



Church of the Brethren

# MANUAL OF ORGANIZATION AND POLITY

January 2021

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# CHAPTER 1

## THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE<sup>1</sup>

### I. INTRODUCTION

Annual Conference is the highest legislative authority in determining the polity of the church and the final authority of the Church of the Brethren in all matters of procedure, program, polity, and discipline. The authority of Conference has its source in the delegates elected by local churches and districts who come together as a deliberative body under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

The Conference is the final source of appeal in adjusting difficulties and solving problems that arise in the church. It serves as one of the major channels of information and interpretation of the mission and work of the church. It provides an opportunity for face-to-face confrontation and discussion of major issues which are of vital concern to the church. It serves as a means of building unity, fellowship, and understanding among the Brethren, as laity and clergy, age and youth, urban and rural people try to discover the mission of the church in today's world.<sup>3</sup>

The actions of Conference are directives for the whole life of the church, and implementation is assumed to take place within a reasonable span of time. This implementation does not depend on acts of enforcement by decree. Rather, education, consultation, and patience are characteristics of Brethren polity. Groups and individuals have channels of review when decisions of Annual Conference are questioned. It is important that there be mutual trust and shared responsibility between local, district, and denominational structures of church order.<sup>4</sup>

The voting body consists of two sets of delegates: those representing congregations and those from the districts who also serve as the Standing Committee.<sup>5</sup> All members of the Church of the Brethren who are present have full liberty to participate in the discussions, but only delegates vote.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The place of Annual Conference in Church of the Brethren organization and polity has been clarified in the Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren in such key documents as these: 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 52-59; 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Study of the Annual Conference," 162-183; 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference," 316-320. Additional references and emendations follow.

Nearly every reference in this chapter is a polity statement and its source in the Annual Conference minutes is cited in its endnote. It is, however, the nature of a manual of organization and polity to require a few explanatory notes to describe the parts of the organizational structure of the church for which there are no Annual Conference minutes to cite that would provide the description. In order to distinguish such editorial comments in this manual from polity statements (decisions made by the Annual Conference delegate body), a section that is not a quotation from Annual Conference minutes will be identified as an explanatory note from the editor.

<sup>2</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference," 316; "Church Polity, Including Referendum on Merger and Continuation of Ecumenical Concerns," 337.

<sup>3</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference," 316.

<sup>4</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "Church Polity, Including Referendum on Merger and Coordination of Ecumenical Concerns," 337. See also 2004 Minutes (2000-2004), "Query on Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions," 1270-1280.

<sup>5</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference," 318.

<sup>6</sup> It has been our historic standard practice to allow all members of the church to participate in the discussions of the delegate body. The 1890 Minutes, "Report of Committee on Rules," 2, state: "All members present shall have the right to participate in the discussion of all questions before the meeting."

## **II. FREQUENCY, TIMING, LOCATION**

- A. The Annual Conference is held each year in order to deal more quickly with current issues in the life of the church and the world situation.<sup>7</sup>
- B. The Annual Conference is to be scheduled involving four nights in a broad time range of mid-June to mid-July. The Program and Arrangements Committee is to exercise sound stewardship in making commitments with convention facilities and to plan in order to creatively address issues of spiritual renewal, fellowship, outreach, and business.<sup>8</sup>
- C. The Program and Arrangements Committee shall focus on a handful of locations at which to hold Annual Conference that maximize sound fiscal stewardship for Annual Conference and attendees by addressing overall costs including, but not limited to, hotel rates, airline costs, and meeting facility costs. A travel scholarship, set by the Program and Arrangements Committee, shall be offered by Annual Conference to every delegate from a congregation west of the Mississippi River.<sup>9</sup>

## **III. CONFERENCE STRUCTURES AND RELATIONSHIPS**

### **A. DELEGATE BODY**

The delegate body assembled in Conference is the ultimate authority of the Church of the Brethren. It is composed of the Standing Committee and the local church delegates. It functions primarily as a deliberating legislative assembly, determining the polity and setting forth the primary courses of action and relationships in which the church should be involved. All other agencies of the church should assist the delegate body in the performance of that which it regards as the business of the church.<sup>10</sup>

#### **1. Functions of the Delegate Body**<sup>11</sup>

- a. It is the final authority of the Church of the Brethren in all matters of procedure, program, polity, and discipline. It is the annual meeting of the members of the corporation Church of the Brethren, Inc., doing business as the Church of the Brethren.<sup>12</sup>
- b. It elects the officers of the Annual Conference, elects or confirms the members of the Mission and Ministry Board, elects or confirms members of the boards of the Annual Conference agencies in accordance with their governing documents, and elects the members of special committees authorized by the Conference. These elections are made from nominations presented to the delegate body by the Standing Committee.
- c. It reviews the work of the denomination as presented to Annual Conference in the reports of the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board and other institutions of the denomination.

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<sup>7</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference," 319. See also 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 276.

<sup>8</sup> 2012 Minutes, "Revitalization of Annual Conference," 236.

<sup>9</sup> 2012 Minutes, "Revitalization of Annual Conference," 236.

<sup>10</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference," 318. See also 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 57.

<sup>11</sup> 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 57. See also section IV.A. of this chapter, with which this section has been made identical in this edition of the manual.

<sup>12</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 232 (Article Three, Section 1 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)); 2008 Minutes (2005-2008), "Implementation of the New Denominational Structure," 1154.

- d. It projects the program of the denomination, determining the new fields of endeavor, plans for advance, size of budget, and all other necessary matters.
- e. It disposes of queries.
- f. It receives the reports of committees appointed to deal with specific problems in the life of the denomination.
- g. It determines what resolutions shall be the voice of the Church of the Brethren on the problems of the day.

## 2. The Standing Committee<sup>13</sup>

The Standing Committee is composed of the district representatives to the Conference and the immediate past moderator of the Conference.<sup>14</sup>

### a. Responsibilities

The Standing Committee has nominating, legislative, judicial, and envisioning responsibilities.<sup>15</sup>

- 1) Nominating functions. Standing Committee serves as the nominating committee for the Annual Conference.<sup>16</sup>
  - a) Congregations are encouraged to send suggested nominees to the nominating committee of Standing Committee. For this purpose the names of the nominating committee and the list of vacancies should be publicized immediately following Conference. All bodies responsible for calling denominational leadership are encouraged to use a spiritual model in their discernment process in order to raise awareness of God’s Spirit in this process.
  - b) On the nomination form, offices held at the local, district, denominational, ecumenical, and community levels shall be used by candidates to provide information about how the offices and positions they have held provide them with the skills and experience related to the position for which they are being nominated. This information, in narrative form, shall be included with basic biographical data, a vision statement, a priority statement, and a faith statement in a half-page entry on the Annual Conference ballot. The Annual Conference ballot shall also include a brief description of the responsibilities for each position open. Each candidate shall have the opportunity to review/edit final ballot copy prior to publication. The Conference secretary retains the responsibility to keep the ballot copy equitable and within an appropriate amount of space.
  - c) Nominating committee shall meet in January to prepare an initial ballot<sup>17</sup> with twice

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<sup>13</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 318. See also 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), “Brotherhood Organization,” 54-56.

<sup>14</sup> 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure,” 274.

<sup>15</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 318; 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure Review,” 274-275; 2012 Minutes, “Church of the Brethren Vision Statement 2012-2020,” 223-224.

<sup>16</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 318; 2001 Minutes (2000-2004), “Review of the Process of Calling Denominational Leadership,” 483-484.

<sup>17</sup> The nominating committee will apply polity guidelines regarding eligibility for individual positions on the ballot and the general requirement that a person shall not be elected a member of any body which exercises control over or has substantial influence upon: (a) their employment, including pay scale and working conditions; (b) policies governing the program they administer; (c) any major part of the financial support they administer or which they serve as a staff

the number of names of qualified persons for all nominations Standing Committee must make.<sup>18</sup> That ballot shall be distributed to only Standing Committee, who shall vote and reduce the initial ballot to its tentative final form. This tentative final ballot shall be distributed to the denomination at large in February.

- d) If study committees are required by Annual Conference action, biographical ballots shall include narrative of the candidates' qualifications for and interest in the focus of the particular study committee to which they are being nominated. This candidate information shall be included with basic biographical data on a one third page entry as part of the Annual Conference Study Committee ballot.
- 2) Legislative functions. The Standing Committee studies all queries and items of new business and recommends answers to the Annual Conference delegate body. It shall determine which items of both new and unfinished business involve polity changes and thus require a two-thirds vote of Conference.<sup>19</sup>

The Standing Committee can also be called upon to make decisions on behalf of the Annual Conference in between Conferences. Any action required of members of the corporation between annual meetings may be taken by the vote of the delegates of Standing Committee. Notice of such a meeting shall be by first class mail to the members of Standing Committee at the address listed in their registration for the previous Annual Conference.<sup>20</sup>

- 3) Judicial functions. The Standing Committee is the judicial body of the Church of the Brethren for decisions on discipline and controversy involving members, congregations, districts, and denomination.<sup>21</sup> It shall be the body to which appeals of the policies and decisions of the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee are submitted.<sup>22</sup> Standing Committee shall counsel on controversial issues, taking the initiative when deemed wise, and maintaining the right to hold closed sessions as

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member. 1966 Minutes (1965-1969), "Proposal on Conflict-of-Interest Problem," 176-177.

<sup>18</sup> 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee," 179. Normally, this will mean that four nominations are required for each position open on the Annual Conference ballot, in order for Standing Committee to reduce the four to two nominations for the final ballot. An exception is made when an incumbent Brethren Benefit Trust Board director who was elected by Annual Conference is approved by that board for a second term of service – see section II.B.2.k.1) of chapter 2 of this polity manual and 2015 Minutes, "Polity Change Proposal from Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust," 247-248. In such a case, Nominating Committee provides only two nominations for Standing Committee to choose one nominee to be on the final ballot alongside the incumbent director.

<sup>19</sup> 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee," 179. "Unfinished Business shall not be reviewed by Standing Committee but shall go directly to Conference as business already belonging to Conference. The officers or a Conference committee bringing back a report may, however, request the counsel and guidance of Standing Committee on items of unfinished business coming to the Conference." Also, "Reports ... printed in the Conference booklet shall be made only once and that to Standing Committee and the church delegates together."

<sup>20</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 233 (Article Three, Section 6 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)). Our standard practice and expectation in the Church of the Brethren is that such decisions are made in collaboration among denominational leadership. Our polity grants the Conference officers the authority to call together any representative group, such as Standing Committee, in cases of emergency [1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference," section II.C., 318] and gives corporate/legal responsibility to the corporate board (Mission and Ministry Board) to call special meetings between Conferences [2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 232 (Article Three, Sections 2, 3, and 4 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/))]. Any legal documents need to be done by the corporate officers, although the Annual Conference officers are ex officio members of the corporate board, where their voices are highly respected. The genius of our polity is that we work to hold the corporate and the ecclesial natures of the church together in creative collaboration.

<sup>21</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference," 318.

<sup>22</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Appeals of Program and Arrangements Committee Decisions," 226.

desired.<sup>23</sup>

- 4) Envisioning functions. The Standing Committee is to gather information and to listen to persons, congregations, and districts concerning new ideas, dreams, and visions for ministry. These shall be shared with the Mission and Ministry Board and other appropriate bodies.<sup>24</sup>
- b. Membership

The membership of Standing Committee shall be composed of one representative for each district with five thousand or fewer members, and one additional representative for each additional five thousand members or fraction thereof in larger districts.<sup>25</sup>

Members of Standing Committee shall be elected by their respective districts to serve a term of three years. They are eligible for re-election to one additional term of three years following a full or partial term of service on Standing Committee. After such service, former members will be ineligible to serve for a period of four years.<sup>26</sup> Upon transfer to another district, Standing Committee members who have not served a term for three Conferences will be replaced by the district they were originally chosen to represent. To them as well as their successors the ineligibility rule will apply.

In the Standing Committee as a whole, and in the districts that send more than one Standing Committee delegate, the principle of staggering of terms shall be applied; the exact method of initiating and regulating this procedure shall be left to the Conference secretary.

When an alternate Standing Committee delegate takes the place of a regular delegate, the alternate shall continue to serve the remainder of the term in order to provide continuity.<sup>27</sup>

Members also serve as a resource for interpreting Annual Conference concerns and actions in their districts. It is recommended that Standing Committee members be ex-officio members of their respective district board.<sup>28</sup>

c. Eligibility

Any member of the Church of the Brethren may serve the district on Standing Committee if that member has been in the district for at least one year, fulfills the qualifications as set forth by Annual Conference, and is not a member of the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board or Church of the Brethren, Inc. program staff, nor of the board of an Annual Conference agency or its program staff, and is not an executive/minister or associate executive/minister of a district.<sup>29</sup> Eligibility for re-election is stated in section b. above.

In choosing Standing Committee delegates, districts should give consideration to members of the district board and other people who are actively involved in the district program –

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<sup>23</sup> 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee," 179.

<sup>24</sup> 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 275; 2012 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Vision Statement 2012-2020," 223-224.

<sup>25</sup> 1988 Minutes (1985-1989), "Ratio for Standing Committee Representations," 674.

<sup>26</sup> 1989 Minutes (1985-1989), "Standing Committee Members – Term of Office," 879-880.

<sup>27</sup> This sentence has been edited to conform with the three-year term. 1961 Minutes (1955-1964), "Interpretation of Standing Committee Representation," 83, made this provision for the previous two-year term.

<sup>28</sup> 1976 Minutes (1975-1979), "Brotherhood Understanding," 208.

<sup>29</sup> 1987 Minutes (1985-1989), "Dual Membership and Conflict of Interest/Time/Responsibility," 503; 1989 Minutes (1985-1989), "Eligibility for Standing Committee," 879. 2015 Minutes, "Amendments to Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust Articles of Organization," 245. Members of the Bethany Theological Seminary Board of Trustees and the On Earth Peace Board cannot serve on Standing Committee because it is a conflict of interest for Standing Committee members to serve on a board for which they nominate new members.

including both ministers and lay people.

d. Qualifications<sup>30</sup>

- 1) Consecrated Christian living in home, church, and community.
- 2) Faithful service in local church and district.
- 3) Loyalty to the ideals and the program of the Church of the Brethren.
- 4) A working knowledge and understanding of the Church of the Brethren and its program of ministries.
- 5) Ability to exercise mature judgment in the solution of denominational problems.

e. Open and closed sessions

Sessions of Standing Committee shall be open except when dealing with personnel and judicial matters and those issues on which Standing Committee would vote to have a closed session.<sup>31</sup>

3. Delegates from the Local Church<sup>32</sup>

a. Choice of delegates

- 1) Congregations and fellowships<sup>33</sup> are urged to send their full quota of delegates, carefully selected at least six months in advance of Annual Conference, with notification of their selection sent to the Annual Conference Office.
- 2) Congregations should seek ways to involve more lay people as delegates. To this end, it is suggested that when local churches send two or more delegates, at least one of them should be from the laity. It is further urged that delegates be chosen on the basis of their qualifications rather than to effect a financial saving for the local church.
- 3) Congregations should always plan to send their pastors/ministers, although not necessarily as delegates.
- 4) Each congregation or fellowship having a membership of two hundred or fewer may send one delegate; each congregation having more than two hundred members may send one additional delegate for each two hundred or fraction thereof.
- 5) People received into associate membership are not eligible for election as delegates to Annual Conference.<sup>34</sup>

b. Term of service

Delegates are elected to represent congregations at Annual Conference. It is recommended that congregations consider establishing two-year terms for the congregational delegates.<sup>35</sup>

Local Annual Conference delegates should serve as ex officio members of the church board (or leadership team) from the time of their election through Annual Conference and six

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<sup>30</sup> 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 55.

<sup>31</sup> 1978 Minutes (1975-1979), "Role and Function of Standing Committee," 469.

<sup>32</sup> 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 56; 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Study of the Annual Conference," 180-181.

<sup>33</sup> 1967 Minutes (1965-1969), "Recognition of Church Fellowships," 257.

<sup>34</sup> 1985 Minutes (1985-1989), "Membership Study," 133.

<sup>35</sup> 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 275.

months following, in order to help interpret and implement official statements.<sup>36</sup>

c. Eligibility

Any member of the Church of the Brethren who fulfills the qualifications as interpreted by Annual Conference is eligible to serve. A non-Brethren minister serving as pastor of a Brethren congregation may serve as a delegate if properly elected by the congregation.<sup>37</sup>

d. Qualifications

Local church moderators are personally responsible for seeing that the following qualifications are taken seriously in the selection of delegates:

- 1) Consecrated Christian living in home, church, and community.
- 2) Faithful service in local church and district.
- 3) Loyalty to the ideals and the program of the Church of the Brethren.
- 4) A working knowledge and understanding of the denominational program.
- 5) Ability to exercise mature judgment in the solution of denominational problems.
- 6) Reading of church literature.
- 7) Knowledge of past decisions of the church gained by reading of minutes and reports and a continual study of current business.
- 8) Attendance at denominational and interdenominational conferences outside the local church.<sup>38</sup>

e. Credentials

- 1) Authorization cards for delegates from congregations shall be sent, along with other literature, from the Annual Conference Office, to each pastor of each church in order that delegates may be preregistered.
- 2) Proper identification and seating of delegates shall be arranged by such provisions as special badges, a consecration ceremony, and special seating areas.

f. Preparation of delegates<sup>39</sup>

- 1) In the local church
  - a) Delegates, upon election, should be consecrated for their important tasks by a spiritual commissioning service in the local church.
  - b) They shall be preregistered with the Annual Conference Office and a registration fee shall be paid to cover the providing of a Conference Booklet and other Conference expenses. The Conference Booklet is mailed to each preregistered delegate for use in preparing for Conference.
- 2) At Annual Conference
  - a) Delegates shall be present by the beginning of Annual Conference to confirm their

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<sup>36</sup> 1976 Minutes (1975-1979), "Brotherhood Understanding," 207.

<sup>37</sup> 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 56; 1973 Minutes (1970-1974), "Non-Brethren Ministers as Delegates," 357.

<sup>38</sup> 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 56-57; 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), 180.

<sup>39</sup> 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Study of the Annual Conference," 180-181.

registration and be ready to go into session. It is extremely important that they attend all business sessions and participate fully in the deliberations.<sup>40</sup>

- b) Consecration. An act of consecration of all delegates is held at the beginning of the first business session.

## **B. OFFICERS OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE**<sup>41</sup>

The Annual Conference officers include the moderator, the moderator-elect, and the Annual Conference secretary. The officers of Conference have the authority to act for the church in signing documents which are approved by the Conference. In cases of emergency at any time between Conferences, the officers may call together any representative group in the church to deal with the emergency.<sup>42</sup>

The Annual Conference officers shall list queries for consideration by Annual Conference that in their judgment have fulfilled the preliminary steps. They shall have the responsibility of informing the congregations and delegates prior to Annual Conference of the items of business that will come before the Annual Conference. They shall study the Annual Conference business and allocate the amount of time for each item. They shall set the order of the day for business sessions, but these may be adjusted by action of the delegate body if need arises. The Annual Conference officers shall appoint messengers, tellers, the timekeeper, and other people as needed for implementing the Annual Conference business. No ratification of these appointments is needed. The officers shall appoint such committees as are not provided for otherwise.

The Annual Conference officers serve as members of the leadership team of the Church of the Brethren, Inc., which also serves as the executive committee of Annual Conference.<sup>43</sup>

Specific position descriptions for each of the officers of Annual Conference have been prepared by the Program and Arrangements Committee and may be obtained from the Annual Conference Office. They include detailed responsibilities in addition to the general duties outlined below.

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<sup>40</sup> This paragraph edited to apply regardless of the day of the week on which Annual Conference begins.

<sup>41</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 318-319; 2010 Minutes, “Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision,” 233-234 (Article Four in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)).

<sup>42</sup> Our standard practice and expectation in the Church of the Brethren is that such decisions are made in collaboration among denominational leadership. Our polity grants the Conference officers the authority to call together any representative group, such as Standing Committee, in cases of emergency, and to sign documents approved by Annual Conference [1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” section II.C., 318]. At the same time, our polity gives corporate/legal responsibility to the corporate board (Mission and Ministry Board) to call special meetings between Conferences [2010 Minutes, “Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision,” 232-233 (Article Three, Sections 2, 3, 4, and 6 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/))]. And our polity requires that any contract or instrument executed and delivered in the name of and on behalf of the Church of the Brethren, Inc., needs to be authorized by the corporate board (Mission and Ministry Board) [2010 Minutes, “Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision,” 240, (Article Six, Section 5.A. in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/))]. Any legal documents need to be done by the corporate officers, although the Annual Conference officers are ex officio members of the corporate board, where their voices are highly respected. The genius of our polity is that we work to hold the corporate and the ecclesial natures of the church together in creative collaboration.

<sup>43</sup> 2010 Minutes, “Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision,” 235 (Article Five in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)).

**1. The Moderator (Moderator-elect, Moderator, and Immediate Past Moderator)**

a. Term of service<sup>44</sup>

The moderator serves three years, serving one year in three successive offices.

- 1) Moderator-elect. The moderator is elected one year in advance of beginning a year of service as moderator and is known as the moderator-elect.<sup>45</sup> The moderator-elect serves as moderator when the moderator is unable to perform the duties of moderator.
- 2) Moderator. The moderator-elect becomes moderator at the close of the Annual Conference a year following election and continues in that office until the close of the following Annual Conference.
- 3) Immediate past moderator. The moderator becomes the immediate past moderator after serving one year as moderator, concluding with the Annual Conference.

b. Eligibility

Any active member of the Church of the Brethren may serve as moderator. During the three years of service, a moderator cannot be employed by or serve on the board of directors of Church of the Brethren, Inc., or of any agency reportable to Annual Conference,<sup>46</sup> or be a member of an Annual Conference-elected committee.<sup>47</sup>

c. Qualifications<sup>48</sup>

- 1) Consecrated Christian living in home, church, and community.
- 2) Faithful service in local church and district.
- 3) Loyalty to the ideals and program of the Church of the Brethren.
- 4) A working knowledge and understanding of the denomination's program.
- 5) Ability to exercise mature judgment in the solution of the denomination's problems.
- 6) Familiarity with parliamentary procedures and skill in presiding over a deliberative assembly.
- 7) Capacity to cultivate desirable public relations.
- 8) Demonstrated leadership ability in programs of the Church of the Brethren.
- 9) Ability to facilitate discernment groups or a willingness to learn and seek assistance from those who do and to receive training and coaching in large-group discernment processes.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 233-234 (Article Four, Section 2 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)).

<sup>45</sup> 1962 Minutes (1955-1964), "Moderator-elect," 254-255. See also 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 273-274, and 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 233-234 (Article Four, Section 2 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)).

<sup>46</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 233 (Article Four, Section 2.B. in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)). See also 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee," 176-177.

<sup>47</sup> This has been our standard practice.

<sup>48</sup> 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), "Brotherhood Organization," 58.

<sup>49</sup> 2012 Minutes, "Revitalization of Annual Conference," 236; 2007 Minutes (2005-2008), "Query: Doing Church Business, 813.

d. Duties

1) Moderator-elect<sup>50</sup>

- (a) serve as moderator when the moderator is unable to perform the duties of moderator.
- (b) serve as an assistant to the moderator throughout the sessions of Standing Committee and Annual Conference.
- (c) serve ex officio as a member of the Mission and Ministry Board in a consultative capacity without vote.
- (d) serve as vice chairperson of the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee.
- (e) serve as a member of the Leadership Team.

2) Moderator<sup>51</sup>

- (a) preside over all sessions of Standing Committee and of Annual Conference, and act as the official representative of the church. The moderator may appoint a parliamentarian.
- (b) contact district and other Brethren conferences.
- (c) serve ex-officio as a member of the Mission and Ministry Board and its Executive Committee in a consultative, nonvoting capacity.
- (d) represent the denomination at strategic interchurch conferences.
- (e) serve as the chairperson of the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee.
- (f) serve as a member of the Leadership Team.
- (g) give a “state of the church” address at Annual Conference.

3) Immediate Past Moderator

- (a) convenes the Inter-Agency Forum.<sup>52</sup>
- (b) serves as a voting member of Standing Committee for one year<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> 2010 Minutes, “Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision,” 233 (Article Four, Sections 1. and 2.A. in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)); 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure,” 274; 1962 Minutes (1955-1964), “Moderator-Elect,” 254-255.

<sup>51</sup> 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure,” 273-274; 2005 Minutes (2004-2008), “Updates to Annual Conference Polity,” 251-252; 2010 Minutes, “Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision,” 234 (Article Four, Section 2.C. in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)).

<sup>52</sup> 2005 Minutes (2004-2008), “Updates to Annual Conference Polity,” 252. Polity also states that the Leadership Team convenes the IAF (section III.C.2.f. of this chapter), so our practice has become that the general secretary, as chair of the Leadership Team, coordinates agenda items for the IAF meetings and works together with the immediate past moderator to co-convene the IAF meetings, over which the immediate past moderator presides.

<sup>53</sup> 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure,” 274. The immediate past moderator serves as a voting member of Standing Committee from the close of the Annual Conference at which he or she presided as moderator until the close of the Annual Conference at which he or she sits with Standing Committee as a voting member of the delegate body. However, when a district executive is serving as immediate past moderator, she or he must not vote, but simply serve on Standing Committee in an advisory capacity, because polity [1989 Minutes (1985-1989), “Eligibility for Standing Committee,” 879] does not allow a district executive to serve as a member of Standing Committee.

2. **The Secretary**<sup>54</sup>

a. Qualifications and tenure

Any active member of the church is eligible for election to this office. The secretary is elected for a term of five years and is limited to two terms. During service as secretary, the secretary cannot be employed by the board of directors of Church of the Brethren, Inc., nor be employed by or serve on the board of an agency reportable to Annual Conference.

b. Duties

The secretary shall:

- 1) Record the minutes of Standing Committee and of Annual Conference;
- 2) Publish the Annual Conference minutes;
- 3) Serve as a member of the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee;
- 4) Serve as secretary for the Church of the Brethren, Inc., an officer of the corporation:
  - a) keep the minutes of the board of directors;
  - b) see that all notices are given according to the Bylaws of the Church of the Brethren, Inc. or as required by law;
  - c) have custody of the corporate records;
  - d) keep a register of the post office addresses of each member;
- 5) In general, perform all duties incident to the office of secretary and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned by the Annual Conference officer or the board of directors;
- 6) Serve as ex-officio member of the Mission and Ministry Board without vote;
- 7) Serve as counsel to the Standing Committee nominating committee;
- 8) Serve as a member of the Leadership Team.

c. Secretary's assistant

The Conference officers shall appoint in advance of each Annual Conference an assistant to the Annual Conference secretary.<sup>55</sup>

**C. THE LEADERSHIP TEAM**<sup>56</sup>

The Leadership Team provides executive leadership for the committees of Annual Conference and general oversight of Annual Conference.<sup>57</sup> It is a liaison between Annual Conference and Church of the Brethren Inc. Specific functions of the Leadership Team shall include:

- a. Coordinate denominational envisioning and assume responsibility for how denominational vision shall be implemented, giving consideration to emphasizing a unified vision among denomination, districts, and congregations;

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<sup>54</sup> 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), "Recommendation from Standing Committee," 102; 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 274; 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 234-235, 240 (Article Four, Section 3; Article Five, Section 2; Article Seven, Section 1 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)).

<sup>55</sup> 1966 Minutes (1965-1969), "Proposal on Officer Personnel," 176.

<sup>56</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 234-235 (Article Five in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)). 2018 Minutes, "Amendments to the Bylaws of the Church of the Brethren Inc.," 289-290.

<sup>57</sup> Leadership Team may also bring items of business to Annual Conference; see section IV of this chapter of the polity manual.

- b. Delegate tasks from the actions of Annual Conference;
- c. Interpret Annual Conference decisions and denominational polity;
- d. Review recommended changes to Annual Conference policies and guidelines;
- e. General oversight for Annual Conference, in consultation with the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee and the director of the Annual Conference Office;
- f. General oversight of Annual Conference budget in consultation with the board of directors;
- g. Serve as executive committee for Annual Conference;
- h. Participate in the hiring and periodic review of the director of the Annual Conference Office at the invitation of the general secretary;
- i. Propose and review bylaw changes for the Corporation to Standing Committee, in consultation with the board of directors.<sup>58</sup>

## 1. Membership

The Leadership Team consists of the current moderator, moderator-elect, Conference secretary, a district executive, and the general secretary of Church of the Brethren Inc., who serves as convener. The district executive will be appointed by the Council of District Executives, approved by Annual Conference, and will serve a three-year term.<sup>59</sup>

## 2. Duties<sup>60</sup>

- a. Interpretation, revision, and publication of polity.  
Maintain and publish the denomination's *Manual of Organization and Polity* and respond to questions seeking interpretation of the church's polity.
- b. Oversight of Annual Conference directives to assure that they are lodged with the appropriate agency and that Annual Conference directives are met.  
Review Conference's actions, assign them to the appropriate agencies, and establish a means of seeing that the assignment is completed. Report the assignment to Standing Committee and/or Conference.
- c. Resolve differences between agencies as to jurisdiction, fundraising, or other matters.  
Act as coordinator or mediator in matters where there is a lack of clarity or authority affecting the Conference agencies, calling for the help of persons skilled in process observation, mediation, and conflict resolution as needed.
- d. Serve as executive committee for the Annual Conference.  
Resolve disputes or answer questions when neither the Annual Conference nor the Standing Committee is in session.

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<sup>58</sup> Because the Bylaws of the Church of the Brethren, Inc. state that amendments to the bylaws can only be amended through the Annual Conference query process or through a proposal by the Mission and Ministry Board to Annual Conference as a new item of business, Leadership Team can only propose bylaw changes to the Mission and Ministry Board (which is the board of directors), and the board will decide whether to recommend them to Annual Conference.

<sup>59</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 241 (Article Seven, Section D in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)). 2018 Minutes, "Amendments to the Bylaws of the Church of the Brethren Inc.," 289.

<sup>60</sup> These tasks were originally assigned to the Annual Conference Council by the 2001 Review and Evaluation Report (the first five in creating the Council and the last one in response to an evaluation of the IAF) in the 2001 Minutes (2000-2004), "Report of the Annual Conference Review and Evaluation Committee, 497-501. After the 2008 restructuring, they were assigned to the Leadership Team; see October 16, 2014, Leadership Team minutes.

- e. Assume supervisory responsibility for the planning and arrangements for Annual Conference.

The Program and Arrangements Committee and the director of the Annual Conference Office have hands-on responsibility for planning the Conference program and making arrangements for each event. The Leadership Team is the final authority for making policy decisions.

- f. Convene the Inter-Agency Forum; it should meet at least annually.<sup>61</sup>

The Inter-Agency Forum (IAF) includes the chief executive officer and board chair of the Annual Conference agencies and of Church of the Brethren, Inc., two representatives of the Council of District Executives, and the Annual Conference officers. The immediate past moderator presides at the meeting.

#### **D. THE PROGRAM AND ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE**<sup>62</sup>

The Program and Arrangements Committee is responsible for arrangements, location, and operation of the Annual Conference. The committee has the responsibility to plan the Conference program, taking into account the work of the denomination administered by the Mission and Ministry Board and the Annual Conference agencies.

##### **1. Membership**

The Program and Arrangements Committee shall include . . .

- a. the Annual Conference moderator, moderator-elect, and secretary.
- b. three members-at-large, elected by Conference for staggered terms of three years each. They shall not be eligible to succeed themselves.
- c. the director of the Annual Conference Office serves as staff for the Program and Arrangements Committee as an ex-officio member.<sup>63</sup>

##### **2. Duties**

- a. Plan the program and arrangements for Annual Conference.
- b. Administer the policies guiding Annual Conference onsite activities and make recommendations to the Leadership Team regarding any desired changes in the policies.
- c. Prepare an annual budget for Annual Conference, including recommended delegate and exhibit fees and district assessments, and submit the budget to the Leadership Team for approval.
- d. Secure the locations and set dates for future Annual Conferences.

Appeals of the policies and decisions of the Programs and Arrangements Committee are submitted to Standing Committee.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Polity also states that the immediate past moderator convenes the IAF (section III.B.1.d.3)(a) of this chapter), so our practice has become that the general secretary, as chair of the Leadership Team, coordinates agenda items for the IAF meetings and works together with the immediate past moderator to co-convene the IAF meetings, over which the immediate past moderator presides.

<sup>62</sup> 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure,” 275-276; 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), “Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee,” 175-176. See also 2012 Minutes, “Updating Structure for Program and Arrangements Committee,” p. 280, an action that removed the corporation treasurer from membership on the committee. Prior to 1991, the committee was called the Central Committee.

<sup>63</sup> 2008 Minutes (2005-2008), “Implementation of the New Denominational Structure,” 1155.

<sup>64</sup> 2010 Minutes, “Appeals of Program and Arrangements Committee Decisions,” 226.

## **E. THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN, INC.**

Created by Annual Conference and responsible to it, the Church of the Brethren, Inc. is the principal administrative body for program development and implementation for the global mission of the denomination. In keeping with the general policies determined by Annual Conference, the Church of the Brethren, Inc., through its board of directors, also known as the Mission and Ministry Board, administers and evaluates all phases of the denominational program, except for programs specifically within the designated purview of the Annual Conference agencies. As an administrative arm of Annual Conference, it carries out, correlates, and unifies the work assigned to it, and reports its stewardship to Annual Conference. In keeping with the Church of the Brethren, Inc.'s responsibility, the general secretary is recognized as the principal staff executive reporting to Annual Conference. The relationship of the Church of the Brethren, Inc. to Annual Conference will be strengthened as regular consultation and open communication takes place.<sup>65</sup>

The sessions of Conference should always provide ample time for the Mission and Ministry Board to report to the church on the work the Church of the Brethren is doing cooperatively in America and overseas, and to share experiences and observations concerning the witness and mission of the church in these times.<sup>66</sup>

The Church of the Brethren, Inc. is a corporation organized under the General Not-for-Profit Corporation Act of the State of Illinois, organized originally on April 16, 1894, and restructured as of August 31, 2008.<sup>67</sup> The members of the corporation are the congregations of the Church of the Brethren, and are represented at the annual meeting of the corporation by their delegates to the Annual Conference. The officers of the corporation are the chair and the chair-elect of the Mission and Ministry Board, the Annual Conference secretary, the treasurer, and the general secretary.<sup>68</sup>

All of the directors on the Mission and Ministry Board are either elected or affirmed by Annual Conference to serve five-year terms. An exception is made when a director is chosen to serve as chair-elect; the chair-elect is elected by the board from its current members to serve a four-year term – two years as chair-elect and two years as chair. The chair-elect's initial five-year term becomes an unexpired term.<sup>69</sup>

1. Ten directors shall be elected by Annual Conference; of these 10 directors, two shall come from each of five areas of the denomination, with staggered terms to ensure continuity. Directors shall

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<sup>65</sup> 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 273, reaffirmed by 2005 Minutes (2005-2008), "General Board Revisions to Polity," 242-243. The polity initially described the former General Board, Inc., but it still applies to the Church of the Brethren, Inc., which superseded the General Board, Inc. in 2008.

<sup>66</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference," 319.

<sup>67</sup> 2008 Minutes (2005-2008), "Implementation of the New Denominational Structure," 1202. The delegate body unanimously adopted the document entitled "Resolutions of the Members of the Church of the Brethren General Board" and thereby adopted and approved the "Plan and Agreement of Merger By and Between Association of Brethren Caregivers and Church of the Brethren General Board," approved changing the name to Church of the Brethren, Inc., and adopted and approved the "Amended Articles of Incorporation of the Church of the Brethren, Inc., completing the legal steps necessary to establish the new entity, "Church of the Brethren, Inc." The "Amended Articles of Incorporation of the Church of the Brethren, Inc." were adopted by the delegate body (the members of the corporation) on July 14, 2008; the effective date of the amendments was August 31, 2008. Copies of the resolution are on file with the secretary of the Church of the Brethren, Inc. and with the state of Illinois.

<sup>68</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 231, 240 (Article Two, Section 1 and Article Seven, Section 1 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)).

<sup>69</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 235-241 (Article Six, Section 2 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)); 2015 Minutes, "Amendments to the Bylaws of the Church of the Brethren, Inc.," 238-239.

represent the entire denomination rather than a specific area. The purpose of election from areas is to ensure geographic balance on the board. If a director moves out of that area while serving on the board, that person shall continue as a director as if living in the original area. There shall be no more than two directors from a district and only one director from a congregation. Any vacancies or unfulfilled terms of elected members on the board, including the unfulfilled term of an elected member who was chosen to serve as chair-elect and chair, shall be filled by the nominating committee of Standing Committee; the new member called to fill that vacancy shall come from the same area.

2. Five at-large directors shall be elected by the board and affirmed by Annual Conference, to obtain specific skills and gifts needed. Any vacancies or unfulfilled terms of at-large members of the board, including the unfulfilled term of an at-large member who was chosen to serve as chair-elect and chair, shall be filled by appointment by the board; all such appointments shall be ratified by the subsequent Annual Conference.

Directors shall not be eligible for another term until two years after completing the prior term, except that a director who serves less than half of an unexpired term may serve a subsequent full five-year term.

The officers of Annual Conference, the chief executive officers of Bethany Theological Seminary, the Brethren Benefit Trust, and On Earth Peace, a member of the Council of District Executives appointed by that organization, and any other ex officio directors designated by the board, shall be ex officio members to serve in a consultative, nonvoting capacity on the Mission and Ministry Board. The moderator of Annual Conference also serves ex officio without vote on the board's Executive Committee.<sup>70</sup>

## **F. THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE AGENCIES**

Annual Conference has authorized certain agencies to serve as Annual Conference agencies. Currently, they are Bethany Theological Seminary, Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust, and On Earth Peace.<sup>71</sup>

## **G. USE OF THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN NAME**

No other organization, entity, or body shall be deemed to be the agent of a district, Church of the Brethren, Inc., or Annual Conference. Only Annual Conference, Church of the Brethren, Inc., a district, or a congregation duly recognized by a district shall be entitled to use the name "Church of the Brethren" in its own name or to indicate in any way it is an agent of another Church of the Brethren entity without the express written authorization of Annual Conference,<sup>72</sup> Church of the Brethren, Inc., or a district board. Unless expressly recognized as an agent of another Church of the Brethren entity, no institution or interest group should suggest in its documents, publicity, or communications that it is the agent of a Church of the Brethren organization. Consent to use the name "Church of the Brethren" will not, unless otherwise indicated in writing, indicate an intention to create an agency relationship but will merely indicate the involvement of members of the Church of the Brethren in the organization.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 234, 236, 238 (Article Four, Section 2.C.; Article Six, Section 2.C.; and Article Six, Section 4. in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)).

<sup>71</sup> Specific information is found in section II of chapter 2 of this manual.

<sup>72</sup> Current understanding is that an organization which has been authorized by Annual Conference to serve as an Annual Conference agency is thereby authorized to use the name "Church of the Brethren."

<sup>73</sup> 1987 Minutes (1985-1989), "Revisions of Brethren Polity," 486.

It is recommended that special interest groups seek recognition through the Church of the Brethren, Inc. It is further recommended that special interest groups shall not raise funds in the name of the denomination unless such solicitation has been approved by the Church of the Brethren, Inc. and/or the Annual Conference.<sup>74</sup>

## H. ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS<sup>75</sup>

### 1. Role of the Mission and Ministry Board

- a. The Mission and Ministry Board shall give careful attention to basic coordination and integration of ecumenical concerns in the normal course of the Board's work.
- b. The Mission and Ministry Board shall assign other ecumenical concerns, especially efforts to further local cooperation, to ongoing program areas as integral aspects of these efforts, using all the reliable channels of communication and implementation such as . . .
  - 1) counseling with districts and congregations on their relationships to councils of churches
  - 2) ecumenical education
  - 3) interchurch involvements of designated program areas on behalf of cooperative ministries
  - 4) coordination by the general secretary of all ecumenical staff relationships;
  - 5) Faith and Order studies and relationships to be related to the appropriate program units, according to their nature.
- c. The Mission and Ministry Board shall initiate steps to develop a budget as part of the Core Ministries Fund for the program of ecumenical concerns. The church's ecumenical witness is expressed by the staff and the church at large.<sup>76</sup>
- d. The general secretary of the corporation represents the Church of the Brethren ecumenically in positions customarily served by denominational executive staff. To enable the moderator to fill his or her role, the general secretary will seek opportunities in ecumenical circles for the moderator to give strategic visibility to Annual Conference as the highest authority of the Church of the Brethren. In some circumstances (i.e., the visits of heads of state, major media events, and ceremonial functions), the moderator will represent the denomination.<sup>77</sup>

### 2. National and World Councils of Churches

Representation of the Church of the Brethren to the National Council of Churches of Christ and World Council of Churches is based on the councils' guidelines for denominational representation. When more than one person is invited to represent the denomination at a National or World Council of Churches assembly, half the representatives and alternates are to be nominated by Standing Committee and half by the Mission and Ministry Board,<sup>78</sup> and World

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<sup>74</sup> 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 281.

<sup>75</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "Church Polity," 338-339. See also "Affiliation with the National Council of Churches," 324. 2012 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Ecumenical Witness," 281-283, discontinued the Committee on Interchurch Relations. 2018 Minutes, "Vision of Ecumenism for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," 221-241.

<sup>76</sup> 2012 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Ecumenical Witness," 283.

<sup>77</sup> 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), "Denominational Structure," 274.

<sup>78</sup> 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Appointments to the World Council of Churches," 137. Reaffirmed by 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "Church Polity," 338. Previous editions of this polity manual listed requirements for choosing the National Council of Churches delegation, such as "including a representative of the conciliar movement," which were based on requirements of the National Council of Churches bylaws; see 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "Affiliation with the National Council of Churches," 323. However, the council's bylaws have changed.

Council of Churches Assembly delegations should include both lay and ordained people.<sup>79</sup> When only one person is invited to represent the denomination at a World Council of Churches assembly, the delegate and alternate to the Assembly of the World Council of Churches are elected by Standing Committee.<sup>80</sup>

For the governing board of the National Council of Churches of Christ, the general secretary, as chief ecumenical officer for the denomination,<sup>81</sup> serves as the Church of the Brethren representative and makes appointments for other participants in accordance with National Council of Churches guidelines.

Representatives to the Assembly of the World Council of Churches are to be appointed about midpoint between successive Council Assemblies, which follow a six- to seven-year Assembly schedule. Newly appointed representatives will thus have opportunity (for at least three years) to join with other delegates in preparing for the Assembly in which they serve as official delegates.<sup>82</sup>

### 3. Christian Churches Together<sup>83</sup>

The 2007 Annual Conference approved full participation of the Church of the Brethren in Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT). CCT seeks to provide a new space that is inclusive of the Christian families in the United States, to enable churches and national Christian organizations to grow closer together in Christ in order to strengthen the Christian witness in the world. CCT welcomes churches, Christian communities and national Christian organizations that:

- Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures;
- Worship and serve the One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and
- Seek ways to work together in order to present a more credible Christian witness in and to the world.

Participation in CCT is not intended to hinder the denomination's work with other ecumenical agencies.

The Church of the Brethren will be represented in the meetings of CCT by the general secretary of Church of the Brethren, Inc., the moderator, and moderator-elect.<sup>84</sup>

### 4. Associated Relationship with the American Baptist Churches, USA<sup>85</sup>

The Church of the Brethren and the American Baptist Churches, USA as autonomous national church bodies extended to each other an invitation to become "associated organizations" which is not intended as a merger of our two church bodies in a form of union, but is intended to affirm our desire for a closer fellowship and cooperation that may continue and expand the already

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<sup>79</sup> The 1975 Fifth WCC Assembly stipulated that representatives be divided between lay and ordained.

<sup>80</sup> This is our current procedure.

<sup>81</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 241 (Article Seven, Section 1.D. in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)).

<sup>82</sup> 1976 Minutes (1975-1979), "Appointment of Representatives to the World Council of Churches," 220-221.

<sup>83</sup> 2007 Minutes (2005-2008), "Recommendation Regarding Christian Churches Together," 883-884.

<sup>84</sup> This representation has been our standard practice.

<sup>85</sup> 1971 Minutes (1970-1974), "A Proposal of an Associated Relationship between the Church of the Brethren and the American Baptist Convention," 164-165. 1972 Minutes (1970-1974), "A Proposal of an Associated Relationship between the Church of the Brethren and the American Baptist Convention," 253. In previous editions of this manual, the associated relationship with the American Baptist Churches, USA was presented as the guideline for establishing associated relationships with other denominations; this was the concept of the Committee on Interchurch Relations, but it was never officially adopted as polity by Annual Conference. Any further associated relationships can be worked out individually; this section could provide guidance.

existing relationships at various levels of our church life. The following principles for the associate relationship were adopted:

- a. It is a voluntary relationship of autonomous national denominational bodies, which acknowledges a mutual desire to be in close Christian fellowship and to witness together and cooperate in missions together wherever feasible.
- b. It may also be described as providing a bridge across which the “associated organizations” can move freely in various forms of cooperation at all levels of their respective church life without losing identity as autonomous denominational bodies.
- c. It provides a means by which congregations of each “associated organization” may enter into fellowship and cooperative endeavor in local communities without relinquishing membership in and responsibility to their respective parent bodies.
- d. It is a means by which the program agencies of each “associated organization” can feel free to engage in joint projects which may require joint funding and sharing of personnel.

It would be advisable to provide for a periodic review of this relationship by the Mission and Ministry Board and representatives of the American Baptist Churches, USA to determine whether there may be a readiness to enter negotiations for further cooperation.

#### 5. Referendum on Merger<sup>86</sup>

As the highest legislative authority in the Church of the Brethren, Annual Conference may supplement its deliberations and actions by encouraging still broader involvement of the larger church in reaching given decisions. Church merger is the kind of exceptional case where such shared responsibility is essential. Any merger proposal should be referred to district conferences for ratification within a specified time. Ratification shall require a two-thirds majority of the total accumulated votes cast at all district conferences. This procedure is fully in keeping with our form of church government. It is a legitimate extension of Annual Conference authority. It ensures district participation. At the same time, it offers additional opportunity for the local congregation to express its views.

In order to provide a uniform plan of representation at district conferences where a proposal on merger is to be voted upon, the latest Annual Conference formula for district conference delegate representation shall be required. To deal adequately with the proposal, it is suggested that special district conferences be called.

### I. PASTORAL COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS ADVISORY COMMITTEE<sup>87</sup>

1. The Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee is a continuing committee for Annual Conference.
2. The committee is elected by Annual Conference and reports directly to Annual Conference.
3. The committee is composed of five members, serving a five-year, non-repeating term, with composition of the committee representing pastors (one member), district executives (one member), and the laity (three members), with one lay member being a compensation practitioner from the secular world. All are elected by Annual Conference via a Standing Committee ballot,

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<sup>86</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “Church Polity,” 337-338.

<sup>87</sup> 1985 Minutes (1985-1989), “The Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee,” 179-180; 2018 Minutes, “Polity for Electing the District Executive Representative to the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee,” 306-307. The director of the Office of Ministry has served as liaison in recent years. It has become our standard practice to receive a written and oral report each year.

except the district executive, who is nominated by the Council of District Executives and confirmed by Annual Conference. A Church of the Brethren staff member of the Office of Human Resources serves as a non-voting liaison to this committee.

4. The committee acts as an advisory group on all pastoral compensation matters referred to the committee from the denominational board, Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust, Office of Human Resources, Church of the Brethren Ministers Association, district organizations, congregations, or Annual Conference or its Standing Committee.
5. The committee meets as needed when any of these groups suggest that attention be given to a specific issue.
6. The committee reports to Annual Conference at least every five years with an in-depth review of pastoral compensation and benefits, and on such other occasions when it is necessary to bring a specific item to the attention of Conference.
7. The committee recommends annually an appropriate increment to be suggested for pastors' salaries.

#### **J. REVIEW AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE**<sup>88</sup>

It has become the practice of the Church of the Brethren during the fifth year of each decade to call a committee to review and evaluate the organization and structures of the denomination and make recommendations to the Annual Conference in the seventh year of the decade for improving the effectiveness of our efforts to accomplish the goals and purpose of the church.

1. Number of Members: 5 members from the church at large, excluding staff and employees of the Church of the Brethren and of the Annual Conference agencies (Brethren Benefit Trust, Bethany Theological Seminary, and On Earth Peace).
2. Procedure: Twenty nominees will be presented to Standing Committee by its Nominating Committee. Standing Committee will vote to reduce the slate to ten nominees to be presented to Annual Conference, which shall elect five members for the committee.
3. Term and Schedule: Review and Evaluation Committee members are elected in the fifth year of each decade and make their final report to Annual Conference in the seventh year of the decade, serving two years.

The committee functions according to the mandate.<sup>89</sup>

### **IV. BUSINESS OF CONFERENCE**

The usual sources of business for the Conference are the district conferences, the Mission and Ministry Board, the Annual Conference agencies, the Leadership Team, the Standing Committee, and other boards and committees constituted by Annual Conference.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> 2015 Minutes, "Mandate for the 2015-2017 Review and Evaluation Committee," 250-252.

<sup>89</sup> The most recent mandate was adopted in 2015. See 2015 Minutes, "Mandate for the 2015-2017 Review and Evaluation Committee," 250-252.

<sup>90</sup> 1953 Minutes (1945-1954), "Our General Church Government," 196; 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), "Report of the Central Committee: Concerning New Business for Annual Conference," 60; 1930 Minutes, "Standing Committee – Function Of," 29; 1931 Minutes, "Standing Committee – Function Of," 10.

**A. FUNCTIONS OF THE DELEGATE BODY**<sup>91</sup>

1. It is the final authority of the Church of the Brethren in all matters of procedure, program, polity, and discipline. It is the annual meeting of the members of the corporation Church of the Brethren, Inc., doing business as the Church of the Brethren.<sup>92</sup>
2. It elects the officers of the Annual Conference, elects or confirms the members of the Mission and Ministry Board, elects or confirms members of the boards of the Annual Conference agencies in accordance with their governing documents, and elects the members of special committees authorized by the Conference. These elections are made from nominations presented to the delegate body by the Standing Committee.
3. It reviews the work of the denomination as presented to Annual Conference in the reports of the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board and other institutions of the denomination.
4. It projects the program of the denomination, determining the new fields of endeavor, plans for advance, size of budget, and all other necessary matters.
5. It disposes of queries.
6. It receives the reports of committees appointed to deal with specific problems in the life of the denomination.
7. It determines what resolutions shall be the voice of the Church of the Brethren on the problems of the day.

**B. QUERIES**<sup>93</sup>

**1. Preparation and Processing of Queries**

a. The Right to Raise Questions and Seek Answers

Any member of the church, or any congregation, has a right to raise questions and concerns that relate to the Christian life or to the mission and work of the church. Counsel and help should be sought from the pastor or the local church board, the district executive or the district board or commissions, the Mission and Ministry Board, or the Church of the Brethren staff. When an adequate and satisfactory answer to an important question cannot be found in any of the above channels, a query may be formulated to go to Conference.

b. Types of Questions That May Go to Conference for Consideration

Distinction should be made between different types of questions and concerns. Legislative action by the highest deliberative assembly of the church is necessary in answering some questions, but many of them can be dealt with more effectively in other ways.

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<sup>91</sup> 1947 Minutes (1945-1954), “Brotherhood Organization,” 57. See also section III.A.1. of this chapter, with which this section has been made identical in this edition of the manual.

<sup>92</sup> 2010 Minutes, “Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision,” 232 (Article Three, Section 1 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)); 2008 Minutes (2005-2008), “Implementation of the New Denominational Structure,” 1154.

<sup>93</sup> 1968 Minutes, (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 317-318, and “Proposal on Query Procedures,” 426-427. 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), “Report of the Central Committee,” 59-60. The form of this section was approved by Standing Committee in 2014.

- 1) Changes in church polity will always need to be made through legislative action. Questions of this nature and suggestions for change should receive extensive study by the local congregation, the district, and Church of the Brethren staff before being brought before the Annual Conference.
- 2) Statements on the Christian life and witness, moral problems and positions are usually intended to influence personal and group habits of thought and action. We believe education and motivation are more effective than legislation in dealing with this type of issue. The Mission and Ministry Board and the Church of the Brethren staff are constantly working in these areas and have available literature and program resources. All available information on any such questions should be carefully studied before formulating a query to Conference. Legislative action on such issues should be used with restraint.
- 3) Matters of church program and administration do not normally require legislative action. The church employs a staff to assist the local congregations in program and administration. Books, literature, and program materials are constantly made available to the churches for their use. Such church periodicals as Messenger and Brethren Life and Thought provide opportunities to communicate and debate ideas concerning the church program and administration. An appeal for new legislative action should be made only when an adequate hearing or action has not been achieved in these other areas.

On any matter when legislation by the Conference is felt to be necessary, a query is the means to follow. A query may originate in the local church, in the district, in the Mission and Ministry Board, or in the Standing Committee. The following procedures should be followed in the preparation and the processing of a query.

c. Query Procedures<sup>94</sup>

- 1) In the local church: When a member presents to the local church board or council meeting a question or concern that merits consideration, the local church should, when it seems appropriate, appoint a working committee to do the following things:
  - a) Define and state clearly the question or concern.
  - b) Evaluate and try to answer the concern through research and inquiry.
  - c) Confer with the district executive and the Church of the Brethren staff to get information as to what has been done or is being planned in regard to this particular matter.
  - d) If it is a new concern, the district and Church of the Brethren staff persons should be consulted regarding what immediate action might be taken or whether Conference legislation would be helpful or necessary.
  - e) If the matter does seem to need legislative action, the local church council should prepare a query to send to the district conference.
- 2) In the district: Whenever possible the district should answer the question or concern presented in the query.
  - a) The query should be reviewed by the district board, or the district can appoint a committee to investigate the merits of a query, hold hearings to evaluate different sides of the question, and seek to find a satisfactory answer.

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<sup>94</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference," 317-318; 1969 Minutes (1965-1969), "Proposal on Query Procedures," 426-427.

- b) If a satisfactory answer is not found, and the district conference feels that the query merits legislative action by Annual Conference, or if the concern or question of the query relates to denominational or general church matters directly, the district may send the query on to the Annual Conference.
  - c) When a district board or district conference initiates a query, steps should be taken to assure that the concerns expressed in the preceding procedures<sup>95</sup> are observed.
  - d) The district executive should send copies of the query to the Annual Conference secretary and to the director of the Annual Conference Office, accompanied by a letter of explanation of the origin of the query and actions taken on the query up to that point. (The printing deadline is February 1.)<sup>96</sup>
- 3) In the denomination: Queries which have been processed according to the above procedures shall be listed by the Conference officers for consideration by the Conference.

The 1991 Annual Conference adopted a further requirement for a query: Any query arising from a congregation or from a district board must be approved by a district conference in order to be accepted by Standing Committee as an item of business.<sup>97</sup>

d. Guidelines for Preparation of Queries<sup>98</sup>

The query should always state clearly the issue, remain open-ended for the widest possible base of judgment and response, and include some of the factual details by which to identify it. The following specific suggestions may prove to be helpful. The query should:

- 1) Give the full name of the congregation or official body in the district initiating the query.
- 2) State as precisely as possible the issue concerning which the query is being presented.
- 3) Give briefly the principle reasons or conditions which prompted the query.
- 4) Avoid giving answers or proposing a solution to the problem raised by the query, leaving these rather to the outcome of the Annual Conference action. A proposal may be offered, but in the awareness that study may lead to another outcome.
- 5) Give the date on which the query was initiated by the congregation or the official body in the district.
- 6) Indicate the district conference (and the date and location of its meeting) through which it hoped to have the query passed to Annual Conference.
- 7) Have appended the names and positions of the officials of the congregation or official body which is the source of the query.
- 8) Have attached the action and the date of the district conference and the name of the district moderator and conference secretary, if the action is to pass the query to Annual Conference.

Queries coming from the Standing Committee will follow as many of the above specific suggestions as apply.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> “Preceding procedures” includes all that is listed in section 1 of the query procedures.

<sup>96</sup> The February 1 deadline is specified in 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), “Report of the Central Committee,” 60.

<sup>97</sup> 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Query: Procedure for Presenting Queries to Annual Conference,” 336.

<sup>98</sup> 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), “Report of the Central Committee,” 60.

<sup>99</sup> Further procedures and guidelines have become standard practice for preparing queries – see Standing Committee’s document “Preparation and Processing of Queries,” as revised in 2014.

- e. Processing of Queries by the Officers and Standing Committee<sup>100</sup>
  - 1) The officers of Annual Conference shall list queries for consideration by Conference which in their judgment have fulfilled the preliminary steps.
  - 2) The Standing Committee ... studies all queries and items of new business and recommends answers to the delegate body.

## 2. Selection of Committees for Study of Queries

If the decision of Annual Conference is to adopt the query or the concern(s) of the query and to make a study, the assignment should be directed to a committee.

### a. Membership<sup>101</sup>

Committees chosen to make studies and propose answers to queries shall be elected from a ballot presented by Standing Committee.

The ballot shall include at least twice as many names as are to be elected. The ballot shall also be open to further nominations from the Conference floor. No person shall be elected to a Conference study committee until at least one year has elapsed following the termination of any previous service on a study committee.

The biographical ballots shall include narrative of the candidates' qualifications for and interest in the focus of the particular study committee to which they are being nominated. This candidate information will be included with basic biographical data on a one third page entry as part of the Annual Conference Study Committee ballot.<sup>102</sup>

### b. Procedure<sup>103</sup>

Annual Conference study committees should counsel with concerned individuals, congregations, and district officers/staff and need always to be aware that a major effort toward bridging the gap in understanding can be made before the final action is taken on the paper. Study committees need to make adequate research into the total scope of the problem and its varying viewpoints.

- 1) As often as is feasible and in keeping with good stewardship, study committees in the process of making policy statements are encouraged to hold hearings throughout the denomination to test opinion of statements coming to Annual Conference and to generate input and participation from congregations.
- 2) Consultation should be made with persons whose work is involved or who are directly involved in some other way with the area of life which is being studied. These viewpoints should be considered in the forming of the denominational policy.
- 3) Study committees should be in dialogue with the appropriate staff of Church of the Brethren, Inc. and/or other Annual Conference agencies to gain their insights reached through their wide contacts with the denomination.
- 4) Consultation with district staffs just before and after new statements are adopted is encouraged so that where interpretation is needed it can be quickly identified.

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<sup>100</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference," 318-319.

<sup>101</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "Selection of Conference Committees," 348.

<sup>102</sup> 2001 Minutes (2000-2004), "Review of the Process of Calling Denominational Leadership," 484.

<sup>103</sup> Approved procedures – see the 1976 Minutes (1975-1979), "Brotherhood Understanding," 208.

### C. RECOMMENDATIONS AND OFFICIAL STATEMENTS<sup>104</sup>

In addition to the query, other forms of new business are statements and recommendations brought to Conference by the Mission and Ministry Board, an Annual Conference agency, Leadership Team,<sup>105</sup> Standing Committee, or other boards or committees constituted by Annual Conference.<sup>106</sup> These normally are the outgrowth of extensive deliberation, although this fact does not of itself preclude such further study as may be determined by the Conference before a decision is in order. These forms of new business normally carry their own proposals and are acted upon when they are presented. However, they are subject to approval on the same basis as any other matter of business before Annual Conference.

### D. UNFUNDED ANNUAL CONFERENCE MANDATES<sup>107</sup>

1. As Standing Committee each year examines all new and unfinished business to be presented to Annual Conference, it shall assess each item for implications of *new* programming or other mandates entailing costs by an agency or agencies that are not included in current budgets. If Standing Committee determines there are such implications mandated by the item, it shall have the option to recommend to Annual Conference that a decision on the business item be delayed for one year in order for a study to be made of the feasibility and costs that may be required of the agency or agencies and any other collateral impacts, such as closure or substitution of other programming that may need to occur in order to implement the program.

2. The task of preparing this report is to be completed by the Program Feasibility Committee consisting of two persons who are members of Standing Committee at the time of their appointments and one person representing each of the agencies who are staff or members of their respective agency boards at the time of their appointment.

The committee shall be appointed in the following way:

- a. Standing Committee representatives will be selected by Standing Committee. Expiration of a term of service on Standing Committee will not require termination of service on the Program Feasibility Committee.
  - b. Agency representatives will be appointed by their respective agencies using procedures of their own choosing.
  - c. Tenure shall be for one term of four years. The committee members shall have staggered terms in order to keep continuity on the committee.
3. The Program Feasibility Committee will be chaired by the Standing Committee representative with the greater length of service on the Program Feasibility Committee.
  4. This committee will conduct a thorough study including consultation with the affected agency or agencies and contact with the group that brought the query or item for further clarification and dialogue, and will bring this report directly back to Annual Conference which authorized the study.

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<sup>104</sup> 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), "Report of the Central Committee," 60.

<sup>105</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaw Revision," 235 Article Five, Section 1 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)), states that the Leadership Team may propose bylaw changes for the corporation to Standing Committee in consultation with the board of directors. 1953 Minutes (1945-1954), "Our General Church Government," 196, authorizes the Leadership Team to bring other items of business as well.

<sup>106</sup> 1953 Minutes (1945-1954), "Our General Church Government," 196.

<sup>107</sup> 2008 Minutes (2005-2008), "Revision to Unfunded Mandates," 1241-1242.

5. When an unfunded mandate involving agency programming arises from the floor of Annual Conference without having been processed through normal channels, the action of Annual Conference will not be implemented until the Program Feasibility Committee has conducted a feasibility study and cost analysis of the proposed program. The Program Feasibility Committee will report the results of its study to the next Annual Conference through the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee will consider the item as *new business* and make a recommendation for action to Annual Conference including the study of the Program Feasibility Study.
6. Exception: When an immediate response is imperative, the Program Feasibility Committee, upon completion of the feasibility study and cost estimates, will report to the Annual Conference officers and the officers of the affected agency or agencies. Upon approval by these groups, the program will be implemented without additional action by Annual Conference. A report of actions taken under these circumstances will be made to the next Annual Conference by the Conference officers. In the event the officers and affected agencies cannot agree on the implementation of the program, the dispensation of the item will follow the appropriate process in # 4 or # 5 above.
7. The expenses of the Program Feasibility Committee will be reimbursed out of the Annual Conference budget.

## **V. CONDUCT OF CONFERENCE BUSINESS**

The moderator shall preside over all sessions of Standing Committee and of Annual Conference, assisted by the moderator-elect and the Annual Conference secretary. <sup>108</sup>

The Annual Conference officers shall list queries for consideration by Annual Conference that in their judgment have fulfilled the preliminary steps. They shall have the responsibility of informing the congregations and delegates prior to Annual Conference of the items of business that will come before the Annual Conference. They shall study the Annual Conference business and allocate the amount of time for each item. They shall set the order of the day for business sessions, but these may be adjusted by action of the delegate body if need arises. The Annual Conference officers shall appoint messengers, tellers, the timekeeper, and other people as needed for implementing the Annual Conference business. No ratification of these appointments is needed. The officers shall appoint such committees as are not provided for otherwise. <sup>109</sup> The moderator may appoint a parliamentarian. <sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> 1991 Minutes (1990-1994), “Denominational Structure,” 273; 2005 Minutes (2004-2008), “Updates to Annual Conference Polity,” 251; 2010 Minutes, “Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision,” 234 (Article Four, Section 2.C. in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)); 1962 Minutes (1955-1964), “Moderator-Elect,” 254. The role of the secretary to assist in Standing Committee and Annual Conference business sessions is not specified in polity decisions, but has been our standard practice.

<sup>109</sup> 2010 Minutes, “Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision,” 233 (Article Four, Section 1 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)). See also 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference,” 318-319.

<sup>110</sup> 2005 Minutes, “Updates to Annual Conference Polity,” 251-252.

**A. CONFERENCE RULES**<sup>111</sup>

1. The Standing Committee has no authority to change a query or a paper presented as Conference business. The Standing Committee may review the reports of Conference committees but has no authority to change or revise such reports.<sup>112</sup>
2. If an agenda item determined by Standing Committee to involve a change in church polity comes too late to be included in the Conference booklet, final action on that item shall be postponed until the following Annual Conference.<sup>113</sup>
3. Mission and Ministry Board, agency boards, and committees should endeavor to make all reports pointed and brief, including only essentials.<sup>114</sup>
4. The Conference may not alter the regular report of one of the boards or continuing committees, but may alter the paper of any board or committee to which it has directed a matter of business for study and report.<sup>115</sup> No report presented by a board or continuing committee may contain business items. If there are recommendations, questions, or a seeking of support of a proposal, etc., they must come as an item of new business and not be included in an informative report.<sup>116</sup>
5. The Conference shall have no authority to change the wording or intent of any paper or query submitted as Conference business; but upon accepting it as business, Conference may alter its scope or redirect its emphasis so long as Conference deals with its original concern.<sup>117</sup>
6. Each query with its current answer shall be presented by the chair of the appropriate committee or the committee's representative. Queries and their answers shall not be read unless the Conference officers deem it necessary. Reports shall be presented by their respective representatives after which the moderator shall declare the same the business of the meeting.<sup>118</sup>
7. No one shall speak more than twice on the same question. The first speech shall be limited to three minutes and the second speech to two minutes. This shall not include the explanation of a

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<sup>111</sup> Because research about the Conference rules discovered some rules that were not included in previous editions of the polity manual and because it seemed useful to list the Conference rules in the order in which they might apply during Conference business sessions, this listing of the Conference rules is different from editions prior to 2015.

<sup>112</sup> 1875 Minutes, "Article 5," records the following query and answer: "Is it right for the standing committee to change the import of any query addressed to the Annual Meeting? *Answer*: It is not right to do so." 1951 Minutes (1945-1954), "Amendments to the Conference Rules," 130.

<sup>113</sup> 1982 Minutes (1980-1984), "Methods and Procedures Dealing with Issues that Come to Annual Conference," 424.

<sup>114</sup> 1929 Minutes, "Report of the Board of Religious Education," 15. Because Annual Conference minutes are the historical record, however, it is important that reports be thorough with essential information. Current understanding is that this rule refers to written reports.

<sup>115</sup> It has become our standard practice that when the Annual Conference delegate body has assigned a matter of business to a board or a committee for study and report, the delegate body may alter whatever the board or committee recommends be adopted, but the delegate body may not alter the report about how the board or committee has conducted its work.

<sup>116</sup> 1975 Minutes (1975-1979), "Rules on Business Items in Annual Reports," 99.

<sup>117</sup> 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee," 182. See also 1951 Minutes (1945-1954), "Amendments to the Conference Rules," 130. Current understanding is that this rule applies to items of new business, whereas unfinished business is governed by Conference Rule 4. A resolution, however, or the recommendations of an item of new business from a board or a committee may be amended.

<sup>118</sup> 1965 Minutes (1965-1969), "Reading of Conference Business," 45. Note: this rule applies when the report of a study committee is the current answer to a query. When a recommendation from Standing Committee to a new query provides an answer to the query, that recommendation and the query will be presented by a member of the Standing Committee.

- report or a paper called for by the moderator.<sup>119</sup>
8. The moderator shall decide when a question shall be put on its passage, but anyone from the voting body may move the previous question.<sup>120</sup>
  9. A simple majority vote shall decide all matters except where *Robert's Rules of Order* requires otherwise, or on such items as Standing Committee interprets as involving a change of church polity, in which case a two-thirds majority of Conference is required for passage.<sup>121</sup>
  10. All appeals from the rulings of the moderator shall be decided by the voting body.<sup>122</sup>
  11. Committees chosen to make studies and propose answers to queries shall be elected from a ballot presented by Standing Committee. The ballot shall include at least twice as many names as are to be elected. The ballot shall also be open to further nominations from the Conference floor. No person shall be elected to a Conference study committee until at least one year has elapsed following the termination of any previous service on a study committee.<sup>123</sup>
  12. A nomination from the floor must be made by name only at the time the ballot is being considered. Biographical information and written consent by the nominee must be submitted to the Annual Conference secretary at that time for publication and distribution.<sup>124</sup>
  13. If the final answer presented in response to a query is totally rejected by Annual Conference, the query shall be regarded as unanswered and shall be immediately disposed of as though it were an item of new business.<sup>125</sup>
  14. *Robert's Rules of Order* shall be the standard for any point not covered by these rules.<sup>126</sup>
  15. These rules may be amended at any regular session of Annual Conference.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee," 182; 1988 Minutes (1985-1989), "Length of Speeches in Conference Debate," 672.

<sup>120</sup> 1915 Minutes, "Conference Rules," 7.

<sup>121</sup> 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee," 182. It has become our standard practice that Standing Committee may determine that adoption of items of major consequence for the life of the church will require a two-thirds majority vote. The Annual Conference minutes should clearly indicate whether the two-thirds majority vote was required because the item is considered to be a matter of major consequence or because it is a change in polity.

<sup>122</sup> 1915 Minutes, "Conference Rules," 8.

<sup>123</sup> 1968 Minutes (1965-1969), "Selection of Conference Committees," 348.

<sup>124</sup> 1979 Minutes (1975-1979), "Annual Conference Elections," 572. The Annual Conference officers request that persons intending to make a nomination from the floor inform the officers in advance.

<sup>125</sup> 1967 Minutes (1965-1969), "Disposition of Unanswered Queries," 260. Current understanding is that this rule applies whether the rejected final answer that would have concluded Annual Conference's work on the item of business is a recommendation from Standing Committee or a recommendation from a study committee.

<sup>126</sup> 1915 Minutes, "Conference Rules," 8.

<sup>127</sup> 1915 Minutes, "Conference Rules," 8. Current understanding is that this would apply only to suspending the rules for a Conference or a portion of a Conference. Any long-term change in a Conference rule would be a change in polity and would need to wait until the following year to be permanently decided.

## **B. GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL RESPONSE QUERIES**

Standing Committee may determine that a query is likely to generate adversarial stances because of deep feelings and strong differences of opinion. It may then choose to recommend that Annual Conference depart from *Robert's Rules of Order* and follow a process that has been developed for dealing with "Special Response Queries."<sup>128</sup>

## **C. SPECIAL MEETINGS**

Special meetings of the delegate body may be called either by the Mission and Ministry Board or by at least 40 percent of the Annual Conference delegates, for the purpose(s) stated in the call of the meeting. In recognition that the membership of the corporation meets only one time during the calendar year, namely at Annual Conference, any action required of members of the corporation (the delegate body) between annual meetings may be taken by the vote of the delegates of Standing Committee.<sup>129</sup>

## **D. QUORUM**

A majority of the delegates present at any meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business, except to adjourn.<sup>130</sup>

# **VI. FINANCING ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

The means of financing Annual Conference is the responsibility of the Leadership Team.<sup>131</sup> The following are the principal means for accomplishing such funding.

## **A. DISTRICT ASSESSMENTS**

District assessments have been a significant part of Annual Conference support since 1907. District assessments shall be "continued as needed," according to Annual Conference minutes.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> 2014 Minutes, "Revision to the Special Response Process of 'A Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues,'" 300-309. The document can be found online at [www.brethren.org/ac](http://www.brethren.org/ac) in its Statements section. See also 1988 Minutes (1985-1989), "A Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues," 674-681; 2009 Minutes, "A Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues," 231-240.

<sup>129</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 232-233 (Article Three, Sections 2 and 6 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)). Requirements for giving notice for such meetings are specified in Article Three, Section 3.

<sup>130</sup> 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 232 (Article Three, Section 5 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)).

<sup>131</sup> 2001 Minutes (2000-2004), "Report of the Annual Conference Review and Evaluation Committee," 499, 506-507, assigned responsibility for Annual Conference funding to the Annual Conference Council, which served as executive committee for the Annual Conference. 2010 Minutes, "Church of the Brethren Bylaws Revision," 235 (Article Five, Section 1 in the Appendix at [brethren.org/ac/ppg/](http://brethren.org/ac/ppg/)), as amended by 2018 Minutes, "Amendments to the Bylaws of the Church of the Brethren Inc.," 289, assigned general oversight for Annual Conference to the Leadership Team, in consultation with the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee and the director of the Annual Conference Office, as the Leadership Team replaced the Annual Conference Council in the role of serving as executive committee for Annual Conference. 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Election and Term of Service of Standing Committee," 182-183, identifies the means for funding Annual Conference.

<sup>132</sup> 1907 Minutes, "Report of Committee to Provide a Plan for Raising Funds for the Annual Meeting Treasury," 2; 1960 Minutes (1955-1964), "Study of the Annual Conference," 182.

**B. REGISTRATION FEES**

Standing Committee and local church delegates shall pay a registration fee. This fee is underwritten by the districts and churches sending these delegates. There is a general registration at Conference for non-delegates.

**C. OFFERINGS**

The Program and Arrangements Committee shall plan for offerings to be taken during Conference worship services in consultation with the Leadership Team.