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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

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Recorded Church of the Brethren Annual Conferences date back to the late 1700s¹.

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 fellowshiping 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

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3 **Annual Conferences must be special times in the life of the Church of the Brethren.**

3

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4 **We envision Annual Conferences . . .**

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6

that bring or revive commitment to Jesus;

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that glorify God in excellent worship, work and fellowship;

9

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

11

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

14

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

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

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that have dynamic preaching and quality leadership development;

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that have open and compassionate dialogue;

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

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that make people enthusiastic about witness and service;

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that value substance and depth of faith over politics;

31

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that encourage one another and build the community;

33

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that call, nurture and thank denominational leadership;

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

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

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that maximize technology for the glory of God;

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that value the past while looking forward;

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where we have enough quality time, well spent.

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Mission Statement

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

1
2 **Core Values**
3

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

7
8 The Lordship of Jesus Christ
9

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

14
15 Worship
16

17 As a community of faith, worship is the primary means of expressing our love for
18 God in Jesus Christ. We worship because God is. We believe we are to love the
19 Lord our God with every fiber of our being. Annual Conference values worship
20 and will provide rich and full opportunities to do so every time we gather. Biblical
21 instruction to do so comes from Mark 12:28-31, John 4:21-24 and Revelation 4:9-11.
22

23 Unity
24

25 As we worship together under the lordship of Jesus Christ, true unity can be found.
26 All that could possibly separate us is laid aside, in order that we might be one. Unity
27 comes through our expression of love for Jesus Christ and our devotion to him, as
28 clearly seen in John 17:22-23 and Ephesians 4:1-13.
29

30 The New Testament as our rule of faith and practice
31

32 Though all of the Bible is God's inspired word, we believe that the New Testament
33 fully reveals God's will in Jesus Christ – through His ministry, death, resurrection
34 and ascension into the heavenly places. The New Testament confirmation of this is
35 found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Hebrews 8:7-13.
36

37 Relationships
38

39 Unity is found not only in worship of God but through building loving relationships
40 with one another, despite any differences we may have. We are called to love and
41 respect each other. This happens as we look to the relational model Jesus gave us,
42 take the time to know each other, worship and pray together, and extend God's
43 grace and love, as revealed in John 15:17 and Romans 12:8-13.
44
45
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1 Core Values (continued)

2
3
4 Identity

5
6 It is important to remember who we are in Jesus Christ and the unique calling we
7 have as Brethren in this world. We have a significant ministry and message, part of
8 the larger Body of Jesus Christ, that is affirmed and renewed each time we assemble
9 for our annual meeting, corporately and individually. These special times remind us
10 why we exist. Biblical references include Romans 12:3-8 and I Corinthians 12:12-13.

11
12 A variety of faith experiences

13
14 A full spectrum of worship, prayer, business, learning, discerning and fellowshiping
15 is valued and experienced, by all age groups within the church. Abundant life in
16 Jesus Christ is developed through this variety, as God has the opportunity to shine the
17 light upon us in many ways, in different settings. Quality and excellence is valued in
18 all of these varied experiences. It is a time and place for the whole family to have
19 fun, grow together and be strengthened in faith. See scriptural examples in
20 Acts 16:31-34 and Romans 14:1-8.

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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,

1 fellowship events and non-structured times in the Conference schedule bring the Body
2 together, formally and informally, to renew old acquaintances and establish new ones.

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

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

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

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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

1 its roots in the genealogical structures of real families. The hereditary nature of family
2 culture in the Church of the Brethren still exists to some degree but is less of a factor in
3 its third century of existence than it was in the first two centuries.

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

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

16 Obstacles Audit

17 Malphurs states “two kinds of obstacles are people and organizational.”³
18 Annual Conference has some people obstacles. These include special interests;
19 generational issues in the form of dress, music, business and perception of “church;” lack
20 of redemptive skill and knowledge in confrontation; uneasiness with some issues in
21 which we are divided or might be divided; and persons who act with passive-aggression.

22 Organizational obstacles (challenges may be a better word) are present. There is a
23 perception by some that a hierarchy of power/leadership exists. Some question whether

1 all Conference leadership is accountable to the larger body. The methodology of
2 planning and arranging Conference has been done the same way for a long time; that
3 methodology may sometimes be an obstacle to God's perfect will. Not all of the
4 immense talent base of the denomination can be identified or used at Annual Conference
5 events.

6 Spirituality Audit

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

13 Energy Audit

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

18 Finances Audit

19 The finances of Annual Conference are healthy at present. The Annual Conference
20 Fund now contains a modest surplus. Registration fees of delegates and non-delegates
21 constitute the largest share of Conference revenue. Years of large attendance generate
22 surpluses; years of lesser attendance, experienced in certain cities on our geographic
23 rotation, hold the possibility of generating deficits. In the past, surpluses were carried

1 forward to Conference operations for future years. Conversely, deficits reduced the
2 Annual Conference Fund. Unfortunately, annual budget deficits in the last two decades
3 have occurred almost 50 percent of the time. Although the General Board has graciously
4 made loans to Annual Conference, we do not want to continue in that mode of operation.

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

9 Opportunities Audit

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

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

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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

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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.

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Annual Conference Strategic Actions (Goals) to Achieve Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions (Goals)	Target	Accountability
Develop intentional community in the Annual Conference experience.	Identify possible Conference relational activities or social events that promote community	Aug 2005	P&AC
	Place annual relational activity/social event planning on P&AC agenda	Sep 2005	Executive Director
Foster Christian spirituality and affirm it.	Identify ways we can challenge persons to follow Jesus in every major aspect of Conference programming	Aug 2006	P&AC
	Place spirituality challenge planning on the agenda for P&AC	Sep 2006	Executive Director
Combine the broadest possible welcome with the strongest possible commitment to following Jesus.	Identify ways to broaden the welcome	Nov 2005 Apr 2006	P&AC Marketing Ministry Team
	Incorporate broader welcome approaches into Conference advertising and planning	Aug 2006	P&AC
Develop a relational discernment style that is open to others of different cultures.	Implement Spanish translation of written agency reports and worship service bulletins	July 2005	Staff
	Identify short-term recommendations for helping persons of different cultures or ethnic groups relate to the Annual Conference experience	Complete	P&AC
	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	July 2006	Doing Church Business and Intercultural Study Committees

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions (Goals)	Target	Accountability
Enhance age group programming.	Evaluate all age group programs in light of mission, vision & core values; formulate recommendations and create additional actions	Nov 2007	P&AC
	Revise all age group coordinator PDs, based on age group recommendations	Mar 2008	Executive Director P&AC
Foster open and compassionate dialogue in the Annual Conference experience.	Evaluate ways to achieve higher quality dialogue in business sessions	July 2006	Doing Church Business Study Committee
	Evaluate ways that the exhibit hall fosters dialogue; publish revisions if necessary	Aug 2005	P&AC
	Evaluate the efficacy of the SC envisioning process	Aug 2005	ACC
	Explore ways to facilitate informal dialogue	Aug 2005	P&AC
Develop an Annual Conference marketing plan to strengthen the event.	Create marketing ministry team description/mission and the technical capabilities available to them	Feb 2005	Staff
	Assemble a ministry team to create the marketing plan	Apr 2005	Executive Director with P&AC affirmation
	Identify levels of congregational participation	July 2005	Staff
	Create a draft of the marketing plan	Oct 2005	Ministry Team
	Approval of the plan	Dec 2005	Staff, P&AC, ACC
	Implementation of the plan	Jan 2006	Ministry Team, Staff
	Create actions to be completed based on plan recommendations	Jan 2006	Staff

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions (Goals)	Target	Accountability
Review and recommend enhancements to insight sessions.	Evaluate the efficacy of the Insight Session evaluation system used for Charleston and modify if necessary	Apr 2005	Executive Director Agencies
	Assemble a ministry team to evaluate Insight sessions in light of core values, vision and mission; make reccomm (include leader dev & trng)	Aug 2007	Ministry Team
	Create actions based on recommendations	Sep 2007	Staff
Incorporate intentional Bible studies that relate to the Conference theme and/or issues facing the church.	Assemble a ministry team to evaluate Bible studies at Conference and make recommendations (to include more effective use of the theme)	Aug 2006	P&AC Staff
	Create actions based on recommendations	Sep 2006	Staff
Strengthen the financial position of Conference.	Implement a five-year budget model with registration fee averaging	Complete	Executive Director P&AC
	Evaluate all current funding streams and make recommendations	Sep 2005 Nov 2005 Dec 2005	Executive Director P&AC ACC
	Review Conference geographic rotation schedule and make recommendations	Mar 2006 Aug 2006 Dec 2006	Executive Director P&AC CODE
	Develop and document a strategy for Annual Conference financial audits	Nov 2006	P&AC
Minimize risks associated with planning and conducting Conference.	Complete a draft of a Risk Management plan	Complete	Executive Director P&AC
	Complete a legal review of the Risk Management Plan draft	Complete	Legal counsel
	Implement the Risk Management plan	Apr 2006	Staff

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions (Goals)	Target	Accountability
Leverage technology to maximum advantage for Annual Conference use.	Provide email stations for attendees at all Conferences	Complete	Executive Director BBT
	Consolidate video footage and Conference wrap-up on DVD and VHS	Complete	Executive Director P&AC Dave Sollenberger
	Evaluate information and registration capabilities and make recommendations	June 2005	Staff P&AC
	Establish video as the primary medium for archival of Conference activity	Jul 2005	Executive Director
	Evaluate the use of electronic Conference evaluation	Dec 2006	Executive Director
	Evaluate technology improvements that would make the experience better and make recommendations. This may include, but not be limited to Electronic messaging Electronic voting Internet audio feed (Conference online) Audio streaming sermons & business sound track Audio streaming of all archived material Video streaming sermons & business footage Video streaming of all archived material Video conferencing	Dec 2005 Dec 2007 Dec 2008 2008 2008 2009 2009 2010	Staff
Complete administrative tasks that strengthen and unify Conference.	Place BLHA index on the AC website	Aug 2005	Staff
	Complete an interim Polity Manual	July 2005	AC Secretary ACC
	Strategic planning process implemented with final SC approval & publication of plan to delegates	July 2005	ACC P&AC Staff

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Actions (Goals)	Target	Accountability
Complete administrative tasks that strengthen and unify Conference (continued).	Revise the Conference evaluation mechanism to incorporate strategic objective achievement and measurement of spirituality impact	Oct 2005	Executive Director creates draft
		Nov 2005	P&AC approves
	Evaluate and revise other P&AC policies and guidelines in light of approved strategic plan	Nov 2006	P&AC
	Publish revised Polity Manual	July 2008	Staff ACC

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Implementation Plan

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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.

6

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Leadership

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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.

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Organizational Culture

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

7 Proceeding with the strategic plan will automatically launch cultural change.
8 Communicating the plan will educate persons about the culture being enhanced and will
9 provide energy to the strategic work in process. Appropriate incentives and rewards for
10 volunteers and staff will be offered and given to grow the culture that will develop as a
11 result of implementing the plan. Regular evaluation of the plan will determine if the
12 culture is maturing or if it is becoming something else.

13 Prioritizing Objectives and Strategic Actions

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

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

1 Romans 8:28 (American Standard Version), will be applied for all contingencies.
2 Something will be learned and good things will flow from any situation we face.

3

4 Financial Matters

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

12 Communicating the Plan

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

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

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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

1 noted for additional celebration. Issues of concern will be noted and addressed at
2 appropriate times with appropriate individuals or groups.

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

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

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

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

21 External Evaluation

22 In addition to the internal reviews, evaluation will be conducted on the Annual
23 Conference operation from an external perspective. Oster states that “outside evaluations

1 are especially helpful in nonprofits”⁵. The outsiders who will provide external evaluation
2 will not be accrediting institutions or other official agencies. The outsiders will be the
3 large numbers of people who attend Annual Conference each year. These individuals
4 will be given the opportunity to reflect on their experience and indicate how well the
5 strategy of Annual Conference is being accomplished, through a carefully honed
6 evaluation mechanism geared to the strategic plan.

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

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

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

²Malphurs, A. (1999). *Strategic planning: a new model for church and ministry leaders*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

³Malphurs, A. (1999). p. 69.

⁴Malphurs, A. (1999). p. 70.

⁵Oster, S. (1995). *Strategic management for nonprofit organizations*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, p. 144.