Unfinished Business

2. Review and Evaluation

Mandate for the 2015-2017 Review and Evaluation Committee

It has become the practice of the Church of the Brethren during the fifth year of each decade to call a committee to review and evaluate the organization and structures of the denomination and make recommendations to the Annual Conference in the seventh year of the decade for improving the effectiveness of our efforts to accomplish the goals and purpose of the church.

As Standing Committee prepares to call the 2015-2017 Review and Evaluation Committee, the Leadership Team recommends:

1) that Standing Committee affirm the following election guidelines for calling the Review and Evaluation Committee and

2) that Standing Committee recommend to the 2015 Annual Conference approval of “The Review and Evaluation Tasks” to be assigned to the Review and Evaluation Committee in light of the changes which have been made in our denominational structure since the last review and evaluation process.

Review and Evaluation Committee

Number of Members: 5 members from the church at large, excluding staff and employees of the Church of the Brethren and of the Annual Conference agencies (Brethren Benefit Trust, Bethany Theological Seminary, and On Earth Peace).

Procedure: Twenty nominees will be presented to Standing Committee by its Nominating Committee. Standing Committee will vote to reduce the slate to ten nominees to be presented to Annual Conference, which shall elect five members for the committee.

Term and Schedule: Review and Evaluation Committee members are elected in the fifth year of each decade and make their final report to Annual Conference in the seventh year of the decade, serving two years. The committee will meet as necessary to complete its task, making use of conference calls and Skype when possible.

Expenses: Expenses are paid for travel and room and board during meetings. The chairperson’s expenses to bring the report of the committee to Annual Conference are paid unless already covered.

The Review and Evaluation Tasks: Originally, the Review and Evaluation Committee evaluated how well the denominational board was carrying out its mandate from the Annual Conference. In 2005, the scope of review and evaluation was expanded to include total denominational structure and program, including all agencies reportable to Annual Conference. In 2008, the structure of the denomination changed when the General Board and the Association of Brethren Caregivers merged and the Annual Conference Council was replaced by the Leadership Team. In light of
those changes, the Leadership Team recommends that the 2014 Standing Committee approve and recommend to the 2015 Annual Conference the following scope and tasks for the 2015-2017 Review and Evaluation Committee:

1. A study of the existing organization and structure of the denomination and the effectiveness of that organization and structure for accomplishing the goals and purpose of the church.

2. A study of thoroughness and comprehension of denominational program to include the total denominational structure and programs of the Church of the Brethren.

3. A consideration of the balance and unity of denominational witness and ministry as directed and implemented by the denominational board and by the Annual Conference agencies (Bethany Theological Seminary, Brethren Benefit Trust, and On Earth Peace).


5. An evaluation of the collaboration, coordination, and cooperation among the Leadership Team, the denominational board, the Annual Conference agencies, and the Annual Conference.

6. An evaluation of the collaboration, collegiality and cooperation between the denominational board, the Annual Conference agencies, and the goals and programming of the districts.

7. An assessment of the interest and involvement of the general membership of the Church of the Brethren in denominational programs and missions.

8. The study of other matters of current relevance to the physical and spiritual effectiveness of the denomination.

9. The committee shall not recommend that Annual Conference adopt any recommendation that violates the bylaws of an Annual Conference agency. The committee can make suggestions for an agency board to consider, but only the agency board has the authority to change its bylaws.

10. Any recommendations of the committee affecting the Bylaws of the Church of the Brethren, Inc. will be reviewed by the Leadership Team and the denominational board to bring an item of new business to Annual Conference, in accordance with Article 11 of the bylaws.

The committee shall develop the criteria for conducting its study.

Tools, Methods, and Procedures: While the committee will determine the techniques that are most appropriate for its task, the following may be helpful:

1. Self-evaluation by the denominational board and the individual Annual Conference agencies.

2. Interviews with key denominational leaders.

3. Questionnaires for Annual Conference delegates.
4. Hearings and drop-in center at Annual Conference.

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

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

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

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

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

4. The committee must observe confidentiality at all times.

5. The committee will keep the Conference Office and the Leadership Team apprised of its progress.

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

Notes:

(1) The Numbers of Members paragraph has been changed slightly to name the denominational board and the agencies individually.

(2) The next three sections (Procedure, Term and Schedule, and Expenses) are standard procedures for the Review and Evaluation Committee from past years.

(3) The Review and Evaluation Task section presents additional background since 2005 and updates the scope and tasks in light of current denominational structure. For comparison, here is The Review and Evaluation Task section from the 2005 Minutes:

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

(4) The Tools, Methods, and Procedures and Guidelines sections are from the 2005 Minutes record of the Review and Evaluation Committee guidelines, updated to name the denominational board separately from the Conference agencies and to designate the Conference Office and the Leadership Team as being responsible for overseeing the committee’s progress.
Action of the 2014 Standing Committee: The 2014 Standing Committee recommends to the 2015 Annual Conference that the “Mandate for the 2015-2017 Review and Evaluation Committee” be adopted.

Action of the 2015 Annual Conference: Annual Conference adopted the recommendation from the 2014 Standing Committee that the “Mandate for the 2015-2017 Review and Evaluation Committee” be adopted.

2016 Interim Report of the Review and Evaluation Committee

The Review and Evaluation Committee is tasked with assessing the quality and effectiveness of denominational structure. Our multi-pronged mandate includes evaluation of every level of denominational leadership, interaction between levels (i.e., partnerships between districts and denominational agencies) and participation of laypersons, clergy, district executive ministers, and agency and denominational staff within that overall structure.

Our first meeting was a teleconference in October 2015 to review New Business Item #5 from the 2015 Annual Conference, “Mandate for the 2015-2017 Review and Evaluation Committee,” and to lay out a framework for our work.

In December, we met in New Windsor, Md., to begin prioritizing tasks, forming questions, discerning each member’s role, and delegating preliminary responsibilities. It became clear early in that process that the work of the Review and Evaluation Committee is closely related to the work of the Vitality and Viability Study Committee. Recognizing that it is important that the work of our committees neither conflict with nor duplicate one another, we made arrangements to meet with a representative of the Vitality and Viability Study Committee before taking additional steps in our own work.

In early January our committee met in Bridgewater, Va., with Mary Jo Flory-Steury (representing the Vitality and Viability Study Committee) to assess potential areas of collaboration and to outline our process. We agreed on the importance of working together where possible to maximize efficiency and best use resources. Following this meeting, we drafted a denomination-wide online survey that will collect data on denominational participation.

The Review and Evaluation Committee will broadcast a link to that online survey in Spring 2016 using district newsletters, social media, Newsline, pastors’ memos, and other available means. As the amount of data collected during various stages of the process will determine the value of the committee’s work, all members of the Church of the Brethren are encouraged to participate.

Prior to the 2016 Annual Conference, our committee will interview members of district, denominational, and agency staff and will begin analyzing that data as well. At the 2016 Annual Conference, we will host a hearing with representatives of the Vitality and Viability Committee in attendance to answer questions. We anticipate that a member of Review and Evaluation will attend the Vitality and Viability Hearing to assist with questions asked there.

The Review and Evaluation Committee is comprised of: