

# New Business

## 1. Call to Stewardship Education

**Whereas** Jesus acknowledged and affirmed the Old Testament teaching of tithing (Luke 11:42) plus Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35); and,

**Whereas** The Church of the Brethren as a denomination reports only 12 percent of our membership make an intentional decision to "give a tithe or more of income." *Newsline*, 5/12/05; and,

**Whereas** Church leaders often feel uncomfortable talking about stewardship education and giving to the church; and,

**Whereas** The mission of the church is dependent on the stewardship of time, talent and financial resources; and,

**Whereas** Giving of our time, talent and financial resources are part of what it means to be a Christian; and,

**Whereas** Stewardship education is a process and not an event; and,

**Whereas** The Biblical record challenges us to mature as stewards of God's resources (Deuteronomy 14:23, Luke 21:1-4 and I Corinthians 16:2);

**Therefore**, we the Leadership Team of the Mid-Atlantic District, meeting on July 23, 2005, petition the Mid-Atlantic District Conference meeting at Frederick, Maryland, October 7, 2005 to request Annual Conference at Des Moines, July 1 - 5, 2006 to offer additional guidance, resources and instruction for deepening our understanding of the stewardship of time, talent and financial resources.

**Action of the 2005 Mid-Atlantic District Conference:** Passed on to Annual Conference by the Mid-Atlantic District Conference meeting on October 7-8, 2005 at Frederick, Maryland.

John Thompson  
Moderator

Jan Young  
Clerk

## 2. Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust

### Articles of Organization Proposed Revisions

1 **Purpose**

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3 The purpose of the Brethren Benefit Trust is to support **a mutual ministry of** finan-  
4 cial **services among members, employees, and affiliated agencies** of the Church of  
5 the Brethren, and other persons and groups that share the values of the Church of  
6 the Brethren.

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8 **Function**

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10 The function of the Brethren Benefit Trust is to provide financial programs and serv-  
11 ices **through Brethren Benefit Trust, Inc., and Brethren Foundation, Inc.**, which  
12 **focus on fiduciary responsibility, mutual support, Christian stewardship, and**  
13 respond to the needs and interests of local churches, church members, church agen-  
14 cies and employees, **such as the following:**

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16 Pension benefit plans

17 **Medical insurance and other welfare benefit plans**

18 Financial assistance programs

19 **Tax information**

20 Financial management consulting and training

21 Financial operations administration and support

22 Information **services and** systems development and management

23 **Banking and loan services**

24 Investment management

25 Mutual insurance products

26 Financial and estate planning

27 Deferred gifts development and management

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29 **Available** products and services **at the effective date of this document include** the  
30 Church of the Brethren Pension Plan; **Church Workers Assistance Plan;** The  
31 Equitable Annuity Plan; Supplemental Income for Equitable Annuitants (SIFEA);  
32 Medical, Life, **Dental, Vision, and** Long Term Disability insurance plans; **Health**  
33 **Savings Accounts and Flexible Spending Accounts;** asset management, deferred  
34 gifts management, and technical **and marketing** assistance from the Brethren  
35 Foundation; **and third party administration of Church of the Brethren Credit**  
36 **Union.**

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<b>Governance and Reportability</b>	1
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The Brethren Benefit Trust is an official agency of the Church of the Brethren as authorized by the Annual Conference and shall report to the Annual Conference on matters of organization and function. An annual report shall be made to the conference for its review and approval. Reports of programs and services shall also be made to districts, local churches, agencies, employees, and the general church membership.	3 4 5 6 7 8 9
<b>Authority</b>	10 11
The Brethren Benefit Trust shall have the authority to (i) establish, modify, interpret, and maintain programs, products, and services that it may elect to develop and implement, (ii) develop alliances and subsidiary organizations (either not-for-profit or for-profit corporations, partnerships, or limited liability companies) to which it may assign authority and responsibility for programs, products, and services, and (iii) act in any lawful manner to fulfill the purpose of the Brethren Benefit Trust.	12 13 14 15 16 17 18
<b>Bylaws</b>	19 20
The Brethren Benefit Trust shall have authority to develop and implement bylaws for the proper and efficient operation of its organization and sub-organizations. The bylaws shall address all pertinent subjects including, but not limited to, board of directors, officers, tenure, frequency of meetings, coverage of expenses, and employment of staff.	21 22 23 24 25 26
<b>Funding for Services</b>	27 28
The principal source of funding shall be fees for services as established by the Brethren Benefit Trust and related organizational entities. <b>Special programs requested from Brethren Benefit Trust may require funding through donations, grants, or other contractual arrangements.</b>	29 30 31 32 33
<b>Liaison Relationships</b>	34 35
The President of the Brethren Benefit Trust shall serve as an ex-officio member of the General Board without vote and the <b>General Secretary</b> of the General Board shall serve as an ex-officio member of the Brethren Benefit Trust board without vote. Similar relationships may be developed with other agencies reportable to the Annual Conference.	36 37 38 39 40 41
<b>Board Membership and Terms</b>	42 43
The board of directors of the Brethren Benefit Trust shall consist of twelve members. Each term shall be for a period of four years. Directors may serve a maximum	44 45

1 of two consecutive terms. There shall be a lapse of at least one year before a direc-  
2 tor is eligible for election to additional terms. The directors of the Brethren Benefit  
3 Trust may elect a successor director to fill the unexpired term of any director in the  
4 event of a vacancy due to the resignation or death of a director before the end of a  
5 term. Partial terms of two years or less shall not be counted in considering eligibil-  
6 ity for re-election.

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

10  
11 **Election**

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13 A. Four directors are to be elected by the Annual Conference from a ballot sub-  
14 mitted by Standing Committee. The responsibility for this election shall be  
15 lodged with the officers of the Annual Conference.

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17 B. **Four** directors are to be elected by a majority vote of the members of the  
18 Church of the Brethren Pension **and Insurance plans** under procedures estab-  
19 lished by the directors of the Brethren Benefit Trust. Nominees shall represent  
20 the employees of user groups, including, but not limited to, local churches, **dis-**  
21 **tricts and district-related agencies, denominational agencies reportable to the**  
22 **Annual Conference, and retirement communities** related to the Church of the  
23 Brethren.

24  
25 C. **Four** directors are to be elected by the **board of** directors of the Brethren  
26 Benefit Trust under procedures set forth in its bylaws and subject to approval  
27 by the Annual Conference.

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29 The responsibility for conducting the election in B. and C. shall be lodged with the  
30 Brethren Benefit Trust.

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32 **Eligibility**

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34 Persons eligible for election as a director by Annual Conference and by the directors  
35 of the Brethren Benefit Trust shall meet the following qualifications:

- 36  
37 - Be a member of the Church of the Brethren.  
38 - Have a general knowledge of pension, insurance, foundation, **or credit union**  
39 programs.  
40 - Have some expertise in the field of finance, **credit union, banking, employee**  
41 benefits, insurance, accounting, law, information **technology and** systems,  
42 investments, **human resources**, charitable gifts, or health care.

43  
44 All nominees should have sensitivity to the concerns of the Church of the Brethren  
45 and to the persons and agencies they represent.

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

**Implementation**

**A. Four directors shall be elected by the Annual Conference**

One director shall be elected each year **for a four-year term** by the Annual Conference. Two names shall be nominated for each vacancy.

**B. Four directors shall be elected by members of the Pension and Insurance Plans**

**One** director shall be elected **each year by members of the Pension and Insurance plans. Two names shall be nominated for each vacancy.** All active and retired employees of user groups (excluding BBT active employees) or former employees **who participate in the Pension and/or Insurance plans** shall be eligible to serve as a director. The user groups, number of directors, and nominating agencies shall be as follows:

<u>User Group</u>	<u>Directors</u>	<u>Nominating Agency or Group</u>
Local Churches and Districts	2	Ministers Association and Council of District Executives
<b>Annual Conference Agencies</b>	1	<b>Agency Executives</b>
Retirement <b>Communities</b>	1	Fellowship of Brethren Homes

**C. Four directors shall be elected by the Brethren Benefit Trust, subject to the approval of the Annual Conference.**

One director shall be elected each year by the BBT.

**Effective Date**

The revised Articles shall become effective **July 2006.**

### 3. Resolution: Divestment from Companies Selling Products Used as Weapons in Israel and Palestine

1 **Whereas** The prophets Isaiah and Micah declared that we must beat our swords into  
2 plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks, and Jesus consistently modeled and  
3 taught us peacemaking; and

4

5 **Whereas** The Church of the Brethren has throughout its history opposed participa-  
6 tion in war and in the production of weapons of war, from the writings of Alexander  
7 Mack, to the petition to the Colonial Assembly in Pennsylvania that “We find no free-  
8 dom in giving, doing or assisting in anything by which men’s lives are destroyed or  
9 hurt,” to the 1991 Annual Conference statement that “encourages the boycott of  
10 products produced and sold by companies that derive large amounts of their income  
11 from military contracts”; and

12

13 **Whereas** the Church of the Brethren helped initiate and is participating in the  
14 Decade to Overcome Violence sponsored by the World Council of Churches and  
15 declared its intention at the 2003 Annual Conference to be a “Living Peace Church”;  
16 and

17

18 **Whereas** The Brethren Benefit Trust has a strong concern for responsible investment,  
19 including the avoidance of ownership of stock in companies that produce weapons of  
20 war; and

21

22 **Whereas** The Brethren Benefit Trust holds stock in the Caterpillar Corporation,  
23 which sells to Israel bulldozers that are used to destroy Palestinian homes, farms,  
24 ancient olive groves, roads, and water and sewer pipes and that have killed several per-  
25 sons; and

26

27 **Whereas** These Caterpillar D9 bulldozers are made according to military specifica-  
28 tions and are sold to Israel under the U.S. Foreign Military Sales Program, a govern-  
29 ment-to-government program for selling U.S.-made defense equipment; and

30

31 **Whereas** Human Rights Watch has documented the Israel Defense Force’s systemat-  
32 ic use of the D9 bulldozer in illegal demolitions throughout the occupied Palestinian  
33 territories, including more than 2,500 Palestinian homes over the past four years in  
34 the Gaza Strip alone, and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to  
35 Food has warned that the delivery of bulldozers to the Israeli government with knowl-  
36 edge that they were being used for illegal demolitions might involve complicity in vio-  
37 lations of human rights;

38

39 **Therefore** based on the teachings of the prophets and of Jesus Christ we resolve that  
40 the Brethren Benefit Trust divest itself from ownership of Caterpillar Corporation and  
41 any other company that sells products that are used routinely as weapons of destruc-

tion or death in Israel and Palestine. Furthermore, we encourage all other Church  
of the Brethren agencies and individuals to review their own investments and take  
appropriate action. We also ask for exploration as to whether such funds could be  
reinvested in companies doing business that enhances the quality of life for both  
Israelis and Palestinians.

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Adopted by the Fremont Fellowship in Christ congregation on September 28, 2005,  
and passed on to the Pacific Southwest District.  
Ben Garst, Board Chair; Esther M. Ho, Church Clerk

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Adopted by District Conference of the Pacific Southwest District of the Church of  
the Brethren meeting at the Modesto congregation, October 8, 2005, and passed on  
to Annual Conference.  
R. Jan Thompson, Moderator; Doris Dunham, Clerk

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## 4. A Call to Reduce Global Poverty and Hunger

1 To all who are concerned with making known to a suffering world the teachings  
2 and compassion of Jesus Christ, now is a critical time for addressing the crisis of  
3 extreme poverty and widespread hunger. While the number of persons living in  
4 a continuous state of hunger remains staggering, for the first time in history it is  
5 believed that humankind has the prospect of resolving this suffering within a  
6 generation. Response to hunger and human need is not a new calling for  
7 Christians. The churches have a long history of such ministry in their commu-  
8 nities and around the world.  
9

10 Through the serving of meals in local soup kitchens and by providing shelter for  
11 the homeless, congregations live out the biblical mandate to “share your bread  
12 with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house” (Isa. 58:7).  
13 Through the Global Food Crisis Fund and other generous giving to many min-  
14 istry areas for the poor and hungry, the Church of the Brethren continues to  
15 build on its history of developing programs and opportunities for Brethren to  
16 fulfill the call of Christ to feed the hungry and clothe the naked (Matt. 25:36).  
17

18 For generations, Brethren have sought to live out that call among sisters and  
19 brothers around the world as evidenced in the pioneering ministries introduced  
20 in India, Nigeria, and Ecuador in health services, wells, and agricultural train-  
21 ing; in the founding of such far-reaching efforts as Heifer International and  
22 SERRV; in helping to establish CROP and Church World Service; in continu-  
23 ing to place mission and service personnel in community development assign-  
24 ments; in conducting agricultural exchanges and disaster services irrespective of  
25 ideological differences; and in promoting and monitoring socially responsible  
26 investment. Drawing from its vital rural heritage, the Church of the Brethren  
27 has made a significant impact on food security and the alleviation of poverty in  
28 specific settings.  
29  
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31 The call to the Church of the Brethren in these early years of the 21st century is  
32 to join our voice with many sisters and brothers who are also speaking with  
33 renewed vigor about a global response to the poor and the hungry. The collec-  
34 tive voices of the churches, as well as people of other faiths, have focused on a  
35 series of broad goals to bring health and wholeness to communities around the  
36 world. Crafted through a United Nations process, these goals are grounded in  
37 the same moral directives and high regard for all humankind to which Christians  
38 have committed themselves. In summary, these goals are to:  
39

- 40 1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger,
- 41 2) achieve universal primary education,
- 42 3) promote gender equality and empower women,
- 43

- 4) reduce child mortality, 1
- 5) improve maternal health, 2
- 6) combat HIV/AIDS and other diseases, 3
- 7) ensure environmental stability, and 4
- 8) develop a global partnership. 5

Together, these have been called the Millennium Development Goals. These global objectives set forth tangible and measurable steps for building a healthier, safer, and more just world by 2015. The United States signed and committed to achieve the Millennium Declaration along with 188 other countries at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000. Faith-based groups, non-governmental organizations, corporations, and individuals are urged to join together with the efforts of governments in attaining these outcomes. 6

The Church of the Brethren Annual Conference is encouraged by this swelling global voice to redress critical human want on a broader scale. We recommit ourselves to follow the teachings of Jesus that prompt our loving response to the poor and hungry. *We recommend that* congregations, agencies, and members revisit the 2000 Annual Conference *Statement on Caring for the Poor*, using this and other study materials to prayerfully engage the questions of hunger and poverty. We call on all levels and structures of the denomination to identify with and pursue the Millennium Development Goals, joining others in advocacy and action and building upon decades of experience locally and globally. 7

“Draw out your soul to the hungry,” states one version of Isaiah 58:10. “In a world where injustice and inequities are the cause of so much suffering, misery, and death, the church cannot be silent. The church, as Christ’s body, must place itself clearly on the side of the poor and the oppressed” (*Statement on World Mission Philosophy and Program*, 1981 Annual Conference). 8

Through prayer, study, and concrete action, let us resolve to act so that those who know extreme poverty and hunger might enter more fully into the abundance of God’s love. 9

**Action of the General Board:** *At its October 2005 meeting the General Board approved the statement and endorsed the Millennium Development Goals. The General Board recommends adoption of the statement by the 2006 Annual Conference.* 10

## Appendix

### Church of the Brethren Policy on Poverty and Hunger

1 The Church of the Brethren has many statements on issues related to hunger  
2 and poverty as well as other issues addressed by the Millennium Development  
3 Goals. The following are selected portions from statements of the church since  
4 1973. The most recent document is the 2000 Annual Conference paper, *Caring*  
5 *for the Poor*. Specific recommendations for the church from this paper are list-  
6 ed at the end.

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8 *“The Christian faith teaches that all persons are entitled to a humane standard of*  
9 *living. The Church of the Brethren has recognized this right to a humane standard*  
10 *of living throughout its history in its frequent calls for practical help for those in mis-*  
11 *fortune or with serious, unmet needs. . . . Although we have made great achieve-*  
12 *ments as a nation, we have yet to live up to our potential and responsibility in car-*  
13 *ing and providing for those persons among us who are still deprived of the basic*  
14 *necessities that make for a humane standard of living.” Annual Conference 1973*  
15

16 *“The Church of the Brethren is committed to feeding the hungry, helping the impover-*  
17 *ished, healing the broken and promoting freedom, justice, and reconciliation*  
18 *among all men. . . . Our bread is a material concern, our brother’s bread is a spir-*  
19 *itual concern.”*  
20

21 *“The global crisis of hunger is primarily a challenge potentially generating hope and*  
22 *new commitment. The crisis gives us an opportunity to participate more energetically*  
23 *in the radical transformation of human values, social realities and distribution sys-*  
24 *tems. If the world is to change, we Western Christians must change, for we control*  
25 *the resources that must be invoked to set humankind on a new course.” Annual*  
26 *Conference 1975*  
27

28 *“The Church of the Brethren seeks to shape its own programs and to influence other*  
29 *institutions in order to encourage the United States to: acknowledge that food is a*  
30 *human right and to make this right a guiding principle in deciding economic poli-*  
31 *cies . . . channel its foreign economic aid through multilateral agencies in which the*  
32 *poor nations enjoy equitable representation.”*  
33

34 *“The Church of the Brethren recognizes the principle that the church has specific*  
35 *responsibility to defend and respond to the rights and needs of the poor, the disad-*  
36 *vantaged, and those with insufficient power to assure their rights, and the principle*  
37 *that no person is created for poverty, but all are born for a full place at the table of*  
38 *the human family.”*  
39

40 *“Hunger, poverty, war, and broken relationships are evidences of sin working in*

human structures. These point up the need for repentance and restitution for the restoration of justice in the earth.”

“Economic institutions should promote the capacity, willingness, and likelihood of peoples to embrace economic equity at the expense of material self-aggrandizement; to substitute for selfish competition, cooperation to meet the needs of one another; to implement justice toward other classes, nationalities, and ‘enemies’ by sharing wealth and power in practical ways and to build community, nurtured by local roots and encompassing all humanity. We call upon all Christians and other persons of good will to join with the Church of the Brethren to reverse the widening of the gap between rich and poor. In order to conserve energy, food, and other resources needed by the poor, we must reexamine our patterns of consumption.” Annual Conference 1977, *Statement on Justice and Non-violence*

“We support new government measures to provide emergency food and shelter to the homeless and housing policies that will make available to each person affordable, decent housing.” Annual Conference 1989

“Poverty is therefore not an ‘out-there’ problem, but an ‘everywhere’ problem.” Annual Conference 2000, *Caring for the Poor*

## **Caring for the Poor**

Recommendations of the 2000 Annual Conference Statement:

1. In the firm belief that experience helps beget mission, *we recommend that* each congregation develop at least one direct, hands-on ministry with the poor or develop one new activity that will undergird the congregation’s commitment in ministry with the poor.
2. *We recommend that* congregational study experiences be used to discover and explore our faith basis for ministry with the poor. Bible studies and our denominational heritage provide strong motivation for an active, caring ministry with the poor.
3. *We recommend that* congregations use their experience in ministry with the poor to inform themselves of the legislative and political issues having impact on the poor and speak to those issues with their legislators at local, state, and national levels. The biblical witness and our own experiences as a community of faith suggest that there is a corporate or societal responsibility to deal with the problems of the poor, such as the Year of Jubilee. This extends beyond personal, hands-on responses and includes advocacy on behalf of the poor.
4. Congregations are encouraged to partner with urban/ethnic congre-

1 gations of the Church of the Brethren in shared ministries, includ-  
2 ing fellowship, finances, and joint programs. Congregations may  
3 also find meaningful relationships with congregations of other  
4 denominations strategically placed in their own communities that  
5 will create strengthened shared ministries with the poor. These part-  
6 nerships may be especially helpful as congregations begin their min-  
7 istries with the poor.  
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- 9
- 10 5. Congregations are encouraged to contact their local social service  
11 agency office. What gaps in service or absence of resources do they  
12 see as persons prepare to enter the workforce? Can they link the con-  
13 gregation with organizations they can partner with in specific min-  
14 istries with the poor?
- 15
- 16 6. The committee recommends that each District Conference annual-  
17 ly include at least one insight-sharing session in which congregations  
18 can share their experiences in ministry with the poor. This forum  
19 would provide opportunity to share examples, concerns, resources,  
20 and encouragement and truly build up the body of Christ.  
21
- 22 7. *We recommend that* three to five slots be reserved annually in the  
23 Ministry Summer Service Program for participants to serve in  
24 urban/ethnic congregations and that adequate financial resources be  
25 appropriated to accomplish this. These opportunities would increase  
26 the awareness of the problems of the poor in individuals considering  
27 a career calling in ministry. Such firsthand knowledge is essential as  
28 we develop our ministries with the poor.  
29
- 30 8. We recommend the development of anti-racism training on a regu-  
31 lar basis for boards and field staff reportable to Annual Conference.  
32 This training could then become a part of each new employee's stan-  
33 dard orientation. This recommendation recognizes racism as one  
34 enduring structural factor related to poverty in the United States and  
35 seeks a method to increase staff capacity to respond. Other areas of  
36 concern might also be highlighted, e.g., rural isolation and poverty.  
37
- 38 9. *We recommend that* the Cross Cultural Ministries Team be author-  
39 ized to provide counsel and advice to our district executives and  
40 congregational life team leaders as these goals are implemented over  
41 the next five years and to prepare a progress report to be presented  
42 to the 2005 Annual Conference.  
43
- 44 10. Congregations need support as they begin or expand their ministry  
45

with the poor. *We recommend that* the Church of the Brethren develop a “magazine” of resources, one that includes examples of what has worked well for different congregations, descriptions of programs and activities, and sources for congregational exploration as churches develop ministries with the poor. *We recommend that* this responsibility be assigned to the Congregational Life Team program and that support be provided that will enable this resource to be updated routinely and be reflective of ministries appropriate to all congregational sizes and settings. This resource might become a routine part of the *In Our Midst—Congregational Resources*.

## **The Millennium Development Goals**

The United States signed and committed to achieve the Millennium Declaration along with 188 other countries at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000.

### ***Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger***

Target 1: Halve, between 1999 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day.

Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

### ***Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education***

Target 3: Ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

### ***Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women***

Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

### ***Goal 4: Reduce child mortality***

Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.

### ***Goal 5: Improve maternal health***

Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

1 **Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases**

2 Target 7: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of  
3 HIV/AIDS.

4

5 Target 8: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of  
6 malaria and other major diseases.

7

8 **Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability**

9 Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into coun-  
10 try policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental  
11 resources.

12

13 Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustain-  
14 able access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

15

16 Target 11: Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the  
17 lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

18

19 **Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development**

20 Target 12: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, nondis-  
21 criminatory trading and financial system (includes a commitment to  
22 good governance, development, and poverty reduction—both national-  
23 ly and internationally).

24

25 Target 13: Address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries  
26 (includes tariff- and quota-free access for Least Developed Countries'  
27 exports, enhanced program of debt relief for heavily indebted poor  
28 countries and cancellation of official bilateral debt, and more generous  
29 official development assistance for countries committed to poverty  
30 reduction).

31

32 Target 14: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries  
33 and small island developing states (through the Program of Action for  
34 the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and  
35 22nd General Assembly provisions).

36

37 Target 15: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing  
38 countries through national and international measures in order to make  
39 debt sustainable in the long term. Some of the indicators are monitored  
40 separately for the least developed countries, Africa, landlocked develop-  
41 ing countries, and small island developing states.

42

43 Target 16: In cooperation with developing countries, develop and  
44 implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth.

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Target 17: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.

Target 18: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies.

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## 5. Commitment of Accessibility and Inclusion Resolution

1 **Introduction:** *Much like the friends who broke through the roof of the building where*  
2 *Jesus was teaching so that Jesus could heal the paralytic, the Church of the Brethren is*  
3 *encouraged to work creatively to enable all people, including those with disabilities, to*  
4 *have access to God's love, teaching and faith community. The Disabilities Ministry of the*  
5 *Church of the Brethren recognizes that many congregations have worked to incorporate*  
6 *people with disabilities more fully into the body of Christ. At the same time, it urges the*  
7 *church to recognize that more must be done to ensure that all people may worship, serve,*  
8 *be served, learn and grow in the presence of God as valued members of the Christian*  
9 *community.*

10  
11 **Whereas** one in five Americans lives with a disability that significantly limits one  
12 or more major activity, and

13  
14 **Whereas** virtually everyone will have a disability at some point in their lives, espe-  
15 cially as they reach elderhood, which should garner particular attention within the  
16 church since nearly half of the Church of the Brethren population is already elder-  
17 ly, and

18  
19 **Whereas** our call to share our faith and reach out to the many people with dis-  
20 abilities who remain unchurched can be accomplished only as we become accessible,  
21 and

22  
23 **Whereas** some persons with disabilities, who have valuable gifts and energies to  
24 contribute to the common good of our church (1 Corinthians 12:7) and can con-  
25 tribute meaningful leadership on denominational, district and local committees, are  
26 barred from participating fully, if at all, in the life of our denomination, and

27  
28 **Whereas** despite a 1994 Annual Conference Resolution urging "appropriate fol-  
29 low through by the Church of the Brethren congregations and institutions on behalf  
30 of persons with special needs in our midst," many of our churches, church-related  
31 facilities (including camps and denominational offices), and gatherings remain  
32 largely inaccessible or offer significant challenges to persons with disabilities, and

33  
34 **Whereas** the attitude of our greater society toward people with disabilities has  
35 dramatically changed toward full inclusion of people with disabilities since the  
36 national Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of  
37 1990, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, and

38  
39 **Whereas** some denominational districts, camps and congregations have made  
40 accessibility modifications to facilities, half of the Church of the Brethren congrega-  
41 tions, exempt from ADA regulations, still lag behind secular society in making facil-

ities accessible and in integrating persons with disabilities into their communities, and

**Whereas** barriers continue to exist in architecture; in communication for those with visual, mental or hearing impairments; and in attitudes that reflect a lack of sensitivity or understanding, which deny persons with disabilities the right to a life of dignity and respect that includes access to education, healthcare, useful work, recreation, spiritual nurture, friendship, freedom, self expression, and service equal to and balanced by the rights of others, and

**Whereas** the life of Jesus, his works and his teachings, provide a clear basis for our church's commitment to nondiscrimination, integration, and inclusion, and

**Whereas** we believe God requires the Church of the Brethren to protect these rights and exercise spiritual and moral leadership by its preaching, teaching and practice,

**Therefore**, we petition the Annual Conference to urge each congregation, agency, institution, facility and gathering of the Church of the Brethren to make a new commitment to enable all people to participate fully in all ministries of the Church of the Brethren. Furthermore, we ask organizations and event planners:

1. To work to ensure that all may worship, serve, be served, learn and grow in the presence of God as valued members of the Christian community.
2. To examine barriers, both physical and attitudinal, that prevent people with disabilities from living fully in church community and work to rectify these situations.
3. To commit that all existing and future denominational office sites be modified or designed to follow the guidelines of the ADA.
4. To request that the Association of Brethren Caregivers continue to make resources available to assist in fulfilling these commitments.

*Resolution approved by the Association of Brethren Caregivers Board, meeting on March 25, 2006*