

New Business

1. Query: Child Abuse Prevention

Whereas: Nationwide statistics consistently find that more than 4 million children are reported each year as victims of abuse and neglect (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2002); and,

Whereas: National media attention has increased our awareness that the church is not exempt from the reality of child abuse; and,

Whereas: The Church of the Brethren has concerned itself with the conditions of childhood in the past through a query brought to Annual Conference in 1983 and answered in 1986; and,

Whereas: These concerns led the 1986 Annual Conference and the Association of Brethren Caregivers to appoint the Conditions of Childhood Task Group, whose mission "...that children should be safe from all forms of abuse and neglect [and that] we, the church will be advocates for children and establish clearly defined safeguards, policies and procedures for their protection," led to the creation of the *Child Abuse Prevention Handbook*, a manual for congregations; and,

Whereas: the *Child Abuse Prevention Handbook* states, "...that the Church of the Brethren should take an open and truthful stance on protecting children from abuse and adopt firm standards of practice for clerical, lay staff, and volunteers who are employed by the church and its schools, camps and youth programs; and,

Whereas: the Code of Ethics for Ministers (1996) and the Statement of Ethics for Congregations (1996) reiterate and restate these concerns and call for all congregations "...to have written policies in effect for the interviewing, hiring, supervision and reporting of both lay employees and volunteers having child-care duties; and,

Whereas: In services of the consecration of children and parents, congregations promise to assist parents as they help their children grow in faith and in knowledge of God's presence in their lives, and this promise is fulfilled through the programs of the church and through personal relationships with children;

Therefore, we, the members of the Skyridge Church of the Brethren, gathered in our congregational meeting, on Nov. 20, 2005, believing that the Church of the Brethren needs to provide leadership in preventing child abuse and neglect, petition Annual Conference through the Michigan District, to thoroughly examine how the recommendations made in *Conditions of Childhood in the United States* (1986), the *Child Abuse Prevention Handbook* (1991), and the *Ethical Guidelines for Congregations* (1996) are being utilized and implemented in Church of the Brethren congregations; schools; camps; district, Annual

Conference, and General Board programs; other related institutions /events; and bring a recommendation to Annual Conference for implementation at all levels of denominational programming.

Adopted by the Skyridge Church of the Brethren, Kalamazoo, Michigan at their Congregational Meeting on November 20, 2005, and passed on to Michigan District Board.

Wayne Theobald, Board Chair
Robert Metzler, Steward Chair
Carrie Gross, Treasurer

Approved by the Michigan District Board on April 29, 2006 and passed on to the Michigan District Conference.

Bill Sumner, District Board Chair
Frances Townsend, District Board Secretary

The Michigan District Conference, meeting at Winding Creek Campground in Hastings, Michigan, on August 12, 2005, approved the query for consideration by the Annual Conference meeting in 2007 at Cleveland, Ohio.

Mary Gault, Michigan District Moderator, 2006
Roya Stern, Michigan District Recording Secretary, 2006

Action of the 2007 Annual Conference: Annual Conference accepted the query with thanks and referred its concerns to the Association of Brethren Caregivers.