

3. Report of the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee

Membership of the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee (P&AC) remained the same through 2020 because of the cancellation, due to COVID-19, of the 2020 Annual Conference scheduled for Grand Rapids, Michigan. The decision to cancel for the first time in 233 recorded Annual Conferences was very difficult. We were fortunate that the Grand Rapids convention center and hotel waived cancellation penalties in return for us contracting to return there in 2024.

A second equally difficult decision was made in January of this year to pivot the 2021 Annual Conference to an online, rather than in-person, event. Even though we very much wanted an in-person event after missing Annual Conference completely in 2020, it appeared that COVID vaccinations would not be available to many people in time to make a large indoor event safe. Again, we were deeply grateful to the Koury Convention Center and Sheraton Hotel for waiving cancellation penalties of over \$600,000 that they could have charged.

The theme for 2021, originally chosen by Moderator Paul Munday as the 2020 theme, will be "God's Adventurous Future." Preachers, worship leaders, daily themes and scriptures, Bible study leader, and musicians scheduled for the 2020 Conference will give leadership instead for this first ever entirely online Annual Conference.

P&AC works with Chris Douglas, who will retire on October 1 after 12 years as director of Annual Conference. Debbie Noffsinger, conference assistant, also gives support to the work of this committee.

The worship planning team, with P&AC liaison Jan King, continued their planning for the 2021 worship services. Team members Cindy Laprade Lattimer, Robbie Miller, and Mandy North will provide leadership for all five worship services.

A number of unique events planned for 2020 will carry over into the 2021 Conference. Tod Bolsinger, author of "Canoeing the Mountain," will be the Friday morning plenary speaker and Michael Gorman, professor of biblical theology at St. Mary's Seminary, will lead daily Bible studies. Each will also lead insight sessions. Special musical presentations include a Wednesday night concert by singer-songwriter Fernando Ortega and a Friday organ recital by Robin Risser Munday. Business sessions will focus on the Compelling Vision that was introduced and discussed at the 2019 Annual Conference in Greensboro.

An on-going concern of P&AC has been the growing number of persons victimized by human trafficking (over 40 million world-wide). Because sex traffickers often take their victims to hotels, most hotel chains now do extensive training

with their employees on how to spot traffickers. The Annual Conference Office	1
checks each year with each of our hotels to be sure that their employees are re-	2
ceiving training and are vigilant in watching for suspicious activity.	3
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Sites and dates for future Annual Conferences have been chosen by P&AC. In	5
an effort to get the lowest possible prices, we have agreed to some changes in	6
the days of the week that we start and end. Otherwise we would have much	7
higher prices. Upcoming dates are:	8
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2022 Omaha, Neb. July 10-14 (Sun.-Thurs.)	10
2023 Cincinnati, Ohio July 4-8 (Tues.-Sat.)	11
2024 Grand Rapids, Mich. July 3-7 (Wed.-Sun.)	12
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Program and Arrangements Committee encourages feedback about this year's online	14
Conference. An online evaluation form will be available at www.brethren.org/ac .	15
On the final day of Annual Conference, a link to the form will be sent to the email	16
address that you provided when you registered for Annual Conference. Your com-	17
ments and suggestions are taken very seriously and are appreciated by the com-	18
mittee as we plan ahead for the 2022 Annual Conference.	19
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Paul Munday	21
David Sollenberger	22
James M. Beckwith	23
Jan Glass King	24
Emily Shonk Edwards	25
Carol Hipps Elmore	26
Chris Douglas, ex officio	27
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<i>Annual Conference exists to unite, strengthen and equip the Church of the Brethren</i>	29
<i>to follow Jesus.</i>	30
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