

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS OF THE 2011 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
(See Official 2011 Minutes when published)

Refer to 2011 Annual Conference Booklet pages as identified

Reports, Numbers 1-10 (pages 81 through 172)

Reports numbers 1-10, along with the financial statements of the Church of the Brethren, Brethren Benefit Trust, On Earth Peace, and Bethany Theological Seminary, were received

Unfinished Business Items, 1-4

- 1. A Statement of Confession and Commitment** (pgs. 173-174) and
- 2. Query: Language on Same Sex Covenantal Relationships** (pgs. 175)
Action of the 2011 Annual Conference: The 2009 Conference placed both Unfinished Business items 1 & 2 in the special process as outlined in the 2009 Annual Conference paper *Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues*. The process concluded with Annual Conference 2011 with the following answer:

Report of the Standing Committee

Introduction

The Church of the Brethren affirms the New Testament as our rule for faith and practice and seeks to place Jesus at the center of our lives and life together (1998 paper *The New Testament as Our Rule of Faith and Practice*). It is clear that good people of faith, through Bible study and prayer, are not of one mind in how we as a church interpret the Bible or how the Bible is understood concerning homosexuality and same-sex unions.

The Special Response process, as outlined by the 2009 paper *Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues*, revealed strong affirmation for the 1983 paper *Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective* as evidenced by the consistent support of *A Statement of Confession and Commitment*, herein referred to as the Statement, and a desire to return the *Query: Language on Same-Sex Covenantal Relationships*, herein referred to as the Query. At the same time, a credible minority could not offer support for the Statement and pointed to a number of reasons to accept the Query. Both positions were supported with scripture and a desire to place Jesus at the center of our lives. A strong and consistent moderate voice challenged the church to find a way through the difficulties of the current discussion, calling for the church to love and care for one another as members of God's creation. Within the Special Response process, the Statement and Query have served their purpose in allowing Standing Committee to take the "temperature" of the denomination as it relates to homosexuality and same-sex unions. In the end, many participants affirmed the known differences in biblical interpretation and expressed a desire and willingness to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Acknowledgements and Affirmations

The Church of the Brethren acknowledges the diversity of understanding related to the inspiration and authority of scripture and the recognized call to draw all members of Christ's church together. Standing Committee encourages study of the 1979 paper *Biblical Inspiration and Authority*. (1975-1979 Annual Conference Minutes, p. 563)

The Church of the Brethren continues to affirm the entire 1983 paper *Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective* which encourages open and forthright conversations with those of different sexual orientations. "When we stop alienating one another and instead venture toward understanding, our fears disappear and interpersonal relationships become more honest." (1980-1984 Annual Conference Minutes, p. 580) Standing Committee encourages individuals, congregations and districts to continue deeper conversations concerning human sexuality outside of the query process.

The Church of the Brethren acknowledges the call for mutual trust and shared responsibility echoed in the 2004 paper *Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions*. Standing Committee urges disagreeing parties to continue in their conversation through visits, forums, and consultations so as to

gain greater understanding of the disagreement and how each party might learn more about the other's perspective, thereby moving closer to reconciliation. (2000-2004 Annual Conference Minutes, p. 1278) The Church of the Brethren acknowledges our brokenness. Standing Committee advocates the 2008 resolution *Urging Forbearance*, in that "we commit ourselves to forbearance which recognizes and respects differences of opinion and differing degrees of spiritual insight. We will show deference in disputable matters while practicing prayerful study and conversation in core beliefs." (2005-2008 Annual Conference Minutes, p. 1239) Standing Committee urges the Church of the Brethren to continue to wrestle with our tension, to truly listen to one another, to disagree in love, to avoid unkindness toward those with whom we differ, and to continue to seek the mind of Christ together.

Action of the 2011 Annual Conference: Annual Conference adopted the recommendation of Standing Committee that in light of the Special Response process, as outlined by the 2009 paper, *A Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues, A Statement of Confession and Commitment and Query: Language on Same-Sex Covenantal Relationships* be returned. Further, the 2011 Annual Conference reaffirmed the entire 1983 *Statement on Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective*, and voted to continue deeper conversations concerning human sexuality outside of the query process.

3. Query: Guidelines for Implementation of the Congregational Ethics Paper (pgs.176-179)

Action of the 2011 Annual Conference: Annual Conference received the report of the Congregational Ethics Study Committee that the 1996 *Ethics for Congregations* paper be reviewed, revised and updated, and that these revisions be facilitated by Congregational Life Ministries staff in collaboration with the Council of District Executives and the Office of Ministry. As a result of this review, the revised document should include guidelines and suggestions for a denominational process of accountability.

New Business Items 1-3

1. Query: Guidance for Responding to the Changing of Earth's Climate (pgs.180-181)

Action of the 2011 Annual Conference: Annual Conference adopted the recommendation of Standing Committee that the query on *Guidance for Responding to the Changing of Earth's Climate* be adopted and that it be referred to the Washington Advocacy Office of the Global Mission Partnerships.

2. Query: Proper Decorum (pg. 182)

Action of the 2011 Annual Conference: Annual Conference adopted the recommendation of the Standing Committee that the query on *Proper Decorum* be returned with appreciation and that the district be referred to the section in the 2011 Annual Conference booklet entitled "Accountability to One Another" (page 74 of the 2011 booklet).

3. Resolution on the War in Afghanistan 2011 (not in Conference Booklet)

Action of the 2011 Annual Conference: Annual Conference accepted the recommendation of Standing Committee that the Resolution on the War in Afghanistan 2011 be adopted.

**Church of the Brethren Annual Conference
July 2-6, 2011 – Grand Rapids, Michigan**

Elections and Appointments

Elections

Moderator-Elect – Bob Krouse
Program and Arrangements Committee – Thomas Dowdy
Bethany Theological Seminary Trustee (Colleges) – Jonathan Frye
Bethany Theological Seminary Trustee (Laity) – D. Miller Davis
Committee on Interchurch Relations – Torin Eikler
Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee – Herb High
On Earth Peace Board – Patricia Ann Ronk
Brethren Benefit Trust Board – John Waggoner
Mission and Ministry Board (Area 3) – Becky Rhodes
Mission and Ministry Board (Area 4) – Jerry Crouse
Mission and Ministry Board (Area 5) – W. Keith Goering

Appointments Confirmed

Church of the Brethren (Mission and Ministry Board) – Janet Wayland Elsea, Don Fitzkee, Patrick C. Starkey
Brethren Benefit Trust Board – Deb Romary, Craig H. Smith
Bethany Theological Seminary Trustees – Gregory Geisert, David W. McFadden
On Earth Peace Board – Madalyn Metzger, Louise Knight

Standing Committee Nominating Committee, Class of 2013

George Bowers (Shenandoah), Mark Bowman (Southern Ohio), Charles Eldredge (Middle Pennsylvania), Bob Kettering (Atlantic Northeast)

Standing Committee Appeals Committee 2011-2012

Melody Keller (Atlantic Northeast), Victoria Ullery (Southern Ohio), David Crumwine (Middle Pennsylvania), Henry Elsea, Jr. (Shenandoah) 1st alternate, Jeff Castetter (South/Central Indiana) 2nd alternate

Program Feasibility Committee from Standing Committee

Millard Driver

Vision Committee Liaisons from Standing Committee

Ron Nicodemus and James R. Sampson

CIR Study Committee (Standing Committee representative)

Nelda Rhoades Clark

Elected to the Ministers Association Executive Committee

Erin Matteson

NCCC/CWS Representatives (elected by Standing Committee)

Ron Beachley, Audrey DeCoursey, Phil Jones

Mission and Ministry Board Reorganization – Executive Committee

Chair – Ben Barlow
Vice Chair – Becky Ball-Miller
At-Large – Andy Hamilton
At-Large – Pam Reist