UB 7. Denominational Leadership Gathering

Origin of the Study

The delegate body of the 2017 Annual Conference received the report of the Review and Evaluation Committee. The first recommendation of that report recommended that the Leadership Team be assigned responsibility for coordinating a gathering of denominational leadership every three to five years, to "include (but not necessarily be limited to) representation from the Mission and Ministry Board staff, Annual Conference agencies, the Leadership Team, and the district executives."

Recommendation #1

The Review and Evaluation Committee recommends to the Mission and Ministry Board that the duties of the Leadership Team as described in Section III.C.2. of the Manual of Organization and Polity be amended as follows:

g. Coordinate a gathering of denominational leadership every three to five years.

The leadership gathering would potentially include representatives from denominational and agency staff and board members, Annual Conference-elected leadership, and district leadership. The purpose of the leadership gathering is to focus on matters of shared vision and ministry collaboration in the Church of the Brethren.

In response to this recommendation, the 2017 Annual Conference adopted the recommendation of Standing Committee to refer this item to the Program Feasibility Committee, delaying a decision for one year in order to do a feasibility study.

2018 Report of the Program Feasibility Committee

The Program Feasibility Committee met by video conference call on November 8, 2017 to respond to the assignment from the 2017 Annual Conference regarding the recommendation from Review and Evaluation to begin a gathering of denominational leadership every three to five years.

Our feasibility study began with conversation among our Program Feasibility Committee members, who represent the groups that would need to finance such a gathering. Our committee consists of denominational and agency staff and SC members who represent districts. We have discussed the reality that this proposal would impact our budgets substantially and add to the already heavy workloads carried by our staff. Each of the leadership groups already funds representation at annual meetings of denominational leadership. The expenses required to hold a polity-required meeting of additional staff and board members every three to five years would be substantial. The cost for a three-day meeting including transportation, hotel, and meals would average about $1,500 per person. For 50 people, the cost of a three-day meeting could easily be over $75,000.

Currently there is a meeting each January of the Inter-Agency Forum which is made up of:
--the immediate past moderator,
--the three current Annual Conference officers,  
--two representatives from the Council of District Executives,  
--the executive of each of the three agencies and their board chairpersons, and  
--the general secretary and the chair of Mission and Ministry Board.

In the past few years the Inter-Agency Forum has been meeting with the full Council of District Executives during that week in January as well. In addition to these two denominational leadership gatherings in January, the heads of the agencies and denominational board also meet every May and September, as well as some of them serving on one another’s boards and attending meetings in common.

We believe that the current structures that connect denominational leadership are sufficient, though more intentionality could be placed on accomplishing the Review and Evaluation Committee’s goals of focusing on “matters of shared vision and mission collaboration.”

In conversation with the chair of Review and Evaluation, he concurred that increased focus on matters of shared vision and mission collaboration would meet their objectives without adding the costs of an additional meeting time.

The Program Feasibility Committee
Belita Mitchell, Standing Committee, chair  
Brian Bultman, Church of the Brethren  
Jeff Carter, Bethany Theological Seminary  
Larry Dentler, Standing Committee  
Nevin Dulabaum, Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust  
Bill Scheurer, On Earth Peace  
Chris Douglas, Conference director, staff support

After receiving this feasibility study report, as required by last year’s Annual Conference action, the following recommendation of the Review and Evaluation Committee will become the motion on the floor for the delegate body, to be decided in the light of the feasibility report.

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