

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP ¹

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper contains the polity and procedures for the licensed and ordained ministry, calling to and advancement within the ministry, and receiving ordained ministers from other denominations. The polity included here is a revision of the most recent Annual Conference actions.²

1. While the term “ministerial leader” may be a new way of identifying those who are licensed and ordained to the ministry in the Church of the Brethren, this paper affirms an understanding of ministry held dear by the Brethren since the very beginning in Schwarzenau. As stated in the 1992 and 1996 ministerial ethics papers, “We in the Church of the Brethren regard believers’ baptism into Christ Jesus to be enrollment into ministry.” In an effort to enhance and more nearly fulfill the ministry of all baptized believers, the Church of the Brethren throughout its history (in keeping with Scriptures like Ephesians 4:11-12) has identified the gifts of some as special and beneficial to the church. These ministerial leaders have been variously identified over the years as the “called out” and “set forward” for servant leadership; those identified by the church as the “weighty” members; or the “set-apart” leaders. The called out, the set forth, the weighty members, and the set-apart leaders were always understood as those set *within* the community of believers who differ from the whole body of the baptized only in their recognized gifts for leadership. (For further reading on the theology of leadership in the Church of the Brethren, see the polity papers on ministry listed under footnote #2 and the ministerial ethics papers mentioned above.)

2. The 1986 Annual Conference paper on “Licensed and Ordained Ministry” is a compilation of polity and other relevant ministry issues from several other Annual Conference papers: “The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life”

The Church of the Brethren has two degrees³ for its ministerial leadership: the licensed ministry and the ordained ministry. The policies for both apply equally to men and women.⁴ The church has upheld scriptural qualifications for ministerial leaders, such as those found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9:

Living above reproach; exercising self-control; having the gift of teaching; living so as to be well thought of by outsiders; being a lover of goodness; living a life that is just, upright, spiritual, faithful, and dignified; being a lover of hospitality.⁵

Additional biblical passages that are significant for Brethren ministerial leaders include:⁶

2 Corinthians 5:17-18: in Christ, the believer is a new creation; 2 Corinthians 3:18: the believer is being changed into the likeness of Christ; Ephesians 4:13: the believer grows toward maturity; Matthew 5:33-37: followers of Christ live with integrity; Matthew 5:21-24: Christians believe that all of life is sacred; Matthew 5:25-26, 43-48; 6:12, 14-15; 18:15-17; Romans 12:14-21: sisters and brothers in Christ strive for healing and reconciliation; Matthew 5:27-32: living with moral integrity and marital fidelity; Matthew 6:19-24: believers are committed to high values; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: the body is a temple for God's indwelling Spirit; therefore, followers of Christ abstain from those things that harm and destroy the body; Galatians 5:19-24: new life for the believer is defined as changes from old behaviors; 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4: sisters and brothers live in a caring community, where each part of the body is valued.

II. THE LICENSED MINISTRY

A. Delegated Authority

(1975), "Discipleship and Reconciliation" (1976 and as amended in 1977), "Marriage and Divorce: Special Problems for Leadership" (1977), and "Calling and Ordination" (1985). In an effort to have one official statement on ministerial leadership, this 1999 paper *replaces* the 1986 paper and *eliminates* the sections on licensing and ordination in the 1975, 1976, 1977, and 1985 papers. The 1998 Annual Conference paper on "Plural Nonsalaried Ministry," which provides for a different calling and placement process, is in this *Ministerial Leadership Manual*.

3. Annual Conference Minutes, 1967 (1965–69), p. 235: "A New Basis for the Eldership: 1966 Report."

4. Annual Conference Minutes, 1958 (1955–64), p. 113: "Women in the Ministry."

5. Annual Conference Minutes, 1957 (1955–64), p. 62.

6. Annual Conference Paper, "The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life," 1975.

The authority for licensing granted by Annual Conference rests with the District Board and is delegated to the District Ministry Commission.⁷

B. Purpose

The licensed ministry is the designation given to the person who has been called by the church to consider ministerial leadership. This degree exists for these reasons:⁸

1. It gives time and opportunity for the person and the church to test their preliminary judgment regarding the call to ministerial leadership.
2. It authorizes the person to participate in many services of ministerial leadership while engaged in an approved educational program.
3. It enables the person to have time to work at educational preparation.⁹

C. Responsibility for Licensing

The responsibility for licensing persons to ministerial leadership rests with the District Ministry Commission and is carried out with the candidate's congregation. Both parties must be in agreement to license.¹⁰

D. Authority of the Licensed Minister

1. A candidate for licensing must be an active member of a Church of the Brethren congregation.
2. The licensed minister functions under the guidance of the District Ministry Commission and the pastor of his or her congregation.

7. The District Ministry Commission may appoint committees to act on its behalf; however, it is understood that the District Board and the District Ministry Commission are responsible for licensing and supervising all licensed ministers.

8. Annual Conference Minutes, 1951 (1945–54), p. 128: “Advancement and Standards in Ministry.”

9. Educational requirements for ordination are printed on page AC10.7.

10. Annual Conference Minutes, 1951 (1945–54), p. 128: “Advancement and Standards in Ministry.”

3. A licensed minister who is in an approved educational program may serve as pastor of a congregation. This special “Approval for Employment” requires a letter of recommendation by the District Ministry Commission,¹¹ and the licensed minister shall be under the guidance of the District Ministry Commission until all requirements for ordination are met. Under such district guidance and counsel, the licensed minister may fulfill all the services of the ordained ministry, including officiating at weddings where the law recognizes the church’s authority to grant such privilege. These pastoral services are limited to the specific congregation where the licensed minister has been called and approved for service.

E. Calling Candidates to the Ministry

Before considering ministerial leadership in the church, men and women should seek to discern God’s call to serve. God’s call may come in such ways as:

1. *Personal initiative.* A person who feels led by God to explore whether he or she may be called to ministry can begin the discernment process through conversation with his or her pastor or the District Executive/Minister. The individual should also submit a letter of interest to the appropriate group in the congregation where the individual is a member.
2. *Congregational initiative.* Congregational leaders are expected to observe the spiritual maturity and commitment of all persons within their congregation, anticipating that some will be ready to answer God’s call to ministerial leadership. After prayerful discussions with the potential ministerial candidate, the appropriate congregational group should communicate with the District Executive/Minister to report that the named individual is interested in testing his or her call to the ministry.
3. *Initiative by the church at large.* Leaders throughout the denomination are expected to observe the spiritual maturity and potential of persons to serve as ministerial leaders. In particular, camps, colleges, seminaries, Brethren Volunteer Service, youth conferences, mission projects, district boards, and other agencies of the church will be able to identify many such persons. When such a person is identified, the appropriate congregational group and/or the pastor should be informed.

F. The Process of Licensing

The congregation is critically important in the *calling* process. Through its appropriate representatives, the congregation must determine whether or not it wishes to nominate an individual to the District Ministry Commission for ministerial leadership. When the leadership of a congregation affirms that an individual should be recognized as a candidate for ministerial leadership, the congregational leaders shall notify the District Executive/Minister.

¹¹ If the licensed minister is relocating from another district, the letter of recommendation is provided by the sending district.

The District Ministry Commission and the congregation then take the following steps:

1. *Pre-Licensing Interview.* The District Ministry Commission, or another appropriate group, arranges for and conducts an interview with the candidate.¹² The “Pre-Licensing Interview Guide” provides the format for the interview, including the candidate’s aims for the ministry, natural ability, moral and spiritual fitness, and willingness to prepare for the duties of ministerial leadership.
2. *Congregational Action.* If the candidate is approved for licensing by the District Ministry Commission, the congregation will be informed so that a congregational vote can be taken to affirm the candidate. The affirmation by the congregation is by simple majority vote. If the congregation votes before the pre-licensing interview, its recommendation is subject to approval by the District Ministry Commission.¹³

G. The Licensing Service

Upon approval of the candidate for licensing by the District Ministry Commission and the congregation, he or she shall be licensed in the congregation, preferably during a Sunday morning worship service. A representative of the District Ministry Commission, after consulting with the candidate and the local pastor, should conduct the licensing service.

H. The Term of License

The term of license shall be for the current year, with all expirations being on December 31. The license may be renewed annually at the initiative of the District Ministry Commission, following a consultation with the licensed minister and approval by the appropriate group responsible for ministerial leadership in the congregation.¹⁴ Licensed ministers who show no inclination to fulfill the purpose of licensed ministry and to pursue the requirements for ordination shall not be relicensed. The license may be terminated at the initiative of the licensed minister, the congregation, or the District Ministry Commission, if satisfactory progress is not being made.¹⁵ Once a license has been terminated, the individual may reapply as a candidate for the licensed ministry, following the same procedures that are outlined above.

I. Records and Reports

12. The Council of District Executives (CODE) recommends a “Readiness for Ministry” process prior to the interview by the District Ministry Commission.

13. This statement refers to the “Free Ministry” congregations, which follow a different “calling” process.

14. Some congregations desire to conduct an annual vote in a congregational business meeting before a person is relicensed for another year.

15. Annual Conference Minutes, 1957 (1955–64), p. 61: “The Ministry.”

1. Within thirty (30) days of a licensing service, the district shall submit the Ministry Report Form (MRF) to the Office of Ministry of the General Board.
2. Annually, the district shall provide an update of the district's ministerial list for the denominational yearbook.¹⁶

16. Annual Conference Minutes, 1961 (1955–64), p. 198: "Guidance Program for Licensed Ministers." This standard report is submitted to the yearbook office.

3. A ministerial file¹⁷ is maintained in the district office on each licensed minister of that district. If the licensed minister relocates to another district, the file is sent to the office of the receiving district once the sending district has been notified that the individual has been relicensed by the receiving district and his or her church membership has been moved to a Church of the Brethren congregation in that new district.¹⁸ In addition to the ministerial file, the Ministry Commission of the sending district shall send a letter to the receiving district, stating the status of the individual's educational preparation.
4. Within thirty (30) days of the termination of a license, or upon the death of a licensed minister, the district shall send the Ministry Report Form (MRF) to the Office of Ministry of the General Board.
5. Should the licensed person move his or her membership to another congregation in another district, the sending congregation and District Ministry Commission, through the services of the District Executive/Minister, shall inform the new congregation and District Ministry Commission of that person's ministerial standing. The receiving congregation and District Ministry Commission may decide whether or not to relicense and must be in agreement to do so.
6. Should the licensed minister relocate to another district for educational purposes and be called into pastoral services while a student, the receiving district and the sending district will sign an "Approval for Employment" agreement that will clarify ministerial accountability. The licensed minister's church membership and license will remain with the sending district. The licensed minister is free to seek an associate membership with the congregation he or she serves as a student.

J. Recommended Support Systems for Licensed Ministers

1. The congregation, through its executive committee or another appropriate group charged with ministerial concerns, can be helpful in the following ways:

17. The ministerial file contains a biographical folder that provides the licensed minister's name, address, congregation, date of license, family connections, education and other pertinent biographical and professional information; the "Pre-Licensing Interview Guide"; annual reviews; and readiness for ministry documents that the licensed minister has authorized for placement in the file. The file belongs to the district where it is located; however, the licensed minister may access his/her file by contacting his/her District Executive/Minister. The licensed minister's file is confidential, is held in a secured place in the district office, and it is transferred from one district office to another when that is appropriate.

18. The file of the licensed minister is not automatically sent to another district when the individual changes his/her place of residence. The licensed minister must be relicensed in the new district and transfer his or her church membership before the file is transferred; otherwise, the license remains in the district where it was located prior to the relocation, and it will expire on December 31 of that year.

- a. Provide ample opportunity for the licensed minister to participate in a wide variety of meaningful congregational activities under the guidance of the pastor.
 - b. Give encouragement to him or her for adequate educational preparation for ministerial leadership.
 - c. Be alert to the financial needs of the licensed minister in his or her educational preparation by assisting in securing grants or loans. Congregations should consider making funds available to licensed ministers as one way of supporting them.
 - d. Arrange for the licensed minister to attend at least one meeting annually of the executive committee or another appropriate group of the congregation related to ministerial concerns. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the licensed minister's progress and his or her involvement in the life of the congregation. The executive committee (or the appropriate group that met with the licensed minister) is expected to make a recommendation to the District Ministry Commission relative to relicensing for another year.
2. The district also has important responsibilities in the care of licensed ministers and therefore needs to participate in their support. The following are ways districts may be involved and supportive:
- a. Establish ongoing contact with the licensed minister by appointing a counselor/mentor (who may be his or her pastor) for mutual sharing of activities and concerns. In light of this contact and regular sharing with the District Ministry Commission, judgment can be made regarding the licensed minister's progress toward ordination.
 - b. Make financial assistance available for educational preparation.
 - c. Be responsible for an annual consultation with the licensed ministers and make recommendations to relicense, terminate the license, or to ordain.
 - d. Supervise the educational program for licensed ministers.

III. THE ORDAINED MINISTRY

A. District Board Authority

The authority for ordination granted by Annual Conference rests with the District Board.

B. Requirements for Ordination¹⁹

1. A candidate for ordination must be an active member of a Church of the Brethren congregation.

19. The completion of the "Requirements for Ordination" does not automatically lead to ordination. The candidate for ordination is subject to "The Process of Ordination."

2. A candidate for ordination must satisfactorily fulfill the scriptural qualifications in the opinion of the district and his or her congregation.²⁰
3. A candidate for ordination must fulfill one of the following educational requirements:

20. The scriptural references are given at the beginning of this paper.

- a. Complete four years of study in an accredited college and three years in an accredited seminary leading to a Master of Divinity degree.²¹
 - b. For those who because of age, family responsibility, or other circumstances find it impossible or impractical to complete college and seminary, an alternative is provided by the Training in Ministry (TRIM) program through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.²²
 - c. Still another alternative for those eligible persons and congregations is Education for Shared Ministry (EFSM) which features ministerial training in the context of a congregation through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.
 - d. In special cases that have the approval of the District Ministry Commission, and where provision is made for accountability and supervision, another alternative is a district administered program of ministry education certified by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.
 - e. In assessing the readiness for ordination, the District Ministry Commission takes account of the gifts and training appropriate to a given area of service.
4. The candidate for ordination must articulate, via the “Pre-Ordination Interview Guide,” a statement on his or her faith journey, and provide statements that indicate his or her obedience to God, commitment to Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord, openness to the continual infilling of the Holy Spirit, understanding the nature and mission of the church, and the meaning and purpose of scripture. The District Ministry Commission shall be responsible for discerning the candidate’s faith and spiritual formation and, when deemed necessary, shall provide content and supervision to help fill a need that is lacking.
 5. The candidate for ordination must demonstrate leadership ability and maturity of judgment.
 6. The candidate for ordination shall give evidence of a thorough knowledge of and commitment to the history, beliefs, and polity of the Church of the Brethren. The District Ministry Commission shall be responsible for evaluating the candidate as to this knowledge and, when deemed necessary, shall provide content and supervision to help fill a need that is lacking.

21. Accreditation shall come from a nationally recognized agency for post-secondary education and/or the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, or an equivalent accreditation outside the North American context.

22. The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership is a cooperative effort between the General Board and Bethany Theological Seminary.

7. The candidate for ordination shall affirm the expectations and commitments of ministerial leadership, including a declaration of intention to make church service a major concern of one's lifework.²³
8. The candidate for ordination must have a specific ministerial call as defined under the Areas of Service for Ordained Leadership (III.C.).

23. Based on Annual Conference Minutes (1955–4), p. 62, paragraph d, under heading B: “The Ordained Ministry.”

C. Areas of Service for Ordained Leadership²⁴

The Church of the Brethren affirms that ordination for ministerial leadership, through the “laying on of hands,” is a lifetime commitment to the church and its ministries. Ordination is a commissioning of a person for leadership in a recognized “area of service.” The following “areas of service” are recognized and monitored by the district boards:

1. Pastor of a congregation.
2. Person serving a congregation in self-supporting ministry.
3. Administrator or teacher in a theological seminary.
4. Teacher of religion in a school, college, or university.
5. Staff persons with districts, the General Board, and other Annual Conference agencies.
6. Missionary assigned to pastoral or evangelistic duties.
7. Chaplain (e.g., chaplaincy in a hospital, hospice, long-term care facility, campus, prison, or industrial setting).
8. Person serving in a specialized ministry (e.g., youth ministry, Christian education, camp administrator, ecumenical ministries, spiritual direction, pastoral counselor).²⁵
9. Ministers retired from their area of service.²⁶

24. Heading adapted from the 1957 Annual Conference paper on ministry, Annual Conference Minutes (1955–64), p. 62.

25. This may also include specialized new ministries not yet foreseen, for which ordination would be a needed affirmation. These are individual situations and each individual would need the affirmation of the congregation where he or she is an active member and the District Board of that district. Persons in this specialized area of service must fulfill all the ordination requirements and expectations addressed in this paper.

26. This statement on ministerial leadership affirms that one’s call to the ministry is for life. Those who retire from one of the eight areas of service listed above may continue an active ordination classification. Generally speaking, the term *retired* refers to those who are receiving pension and/or Social Security benefits. Therefore, this paper eliminates the “inactive” and “emeritus” classifications. All ministers in this ninth area of service must fulfill the basic requirements of ordination, be an active member in a Church of the Brethren congregation, and be accountable to the District Board in the district where his or her membership is located. Retired ministers are also subject to the “Ethics in Ministry Relations—1996” paper.

In exercising their discernment and their designations in relation to ordained ministry, District Ministry Commissions are requested to view the listing above as a guide rather than an inflexible standard.

D. Authority of Ordained Minister

1. An ordained minister has the authority to perform all ministerial services and preside at the ordinances practiced by the denomination. If the ordained minister is not the pastor, these activities should be carried out in cooperation with and under the direction of a pastor and/or a District Ministry Commission.
2. An ordained minister, by both word and deed, is a representative of the faith community. In denominational and ecumenical settings, the ordained individual symbolizes the spirit that the Brethren believe to be important about themselves.
3. An ordained minister, who believes in the ministry of the whole people of God, will understand *ministerial leadership* as a call to serve with and among brothers and sisters who are not licensed or ordained, but who are also called to ministry and service through the rite of baptism.

E. The Process of Ordination

The process may be initiated by the licensed minister, by the licensed minister's congregation, or the District Ministry Commission and shall consist of the following:

1. *Pre-Ordination Examination.* The District Ministry Commission and representatives of the congregation shall consult with the licensed minister in a personal interview as he or she nears completion of requirements for ordination. The use of the "Pre-Ordination Interview Guide" can help to determine the candidate's growth and development since licensing. Recommendations from various sources, including college and/or seminary personnel and the candidate's congregation, following normal clearance procedures, should be obtained.²⁷
2. *Recommendation to the District Board.* When in the judgment of the District Ministry Commission the licensed minister has met the requirements of ordination, the commission shall report its recommendation to the District Board for approval. The approval by the District Board is by simple majority vote.
3. *Recommendation to the Congregation.* Upon approval by the District Board, the District Ministry Commission shall notify the pastor, board chair, or other appropriate persons in the candidate's congregation of the District Board's action so that a congregational vote can be taken to affirm the ordination of the candidate.²⁸ The affirmation by the congregation is by two-thirds (2/3) majority vote. A representative of the District Ministry Commission should be present for the congregational business meeting to take the vote.

27. "Normal clearance procedures" is defined to mean that the District Ministry Commission secures a list of potential references from the candidate for ordination.

28. "Free Ministry" congregations follow a different "call" process. For details, read the Annual Conference paper on "Plural Nonsalaried Ministry" that is in this *Ministerial Leadership Manual*.

4. *An Ordination Service.* If the District Board and the congregation approve the candidate for ordination, the person shall be ordained to ministerial leadership with the laying on of hands during a regular or, preferably, specially called worship service by a representative of the District Ministry Commission after consultation with the candidate and the local pastor.

F. Records and Reports

1. Within thirty (30) days, of the ordination service, the district shall submit the Ministry Report Form (MRF) to the Office of Ministry of the General Board.
2. The districts shall submit to the Office of Ministry an annual update of the district's ministerial list for the denominational yearbook.²⁹
3. A ministerial file³⁰ is maintained in the district office on each ordained minister of that district. When an ordained minister is called to serve another congregation within the same district or in another district, he or she is expected to move his/her church membership to that congregation on a date no later than the day of installation. The ministerial file is sent to another district once the sending district has been notified by the receiving district that the individual's membership has been properly transferred.
4. Within thirty (30) days of the retirement of a pastor, the district shall submit the Ministry Report Form (MRF) to the Office of Ministry of the General Board.
5. Annually, the districts shall submit to the Office of Ministry of the General Board the names of those ordained ministers who retired from non-pastoral forms of service.
6. Within thirty (30) days of the termination of an individual's ordination, or upon the death of the ordained minister, the district shall send the ministerial file and the Ministry Report Form (MRF) to the Office of Ministry of the General Board. The Office of Ministry shall transfer the file to the Brethren Historical Library and Archives.

G. Guidelines for Discontinuing the Call to Ordained Leadership

29. See footnote sixteen (16) of this paper.

30. In addition to the material mentioned in footnote #17 above, the ordained minister's file may contain the "Pre-Ordination Interview Guide," the Ministry Report Form (MRF) that document previous places of service and changes in ministerial status, continuing education information, citations for achievements, and any and all necessary documentation relative to ethical misconduct. Documentation in ethical misconduct cases will follow the due process described in the "Ethics in Ministry Relations—1996" paper. The file belongs to the district where it is located; however, the ordained minister may access his/her file by contacting his/her District Executive/Minister. The ordained minister's file is confidential, is placed in a secured location in the district office, and it is transferred from one district office to another when that is appropriate.

Based as it is upon the Spirit's empowerment but also upon a process of discernment and designation by the church, ordained leadership is not seen as a *right* as much as a *gift* and a naming of gifts and, as such, it may be terminated by the District Board when the board determines that the individual is no longer fulfilling the guidelines for ordained leadership.³¹ Regular reviews of ordained persons by District Ministry Commissions are encouraged in order to assist the District Boards in assessing whether, in specific instances, there has been a change in the relationship between the ordained person and the Church of the Brethren, and these reviews may be synchronized with the renewal of ordination cards every five years. The conditions for review of ordination are varied. Among them are the following:

1. The ordained person voluntarily chooses to discontinue his or her ministry to enter into another type of calling for which ordination is not designated or desired.
2. The ordained person, for reasons other than illness or diminishment due to aging, ceases to be active in the life and work of the church.
3. The ordained person cuts himself or herself off from the ministry through some indiscretion so that usefulness for the leadership services designated by ordination is no longer tenable in the Church of the Brethren. In the event of indiscretion, after due process according to the paper on "Ethics in Ministry Relations—1996," ordination may be terminated by the District Board. The "Discipleship and Reconciliation" paper should be consulted for further information on reconciliation methods as supported by the Church of the Brethren.
4. The ordained person's ordination may be terminated by the District Board if the individual fails to fulfill his or her vows of membership and ordination.³²

In summary, the authority to terminate ordination rests with the District Board. The process leading to termination can be initiated by the ordained person, the congregation, or the District Ministry Commission. Ordination is the commissioning of a person for ministerial leadership. The laying on of hands for ministry has been considered a lifetime commitment by the church. However, a person's ordained status is neither permanent nor automatic. If an ordained minister ceases to fulfill the purposes of ministerial leadership, as defined and described in this paper, his or her status should be reviewed by the District Ministry Commission in consultation with the congregation and the ordination should be terminated when such action is warranted.³³

H. Reinstatement of Ordination

Once an ordained status has been terminated by the District Board, an individual may seek to become a candidate for reinstatement by following the normal procedures for ordination outlined in this paper.

I. Term of Ordination

Ordination is the commissioning of a person for ministerial leadership and, except for termination reasons discussed above, one's ordination remains active until death.

31. Adapted from Annual Conference Minutes (1985–89), p. 121: "Leadership Needs and Ministry Needs."

32. Annual Conference Minutes (1975–79), pp. 64-65: "The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life" and the Annual Conference paper, 1976–77: "Discipleship and Reconciliation."

33. Annual Conference Minutes (1985–89), p. 336: "Church of the Brethren, Licensed and Ordained Ministry."

J. Accountability

1. The Annual Conference paper “Ethics in Ministry Relations—1996” is the ethical and moral guide for all licensed and ordained ministers and lay speakers,³⁴ especially the Code of Ethics, Part III, pages 5-7. District Ministry Commissions will provide regular (a minimum of one every five years) district-wide training sessions to keep ministerial leaders informed about ministerial ethics.³⁵
2. Each District Ministry Commission will hold all ministerial leaders under its jurisdiction accountable for their ethical misconduct and to take appropriate action when violations are reported to them.
3. Each District Ministry Commission is expected to promote continuing education expectations for every ministerial leader serving under its jurisdiction.³⁶

K. Receiving Ordained Ministers from Other Denominations³⁷

1. Members of other denominations who wish to enter ministerial leadership in the Church of the Brethren have two primary routes before them.
 - a. Those persons who are not ordained in another denomination should seek membership in a Church of the Brethren congregation and follow the normal call process for licensing and ordination, as outlined in this paper.

34. This leadership program for lay persons is described in a 1977 Annual Conference paper, “The Lay Speaker.”

35. Congregations that call persons to ministerial leadership positions, including those who are not licensed or ordained, are legally liable for their ethical misconduct. To lessen legal liabilities and other risks, congregational leaders should consult with their District Executive/Minister.

36. Ministerial leaders (lead pastors, associate pastors, pastors in special ministries, etc.) serving congregations in pastoral roles influence the lives of parishioners in significant ways. These leaders need to pay special attention to their “spiritual health” and continue to improve their professional skills. Contact the denominational Office of Ministry for specific accountability guidelines developed by the Council of District Executives. The guidelines include information about sabbaticals and many other professional growth opportunities.

37. The word *denomination* refers to nonprofit religious organizations that have established standards and procedures, similar to those in the Church of the Brethren, for calling, educating, and ordaining persons for ministerial leadership.

- b. Those persons who are presently ordained in another denomination who wish to serve as ordained ministers in the Church of the Brethren may do so without reordination, subject to certain standards and procedures.
2. The following *standards* are established for those seeking ministerial leadership positions in the Church of the Brethren:
- a. Persons seeking ministerial leadership positions must have documentation of ministerial standing and satisfactory assurance from the appropriate ordaining group within the minister's denomination as to his or her moral, spiritual, leadership and educational qualifications required by Church of the Brethren polity.
 - b. Persons seeking ministerial leadership positions must accept a discipline of study and orientation to the Church of the Brethren with the guidance and support of a district-appointed counselor/mentor.³⁸ These ministers may be asked to complete such study and orientation prior to being received as an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren.
 - c. Persons seeking ministerial leadership positions must be willing to teach and uphold the beliefs, practices, and polity of the Church of the Brethren through a verbal commitment in the initial interview and a public commitment at the time of installation.
 - d. Persons seeking ministerial leadership positions will provide a written acceptance of the ordination polity and policies of the Church of the Brethren in completing the "Pre-Ordination Interview Guide."
3. The following *procedures* are to be followed for those seeking leadership positions³⁹ in the Church of the Brethren:
- a. An inquiring minister who desires to become a ministerial leader in the Church of the Brethren should make an official contact with the District Executive/Minister in the district of interest.
 - b. The District Executive/Minister shall supply the inquiring minister with a set of appropriate documents on the basic beliefs and practices of the Church of the Brethren⁴⁰ and make a timely follow-up contact with regard to interest in ministry in the Church of the Brethren.
 - c. The District Executive/Minister shall, in timely fashion, convene the Ministry Inquiry Committee (MIC)⁴¹ to meet with the inquiring minister. At this meeting, the standards and procedures for bringing an ordination into the Church of the Brethren will be explained, a copy of the "Pre-Ordination Interview Guide" will

38. The format for such a discipline is available from the denominational Office of Ministry.

39. Hereafter referred to as "inquiring minister."

40. Contact the denominational Office of Ministry for a packet of material.

41. See section "L" below for a description of the Ministry Inquiry Committee.

be provided and explained, and a conversation about mutual understandings for ministerial leadership will be conducted.

- d. If the MIC and the inquiring minister agree that the process shall continue and the standards outlined above are met, the MIC shall submit a recommendation to the District Ministry Commission, suggesting an interview with the inquiring minister.
- e. If the District Ministry Commission affirms the MIC's recommendation, it may schedule and conduct an interview with the inquiring minister. The District Ministry Commission must be given a completed copy of the "Pre-Ordination Interview Guide" prior to the interview.
- f. If the District Ministry Commission affirms the inquiring minister's desire to become a ministerial leader in the Church of the Brethren, it may recommend to the District Board that the inquiring minister's current ordination be recognized and that he or she be granted permission to enter the placement process.⁴² Persons called to serve under their current ordination must fulfill the district's orientation program, with a waiting period of at least one year before a transfer of ordination to the Church of the Brethren can be considered. During this period of orientation, the inquiring minister is subject to the guidelines under A Recognized Ordination for Term of Service (see III.M.).
- g. After the period of orientation is completed, the District Ministry Commission may recommend to the District Board that the inquiring minister be received as an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren.
- h. Upon approval of the District Board, the District Ministry Commission may provide the inquiring minister with a Certificate of Ordination, showing that he or she is now recognized as an ordained minister in good standing in the Church of the Brethren and is afforded the same privileges and is subject to the same discipline as are all other ministerial leaders in the denomination.
- i. The minister's letter of membership shall be placed in a Church of the Brethren congregation prior to receiving the Certificate of Ordination. An appropriate service of worship should be scheduled in the congregation, celebrating the reception of ordination and the reaffirmation of faith.

L. The Ministry Inquiry Committee (MIC)

The MIC shall consist of a representative of the District Ministry Commission⁴³ in the district through which the inquiring minister is seeking to have his or her ordination recognized, the District Executive/Minister of that same district, and a representative of the denominational Office of Ministry, appointed by the General Board's Director of Ministry. The MIC shall be convened by the District Executive/Minister who had initial contact with the candidate. The

42. If the inquiring minister, through the denomination's placement system, is called to serve a congregation in another district, a waiting period for a minimum of one year remains operative, beginning with the date of placement in the receiving district. The inquiring minister, during this period of orientation, is subject to the guidelines under A Recognized Ordination for Term of Service.

43. See footnote number seven (7) of this paper.

inquiring minister will be responsible for his or her personal expenses relative to the interview with the MIC.

M. A Recognized Ordination for Term of Service

If a minister in another denomination is interested in serving a Church of the Brethren congregation, he or she may be approved for a “Term of Service” in that congregation, provided:

1. The District Ministry Commission recommends the “Term of Service” to the District Board.
2. The minister satisfies the first three *standards* appearing in the section Receiving Ordained Ministers.
3. The minister becomes an associate member in the Church of the Brethren congregation he or she will serve.
4. It is understood that the “Term of Service” is for the period of one year. The “Term of Service” may be extended, with annual reviews, so long as the minister, the congregation, and the District Board are in agreement.

The minister’s present ordination will be recognized, and he or she will be accorded full authority for pastoral ministry including serving as delegate to District Conference and Annual Conference, for the duration of the term of service in that congregation. When that term of service ceases, the minister may seek ordination in the Church of the Brethren through the normal procedures for receiving ordained ministers from other denominations.

N. Multiple Standing

An ordained minister who is called to serve a dual ministry (an approved ministry in his or her denomination and an approved ministry in the Church of the Brethren) and who elects to maintain membership and ordination in his or her denomination, may be recognized as an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren for the duration of that dual ministry, so long as the following conditions are met:

1. That the minister become a member or an associate member of the Church of the Brethren he or she is serving.
2. That the District Ministry Commission be assured of the good standing of the person within his or her denomination and make the appropriate recommendation to the District Board.
3. That the minister express a willingness to teach and uphold the beliefs, practices, and polity of the Church of the Brethren, including the requirements for ordination in the Church of the Brethren, through a verbal commitment in the interview with the District Ministry Commission and a public commitment at the time of installation.⁴⁴

O. The Authority of the District Board

The district boards have been given the authority for ordination in the Church of the Brethren. They ordain persons on behalf of the denomination. Therefore, a congregation, with

44. Except for the section related to the Ministry Inquiry Committee, guidelines for receiving ministerial leaders from other denominations were approved by the 1987 Annual Conference.

the guidance of the District Executive/Minister, is free to call as pastor a presently ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, because ordination implies approval of the District Board.⁴⁵

A congregation is not free to call a pastor from another denomination without following, under the guidance of the District Executive/Minister, the *standards* and *procedures* for Receiving Ordained Ministers from Other Denominations.

45. Persons called as *interim* pastors are also accountable to the District Board and are subject to the “Ethics in Ministry Relations—1996” paper.

With the guidance of the District Executive/Minister, a congregation may call an ordained minister from another denomination as interim pastor.⁴⁶ This individual is not required to seek membership and ordination in the Church of the Brethren, but must agree to fulfill the expectations expressed in standards 2.a. and 2.c. in the section Receiving Ordained Ministers from Other Denominations (III.K.).

Under special circumstances, a congregation may call as pastor a licensed minister in the Church of the Brethren and enter into an “Approval for Employment” agreement, provided the licensed minister serves with the approval and guidance of the District Ministry Commission, which acts on behalf of the District Board.⁴⁷

P. Ministerial Status and Seconded Ministerial Leadership⁴⁸

“Seconded ministerial leadership” refers to persons who are assigned to or accept the call to serve in ministry beyond the denomination. Types of seconded leadership include the following:

1. Missionary personnel serving indigenous churches and other denominations often feel the necessity to hold membership in a congregation in the geographical area in which they serve, but wish to remain recognized as ordained ministers within the Church of the Brethren.
2. Ordained ministers of the Church of the Brethren are sometimes called to or assigned to ministry in the broader Christian community or to ecumenical positions such as national, state, or city councils of churches and find they wish to retain their status as an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren.

Q. Guidelines for Seconded Leadership

1. When ordained ministers assume seconded ministries beyond their own congregations, districts, or the denomination and desire to be recognized as ordained in the Church of the Brethren, they may do so as long as they continue to hold membership in a Church of the Brethren congregation. Where membership in the church related to the ecumenical or seconded ministry is beneficial or required, persons carry membership in both denominations.
2. District boards are allowed to accept and hold the ordination of persons serving seconded ecumenical ministries so long as . . .
 - a. The person requests the District Board to do so.
 - b. The person’s ordination is in good standing.
 - c. The seconded ecumenical ministry is acceptable to and confirmed by the District Board.

46. Contact the denominational Office of Ministry for guidelines, “approval for employment” forms, and other relevant information about “term of service” and “interim” ministries.

47. Annual Conference Paper, 1986: “Licensed and Ordained Ministry.”

48. Approved by the 1973 Annual Conference.

- d. The person holds active membership in a congregation in the district where his or her ordination is held.
- e. The person continues in the seconded ministry.
- 3. Such persons are answerable to the District Board regarding their ordination and their professional conduct relative to the “Ethics in Ministry Relations—1996” paper.
- 4. The District Board is responsible for listing such persons in the official listing of ordained ministers in the yearbook.⁴⁹

IV. RESOURCES

- A. The *Ministerial Leadership Manual* provides a wide variety of materials related to ministerial leadership. This manual may be ordered from Brethren Press, 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120. (See the order form in the back of this manual.)
- B. Questions related to the ministry in the Church of the Brethren can be directed to a District Executive/Minister or the Director of Ministry of the General Board.

Action of the General Board:

Approved at its March 7, 1999, meeting in Elgin, Illinois.

Mary Jo Flory-Steury, Board Chair
Judy Mills Reimer, Executive Director

Approved changes and additions at its June 29, 1999, meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Mary Jo Flory-Steury, Board Chair
Judy Mills Reimer, Executive Director

Action of the 1999 Annual Conference:

John David Bowman, a Standing Committee member from the Atlantic Northeast District, presented the Standing Committee recommendation that the “Ministerial Leadership” statement be adopted, including the changes and additions approved by the General Board in its June 29, 1999, meeting. *The delegate body adopted the recommendations by a two-thirds vote with two amendments* that have been incorporated into the text.

1/2000

49. See footnote sixteen (16) of this paper.

Office of Ministry

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