an ethnically
28 diverse seven-member study committee to respond to the questions asked by the
29 queries.

30

31 **Study Committee Actions to Date**

32 In September, with the assistance of Lerry Fogle, Annual Conference Executive
33 Director, we used the conference call to respond to the concerns of the conference
34 that no African-American members had been elected to the committee. Acting on
35 the direction of the delegates, the committee chose a seventh full member to the
36 Study Committee from among the African-American nominees on the study com-
37 mittee ballot that was presented to the Conference. The selection of the ex-officio
38 member from the American Baptist Churches USA is in the search process as of this
39 writing.

40

41 Our first committee meeting took place in October when we began discussing ways

to carry out our charge. We decided that the question about barriers asked in the query *The Need for Cross-Cultural Ministries* must to be addressed first in order to respond respectfully, thoughtfully, and comprehensively to the questions asked in the query *Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church*.

Our initial discussion included some definitional clarification. Committee members felt strongly that the term “cross-cultural” did not fully describe the tasks set out for the committee and “multicultural” indicated multiple cultures on parallel paths. Given our attempts to “bring us to conformity with the biblical vision of a church...united in worship before the throne of God,” we felt that the term “inter-cultural” was better suited for our committee. “Intercultural” indicates various cultures relating with and to each other, and is a more accurate term to describe the work of this committee as mandated by Annual Conference. We are therefore referring to ourselves as the Study Committee for Intercultural Ministries within the Church of the Brethren.

The committee is making a concerted effort to include individuals and as many members and friends of the Church of the Brethren as possible in the discussions. In order to foster dialogue and understanding, we developed a “framework” to guide our conversations with various people from both within the denomination and our ecumenical partners.

A partial list of proposed conversation partners and events include:

- The Intercultural Study Committee plans to meet next in April 2005. At this time we will be having discussions with the Cross Cultural Ministries Team.
- A listening session is scheduled for Saturday evening of Annual Conference to invite input from the denomination.
- We hope to schedule interviews with each district executive and ask each district conference to host a “conversation” regarding cross-cultural ministries and becoming a multi-ethnic church.
- We plan to have continuing conversations with Congregational Life Team staff, the Cross Cultural Ministries Team, and Global Mission Partnerships.

We are developing a reading list/resource list that relates to developing intercultural ministries. Upon completion, this list will be disseminated to all congregations through their respective district offices.

The committee requests an additional year to complete its study.

We encourage each of you to participate in these and other efforts and we solicit your prayers as we carry out our responsibilities.

1 Darla Kay Bowman Deardorff Neemita Pandya
2 Rueben D. Deoleo Gilbert Romero
3 Thomas Dowdy Asha Solanky, Chair
4 Nadine L. Monn, Recorder

5
6

7 **Action of the 2005 Annual Conference:** Annual Conference received the 2005
8 report of the Multi-Ethnic/Cross Cultural Ministries study committee (now
9 renamed the Study Committee for Intercultural Ministries) and granted the com-
10 mittee an additional year of study.

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12

13 **Report to the 2006 Annual Conference in Des Moines, Iowa**

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16 The vision of becoming an inclusive church of “all nations, tribes, peoples and
17 tongues” is very much alive within the Church of the Brethren. Members from all
18 of the ethnic and racial cultural backgrounds within the community have chal-
19 lenged it to identify barriers that prevent us from being the church John envi-
20 sioned in Revelation 7:9, and find ways to overcome them.

21

22 **STUDY COMMITTEE TASKS BASED ON THE ADOPTED QUERIES** 23 **AND 2004 ANNUAL CONFERENCE ACTIONS**

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25

26 Below is a brief synopsis of the committee’s five tasks, as well as each query’s
27 Scriptural foundations and questions.

28

- 29 1. Name the barriers in the Church of the Brethren that prevent the
30 fulfillment of the Revelation 7:9 vision. (COMPLETED)
- 31 2. Recommend actions we must take to bring us into conformity
32 with the vision of Revelation 7:9. (IN PROCESS)
- 33 3. Formulate a mechanism to report intercultural ministry progress
34 at Annual Conference through 2010. (SEVERAL OPTIONS
35 BEING EVALUATED)
- 36 4. Integrate an ex-officio member from our affiliate denomination,
37 the American Baptist Church (USA). (COMPLETED)
- 38 5. Select an eighth full committee member from the African-
39 American nominees on the 2004 ballot. (COMPLETED)

40 **Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church, 2004 (Atlantic Southeast District)**

41 **Scriptures cited:** Isaiah 56:6-7; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 15:9; 2 Corinthians 13:12;
42 Revelation 7:9

43

44 “What action must we take, in our lives, in our congregations, in our districts, in
45 our denomination, and globally, to bring us into conformity with the biblical vision
of a church from every nation, tribe, people and language, united in worship before
the throne of God? How are we to become the church John saw in Revelation 7:9?”

The Need for Cross Cultural Ministries, 2004 (Oregon-Washington District)	1
Scriptures cited: Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:12; Revelation 7:9b	2
	3
The query asks “for assistance in identifying and naming the barriers that exist in the Church of the Brethren which are preventing the biblical vision of Revelation 7:9 from happening within our congregations and districts and to outline specific steps which can enable congregations and districts to overcome them.”	4
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CLARIFICATION: TERMINOLOGY USED BY THE COMMITTEE	11
	12
At the 2005 Annual Conference, several delegates requested additional clarification of the terms that the Intercultural Study Committee uses. There are many definitions of culture. We defined “culture” as a system of beliefs, values, customs, meanings, and behavioral norms, used by members of a particular group of people in society as they make decisions and construct their unique view of the world.	13
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The committee understands the scope of the two queries to reference ethnic and racial cultures. These two indicators of culture are very complicated on their own and although others have requested inclusion in our study, we choose to remain faithful to these limits. We also recognize that our primary duty is to give Christ’s unconditional love to each person. Therefore, we encourage the denomination to continue dialogue with all cultural groups in the body of Christ.	19
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Second, we needed to distinguish between the terms “cross-cultural” and “multicultural.” Both words are used interchangeably in church and secular circles. Each can be used to describe work and relationship across at least two cultures. However, we did not feel that they were appropriate for our tasks. Neither word fully implies the concept of a mutual relationship, which we see as being the key to success for any recommendations.	26
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These are our observations on the two terms:	33
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<u>Cross-cultural</u> : Potentially limited to one cultural group seeking understanding of and relationship with another. The second culture may not see these efforts as a mutual relationship.	35
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	38
<u>Multicultural</u> : Potentially two or more cultural groups on parallel paths seeking understanding of each other, but not necessarily relationships with one another.	39
	40
	41
We selected the word “intercultural.” By the very definition for the prefix “inter,” the word signifies mutuality - a weaving together of cultures.	42
	43
	44
<u>Intercultural</u> : Two or more cultural groups seeking a mutual understanding of and relationship with one another.	45

1 **INTERCULTURAL STUDY COMMITTEE ACTIONS-TO-DATE ON ITS**
2 **TASKS**
3 **(In order of completion)**
4

5 **Completed Tasks:**

6 **Task 5 - Select an eighth full member from the African-American nominees on the**
7 **2004 ballot.**

8
9 Thomas K. Dowdy, pastor of Imperial Heights Church of the Brethren in Los
10 Angeles, CA, was selected in September 2004.

11 **Task 4 - Integrate an ex-officio member from the American Baptist Churches**
12 **(USA).**

13
14 Glenn Hatfield, a retired pastor from West Orange, NJ, was appointed as the ex-
15 officio committee member from the American Baptist Churches (USA) in March
16 2005. Glenn's final pastorate was a congregation that included members from 23
17 different nationalities. During his service, the congregation made intentional efforts
18 to invite and include its neighbors in order to reverse a decline in membership as the
19 surrounding community's demographics changed, in addition to fulfilling their out-
20 reach and evangelism goals.

21
22 **Task 1 - Name the barriers in the Church of the Brethren that prevent the fulfill-**
23 **ment of the Revelation 7:9 vision.**

24
25 Through prayer, study, and interviews with denominational leaders and individuals,
26 the Intercultural Study Committee created and distributed a questionnaire solicit-
27 ing information about barriers to becoming an inter-culturally inclusive church, and
28 requested input on actions to overcome them. Responses include information
29 obtained in congregational and personal conversations, in discussions at other
30 denominational events such as Mission Alive, at the April 2005 Cross-Cultural
31 Consultation and Celebration event, and at a 2005 Annual Conference listening ses-
32 sion on Saturday night. All of the responses were reviewed and categorized in order
33 to help formulate action recommendations.

34
35 Response styles have been mixed. Some districts established a task team to solicit
36 and compile the responses. Most responses are from individuals and the majority of
37 them address issues related to barriers. The lack of language inclusivity, fear of
38 change, loss of traditions, and loss of power were themes that appeared at all levels.
39 Below are some of the most frequently cited responses regarding barriers at various
40 levels within the church. *(Read Appendix 1 for the complete listing of the barriers for*
41 *each level).*

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Theological/Spiritual	1
• Marked lack of evaluation and use of theological and scriptural basis for intercultural efforts	2 3
• Need for confession of past transgressions, and reconciliation	4
• Marked lack of evangelism within the denomination	5 6
Denominational / Organizational Issues	7
• Past baggage, including unwillingness to share power and inaction, that cause hurt, pain, and brokenness in the denomination	8 9
• Paternalism - empowerment without independence and a need to grow beyond our history as the closed community that formed Brethren identity	10 11 12
• Lack of organizational and denominational structures and finances dedicated to intercultural efforts	13 14 15 16
District Level	17
• Minority pastors not intentionally recruited, and lack of mentoring/support programmes	18 19
• Lack of evangelism and training to reach out to diverse groups	20
• Lack of cultural training and skill set development among those in leadership	21 22 23
Congregational Level	24
• Lack of needs assessment - Which population requires service based on geographical area and economic conditions ?	25 26
• Lack of resources assessment (not necessarily financial) to provide the services	27 28
• Sense of inertia; okay with the status quo	29 30
Personal Level	31
• Fear of the loss of Brethren identity, of change, of language, and of discomfort	32 33
• Lack of awareness of prejudice, racism, and white privilege	34
• Reverse racism	35 36
Some respondents feel that there are no barriers within their congregations to embracing and implementing intercultural ministry, but that the issue is other cultures might have “problems” embracing our lifestyle as Brethren. Still others have a different theological perspective of Revelation 7:9, understanding that the scripture describes what the church will look like in heaven, rather than on earth.	37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45

1 **Unfinished Tasks**

2

3 **Task 3 - Develop a way to report intercultural ministry progress at Annual**
4 **Conference through 2010.**

5 Several options are under consideration at this time.

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1. Every congregation's annual report to its respective district would include what kind of intercultural activities are occurring. The districts will forward these responses to the Congregational Life Ministry (CLM) office. It is strongly recommended that CLM make a report to Annual Conference independent of the General Board report so that it does not get diluted and might be more detailed. The report would include specifics of activities occurring by area at the congregational and district level. For example, Harrisburg First Church (PA) has an intercultural choir.
2. Each district would submit an intercultural ministries report at Annual Conference on their intercultural activity and progress. Report content should include activities, conferences, events, ministries and service opportunities that would be influenced by the action recommendations proposed by the committee at the 2007 Annual Conference in Cleveland, OH.
3. Congregational Life Ministries would host an insight session to share information about intercultural ministry progress.

25 **Task 2 - Recommend actions we must take to bring us into conformity with the**
26 **Revelation 7:9 vision.**

28 The Intercultural Study Committee felt that, in addition to survey and interview responses regarding actions being taken and/or recommended, an appropriate starting point was to review past Annual Conference papers related to ethnicity and multiculturalism to see what specific recommendations were adopted and then to assess the status of how these recommendations have been met. Below is a brief synopsis to date on this review.

35 The closing sentences of the Report of the Committee on Brethren and Black Americans reads, "The longest step is the one that leads from statement to action, from word to deed. Let us begin (1991)." For many who responded to the Intercultural Study Committee's questions, we have a way to go on the journey to intercultural inclusion.

41 Church of the Brethren statements on race relations date back to 1835. Annual Conference made the first of its most contemporary statements about racial and ethnic issues in the Church of the Brethren in the United States beginning with the 1935 Inter-Racial Problem Resolution. Since then, there have been several Annual Conference actions to reaffirm the Christian imperative for the Church of the Brethren to be a culturally inclusive church, and to work proactively and diligently

on identifying and eliminating stumbling blocks within denominational structures, traditions, ideology and polity.	1 2 3
Annual Conference Papers and Resolutions Regarding Intercultural Ministries in the Church of the Brethren Since 1989	4 5 6
As a committee, we chose to review Annual Conference recommendations and their implementation beginning in 1989, as they include most of the ethnic and cultural minorities currently represented within the Church of the Brethren. These papers include the following:	7 8 9 10 11
1. <u>Inclusion of Ethnics in the Church of the Brethren</u>	12
Adopted at the 1989 Annual Conference	13
Scriptures cited: Proverbs 29:18; Ezekiel 34; Habakkuk 2:3; Matthew 28:19; John 15:16; Acts 2; Romans 12:4-8, 12-13; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; 1 Corinthians 12:13-31; Ephesians 4:15	14 15 16 17
This paper is the first to examine the multiple, major ethnic and racial groups present in the Church of the Brethren in the United States and Puerto Rico. It includes a “snapshot” history of the following communities: African-Americans, Hispanics, Filipinos, Koreans, and mentions the emerging Haitian membership. It contains recommendations for the denomination (directed to the General Board and Bethany Theological Seminary), districts, and congregations.	18 19 20 21 22 23 24
2. <u>Brethren and Black Americans</u>	25
Adopted at the 1991 Annual Conference	26
Scriptures cited: Matthew 15:21-28; Mathew 23; Galatians 3:27-28, Colossians 3:9-11	27 28 29
This paper examines the history and relationship between the European-American majority and the African-American minority in the Church of the Brethren. Its recommendations are directed to the denomination (General Board, Annual Conference, Brethren Colleges, and Bethany Theological Seminary) and congregations. The paper also includes a general recommendation that all Brethren institutions vigorously practice affirmative action.	30 31 32 33 34 35 36
3. <u>Community: A Tribe of Many Feathers</u>	37
Adopted at the 1994 Annual Conference	38
Scriptures cited: Genesis 12:3; Exodus 23:9; Deuteronomy 10:18-19; Ruth; Psalms 94:6; Jeremiah 7:6; Malachi 3:5; Luke 7:36-50; Luke 8:40-48; Luke 9:49-50; John 4; John 14:6; Acts 10; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 2:11-21; Ephesians 4; Colossians 1:15	39 40 41 42 43
This final paper examines the history and relationship between the European-American majority and the Native-American minority at Lybrook Community in	44 45 46

1 Cuba, NM. More importantly, the committee writing the paper takes the opportunity to give two explanations:

- 3 • A concise history of Native-American relations in the United States, and
- 5 • An introduction of Native American perspective on Christianity as it relates to their cultural reference points.

7 This paper provides recommendations for the denomination, districts, congregations, and personal recommendations for families and individuals.

10 4. Resolution on Ethnic Representation

11 Adopted at the 2001 Annual Conference

12 Scriptures cited: Acts 6: 1-8

14 The Castañer Church (Puerto Rico) petitioned the Annual Conference, through the Standing Committee, to update the guidelines in the 1979 Annual Conference Elections paper to assure “fair representation for minority groups in the church by calling forth and utilizing gifted leadership from among our ethnic brothers and sisters.” The delegate body approved Standing Committee’s recommendation that the concerns of the query be affirmed.

22 **Status on the Implementation of Previous Recommendations**

24 The last set of recommendations adopted by Annual Conference is twelve years old. Additionally, the last comprehensive review of major cultural groups within the church in the United States and Puerto Rico is seventeen years old. The fields of intercultural ministries, mission, and studies have developed and promoted numerous models in that time span. New recommendations must reflect this growth.

30 The committee decided that it was important to investigate several earlier recommendations and the status of their implementation. To that end, we have sent out two more questionnaires. The first one asked for demographic makeup of congregations within the various districts. The second questionnaire listed the recommendations listed in the four papers discussed above and asked each district to identify how the recommendations have been implemented. Both these questionnaires are available on the Intercultural Study Committee’s portion of the Annual Conference Web site (<http://www.brethren.org/ac>).

39 After continued consultation with individuals and agencies throughout the denomination, we cannot readily identify how previous recommendations have been implemented within the church. This does not mean that they have not been implemented, but that when and where they have been enacted, the action has not been highly visible nor has it been reported to all levels within the denomination.

45 As a result, the Intercultural Study Committee continues to work on formulating

faithful and accurate recommendations for action and implementation.	1
REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL TIME	2
	3
The Intercultural Study Committee has completed three of the tasks named by the 2004 Annual Conference.	4
	5
Several factors contribute to our inability to make specific action recommendations in this report. They include:	6
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1. A decided paucity to date in suggestions for action recommendations in response to our initial questionnaire.	9
	10
2. Unclear information received thus far about denominational demographics in terms of ethnicity and race.	11
	12
3. A systemic lack of knowledge within the denomination about previous recommendations from Annual Conference.	13
	14
4. Difficulty in assessing the implementation and efficacy of previous recommendations, due to a general lack of knowledge about the recommendations and due to repeated changes in the denomination's organization and staffing structures since the recommendations were adopted.	15
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5. A rapid growth in the field of intercultural ministries and mission since the most recent Annual Conference studies were completed, which needs further study than the current time allotment permitted.	20
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6. The need for more time to further develop specific recommendations, including implementing the following action plan:	24
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• Continued research on how other denominations are addressing this topic.	27
	28
• Continued evaluation of past recommendations to Annual Conference.	29
	30
• Continued interviews and focus groups (some to be held at the May 2006 Cross-Cultural Celebration) to elicit specific action steps.	31
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• Collection and analysis of results from current surveys being conducted within the denomination.	34
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• Collection and analysis of feedback and discussion through our newly launched Web log (http://interculturalcob.blogspot.com).	36
	37
Note: We encourage everyone to visit this site to stay updated on the Intercultural Study Committee's work and to engage with others in an ongoing, online discussion.	38
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We therefore request an extension to bring our final report at the 2007 Annual Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. In the coming year, we will finalize a reporting structure for the progress made in intercultural ministries through the 2010 Annual Conference. Additionally, we will finalize the evaluation of previous recommendations and implement the above action plan, thereby allowing us to bring our recom-	42
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- 1 mendations for action and implementation at all levels of the denomination.
2 During this next year, it would be helpful if individuals and congregations continue to:
3 • Pray for the Intercultural Study Committee and its work.
4 • Provide feedback about possible action plans.
5 • Recommend additional reading and study guide materials.
6 • Hold continued dialogue within the congregations and denomina-
7 tion on how God is guiding us to fulfill Revelation 7:9.
8 • Engage in deliberate study of the history, culture, faith, etc., of our
9 ethnic and culturally diverse brothers and sisters by inviting guest
10 speakers from these groups to lead study groups and Bible studies.
11 • Include cultural minorities within our congregations, districts and at
12 the denominational level in programme planning for all events.
13 • Initiate pulpit exchanges, exchange of music and worship pro-
14 grammes, visit one another’s worship service.
15 • Invite the Antiracism Team to train church members and the leader-
16 ship. (Contact Congregation Life Ministries for more information.)
17 • Engage in deliberate dialogue with different cultural groups and
18 include them in planning and hosting intercultural events.

19
20 Prayerfully and respectfully submitted by:

21
22 Asha Solanky, Chair
23 Nadine L. Monn, Recorder
24 Darla Kay Bowman Deardorff
25 Rubén D. DeOleo
26 Thomas K. Dowdy
27 Neemita Pandya
28 Gilbert Romero
29 Glenn Hatfield, ex-officio, American Baptist Church (USA)

30
31 **Appendix 1: Complete Barriers List from Questionnaires and Interviews**

32
33 **Theological/Spiritual**

- 34 - Need for evaluating theological/scriptural basis for the need for
35 cross-cultural, multicultural efforts
36 - Need to discern what is central to our perspective on Christian faith
37 which makes us “Brethren”
38 - Need for confession of past transgressions and reconciliation
39 - Need for reparation
40 - Brethren have failed to realize how they have conformed to the
41 “world”
42 - Marked lack of evangelism within the denomination
43 - “Pervasive pride about our unique heritage which makes the whole
44 issue more about preserving our traditions rather than preaching
45 the gospel.”

Denominational / Organizational Issues	1
- Difficulty in decision making due to increased ambiguity of needs	2
- Greater complexity of issues leading to more confusion about the rightness of decision making	3
- Confusion due to language and miscommunication	4
- Difficulty reaching agreement regarding meanings of behavior and decisions made	5
- Difficulty agreeing with specific action plans	6
- Power differential needs to shift from a majority to include the minorities	7
- Denominational pride about our “humility” gets in the way	8
- Brethren have failed to welcome the gifts, insights, and other contributions of Brethren from other ethnic groups by failing to welcome their leadership on their own terms	9
- Failure to ask what makes the other “comfortable” and when the question is asked, failing to take the response “seriously”	10
- Overwhelming sense of hurt, brokenness, sense of exclusion, being ignored is often not recognized or not seen	11
- Sense that outspokenness about cultural and ethnic issues will result in “backlash” from those in positions of power	12
- Behavior may not be intentional but it is certainly not recognized as demoralizing or demeaning	13
- Racism, prejudice and violence are not overt as in the past but are more covert and hence more difficult to identify and overcome	14
- Financial picture governs allocation of resources	15
- The continuation of a pattern of having too few people of cultures other than the dominant white culture, either on staff or in decision-making positions.	16
- Personnel shortages	17
- Elimination of denominational structures that would foster multicultural/cross cultural activities	18
- No dedicated denominational office to monitor activities or disseminate information about current denominational activities (multicultural or cross-cultural initiatives)	19
- No follow-up on how previous decisions and recommendations by Annual Conference have been implemented	20
- Not enough training to increase awareness at individual, congregational, district and denominational levels	21
- Gaps in leadership/pastoral education	22
- Lack of access to available resources	23
- No intentional recruitment of minority pastors	24
- Need to eliminate tokenism	25
- Need to work intentionally toward language inclusivity	26
- Need to go beyond our history (Emergence as a denomination due to a history of persecution led to the need to be a closed society to survive. Now need to be an open society to survive)	27

- 1 - Fear that increasing minorities will create fractions and
- 2 destabilization
- 3 - Fear that diversity will create loss of Brethren identity
- 4 - Past baggage including past inaction - hurt/pain/brokenness
- 5 has occurred within the denomination
- 6 - Need for healing and reconciliation
- 7 - Paternalism - empowerment without independence
- 8 - Unwillingness to adapt
- 9 - Perceived “invisibility” of minorities in our midst
- 10 - Denominational pride about our humility

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12 District level

- 13 - Minority pastors not intentionally recruited
- 14 - Lack of leadership
- 15 - Districts should be encouraged to be more intentional about
- 16 their efforts, “some great things happen at AC, but they don’t
- 17 filter down to Districts and congregations.”
- 18 - Lack of funding for cross-cultural projects
- 19 - Lack of intentional programmes of mentorship/support for
- 20 minority pastors
- 21 - “We are a doing church and forget the value of building rela-
- 22 tionships first”
- 23 - “We like to do for but are unwilling to do with”
- 24 - Lack of evangelism/training to reach out to diverse groups
- 25 - Lack of cultural training/skill set among those in leadership
- 26 - Inability to address intercultural conflict in congregations
- 27 - Unwillingness to adapt to the changing world around us
- 28 - “In more conservative districts, I have heard older (long-
- 29 term) Brethren say that they do not want things to change
- 30 (thereby making NO room for cultural expression w/in the
- 31 Brethren framework). Because these families have the
- 32 money in their congregations, leaders are unmotivated to
- 33 actively pursue inter-cultural changes and additions.”
- 34 - Lack of language inclusivity

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36 Congregational level

- 37 - Lack of assessment of need - which population requires serv-
- 38 ice based on geographical area and economic conditions;
- 39 lack of assessment of resources to provide the services
- 40 - Tolerance/acceptance of persons who “become like us” = lack
- 41 of respect
- 42 - Application of initiatives is superficial and inconsistent
- 43 - Lack of evangelism or support for evangelism activities
- 44 occurring
- 45 - Restricted empowerment
- “Active learning” laziness

- Lack of language inclusivity 1
- Sense of action “inertia” - OK with status quo 2
- Lack of intercultural training and skill sets 3
- Lack of motivation 4
- Inability to perceive that different cultural and ethnic minorities can enhance our faith and view of what the Kingdom of God can be like 5
6
7
- Core groups in congregations need to be less cliquish and reach out to visitors and culturally different members within the church 8
9
- Socio-economic concerns/inequities 10
- Paternalism - helping/serving others without seeing the value of what others bring to congregations 11
12
- Unwillingness and inability to adapt 13
14

Individual level

- Racism and prejudice are pervasive 15
16
- Racism/prejudice/white privilege are not recognized in many cases 17
- Lack of motivation 18
- Lack of contact with persons of a different culture or ethnicity 19
- “Lack of a belief that the life of the COB depends on becoming a multi-cultural church” 20
21
- “Change is seen as dangerous and uncomfortable and unnecessary” 22
23
- Reverse racism 24
- Lack of willingness of the minority or culturally different in meeting the majority half-way 25
26
- Lack of willingness to move from “our uniqueness” to being open to what others might have to offer in terms of worship style, faith perspectives, spiritual growth, Biblical insight, etc. 27
28
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- Fear of change, discomfort 30
- Fear of loss of Brethren identity 31
- Lack of awareness/information about how our behavior impacts people around us 32
33
- Need for training and exposure to different peoples and ways of being 34
35
- Language 36
- Not able to find “common ground”/connections with those from other cultures 37
38
- There is a sense that change should not be forced on older members who might have more difficulty changing worship and music styles. 39
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Appendix 2: Reading/Resource List

We have compiled a reading/resource list that relates to developing intercultural ministries and understanding. 42
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1 **I. Intercultural Churches as an Expression of Christian Principle**

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From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective by David Rhoads and David M. Rhoads. Augsburg Fortress Publishers.

Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World by Stephen A. Rhodes. InterVarsity Press.

What Color Is Your God? by David Ireland. Impact Publishing House.

Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology by Jung Young Lee. Fortress Press.

United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race by Curtiss Paul Deyoung, Michael Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim. Oxford University Press.

One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church by Manuel Ortiz. InterVarsity Press.

Pursuing the Pearl: A Comprehensive Resource for Multi-Asian Ministry by Ken Fong. Judson Press.

Many Faces, One Church: Cultural Diversity and the American Catholic Experience by Peter C. Phan. Sheed and Ward.

One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism by Ken Ham, Carl Wieland and Don Batten. Master Books.

II. Toward Understanding Difficulties and Barriers

There is More Than One Color In the Pew by Tony Mathews. Smith Helwys Publishing.

The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community by Eric Law. Chalice Press.

Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America by Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith. Oxford University Press.

The Color of Faith: Building Community in a Multiracial Society by Fumitaka Matsuoka. United Church Press.

Many Cultures, One in Christ by Julie Garber. faithQuest.

Enter the River: Healing Steps from White Privilege toward Racial Reconciliation

by Tobin Miller Shearer and Jody Miller Shearer. Herald Press.	1
God is Red: A Native View of Religion by Vine Deloria Jr., Leslie Marmon Silko, and George E. Tinker. Fulcrum Publishing.	2 3 4
The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future by Riane Eisler. Harper San Francisco.	5 6 7
Embracing Diversity: Leadership in Multicultural Congregations by Charles Foster. Alban Institute.	8 9 10
The Art of Crossing Cultures by Craig Storti. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.	11 12
Frontline Women: Negotiating Cross-cultural Issues in Ministry by Marguerite G. Kraft (Ed.).	13 14 15
Breaking Down Walls: A Model for Reconciliation in an Age of Racial Strife by Raleigh Washington and Glen Kehrein. Moody Publishers.	16 17 18
Mediation across Cultures by David Augsburg. Westminster John Knox Press.	19 20
III. Toward Becoming Intercultural	
One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches by George A. Yancey. InterVarsity Press.	21 22 23 24 25
The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed: Developing a Multicultural Community Through Dialogue and Liturgy by Eric Law. Chalice Press.	26 27 28
Against All Odds: The Struggle for Racial Integration in Religious Organizations by Brad Christerson, Michael O. Emerson, and Korie Edwards. New York University Press.	29 30 31 32
Multicultural Ministry: Finding Your Church's Unique Rhythm by David Anderson. Zondervan.	33 34 35
A Mosaic of Believers: Diversity and Innovation in a Multiethnic Church by Gerardo Marti. Indiana University Press.	36 37 38
Uncovering Racism by Kathryn Goering Reid and Stephen Breck Reid. Brethren Press.	39 40 41
People on the Way by Ken Fong.	42 43
A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures: Making Friends in a Multicultural World by Patty Lane. InterVarsity Press.	44 45

1 **Pastoral Counseling across Cultures** by David Augsberger. Westminster John Knox
2 Press.

3
4 **Let's get to Know Each Other** by Tony Evans. Thomas Nelson Publishers

5
6 **We Stand Together: Reconciling Men of Different Color** by Rodney Cooper.
7 Moody Publishers.

8
9 **He's My Brother: Former Racial Foes Offer Strategy for Reconciliation** by John
10 Perkins, Thomas A. Tarrants, and David Wimbish. Baker Publishing Group.

11
12 **The End of Racism: Principles for a Multi-racial Society** by Dinesh D'Souza. Free
13 Press.

14
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16 **Action of the 2006 Annual Conference:** Annual Conference received the 2006
17 report of the Study Committee for Intercultural Ministries and granted the com-
18 mittee an additional year of study.

19
20

21 **Intercultural Study Committee**
22 **Final Report to the 2007 Annual Conference in Cleveland, Ohio**

23
24

Separate No More

25
26

Introduction

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28

The Church of the Brethren as a denomination is giving serious attention, in its
29 "Together" emphasis, on being transformed by God's Spirit. One expression of this
30 quest is highlighted by the deeply searching question, "What are God's yearnings for
31 Church of the Brethren?" .

32
33

After much prayer, study, research, and deliberation, our committee concluded that
34 one essential part of the answer to that question is for us to be SEPARATE NO
35 MORE. We accomplish this by deliberately and intentionally moving toward
36 becoming much more intercultural than we currently are. Our reasons for this con-
37 clusion are Biblically-based.

38
39

We began with the Revelation 7:9 vision:

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41

*After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from
42 every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne
43 and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.*

44
45

The text goes on to describe the profound worship experience of God's angels and
45 people of diverse backgrounds.

46

We believe that this vision is not merely a description of God's Church at the end of time, but a revelation of the true intended nature of God's church in the here and now.

Acts 2:9-11 lists fifteen (!) ethnic or language groups as being present at the Pentecostal "birthday" of the church when the Holy Spirit came upon the people of faith. Some Bible scholars suppose there were more than that, saying that the list was intended to represent "every nation under heaven," (v.5). The sense that the church should be ethnically diverse is emphasized broadly in many other New Testament passages. These passages include, but are not limited to the following:

- Matthew 22: Jesus' second greatest commandment – Love your neighbor (and illustrated by a parable of a person from a diverse background – the Samaritan);
- Matthew 28:19-20: Jesus' commandment to make disciples of all "ethna" - The primary meaning of this Greek term is "ethnic groups;" "nations" is the secondary meaning;
- Acts 10: When Peter resisted the intercultural nature of the church, the Holy Spirit sent him a soul-shaking vision to redirect and prepare him for intercultural evangelism;
- Romans 12: Members of Christ's church differ greatly, but are all parts of one body;
- I Corinthians 12:12-27: Many members, transformed into one body;
- Galatians 3:26-28: Neither Jew nor Greek, etc. All one in Christ;
- Ephesians 2:14-22: No longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens;
- I John 4:7: All God's children to love one another.

Jesus' ministry was to people from many different backgrounds. He expressed God's love for all people in his teachings. The Bible describes the church as being intercultural (1) at birth, (2) throughout the New Testament and (3) as being so at the end of time. We believe that God loves and values the many faithful monocultural churches (a majority of members from one culture) in our midst. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, monocultural churches have been and can be effective. We also believe that God has long yearned and still yearns for the church to be intercultural – that is, different cultures united in one "Christ culture" (Colossians 3:10-11), furthering Jesus' mission to make "all things new (Revelation 21:5)." Thus, Jesus calls us to be SEPARATE NO MORE but instead to truly be one whole body. We pray that we can all be open and supportive of this long-range goal and undertake incremental steps toward achieving it.

In the parable-telling style of Jesus, we share a summary of this story from India. It demonstrates how our individual journeys of faith can limit our experience of God. The summarization is far too brief to capture the beauty or full impact of this story, but adequate to illustrate its main point:

"Six blind men, after much disagreement about the nature of the elephant, decided that an actual encounter with an elephant would be most informative in assisting them to discern the true nature of the elephant.

- 1 • The first to approach it reached out and touched its huge side. He concluded,
2 “The elephant is like a wall.”
3 • The second felt the elephant’s trunk and said, “The elephant is like a snake.”
4 • The third felt the elephant’s tusk and said, “The elephant is like a spear.”
5 • The fourth put his arms around one of its huge legs and concluded, “An elephant
6 is like a tree trunk.”
7 • The fifth felt one of its ears and said, “An elephant is like a fan.”
8 • The sixth grabbed the elephant’s tail and said “An elephant is like a piece of rope.”
9

10 Which man was right in his perception of the elephant and which man experienced
11 him best? Each of the six had a separate, but only partially correct perception of the
12 elephant. Later in the story when all six perceptions and experiences were combined,
13 a more comprehensive picture of the elephant emerged.

14
15 The story illustrates that none of us has a monopoly on the one “correct” perception
16 of God from our faith journeys. But by attention to God’s Word and the leadership of
17 the Holy Spirit, plus the willingness to share our faith journeys and experiences of God
18 with brothers and sisters from different cultural backgrounds, each of us can experi-
19 ence and see God - and his vision for us - more fully. Only then are we transformed
20 to embrace what this report calls a “SEPARATE NO MORE” philosophy, leading to
21 that richer and fuller experience of God.

22
23 There are other reasons why it is imperative that we become a more intercultural
24 denomination. They include, but are not limited to the following:

- 25 • The need for evangelistic outreach and compassionate service to a wider group.
26 • The realistic accommodation of the national demographic shift to a multi-ethnic
27 population.
28 • For some local churches that might otherwise shrink or die, interculturalism may
29 allow survival, revival and growth in accommodating changing demographics.
30 • The value of embracing the spiritual giftedness of all ethnic and racial groups.
31 • The witness of many individuals in intercultural churches is that being members
32 of such a church is life-enriching and transforming.
33 • The intercultural church provides a model for healing racial and ethnic divides in
34 society by demonstrating how to communicate and love one another across these
35 “boundaries.”
36 • The transformation of society from Sunday morning segregation and compart-
37 mentalization of God’s people can be a time where we as Christians, reach out in
38 reconciliation.

39
40 In his letter to the Corinthian church, Paul held up the Macedonian church as an
41 example for emulation. We also have examples of other denominations that have made
42 substantial progress toward becoming more intercultural. For example, our committee
43 has drawn from the experience and models for progress in intercultural ministry found
44 in denominations such as the American Baptist Churches USA, the Presbyterian
45 Church (USA), the Reformed Church of America, and the Mennonite Church USA.

Lutheran theologian Dr. H.S. Wilson, in his article about multicultural churches, “A Bouquet of Multiple Flowers,” maintains that when churches became too comfortable with a monocultural norm, it was - at least to some extent - a sliding away from God’s preferred norm. He says this: “Embracing multiculturalism is not an option for Christians, but a mandate. It is a call for discarding a false notion of Christian community, despite its long-cherished legacy.” How can we embrace true Christian community? We can embrace Christian community by following Jesus’ commandment to love our neighbours from diverse backgrounds – by building lasting and deep relationships with them that result in the Christian community to which Christ calls us.

Moving toward being “Separate No More”

As a result of many conversations over our three years together, we feel there is an urgent need to celebrate our current diversity and build on it. It is very clear that we, as a denomination, widely agree that despite differences in how we worship and relate to God, we are members of God’s family and have shared faith values.

These values and our discipleship in Christ unite us and allow us to see past our differences, even when they manifest themselves in different ways. These same forces allow us to focus on being God’s family - a family that builds authentic relationships and community by embracing, respecting and loving each of its members, regardless of their background.

Merely acknowledging or tolerating another’s existence is not enough. Healing and reconciliation must occur because Christ calls us to love our neighbor, with all its ramifications! So, where do we begin?

First and foremost, let us seek God and be open to God’s leading. We then need to make a long-term commitment to achieving more of the Revelation 7:9 vision. We must be realistic about what a commitment to this journey entails and know that change does not occur quickly. We also need to recognize that there will be challenges to building a whole body of Christ so that we are prepared to work through them in love.

Secondly, listen, listen, listen to each other and respect one another! While we share common aspects of believing in Christ and “being Brethren” that transcend our divides, ultimately we need to transform our worldview to see others as Jesus sees all of us by growing in the likeness of Christ, by gaining greater self-awareness and by learning more about those from other racial/ethnic cultures. We build our diversity by building deeper and authentic relationships with one another. Flexibility and adaptability are key concepts for relationship building.

We need to be careful not to make assumptions about or judgments of others who are different from us. The willingness to expand our Brethren identity by not “doing church” the way we’ve always done it can keep the larger vision of Christ’s calling in

1 front of us. Living “Christ’s call to oneness” through the intercultural family of God
2 will require that we as a denomination be intentional, inclusive and committed to
3 transformation and healing.

4
5 **Study Background, Process and Initial Conclusions**

6
7 This study committee’s work commenced with the adoption of two queries and five
8 tasks at the 2004 Annual Conference in Charleston, West Virginia. Of the five origi-
9 nal tasks assigned to the committee, two remained unfinished at the time of our report
10 to the 2006 Annual Conference in Des Moines, Iowa. They are:

- 11
12 1. Recommend actions we must take to bring us (the denomination) into conform-
13 ity with the vision of Revelation 7:9.
14 2. Formulate a mechanism to report intercultural ministry progress at Annual
15 Conference through 2010.

16
17 While working on the tasks assigned to us, we realized that many people were drawn
18 to our denomination because of our core values. For clarity on this matter, the Church
19 of the Brethren website states, “Faithful following of Jesus Christ and obedience to the
20 will of God as revealed in the Scriptures have led us to emphasize principles that we
21 believe are central in true discipleship. Among these are peace and reconciliation, sim-
22 ple living, integrity of speech, family values, and service to neighbors near and far.” In
23 repeated conversations with majority and minority ethnic and racial church members,
24 almost all who came into the church from outside the denomination cited our peace
25 witness, service to others, and community as the top three reasons they were attracted
26 to the Church of the Brethren.

27
28 We also attempted to explore demographics related to the various ethnic/racial minori-
29 ties within our denominational and congregational make-up to understand our current
30 diversity. In doing so, we found that there is a severe shortage of reliable and useful
31 information about the ethnic, racial and other cultural elements in the Church of the
32 Brethren. The only centralized data collection tool is the three-page Congregational
33 Statistical Report Form sent each fall to congregations by the District offices.

34
35 To the best of our understanding, the Ministry Office and the Brethren Press staff who
36 work on the yearbook share this tool to collect demographic information about con-
37 gregations and the pastoral body. The form has few cultural diversity indicators of any
38 sort, and those that do appear only relate to the denomination’s pastors. Cultural diver-
39 sity within congregations is generally interpreted by the respondent rather than by
40 using standardized definitions of ethnicity, race or other forms of cultural diversity.
41 The response rate is poor. Therefore, there are no reliable demographic statistics to
42 provide a current “snapshot” of who the Church of the Brethren is in the United States
43 and Puerto Rico.

44
45 Lastly, we reviewed Annual Conference papers and recommendations (1989, 1991,
46 1994) and Annual Conference resolutions (2001) related to interculturalism (please

refer to 2006 interim report to Annual Conference for details). We examined these
recommendations' implementation status. This exercise elicited:

- Great admiration for the deep theological insight, Christian integrity, and ideal-
istic nobility of the stated goals, ideals and expected outcomes of these docu-
ments.
- A feeling that our committee has been assigned to "reinvent the wheel."
- Consternation that, for all the resolutions and recommendations, there have been
few applications or results.

We concluded that the application of the recommendations and lack of outcomes
resulted from:

- A lack of will to implement the recommendations, thereby leading to an even
greater reluctance to dedicate funding for the implementation of the recommen-
dations.
- A lack of a formal process to assess the progress of implementation of the recom-
mendations.
- A lack of assigned accountability for monitoring denominational achievement of
outcomes.
- The failure of implementation, assessment of outcomes, and accountability for
follow-through (which was a result of too few champions of the cause and no real
structural changes within the denomination to facilitate them).

These issues are acknowledged at all levels within the Church of the Brethren. Today,
there appears to be cautious willingness to find funding for intercultural efforts, a will-
ingness to consider some structural changes and more champions for the cause. To
reiterate, we as a committee, recognize that the move to interculturalism within our
denomination will not happen overnight, but requires intentionality, commitment
and priority, resulting in a fundamental shift in the way we "do church."

The Church of the Brethren as a denomination has taken some steps to move toward
the diversity depicted in Revelations 7:9, such as starting churches for separate lan-
guage groups. While this strategy of planting "language churches" is a stepping stone
to achieving Christ's vision, we must not stop there! The vision is to be SEPARATE
NO MORE, meaning that we all worship Christ together. Further, the Church of the
Brethren has been involved in mission work in other countries, resulting in separate
denominations in some of them. Is God now calling us to be SEPARATE NO
MORE in regard to our sisters and brothers in other countries? One suggestion we
have heard that requires further prayer and exploration is to establish a worldwide
Church of the Brethren, which could help draw us all together.

God has led us as a committee to recommend specific actions that we as the Church
of the Brethren can take at all levels of our denomination, so that together we might
realize more of the Revelation 7:9 vision and experience God more fully.

1 **Foundations for Intercultural Progress**

2

3 Many common ideas emerge in the literature about interculturalism and among
4 denominations that have made strides toward it. They are non-specific but founda-
5 tional and necessary underpinnings for intercultural efforts to come to fruition.

6

7 To paraphrase the New Life Ministries' Diversity Project Findings by Mennonites
8 Rocky Kidd and Alan Rowe (see resource list), the Church of the Brethren as a denom-
9 ination needs to commit to the following:

10 • Listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

11 • Be intentional concerning interculturalism in our congregations and denomina-
12 tion.

13 • Make a commitment to work on racial reconciliation and to "speak the truth in
14 love" concerning racial, ethnic and class issues that will lead to healing and whole-
15 ness.

16 • Call and embrace multicultural pastoral staff as important.

17 • Commit to culturally appropriate music and worship styles.

18 • Invest ourselves emotionally, spiritually, financially, and physically in a multieth-
19 nic neighborhood when possible.

20 • Make a long-term commitment to a ministry and a community in that neighbor-
21 hood, and "walk alongside" our neighbors.

22 • Avoid the "just a fix it" attitude.

23 • Respect those within the community. Allow the community to accept us and the
24 ministry on their terms, not ours. They are our partners, not our mission project.

25 • Be aware that individual ethnic [Church of the Brethren] culture can overshadow
26 the gospel and our evangelistic efforts if we are not very careful.

27

28 **Specific Recommendations**

29

30 Task 1: Recommend actions we must take to bring us (the denomination) into con-
31 formity with the vision of Revelation 7:9.

32

33 Task 2: Formulate a mechanism to report intercultural ministry progress at Annual
34 Conference through 2010.

35

36 **Denominational Recommendations**

37

38 As we prepare to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Church of the Brethren, we
39 call all our sisters and brothers to re-commit themselves to radical discipleship that
40 embraces our traditional witness of peace, simplicity, compassion, and stewardship of
41 God's creation. We give thanks for the old wineskins (Matthew 9:17) that faithfully
42 carried forth the living witness of Christ in our world. But in the spirit of transfor-
43 mation found in Romans 12:2, it is time to make new wineskins for the future of the
44 Church of the Brethren.

45

Therefore, **we recommend that the denomination widen the relevancy of our witness to those "from every nation, people, tribe and tongue" by adopting Revelation 7:9 as our denominational vision for the remainder of the 21st century.** Thus, we can clearly articulate to ourselves, our friends, and the un-churched that we are – and will be – SEPARATE NO MORE.

We further recommend that the Annual Conference and its reportable agencies:

- Include the concept of intentional intercultural inclusion in their purpose/vision statement.
- Establish a discernment process during hiring which considers candidates' intercultural competence and the denominational needs.
- Require annual intercultural orientation/education for staff and programme volunteers.
- Develop programmes to include and formally mentor young adults of every ethnic/racial background into leadership positions for the church's future stability and growth.
- Update the Congregational Statistical Report Form to include standardized cultural indicators, so that collected data may be improved and provide an accurate "census" of the Church of the Brethren.
- Annual Conference and all its reportable agencies' national conferences (NYC, NOAC, YAC and NYAC, CCS, etc.) will intentionally include intercultural themes and diverse speakers, offer intercultural-awareness activities and training, and provide adequate translation services.
- Provide new member materials, evangelism materials, and Christian education materials that are intercultural and translated into appropriate languages.
- Require that all of Annual Conference's new Standing Committee members on the Nominating Committee have attended two (2) Cross-Cultural Celebrations in the past five (5) years.
- Require all new agency Board of Directors nominees to have attended two (2) Cross-Cultural Celebrations in the past five (5) years.

We recommend that Bethany Theological Seminary:

- Make intercultural church planting and intercultural education a priority.
- Pursue a policy of intentional recruitment of people of colour among its students.
- Seek qualified faculty from various ethnic and national backgrounds.
- Include the religious history and heritage of non-white church members, along with intercultural communication, in its curriculum.

In regard to structure, we recommend that a full-time, funded specialist position be established within Congregational Life Teams that would:

- Assist in facilitating intercultural activity within the denomination.
- Serve as a denominational clearing house for intercultural resources.
- Assist in data collection about intercultural activity.
- Compile annual intercultural progress reports to be included in the Congregational Life Ministries' reporting to the Annual Conference from the updated Congregational Statistical Request Form. (See Appendix 6: Draft of Proposed Position Description for further details.)

1 We recommend that we as a denomination renew our commitment to existing and
2 new urban ministry sites and intentionally work toward planting new intercultural
3 congregations.

4
5 We recommend that the accountability for monitoring the implementation of these
6 recommendations rest with the Annual Conference Standing Committee. Annual
7 Conference and its agencies will report on their applicable progress at Annual
8 Conference each year until 2010, and every two years thereafter.

9
10 **District Recommendations**

11
12 We recommend that Districts:

- 13 • Develop and implement strategies for realizing the Revelation 7:9 vision in the
14 District.
- 15 • Require that all pastors have ongoing continuing education focusing on intercultural
16 activity. (This could be accomplished by having pre- or post-conference
17 workshops for pastors, online training, dedicated pastoral training sessions or
18 retreats, etc. These activities could carry credit for continuing education units, or
19 CEUs.)
- 20 • Require intercultural content CEUs for re-ordination and re-licensing.
- 21 • Require all district staff and programme volunteers to have intercultural orienta-
22 tion and experience.
- 23 • Implement a formal mentoring programme for new minority pastors.
- 24 • Require that all new District Executive candidates and new nominees for the
25 District Board, committees, and their representatives to the Standing Committee
26 and General Board must have attended at least one (1) Cross-Cultural Celebration
27 in the last five (5) years.

28
29 We recommend that each District Board be accountable for the implementation of the
30 above recommendations by reporting on the District's progress on intercultural activ-
31 ity at the end of two years during their District Conference, and every two years there-
32 after, with progress reports sent to the General Board.

33
34 We recommend that each District implement and promote an annual event empha-
35 sizing the blessing of the increasing intercultural nature of our Church of the Brethren
36 family, and our need to move even closer to the Revelation 7:9 vision.

37
38 We recommend that Districts be intentional about collecting congregational and pas-
39 toral statistics using the Congregational Statistical Report Form which will be revised
40 to include diversity indicators.

41
42 **Congregational Recommendations**

43
44 Across numerous discussions, case studies, readings, etc. in which our committee
45 members engaged, the salient principles of churches moving toward becoming an
46 intercultural family of God include leadership, intentionality, adaptability, and inte-

grated worship. The appendices contain “Stages of Intercultural Church Development” (along with key principles, actual case studies and resources), which may be a helpful guide to congregations desiring to become more intercultural.

We recommend that:

- Congregations reach out intentionally to people from different backgrounds in their neighbourhood and love them as neighbours by building authentic relationships with them.
- Congregations become informed about the conditions of life for ethnic and racial minorities within their neighbourhoods and their congregations, so that when inequities are uncovered, they can make strong commitments of time and financial resources to local organizations working on these issues.

Individual Recommendations

We recommend that:

- Individual Church of the Brethren members and families be intentional about forming authentic relationships with diverse neighbours, learning about their cultural backgrounds and personal stories, and learning more about how they experience and view God.
- Individual Church of the Brethren members and families become better informed about racism and other discrimination, and that they stand in solidarity with victims of all hate crimes, offering compassion and assistance to them.
- Brethren students, staff and faculty at Brethren institutions of higher learning continue their commitment to be open to people from all ethnic and racial backgrounds, and seek to build relationships with those from traditionally ethnic institutions of higher learning located near them.
- Brethren residents and staff of the Brethren retirement communities continue to be open to people from all ethnic and racial backgrounds, and seek to build relationships with traditionally ethnic institutions near them.

Conclusion

How can we experience God more fully? What does it truly mean to be God’s family? What does it mean to truly be one in Christ? What prevents us from realizing the vision of Revelation 7:9? What do we need to do to achieve this vision?

As an intercultural team, these are the questions we have wrestled with and prayed about over the last three years. We have sought God’s guidance as we worked together to answer them and complete our assigned tasks. What we found was that God has taken each one of us on an amazing journey. We have heard God calling for the complete transformation of each of us, of our churches and of our denomination.

1 This is a plea for transformation, calling each of us to more fully and completely fol-
2 low Christ's example of loving all peoples – in loving our neighbours. Through
3 Christ's love, we become the all-inclusive family of God envisioned in Revelation 7:9.

4

5 To do this, we must be completely open to God's work in us and among us. In truly
6 opening ourselves to God, there is no limit to what God can accomplish. This is the
7 way it was in the church described in Acts 2. This is the way it was with our roots in
8 Schwarzenau, Germany. We began as Christians who allowed ourselves to be trans-
9 formed.

10

11 God is calling us today, to be transformed into a whole body of Christ, so that we are
12 SEPARATE NO MORE. So this is not merely a paper containing recommendations.
13 This is a call for transformation. Without transformation, there may be no effective
14 implementation of the recommendations. For as Matthew 9:17 says, "Neither do men
15 pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run
16 out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins,
17 and both are preserved."

18

19 Sisters and Brothers, this is a call for new wineskins – for total transformation through
20 being open to God's guidance. This is the only way to realize more of the Revelation
21 7:9 vision. In this transformation and moving toward this vision for the church, we
22 are called into reconciliation – and God can use this message and ministry of recon-
23 ciliation to literally transform and heal our society and our world.

24

25 Respectfully and prayerfully submitted,

26

27 Asha Solanky, Chair

28 Darla Kay Bowman Deardorff

29 Thomas M. Dowdy

30 Nadine L. Monn, Recorder

31 Neemita Pandya

32 Gilbert Romero

33 Glenn Hatfield, Ex-officio, American Baptist Churches USA

34

35

Appendices

36

37

Appendix 1: Draft of Proposed Position Description

38

39 This CLT position includes a specialty element and by virtue of its function is a high-
40 ly collaborative position. Salary Range: \$ 40,000.00 - 42,000.00

41

42

43 Job Description:

44

45

46

This staff person who would carry the duties of CLT members but their portfolio would include functional expertise in areas of collection and analysis of cultural demographics including but not limited to race, ethnicity and gender. The person would also collect, monitor and analyze intercultural efforts and ministry occurring within the denomination and making recommendations when and where appropriate. The individual would also compile and report data on these activities to be included in the Annual Report presented to Annual Conference.

Note: The person in this position would not be responsible for prescribing or directing intercultural activity within the denomination. Rather, the person in this position would serve as a conduit for information and connect persons with specific needs regarding intercultural ministry and activity to known experts and other available resources within the denomination.

Report to the Director or Congregational Life Ministries.

The following criteria will be considered in the discernment of an appropriate candidate:

- Pastoral experience (five years) or equivalent service
- Master's level education
- Demonstrated intercultural competence
- Bilingual: with both verbal and written fluency
- Demonstrated ability to communicate and network effectively with persons from a variety of ethnicities, races and cultures
- Expertise in data collection, analysis, and reporting
- Minority person

Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

Active collect data and compile data about intercultural activity, ministry within the denomination (through routine contacts with other CLT members and own initiative).

Serve as resource who would connect persons with need to persons with the expertise for various inter-cultural activities: contact, set up meetings.

Find and connect to translators for various denominational events.

Involve youth and young adults (Youth and Young Adults under CLM).

Compile information about available statistics on minorities within the denomination with input from Ministry Commission and Messenger Office (both offices currently gather some data about minorities).

Compile written report to be included in an annual report to Annual Conference that would include an update on intercultural activities within the denomination.

Appendix 2: Stages of Intercultural Church Development

Congregations can be anywhere along this continuum (including in between stages), may move back on the continuum before moving forward again...

- 1) Closed Monoculture – Church is comprised of those from only one ethnic group and members are not open to persons from other cultures
- 2) Open Monoculture – Church is comprised of those from mostly one ethnic group but members are open to persons from other cultures as long as they become “like us”
- 3) Predominantly Monoculture – Church is comprised mostly of those from one ethnic group but are welcoming of those from other cultures and aware of/tolerate some cultural difference
- 4) Mixed Culture – Church is comprised of those from two or more ethnic groups and is welcoming and accepting of those from different cultures; one cultural group still dominates; some leadership in place to move vision forward
- 5) Partially Integrated – Church is comprised of those from two or more ethnic groups. Is welcoming and adapting to those from different cultures, including visuals, music, worship; strong leadership in place to move vision forward
- 6) Fully Integrated – No one culture or ethnic group dominates, leadership is shared by those from different cultural backgrounds, church has created a “new” culture which moves fluidly between different cultural backgrounds; members see from Christ’s perspective (not through their own cultural lens); strong leadership continues to move the Rev 7:9 vision forward....

Developed by Dr. Darla K. Deardorff, Durham, North Carolina 2007

Appendix 3: Principles of Growing Multicultural Churches

The Diversity Project:

Stories and Practical Learnings about the Origins of Multicultural Urban Churches
By Rocky Kidd and Allan Howe

Appendix: Principles of Growing Multicultural Churches

1. Build conviction about diversity

Biblically: People must know why biblically we should have multicultural churches. See: Rev. 7:9-12; Acts 6:1-17, 11:19-26, 12:1-3; Matt. 28:19-20; Eph. 2:14-22; Gal. 3:26-28.

Strategically: The urban reality is multicultural and the church must not lag behind the world’s diversity, but, instead, demonstrate a healthy model of unity in diversity in Christ to the world.

2. Affirm diversity as part of the church's identity and vision	1
Through messages: The pastor must speak about it frequently in his messages.	2
Through planning: Diversity usually doesn't just happen; there must be intentionality in our plans to grow as a diverse church.	3
Through worship, outreach, and ministries: Worship should be enriched by elements from diverse cultures, and ministries should be developed or redefined to be sensitive to concerns of diverse cultures.	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
3. Build a multicultural leadership team and staff	9
Pray for God to direct you to the people of other cultures God has to grow and serve with you.	10
Pursue those people, challenging them with your vision and their role in it.	11
Disciple/train them to grow and serve with you.	12
4. Enjoy progress and anticipate problems	13
Celebrate diversity: It's a foretaste of heaven that we can relish right here and now!	14
Evaluate dynamics: Be alert to how people are interacting on deeper levels.	15
Learn how to identify warning signals: Factions, undercurrents, and "mysterious disappearances."	16
Facilitate communication: An ongoing need to not only solve problems but maximize what God intends diversity to be.	17
	18
	19
	20
	21
5. Keep growing and plant new multicultural churches	22
Recognize how the dynamics of a multicultural church affect the already complex issues of assimilation, mobilization, and charge.	23
Affirm your vision for multicultural churches by enlisting a multicultural team from your church to go start another multicultural church.	24
	25
	26
	27
Prepared by Rev. Thomas M. Maluga, Senior Pastor, Uptown Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois	28
	29
	30
Appendix 4: Case Study of Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren	31
	32
Presenters:	33
Pastor Marisel Olivencia	34
Pastor Irvin Heishman	35
	36
Background Information	37
	38
Vision Statement (affirmed by the congregation in 1995)	39
	40
"We are called to build a Christ-centered, multi-cultural community in the inner city sharing the love, healing, peace and justice of Christ."	41
	42
	43
Church and Neighborhood Information	44
	45
	46

1 In 1996, First Church celebrated its 100th anniversary. The church was started by
2 rural German Brethren who were moving into the city for work. The city was much
3 smaller then so the church was actually located on the edge of the city. At that time,
4 the church neighborhood consisted of white, blue-collar workers.

5
6 By the 1950's, the city had grown to the point that First Church was clearly located
7 in the inner city. A major crisis developed in the church as the neighborhood began
8 to radically change, with a variety of ethnic minority persons moving in and racial
9 tensions flaring. There was a strong feeling among many that the church should re-
10 locate to the suburbs, as many of the church members were. However, the congrega-
11 tion's prophetic pastor helped support those who felt called to stay in the communi-
12 ty to serve the new groups of people moving in. In the end, the congregation decid-
13 ed to assist in the development of a new church plant in the suburbs, forming the
14 Ridgeway Community Church. At the same time, those choosing to stay with the
15 congregation took on a major building project and added staffing to launch new and
16 extensive community outreach programs.

17
18 The community outreach of the church has remained consistently strong. However,
19 the focus of the vision formed in the 1960's was primarily on service, with little
20 emphasis on evangelism. As a result, the congregation attracted a unique, wonderful,
21 but mostly white membership with a high percentage of former volunteer service
22 workers. The congregation has also suffered from several decades of gradual decline
23 in membership and attendance.

24
25 This pattern of decline is beginning to dramatically change. Current leadership has
26 been emphasizing the importance of balancing service and evangelism. The addition
27 of a Spanish language worship service has been the most effective evangelistic effort
28 to date.

29
30 **Attendance Statistics**

31
32 After decades of gradual decline, average worship attendance at First Church has
33 increased 62% in just two years. In addition to this increase, our Latino worship
34 group developed a relationship with a new church plant (averaging 75 in attendance)
35 in Bethlehem, PA, which now wants to affiliate with the Church of the Brethren. We
36 are now in the process of being "adopted" as the mother church for this new fellow-
37 ship!!! If we count the Bethlehem group the two-year rate of growth would be 122%.

38
39 **Statistical Summary**

40 Year	Average Attendance
41 1985	157
42 1997	127*
43 1999	193
44 Month	
45 Jan 2000	206** and growing!

46

* This low figure does not include attendance at a Saturday Evening worship service, a first attempt to start a second worship service. This effort did not thrive and has been discontinued. Unfortunately, most of the people who did come to this evening service are no longer with us. However, lessons learned from this experience have contributed to the success of current efforts.

** This monthly average excludes a winter weather Sunday when both services experienced unusually low attendance.

The period of decline from 1985 to 1997 reflects a pattern that actually extends back several decades. A significant part of this decline was due to the aging of the congregation. There were 12 deaths during one of those years. Losing a significant number of members to death will continue to be a drain on the membership strength of the congregation for some time.

However, in the two-year period ending in December of 1999, average worship attendance had dramatically increased to 193, due in large part to the addition of the Spanish language worship service. Most of the new attenders have been new believers. Some new attenders in the morning English language service were attracted to the church because they were impressed by the congregation's outreach to the Latino community even though they didn't speak Spanish themselves! On January 30, 2000, attendance at the Spanish worship service was 107, surpassing 100 for the first time. We may see the first Sunday in which attendance at the Spanish service is larger than that of the morning service sometime this year.

Our History of Sharing Our Building

First Church has a long and successful history of sharing its building with community groups and other worshipping groups. The congregation currently shares its building with a Cambodian Fellowship affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church. This group has been using our building free of charge for fifteen years (the fellowship is contributing to our building campaign).

In the past, the church shared its facilities with the Hispanic Mennonite Church as it was getting started. That congregation now has its own facilities and is located in another part of the city. Our Latino group and the Mennonites hold joint worship services and enjoy a positive and supportive relationship.

Community Ministries

Brethren Housing Association is now ten years old. This separately incorporated ministry has purchased and renovated six properties (on the same street as First Church) with a total of sixteen living units. These are used to provide transitional housing for homeless families. Case management services are provided in cooperation with a sister organization, DELTA Housing Inc. BHA currently has an annual budget of \$140,000 and is supported by a network of eight member congregations, individuals, and grants.

1 A weekly food distribution takes place at First Church on Fridays. Over two hundred
2 families come for supplemental food each week. This ministry is a cooperative min-
3 istry with Freedom Chapel, an independent congregation. To balance service with
4 evangelism, families are invited, on a totally voluntary basis, to come early for a Bible
5 study before receiving their food. The response has been surprisingly strong and sev-
6 eral people have begun attending the church through this outreach.

7
8 A number of programs are offered for children including a computer club (in which
9 children completing the class receive a free computer to take home with them), KIDS
10 Church (a lively evening worship service for children), after school tutoring, and
11 scholarships for children to attend summer camp.

12
13 First Church is experimenting with "income producing ministries" to see if its com-
14 munity outreach ministries can become self-funded. A thrift shop to sell used cloth-
15 ing and small furniture items is being operated out of the church basement. This is
16 our first experiment with this concept. Free clothing is given from the shop to fami-
17 lies in need. First Church is also making arrangements to rent its parking lots to
18 downtown workers.

19
20 The building is heavily used by community groups such as Narcotics Anonymous.

21
22 Financial Statistics

23
24 First Church has enjoyed surprisingly strong financial support from its members. The
25 congregation's 2000 budget (fully funded by congregational commitments and other
26 income sources) is \$290,143. In addition to this the congregation raised \$361,000 in
27 a capital improvements campaign. The Spanish worship service was started in the
28 middle of the capital campaign.

29
30 Funds to bring our Latino pastoral team on staff were raised by preparing a budget
31 for the ministry including the salary package. This budget was then projected five
32 years into the future. Then the total budget was divided into pieces (like pieces of a
33 pie). A variety of congregations, our district, and groups were invited to become
34 funding partners, each covering a piece of the "pie." Over the five years, the new

35
36
37 Spanish fellowship is projected to pick up more and more of the financial costs, with
38 the group projected to be financially self-sufficient in six years. So far the projections
39 are on target, except that attendance has grown faster than expected.

40
41 Future Dreams

42
43 During the past year the congregation has struggled with questions regarding how to
44 reach out more effectively to our English-speaking neighbors. We have grown in our
45 appreciation of the key role that worship style plays in this.

46

Experiments with blended worship styles have revealed the potential but frustrating limits of this approach. Therefore, plans are currently being laid for developing a new cell group based contemporary/black gospel English language worship service. At the same time we plan to keep the current traditional style worship service fresh and meaningful by continuing to slowly introduce gradual change and variety.

We hope to maintain the Anabaptist ideal of community by expanding the number of joint worship services involving people from all the worship groups, developing cross-cultural small groups, and supporting activities like the Anglo/Latino youth work camp in Puerto Rico.

Appendix 5: The Intercultural Journey of Peace Covenant Church

Over the life of Peace Covenant Church, planted in Durham, North Carolina in 1994, there has consistently been a yearning to be what God wanted the community to be. With the closest Church of the Brethren 80 miles away and the group comprised of members in their 20's and 30's (most from Brethren backgrounds) in an urban setting, we knew it wasn't going to be business as usual.

From the beginning we knew challenge #1 was going to translating the Brethren message into a context understandable by a population that had basically never heard of us. This meant expanding our Brethren identity and not "doing church" the way we Brethren were used to. So, who were our neighbors? What context did they live in? What were their needs? Where was the Anabaptist message going to fit in this part of North Carolina? So, we took a look at our surrounding community and noticed that the community is indeed very diverse! People from all over the world are drawn by our three major universities (Duke, NC State and UNC-Chapel Hill) and the global corporations in Research Triangle Park. Yes, Durham is about 40% Caucasian and 40% African American, but the growing Hispanic, Indian, Asian, and African communities are all increasing at a remarkable rate. It wasn't long until we realized that we as Caucasians were a minority in our community, and we wondered why our church didn't represent that demographic.

So then, we began to not just ask what our neighbors needed from us, but what did we need from our neighbors? What gifts, talents, traditions, passions and spiritual strengths did the people around us have that could strengthen us as a body? And that helped us to turn a corner in our ministry. We were no longer looking for the poor and neglected and those who suffered injustice to give to them, but looked at the people around us and longed to be in community with them and to learn from them and to worship God together.

First though, we realized that our members needed to feel more comfortable with cultural differences. Through prayer and study, we concluded that we needed to intentionally reach out to people in the international community.

1 So, how did we reach out? Through celebrations of cultural and racial diversity in a
2 variety of ways:

- 3 1) We began doing IFFF events on the first Saturday evening of each month. IFFF
4 stands for “International Food, Friends, and Film” (we all know how Brethren
5 like to eat!) and involves an international potluck meal followed by a foreign film
6 (often in other languages with subtitles). Electronic invitations are sent regular-
7 ly to the area university international offices, neighbors, colleagues, English-as-a-
8 Second Language teachers in the community and so on. These IFFF events have
9 become quite popular with an average of 30-40 persons per event and over 10-
10 11 countries and 5 continents often represented. These events have also become
11 an excellent way for our members to become more comfortable with cultural dif-
12 ferences, including different foods and different languages – all in a fun, social
13 event.
- 14 2) Another event started was our Friday Nite Forums to which the community is
15 invited. These forums, usually held every 2 months, deal with world issues and
16 participants are able to discuss practical ways they can address these issues in their
17 daily lives.
- 18 3) A third step our church has taken is in adapting our worship, music, art, and
19 imagery to represent a more diverse picture of God and Christianity (including
20 rhythm instruments from different cultures, banners in different languages, wel-
21 come signs in different languages, and décor from A Greater Gift!).

22
23 We are 3 years into our journey of intentionally diversifying so that we can be a more
24 complete community, experiencing the many faces and races of God. Each week we
25 thank God for the new voices, accents, languages, traditions, music and liturgy from
26 around the world and in our backyard, and feel we are closer to God than ever. On
27 any given Sunday, we now have around 30-35 worshippers from 4-5 different coun-
28 tries. We have learned that persons from other cultural backgrounds are drawn to
29 Peace Covenant through the warmth, genuineness and caring of its members and
30 through the denominational peace witness (and in fact, we learned that the Peace Pole
31 in front of our church building is what brought some of our members through the
32 door initially!).

33
34 It has been an amazing journey that we’ve been on with God – full of joys and strug-
35 gles. Through it all, we have learned that when we open ourselves fully to God’s guid-
36 ance, there is no limit to what God can do in our midst!! As with any intercultural
37 church, there are challenges that we must continue to confront – with God’s help.
38 Some of those challenges include diversifying leadership, dealing with the multiple
39 language issue, learning to be true community together, basically learning to love in
40 many languages. But what comforts us is that we believe this in not our vision, but
41 God’s vision for the church and he already has a way forward into this glorious vision
42 of Revelation 7:9, we just have to be faithful to discerning the vision, courageous and
43 open to follow it and humble to live it.

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Appendix 6: Reading/Resource List 1

I. Intercultural Churches as an Expression of Christian Principle 2

- **Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World** by Stephen A. Rhodes. Intersity Press. 3
- **What Color Is Your God?** by David Ireland. Impact Publishing House. 4
- **Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology** by Jung Young Lee. Fortress Press. 5
- **United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race** by Curtiss Paul Deyoung, Michael Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim. Oxford U. Press. 6
- **One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church** by Manuel Ortiz. Intersity Press. 7
- **Pursuing the Pearl** by Ken Fong. Judson Press. 8
- **A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures: Making Friends in a Multicultural World** by Patty Lane. Intersity Press. 9
- **Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible** by Hans De Wit. Institute of Mennonite Studies. 10
- **One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism** by Ken Ham. Master Books. 11

II. Toward Understanding Difficulties and Barriers 12

- **There is More Than One Color In the Pew** by Tony Mathews. Smith Helwys Publishing. 13
- **The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community** by Eric Law. Chalice Press. 14
- **Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America** by Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith. Oxford U. Press. 15
- **The Color of Faith: Building Community in a Multiracial Society** by Fumitaka Matsuoka. United Church Press. 16
- **Many Cultures, One in Christ** by Julie Garber. Brethren Press. 17
- **Enter the River** by Jody Miller Shearer. 18
- **God is Red** by Vine Deloria Jr. 19
- **The Chalice and The Blade** by Riane Eisler. 20
- **Embracing Diversity: Leadership in Multicultural Congregations** by Charles Foster. 21
- **Challenging Racism** by Jody Miller Shearer. Faith and Life Press. 22
- **The Many Faces of Jesus Christ: Intercultural Christology** by Volker Kuster. Orbis Books. By Volker Kuster. 23

III. Toward Becoming Intercultural 24

- **One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches** by George A. Yancey. Intersity Press. 25

- 1 • **The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed: Developing a Multicultural**
- 2 **Community Through Dialogue and Liturgy** by Eric Law. Chalice Press.
- 3 • **Against All Odds: The Struggle of Racial Integration In Religious**
- 4 **Organizations** by Brad Christerson, Michael O. Emerson, and Korie Edwards.
- 5 • **Multicultural Ministry: Finding Your Church's Unique Rhythm** by David
- 6 Anderson. Zondervan.
- 7 • **From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural**
- 8 **Perspective** by David Rhoads. Augsburg Fortress Publishers.
- 9 • **A Mosaic of Believers: Diversity and Innovation in a Multiethnic Church.** By
- 10 Gerardo Marti.
- 11 • **Uncovering Racism** by Kathryn Goering Reid and Stephen Breck Reid.
- 12 • **People On The Way** by Ken Fong.
- 13 • **The Blessing of Diversity.** January 1999 Messenger Magazine. Includes articles
- 14 such as, "Diversity at the Corner of Poplar and Main: A Call to Action on
- 15 Inclusivity" by Jeanne Jacoby Smith, "Where does your Church go from here?"
- 16 by J.J. Smith, and "On Diversity, is your Church still Running like a Model A?"
- 17 by J. J. Smith.
- 18 • **Cross-Cultural Servanthood** by Duane Elmer. Intervarsity Press.
- 19
- 20 • **Living on the Borders: What the Church Can Learn from Ethnic Immigrant**
- 21 **Cultures** by Mark Griffin and Theron Walker. Brazos Press.

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23 **Committee expenses for travel, lodging meals, and misc.**

24 July, 2004 to July, 2005	\$4,638.00
25 July, 2005 to July, 2006	\$3,073.00
26 July 2006 to December 2006	\$2,412.00
27 Total Committee Expenses	\$10,123.00

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3. Brethren Medical Plan Resolution

1 Introduction

2 From its beginning, the Church of the Brethren has modeled the concept of mutual-
3 ity, emulating the teachings of the Apostle Paul. In I Corinthians 12:24-27 (NIV),
4 Paul states, "But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater
5 honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but
6 that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part
7 suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the
8 body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it."
9

10 According to the 1989 Annual Conference *Statement on Health Care in the United*
11 *States*, "Our Judeo-Christian heritage has taught us that God's holy purpose includes
12 everyone; that every person is of worth. As God's people, we are to be concerned for
13 the health of all people, and to nurture health for one another."
14

15 Historically, the Church of the Brethren has accepted the responsibility of caring for
16 others. In 1961 Annual Conference affirmed the interplay of medical and psycholog-
17 ical sciences, as well as the sacramental elements of confession, prayer, and anointing,
18 for the healing of the body and mind. In the 1974 Addendum of the Report of the
19 Annual Conference Committee on Health and Welfare, the resolution stated, "We
20 believe that all persons should receive adequate health care as a basic human right, as
21 a legal right, and as a reflection of the dignity of personhood. We believe that the
22 responsibility for fulfilling this right must rest with both the individual and society
23 and the government as an instrument of society must assure it...."
24

25 Current Status

26 Whereas -

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28 1. The Church of the Brethren has always believed in mutual care within the body
29 of Christ,

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31 2. The church first started offering medical insurance for national staff, employees
32 of colleges and retirement home communities, and pastors and church staff
33 members in the 1940s,

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35 3. Annual Conference delegates in 1985 endorsed a guideline that "pastor(s) and
36 congregations should participate in the Church of the Brethren Medical Plan"
37 by adopting *Guidelines for Pastors' Salary and Benefits*,

38

39 4. The Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in 1988 and again in 1998
40 affirmed that Brethren Benefit Trust is the administrator of the Brethren Medical
41 Plan,

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5. There are employees of congregations, districts, and church-related agencies and their families who would be uninsurable or be faced with high, budget-busting premiums without the Brethren Medical Plan, 1
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6. The Brethren Medical Plan offers guaranteed issue - guaranteed insurance coverage regardless of medical condition - to eligible employees of congregations, districts, and church-related agencies and their families, 4
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7. The Brethren colleges and many retirement home communities once participated in the Brethren Medical Plan but no longer do so for myriad reasons, 8
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8. Brethren Medical Plan participation among congregational employees has steadily declined over the past decade; many have left the Plan for cheaper insurance, 11
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9. The membership of the Brethren Medical Plan was at 3,119 members in 1993 but dropped to 796 as of May 12, 2005, 15
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10. The medical insurance industry within the United States today is in crisis, with 83 million Americans having inadequate or no health insurance, 18
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11. Medical insurance premiums continue to rise by double digits each year, increasingly becoming a financial burden on congregations, districts, and church-related agencies, 21
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12. Brethren Benefit Trust supplemented the Plan by \$1.4 million in 2003 and 2004, and, with Mennonite Mutual Aid, will continue to supplement the Plan as needed in 2005 and 2006, 25
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13. Insurance consultants have warned that the Brethren Medical Plan needs to be stabilized or terminated as it is in the early stages of a "death spiral," a downward cyclical phenomenon resulting from increased medical costs, increased risk, and declining membership, 29
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14. The Brethren Benefit Trust Board, in an attempt to stabilize the Brethren Medical Plan, announced in August 2004 that each district would need to have 75 percent of its eligible congregations in the Brethren Medical Plan by Jan. 1, 2007; as of this date, districts will not be able to participate in the Plan until this requirement is met, 34
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15. The Brethren Benefit Trust Board will delay implementing its 75 percent participation requirement, subject to the creation of an Annual Conference Study Committee as called for below, through Dec. 31, 2008, or until the completion of the study, whichever is latest, 40
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Resolution

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the 2005 Annual Conference delegates appoint a one-year study committee to -

- A) Evaluate the Brethren Medical Plan, and
- B) Assess the continuing need for a denominational medical insurance plan for employees of congregations, districts, and church-related agencies.

Be it further resolved that the 2005 Annual Conference delegates call on every eligible congregation, district, and church-related agency to participate in the Brethren Medical Plan from 2006 through at least the conclusion of the study. The delegates also call on district and Brethren Benefit Trust staff and other stakeholders in the Plan to work together to promote the Plan to all eligible employers, including colleges, retirement home communities, and other agencies that relate to districts.

*Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust Board of Directors
May 17, 2005*

2005 Annual Conference: Annual Conference adopted the resolution including the recommendation of Standing Committee that Annual Conference elect a committee of four to answer the questions raised in the resolution and report back to the 2006 Annual Conference. Elected to serve on the study committee were: James C. Gibbel, Brian Markle, Willie Hisey Pierson, and Donna Shumate.

Progress Report to the 2006 Annual Conference

The 2005 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren, meeting in Peoria, Illinois, had as an item of new business a resolution from the Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) regarding the current fiscal crisis of the Brethren Medical Plan and asking that a study committee be elected by Annual Conference to review the current plan and respond with recommendations regarding the denomination's participation in such a benefit for its employees. The delegates adopted the resolution, including the recommendation from Standing Committee that Annual Conference elect a committee of four.

Specifically, the resolution requested the study committee to complete two tasks:

- A. Evaluate the Brethren Medical Plan;
- B. Assess the continuing need for and feasibility of a denominational medical insurance plan for employees of congregations, districts, and church-related agencies.

The Brethren Medical Plan Study Committee met for an organizational meeting in September 2005 to begin gathering facts relating to all aspects of the current plan. To date, the committee has consulted with: Wil Nolen, Jeff Garber, and Donna March of the Brethren Benefit Trust; Stan Noffsinger and Mary Lou Garrison of the General Board; and Marilyn Koehler of the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee. As well, the committee has sought the input from the

1 Council of District Executives and has welcomed input from congregations and
2 individuals through letters and e-mails at annualconference@brethren.org.
3

4 The Church of the Brethren has always believed in mutual care within the body of
5 Christ. Since the 1940's, the church has offered medical insurance for national staff,
6 employees of colleges and retirement home communities, and pastors and church
7 staff members. In 1985, Annual Conference delegates endorsed a guideline that
8 "pastor(s) and congregations should participate in the Church of the Brethren
9 Medical Plan" by adopting *Guidelines for Pastors' Salary and Benefits*. Since 1985, the
10 need of staff and pastors for affordable health care coverage has only increased.
11

12 As of January 1, 2006, there were 506 active employees and ministers as well as 240
13 retired employees and ministers participating in the Brethren Medical Plan. Many
14 of these participants have been loyal to the Plan for decades. Pastors and employees
15 of congregations and districts sacrifice to care for the spiritual well-being of the
16 church. Similarly, we have a duty to sacrifice for the physical health of those who
17 minister to and serve us. Some of these participants may be considered uninsurable
18 and most likely would be unable to find affordable health insurance coverage if the
19 Brethren Medical Plan ceased to exist.
20

21 The ministry element of the Brethren Medical Plan makes it imperative to provide
22 for those who serve and especially for those who would not otherwise have health
23 care insurance. It is clear that there is a continuing need for the Brethren Medical
24 Plan.
25

26 The Brethren Medical Plan sustained a loss of \$1.4 million over the years 2003 and
27 2004. Brethren Benefit Trust covered the loss from its reserves. Mennonite Mutual
28 Aid, the administrator of the Brethren Medical Plan, and Hewitt & Associates, an
29 insurance consulting firm, advised Brethren Benefit Trust to take steps to stabilize
30 the Brethren Medical Plan. In response, Brethren Benefit Trust announced in
31 August 2004 that each district would need to have 75 per cent of its eligible con-
32 gregations in the Brethren Medical Plan by January 1, 2007. District Executives,
33 District Advocates, and representatives of Brethren Benefit Trust have actively pro-
34 moted the Brethren Medical Plan since that time. Despite these efforts, the 2006
35 data indicates that the 75 per cent participation requirement has not yet been
36 achieved. This committee believes that further efforts to achieve this requirement
37 would be counter-productive.
38

39 Through the committee's research, it has become apparent that the tasks of evaluat-
40 ing the Brethren Medical Plan and completing the feasibility assessment will require
41 additional time.
42

43 THEREFORE, the Brethren Medical Plan Study Committee affirms the continu-
44 ing need for the Brethren Medical Plan and recommends that:
45

The committee be granted an additional year to consult with other denominational representatives and to complete its study.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Shumate
Brian Markle
James Gibble
Willey Hisey-Pierson

Action of the 2006 Annual Conference: Annual Conference received the 2006 progress report of the Brethren Medical Plan Study Committee and granted the committee an addition year to consult with other denominational representatives and to complete its study.

Report to the 2007 Annual Conference

Introduction

The 2005 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren, meeting in Peoria, Illinois, received as an item of new business a resolution from the Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) regarding the current fiscal crises of the Brethren Medical Plan and asking that a study committee be elected by Annual Conference to review the current plan and respond with recommendations regarding the denomination's participation in such a benefit for its employees. The delegate body adopted a recommendation from Standing Committee that a study committee of four be elected by Annual Conference. The study committee was charged with accomplishing two tasks:

- A. Evaluate the Brethren Medical Plan;
- B. Assess the continuing need for and feasibility of a denominational medical insurance plan for employees of congregations, districts, and church-related agencies.

The delegate body called Willie Hisey Pierson (Illinois-Wisconsin), James C. Gibbel (Atlantic-Northeast), Brian Markle (Southern Pennsylvania) and Donna L. Shumate (Southeastern) to serve on the committee.

For two years, the Brethren Medical Plan Study Committee members gathered and analyzed data regarding the current Brethren Medical Plan. In addition, the study committee sought input from denominational members, pastors, congregations, and related church agencies. The committee had conversations with representatives

1 from the General Board, BBT, the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory
2 Committee, the Council of District Executives, district advocates, and an outside
3 consulting firm. The committee conducted a listening session at the 2006 Annual
4 Conference.

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6 **Background**

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8 The General Brotherhood Board first offered a Medical Plan for its employees in
9 1939. Bethany Seminary employees joined the Medical Plan the following year.
10 During the early 1950s, ministers from across the denomination joined the Plan.
11 The following decade, the colleges and Brethren Homes also joined. The Pension
12 Board assumed administrative responsibility for the Plan in 1978 and the responsi-
13 bility was later transferred to the Brethren Benefit Trust when it was formed in 1988.
14 By the early 1980s, the Plan covered five colleges, nine Brethren Homes, the General
15 Board, Bethany Seminary, ministers, and missionaries. At that time, there were more
16 than 3000 employees covered by the Plan.

17

18 In 1984, the Plan became self-insured up to \$500,000. This means that the Medical
19 Plan collected premiums and used them to pay claims up to \$500,000 per insured
20 person per year. Any claim made in excess of \$500,000 was paid by a commercial
21 insurer. By being self-insured, the Plan accepted the risk of all claims made in excess
22 of the premiums paid up to the \$500,000 mark per insured person per year. In the
23 1990s, membership in the Medical Plan began to decline largely due to an increase
24 in premiums, which was necessary to cover the claims being made.

25

26 In 1999, the Medical Plan changed to a fully insured plan, meaning that the Plan
27 purchased insurance from a commercial carrier and the risk passed to the insurer.
28 MAMSI and Blue Cross/Blue Shield were the primary insurance companies used
29 during that time. From that point until 2003, rates increased dramatically and many
30 members experienced service difficulties. The Brethren Homes and colleges left the
31 Plan to purchase their own fully insured plans.

32

33 The Medical Plan returned to being a self-insured up to \$10,000 in 2003. The
34 Brethren Medical Plan joined the Congregational Employee Plan that was adminis-
35 tered by Mennonite Mutual Aid. In 2003 alone, claims exceeded premiums by over
36 \$1 million. The Medical Plan suffered a loss again in 2004. It became clear that the
37 Medical Plan could not sustain such losses year after year.

38

39 Brethren Benefit Trust recognized the crisis of the Brethren Medical Plan and began
40 exploring various options to make the Medical Plan more stable and viable.
41 Consulting with Hewitt Associates, Brethren Benefit Trust investigated the possibil-
42 ities of returning to a fully insured plan, changing the Medical Plan to small group
43 plans, and rebuilding participation in the current self-funded arrangement. By mid-
44 year 2004, the BBT Board opted to maintain the Brethren Medical Plan as a viable
45 insurance program by implementing a participation requirement for the ministers'
46 group. Specifically, districts were required to obtain commitments from at least 75

percent of their eligible participants by August 31, 2006, to participate in the Brethren Medical Plan beyond December 31, 2006. The agencies participating in the plan had already achieved the required 75 percent threshold. The 75 percent requirement is an industry standard and had been a requirement of the initial General Brotherhood Board Medical Plan during the early 1950s. Participation at that level is considered to be necessary to stabilize premiums because it creates a more adequate spread of the risk. The larger and more diverse the risk-pool is, the more stable the plan.

Brethren Benefit Trust employees, District Executives, and district advocates took on the challenge of increasing participation in the Brethren Medical Plan. They made presentations to individuals, congregations, district conferences, congregational agencies, and Annual Conference. Unfortunately, the 75 percent requirement has been met by only four of the districts and those meeting the requirements are the districts with the smallest number of eligible participants. As of January 1, 2007, there were 463 active employees and ministers as well as 221 retired employees and ministers participating in the Brethren Medical Plan. These numbers are indicators of the continuous downward trend the Plan has experienced with member participation. In fact, since 2005 active employees and ministers has gone from 536 to 463, and retired employees and ministers has gone from 283 to 221. This is a total loss of 135 members or just over 16 percent since 2005. Moreover, the Plan has seen a 78 per cent drop in participation since 1993 when there were 3,119 members. Thus, the Brethren Benefit Trust Board passed the resolution and presented it to the 2005 Annual Conference in Peoria requesting to form a Brethren Medical Plan Study Committee.

Evaluate the Plan

In 2006, BBT provided the committee with the results from a Brethren Medical Plan survey sent to pastors and board chairs of every congregation (except in Puerto Rico) and to all the district offices. The survey consisted of eighteen questions, with the final question asking for comments. There were 2161 surveys sent and 263 responses returned for assessment, which is almost twelve percent. In most marketing areas, the average amount of surveys returned for examination usually runs about three to five percent. Therefore, the responses returned for this evaluation exceeds what is needed to get a true sense of the opinions concerning the medical plan. Of the 263 responses, 93 were enrolled in the Brethren Medical Plan in 2006, 169 were not enrolled in the plan and one church had closed. In addition, of the 169 not enrolled, 80 said they were never enrolled in the plan and 89 were previously enrolled in the plan at some point.

The committee first reviewed data from the survey that addressed the 169 persons who responded they were not on the plan. First responses reviewed were of the 89 persons who were previously enrolled in the BMP at some point but were not enrolled at this time. In this cluster, results indicated the highest number of persons 38% (34 persons) who chose to leave the plan left the plan due to cost and/or cov-

1 erage. The next highest number was 34% (31 persons) who left to go on their spousal
2 coverage. The assumption is these 31 persons chose to be covered by their spouse's
3 coverage because it was less expensive. That would indicate 72% of the persons who
4 were on the plan at some point chose to leave the plan due to price. This pattern con-
5 tinues with the 80 persons who indicated they were never in the plan. The results in
6 this cluster indicated 20% (16 persons) were not in the plan due to cost. When cou-
7 pled with the 35% who either are covered on their spouse's plan or have other cover-
8 age elsewhere, the results of the survey indicate that 64% (109 persons) of the 169
9 who were not on the plan chose not to be on the plan due to cost.

10
11 Another area of the survey that indicates price is an issue for the plan was the results
12 where of the 263 responding to the survey, 151 received a quote from BBT in 2006.
13 Of the 151 persons who received quotes, 58 persons compared their BBT quote to
14 other insurance companies. The results indicated that the BBT quote for 64% (37
15 persons) were higher than the quote they received from other insurance companies.
16 In addition to the survey, the committee heard many comments and received a num-
17 ber of correspondences concerning the high cost of the plan. Therefore, it is appar-
18 ent that price is a major issue for the Plan.

19
20 The most encouraging area of the plan survey was there were no negative responses
21 or comments in the survey concerning claim or customer services issues.
22 Furthermore, there were mentions of how much better customer service has been
23 since changing to Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Along those lines, there were comments
24 that providers/doctors/clinics were more relatively available since changing to the
25 Blue Cross/Blue Shield provider network. Throughout the committee study period
26 the comments as well as correspondences supported that the change to Blue
27 Cross/Blue Shield was very positive regarding the accessibility and availability of net-
28 work providers.

29
30 Brethren Medical Plan Evaluation Conclusion:

- 31
32 1. The plan premium price is considered high. However, the price cannot
33 decrease unless the numbers of persons on than plan increase. Having a
34 requirement of 75% of each district eligible participants on the plan will not
35 guarantee that the price will go down. The increase of participants must also
36 a better risk profile than the ones currently on the plan.
37 2. Processing of claims and customers service has been a problem in the past,
38 however it has improved since the plan began using Blue Cross/Blue Shield
39 as the provider.
40 3. Accessibility of network providers has increased drastically since the plan
41 began using Blue Cross/Blue Shield.
42 4. The Brethren Medical Plan is competitive and its participants seem to like
43 the plan.

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The Continuing Need for and Feasibility of the Brethren Medical Plan 1

A. Based on New Testament teachings, mutual care within the body of Christ has been fundamental to the Church of the Brethren. At the Last Supper, Jesus Christ commanded us to love one another: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34). The Apostle Paul encouraged the church in Corinth to care for one another: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (1 Cor. 12:26). The early Christian church was described in the book of Acts: “All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:44). 2
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The Brethren Medical Plan was created with mutual care in mind. The employees of the Church of the Brethren, the pastors, and district employees are all about the work of Jesus Christ. These are the people who minister to and serve the body of Christ. We have been commanded by Jesus Christ to love one another. This includes the obligation to provide for the needs of those who serve the denomination. Medical insurance coverage is commonplace in employee benefits packages in the secular world and it needs to be available to church employees as well. 13
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Since the inception of the Medical Plan, many congregations, districts and participants have been loyal to the plan. They have continued their participation even during the times when they could have found other coverage at lower rates. Since the denomination has learned of the financial difficulties of the current plan, these participants have continued their participation out of a sense of mutuality and need. Some participants of the Brethren Medical Plan who have contacted the study committee have health conditions which would make it difficult for them to obtain medical insurance coverage elsewhere or which would make the premiums cost-prohibitive. 21
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The ministry element of the Brethren Medical Plan makes it imperative to provide for those who serve. A medical plan must continue for those who would not otherwise be able to obtain or afford medical insurance. 31
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B. The Church of the Brethren is blessed because we still have a Medical Plan for our employees. Many other small denominations have experienced problems similar to the ones we now face and they have not been able to sustain their medical plans. Although the Brethren Medical Plan faces serious challenges, it still exists. It has been viable and it is still marginally viable. 35
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Tracking the claims history of the Brethren Medical Plan, the study committee notes that the recent trend has been an improvement. The Brethren Medical Plan has had a positive loss-claims ratio since 2004. However, during this same timeframe, the number of participants has steadily declined. 41
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1 The only way to ensure the Medical Plan's long-term existence would be to expand
2 the risk pool and to increase the reserves. In order to expand the risk pool, it would
3 be necessary to add participants who would help spread the risk to a more accept-
4 able level. Attracting more participants just like the high-risk group already in the
5 Plan would not solve the problem. It appears that this goal is unattainable based on
6 the history of the participation in the Medical Plan and the recent efforts expended
7 in trying to increase denomination-wide participation.

8
9 Of equal concern is the reserve balance of the Brethren Medical Plan. The Brethren
10 Medical Plan experienced catastrophic years in 2003 and 2004 which could have
11 been anomalies. However, it is clear that the Plan's reserves would be rapidly deplet-
12 ed if the Plan suffered a year of similar losses.

13
14 The study committee concludes that the Brethren Medical Plan's medical coverage
15 component is neither feasible nor viable in its current state.

16
17 C. The Brethren Medical Plan offers long-term disability insurance and life
18 insurance in addition to the medical insurance, which, has been the major topic of
19 discussion. The study committee evaluated the disability and life insurance com-
20 ponents of the Plan as well and concludes that these elements are necessary, feasible,
21 and viable.

22
23 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

24
25 Based on the two years of study, the Brethren Medical Plan Study
26 Committee makes the following recommendations:

27
28 1. That the medical insurance component of the Brethren Medical Plan for
29 the ministers and retirees be phased out while allowing BBT to continue to explore
30 the viability of the Plan for the church-related agencies;

31
32 2. That the long-term disability, life, vision and dental insurance elements of
33 the Brethren Medical Plan continue;

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35 3. That BBT be directed to attempt to find alternative medical coverage for
36 those current participants who would not otherwise be able to obtain or afford med-
37 ical insurance.

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CONCLUSION

The members of the study committee would like to thank the many people who wrote letters of concern or suggestions and those who attended the Annual Conference listening session. In addition, the study committee thanks the denominational members, pastors, congregations, district advocates and related church agencies who shared their thoughts and comments with the committee. The committee looked at all suggestions and discussed them among ourselves and with outside consultants before making a decision on our recommendations. The committee is also grateful for the representatives from BBT, the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, the General Board, and the Council of District Executives who contributed invaluable research, data, suggestions, and ideas to the committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna L. Shumate, Chair
Willie Hisey Pierson
James C. Gibbel
Brian Markle

Committee Expenses for Travel, Lodging Meals and Misc.	
July, 2005 to July, 2006	\$4,687.00
July, 2006 to December 2006	288.00
Total Committee Expenses	\$4,975.00

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4. The Review and Evaluation Committee

A new Mandate

Background

1 The Review and Evaluation Committee was created by the 1971 Annual Conference
2 as a part of the reorganization of the General Board in that same year. The function
3 of the committee, a.k.a. the “Rev & Ev Committee,” was “to evaluate the work of the
4 General Board in terms of its mandate from Annual Conference and to report on the
5 evaluation both to the Board and to the next Annual Conference.” That first com-
6 mittee, consisting of Carl E. Myers, chairman, Walter D. Bowman, Norman L. Harsh,
7 DeWitt L. Miller, and Earl M. Mitchell, made its report, a very thorough one, to the
8 1972 Conference. Adopted along with its report was a recommendation from the
9 committee that subsequent review and evaluations be conducted every five years and
10 that the committee be elected two years in advance of the date of reporting. That pat-
11 tern continued until the 1989 Conference when the frequency of Review and
12 Evaluation Committee reports was changed to ten year intervals. Specifically, the Rev
13 and Ev Committee was to be elected in the fifth year of each decade to “apprise the
14 work of the General Board” and report to Annual Conference in the seventh year of
15 the decade.

16

17 With the approval of a new design for the General Board in 1997, Annual Conference
18 authorized the creation of a specially scheduled Review and Evaluation Committee to
19 be elected in the year 2000 and to present its final report to Annual Conference one
20 year later. That interim limited report, focusing primarily on the new design, was
21 then to be followed by a full review and evaluation in the normal 10-year cycle with
22 election of the new Rev and Ev Committee in 2005 and the report scheduled for
23 2007.

24

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

31

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

34

35 *Who is the official representative in ecumenical relationships?*

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

37 *Who should provide clarification on questions of denominational polity?*

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

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

41 *What role should the Annual Conference office play in the denomination’s orga-*
42 *nizational structure?*

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

As Annual Conference prepares to elect a regularly scheduled Review and Evaluation Committee in 2005, it would be reasonable to believe that such a committee should have an expanded scope, just as that given the specially scheduled Rev and Ev Committee in 2000. In fact, it will be timely to evaluate the effect of the redesign of denominational organization with the passing of another five years of operation.

The Recommendation

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

The Review and Evaluation Task

1. A study of the existing organization and structure of the denomination and their effectiveness for accomplishing the goals and purpose of the church.
2. A study of the thoroughness and comprehension of denominational programs of the General Board, the Association of Brethren Caregivers, and On Earth Peace Assembly.
3. A consideration of the balance and unity of denominational witness and ministry as directed and implemented by Annual Conference agencies.
4. An evaluation of the collaboration, collegiality and cooperation between Annual Conference agencies and the goals and programming of the districts.
5. An assessment of the interest and involvement of the general membership of the Church of the Brethren in denominational programs and missions.
6. The study of other matters of current relevance to the physical and spiritual effectiveness of the denomination.
7. The committee shall make no recommendations that violate agency bylaws.

1 The committee shall develop the criteria for conducting its study.

2 Tools, Methods, and Procedures

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

5

6 1. Self-evaluation by individual agencies.

7

8 2. Interviews with key denominational leaders.

9

10 3. Questionnaires for Annual Conference delegates.

11

12 4. Hearings and drop-in center at Annual Conference.

13

14 5. Examination of documents related to Annual Conference component groups
15 and accountable agencies.

16

17 Guidelines

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

20

21 1. The Annual Conference Council shall ensure that the committee members
22 have an opportunity to be introduced to the leadership and staff of each of
23 the agencies and their role interpreted.

24

25 2. Initial inquiries about the programs and activity of the Annual Conference
26 agencies will be channeled through the respective executives of each agency.

27

28 3. Committee members are welcome and encouraged to conduct spontaneous
29 interviews of agency employees and denominational members.

30

31 4. The committee must observe confidentiality at all times.

32

33 5. The committee will keep the Annual Conference executive and the
34 executives of the Annual Conference agencies apprised of its progress.

35

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

38

39 **Action of the 2005 Annual Conference:** Annual Conference adopted the recom-
40 mendation of Standing Committee that the new mandate for the Review and
41 Evaluation Committee be adopted with one amendment recorded in the document
42 above.

43

44 **Action of the 2006 Annual Conference:** Annual Conference received as informa-
45 tion an interim report of the Review and Evaluation Committee's study. The com-
46 mittee will bring a final report to the Conference.

Report to the 2007 Annual Conference

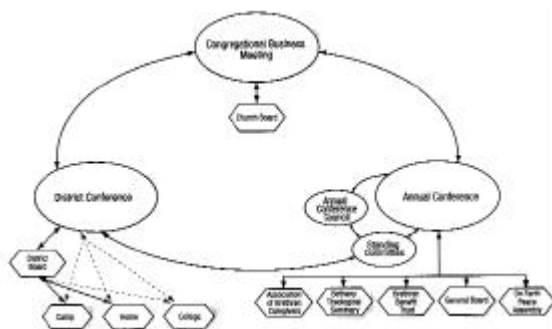
Reviewing the structure of the entire denomination is a daunting task. Many people have been surveyed and interviewed to reflect on the past 10 years and suggest ways to continue building up the Body of Christ and the Church of the Brethren. The committee met twice in Elgin, Illinois, seven times via conference call, and during Annual Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, in 2006. Two hearings and a booth were set up at Annual Conference to listen to input from delegates, church members and denominational staff and leaders. The committee examined all recent reports and documents from the five agencies reportable to Annual Conference. Appreciation is expressed to each person who took the time to review our denominational structure during the past year and give observations and reflections to this committee.

In Luke chapter 11, verse 17, we read Jesus' words of warning to his disciples, "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined and a house divided against itself will fall." Building a foundation that will last is important when we think of the church's structure and its mission in the world. Putting the blocks together so they enhance the structure and do not cause its downfall is of utmost importance. While numerous blocks known as the local church make up the Church of the Brethren, Jesus Christ remains the cornerstone of our building. It is following the mind and example of Jesus, the Christ, that we strive for as we examine our church structure and the ways we can strengthen and enhance our witness in the world today.

Historical Perspective on Church Structure

Our denomination is centered on the local church. Each local church is a building block in the current structure of our denomination. Those blocks are grouped into 23 districts which might be thought of as rooms in the house. The Annual Conference is the gathering of representatives of each individual block. At this yearly meeting, delegates meet to discern the mind of Christ as they hear reports and act on business that will equip the church for ministry.

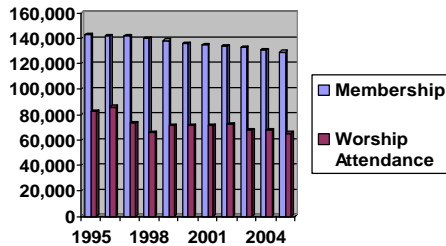
Here is a diagram depicting the current structure of the denomination: (taken from the 2006 Church of the Brethren Yearbook, page 10)



1 To put the current structure into historical perspective, it is well to review the
2 changes in our organizational structure during the past century. Prior to 1947, the
3 mission and ministry of the denomination were carried out by separate committees
4 and/or boards with specific responsibilities. In 1947, Annual Conference created a
5 single agency named the General Brotherhood Board. In 1997, that board was
6 redesigned into three agencies: the General Board, the Association of Brethren
7 Caregivers, and On Earth Peace Assembly. These three agencies along with
8 Brethren Benefit Trust and Bethany Seminary form the basis of the groups being
9 reviewed by this committee.

10
11 **Statistical Indicators**

12
13 What has been happening statistically with our denomination during the past 10
14 years as we have adapted to the changes with our structure? The following graphs
15 show the trends within our church membership, worship attendance, and giving to
16 the agencies and districts..



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27 Church membership has steadily declined from 143,121 in 1995 to 129,340 in
28 2005. This is an 11% decline in membership. At the same time, worship atten-
29 dance has shown a similar trend going from 82,394 in 1995 to 65,143 in 2005 or
30 a decrease of 12.6%.

31
32 Research from the Barna Group indicates a similar trend noting that from 1992 to
33 2003, average attendance at a typical church service has dropped by 13% whereas
34 the population of America has increased by 9%.*1

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40 *1 George Barna Group (2003-SEPT-02) "Small Churches Struggle to Grow
41 Because of the People They Attract," Retried Jan. 27, 2007 from
42 <http://www.barna.org>.

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In contrast to this decline, giving to the overall ministries of the church has remained steady. In 1995, overall giving to the General Ministries Fund (which included Association of Brethren Caregivers and On Earth Peace) was \$4,092,042 and in 2005 the combined giving to General Ministries Fund, Association of Brethren Caregivers and On Earth Peace was \$3,966,297. 2005 was a notable year since giving to the Special Purpose Funds was twice the normal amount at \$4,290,807. District giving has also remained strong in light of membership decreases, going from \$3,080,163 in 1995 to \$2,917,933 in 2005. As a church, the faithful stewardship and support of the denomination shown in the giving figures is a cause for celebration.

Membership Feedback

The surveys from across the denomination were insightful and varied but had some central themes which kept coming to the forefront of the comments. Those included:

- 1) A general concern that the church’s structure is complex for the size of our denomination and is ineffective due to duplication, overlap, and layers of organization.
- 2) A concern that the creation of the Annual Conference Council which was just formed in 2001 at the recommendation of the Review and Evaluation Committee, added confusion and complexity to the current structure.
- 3) A need for better communication among the denomination, districts, and local churches so that information and opportunities get into the hands of church members. Members called for more on-line resources and greater use of technology, while acknowledging that some members do not have computer access.
- 4) A lack of emphasis in the area of evangelism and opportunity for mission, outreach, and growth within the denomination at all levels. At the same time, some members highlighted the growth in work camp opportunities as a positive area of outreach for local churches.
- 5) Overall appreciation for the work of the Congregational Life Team members and the resources they provide for local churches.
- 6) A call for greater unity and cooperation between the General Board, Association of Brethren Caregivers, and On Earth Peace.
- 7) A hope for multi-cultural diversity and inclusiveness within the denomination.
- 8) A need for well-trained leaders and pastors in the local church and education for those persons called to serve the denomination in various roles.
- 9) Appreciation for the ecumenical witness of the denomination.
- 10) A hope that we can deepen our understanding of Brethren heritage and the core values of Bible study, spiritual direction, peace, service, and justice issues as we look to the future.

Many people spent hours writing down their thoughts and we are grateful for these comments and suggestions. The Review and Evaluation committee has spent

1 days reviewing these surveys and interviewing individuals across the denomi-
2 nation. Based on all this information, we humbly offer the following recom-
3 mendations with a prayer that the Holy Spirit will guide us all as we discern
4 God's leading into the future.

5

6 **Recommendations:**

7

8 1) We recommend the merger of the General Board and the Association of
9 Brethren Caregivers into one incorporated legal entity entitled "The
10 Church of the Brethren, U.S.A." The board of directors (trustees) of the
11 corporation would have responsibility to oversee the domestic and inter-
12 national ministries as the administrative and programmatic agency for
13 the denomination. We also strongly encourage On Earth Peace to con-
14 sider joining together with these two agencies through prayerful discus-
15 sions with their board, executives, and the wider church as the agencies
16 work toward unity.

17

18 The current articles of incorporation of the General Board have been
19 amended previously to accommodate name changes. The General Board
20 continues to be the only agency wholly owned by the delegates of the
21 Annual Conference, holding for the denomination the corporate name,
22 the 501c3 tax status and titles for all real estate, and it assumes legal lia-
23 bility for activities of the denomination, including Standing Committee
24 and Annual Conference. We envision that the new incorporated board
25 of directors (trustees) will replace the roles and functions of both the
26 current General Board and the Annual Conference Council, uniting
27 them into a single body.

28

29 The new structure will be responsible for the coordination of major
30 church conferences on behalf of the denomination. It would be respon-
31 sible for the employment of their staff and oversight of their work.

32

33 The General Secretary of The Church of the Brethren, U.S.A. would
34 serve as the representative for the denomination with the ecumenical
35 community, for example with the National Council of Churches Head
36 of Communion meetings. When speaking on behalf of the denomina-
37 tion, the General Secretary would make statements in consultation with
38 the moderator and other church leaders as deemed appropriate.

39

40 All ministries would be funded through a core ministries budget (uni-
41 fied) unless the inherent nature of the ministry (Disaster Response,
42 Brethren Press, et cetera) generated resources to adequately support its
43 activities, in which case it would be designated a "self-funded" ministry.
44 Staffing for this structure would be primarily centralized except where
45 the nature of the work assignment necessitated dispersed placement such

as Congregational Life Team staff and funding counselors. 1

Bethany Theological Seminary would continue in its current relationship to the 2
broader church as the denominational seminary. Brethren Benefit Trust would 3
continue to serve in its capacity to provide financial services to the church and 4
its employees. 5
6

The duplication of resources expended for separate boards, separate finance and 7
fundraising needs of each of these agencies has meant the draining of both 8
financial and people resources within the denomination. The hope is that a 9
simpler structure can empower local churches to maintain creative energy and 10
resources and minimize the footprint that the agencies within the church 11
impose on the local church's mission and ministry. There has been some over- 12
lap within the area of witness between the agencies, and this proposal would 13
enable a unified approach to share the message of the denomination. 14
15

We further recommend that a new committee be called to examine how such a 16
merger can be implemented, taking into account the research and recommen- 17
dations of this report. 18
19

2) We recommend that our current practices for orientation for leadership roles 20
including the moderator, moderator-elect, Standing Committee and denomina- 21
tional board members be examined and enhanced to better equip leaders for 22
their positions. Many leaders commented about the large amount of time it 23
took for them to understand their position and the tasks before them. 24
Recommendations regarding ways to better orient leaders are found in the 25
2006 Study Committee Report: Doing Church Business. 26
27

3) The core values of the church should be promoted through our Brethren iden- 28
tity and heritage curriculum resources. The 300th anniversary committee is 29
working hard to lift up ways we can share our heritage and faith with the world 30
in 2008. Many local churches are calling for ways they can disciple new mem- 31
bers and help them understand who we are as Brethren. Brethren Press is 32
encouraged to continue empowering local churches in this area. 33
34

4) Evangelism is an area that needs strengthening in our current structure. More 35
guidance and opportunities are needed within the denomination for church 36
members to learn about sharing their faith and ways to establish new churches. 37
We recommend the denomination seriously consider, through curriculum and 38
workshops, ways to empower local churches to reach out to the unchurched in 39
their local communities. We further recommend that denominational leader- 40
ship model active evangelism. 41
42

5) Stewardship education was emphasized in a query to Annual Conference in 43
2006. Church members are calling for ways to lift up generous giving to the 44
ministries of the church. The General Board responded to this query with the 45
46

- 1 increase of staff in this area. A full-time staff in stewardship education began in
2 the Fall 2006.
3
- 4 6) The local church, districts, and the denominational agencies struggle to find and
5 maintain leaders for their positions. Those currently in leadership positions
6 often feel overworked. In an effort to call out and maintain quality leaders,
7 local churches and district boards are encouraged to provide avenues for profes-
8 sional growth and sabbaticals for renewal. Each year pastors, district execu-
9 tive/ministers, and denominational staff are encouraged to bring proposals to
10 their annual review on how they plan to work at spiritual renewal for the call of
11 their ministry position. In addition, local churches and districts are encouraged
12 to establish a yearly process to review and consider members to be called out
13 into ministry.
14
- 15 7) Both agency personnel and local church members recognized the strain on
16 budgets to try and attend numerous conferences of the denomination annually.
17 It is suggested that the denominational leaders consider staggering conferences
18 such as National Older Adult and National Youth Conference so that they
19 would not all occur the same year. It was noted that 40% of local churches do
20 not send a delegate to the Annual Conference in any given year. There was a
21 call from some denominational leaders to consider having Annual Conference
22 bi-annually due to the expense for all participants. We encourage discussion of
23 this idea by all agencies and local churches.
24
- 25 8) There continues to be a disconnect between the person in the pew and the pro-
26 grams of the denomination. Continued emphasis on the use of modern tech-
27 nology and varied ways of reaching local churches with information about activ-
28 ities and opportunities is encouraged.
29
- 30 9) The Congregational Life Teams were mentioned often in the surveys. The
31 Congregational Life Teams need to be more intentional about making local
32 churches aware of what they do and services offered in their area. The commit-
33 tee felt many people value this group as a link between the denomination, dis-
34 tricts and local church.
35
- 36 10) A number of respondents lifted up the need for our church to be more welcom-
37 ing toward diversities of all types. Currently several denominational committees
38 and groups are working on this, including the Intercultural Study Committee
39 reporting to the 2007 Annual Conference and the Cross Cultural Consultation.
40 A Commitment of Accessibility and Inclusion Resolution was adopted at the
41 2006 Annual Conference urging each Church of the Brethren to enable all peo-
42 ple to participate fully in the church's life. Resources are available from the
43 Association of Brethren Caregivers.
44
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46

A Call to Unity and Simplicity

Throughout our denomination’s 300-year history we have sought to follow Jesus’ teachings in the New Testament. The early church model in Acts 2 was lifted up by some survey respondents as an example of how the church sought to live out Christ’s teachings. Simplicity and cooperation between church members was a priority. Sharing everything in common and pooling resources was emphasized.

As our denomination moves into its fourth century, these values of simplicity, cooperation, and stewardship of our precious gifts and resources are encouraged through these recommendations and suggestions. May these ideas undergo prayerful consideration as we boldly proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to a hurting, violent world.

“I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.” I Corinthians 1:10.

Prayerfully Submitted by:

- Paul Hoffman, McPherson, Kansas, Committee Chair
- Michaela Camps, Miami, Florida
- Rebecca Baile Crouse, Warrensburg, Missouri
- Craig L. Gandy, Mexico, Indiana
- James Edward Martinez, Modesto, California, Recorder

Committee Expenses for Travel, Lodging, Meals, and Misc.

July, 2005 to July, 2006	\$2,622.00
July, 2006 to Dec.,	\$2,483.00
Total Expenses	\$5,105.00

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New Business

1. Query: Child Abuse Prevention

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Whereas Nationwide statistics consistently find that more than 4 million children are reported each year as victims of abuse and neglect (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2002); and,

Whereas National media attention has increased our awareness that the church is not exempt from the reality of child abuse; and,

Whereas The Church of the Brethren has concerned itself with the conditions of childhood in the past through a query brought to Annual Conference in 1983 and answered in 1986; and,

Whereas These concerns led the 1986 Annual Conference and the Association of Brethren Caregivers to appoint the Conditions of Childhood Task Group, whose mission "...that children should be safe from all forms of abuse and neglect [and that] we, the church will be advocates for children and establish clearly defined safeguards, policies and procedures for their protection," led to the creation of the **Child Abuse Prevention handbook**, a manual for congregations; and,

Whereas the **Child Abuse Prevention Handbook** states, "...that the Church of the Brethren should take an open and truthful stance on protecting children from abuse and adopt firm standards of practice for clerical, lay staff, and volunteers who are employed by the church and its schools, camps and youth programs; and,

Whereas the Code of Ethics for Ministers (1996) and the Statement of Ethics for Congregations (1996) reiterate and restate these concerns and call for all congregations "...to have written policies in effect for the interviewing, hiring, supervision and reporting of both lay employees and volunteers having child-care duties; and,

Whereas In services of the consecration of children and parents, congregations promise to assist parents as they help their children grow in faith and in knowledge of God's presence in their lives, and this promise is fulfilled through the programs of the church and through personal relationships with children;

Therefore we, the members of the Skyridge Church of the Brethren, gathered in our congregational meeting, on Nov. 20, 2005, believing that the

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Church of the Brethren needs to provide leadership in preventing child abuse and neglect, petition Annual Conference through the Michigan District, to thoroughly examine how the recommendations made in Conditions of Childhood in the United States (1986), the Child Abuse Prevention Handbook (1991), and the Ethical Guidelines for Congregations (1996) are being utilized and implemented in Church of the Brethren congregations; schools; camps; district, Annual Conference, and General Board programs; other related institutions /events; and bring a recommendation to Annual Conference for implementation at all levels of denominational programming.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Adopted by the Skyridge Church of the Brethren, Kalamazoo, Michigan at their Congregational Meeting on November 20, 2005, and passed on to Michigan District Board.	11 12 13 14
Wayne Theobald, Board Chair	15
Robert Metzler, Steward Chair	16
Carrie Gross, Treasurer	17 18
Approved by the Michigan District Board on April 29, 2006 and passed on to the Michigan District Conference.	19 20 21
Bill Sumner, District Board Chair	22
Frances Townsend, District Board Secretary	23 24
The Michigan District Conference, meeting at Winding Creek Campground in Hastings, Michigan, on August 12, 2005, approved the query for consideration by the Annual Conference meeting in 2007 at Cleveland, Ohio.	25 26 27 28
Mary Gault, Michigan District Moderator, 2006	29
Roya Stern, Michigan District Recording Secretary, 2006	30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46

1 **2. Query: Annual Conference Schedule**
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4 **Whereas** The attendance at Annual Conference has declined over the past
5 decade, and;

6
7 **Whereas** Only 59% of the denominations congregations sent delegates to
8 Annual Conference held at Peoria, Illinois in 2005, and;

9
10 **Whereas** The Church of the Brethren has held the stewardship of creation
11 and conservation of resources as a high priority, and;

12
13 **Whereas** Communication in the 21st Century provides the means for
14 instant communication within the denomination, and;

15
16 **Whereas** The expenses of Annual Conference places a burden on local
17 congregations, individuals and families and causes agencies reportable to the
18 Annual Conference to spend funds that could be used to support the ministries of
19 the church to continue the work of Jesus, peacefully. . . simply. . . together.

20
21 **Therefore** we the members of the Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren, gathered
22 in council meeting on May 7, 2006, ask - what is the best way for the denomina-
23 tion to schedule Annual Conferences, taking into consideration frequency, length,
24 technology-based and other options?

25
26 Joe Patton, Church Moderator
27 Karen Walters, Chair Leadership Team
28 Laura Miller, Church Clerk

29
30 _____
31 *District Board, August 18, 2006*
32 Paul Lovelace, District Board Chair
33 Laura Miller, District Recording Secretary

34
35 _____
36 *District Conference, October 28, 2006*
37 Joseph J. Schechter, District Moderator
38 Laura Miller, District Clerk

3. Query: Reverse Membership Trend

Because Jesus commissioned his church to "make disciples of all nations," "baptize them" and "teach them" everything he commanded (Matthew 28:18); and,

Because The early church believed the promise of God's grace was "for you and your children and all who are far off" (Acts 2:39); and,

Whereas Church of the Brethren membership declined by the largest amount in five years in 2005, down 1861 members or 1.42 percent; and,

Whereas Total reported denominational membership fell under 130,000 for the first time since the 1920's; and,

Whereas Denominational membership has been on a steady decline since the early 1960's; and,

Whereas The number of baptisms in 2005 was at its lowest level in recent history, with just 1,660 reported;

Therefore, Nampa Church of the Brethren confesses our sinful complicity with the declining membership of our denomination and asks when and how the Church of the Brethren can halt and reverse this trend toward extinction?

Timeline:

September 12, 2006: Query adopted by Nampa, Idaho Church of the Brethren and forwarded to the District of Idaho & Western Montana Board of Directors.

Robert McKellip, Board Chair
Marilyn Blickenstaff, Moderator
Jim Hardenbrook, Senior Pastor

October 3, 2006: Query reviewed and discussed by District of Idaho and Western Montana Board of Directors. This body unanimously approved forwarding query to 2006 District Conference.

Ed Kerschensteiner, Board of Directors Chair
Sue Daniel, District Administrative Executive

October 21, 2006: Delegates to the Idaho and Western Montana 2006 District Conference, meeting at the Mountain View Church of the Brethren in Boise, Idaho, unanimously approved passing the query to Annual Conference for consideration, with the addition of the following statement:

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1 "The Idaho District Conference also acknowledges its complicity in the declining
2 membership of the district and the denomination. We will give in-depth considera-
3 tion to this issue for our local congregations and our district, as well as the denom-
4 ination."
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6 Sidney King, Idaho & W. Montana District Moderator 2006
7 Sue Daniel, District Administrative Executive
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4. Update to Annual Conference Polity

Background

In 2005, the Program and Arrangements Committee (P&AC), as an action plan of the Annual Conference Strategic Plan, initiated a subcommittee to explore marketing and promotion of Annual Conference. The Marketing Ministry Team recommended to P&AC in 2006 multiple marketing and promotion proposals that held the potential to hold the line on attendee expenses and increase attendance at Annual Conferences. One of those recommendations was to change the rotation pattern of Annual Conference and hold the event in population concentrations of Brethren even more than we do today. A portion of that recommendation was to consider using fixed cities in the East and Midwest with larger airline hubs, an attendee expense consideration.

P&AC and Annual Conference staff explored the feasibility of making the rotation change in fixed cities and determined that first-tier cities, like Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, through which lower airfare costs could be realized, would have to be utilized for Annual Conference rather than smaller cities with regional airports, where airfares are generally higher. Though there are some travel cost savings for attendees through first-tier cities, the meeting space and hotel room costs in first-tier cities would be prohibitive. In addition, establishing fixed cities in the rotation may actually decrease attendance, as some attendees look to Conference sites for pre/post-Conference vacation possibilities in different locations with new attractions.

P&AC discontinued pursuing the 'fixed cities' option but believes that having Annual Conference more often in population concentrations of Brethren (East and Midwest) holds the greatest potential for attracting as many attendees as possible. There has been a general trend of declining attendance at Annual Conference over the past six to ten years, consistent with the longer decline of membership in the denomination and other demographic considerations. In order to hold the line on attendance at Annual Conference, a necessity to avoid other, more significant changes in the way we conduct the annual meeting, P&AC recommended to the Annual Conference Council, who approved it, the following Conference rotation polity change.

Recommendation to Annual Conference 2007

The Annual Conference Council recommends the following to supersede previous Conference actions.

(I) *Frequency, Timing, Location (of Annual Conference)*

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1 C. Since Annual Conference involves all districts and churches, it is held as
2 close to the population concentrations of Brethren as available facilities
3 permit, rotating every six years to the following geographic areas: (1) East -
4 e.g., Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia; (2) Midwest (east of the
5 Mississippi) e.g., Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee; (3)
6 Midwest (west of the Mississippi) e.g., Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, Colorado;
7 (4) Southeast - e.g., Virginia, Carolinas, Florida; (5) Midwest (east of the
8 Mississippi) e.g., Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee; (6) Far
9 West - e.g., Idaho, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona (alternate
10 every six years between northwest and southwest).
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12 **Recommendation:** Change the underlined portion of the paragraph to
13 read: as available facilities, volunteers, and potential attendees permit,
14 rotating every 12 years to the following geographic areas. Conference will
15 be held in the East and Midwest four times respectively in a 12 year peri-
16 od. The other years of the 12-year cycle, Conference would be held in the
17 Southeast once, the Northwest once, the Plains once, and the Southwest
18 once, in years three, six, nine and twelve, respectively. The rotation would
19 thus be:
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- 21 Year 1 East
 - 22 Year 2 Midwest
 - 23 Year 3 Southeast
 - 24 Year 4 East
 - 25 Year 5 Midwest
 - 26 Year 6 Northwest
 - 27 Year 7 East
 - 28 Year 8 Midwest
 - 29 Year 9 Plains
 - 30 Year 10 East
 - 31 Year 11 Midwest
 - 32 Year 12 Southwest
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5. Recommendation Regarding Christian Churches Together

Christian Churches Together (CCT) in the USA seeks to provide a new space that is inclusive of the Christian families in the United States. Currently, there is no process or forum for such a gathering. The National Associations of Evangelicals and the National Council of Churches of Christ each provide important ministries in their own right, but neither has found it possible to bring together people from all the Christian families.

CCT's purpose is to enable churches and national Christian organizations to grow closer together in Christ in order to strengthen the Christian witness in the world. To fulfill this purpose, CCT focuses, in its annual meeting, on praying together, discerning the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer and theological dialogues, and providing fellowship and mutual support.

CCT welcomes churches, Christian communities and national Christian organizations that:

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

The Committee on Interchurch Relations has discussed this matter for the past three + years. We believe that our participation in CCT will not hinder our work with other ecumenical agencies. Indeed, leaders from the NCCC gave encouragement to CCT early in its development. We are pleased that the General Board has affirmed our recommendation at their fall meeting.

At the September 2006 meeting of the Committee on Interchurch Relations, the following two actions were taken:

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Approved CIR Action for Annual Conference decision
The Committee on Interchurch Relations recommends to Annual Conference that the Church of the Brethren become full participants in Christian Churches Together in the USA to enable us to participate in a broader Christian community. We will review our participation periodically, to ensure that it meets our goals of building Christian unity, being spiritually uplifting and welcoming to the beliefs and values of the Church of the Brethren.

Approved CIR Action
The Committee on Interchurch Relations invites the General Board to affirm this recommendation.

At the October 2006 General Board meeting, the following action was taken:

Action
The General Board affirms the recommendation of the Committee on Interchurch Relations that the Church of the Brethren become a full participant in Christian Churches Together in the USA. Affirmed.

Recommendation: Approve full participation by Church of the Brethren in Christian Churches Together in the USA.