5. Report of the Program and Arrangements Committee

The Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee (P&AC) reorganized in August following the Greensboro Annual Conference with the addition of moderator-elect David Sollenberger and new committee member Carol Hipps Elmore. The committee discussed evaluations from the 2019 Annual Conference and planning began for the 2020 Conference in Grand Rapids. The theme for 2020, chosen by Moderator Paul Mundey, will be “God’s Adventurous Future.” Primary scripture texts and daily themes were chosen for each worship service along with preachers, worship leaders, a Bible study leader and musicians. The committee works with Chris Douglas, director of the Conference Office as an ex officio member of the committee. Jon Kobel, conference assistant, also gives support to the work of this committee. Debbie Nofsinger, registration coordinator, works in the Conference Office the first six months of each year, caring for Conference registration systems and for the production of the conference booklet.

The worship planning team, with Jan King as the liaison from Program and Arrangements Committee, also met in August to begin planning the worship services for 2020. Three persons, Cindy Laprade Lattimer, Robbie Miller and Mandy North, were chosen as a worship team to plan and lead all five worship services.

One of the on-going concerns of Program and Arrangements Committee has been the growing numbers of persons victimized by human trafficking (over 40 million persons world-wide). Because sex traffickers often take their victims to hotels, most hotel chains now do extensive training with their employees on how to spot traffickers. The Annual Conference Office checks each year with each of our hotels to be sure that their employees are receiving training and are vigilant in watching for suspicious activity.

The November P&AC meeting in Elgin included further planning for the 2020 Conference. Plans include the orientation session for first-time attendees from 3:30-5:00 pm on Wednesday, July 1, led by moderator-elect David Sollenberger and Annual Conference Secretary Jim Beckwith.

P&AC also planned a number of unique events at the 2020 Conference. Tod Bolsinger, author of “Canoeing the Mountain” will be our special Friday morning speaker and Michael Gorman, professor of biblical theology at St. Mary’s Seminary, will be our daily Bible study leader. Each of those guest leaders will also be leading insight sessions and meal events. There will be Compelling Vision Sessions during the business sessions, including a service of anointing on Saturday afternoon. There will also be two special concerts: Wednesday night by Fernando Ortega and an organ recital by Robin Risser Mundey Friday at 11:30 am.
The 2020 Annual Conference is hosted by the Michigan District with significant assistance from the Northern Indiana District. The site coordinator, Joanna Willoughby, secured additional volunteers from Michigan and Northern Indiana districts, as well as from some other districts, to handle the many tasks associated with Annual Conference. Program and Arrangements Committee is deeply grateful to each of the volunteers who share their time and talents to make Annual Conference possible.

Future sites and dates for Annual Conference have been chosen by Program and Arrangements Committee. In an effort to get the lowest possible prices, we have had to accept some changes in the days of the week that we start and end. Otherwise we would have much higher prices. Upcoming dates are:

2021  Greensboro, NC       June 30-July 4
2022  Omaha, NE            July 10-14 (Sun-Thur)
2023  Cincinnati, OH       July 4-8 (Tue-Sat)

Program and Arrangements encourages feedback about this year’s Grand Rapids Conference on-line at www.brethren.org/ac. On the day Annual Conference ends, we will also email that link to the email address that you provided when you registered for Annual Conference. Your comments and suggestions are taken very seriously and are appreciated by the committee as we plan ahead for the 2021 Annual Conference.

Paul Mundey
David Sollenberger
James M. Beckwith
Jan Glass King
Emily Shonk Edwards
Carol Hipps Elmore
Chris Douglas, ex officio

*Annual Conference exists to unite, strengthen and equip the Church of the Brethren to follow Jesus.*