



Church of the Brethren

March 2018

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We as the Leadership Team of the Church of the Brethren are painfully aware that the difference of opinion around Biblical authority and interpretation, particularly with regard to matters of sexuality, has led to deep divisions and brokenness within our denomination. In the face of that division we are seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we strive to find ways to help bring healing and wholeness in our life together.

We have received many letters and emails expressing deep concerns from all perspectives. Many of those have been respectful expressions of concerns and opinions. We encourage and welcome these expressions.

We are aware, however, that in the debate among us some have expressed their concerns using harsh, unkind rhetoric, shaming, name-calling, and invalidation of the personhood of those with whom they disagree. This disrespectful and sometimes violent rhetoric is extremely hurtful to those it is directed toward and is destructive to us as a body of believers. This type of communication and behavior, often used to point out the spiritual failure of the other, is in itself a spiritual failure of the speaker to live as a follower of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are aware that these harsh communications are being sent not only to leadership but also to individuals through emails, letters, and social media posts, bringing great pain to those individuals and their circles of support. These destructive communications need to stop. If you have written such communications, we encourage you to seek forgiveness and reconciliation with those who have been hurt by your actions.

We call all to a place of humility and repentance, seeking how we may grow more and more like Christ, who calls and empowers us to be in a place of love, respect, grace, and forgiveness for one another. Any expressions short of that will only deepen our struggle and will work against God's purpose among us.

The Leadership Team acknowledges that we have a long journey before us, a journey that will have some difficult and painful passages as we move through a time of intentional discernment toward a compelling vision for our life together. Our repentance and collective commitment to love, respect, and forgive one another are keys necessary to open the door for the Holy Spirit's work among us.

Praying for the peace of Christ amid our disagreement,

David A. Steele, general secretary
Samuel Kefas Sarpiya, moderator
Donita J. Keister, moderator-elect

James M. Beckwith, secretary
David D. Shetler, district executive representative
Chris Douglas, Annual Conference director