

Resolution on Ministers' Medical Insurance Crisis

Jointly sponsored by:
Church of the Brethren General Board
Council of District Executives
Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee
Ministers' Association Officers

Jesus came preaching the gospel and God continues to call men and women to carry on the ministry of Jesus Christ. In fulfillment of the sacred trust given by God, congregations call individuals to serve as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ and pledge their support of them.¹

The Church of the Brethren has had a longstanding commitment to the care, health, and wellbeing of the body, including all members of the community and for our ministerial leaders.

The Church of the Brethren has historically sought to respond with favor to those in times of trouble, embrace the concept of mutuality within the body, and undergird those with special needs.

The framework of this resolution takes place in a much larger context—the national health care crisis that engulfs our nation. This crisis has an impact on society at large, as well as on individuals in our pews and in our pulpits.

Whereas, providing medical insurance coverage is a critical part of the care of our ministerial leaders;

Whereas, the denomination has a responsibility to provide networking, vision, and direction to ensure appropriate care for our ministerial leaders;

Whereas, congregations have a responsibility to be compassionate Christian employers, exercising fairness and honesty in all agreements and loyal support (spiritual, emotional, and financial)²;

Whereas, congregations are called to be stewards of all their resources and often struggle to meet financial obligations;

Whereas, as a denomination we are compelled to seek the wellbeing of our pastors, yet we have been unable to sustain a medical program for the ministers group;

Whereas, the 2007 Annual Conference took action to phase out the ministers group of the Church of the Brethren medical plan;

¹ *For All Who Minister*, "The Licensing Service," 290.

² *For All Who Minister*, "Pastoral Installation/Charge to the Congregation," 308-309.

Whereas, the loss of the medical plan will have a significant and growing impact on pastoral calling and placement;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren, convened at Richmond, Virginia, July 12-17, 2008, reaffirms the value of congregations providing health insurance coverage for pastors and families and therefore:

- Directs the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee to establish equitable guidelines and standards for pastors and congregations regarding medical insurance benefits and parameters.
- Calls on congregations to be compassionate Christian employers in providing adequate and equitable health insurance coverage to care for the needs of their pastors(s) and families.
- Recommends that the General Board expand the scope and accessibility of its Ministry Assistance Fund to fiscally aid pastors in securing affordable health care coverage.
- Recommends that the Brethren Benefit Trust revise and expand the Church Workers Assistance Plan to fiscally aid pastors in securing affordable health care coverage.
- Directs the Brethren Benefit Trust and the General Board to cooperate and coordinate in the expansion and use of these two assistance funds to benefit pastors and their families.
- Directs the General Board through the Brethren Witness/Washington Office to serve as our *advocate voice* in the national health care crisis debate.

The loss of the active minister's group of the medical plan has led many of our pastors and other loyal medical plan members to feelings of abandonment, betrayal, and distrust. Such an injury to the body has a far-reaching impact on the church as a whole—including support for missions, community outreach, and the other ministries that are carried out by our congregations, districts, and agencies. This change can also further the regionalization of the church and damage our sense of community. As a tangible expression of our commitment to support those who minister on our behalf, we commend these actions to the church.

Action: Adopted by the General Board at the October 2007 General Board meeting in Elgin, Illinois.