

4. Resolution: Call For a Living Peace Church

*For 2003 Annual Conference, co-sponsored by On Earth Peace and the General Board
Final Draft affirmed by the On Earth Peace Board of Directors, March 7, 2003
and the Church of the Brethren General Board, March 10, 2003*

Whereas Jesus breaks down the dividing wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14) and weeps that we do not know “the things that make for peace” (Luke 19:41-42), we confess that we are often complacent or uninformed about injustice, violence, and exclusion of others, both in our communities and in the world;

Whereas we are called to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48) and to follow Jesus’ example of building bridges across lines of race, class and creed (John 4), we confess that we struggle with finding a balance between the claims of citizenship and our kinship with all people;

Whereas the church has a prophetic mission to live out Christ’s way of peace (Luke 1:79), and to express God’s steadfast love in all our relationships (Psalm 85:10-13), we confess that we struggle in our own congregations and church structures with racism, domestic violence, destructive communication, and many forms of sin;

Whereas for the early Brethren, counting the cost of following Jesus meant taking the path of nonresistance, risking their reputation, their wealth, and even their lives for their commitment (Matthew 10:37-39);

Whereas the 1991 Annual Conference statement, “Peacemaking: The Calling of God’s People in History,” states that “at the heart of Church of the Brethren life is a commitment both to live within God’s peace and to be peacemakers”; and

Whereas the Church of the Brethren has affirmed its intention to participate in the World Council of Churches’ Decade to Overcome Violence (2000-2010), with more than 125 congregations already participating in this effort, and many current and former members of the Church of the Brethren active in peace and nonviolence working locally and internationally,

WE RESOLVE TO follow Jesus in seeking together an active Christian peace witness in our congregations and districts. We will:

- Pray individually and together for transformation and courage as we struggle to extend our love for our neighbor to include our enemy;
- Undertake thoughtful study of the Scriptures to discover afresh “the things that make for peace” and discern through honest and prayerful discussion how to put this knowledge into action; and
- Address issues of violence and answer Christ’s call to peace in a focused effort

at least once each quarter through worship, educational programs, prayer, and/or some kind of public witness.

- Facilitate dialogue among those committed to Biblical non-resistance, those committed to conscientious objection to armed conflict, and those committed to military action, to give expression to the Brethren witness to Jesus' way of making peace.

There will be an opportunity at each Annual Conference (and where possible, District Conferences) from now through 2010 for congregations to report on efforts to seek and develop a living peace tradition, in order to strengthen and encourage one another. (This time may also include reporting by congregations engaged in the Decade to Overcome Violence and other programs of peace.)

Be it further resolved that On Earth Peace and the General Board will provide resources, leadership, and support to individuals, congregations, and districts as they strive to answer this call.

Action of the 2003 Annual Conference: *The delegate body accepted the Standing Committee recommendation that the resolution be adopted, with one amendment added by the delegates and incorporated in the paper above.*