Church of the Brethren
Annual Conference

STRATEGIC PLAN

This is the Strategic Plan to guide
staff and volunteers of the
Church of the Brethren Annual Conference

August 27, 2005
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Introduction

Recorded Church of the Brethren Annual Conferences date back to the late 1700s. Established as the umbrella organization of the church, Annual Conference unites representatives of most Church of the Brethren congregations, hereafter called Brethren, annually for the purposes of worship, denominational business, learning, discerning and fellowshipping together. The annual meeting rotates geographically around the country, enabling the opportunity for many Brethren to participate. Annual Conference is highly family-oriented; programs exist for all age groups and singles. Though congregations send voting delegates, authorized by membership level, anyone in the denomination can attend as a non-delegate. As a result, many families plan vacations around Conference.

Annual Conferences years ago were held in rural, farming communities. Meetings were held in specially-constructed buildings or tents and attendees lodged with church members in the community. As time passed, Conference has gravitated toward larger cities with convention centers and hotels. Occasionally Annual Conference is held on university campus settings. Attendance fluctuates between 3,000 and more than 5,000, depending on location.

Conference detail is far-reaching and planning is complex. To meet this demand over the years, full-time, paid staff has been secured to plan and facilitate the annual meeting in conjunction with the Program and Arrangements Committee (P&AC). This strategic plan, initially developed by the Annual Conference Council (ACC), contains a vision statement, a mission statement, core values, ministry analysis, objectives, strategies for achieving the objectives, an implementation plan and an evaluation plan to ensure the strategy is being carried out and the vision achieved.
Vision Statement

Annual Conferences must be special times in the life of the Church of the Brethren.
We envision Annual Conferences . . .

that bring or revive commitment to Jesus;

that glorify God in excellent worship, work and fellowship;

that facilitate the business of the church through business sessions, study committees, agency reports, and disposition of queries;

that are open and welcoming, and bring together Brethren from all cultures and points of view to proclaim Jesus as Lord;

where we humbly celebrate our oneness in the Body as well as our unique place and ministry in the Body;

that reach out to the local Conference community with the Good News through word and deed;

that have dynamic preaching and quality leadership development;

that have open and compassionate dialogue;

that are a catalyst for personal and corporate change, and Kingdom momentum;

that make people enthusiastic about witness and service;

that value substance and depth of faith over politics;

that encourage one another and build the community;

that call, nurture and thank denominational leadership;

that provide memorable, safe and joyful experiences for the whole family;

that involve and challenge all of our congregations in the New Testament model;

that maximize technology for the glory of God;

that value the past while looking forward;

where we have enough quality time, well spent.
Mission Statement

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

We believe that Jesus is the head of the Church. As part of the larger Body of Jesus Christ, the Church of the Brethren has a unique ministry to the world. Therefore, Annual Conference, the Church of the Brethren assembled, is committed to:

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

Our ministry centers on the Godhead, focused in Jesus. All that we do is because Jesus Christ is Lord. We focus upon Jesus. We find discernment and truth in Jesus. Scriptural basis can be found in Mark 9:7, Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:15-20 and Hebrews 12:2-3.

Worship

As a community of faith, worship is the primary means of expressing our love for God in Jesus Christ. We worship because God is. We believe we are to love the Lord our God with every fiber of our being. Annual Conference values worship and will provide rich and full opportunities to do so every time we gather. Biblical instruction to do so comes from Mark 12:28-31, John 4:21-24 and Revelation 4:9-11.

Unity

As we worship together under the lordship of Jesus Christ, true unity can be found. All that could possibly separate us is laid aside, in order that we might be one. Unity comes through our expression of love for Jesus Christ and our devotion to him, as clearly seen in John 17:22-23 and Ephesians 4:1-13.

The New Testament as our rule of faith and practice

Though all of the Bible is God’s inspired word, we believe that the New Testament fully reveals God’s will in Jesus Christ – through His ministry, death, resurrection and ascension into the heavenly places. The New Testament confirmation of this is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Hebrews 8:7-13.

Relationships

Unity is found not only in worship of God but through building loving relationships with one another, despite any differences we may have. We are called to love and respect each other. This happens as we look to the relational model Jesus gave us, take the time to know each other, worship and pray together, and extend God’s grace and love, as revealed in John 15:17 and Romans 12:8-13.
Core Values (continued)

Identity

It is important to remember who we are in Jesus Christ and the unique calling we have as Brethren in this world. We have a significant ministry and message, part of the larger Body of Jesus Christ, that is affirmed and renewed each time we assemble for our annual meeting, corporately and individually. These special times remind us why we exist. Biblical references include Romans 12:3-8 and I Corinthians 12:12-13.

A variety of faith experiences

A full spectrum of worship, prayer, business, learning, discerning and fellowshipping is valued and experienced, by all age groups within the church. Abundant life in Jesus Christ is developed through this variety, as God has the opportunity to shine the light upon us in many ways, in different settings. Quality and excellence is valued in all of these varied experiences. It is a time and place for the whole family to have fun, grow together and be strengthened in faith. See scriptural examples in Acts 16:31-34 and Romans 14:1-8.
Ministry Analysis

This is a ministry analysis for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. It includes an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, based on Malphurs.\(^2\) Consideration is given first to internal analysis which includes audits of life cycle, performance, direction, strategy, culture, obstacles, spirituality, energy, and finances. Following these will be an external analysis with audits of threats, opportunities and risks.

Life Cycle Audit

Annual Conference is an event each year, not a congregation, and therefore has a different kind of life cycle. Whereas congregations grow, remain on a plateau, decline, revive and grow again, Annual Conference has a unique life cycle. Although denominational membership has declined for a number of years, Annual Conference attendance and participation has remained fairly constant. Only a significant growth or loss in total membership would result in Annual Conference having to seriously adjust program and arrangements, based on attendance.

Performance Audit

Annual Conference has many strengths. It provides the opportunity for people from all Church of the Brethren congregations, delegates and non-delegates, to experience the love, joy and fellowship of the Conference. Worship is a central strength leading to inspiring services and Bible-based decision making business sessions. Bible studies and insight sessions focus on church ministry, providing learning opportunities that equip the church. Special concerts,
fellowship events and non-structured times in the Conference schedule bring the Body
together, formally and informally, to renew old acquaintances and establish new ones.

Specific strengths of the Annual Conference experience include fellowship with
God, building relationships with each other, blending of cultures, various opportunities
for dialogue, rotating locations and a variety of Christ-centered worship experiences that
include powerful preaching, great congregational singing, and inspiring music. Annual
Conference volunteers and staff are strong and enthusiastic leaders.

Annual Conference does have some weaknesses: Brethren exclusivity, tight
scheduling, contention and differing interpretations. Conference attendees can
sometimes feel as though they are not part of the Brethren family, depending on their
family heritage, cultural background, or college or seminary attended. The Conference
schedule is very busy, causing some who attend to feel rushed. Business sessions can
sometimes be contentious and are difficult to redeem. Districts and congregations can
have differing interpretations of Annual Conference decisions.

There are also a few limitations: facility challenges, lack of vision, leadership
continuity, time and money. Conference facilities change every year as we move around
the country and utilize different metropolitan centers or college campuses. Prior to this
strategic plan, we lacked a written statement of intentionality or vision for the annual
meeting. Annual Conference leadership is constantly changing, presenting continuity
limitations and training challenges. As with most organizations, time and money also are
limiting factors.
Direction Audit

Annual Conference has never had core values, vision and mission statements. Having these will help solidify direction and provide guidance for the planning and implementation of future conferences. This strategic plan will provide the framework that will support everything done by Annual Conference staff and volunteers.

Guiding principles have been identified as: God’s purpose must prevail; God’s timing is all important; the Holy Spirit will lead us to success; all that we do springs from the authority of Jesus Christ; God’s greatest mission for us is to make disciples; and Annual Conference is a clear channel of God’s truth.

Strategy Audit

Volunteers and staff are persons very dedicated to the success of the annual event. Accordingly, Annual Conference enjoys a degree of success, hosting a conference each year planned and carried out by individuals committed to its success. The larger church probably has not thought much about having a strategy, due to the success of Conference. However, having core values, mission and vision, and a strategy to accomplish them, will serve as a steering mechanism for Annual Conference personnel. It will help everyone focus on what the event is really about and the best way to accomplish it.

Culture Audit

Annual Conference, though not a local church but a composite of persons from many congregations, has a culture. Repetitive attendees of Conference nurture a culture that resembles a family gathering. This is primarily a good thing, bringing together persons who sometimes do not see each other until they meet again at Conference. This family culture of Annual Conference, similar to that of many Brethren congregations, had
its roots in the genealogical structures of real families. The hereditary nature of family
culture in the Church of the Brethren still exists to some degree but is less of a factor in
its third century of existence than it was in the first two centuries.

Key components of Annual Conference culture in this family setting include:
worship, business, Biblical insight, peace emphasis, age programming, informational
networks, Conference identification (Brethren), a moderator, logo, theme, caring
relationships, service, and T-totaling ice cream eaters.

As of 2004, the Church of the Brethren has held 218 recorded Annual Conferences.
Changes were made as recently as five years ago to shorten Conference to four days and
minimize Sunday away time for the many pastors who attend. The routine and schedule
of Conference activities is fairly well set. Even though there are many first-time
attendees each year, those who attend regularly expect it to run a certain way and, when it
does not, they do not hesitate to register their concerns on Conference evaluation forms.
This feedback is actually a healthy mechanism for expression and idea generation. There
is an expected rhythm that needs to occur for Conference culture to be satisfied.

Obstacles Audit

Malphurs states “two kinds of obstacles are people and organizational.”

Annual Conference has some people obstacles. These include special interests;
generational issues in the form of dress, music, business and perception of “church;” lack
of redemptive skill and knowledge in confrontation; uneasiness with some issues in
which we are divided or might be divided; and persons who act with passive-aggression.

Organizational obstacles (challenges may be a better word) are present. There is a
perception by some that a hierarchy of power/leadership exists. Some question whether
all Conference leadership is accountable to the larger body. The methodology of
planning and arranging Conference has been done the same way for a long time; that
methodology may sometimes be an obstacle to God’s perfect will. Not all of the
immense talent base of the denomination can be identified or used at Annual Conference
events.

Spirituality Audit

The Church of the Brethren faces the same challenges as do other denominations
living in a fallen world. Members, congregations and districts are all at different places
in their spiritual walk. This diversity is seen at Annual Conference, but the event does
provide opportunity for growth, renewal in the Spirit and unity. Using Malphurs’ scales
for spirituality measures⁴, Annual Conference would be rated fairly mature, strongly
spiritual and more open than legalistic. Conference emotions are largely upbeat.

Energy Audit

There is always a high degree of energy at Annual Conference. It is a set-apart
time when persons worship God, learn new things and more eagerly embrace each other.
Volunteers and staff are highly charged and very energetic. This stems from year-long
preparation and anticipation that regular attendees cannot see.

Finances Audit

The finances of Annual Conference are healthy at present. The Annual Conference
Fund now contains a modest surplus. Registration fees of delegates and non-delegates
constitute the largest share of Conference revenue. Years of large attendance generate
surpluses; years of lesser attendance, experienced in certain cities on our geographic
rotation, hold the possibility of generating deficits. In the past, surpluses were carried
forward to Conference operations for future years. Conversely, deficits reduced the
Annual Conference Fund. Unfortunately, annual budget deficits in the last two decades
have occurred almost 50 percent of the time. Although the General Board has graciously
made loans to Annual Conference, we do not want to continue in that mode of operation.

To shore up the financial status of Annual Conference, P&AC has adopted a new
strategy of budgeting for five years and averaging registration fees over that five year
period. Elimination of major surpluses and deficits is the goal. Sources of funding do
need to be reviewed. Payment of all bills is current. There is no long-term debt.

Opportunities Audit

Annual Conference has the opportunity to be the forum where the mind of Christ is
sought on decisions that impact denominational and congregational life. Conference
officers and staff must take the lead in this effort. Conference worship services, Bible
studies and insight sessions can all be fertile ground for proclaiming the truth of God’s
Word and sowing good seeds that will regenerate the life of the church. The opportunity
is there and must be seized.

Annual Conference has the opportunity to minister to the communities in which they
are held. Conference has the opportunity to expand international participation, to
increase participation by congregations, to stir increased involvement in larger church
ministries, to deepen commitment to Jesus, to have more pre- and post-Conference
events, and to expand the overall ministry and service of the denomination.
Threats Audit

Annual Conference is a positive experience for the Church of the Brethren. The major threats Conference faces include a cultural shift away from denominationalism, a drawing away from annual meeting attendance by leisure and other activities, financial issues related directly to the national economy and a threat of disruption by local, national or world incidents.

Risk Audit

Church of the Brethren Annual Conference faces many possible risks in holding the event. Some come in the form of risks to people; others exist as risks to people and property. Some risks can be stated as the liability of officers, staff and volunteers; organizational liability or those associated with insurance and risk financing.

To address these risks, a complete risk analysis should be conducted and a risk management plan developed. The main objective of the risk management plan will be to minimize and/or eliminate risks associated with holding such a large event.

Conclusions

The Church of the Brethren Annual Conference is on firm ground. It is a regular gathering of the body that always holds the potential for better things in the life of God’s people. Renewal and revival regularly spring forth from Conference activities. This strategic plan should place the annual meeting on even firmer ground and, hopefully, in the center of God’s will for the denomination.
Objectives to Achieve Our Vision

1. Develop **intentional community** in the Annual Conference experience.
2. Foster **Christian spirituality** and affirm it.
3. Combine the **broadest possible welcome** with the strongest possible commitment to following Jesus.
4. Develop a **relational discernment** style that is open to others of different cultures.
5. **Enhance age group programming.**
6. Foster **open and compassionate dialogue** in the Annual Conference experience.
7. Develop an Annual Conference **marketing plan** to strengthen the event.
8. Review and recommend **enhancements to insight sessions.**
9. Incorporate **intentional Bible studies** that relate to the Conference theme and the issues facing the church.
10. **Strengthen the financial position** of Conference.
11. **Minimize risks** associated with planning and conducting Conference.
12. **Leverage technology** to maximum advantage for Annual Conference use.
13. **Complete administrative tasks** that strengthen Conference and unite the church.
### Annual Conference

**Strategic Actions (Goals) to Achieve Objectives**

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<th>Strategic Actions (Goals)</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
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<tr>
<td>Develop <strong>intentional community</strong> in the Annual Conference experience.</td>
<td>Identify possible Conference relational activities or social events that promote community</td>
<td>Aug 2005</td>
<td>P&amp;AC</td>
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<td>Place annual relational activity/social event planning on P&amp;AC agenda</td>
<td>Sep 2005</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster <strong>Christian spirituality</strong> and affirm it.</td>
<td>Identify ways we can challenge persons to follow Jesus in every major aspect of Conference programming</td>
<td>Aug 2006</td>
<td>P&amp;AC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place spirituality challenge planning on the agenda for P&amp;AC</td>
<td>Sep 2006</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combine the <strong>broadest possible welcome with the strongest possible commitment to following Jesus.</strong></td>
<td>Identify ways to broaden the welcome</td>
<td>Nov 2005</td>
<td>P&amp;AC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorporate broader welcome approaches into Conference advertising and planning</td>
<td>Aug 2006</td>
<td>P&amp;AC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a <strong>relational discernment</strong> style that is open to others of different cultures.</td>
<td>Implement Spanish translation of written agency reports and worship service bulletins</td>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Identify short-term recommendations for helping persons of different cultures or ethnic groups relate to the Annual Conference experience</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>P&amp;AC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Identify how our core values, vision and mission help or hinder different cultures or ethnic groups relate to the Annual Conference experience, and make long-term recommendations</td>
<td>July 2006</td>
<td>Doing Church Business and Intercultural Study Committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Objectives</td>
<td>Strategic Actions (Goals)</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
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<td>Enhance age group programming.</td>
<td>Evaluate all age group programs in light of mission, vision &amp; core values; formulate recommendations and create additional actions</td>
<td>Nov 2007</td>
<td>P&amp;AC</td>
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<td>Revise all age group coordinator PDs, based on age group recommendations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mar 2008</td>
<td>Executive Director P&amp;AC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster <strong>open and compassionate dialogue</strong> in the Annual Conference experience.</td>
<td>Evaluate ways to achieve higher quality dialogue in business sessions</td>
<td>July 2006</td>
<td>Doing Church Business Study Committee</td>
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<td>Evaluate ways that the exhibit hall fosters dialogue; publish revisions if necessary</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aug 2005</td>
<td>P&amp;AC</td>
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<td>Evaluate the efficacy of the SC envisioning process</td>
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<td>Aug 2005</td>
<td>ACC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explore ways to facilitate informal dialogue</td>
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<td>Aug 2005</td>
<td>P&amp;AC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop an Annual Conference <strong>marketing plan</strong> to strengthen the event.</td>
<td>Create marketing ministry team description/mission and the technical capabilities available to them</td>
<td>Feb 2005</td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<td>Assemble a ministry team to create the marketing plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Apr 2005</td>
<td>Executive Director with P&amp;AC affirmation</td>
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<td>Identify levels of congregational participation</td>
<td></td>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create a draft of the marketing plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oct 2005</td>
<td>Ministry Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approval of the plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dec 2005</td>
<td>Staff, P&amp;AC, ACC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation of the plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jan 2006</td>
<td>Ministry Team, Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create actions to be completed based on plan recommendations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jan 2006</td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Objectives</td>
<td>Strategic Actions (Goals)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review and recommend enhancements to insight sessions.</td>
<td>Evaluate the efficacy of the Insight Session evaluation system used for Charleston and modify if necessary</td>
<td>Apr 2005</td>
<td>Executive Director Agencies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assemble a ministry team to evaluate Insight sessions in light of core values, vision and mission; make recommendations (include leader dev &amp; trng)</td>
<td>Aug 2007</td>
<td>Ministry Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create actions based on recommendations</td>
<td>Sep 2007</td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incorporate intentional Bible studies that relate to the Conference theme and/or issues facing the church.</td>
<td>Assemble a ministry team to evaluate Bible studies at Conference and make recommendations (to include more effective use of the theme)</td>
<td>Aug 2006</td>
<td>P&amp;AC Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create actions based on recommendations</td>
<td>Sep 2006</td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthen the financial position of Conference.</td>
<td>Implement a five-year budget model with registration fee averaging</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Executive Director P&amp;AC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Evaluate all current funding streams and make recommendations</td>
<td>Sep 2005 Nov 2005 Dec 2005</td>
<td>Executive Director P&amp;AC ACC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop and document a strategy for Annual Conference financial audits</td>
<td>Nov 2006</td>
<td>P&amp;AC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimize risks associated with planning and conducting Conference.</td>
<td>Complete a draft of a Risk Management plan</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Executive Director P&amp;AC</td>
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<td>Complete a legal review of the Risk Management Plan draft</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Legal counsel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Implement the Risk Management plan</td>
<td>Apr 2006</td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Objectives</td>
<td>Strategic Actions (Goals)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leverage technology to maximum advantage for Annual Conference use.</td>
<td>Provide email stations for attendees at all Conferences</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Executive Director BBT</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consolidate video footage and Conference wrap-up on DVD and VHS</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Executive Director P&amp;AC, Dave Sollenberger</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Evaluate information and registration capabilities and make recommendations</td>
<td>June 2005</td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<td>Establish video as the primary medium for archival of Conference activity</td>
<td>Jul 2005</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Evaluate the use of electronic Conference evaluation</td>
<td>Dec 2006</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<td>Evaluate technology improvements that would make the experience better and make recommendations. This may include, but not be limited to</td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Electronic messaging</td>
<td>Dec 2005</td>
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<td>Electronic voting</td>
<td>Dec 2007</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Internet audio feed (Conference online)</td>
<td>Dec 2008</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Audio streaming sermons &amp; business sound track</td>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>Audio streaming of all archived material</td>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>Video streaming sermons &amp; business footage</td>
<td>2009</td>
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<td>Video streaming of all archived material</td>
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<td>Video conferencing</td>
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<td>Complete administrative tasks that strengthen and unify Conference.</td>
<td>Aug 2005</td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<td>Place BLHA index on the AC website</td>
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<td>Complete an interim Polity Manual</td>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>AC Secretary ACC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strategic planning process implemented with final SC approval &amp; publication of plan to delegates</td>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>ACC P&amp;AC Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Objectives</td>
<td>Strategic Actions (Goals)</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
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<td>Complete administrative tasks that strengthen and unify Conference (continued).</td>
<td>Revise the Conference evaluation mechanism to incorporate strategic objective achievement and measurement of spirituality impact</td>
<td>Oct 2005</td>
<td>Executive Director creates draft Nov 2005 P&amp;AC approves</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Evaluate and revise other P&amp;AC policies and guidelines in light of approved strategic plan</td>
<td>Nov 2006</td>
<td>P&amp;AC</td>
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<td>Publish revised Polity Manual</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
<td>Staff ACC</td>
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**Implementation Plan**

To make sure that the strategy designed for Annual Conference is not just another piece of paper, a strategic implementation plan has been formulated to ensure that our vision is achieved and our mission accomplished through an intentional, managed process. Components of the implementation plan follow.

**Leadership**

To ensure that the vision is achieved and the mission is accomplished, excellence in leadership will receive primary attention. The Conference Executive Director and Conference Assistant will diligently carry out the strategic plan on a day to day basis, ensuring that all strategic activities, near and long-term, are begun and completed on schedule. Annual Conference Council members, officers, P&AC members and staff will work closely with the myriad of volunteers, required for successful Conference operation, to ensure that objectives and goals of the organization are being met before, during and after the Conference event.

**Organizational Culture**
The culture of Annual Conference is Christ-centered and family oriented. It is a
good culture that needs bolstering, not redefinition. Our strategic plan identifies the
strategies for strengthening that culture. Conference leadership will set the example in
living out the culture of Annual Conference by personally promoting family-like
community and Christ-centeredness, and will enthusiastically spread the strategy of this
plan.

Proceeding with the strategic plan will automatically launch cultural change.

Communicating the plan will educate persons about the culture being enhanced and will
provide energy to the strategic work in process. Appropriate incentives and rewards for
volunteers and staff will be offered and given to grow the culture that will develop as a
result of implementing the plan. Regular evaluation of the plan will determine if the
culture is maturing or if it is becoming something else.

Prioritizing Objectives and Strategic Actions

All of our objectives are important to our strategy. Each objective is measurable and
achievable. For each objective, strategic actions have been set. To provide
accountability, persons responsible for each strategic action have been identified and
intended completion dates set.

A contingency plan also will be put in place, identifying as many unforeseen events
that could impact Annual Conference as possible. For each contingency, strategies for
capitalizing on or addressing it will be documented. Positive contingencies will be used
to reinforce the plan and spur new strategic thinking and activity. Not-so-positive
contingencies will be addressed head-on as promptly as possible. The Apostle Paul’s
words of instruction, “to them that love God all things work together for good . . . “
Romans 8:28 (American Standard Version), will be applied for all contingencies.

Something will be learned and good things will flow from any situation we face.

Financial Matters

Budgeting for objective and strategy accomplishment will occur through the annual budgeting cycle. Strategy expenses will be placed in the budget, as will the funding mechanisms to cover them. Some strategies may require funding techniques not previously attempted by Annual Conference. These new funding techniques will be addressed creatively, with specific emphasis on the five-year budgeting technique that was implemented by P&AC in July, 2004. Having a five-year budget plan may position Conference leadership to plan more effectively for future financial needs.

Communicating the Plan

Our strategic plan will need to be communicated in a variety of ways over an extended period. The plan will be provided to all stakeholders. Annual Conference Council members, Program and Arrangements Committee members, Standing Committee, and all staff will be given the complete plan with specific directions on communicating it to their constituents. Our other primary internal stakeholders, attendees of Conference, will be given our core values, vision, mission and objectives.

The vision, mission, core values and objectives also will be initially communicated through denominational publications and electronic media, and redistributed in various forms on other occasions to remind everyone about our strategy. The core values, vision, mission, and objectives also will be placed on the Annual Conference website. The mission will be utilized on Conference letterhead and by other appropriate means.
Providing Necessary Resources

To ensure the strategic plan is carried out, proper resources will be made available. Additional staff, if identified and justified, will be recruited and hired. All staff will be provided necessary training to ensure that needed skills are in place. Software and hardware capabilities will be researched, secured, installed and deployed for planned use. Any other resources needed to achieve our vision will be secured, including information and communication systems vital to the cause.

Policies and Procedures

Annual Conference staff operate according to policies and procedures published by the General Board and P&AC. Annual Conference delegates, congregations and districts take direction and guidance from Annual Conference polity and procedure.

Evaluation Plan

To check on the progress of strategic implementation and ensure that the organization is moving toward achievement of its core values, mission and vision, regular evaluation of the ministry will take place. Evaluation, internal to the Annual Conference operation, will be done by staff and volunteers. Evaluation will also be done regularly by people external to the organization. The internal and external components of the evaluation plan follow.

Internal Evaluation

The Conference Executive Director will play a vital role in evaluation, on a daily basis as well as on scheduled frequencies, to ensure all phases of evaluation are occurring. The Director will interface with employees and with the volunteer base, taking the pulse of the organization daily. Positive efforts will be acknowledged and
noted for additional celebration. Issues of concern will be noted and addressed at appropriate times with appropriate individuals or groups.

The Director will ensure that ethics are followed in Annual Conference operations from top to bottom. Unethical behavior, that could derail the strategic plan and forestall vision achievement, will be addressed immediately. The ethical behavior of the Director will be reviewed annually during performance evaluation by the Annual Conference Council.

Staff will conduct implementation reviews on a quarterly basis. The purpose of implementation reviews is twofold. The reviews will examine operational efficiency toward strategic action accomplishment and evaluate whether the implementation plan is being achieved. Changes to the implementation plan will be suggested if necessary. These reviews are the first indicators of strategic plan progress, good or bad.

In addition to quarterly implementation reviews, P&AC will review Annual Conference strategy each year. Objectives and the strategic actions for accomplishing each objective will be examined closely. Changes deemed necessary to the strategy will be placed in the plan and initiated by the Executive Director.

On an annual basis, ACC will review core values, mission and vision. The Council will examine whether we have strayed from our core values and what impact that it is having on the vision becoming reality and the mission being accomplished. If needed, appropriate steps will be taken to correct the course or make adjustments.

External Evaluation

In addition to the internal reviews, evaluation will be conducted on the Annual Conference operation from an external perspective. Oster states that “outside evaluations
are especially helpful in nonprofits\textsuperscript{5}. The outsiders who will provide external evaluation will not be accrediting institutions or other official agencies. The outsiders will be the large numbers of people who attend Annual Conference each year. These individuals will be given the opportunity to reflect on their experience and indicate how well the strategy of Annual Conference is being accomplished, through a carefully honed evaluation mechanism geared to the strategic plan.

The evaluation mechanism will be completely revised to measure satisfaction in performance areas tied to the objectives and strategic actions of our plan. Feedback and comments will be carefully analyzed. P&AC will determine what changes should be made as a result of the input provided. P&AC will also evaluate the effectiveness of the evaluation mechanism and modify it as needed.

An external financial audit is provided yearly by the Treasurer as part of the General Board’s audit.
References

1 For historical information on Annual Conference, refer to the Brethren Encyclopedia.


