

## 4. The Review and Evaluation Committee

### A New Mandate

#### Background

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

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

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

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

*Who is the official representative in ecumenical relationships?*

*Who should maintain and distribute the denomination's polity manual?*

*Who should provide clarification on questions of denominational polity?*

*How should Annual Conference agencies and the Council of District Executives relate to each other?*

*What should be the role and composition of the Interagency Forum?*

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

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

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

### **The Recommendation**

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

### The Review and Evaluation Task

1. A study of the existing organization and structure of the denomination and their effectiveness for accomplishing the goals and purposes of the church.
2. A study of the thoroughness and comprehension of denominational programs of the General Board, the Association of Brethren Caregivers, and On Earth Peace Assembly.
3. A consideration of the balance and unity of denominational witness and ministry as directed and implemented by Annual Conference agencies.
4. An evaluation of the collaboration, collegiality and cooperation between Annual Conference agencies and the goals and programming of the districts.
5. An assessment of the interest and involvement of the general membership of the Church of the Brethren in denominational programs and missions.
6. The study of other matters of current relevance to the physical and spiritual effectiveness of the denomination.
7. The committee shall make no recommendations that violate agency bylaws. The committee shall develop the criteria for conducting its study.

### Tools, Methods, and Procedures

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

1. Self-evaluation by individual agencies.
2. Interviews with key denominational leaders.
3. Questionnaires for Annual Conference delegates.
4. Hearings and drop-in center at Annual Conference.
5. Examination of documents related to Annual Conference component groups and accountable agencies.

### Guidelines

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

1. The Annual Conference Council shall ensure that the committee members have an opportunity to be introduced to the leadership and staff of each of the agencies and their role interpreted.
2. Initial inquiries about the programs and activity of the Annual Conference agencies will be channeled through the respective executives of each agency.
3. Committee members are welcomed and encouraged to conduct spontaneous interviews of agency employees and denominational members.
4. The committee must observe confidentiality at all times.
5. The committee will keep the Annual Conference executive and the executives of the Annual Conference agencies apprised of its progress.
6. The committee may make an interim report to Annual Conference after the first year of its study.

**Action of the 2005 Annual Conference:** Annual Conference adopted the recommendation of Standing Committee that the new mandate for the Review and Evaluation Committee be adopted with one amendment recorded in the document above.

**Action of the 2006 Annual Conference:** Annual Conference received as information an interim report of the Review and Evaluation Committee's study. The committee will bring a final report to the Conference.

### **Report to the 2007 Annual Conference**

Reviewing the structure of the entire denomination is a daunting task. Many people have

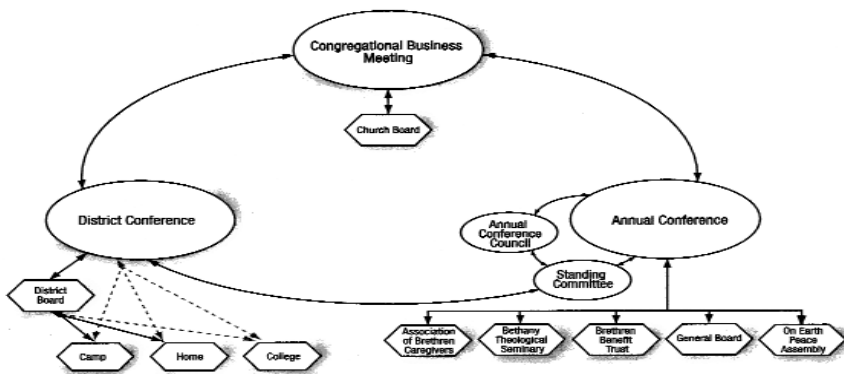
been surveyed and interviewed to reflect on the past 10 years and suggest ways to continue building up the body of Christ and the Church of the Brethren. The committee met twice in Elgin, Illinois, seven times via conference call, and during Annual Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, in 2006. Two hearings and a booth were set up at Annual Conference to listen to input from delegates, church members and denominational staff and leaders. The committee examined all recent reports and documents from the five agencies reportable to Annual Conference. Appreciation is expressed to each person who took the time to review our denominational structure during the past year and give observations and reflections to this committee.

In Luke 11:17, we read Jesus' words of warning to his disciples, "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined and a house divided against itself will fall." Building a foundation that will last is important when we think of the church's structure and its mission in the world. Putting the blocks together so they enhance the structure and do not cause its downfall is of utmost importance. While numerous blocks known as the local church make up the Church of the Brethren, Jesus Christ remains the cornerstone of our building. It is following the mind and example of Jesus, the Christ, that we strive for as we examine our church structure and the ways we can strengthen and enhance our witness in the world today.

**Historical Perspective on Church Structure**

Our denomination is centered on the local church. Each local church is a building block in the current structure of our denomination. Those blocks are grouped into 23 districts which might be thought of as rooms in the house. The Annual Conference is the gathering of representatives of each individual block. At this yearly meeting, delegates meet to discern the mind of Christ as they hear reports and act on business that will equip the church for ministry.

Here is a diagram depicting the current structure of the denomination: (taken from the 2006 Church of the Brethren Yearbook, page 10)

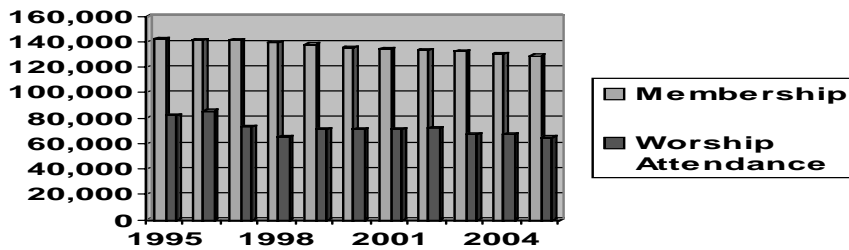


To put the current structure into historical perspective, it is well to review the changes in our organizational structure during the past century. Prior to 1947, the mission and ministry of the denomination were carried out by separate committees and/or boards with specific responsibilities. In 1947, Annual Conference created a single agency named the General Brotherhood Board. In 1997, that board was redesigned into three agencies: the General Board, the Association of Brethren Caregivers, and On Earth Peace Assembly. These three agencies along with Brethren Benefit Trust and Bethany Seminary form the basis of the groups being reviewed by this committee.

**Statistical Indicators**

What has been happening statistically with our denomination during the past 10 years as we have adapted to the changes with our structure? The following graphs show the trends within our church membership, worship attendance, and giving to the agencies and districts.

Church membership has steadily declined from 143,121 in 1995 to 129,340 in 2005.



This is an 11% decline in membership. At the same time, worship attendance has shown a similar trend going from 82,394 in 1995 to 65,143 in 2005 or a decrease of 12.6%.

Research from the Barna Group indicates a similar trend noting that from 1992 to 2003, average attendance at a typical church service has dropped by 13% whereas the population of America has increased by 9%.\*1

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\*1 George Barna Group (2003-SEPT-02) "Small Churches Struggle to Grow Because of the People They Attract," Retrieved Jan. 27, 2007 from <http://www.barna.org>.

In contrast to this decline, giving to the overall ministries of the church has remained steady. In 1995, overall giving to the General Ministries Fund (which included Association of Brethren Caregivers and On Earth Peace) was \$4,092,042 and in 2005 the combined giving to General Ministries Fund, Association of Brethren Caregivers and On Earth Peace

was \$3,966,297. 2005 was a notable year since giving to the Special Purpose Funds was twice the normal amount at \$4,290,807. District giving has also remained strong in light of membership decreases, going from \$3,080,163 in 1995 to \$2,917,933 in 2005. As a church, the faithful stewardship and support of the denomination shown in the giving figures is a cause for celebration.

### Membership Feedback

The surveys from across the denomination were insightful and varied but had some central themes which kept coming to the forefront of the comments. Those included:

- 1) A general concern that the church's structure is complex for the size of our denomination and is ineffective due to duplication, overlap, and layers of organization.
- 2) A concern that the creation of the Annual Conference Council which was just formed in 2001 at the recommendation of the Review and Evaluation Committee, added confusion and complexity to the current structure.
- 3) A need for better communication among the denomination, districts, and local churches so that information and opportunities get into the hands of church members. Members called for more online resources and greater use of technology, while acknowledging that some members do not have computer access.
- 4) A lack of emphasis in the area of evangelism and opportunity for mission, outreach, and growth within the denomination at all levels. At the same time, some members highlighted the growth in work camp opportunities as a positive area of outreach for local churches.
- 5) Overall appreciation for the work of the Congregational Life Team members and the resources they provide for local churches.
- 6) A call for greater unity and cooperation between the General Board, Association of Brethren Caregivers, and On Earth Peace.
- 7) A hope for multi-cultural diversity and inclusiveness within the denomination.
- 8) A need for well-trained leaders and pastors in the local church and education for those persons called to serve the denomination in various roles.
- 9) Appreciation for the ecumenical witness of the denomination.
- 10) A hope that we can deepen our understanding of Brethren heritage and the core values of Bible study, spiritual direction, peace, service, and justice issues as we look to the future.

Many people spent hours writing down their thoughts and we are grateful for these comments and suggestions. The Review and Evaluation committee has spent days reviewing these surveys and interviewing individuals across the denomination. Based on all this information, we humbly offer the following recommendations with a prayer that the Holy Spirit will guide us all as we discern God's leading into the future.

## Recommendations:

- 1) We recommend the merger of the General Board and the Association of Brethren Caregivers into one incorporated legal entity entitled "The Church of the Brethren". The board of directors (trustees) of the corporation would have responsibility to oversee the domestic and international ministries as the administrative and programmatic agency for the denomination. We also strongly encourage On Earth Peace to consider joining together with these two agencies through prayerful discussions with their board, executives, and the wider church as the agencies work toward unity.

The current articles of incorporation of the General Board have been amended previously to accommodate name changes. The General Board continues to be the only agency wholly owned by the delegates of the Annual Conference, holding for the denomination the corporate name, the 501(c)3 tax status and titles for all real estate, and it assumes legal liability for activities of the denomination, including Standing Committee and Annual Conference. We envision that the new incorporated board of directors (trustees) will replace the roles and functions of both the current General Board and the Annual Conference Council, uniting them into a single body.

The new structure will be responsible for the coordination of major church conferences on behalf of the denomination. It would be responsible for the employment of their staff and oversight of their work.

The General Secretary of The Church of the Brethren, would serve as the representative for the denomination with the ecumenical community, for example with the National Council of Churches Head of Communion meetings. When speaking on behalf of the denomination, the General Secretary would make statements in consultation with the moderator and other church leaders as deemed appropriate.

All ministries would be funded through a core ministries budget (unified) unless the inherent nature of the ministry (Disaster Response, Brethren Press, etc.) generated resources to adequately support its activities, in which case it would be designated a "self-funded" ministry. Staffing for this structure would be primarily centralized except where the nature of the work assignment necessitated dispersed placement such as Congregational Life Team staff and funding counselors.

Bethany Theological Seminary would continue in its current relationship to the broader church as the denominational seminary. Brethren Benefit Trust would continue to serve in its capacity to provide financial services to the church and its employees.

The duplication of resources expended for separate boards, separate finance; and fundraising needs of each of these agencies has meant the draining of both financial and people resources within the denomination. The hope is that a simpler structure can empower local churches to maintain creative energy and resources and minimize the footprint that the agencies within the church impose on the local church's mission and

ministry. There has been some overlap within the area of witness between the agencies, and this proposal would enable a unified approach to share the message of the denomination.

We further recommend that a new committee be called to examine how such a merger can be implemented, taking into account the research and recommendations of this report.

- 2) We recommend that our current practices for orientation for leadership roles including the moderator, moderator-elect, Standing Committee and denominational board members be examined and enhanced to better equip leaders for their positions. Many leaders commented about the large amount of time it took for them to understand their position and the tasks before them. Recommendations regarding ways to better orient leaders are found in the 2006 Study Committee Report: *Doing Church Business*.
- 3) The core values of the church should be promoted through our Brethren identity and heritage curriculum resources. The 300th anniversary committee is working hard to lift up ways we can share our heritage and faith with the world in 2008. Many local churches are calling for ways they can disciple new members and help them understand who we are as Brethren. Brethren Press is encouraged to continue empowering local churches in this area.
- 4) Evangelism is an area that needs strengthening in our current structure. More guidance and opportunities are needed within the denomination for church members to learn about sharing their faith and ways to establish new churches. We recommend the denomination seriously consider, through curriculum and workshops, ways to empower local churches to reach out to the unchurched in their local communities. We further recommend that denominational leadership model active evangelism.
- 5) Stewardship education was emphasized in a query to Annual Conference in 2006. Church members are calling for ways to lift up generous giving to the ministries of the church. The General Board responded to this query with the increase of staff in this area. A full-time staff in stewardship education began in fall 2006.
- 6) The local church, districts, and the denominational agencies struggle to find and maintain leaders for their positions. Those currently in leadership positions often feel overworked. In an effort to call out and maintain quality leaders, local churches and district boards are encouraged to provide avenues for professional growth and sabbaticals for renewal. Each year pastors, district executives/ministers, and denominational staff are encouraged to bring proposals to their annual review on how they plan to work at spiritual renewal for the call of their ministry position. In addition, local churches and districts are encouraged to establish a yearly process to review and consider members to be called out into ministry.



- 7) Both agency personnel and local church members recognized the strain on budgets to try to and attend numerous conferences of the denomination annually. It is suggested that the denominational leaders consider staggering conferences such as National Older Adult and National Youth Conference so that they would not all occur the same year. It was noted that 40% of local churches do not send a delegate to the Annual Conference in any given year. There was a call from some denominational leaders to consider having Annual Conference biennially due to the expense for all participants. We encourage discussion of this idea by all agencies and local churches.
- 8) There continues to be a disconnect between the person in the pew and the programs of the denomination. Continued emphasis on the use of modern technology and varied ways of reaching local churches with information about activities and opportunities is encouraged.
- 9) The Congregational Life Teams were mentioned often in the surveys. The Congregational Life Teams need to be more intentional about making local churches aware of what they do and services offered in their area. The committee felt many people value this group as a link between the denomination, districts and local church.
- 10) A number of respondents lifted up the need for our church to be more welcoming toward diversities of all types. Currently several denominational committees and groups are working on this, including the Intercultural Study Committee reporting to the 2007 Annual Conference and the Cross-Cultural Consultation. A Commitment of Accessibility and Inclusion Resolution was adopted at the 2006 Annual Conference urging each Church of the Brethren to enable all people to participate fully in the church's life. Resources are available from the Association of Brethren Caregivers.

### **A Call to Unity and Simplicity**

Throughout our denomination's 300-year history we have sought to follow Jesus' teachings in the New Testament. The early church model in Acts 2 was lifted up by some survey respondents as an example of how the church sought to live out Christ's teachings. Simplicity and cooperation between church members were priorities. Sharing everything in common and pooling resources were emphasized.

As our denomination moves into its fourth century, these values of simplicity, cooperation, and stewardship of our precious gifts and resources are encouraged through these recommendations and suggestions. May these ideas undergo prayerful consideration as we boldly proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to a hurting, violent world.

"I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment." I Corinthians 1:10.

Prayerfully Submitted by:  
Paul Hoffman, McPherson, Kansas, Committee Chair  
Michaela Camps, Miami, Florida  
Rebecca Baile Crouse, Warrensburg, Missouri  
Craig L. Gandy, Mexico, Indiana  
James Edward Martinez, Modesto, California, Recorder

**Committee expenses for travel, lodging, meals, and misc.**

July, 2005 to July, 2006	\$2,622.00
July, 2006 to July, 2007	\$2,483.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$5,105.00</b>

**Action of the 2007 Annual Conference:** Annual Conference approved the report of the Review and Evaluation Committee with one amendment that has been incorporated in the text above. Conference delegates also elected an Implementation Committee to examine how the first of the committee's recommendations might be accomplished. Elected to the committee were Gary Crim, John N. Neff, and David Sollenberger, along with the executives of the General Board, the Association of Brethren Caregivers, On Earth Peace, and Annual Conference, who will be ex-officio members (with vote).