NB 2. Polity for Electing Brethren Benefit Trust Board Directors

Reasons for Proposed Change in Election Polity

Church of the Brethren denominational polity states that for each person elected to serve in an Annual Conference-elected position, four nominees for the position must be identified. Although nominees are expected to be identified through the regular nomination process that is administered by the Nominating Committee and the Annual Conference Office, the reality is that some positions rarely receive the needed number of nominees. The director who is elected to the board of Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust each year by Annual Conference delegates is one such position. Because of a shortage of nominees, which is due in part to the board’s need to obtain board members who have a specific skill set, such as accounting, investments, or law, Brethren Benefit Trust has been asked for more than five years to ensure that each year there are four qualified people who are willing to be considered for possible nomination for the Brethren Benefit Trust Board.

Brethren Benefit Trust has answered the request of Annual Conference to locate, vet, and nominate four people each year. However, this means that at least three of the four people Brethren Benefit Trust each year identifies to be a potential board member are either not chosen for the final Annual Conference ballot or lose in the final election. Brethren Benefit Trust finds this reality to be problematic. In a denomination the size of the Church of the Brethren, it is increasingly difficult for Brethren Benefit Trust to identify people who are willing and who have the skills to serve on the organization’s board. People who have willingly applied to be candidates for several election cycles no longer want to put their names forward given the likely outcome of not being elected once again. While Brethren Benefit Trust supports the Annual Conference election process and wants to help find qualified candidates, it believes a new process should be adopted. The new process would require no more than two nominees for the election of a director on the Brethren Benefit Trust Board.

Because this proposed amendment would change the election procedures of Annual Conference and would change the Articles of Organization of the Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust, which are the agreement made with Annual Conference that allows the Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust to serve as an official agency of the Annual Conference, the Brethren Benefit Trust Board seeks the approval of Annual Conference for this amendment. Any change to the Articles of Organization approved by the delegate body will be a change in polity and will be recorded in the Manual of Organization and Polity chapter 2, section II.B.

Proposed Amendment to the “Election” section of the Articles of Organization – with proposed additions underlined:

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN BENEFIT TRUST
ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION

…
Election

A. Four directors are to be elected by Annual Conference from a ballot submitted by Standing Committee. The officers of Annual Conference shall be responsible for this election. A minimum of two nominees are to be identified by Standing Committee’s Nominating Committee for the Brethren Benefit Trust Board position elected by Annual Conference delegates. If only two are identified, those two will be the nominees on the Annual Conference ballot. If there are more than two nominees for the Brethren Benefit Trust Board position, the Nominating Committee will present a ballot of no more than four nominees to Standing Committee, which shall vote and reduce the initial ballot to its tentative final form.

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Action by the Brethren Benefit Trust Board: On December 16, 2016, the Board of Directors of Brethren Benefit Trust approved the amendment and recommended its adoption by the 2017 Annual Conference.

Action of the 2017 Annual Conference: Annual Conference adopted a motion to refer this item of business to the officers for the agenda of the 2018 Annual Conference.