

Unfinished Business

1. Query: Doing Church Business

Whereas it has been very important in our heritage to seek the mind of Christ together in order to do it;	1 2 3
Whereas Robert's Rules of Order work well in dealing with many issues, yet there are limits to their usefulness in dealing with some issues—particularly in the light of God's New Order (often referred to in Scriptures as the Kingdom of God);	4 5 6 7
Whereas the secular Robert's Rules of Order tend to make issues adversarial, possibly even accentuating the extremes on a spectrum rather than drawing out voices more from the middle of a spectrum or encouraging both ends of a spectrum to do more affirming of each other;	8 9 10 11 12
Whereas some have concerns that in a culture of democratic politics we may too often reflect worldly assumptions where majorities, money, and might make right, rather than reflecting Acts 15 and faithfully following Jesus in ways of mercy, justice, and peace;	13 14 15 16 17
Whereas the 1998 Annual Conference adopted A STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK FOR DEALING WITH STRONGLY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES which gives Standing Committee the responsibility to decide if a controversial query will be called a Special Response Query needing at least a two-year procedure, yet it seems not to have flexibility and practical helpfulness for some controversial issues;	18 19 20 21 22 23
Whereas some issues are not resolved by legislative votes;	24 25
Whereas the process of dealing with an issue is often as crucial as the issue itself;	26 27
Whereas when we are not of one mind, we sometimes have difficulties respecting loyal persons and groups who hold minority positions;	28 29 30
Whereas there are tensions at times between the consciences of individuals and some of the processes and actions of the wider church; and	31 32 33
Whereas when persons or groups feel sinned against by processes and actions of Annual Conference it is unclear what steps might be taken by them and the people who stand with them;	34 35 36 37
Therefore we the members of the Turkey Creek Church of the Brethren, gathered in council meeting on November 10, 2002, petition the Annual Conference through Northern Indiana District Conference to have a committee appointed to study how	38 39 40

1 Annual Conference can enhance and model doing church business in the spirit of
2 Christ as we discern the mind of Christ in order to continue the work of Jesus.

3
4 Hurbert L. Krull Sue Brock
5 Church Board Chair Church Board Secretary

6
7 Beth Krull Timothy Sollenberger Morphew
8 Treasurer Moderator

9
10 The Northern Indiana District conference, meeting at the Elkhart County
11 Fairgrounds, Goshen, Indiana, on September 19-20, 2003, approved the query for
12 consideration by Annual Conference in Charleston, West Virginia, in 2004.

13
14 Carol Spicher Waggy, Northern Indiana District Moderator, 2003
15 Shirley Braner, Northern Indiana District Clerk, 2003

16
17 **Action of the 2004 Annual Conference:** The delegates approved the recommenda-
18 tion from Standing Committee that the query be adopted *and that Annual*
19 *Conference elect a committee of five to answer the query and report back to the 2005*
20 *Annual Conference.* Elected to the committee were: Joe Detrick, Matt Guynn,
21 Verdena Lee, Dale Posthumus, and David Shetler.

22
23

24 **Study Committee: Doing Church Business**

25
26

27 **Progress Report 2005**

28
29

30 The query from the 2004 Annual Conference requests “a committee appointed to
31 study how Annual Conference can enhance and model doing church business in the
32 spirit of Christ as we discern the mind of Christ in order to continue the work of
33 Jesus.” The delegates approved the recommendation from Standing Committee that
34 the query be adopted and that Annual Conference elect a committee of five to
35 answer the query and report back to the 2005 Annual Conference. Elected to the
36 committee were: Joe Detrick, Matt Guynn, Verdena Lee, Dale Posthumus, and
37 David Shetler.

38
39

40 The committee gathered for their first meeting September 30 - October 2, 2004 at
41 the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Illinois. Dave Shetler was
42 called as chair and Matt Guynn as scribe. Through times of worship, review,
43 discussion and study, the committee came to recognize that to adequately study the
44 query, to gain the counsel and input of the denomination and to prepare a report
45 with recommendations, that an additional year of work will be needed. At the time
of the writing of this progress report, the committee does have several additional
meetings scheduled and has prepared an outline to complete the task, including a
hearing scheduled for this Annual Conference. The committee anticipates present-

ing a full report to the delegates at the 2006 Annual Conference and thereby requests 1
the delegates of the 2005 Annual Conference receive this progress report. 2
Joe Detrick 3
Matt Guynn 4
Verdena Lee 5
Dale Posthumus 6
David Shetler 7

8
Action of the 2005 Annual Conference: Annual Conference received the 2005 9
report of the Doing Church Business study committee and granted the committee an 10
additional year of study. 11

12 13 **Report to the 2006 Annual Conference**

14 15 **Response**

16 **Introduction**

17 The query from the 2004 Annual Conference requested that a committee be 17
"appointed to study how Annual Conference can enhance and model doing church 18
business in the spirit of Christ as we discern the mind of Christ in order to continue 19
the work of Jesus." The delegates approved the recommendation from Standing 20
Committee that the query be adopted and that Annual Conference elect a commit- 21
tee of five to answer the query. Elected to the committee were Joe Detrick, Matt 22
Guynn, Verdena Lee, Dale Posthumus, and David Shetler. 23

24
25 The committee called Dave Shetler as chair and Matt Guynn as scribe through a dis- 25
cernment process. The committee's work took place in face-to-face meetings and 26
conference calls, including times of worship, review, discussion and study. 27

28
29 The committee came to recognize that to adequately study the query, to gain the 29
counsel and input of the denomination and to prepare a report with recommenda- 30
tions, an additional year of work would be needed. The 2005 Annual Conference 31
granted the additional year to complete the task. 32

33
34 The committee recognized the awesomeness of this assignment and approached the 34
work in an attitude of prayer, seeking together the guidance and wisdom of the Spirit 35
in responding to the query. The study of Scripture and consideration of our heritage 36
were included in our preparation of this paper. The committee also sought to dis- 37
cern the mind of Christ in hearing from the denomination through listening sessions, 38
surveys, and interviews. The paper is organized in several sections: Scriptural 39
Reflection; History of Decision-Making and Brethren Heritage; What We Heard (in 40
surveys and interviews); Conclusions and Observations (our summary of findings); 41
Response & Recommendations; Final Remarks; and Recommended Reading. The 42
committee offers this paper for consideration by the 2006 Annual Conference. 43

44
45

1 **Scriptural reflection**

2 Throughout the history of the Church of the Brethren, Scripture has been a guid-
3 ing and grounding element in faith and practice. In the process of discernment,
4 Scripture continues to be a guiding and grounding element for us today. The Spirit
5 of Jesus has much to teach us about community, discernment, and guidance through
6 Scripture.

7
8 Mentioned in the query itself, Acts 15 has many implications for doing church busi-
9 ness. Faced with a difficult issue, the early church came together for prayer, dia-
10 logue, debate, discernment and decision-making. Believers spent significant time
11 listening to one another on the issue, not in order to win an argument, but to listen
12 for the voice of the Holy Spirit for guidance in building up the church. There were
13 elements of worship in the discernment time: moments of prayer and moments of
14 silence, celebrations of joy, telling the stories of God at work in and through them.
15 As they sought the mind of Christ, they listened to those deemed wise and respect-
16 ed in their midst. When all had been taken into account, they reached a decision
17 “which seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (v. 28) and shared their discern-
18 ment in written form with the rest of the church. Acts 15 provides a framework and
19 a pattern for our doing church business, for discernment, which has been incorpor-
20 ated into this paper and the recommendations of this committee.

21
22 In our continuing study of Scripture on the issue of discernment and decision-mak-
23 ing, the committee was also led to Scriptures that not only describe how the church
24 of Acts made decisions, but the spirit in which those decisions were made. Phi-
25 lippians 2:1-11 speaks of our having the same mind and attitude of Jesus in our
26 relationships with one another. Being transformed and living up to ethical standards
27 in our relationships is the message of Romans 12. 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 admonish-
28 es us to be mature in our faith, seeking God's wisdom in order that we might know
29 the mind of Christ, thus being empowered to be a community able to make deci-
30 sions in a spiritual rather than human fashion. Passing judgment on one another is
31 not to be the way of the Christian community, according to Romans 14:10-13, 19.
32 We leave the judging to God so that we might “pursue what makes for peace and for
33 mutual upbuilding” (v. 19). Jesus also addresses judging and self-righteousness in
34 Matthew 7:1-5. We are called to use good judgment without being judgmental. 1
35 Corinthians 12-14 speaks of our being gifted for service to one another and the
36 church, working together for the strengthening of the body while being led by the
37 “more excellent way” of love. Growing in grace, love, and faith is the substance of
38 Ephesians 4:1-16. As we exhibit growth in grace, practice love in our relationships,
39 and experience faith in the One “who is above all and through all and in all,” the
40 work and ministry of Jesus continues, growing and thriving in the Body. The
41 church is built up and God is glorified as we love and respect each other and recog-
42 nize that we all have been gifted by the God of grace.

43
44 Ultimately, we turn to the words of Jesus as we seek to be faithful in our relation-
45 ships, discernment, and decision-making. Jesus clearly instructs us to go to each

other for conversation and dialogue in the pattern of Matthew 18. But above all, Jesus tells us that love for God and love for each other are the greatest and guiding commandments for everything else: all relationships, all discernment and all decision-making (Matthew 22:34-40).

We believe that through the power, wisdom and presence of the Holy Spirit, God still speaks to us through the Scriptures. God offers guidance and direction through the Word as we seek a discernment process that provides a way of entering into and honoring respectful, loving relationships and at the same time allows us to discover the mind of Christ for the issues we face. Adhering to the greatest commandments as defined by Jesus, this paper and the recommendations encourage us to listen to one another and to speak to one another in love as we discern through prayer, Bible study, preaching, and visions that which Jesus would have us be and do.

History of Decision-Making and Brethren Heritage

The teaching of Christ which encourages us to love God and neighbor, including even our enemies, has been the basis of a sense of community among Christians. The early church made an effort to consider the thoughts of the community, as exhibited in Acts 15, as it worked through a controversial issue of the day, being at all times led by the Holy Spirit.

The first Brethren understood scripture leading them to promote a community of mutuality and accountability as an expression of the heart of Christ's love. Esteeming others higher than self, and placing an emphasis on the body of believers, the first Brethren drew lots to specify who would baptize Alexander Mack in order to avoid status or position as they entered the Eder River in 1708. Love Feast became a way to cultivate unity among the Brethren through visits by deacons and community discernment regarding conflict and conciliation. At a point early in the development of Annual Conference, Love Feast was observed as a part of opening worship and attendees were encouraged to cultivate a heart for discernment of the mind of Christ. Other practices of the Brethren set us apart from a secular form of accountability in relating to one another. Practices such as the deacon visit and mutual aid still leave their imprint on our communities today.

In early Brethren congregations, local elders and bishops were trusted to determine what was best for a community. They discerned the moving of the Holy Spirit within the context of a rapidly growing country. The unity of faith was maintained by face-to-face dialogue and care for one another as the family of God.

As the church grew, large annual meetings were encouraged when church leaders sensed a need for centralized fellowship to maintain unity. During the annual gathering, there were opportunities to address weighty concerns in the company of like-minded Christians. At times this involved deep division, disagreement, and rancor, but the context remained a common search for the mind of Christ.

1 Brethren thought and discernment have prevailed against the tide of simple major-
2 ity rule in society for almost three centuries. Eventually, the common use of parlia-
3 mentary procedures of the eighteenth century influenced the Brethren to elect a
4 clerk for the annual meetings. The role of the clerk was similar to the moderator of
5 today. Yet discernment continued to be guided by a desire to reflect the sense of the
6 entire gathered body.

7
8 Henry Kurtz, the translator and editor of the first collection of Annual Meeting
9 Minutes, became the clerk of the Annual Meeting in the mid-1800s. He was
10 instrumental in creating the Annual Conference as we know it today. After study-
11 ing the Yearly Meeting conducted by Quakers in London, which had been practiced
12 since 1666, Elder Kurtz suggested seven principles to guide the formation of
13 Brethren annual meetings:

- 14
- 15 1) simplicity
- 16 2) liberty
- 17 3) order
- 18 4) subordination of our reason to the word of God
- 19 5) due regard to previous decisions
- 20 6) love of the Brethren
- 21 7) a constant aim for union in the Body of Christ
- 22

23 These principles guided the Brethren of the nineteenth century as they met each
24 year to discern the mind of Christ in matters of daily living in a rapidly changing
25 world that was at times hostile to the Christian journey.

26
27 As the world around the Brethren continued to change, democratic procedures
28 became a primary model for secular governance. Annual Conference adopted 2/3
29 majority voting in 1847. However, after a brief trial, the conference returned to a
30 consensus model the next year.

31
32 In the year 1856, district organizations were proposed. However, in 1866 the
33 Brethren held an annual meeting that unified the districts. Despite these smaller
34 geographic divisions, the Brethren sought and prized a sense of the larger, gathered
35 whole, and laid the foundation for Annual Conference as a cohesive community of
36 Christians.

37
38 In the early 1880s, permission was granted to use majority vote. Consensus as a
39 process for discerning the mind of Christ did not survive the painful division of the
40 Brethren body in 1881-1883. Hence, majority rule was used until an adapted form
41 of *Robert's Rules of Order* was formally adopted by the Annual Conference around
42 1915 (records are unclear).

43
44 Annual Conference minutes that followed this vote would seem familiar to those
45 who attend conference today. Though initially there was more attention to an atti-

tude of worship, respect for opposing opinions expressed and time for prayer and the reading of scriptures, the model of parliamentary procedure is the same as we have today. The Church of the Brethren had successfully emulated secular forms of governing.

As time passed and the encroaching American culture increasingly polarized on faith issues, a change came to the Annual Conference floor that was not anticipated by our predecessors. Dissension and arguments over varying opinions have crept into discussion that was once reserved for discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst. If one simply reads the titles of Annual Conference statements and resolutions throughout the twentieth century, it becomes clear that the body of the Church of the Brethren, like many other Christian fellowships, began to struggle with the questions of leadership, identity and the way we conduct business. Language indicating disagreement and the need for further discernment is found throughout queries and statements over the last several decades, including those dealing with biblical authority, patriotism and the flag, and sexuality, among other issues.

During and since the 1990s, a number of congregations, districts, and denominational agencies have experimented with other models for decision-making, including Worshipful Work, Formal Consensus, sense of the meeting (Quaker) process, and others.

This query on “Doing Church Business” was accepted by the Annual Conference delegate body in 2004. It is a plea reflecting the frustration of Brethren across the theological and social spectra who sense the changing tide of relationship among those who follow Christ. Earnest time has been spent by the Committee to listen to the concerns of our brothers and sisters as we all struggle to be heard clearly, received lovingly, and treated respectfully.

What We Heard

As a part of its study, the Committee gathered information by listening to the body through interviews with individuals and groups including the following: Annual Conference participants and delegates, past and current moderators, the Cross Cultural Ministries Consultation, the Council of District Executives, scholars, lay leaders, conflict experts, agency staff, and respondents surveyed at the 2005 Annual Conference. What follows are themes that continuously arose in our conversations.

- We heard that Brethren are a people of the Book, trying to be faithful disciples, from many different theological perspectives, with a strong desire for all to be more patient and forbearing with each other.
- We heard comments regarding confusion about the power and authority of Annual Conference and why Annual Conference exists. What is the prime function and role of Annual Conference regarding faith and polity statements?

- 1 • We heard affirmations that matters of faith and practice are individual
2 preferences as well as corporate understandings. Spiritual growth
3 comes when we gather to discern the mind of Christ, and agree to act
4 as one.
5
- 6 • We heard deep concern and pain about the adversarial style of conver-
7 sation and discussion at Annual Conference. At the same time, we
8 heard exhortation to continue conversation even in difficult times.
9
- 10 • We heard that quiet voices and minority or marginalized positions are
11 often left out of conversation. There is a desire on the part of some to
12 find ways to hear from these individuals.
13
- 14 • We heard that the process we use to make decisions is as important if
15 not more important than the decision being made. We heard calls for
16 creativity in format and physical set-up, while not abandoning what
17 works in current practice.
18
- 19 • We heard that an overwhelming majority desire more faith-based tools
20 for discernment (e.g., formal or informal consensus processes, small
21 groups, silence, Worshipful Work) which could complement and
22 enhance current practice, but that, lacking clear and efficient alterna-
23 tives, there is not sufficient support to move away from *Robert's Rules*
24 *of Order*.
25
- 26 • We heard persons stating that different kinds of discernment and deci-
27 sion-making may require different processes.
28
- 29 • We heard that there is sometimes a lack of education about what dis-
30 cernment means for Brethren, and that there is a desire for leadership
31 training related to discernment for delegates, moderators, secretaries,
32 and others in leadership roles.
33
- 34 • We heard that many congregations are already using a modified ver-
35 sion of *Robert's Rules of Order*. Although they do take recorded votes,
36 often there is also open space for conversation and discussion.
37
- 38 • We heard that some congregations and at least three districts and/or
39 district boards (Illinois/Wisconsin, Oregon/Washington, and Mid-
40 Atlantic), and one agency (On Earth Peace) are already practicing
41 alternative forms of discernment.
42
- 43 • We heard expressions of concern that Brethren seem to have been
44 seduced by the dominant culture and have lost sight of the power of
45 prayer and the value of community discernment.

- We consistently heard that the shortened length of Annual Conference may have done a disservice to the quality of conversation and discernment. 1
2
3
4
- We heard a number of requests for small group discernment opportunities. 5
6
7
- We heard questioning whether Annual Conference is an appropriate place or a safe place to share deeply held beliefs, personal understandings, and experiences. 8
9
10
11
- We heard a strong affirmation that tinkering with the machinery of conference is useless, that it will take a real and significant shift of perspective and belief to refresh the body's ability to discern together. 12
13
14
15
- We heard that quality delegate preparation before conference and strategies for reporting and follow-up after conference are often lacking. 16
17
18
19
- We heard strong encouragement to learn from and utilize the wisdom of the senior members of the church. 20
21
22
23

Survey results from 2005 Annual Conference 24

Our committee prepared a survey for delegates and non-delegates, distributed at the 2005 Annual Conference in Peoria. There were 709 responses. What follows is a summary of results. 25
26
27

More than 80% of respondents shared that they read the AC business items in the booklet; 29% attend district-level briefings; 31% talk with their congregations about business items before coming to conference. 28
29
30
31
32

83% shared that some, but not many, or none of Annual Conference decisions made a difference in the life of their congregations. It is the perception of respondents that the decisions of Annual Conference have little impact on congregational life. 33
34
35
36
37

92% shared that, as a result of AC discussion, they rethink their positions at least sometimes (36% responded, yes, it usually does; 56% responded, yes, but not very often.) 38
39
40
41

65% agreed that, lacking sufficient time to process an item of business, they would prefer to continue the discernment until the body reaches a greater sense of unity. 42
43
44
45

1 73% agreed that Annual Conference should continue to make decisions
2 about belief and faith practices AND should also address organizational
3 matters of the denomination.
4

5 **Comments and Observations**

6 Based on our listening and research, the current usage of an adapted Roberts Rules
7 of Order does not appear to adequately allow us to lovingly and respectfully hear one
8 another or to truly discern the mind of Christ in the most efficient and spiritual way.
9 There is a loss of a sense of community or trust in the process of discernment when
10 it comes to the business sessions at Annual Conference. The Committee wrestled
11 with the question of why this is so. It seems that we have not done well at fostering
12 a sense of Christian community or preparing to truly discern together as we gather
13 for business.
14

15 We have observed and heard stories of pain and loss, of persons feeling disenfran-
16 chised and left out of the process. We also heard of “winners” gloating over a victo-
17 ry after a vote, and “losers” feeling marginalized, rejected and put down. A process
18 that produces these kinds of experiences would seem to undermine the guidance of
19 the Spirit, the love of God, and the mind of Christ.
20

21 The Committee also recognizes that simply changing the model of how we do busi-
22 ness will not address or solve any underlying problems or issues. Appropriate tools
23 are needed so that we can do business and discern the mind of Christ, but we also
24 must come to Annual Conference prepared through Bible and other study, prayer,
25 prior discussion and dialogue, and with openness to the leading of the Spirit through
26 the community of faith.
27

28 Although the Committee greatly respects and appreciates the past leadership of
29 Annual Conference, we also recognize that as a church we have not sufficiently edu-
30 cated, trained and coached those called to leadership to facilitate discernment
31 among the gathered church - especially relevant here are Standing Committee, mod-
32 erators and conference officers. The system and the process have at times failed us
33 through insufficient preparation and training.
34

35 Delegates and Conference attendees have also expressed a sense of loss in the
36 amount of time to meet together for discernment, according to the current time
37 frame of Annual Conference. The former schedule of Tuesday evening through
38 Sunday morning allowed more time for discussion and discernment on matters of
39 faith and practice. More time was also available for informal dialogue and conver-
40 sation.
41

42 The committee recognizes that the 1988 paper, “A Structural Framework for
43 Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues,” is intended to address divisive situa-
44 tions in the life of Annual Conference, and that it has not been applied in recent sit-
45 uations that might have called for it. As it is currently under review by a commit-

tee of Annual Conference Council, we have restricted our recommendations to over- 1
all business practices of Annual Conference, trusting that the committee reviewing 2
that framework will bring clarifications and recommendations about its use. 3

Concerns Requiring Further Study 4

We have not incorporated all concerns into the recommendations and response of 5
our committee. Two concerns have arisen repeatedly in interviews that we feel are 6
outside the scope of our work. We include them for the edification of the body. The 7
first is the frequency and focus of Annual Conference. Should Annual Conference 8
meet every other year, out of concern for stewardship of finances and human labor? 9
Should some years be focused more on teaching, fellowship and worship, and less on 10
business? The second is the process of calling and election used by the delegate body. 11
Would it more truly serve God and our heritage to use a process other than popular 12
election? We leave these for further examination by the body. 13
14

As we prayed, as we studied Scripture, as we considered our history, and as we lis- 15
tened to sisters and brothers, we have come to the conclusion that for the spiritual 16
health and well-being of the body, and to enhance and model discerning the mind of 17
Christ, changes need to be made in our manner of meeting. 18
19

Response and Recommendations 20

“Annual Conference is not a place for predetermined points of view repre- 21
senting specific constituencies to be debated, as in the secular political legislative 22
assembly. It is a setting where people come together to consider questions before the 23
church and seek the will of God through prayerful debate and Bible study” (from 24
“Accountability to One Another” in recent Annual Conference booklets). 25
26

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and things 27
wherewith one may edify another” (Rom 14:19). 28

“Discerning the mind of Christ means that you start out not knowing it” 29
(Interviewee). 30

31
There is a clear need for significant change, from the level of delegate preparation, to 32
training of moderators, to the format of Annual Conference itself, in order to 33
enhance and model a discerning Christian community and the reign of God. In pur- 34
suing together the mind of Christ, we must set aside the contentiousness of main- 35
stream culture in order seek “the glory of God and our neighbor's good.” 36

The purpose of Annual Conference. 37

38
“Annual Conference is the highest and final legislative authority of the 39
Church of the Brethren in all matters of procedure, program, polity, and discipline. 40
The authority of Conference has its source in the delegates elected by local churches 41
and districts who come together as a deliberative body under the guidance of the 42
Holy Spirit....It provides an opportunity for face-to-face-confrontation and discus- 43
sion of major issues that are of vital concern to the church. It serves as a means of 44
building unity, fellowship, and understanding among Brethren, as laity and clergy, 45
people of all ages, and urban and rural people seek to discover the mission of the 46

1 church in today's world" (Church of the Brethren Polity Manual, Chapter One).

2

3 "Annual Conference exists to unite, strengthen, and equip the Church of
4 the Brethren to follow Jesus" (AC Mission Statement, 2004).

5

6 In order to accomplish these ends, Annual Conference needs to be a spiritual train-
7 ing ground for the skills of spiritual discernment and joyful Christian community.

8 How can Annual Conference exemplify these traits in the way it processes discern-
9 ment and decision-making?

10

11 Annual Conference has used various models of discernment and decision-making
12 throughout its history. Any process must be proven by its ability to help the body
13 discern the mind of Christ. We recognize that any human model we use will fall
14 short of full discernment of God's will. The challenge for the body of Christ is to
15 balance the need for some measure of efficiency and structure, with yearnings for
16 patient discernment.

17

18 It is our perception that the delegate body at this time is not prepared to move into
19 a formally structured discernment model, and wishes to continue to use and adapt
20 *Robert's Rules of Order* primarily out of concerns for efficiency in large group process.

21

22 Therefore we exhort the body to freely adapt its use of Robert's Rules as recom-
23 mended below to adequately serve the purposes of discernment.

24

25 **Delegate Preparation (Congregational).** To enhance our search for the mind of
26 Christ, we recommend the following practices on the district, congregational, and indi-
27 vidual levels.

28

29 *District.* The Council of District Executives will consult together about
30 best practices for orienting delegates within their respective districts. The
31 district leadership will offer significant briefing opportunities for delegates
32 that will include Bible study, background and discussion about current
33 items of business, orientation on how we discern together at Annual
34 Conference, and spiritual and practical preparation for speaking and lis-
35 tening in controversial conversations.

35

36 *Congregational.* Congregations will provide time in advance of Annual
37 Conference for discernment about upcoming items of business. Delegates
38 need to be adequately informed of their congregations' perspectives on
39 upcoming business items. Delegates must walk a careful line between rep-
40 resenting their constituencies' expressed positions and participating in the
41 movement of the Spirit during the business of the gathered body.
42 Congregations will provide time for returning delegates to report on the
43 spirit and content of Annual Conference business, and to consider togeth-
44 er the impact on congregational life.

45

Individual. We will hold ourselves and one another accountable for tone and attitude in the midst of discernment processes, using the direct approach recommended in Matthew 18. The spirit of Christ does not lead to insult, backbiting, politicking, or dismissing other Christians for any reason (for example, based on background, affiliation, or their place on the theological spectrum).

Delegates are commended to the statement on “Accountability to One Another,” published annually in the Annual Conference Booklets, as part of their personal preparation.

Study questions. To enhance our search for the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* a few key study questions be provided related to each query or new business item, well in advance of Annual Conference. This is to assist the church in preparing to discern the mind of Christ together. Standing Committee will carry the responsibility for developing these study questions. The Annual Conference Office will coordinate their distribution to the church at large.

Process Counselors. As we seek more fully to discern the mind of Christ, we recognize that learning to discern the mind of Christ takes mentoring. To enhance and model seeking the mind of Christ, we recommend the establishment of a group of three process counselors. These individuals will be available to the moderator and other officers during business sessions. Process counselors will serve in addition to the parliamentarian currently available, who typically consults about conference rules and/or Robert’s Rules. Process counselors join the parliamentarian in providing spiritual support and practical suggestions for planning and facilitating Annual Conference business, in order to enhance our discernment of the mind of Christ.

Process counselors will serve a term of three years, with staggered terms and no term limits, in a volunteer capacity. Criteria to consider in calling a balanced team include wisdom, spiritual centeredness in the midst of controversy, experience with observing and leading discernment processes in small or large groups, and ability to provide practical ideas for a group to move ahead. Process counselors will have or receive training and coaching in large group discernment processes and *Robert’s Rules of Order*. This may include participation in training events for group facilitation, observation of the discernment processes of other traditions in order to compare and contrast, or other suitable experiences.

Process counselors will be called by the Nominating Committee of Standing Committee in consultation with the Ministry of Reconciliation and the Annual Conference Council.

Delegate preparation (Standing Committee). To model and enhance the search for the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* Standing Committee members spend at least one session of their regular meeting in training and preparation for discernment and business, to be led by the process counselors.

1 **Training for Moderator and Moderator-Elect.** The assumption across our denomi-
2 nation has been that the moderator provides spiritual leadership. So that they might
3 help model seeking the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* moderators be called
4 specifically for gifts in helping the body discern. Along with the polity description of
5 the duties of conference moderator, key responsibilities of moderators with regards to
6 discernment include the following:

- 7
8 1) hearing, clarifying and synthesizing opposing viewpoints,
9 2) observing the flow of group process,
10 3) encouraging the engagement of divergent views in search of unity,
11 4) listening and calling for voices not yet spoken (the margins or the quiet
12 voices) in order to hear the full voice of the body, and
13 5) leading the body in seeking the movement of the Spirit in our midst.

14
15 To enhance our common search for the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* modera-
16 tors exercise their role by encouraging Annual Conference participants to engage each
17 other and God beyond merely speaking “in support” or “against” (which can some-
18 times establish a lamentably contentious tone).

19
20 In many cases, space is made for discernment, but only informally or based on per-
21 sonal inspiration. Examples of possibilities for enhancing Robert's Rules are times of
22 worship; silent reflection or prayer; song; a pair or small group working on behalf of
23 the body, in front of the body, to seek solution; and conversations in pairs, clusters, or
24 discernment groups. To more effectively model a variety of discernment processes
25 that could enhance *Robert's Rules of Order*, *we recommend that* a simple handbook of
26 facilitation options that support discernment be compiled for the moderator to use.
27 This handbook will be created by the Ministry of Reconciliation, with counsel from
28 former moderators.

29
30 To enhance our search for the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* at times of deep
31 contention or when the body lacks sufficient time to process an item of business, the
32 moderator be empowered to name the fact that the mind of Christ has not been
33 reached and recommend to the delegates that the issue be postponed until a future
34 year.

35
36 To more adequately guide our search for the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* the
37 moderator and moderator-elect receive training and coaching in large group discern-
38 ment processes and *Robert's Rules of Order*. This may include participation in training
39 events related to group facilitation, observation of the discernment processes of other
40 traditions in order to compare and contrast, or other suitable experiences. The
41 Process Counselors will encourage the facilitation of this training and coaching.

42
43 **Discernment groups during Annual Conference.** To model the intentional and inti-
44 mate work of seeking the mind of Christ, *we recommend that* all delegates and inter-
45

ested non-delegates participate in discernment groups. Small group discernment is essential to the character and quality of our recommendations as a whole. 1
2
3

Delegate groups, no larger than ten people, will meet at least once daily and additionally as needed, for sufficient time to engage one another. Program and Arrangements Committee will form groups to maximize engagement with persons from different backgrounds and geographic regions. 4
5
6
7
8

The intention of these groups is to provide a place of conversation and prayer in which each can speak and be heard and in which discernment is fostered. Each group will include a trained volunteer facilitator and will choose a spokesperson. 9
10
11
12

Non-delegates interested in participating in discernment groups may use this kind of structured group or a different format, such as informal clusters, larger hearing sessions, or other formats as dictated by interest and need. 13
14
15
16

As has been the practice of Conference, the opportunity for all persons to share comments from the floor continues to be a significant part of our shared discussion. In addition, to enhance the discussion of the entire body, and upon the request of the moderator, spokespeople from delegate groups will concisely represent the range of views within their group. This may or may not entail hearing from each group individually; emphasis is on hearing the variety of views in the body, not necessarily each individual opinion. Suggestions for the relations between discernment groups and large group discussion will be included in the moderator's handbook (mentioned above). 17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26

Annual Conference officers will contract with an appropriate agency to provide training and process suggestions for delegate groups. 27
28
29

The Committee recognizes the complexity of this undertaking. However, observing the small group models used at other conferences and large group events, we have reason to believe that this kind of effort is both logistically possible and spiritually nurturing. We believe that small group discussion is essential to creating an environment of true conversation at Annual Conference. 30
31
32
33
34
35

We recommend that discernment groups be seated for business in circles or semi-circles on the conference floor, or some other arrangement conducive for both small group discussion and participation in the larger whole. We recognize that, in venues over the transitional years, this may not always be possible. However, in future planning, consideration should be taken for finding locations that allow for discernment groups to meet together on the business floor. 36
37
38
39
40
41
42

We recommend that the Annual Conference staff, Program and Arrangements Committee, and the Process Committee (see below), be given the care of the specific details related to necessary arrangements. 43
44
45

1 **Format of Annual Conference as a whole.** Creating time for discernment groups
2 will necessitate a shift in the daily schedule for Annual Conference. *We recommend*
3 *that* Program and Arrangements Committee work with the Annual Conference
4 Director to make these adjustments.

5
6 *We recommend that* Program and Arrangements Committee consider format changes
7 to hold space for discernment related to specific items in some of the slots normal-
8 ly reserved for Insight Sessions, and to encourage that some Bible studies and Insight
9 Sessions relate to business items.

10
11 **Acknowledging various voices for the purpose of posterity.** It is current Annual
12 Conference practice that all discussions are recorded in their entirety for the
13 Conference archives. We recommend that this practice continue.

14
15 After decisions are taken, we recommend that the Annual Conference officers to the
16 best of their ability summarize major dissenting opinions for the minutes. The con-
17 ference officers will author simple one or two sentence summaries, which will be
18 offered for approval to the delegate body before the close of the year's business.

19
20 We recognize that even when we believe Annual Conference has discerned the will
21 of God, our understanding is still incomplete. We also recognize that as humans we
22 are imperfect, and therefore wish to acknowledge voices not reflected in the deci-
23 sion, so these perspectives will be available to inform future discernment. All that
24 has gone before may be vital for future discernment. The fullness of the mind of
25 Christ will reveal itself in the fullness of time.

26
27 **Love Feast.** To model and enhance our search for the mind of Christ, *we recom-*
28 *mend* the retrieval of the previous Annual Conference tradition of bread and cup
29 communion and foot-washing to open each Conference. We believe this will bring
30 the body of Christ into a sense of unity and remind us of the magnitude of our
31 charge to maintain the unity of spirit in the bonds of peace (Eph 4).

32
33 **Length of Conference.** In the effort to enhance discernment, adequate time must
34 be provided for discussion and engagement.

35
36 To that end, *we recommend that* Program and Arrangements Committee along with
37 Standing Committee develop a five-year plan to expand the length of Annual
38 Conference. The current schedule, Saturday through Wednesday, allows approxi-
39 mately two days for business. *we recommend* an expanded schedule, not unlike the
40 former schedule (Tuesday night through Sunday morning), which permitted four
41 days for business.

42
43 Time together is an essential component of enhancing discernment. There is a great
44 deal of time and expense already involved in Annual Conference; adding a day or
45 two to make possible the very important work of discernment is minor in compar-
46 ison.

Implementation and review. *We recommend that an Annual Conference Process Committee be formed to coordinate the paper's implementation, appointed by Annual Conference Council. Standing Committee will provide a review of the implementation and impact of this paper to the delegates of the 2009 Annual Conference and every three years thereafter.*

In the interest of moving to a discernment model, *we recommend* a new review of the process of calling versus election for officers and positions accountable to Annual Conference.

Final Remarks

The Committee recognizes that the depth and breadth of these recommendations constitute a significant change in the way we do business together as the Church of the Brethren at Annual Conference. As we have at times struggled to be faithful to our understanding of peace and justice in relationships with one another in the midst of controversial decisions, to be faithful to our understandings of Scripture and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and to be sensitive to our heritage of discerning the mind of Christ together as the body of Christ, it became clear in the minds and hearts of the members of this committee that a modified way of doing business together needs to be offered in response to the concerns raised in this query. It is the prayer of this committee that the delegates of the 2006 Annual Conference will prayerfully and carefully consider how we might best discern the mind of Christ together. It is the committee's prayer that this paper will support the transition toward a new way of doing business in the Church of the Brethren.

The Committee offers its appreciation to all those who have helped in the research and writing of this paper. Without the contributions and assistance of many persons, this paper would not have been possible. This paper is offered "for the glory of God and our neighbor's good."

Doing Church Business Study Committee

- Joe Detrick
- Matt Guynn, scribe
- Verdena Lee
- Dale Posthumus
- Dave Shetler, chair

Recommended Reading

Brown, Dale W. *Another Way of Believing: A Brethren Theology*. (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 2005) Chapter 11, *Unity and Dissension*.

Butler, C.T. Lawrence and Amy Rothstein. *On Conflict and Consensus: A Handbook on Formal Consensus Decisionmaking*. Portland, ME: Food Not Bombs Publishing, 1987.

1 Glick, Sally Weaver. *In Tune With God: The Art of Congregational Discernment*.
2 (Scottsdale, PA: Faith & Life Resources, 2004). Useful theological and practical
3 guide including help for facilitators.

4
5 Mallott, Floyd E. *Studies in Brethren History*. (Elgin, IL: Brethren Publishing
6 House, 19??) Chapter 19, *Annual Meeting and Church Polity to 1848*.

7
8 Morley, Barry. *Beyond Consensus: Salvaging Sense of the Meeting*. Pendle Hill
9 Pamphlet # 307 (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1996).

10
11 Morris, Danny E. and Charles M. Olsen. *Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual*
12 *Practice for the Church*. Alban Institute, 1997.

13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45

2. Query: Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church “of every nation, tribe, people and language” Rev. 7:9

Whereas Isaiah prophesied of a time when “the sons of the foreigner” would “join themselves to the Lord and to serve Him” speaking the words of the Lord: “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:6&7), and;

Whereas Jesus has called upon his followers to “go...and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19), and;

Whereas Peter observed that God had given the Holy Spirit to Gentiles “and made no distinction between us (Jewish followers of Jesus) and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9), and;

Whereas Christ gave to John a vision of the heavenly congregation at worship: “a great multitude which no-one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes, with palm branches in their hands.” (Revelation 7:9), and;

Whereas the 1835 Annual Meeting instructed the Brethren to “make no difference on account of color,” and;

Whereas the 1991 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren expressed the hope that “we may be able to move toward becoming a denomination that is more representative of the whole family of God...,” (1991 paper on *Brethren and Black Americans*), and;

Whereas increased travel, ethnic migrations, and advances in communication technology have opened up new opportunities for fulfillment of the “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:19&20) bringing closer the possibility of our becoming a global church of every nation, tribe, people, and language, and;

Whereas Brethren have historically welcomed people of every color with the right hand of fellowship, we have, in practice, often failed to extend the holy kiss (2 Corinthians 13:12), to one another, indicating something less than full fellowship, and;

Whereas Sunday morning remains for many Brethren, one of the most segregated times of the week;

Therefore we, the Miami First Church of the Brethren, ask Annual Conference through the Atlantic Southeast District Conference: What action must we take, in our lives, in our congregations, in our districts, in our denomination, and globally, to bring us into conformity with the biblical vision of a church from every nation,

1 tribe, people and language, united in worship before the throne of God? How are
2 we to become the church John saw in Revelation 7:9?

3
4 A motion to send forgoing “Query on Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church” to the
5 Atlantic Southeast District Conference passed unanimously by a special congrega-
6 tional meeting of the Miami First Church of the Brethren held on June 8, 2003.

7
8 Brad Ginter Karen Sutton Wayne Sutton
9 Moderator Secretary Board Chair

10
11 The Atlantic Southeast District, meeting at Camp Ithiel, Gotha, Florida, on
12 Saturday, October 11, 2003, voted unanimously to pass this query on “Becoming a
13 Multi-Ethnic Church” to Annual Conference.

14
15 Charles J. McGuckin, Atlantic Southeast District Moderator, 2003
16 Victoria L. Ehret, Atlantic Southeast District Clerk, 2003

17
18 **Action of the 2004 Annual Conference:** Annual Conference adopted the concerns
19 of this query and linked it to Query # 3 in its answer. See the action recorded for Query
20 # 3.

21
22 **Action of the 2005 Annual Conference:** See the action recorded for Query # 3.

23
24

25 **Query: The Need for Cross-Cultural Ministries**

26
27 **Whereas** the Church of the Brethren historically welcomed people of color
28 including freed slaves like Samuel Weir with the right hand of fellowship but did not
29 extend the Holy Kiss (2 Corinthians 13:12, “Greet one another with the Holy
30 Kiss”); and

31
32 **Whereas** the 1991 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren passed the
33 *Brethren and Black Americans* paper which expressed the hope that “we may be able
34 to move toward becoming a denomination that is more representative of the whole
35 family of God and toward a society that is just”; and

36
37 **Whereas** the words of Jesus have historically called the Church of the Brethren,
38 as they call us now, to “go. . . and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the
39 name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19); and

40
41 **Whereas** the changing demographics of our nation have brought the nations of
42 the world to our doorsteps; and

43
44 **Whereas** the opportunities for fulfillment of this great commission of outreach
45 to the nations now reside within our communities, offering opportunity to enjoy the

blessings of inclusion and richer fellowship in Christ; and 1
 2
Whereas the Cross Cultural Ministries Team has striven to make the denomi- 3
 nation aware of the joy of our unity in Christ as people of color and has encouraged 4
 the denomination to include, intentionally, people of all colors and ethnic groups 5
 and languages, bearing in mind Revelation 7:9b, “from every nation, from all tribes 6
 and peoples and languages”; and 7
 8
Therefore, we the Wenatchee Brethren-Baptist Church United petition the 9
 Oregon/Washington District for assistance in identifying and naming the barriers 10
 that exist in the Church of the Brethren which are preventing the biblical vision of 11
 Revelation 7:9 from happening within our congregations and districts and to out- 12
 line specific steps which can enable congregations and districts to overcome them. 13
 14
 Adopted by the Wenatchee Brethren-Baptist Church United Church Board on July 15
 23, 2003, and passed on to Oregon/Washington District Conference. 16
 17
 Lael Vickery, Board Chair 18
 Merry Kay Shaw, Church Clerk 19
 20
 The Oregon/Washington District conference, meeting at Camp Koinonia, 21
 Washington, on August 9, 2003, unanimously approved the query for consideration 22
 by the Annual Conference meeting in 2004 at Charleston, West Virginia. 23
 24
 Carol Bowers, Oregon/Washington District Moderator, 2003 25
 Patrick Fiegenbaum, Oregon/Washington Recording Secretary, 2003 26
 27
Action of the 2004 Annual Conference: *Annual Conference approved the concerns 28*
of the queries, “Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church” and “The Need for Cross-Cultural 29
Ministries,” and voted to have a committee of eight that is ethnically diverse to respond 30
to the questions asked by the queries. The committee will report to the 2005 Annual 31
Conference, along with suggestions on how Annual Conference can continue to receive a 32
progress report on multi-ethnic and cross-cultural ministries each year until 2010. 33
Annual Conference will then reassess the denomination’s progress toward becoming a 34
more inclusive church. Meanwhile, Annual Conference encourages districts, congrega- 35
tions, denominational agencies, and other interest groups to assess the present state of 36
cross-cultural and multi-ethnic relationships in their ministries, so that an increased pri- 37
ority to do cross-cultural ministries might be pursued. 38
 39
The study committee was to be chosen as follows: six persons were elected by Annual 40
Conference, an African-American was to be chosen by the six elected persons from those 41
on the original ballot who are of African-American descent, and the eighth person was 42
to be an ex-officio member from the American Baptist Churches USA. The Annual 43
Conference Council is to determine how the ex-officio member shall be named. The six 44
elected persons on the committee are: Darla Kay Bowman, Reuben Deoleo, Nadine L. 45
Monn, Deemita Pandya, Gilbert Romero, and Asha Solanky. 46

Study Committee: Multi-Ethnic Church/Cross-Cultural Ministries

Report to the 2005 Annual Conference

1 Background

2 The 2004 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren, meeting in Charleston,
3 West Virginia, received two queries: one from the Atlantic Southeast District, enti-
4 tled *Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church*, and one from the Oregon/Washington District
5 entitled *The Need for Cross-Cultural Ministries*. The two queries are very similar in
6 their intent. They desire to address issues of becoming an inclusive church, but their
7 requests in getting to that action are stated quite differently. The query from the
8 Atlantic Southeast District, entitled *Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church*, asks “What
9 action must we take, in our lives, in our congregations, in our districts, in our
10 denominations, and globally, to bring us to conformity with the biblical vision of a
11 church from every nation, tribe, people and language, united in worship before the
12 throne of God? How are we to become the church John saw in Revelation 7:9?” The
13 query from the Oregon/Washington District, entitled *The Need for Cross-Cultural*
14 *Ministries*, asks “for assistance in identifying and naming the barriers that exist in the
15 Church of the Brethren which are preventing the biblical vision of Revelation 7:9
16 from happening within our congregations and districts and to outline specific steps
17 which can enable congregations and districts to overcome them.” Additionally,
18 Annual Conference action also requested that the committee formulate a plan by
19 which the progress made toward multi-ethnic and cross-cultural ministries be report-
20 ed to Annual Conference each year until 2010 (Fred W. Swartz, Annual Conference
21 Secretary’s letter to the committee members).

22
23 Annual Conference approved the concerns of the queries and named an ethnically
24 diverse seven-member study committee to respond to the questions asked by the
25 queries.

26 Study Committee Actions to Date

27 In September, with the assistance of Lerry Fogle, Annual Conference Executive
28 Director, we used the conference call to respond to the concerns of the conference
29 that no African American members had been elected to the committee. Acting on
30 the direction of the delegates, the committee chose a seventh full member to the
31 Study Committee from among the African American nominees on the study com-
32 mittee ballot that was presented to the Conference. The selection of the ex-officio
33 member from the American Baptist Churches USA is in the search process as of this
34 writing.

35
36
37 Our first committee meeting took place in October when we began discussing ways
38 to carry out our charge. We decided that the question about barriers asked in the
39 query *The Need for Cross-Cultural Ministries* must to be addressed first in order to
40 respond respectfully, thoughtfully, and comprehensively to the questions asked in the
41 query *Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church*.

Our initial discussion included some definitional clarification. Committee members felt strongly that the term “cross-cultural” did not fully describe the tasks set out for the committee and “multicultural” indicated multiple cultures on parallel paths. Given our attempts to “bring us to conformity with the biblical vision of a church...united in worship before the throne of God,” we felt that the term “inter-cultural” was better suited for our committee. “Inter-cultural” indicates various cultures relating with and to each other, and is a more accurate term to describe the work of this committee as mandated by Annual Conference. We are therefore referring to ourselves as the Study Committee for Intercultural Ministries within the Church of the Brethren.

The committee is making a concerted effort to include individuals and as many members and friends of the Church of the Brethren as possible in the discussions. In order to foster dialogue and understanding, we developed a “framework” to guide our conversations with various people from both within the denomination and our ecumenical partners.

A partial list of proposed conversation partners and events include:

- The Inter-Cultural Study Committee plans to meet next in April 2005. At this time we will be having discussions with the Cross Cultural Ministries Team.
- A listening session is scheduled for Saturday evening of Annual Conference to invite input from the denomination.
- We hope to schedule interviews with each district executive and ask each district conference to host a “conversation” regarding cross-cultural ministries and becoming a multi-ethnic church.
- We plan to have continuing conversations with Congregational Life Team staff, the Cross Cultural Ministries Team, and Global Mission Partnerships.

We are developing a reading list/resource list that relates to developing inter-cultural ministries. Upon completion, this list will be disseminated to all congregations through their respective district offices.

The committee requests an additional year to complete its study.

We encourage each of you to participate in these and other efforts and we solicit your prayers as we carry out our responsibilities.

Darla Kay Bowman Deardorff	Neemita Pandya	40
Rueben D. Deoleo	Gilbert Romero	41
Thomas Dowdy	Asha Solanky, Chair	42
Nadine L. Monn, Recorder		43

1 **Action of the 2005 Annual Conference:** Annual Conference received the 2005
2 report of the Multi-Ethnic/Cross Cultural Ministries study committee (now
3 renamed the Study Committee for Intercultural Ministries) and granted the com-
4 mittee an additional year of study.

5

6 **Report to the 2006 Annual Conference in Des Moines, Iowa**

7

8 The vision of becoming an inclusive church of “all nations, tribes, peoples and
9 tongues” is very much alive within the Church of the Brethren. Members from all
10 of the ethnic and racial cultural backgrounds within the community have chal-
11 lenged it to identify barriers that prevent us from being the church John envi-
12 sioned in Revelation 7:9, and find ways to overcome them.

13

14 **STUDY COMMITTEE TASKS BASED ON THE ADOPTED QUERIES** 15 **AND 2004 ANNUAL CONFERENCE ACTIONS**

16

17 Below is a brief synopsis of the committee’s five tasks, as well as each query’s scrip-
18 tural foundations and questions.

19

- 20 1. Name the barriers in the Church of the Brethren that prevent the
21 fulfillment of the Revelation 7:9 vision. (COMPLETED)
- 22 2. Recommend actions we must take to bring us into conformity
23 with the vision of Revelation 7:9. (IN PROCESS)
- 24 3. Formulate a mechanism to report intercultural ministry progress
25 at Annual Conference through 2010. (SEVERAL OPTIONS
26 BEING EVALUATED)
- 27 4. Integrate an ex-officio member from our affiliate denomination,
28 the American Baptist Church (USA). (COMPLETED)
- 29 5. Select an eighth full committee member from the African-
30 American nominees on the 2004 ballot. (COMPLETED)

31

32 **Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church, 2004 (Atlantic Southeast District)**

33 **Scriptures cited:** Isaiah 56:6-7; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 15:9; II Corinthians
34 13:12; Revelation 7:9

35

36 “What action must we take, in our lives, in our congregations, in our districts, in
37 our denomination, and globally, to bring us into conformity with the biblical vision
38 of a church from every nation, tribe, people and language, united in worship before
39 the throne of God? How are we to become the church John saw in Revelation 7:9?”

40

41 **The Need for Cross Cultural Ministries, 2004 (Oregon-Washington District)**

42 **Scriptures cited:** Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:12; Revelations 7:9b

43

44 The query asks “for assistance in identifying and naming the barriers that exist in
45 the Church of the Brethren which are preventing the biblical vision of Revelations

7:9 from happening within our congregations and districts and to outline specific steps which can enable congregations and districts to overcome them.”

CLARIFICATION: TERMINOLOGY USED BY THE COMMITTEE

At the 2005 Annual Conference, several delegates requested additional clarification of the terms that the Intercultural Study Committee uses. There are many definitions of culture. We defined “culture” as a system of beliefs, values, customs, meanings, and behavioural norms, used by members of a particular group of people in society as they make decisions and construct their unique view of the world.

The committee understands the scope of the two queries to reference ethnic and racial cultures. These two indicators of culture are very complicated on their own and although others have requested inclusion in our study, we choose to remain faithful to these limits. We also recognize that our primary duty is to give Christ’s unconditional love to each person. Therefore, we encourage the denomination to continue dialogue with all cultural groups in the Body of Christ.

Second, we needed to distinguish between the terms “cross-cultural” and “multicultural.” Both words are used interchangeably in church and secular circles. Each can be used to describe work and relationship across at least two cultures. However, we did not feel that they were appropriate for our tasks. Neither word fully implies the concept of a mutual relationship, which we see as being the key to success for any recommendations.

These are our observations on the two terms:

Cross-cultural: Potentially limited to one cultural group seeking understanding of and relationship with another. The second culture may not see these efforts as a mutual relationship.

Multicultural: Potentially two or more cultural groups on parallel paths seeking understanding of each other, but not necessarily relationships with one another.

We selected the word “intercultural.” By the very definition for the prefix “inter,” the word signifies mutuality - a weaving together cultures.

Intercultural: Two or more cultural groups seeking a mutual understanding of and relationship with one another.

**INTERCULTURAL STUDY COMMITTEE ACTIONS-TO-DATE ON ITS
TASKS
(In order of completion)**

Completed Tasks

1 **Task 5 - Select an eighth full member from the African-American nominees on the**
2 **2004 ballot.**

3

4 Thomas K. Dowdy, pastor of Imperial Heights Church of the Brethren in Los
5 Angeles, CA, was selected in September 2004.

6

7 **Task 4 - Integrate an ex-officio member from the American Baptist Churches**
8 **(USA).**

9

10 Glenn Hatfield, a retired pastor from West Orange, NJ, was appointed as the ex-
11 officio committee member from the American Baptist Churches (USA) in March
12 2005. Glenn's final pastorate was a congregation that included members from 23
13 different nationalities. During his service, the congregation made intentional efforts
14 to invite and include its neighbors in order to reverse a decline in membership as the
15 surrounding community's demographics changed, in addition to fulfilling their out-
16 reach and evangelism goals.

17

18 **Task 1 - Name the barriers in the Church of the Brethren that prevent the fulfill-**
19 **ment of the Revelation 7:9 vision.**

20

21 Through prayer, study, and interviews with denominational leaders and individuals,
22 the Intercultural Study Committee created and distributed a questionnaire solicit-
23 ing information about barriers to becoming an inter-culturally inclusive church, and
24 requested input on actions to overcome them. Responses include information
25 obtained in congregational and personal conversations, in discussions at other
26 denominational events such as Mission Alive, at the April 2005 Cross-Cultural
27 Consultation and Celebration event, and at a 2005 Annual Conference listening ses-
28 sion on Saturday night. All of the responses were reviewed and categorized in order
29 to help formulate action recommendations.

30

31 Response styles have been mixed. Some districts established a task team to solicit
32 and compile the responses. Most responses are from individuals and the majority of
33 them address issues related to barriers. The lack of language inclusivity, fear of
34 change, loss of traditions, and loss of power were themes that appeared at all levels.
35 Below are some of the most frequently cited responses regarding barriers at various
36 levels within the church (*Read Appendix 1 for the complete listing of the barriers for*
37 *each level*).

38

39

40 **Theological/Spiritual**

- 41 • Marked lack of evaluation and use of theological and scriptural
- 42 basis for intercultural efforts
- 43 • Need for confession of past transgressions, and reconciliation
- 44 • Marked lack of evangelism within the denomination

45

Denominational / Organizational issues	1
• Past baggage, including unwillingness to share power and inaction, that cause hurt, pain, and brokenness in the denomination	2 3
• Paternalism - empowerment without independence and a need to grow beyond our history as the closed community that formed Brethren identity	4 5 6
• Lack of organizational and denominational structures and finances dedicated to intercultural efforts	7 8 9
District level	10
• Minority pastors not intentionally recruited, and lack of mentoring/support programmes	11 12
• Lack of evangelism and training to reach out to diverse groups	13
• Lack of cultural training and skill set development among those in leadership	14 15 16
Congregational level	17
• Lack of needs assessment - which population requires service based on geographical area and economic conditions	18 19
• Lack of resources assessment (not necessarily financial) to provide the services	20 21
• Sense of inertia; okay with the status quo	22 23
Personal level	24
• Fear of the loss of Brethren identity, of change, of language, and of discomfort	25 26
• Lack of awareness of prejudice, racism, and white privilege	27
• Reverse racism	28 29
Some respondents feel that there are no barriers within their congregations to embracing and implementing intercultural ministry, but that the issue is other cultures might have “problems” embracing our lifestyle as Brethren. Still others have a different theological perspective of Revelation 7:9, understanding that the scripture describes what the church will look like in heaven, rather than on earth.	30 31 32 33 34 35
<u>Unfinished Tasks</u>	36 37
Task 3 - Develop a way to report intercultural ministry progress at Annual Conference through 2010.	38 39
Several options are under consideration at this time.	40 41
1. Every congregation’s annual report to its respective district would include what kind of intercultural activities are occurring. The districts will forward these responses to the Congregational Life Ministry (CLM) office. It is strongly recommended that CLM	42 43 44 45

1 make a report to Annual Conference independent of the General
2 Board report so that it does not get diluted and might be more
3 detailed. The report would include specifics of activities occurring
4 by area at the congregational and district level. For example,
5 Harrisburg First Church (PA) has an intercultural choir.

- 6 2. Each district would submit an intercultural ministries report at
7 Annual Conference on their intercultural activity and progress.
8 Report content should include activities, conferences, events, min-
9 istries and service opportunities that would be influenced by the
10 action recommendations proposed by the committee at the 2007
11 Annual Conference in Cleveland, OH.
- 12 3. Congregational Life Ministries would host an insight session to
13 share information about intercultural ministry progress.

14
15 **Task 2 - Recommend actions we must take to bring us into conformity with the**
16 **Revelation 7:9 vision.**

17
18 The Intercultural Study Committee felt that, in addition to survey and interview
19 responses regarding actions being taken and/or recommended, an appropriate start-
20 ing point was to review past Annual Conference papers related to ethnicity and mul-
21 ticulturalism to see what specific recommendations were adopted and then to assess
22 the status of how these recommendations have been met. Below is a brief synopsis
23 to date on this review.

24
25 The closing sentences of the Report of the Committee on Brethren and Black
26 Americans reads, "The longest step is the one that leads from statement to action,
27 from word to deed. Let us begin (1991)." For many who responded to the
28 Intercultural Study Committee's questions, we have a ways to go on the journey to
29 intercultural inclusion.

30
31 Church of the Brethren statements on race relations date back to 1835. Annual
32 Conference made the first of its most contemporary statements about racial and eth-
33 nic issues in the Church of the Brethren in the United States beginning with the
34 1935 Inter-Racial Problem Resolution. Since then, there have been several Annual
35 Conference actions to reaffirm the Christian imperative for the Church of the
36 Brethren to be a culturally inclusive church, and to work proactively and diligently
37 on identifying and eliminating stumbling blocks within denominational structures,
38 traditions, ideology and polity.

39
40 **Annual Conference papers and resolutions regarding intercultural ministries in**
41 **the Church of the Brethren since 1989**

42
43 As a committee, we chose to review Annual Conference recommendations and their
44 implementation beginning in 1989, as they include most of the ethnic and cultural
45 minorities currently represented within the Church of the Brethren. These papers
46 include the following:

<u>1. Inclusion of Ethnicity in the Church of the Brethren</u>	1
Adopted at the 1989 Annual Conference	2
Scriptures cited: Proverbs 29:18; Ezekiel 34; Habakkuk 2:3; Matthew 28:19; John 15:16; Acts 2; Romans 12:4-8, 12-13; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; 1 Corinthians 12:13-31; Ephesians 4:15	3 4 5 6
This paper is the first to examine the multiple, major ethnic and racial groups present in the Church of the Brethren in the United States and Puerto Rico. It includes a “snapshot” history of the following communities: African-Americans, Hispanics, Filipinos, Koreans, and mentions the emerging Haitian membership. It contains recommendations for the denomination (directed to the General Board and Bethany Theological Seminary), districts, and congregations.	7 8 9 10 11 12 13
<u>2. Brethren and Black Americans</u>	14
Adopted at the 1991 Annual Conference	15
Scriptures cited: Matthew 15:21-28; Mathew 23; Galatians 3:27-28, Colossians 3:9-11	16 17 18
This paper examines the history and relationship between the European-American majority and the African-American minority in the Church of the Brethren. Its recommendations are directed to the denomination (General Board, Annual Conference, Brethren Colleges, and Bethany Theological Seminary) and congregations. The paper also includes a general recommendation that all Brethren institutions vigorously practice affirmative action.	19 20 21 22 23 24 25
<u>3. Community: A tribe of many feathers</u>	26
Adopted at the 1994 Annual Conference	27
Scriptures cited: Genesis 12:3; Exodus 23:9; Deuteronomy 10:18-19; Ruth; Psalms 94:6; Jeremiah 7:6; Malachi 3:5; Luke 7:36-50; Luke 8:40-48; Luke 9:49-50; John 4; John 14:6; Acts 10; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 2:11-21; Ephesians 4; Colossians 1:15	28 29 30 31 32
This final paper examines the history and relationship between the European-American majority and the Native American minority at Lybrook Community in Cuba, NM. More importantly, the committee writing the paper takes the opportunity to give two explanations:	33 34 35 36 37
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A concise history of Native American relations in the United States, and • An introduction of Native American perspective on Christianity as it relates to their cultural reference points. 	38 39 40 41 42
This paper provides recommendations for the denomination, districts, congregations, and personal recommendations for families and individuals.	43 44 45

1 4. Resolution on Ethnic Representation

2 Adopted at the 2001 Annual Conference

3 Scriptures cited: Acts 6: 1-8

4

5 The Castañer Church (Puerto Rico) petitioned the Annual Conference, through the
6 Standing Committee, to update the guidelines in the 1979 Annual Conference
7 Elections paper to assure “fair representation for minority groups in the church by
8 calling forth and utilizing gifted leadership from among our ethnic brothers and sis-
9 ters.” The delegate body approved Standing Committee’s recommendation that the
10 concerns of the query be affirmed.

11

12 **Status on the implementation of previous recommendations**

13

14 The last set of recommendations adopted by Annual Conference is twelve years old.
15 Additionally, the last comprehensive review of major cultural groups within the
16 church in the United States and Puerto Rico is seventeen years old. The fields of
17 intercultural ministries, mission, and studies have developed and promoted numer-
18 ous models in that time span. New recommendations must reflect this growth.

19

20 The committee decided that it was important to investigate several earlier recom-
21 mendations and the status of their implementation. To that end, we have sent out
22 two more questionnaires. The first one asked for demographic makeup of congrega-
23 tions within the various districts. The second questionnaire listed the recom-
24 mendations listed in the four papers discussed above and asked each district to iden-
25 tify how the recommendations have been implemented. Both these questionnaires
26 are available on the Intercultural Study Committee’s portion of the Annual
27 Conference website.

28

29 After continued consultation with individuals and agencies throughout the denom-
30 ination, we cannot readily identify how previous recommendations have been
31 implemented within the church. This does not mean that they have not been imple-
32 mented, but that when and where they have been enacted, the action has not been
33 highly visible nor has it been reported to all levels within the denomination.

34

35 As a result, the Intercultural Study Committee continues to work on formulating
36 faithful and accurate recommendations for action and implementation.

37

38 **REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL TIME**

39

40 The Intercultural Study Committee has completed three of the tasks named by the
41 2004 Annual Conference.

42

43 Several factors contribute to our inability to make specific action recommendations
44 in this report. They include:

45

1. A decided paucity to date in suggestions for action recommendations in response to our initial questionnaire. 1
2
2. Unclear information received thus far about denominational demographics in terms of ethnicity and race. 3
4
3. A systemic lack of knowledge within the denomination about previous recommendations from Annual Conference. 5
6
4. Difficulty in assessing the implementation and efficacy of previous recommendations, due to a general lack of knowledge about the recommendations and due to repeated changes in the denomination's organization and staffing structures since the recommendations were adopted. 7
8
9
10
11
5. A rapid growth in the field of intercultural ministries and mission since the most recent Annual Conference studies were completed, which needs further study than the current time allotment permitted. 12
13
14
15
6. The need for more time to further develop specific recommendations, including implementing the following action plan: 16
17
 - Continued research on how other denominations are addressing this topic. 18
19
 - Continued evaluation of past recommendations to Annual Conference. 20
21
 - Continued interviews and focus groups (some to be held at the May 2006 Cross-Cultural Celebration) to elicit specific action steps. 22
23
24
 - Collection and analysis of results from current surveys being conducted within the denomination. 25
26
 - Collection and analysis of feedback and discussion through our newly launched web log (<http://interculturalcob.blogspot.com>). 27
28
29
30
31
32

We therefore request an extension to bring our final report at the 2007 Annual Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. In the coming year, we will finalize a reporting structure for the progress made in intercultural ministries through the 2010 Annual Conference. Additionally, we will finalize the evaluation of previous recommendations and implement the above action plan, thereby allowing us to bring our recommendations for action and implementation at all levels of the denomination. 33
34
35
36
37
38
39

During this next year, we request that individuals and congregations continue to: 40
41

- Pray for the Intercultural Study Committee and its work. 42
- Provide feedback about possible action plans. 43
- Recommend additional reading and study guide materials. 44
- Hold continued dialogue within the congregations and denomi- 45

- 1 nation on how God is guiding us to fulfill Revelation 7:9.
- 2 • Engage in deliberate study of the history, culture, faith, etc., of our
- 3 ethnic and culturally diverse brothers and sisters by inviting guest
- 4 speakers from these groups to lead study groups and Bible studies.
- 5 • Include cultural minorities within our congregations, districts and
- 6 at the denominational level in programme planning for all events.
- 7 • Initiate pulpit exchanges, exchange of music and worship pro-
- 8 grammes, visit one another's worship service.
- 9 • Invite the Anti-Racism Team to train church members and the
- 10 leadership. (Contact Congregation Life Ministries for more infor-
- 11 mation.)
- 12 • Engage in deliberate dialogue with different cultural groups and
- 13 include them in planning and hosting intercultural events.
- 14

15 Prayerfully and respectfully submitted by:

16

17 Asha Solanky, Chair

18 Nadine L. Monn, Recorder

19 Darla Kay Bowman Deardorff

20 Rubén D. DeOleo

21 Thomas K. Dowdy

22 Neemita Pandya

23 Gilbert Romero

24 Glenn Hatfield, ex-officio, American Baptist Church (USA)

25

26 **Appendix 1: Complete Barriers List from Questionnaires and Interviews**

27

28 **Theological/Spiritual**

- 29 - Need for evaluating theological/scriptural basis for the need for
- 30 cross-cultural, multicultural efforts
- 31 - Need to discern what is central to our perspective on Christian
- 32 faith which makes us "Brethren"
- 33 - Need for confession of past transgressions and reconciliation
- 34 - Need for reparation
- 35 - Brethren have failed to realize how they have conformed to the
- 36 "world"
- 37 - Marked lack of evangelism within the denomination
- 38 - "Pervasive pride about our unique heritage which makes the whole
- 39 issue more about preserving our traditions rather than preaching
- 40 the gospel."
- 41

42 **Denominational / Organizational issues**

- 43 - Difficulty in decision making due to increased ambiguity of needs
- 44 - Greater complexity of issues leading to more confusion about the
- 45 rightness of decision making

- Confusion due to language and miscommunication	1
- Difficulty reaching agreement regarding meanings of behaviour and decisions made	2 3
- Difficulty agreeing with specific action plans	4
- Power differential needs to shift from a majority to include the minorities	5 6
- Denominational pride about our “humility” gets in the way	7
Brethren have failed to welcome the gifts, insights, and other contributions of Brethren from other ethnic groups by failing to welcome their leadership on their own terms	8 9 10
- Failure to ask what makes the other “comfortable” and when the question is asked, failing to take the response “seriously”	11 12
- Overwhelming sense of hurt, brokenness, sense of exclusion, being ignored is often not recognized or not seen	13 14
- Sense that outspokenness about cultural and ethnic issues will result in “backlash” from those in positions of power.	15 16
- Behaviour may not be intentional but it is certainly not recognized as demoralizing or demeaning	17 18
- Racism, prejudice and violence is not overt as in the past but is more covert and hence more difficult to identify and overcome	19 20
- Financial picture governs allocation of resources	21
- “The continuation of a pattern of having too few people of cultures other than the dominant white culture, either on staff or in decision making positions.”	22 23 24
- Personnel shortages	25
- Elimination of denominational structures that would foster multicultural/cross cultural activities	26 27
- No dedicated denominational office to monitor activities or disseminate information about current denominational activities (multicultural or cross-cultural initiatives)	28 29 30
- No follow-up on how previous decisions and recommendations by annual conference have been implemented	31 32
- Not enough training to increase awareness at individual, congregational, district and denominational level	33 34
- Gaps in leadership/pastoral education	35
- Lack of access to available resources	36
- No intentional recruitment of minority pastors	37
- Need to eliminate tokenism	38
- Need to work intentionally toward language inclusivity	39
- Need to go beyond our history (emergence as a denomination due to a history of persecution led to the need to be a closed society to survive. Now need to be an open society to survive)	40 41 42
- Fear that increasing minorities will create factions and destabilization	43 44
- Fear that diversity will create loss of Brethren identity	45

- 1 - Past baggage including past inaction - hurt/pain/brokenness
- 2 has occurred within the denomination
- 3 - Need for healing and reconciliation
- 4 - Paternalism - empowerment without independence
- 5 - Unwillingness to adapt
- 6 - Perceived “invisibility” of minorities in our midst
- 7 - Denominational pride about our humility

8

9 **District level**

- 10 - Minority pastors not intentionally recruited
- 11 - Lack of leadership
- 12 - Districts should be encouraged to be more intentional about
- 13 their efforts, “some great things happen at AC, but they don’t
- 14 filter down to Districts and congregations.”
- 15 - Lack of funding for cross-cultural projects
- 16 - Lack of intentional programmes of mentorship/support for
- 17 minority pastors
- 18 - “We are a doing church and forget the value of building rela-
- 19 tionships first”
- 20 - “We like to do for but are unwilling to do with”
- 21 - Lack of evangelism/training to reach out to diverse groups
- 22 - Lack of cultural training/skill set among those in leadership
- 23 - Inability to address intercultural conflict in congregations
- 24 - Unwillingness to adapt to the changing world around us
- 25 - “In more conservative districts, I have heard older (long-
- 26 term) Brethren say that they do not want things to change
- 27 (thereby making NO room for cultural expression w/in the
- 28 Brethren framework). Because these families have the
- 29 money in their congregations, leaders are unmotivated to
- 30 actively pursue inter-cultural changes and additions.”
- 31 - Lack of language inclusivity

32

33 **Congregational level**

- 34 - Lack of assessment of need - which population requires serv-
- 35 ice based on geographical area and economic conditions;
- 36 lack of assessment of resources to provide the services
- 37 - Tolerance/acceptance of persons who “become like us” = lack
- 38 of respect
- 39 - Application of initiatives is superficial and inconsistent
- 40 - Lack of evangelism or support for evangelism activities
- 41 occurring
- 42 - Restricted empowerment
- 43 - “Active learning” laziness
- 44 - Lack of language inclusivity
- 45 - Sense of action “inertia” - OK with status quo
- Lack of intercultural training and skill sets

- Lack of motivation 1
- Inability to perceive that different cultural and ethnic minorities can enhance our faith and view of what the Kingdom of God can be like 2
3
4
- Core groups in congregations need to be less cliquish and reach out to visitors and culturally different members within the church 5
6
- Socio-economic concerns/inequities 7
- Paternalism - helping/serving others without seeing the value of what others bring to congregations 8
9
- Unwillingness and inability to adapt 10
11

Individual level

- Racism and prejudice are pervasive 12
13
- Racism/prejudice/white privilege are not recognized in many cases 14
- Lack of motivation 15
- Lack of contact with persons of a different culture or ethnicity 16
- "Lack of a belief that the life of the COB depends on becoming a multi-cultural church" 17
18
- "Change is seen as dangerous and uncomfortable and unnecessary" 19
20
- Reverse racism 21
- Lack of willingness of the minority or culturally different in meeting the majority half-way 22
23
- Lack of willingness to move from "our uniqueness" to being open to what others might have to offer in terms of worship style, faith perspectives, spiritual growth, Biblical insight, etc. 24
25
26
- Fear of change, discomfort 27
- Fear of loss of Brethren identity 28
- Lack of awareness/information about how our behavior impacts people around us 29
30
- Need for training and exposure to different peoples and ways of being 31
32
- Language 33
- Not able to find "common ground"/connections with those from other cultures 34
35
- There is a sense that change should not be forced on older members who might have more difficulty changing worship and music styles. 36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45

1 **Appendix 2: Reading/Resource List**

2

3 We have compiled a reading/resource list that relates to developing intercultural
4 ministries and understanding.

5

6 **I. Intercultural Churches as an Expression of Christian Principle**

7

8 **From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural**
9 **Perspective** by David Rhoads and David M. Rhoads. Augsburg Fortress Publishers.

10

11 **Where the Nations Meet: The Church in a Multicultural World** by Stephen A.
12 Rhodes. InterVarsity Press.

13

14 **What Color Is Your God?** by David Ireland. Impact Publishing House.

15

16 **Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology** by Jung Young Lee. Fortress
17 Press.

18

19 **United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of**
20 **Race** by Curtiss Paul Deyoung, Michael Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai
21 Kim. Oxford University Press.

22

23 **One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church** by Manuel Ortiz.
24 InterVarsity Press.

25

26 **Pursuing the Pearl: A Comprehensive Resource for Multi-Asian Ministry** by Ken
27 Fong. Judson Press.

28

29 **Many Faces, One Church: Cultural Diversity and the American Catholic**
30 **Experience** by Peter C. Phan. Sheed and Ward.

31

32 **One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism** by Ken Ham, Carl Wieland and Don
33 Batten. Master Books.

34

35 **II. Toward Understanding Difficulties and Barriers**

36

37 **There is More Than One Color In the Pew** by Tony Mathews. Smith Helwys
38 Publishing.

39

40 **The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a**
41 **Multicultural Community** by Eric Law. Chalice Press.

42

43 **Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America** by
44 Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith. Oxford University Press.

45

The Color of Faith: Building Community in a Multiracial Society by Fumitaka Matsuoka. United Church Press.	1 2 3
Many Cultures, One in Christ by Julie Garber. faithQuest.	4 5
Enter the River: Healing Steps from White Privilege toward Racial Reconciliation by Tobin Miller Shearer and Jody Miller Shearer. Herald Press.	6 7 8
God is Red: A Native View of Religion by Vine Deloria Jr., Leslie Marmon Silko, and George E. Tinker. Fulcrum Publishing.	9 10 11
The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future by Riane Eisler. Harper San Francisco.	12 13 14
Embracing Diversity: Leadership in Multicultural Congregations by Charles Foster. Alban Institute.	15 16 17
The Art of Crossing Cultures by Craig Storti. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.	18 19
Frontline Women: Negotiating Cross-cultural Issues in Ministry by Marguerite G. Kraft (Ed.).	20 21 22
Breaking Down Walls: A Model for Reconciliation in an Age of Racial Strife by Raleigh Washington and Glen Kehrein. Moody Publishers.	23 24 25
Mediation across Cultures by David Augsberger. Westminster John Knox Press.	26 27
III. Toward Becoming Intercultural	
One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches by George A. Yancey. InterVarsity Press.	28 29 30 31 32
The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed: Developing a Multicultural Community Through Dialogue and Liturgy by Eric Law. Chalice Press.	33 34 35
Against All Odds: The Struggle for Racial Integration in Religious Organizations by Brad Christerson, Michael O. Emerson, and Korie Edwards. New York University Press.	36 37 38 39
Multicultural Ministry: Finding Your Church's Unique Rhythm by David Anderson. Zondervan.	40 41 42
A Mosaic of Believers: Diversity and Innovation in a Multiethnic Church by Gerardo Marti. Indiana University Press.	43 44 45

1 **Uncovering Racism** by Kathryn Goering Reid and Stephen Breck Reid. Brethren
2 Press.
3
4 **People on the Way** by Ken Fong.
5
6 **A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures: Making Friends in a Multicultural**
7 **World** by Patty Lane. InterVarsity Press.
8
9 **Pastoral Counseling across Cultures** by David Augsberger. Westminster John Knox
10 Press.
11
12 **Let's get to Know Each Other** by Tony Evans. Thomas Nelson Publishers
13
14 **We Stand Together: Reconciling Men of Different Color** by Rodney Cooper.
15 Moody Publishers.
16
17 **He's My Brother: Former Racial Foes Offer Strategy for Reconciliation** by John
18 Perkins, Thomas A. Tarrants, and David Wimbish. Baker Publishing Group.
19
20 **The End of Racism: Principles for a Multi-racial Society** by Dinesh D'Souza. Free
21 Press.
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45

3. Brethren Medical Plan Resolution

Introduction

From its beginning, the Church of the Brethren has modeled the concept of mutuality, emulating the teachings of the Apostle Paul. In I Corinthians 12:24-27 (NIV), Paul states, "But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it."

According to the 1989 Annual Conference *Statement on Health Care in the United States*, "Our Judeo-Christian heritage has taught us that God's holy purpose includes everyone; that every person is of worth. As God's people, we are to be concerned for the health of all people, and to nurture health for one another."

Historically, the Church of the Brethren has accepted the responsibility of caring for others. In 1961 Annual Conference affirmed the interplay of medical and psychological sciences, as well as the sacramental elements of confession, prayer, and anointing, for the healing of the body and mind. In the 1974 Addendum of the Report of the Annual Conference Committee on Health and Welfare, the resolution stated, "We believe that all persons should receive adequate health care as a basic human right, as a legal right, and as a reflection of the dignity of personhood. We believe that the responsibility for fulfilling this right must rest with both the individual and society and the government as an instrument of society must assure it...."

Current Status

Whereas -

1. The Church of the Brethren has always believed in mutual care within the body of Christ,
2. The church first started offering medical insurance for national staff, employees of colleges and retirement home communities, and pastors and church staff members in the 1940s,
3. Annual Conference delegates in 1985 endorsed a guideline that "pastor(s) and congregations should participate in the Church of the Brethren Medical Plan" by adopting *Guidelines for Pastors' Salary and Benefits*,
4. The Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in 1988 and again in 1998 affirmed that Brethren Benefit Trust is the administrator of the Brethren Medical Plan,

- 1 5. There are employees of congregations, districts, and church-related agencies and
2 their families who would be uninsurable or be faced with high, budget-busting
3 premiums without the Brethren Medical Plan,
4
- 5 6. The Brethren Medical Plan offers guaranteed issue - guaranteed insurance cov-
6 erage regardless of medical condition - to eligible employees of congregations,
7 districts, and church-related agencies and their families,
8
- 9 7. The Brethren colleges and many retirement home communities once partici-
10 pated in the Brethren Medical Plan but no longer do so for myriad reasons,
11
- 12 8. Brethren Medical Plan participation among congregational employees has
13 steadily declined over the past decade; many have left the Plan for cheaper
14 insurance,
15
- 16 9. The membership of the Brethren Medical Plan was at 3,119 members in 1993
17 but dropped to 796 as of May 12, 2005,
18
- 19 10. The medical insurance industry within the United States today is in crisis, with
20 83 million Americans having inadequate or no health insurance,
21
- 22 11. Medical insurance premiums continue to rise by double digits each year,
23 increasingly becoming a financial burden on congregations, districts, and
24 church-related agencies,
25
- 26 12. Brethren Benefit Trust supplemented the Plan by \$1.4 million in 2003 and
27 2004, and, with Mennonite Mutual Aid, will continue to supplement the Plan
28 as needed in 2005 and 2006,
29
- 30 13. Insurance consultants have warned that the Brethren Medical Plan needs to be
31 stabilized or terminated as it is in the early stages of a "death spiral," a down-
32 ward cyclical phenomenon resulting from increased medical costs, increased
33 risk, and declining membership,
34
- 35 14. The Brethren Benefit Trust Board, in an attempt to stabilize the Brethren
36 Medical Plan, announced in August 2004 that each district would need to have
37 75 percent of its eligible congregations in the Brethren Medical Plan by Jan. 1,
38 2007; as of this date, districts will not be able to participate in the Plan until
39 this requirement is met,
40
- 41 15. The Brethren Benefit Trust Board will delay implementing its 75 percent par-
42 ticipation requirement, subject to the creation of an Annual Conference Study
43 Committee as called for below, through Dec. 31, 2008, or until the completion
44 of the study, whichever is latest,
45
46

Resolution

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the 2005 Annual Conference delegates appoint a one-year study committee to -

- A) Evaluate the Brethren Medical Plan, and
- B) Assess the continuing need for a denominational medical insurance plan for employees of congregations, districts, and church-related agencies.

Be it further resolved that the 2005 Annual Conference delegates call on every eligible congregation, district, and church-related agency to participate in the Brethren Medical Plan from 2006 through at least the conclusion of the study. The delegates also call on district and Brethren Benefit Trust staff and other stakeholders in the Plan to work together to promote the Plan to all eligible employers, including colleges, retirement home communities, and other agencies that relate to districts.

*Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust Board of Directors
May 17, 2005*

Action of the 2005 Annual Conference: Annual Conference adopted the resolution including the recommendation of Standing Committee that Annual Conference elect a committee of four to answer the questions raised in the resolution and report back to the 2006 Annual Conference. Elected to serve on the study committee were: James C. Gibbel, Brian Markle, Willie Hisey Pierson, and Donna Shumate.

Progress Report to the 2006 Annual Conference

The 2005 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren, meeting in Peoria, Illinois, had as an item of new business a resolution from the Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) regarding the current fiscal crisis of the Brethren Medical Plan and asking that a study committee be elected by Annual Conference to review the current plan and respond with recommendations regarding the denomination's participation in such a benefit for its employees. The delegates adopted the resolution, including the recommendation from Standing Committee that Annual Conference elect a committee of four.

Specifically, the resolution requested the study committee to complete two tasks:

- A. Evaluate the Brethren Medical Plan;
- B. Assess the continuing need for and feasibility of a denominational medical insurance plan for employees of congregations, districts, and church-related agencies.

The Brethren Medical Plan Study Committee met for an organizational meeting in September 2005 to begin gathering facts relating to all aspects of the current plan. To date, the committee has consulted with: Wil Nolen, Jeff Garber, and Donna March of the Brethren Benefit Trust; Stan Noffsinger and Mary Lou Garrison of the

1 General Board; and Marilyn Koehler of the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits
2 Advisory Committee. As well, the committee has sought the input from the
3 Council of District Executives and has welcomed input from congregations and
4 individuals through letters and e-mails at annualconference@brethren.org.

5

6 The Church of the Brethren has always believed in mutual care within the body of
7 Christ. Since the 1940's, the church has offered medical insurance for national staff,
8 employees of colleges and retirement home communities, and pastors and church
9 staff members. In 1985, Annual Conference delegates endorsed a guideline that
10 "pastor(s) and congregations should participate in the Church of the Brethren
11 Medical Plan" by adopting *Guidelines for Pastors' Salary and Benefits*. Since 1985, the
12 need of staff and pastors for affordable health care coverage has only increased.

13

14 As of January 1, 2006, there were 506 active employees and ministers as well as 240
15 retired employees and ministers participating in the Brethren Medical Plan. Many
16 of these participants have been loyal to the Plan for decades. Pastors and employees
17 of congregations and districts sacrifice to care for the spiritual well-being of the
18 church. Similarly, we have a duty to sacrifice for the physical health of those who
19 minister to and serve us. Some of these participants may be considered uninsurable
20 and most likely would be unable to find affordable health insurance coverage if the
21 Brethren Medical Plan ceased to exist.

22

23 The ministry element of the Brethren Medical Plan makes it imperative to provide
24 for those who serve and especially for those who would not otherwise have health
25 care insurance. It is clear that there is a continuing need for the Brethren Medical
26 Plan.

27

28 The Brethren Medical Plan sustained a loss of \$1.4 million over the years 2003 and
29 2004. Brethren Benefit Trust covered the loss from its reserves. Mennonite Mutual
30 Aid, the administrator of the Brethren Medical Plan, and Hewitt & Associates, an
31 insurance consulting firm, advised Brethren Benefit Trust to take steps to stabilize
32 the Brethren Medical Plan. In response, Brethren Benefit Trust announced in
33 August 2004 that each district would need to have 75 per cent of its eligible con-
34 gregations in the Brethren Medical Plan by January 1, 2007. District Executives,
35 District Advocates, and representatives of Brethren Benefit Trust have actively pro-
36 moted the Brethren Medical Plan since that time. Despite these efforts, the 2006
37 data indicates that the 75 per cent participation requirement has not yet been
38 achieved. This committee believes that further efforts to achieve this requirement
39 would be counter-productive.

40

41 Through the committee's research, it has become apparent that the tasks of evaluat-
42 ing the Brethren Medical Plan and completing the feasibility assessment will require
43 additional time.

44

45 THEREFORE, the Brethren Medical Plan Study Committee affirms the continu-

ing need for the Brethren Medical Plan and recommends that:	1
	2
1. Brethren Benefit Trust reevaluate the 75 per cent participation requirement;	3
2. The committee be granted an additional year to consult with other denomi-	4
national representatives and to complete its study.	5
	6
Respectfully submitted,	7
Donna Shumate	8
Brian Markle	9
James Gible	10
Willey Hisey-Pierson	11
	12
	13
	14
	15
	16
	17
	18
	19
	20
	21
	22
	23
	24
	25
	26
	27
	28
	29
	30
	31
	32
	33
	34
	35
	36
	37
	38
	39
	40
	41
	42
	43
	44
	45

4. The Review and Evaluation Committee

A New Mandate

1 **Background**

2 The Review and Evaluation Committee was created by the 1971 Annual Conference
3 as a part of the reorganization of the General Board in that same year. The function
4 of the committee, a.k.a. the “Rev & Ev Committee,” was “to evaluate the work of
5 the General Board in terms of its mandate from Annual Conference and to report
6 on the evaluation both to the Board and to the next Annual Conference.” That first
7 committee, consisting of Carl E. Myers, chairman, Walter D. Bowman, Norman L.
8 Harsh, DeWitt L. Miller, and Earl M. Mitchell, made its report, a very thorough
9 one, to the 1972 Conference. Adopted along with its report was a recommendation
10 from the committee that subsequent review and evaluations be conducted every five
11 years and that the committee be elected two years in advance of the date of report-
12 ing. That pattern continued until the 1989 Conference when the frequency of
13 Review and Evaluation Committee reports was changed to ten year intervals.
14 Specifically, the Rev and Ev Committee was to be elected in the fifth year of each
15 decade to “apprise the work of the General Board” and report to Annual Conference
16 in the seventh year of the decade.

17
18 With the approval of a new design for the General Board in 1997, Annual
19 Conference authorized the creation of a specially scheduled Review and Evaluation
20 Committee to be elected in the year 2000 and to present its final report to Annual
21 Conference one year later. That interim limited report, focusing primarily on the
22 new design, was then to be followed by a full review and evaluation in the normal
23 10-year cycle with election of the new Rev and Ev Committee in 2005 and the report
24 scheduled for 2007.

25
26 After hearing reports in 1999 which revealed that the new design for the General
27 Board had created a ripple effect raising questions about long-held understandings
28 about polity, practices, and procedures in our denomination, Standing Committee
29 broadened the assignment by recommending that the task of the Review and
30 Evaluation Committee “become one of reviewing the comprehensive effect of
31 redesign of the General Board of the Church of the Brethren.”

32
33 The 2001 Rev and Ev Committee therefore examined and responded to such
34 questions as:

- 35
36 *Who is the official representative in ecumenical relationships?*
37 *Who should maintain and distribute the denomination’s polity manual?*
38 *Who should provide clarification on questions of denominational polity?*
39 *How should Annual Conference agencies and the Council of District Executives*
40 *relate to each other?*
41 *What should be the role and composition of the Interagency Forum?*

What role should the Annual Conference office play in the denomination's organizational structure?

The 2001 Review and Evaluation Committee clearly conceived its task as that of looking beyond one church agency to the interplay between five reportable/accountable church agencies and to the organization to which they are accountable: Annual Conference. It also believed that the task included the relationship between Annual Conference and its accountable agencies and the Council of District Executives. The report of the 2001 Rev and Ev Committee therefore included recommendations for several innovative procedures, including the creation of the Annual Conference Council, an executive committee for Standing Committee. The report was received by Conference delegates in its entirety.

As Annual Conference prepares to elect a regularly scheduled Review and Evaluation Committee in 2005, it would be reasonable to believe that such a committee should have an expanded scope, just as that given the specially scheduled Rev and Ev Committee in 2000. In fact, it will be timely to evaluate the effect of the redesign of denominational organization with the passing of another five years of operation.

The Recommendation

Standing Committee recommends to the 2005 Conference that the scope of the Review & Evaluation Committee be expanded to include total denominational structure and program, including all agencies reportable to the Annual Conference. The Committee will continue to be elected every ten years, to serve a two-year term, with the election occurring in the fifth year of each decade and the final report of the committee to Annual Conference in the seventh year of the decade.

The Review and Evaluation Task

1. A study of the existing organization and structure of the denomination and their effectiveness for accomplishing the goals and purpose of the church.
2. A study of the thoroughness and comprehension of denominational programs of the General Board, the Association of Brethren Caregivers, and On Earth Peace Assembly.
3. A consideration of the balance and unity of denominational witness and ministry as directed and implemented by Annual Conference agencies.
4. An evaluation of the collaboration, collegiality and cooperation between Annual Conference agencies and the goals and programming of the districts.
5. An assessment of the interest and involvement of the general membership of the Church of the Brethren in denominational programs and missions.
6. The study of other matters of current relevance to the physical and spiritual effectiveness of the denomination.

1 7. The committee shall make no recommendations that violate agency bylaws.

2

3 The committee shall develop the criteria for conducting its study.

4

5 Tools, Methods, and Procedures

6 While the committee will determine the techniques that are most appropriate for
7 its task, the following may be helpful:

8

9 1. Self-evaluation by individual agencies.

10

11 2. Interviews with key denominational leaders.

12

13 3. Questionnaires for Annual Conference delegates.

14

15 4. Hearings and drop-in center at Annual Conference.

16

17 5. Examination of documents related to Annual Conference component
18 groups and accountable agencies.

19

20 Guidelines

21 To promote cooperation between the Review and Evaluation Committee and
22 denominational groups and agencies, several guidelines are suggested:

23

24 1. The Annual Conference Council shall ensure that the committee members
25 have an opportunity to be introduced to the leadership and staff of each of
26 the agencies and their role interpreted.

27

28 2. Initial inquiries about the programs and activity of the Annual Conference
29 agencies will be channeled through the respective executives of each agency.

30

31 3. Committee members are welcome and encouraged to conduct spontaneous
32 interviews of agency employees and denominational members.

33

34 4. The committee must observe confidentiality at all times.

35

36 5. The committee will keep the Annual Conference executive and the
37 executives of the Annual Conference agencies apprised of its progress.

38

39 6. The committee may make an interim report to Annual Conference after the
40 first year of its study.

41

42

43 **Action of the 2005 Annual Conference:** Annual Conference adopted the recom-
44 mendation of Standing Committee that the new mandate for the Review and
45 Evaluation Committee be adopted with one amendment recorded in the document
above.

Report to the 2006 Annual Conference	1
	2
Our Task	3
	4
1. A study of the existing organization and structure of the denomination and their effectiveness for accomplishing the goals and purpose of the church.	5
	6
	7
2. A study of the thoroughness and comprehension of the denominational programs of the General Board, the Association of Brethren Caregivers, and On Earth Peace Assembly.	8
	9
	10
3. A consideration of the balance and unity of denominational witness and ministry as directed and implemented by Annual Conference agencies.	11
	12
4. An evaluation of the collaboration, collegiality and cooperation between Annual Conference agencies and the goals and programming of the districts.	13
	14
5. An assessment of the interest and involvement of the general membership of the Church of the Brethren in denominational programs and missions.	15
	16
6. The study of other matters of current relevance to the physical and spiritual effectiveness of the denomination.	17
	18
7. The committee shall make no recommendations that violate agency bylaws.	19
	20
Suggested Tools, Methods, and Procedures	21
	22
1. Self-evaluation by individual agencies	23
2. Interviews with key denominational leaders.	24
3. Questionnaires for Annual Conference delegates	25
4. Hearings and drop-in centers at Annual Conference	26
5. Examination of documents related to Annual Conference component groups and accountable agencies.	27
	28
	29
Our Organization and Time Goals	30
	31
We had our initial meeting November 11 and 12, 2005.	32
	33
We have assigned interviewing responsibilities to each of the five persons on the Committee. These interviews will be specifically targeted early on and then perhaps become a bit more general, as we assess what information might still be needed to meet our task and objectives. We will also use questionnaires in our information gathering.	34
	35
	36
	37
	38
	39
We developed a timeline which we feel is realistic in order to complete our report to the July, 2007, Annual Conference at Cleveland, Ohio. We are aware that all printed materials for this Annual Conference must be submitted by February 1, 2007. All five of us on the Committee will all be attending the Annual Conference, 2006, at Des Moines, Iowa. It is our plan to utilize the opportunities for conversations and information gathering which this Conference presents. We understand the	40
	41
	42
	43
	44
	45

1 importance of our task and study. We cherish the wisdom, knowledge, and coopera-
2 tion of all Brethren contacted. It is our prayer that this study and report will measure
3 up to the high standards of integrity which are continually exemplified by Annual
4 Conference, its Committees, and the many persons who serve as our leaders.

5

6 Paul Hoffman, McPherson, Kansas, Committee Chair

7 Michaela Camps, Miami, Florida, Recorder

8 Rebecca Baile Crouse, Warrensburg, Missouri

9 Craig Gandy, Roaring Springs, Pennsylvania

10 James Edward Martinez, Modesto, California

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45