

2. Report of the Leadership Team

Guidance and leadership for the denomination is provided by the Leadership Team, whose members include the Annual Conference officers (moderator, moderator-elect, and secretary), the general secretary, and a district executive representing the Council of District Executives, with the Annual Conference director providing staff assistance.

The primary tasks of the Leadership Team are to ensure that Annual Conference decisions are carried out, interpret Annual Conference decisions and denominational polity, review recommended changes in the Annual Conference guidelines and polices, serve as executive committee for Annual Conference, and provide oversight for Annual Conference in consultation with the Program and Arrangements Committee and Annual Conference director.

The Leadership Team has appreciated opportunities to consult with the Council of District Executives about concerns affecting the districts and the denomination. The team developed a document describing best practices in cases of congregational withdrawal and sent it to the district executives in May 2019. In November 2019, the team released a statement expressing concerns regarding the formation of a separation movement – the Covenant Brethren Church – and the participation of various church leaders in the movement’s planning and recruitment efforts.

The Leadership Team convened for twelve scheduled meetings in 2020. The team consulted with the Program and Arrangement Committee about the impact of the pandemic, resulting in a Leadership Team recommendation to the Standing Committee to cancel the 2020 Annual Conference. That recommendation is part of the “Report of the Cancellation of the 2020 Annual Conference” that is appended to this report. Other work included providing interpretations of polity, responding to correspondence from individuals, congregations, and groups expressing a variety of concerns and perspectives, approving disbursements from the distribution received as a result of Church of the Brethren partnership with Brotherhood Mutual, and updates of the *Manual of Organization and Polity* for publishing the January 2021 edition of the manual online. The Leadership Team also issued two statements: the May 16, 2020 response to On Earth Peace’s decision to join the Supportive Communities Network, and the September 14, 2020 updated response to the activities of the Covenant Brethren Church.

This report is provided to the delegate body for the delegates’ information. It is our practice that the Leadership Team reports to Standing Committee.

Leadership Team

David A. Steele, general secretary, chair

Paul Munday, moderator

David Sollenberger, moderator-elect

James M. Beckwith, secretary

Cynthia S. Sanders, Council of District Executives representative

Report of the Cancellation of the 2020 Annual Conference

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5 In response to guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Preven-
6 tion (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and authorities in the state
7 of Michigan, where the 2020 Annual Conference was scheduled to be held, the
8 Leadership Team and the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Com-
9 mittee were considering in March and April of 2020 how the COVID-19 pan-
10 demic would affect plans for the 2020 Conference. The health and safety of
11 attendees, volunteers, and partners were first priority. The uncertainty of govern-
12 mental decisions regarding stay-at-home restrictions and how many people could
13 gather at an event, as well as the expectation that social distancing would con-
14 tinue to be required through the summer, according to federal guidelines stated
15 as of that time, made it difficult to know how many Brethren would attend and
16 whether the convention center would be allowed to host the Conference.

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18 A second primary concern was the financial consequence of cancelling. When
19 negotiations by the Annual Conference director with the convention center and
20 three hotels in Grand Rapids waived our contract's \$665,000 cancellation penal-
21 ties because of our willingness to return to Grand Rapids our next available year,
22 2024, the Leadership Team, in consultation with the Annual Conference Pro-
23 gram and Arrangements Committee, decided to recommend that the 2020 Con-
24 ference be cancelled.

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26 The Leadership Team decided that the best process for making this decision, ac-
27 cording to our polity, would be for the Annual Conference officers to call Stand-
28 ing Committee together to make a decision on behalf of Annual Conference
29 between Conferences. The Nominating Committee was asked to make a recom-
30 mendation as to how the deferring of Annual Conference business would affect
31 the process of electing new members to boards and committee.

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33 Standing Committee was contacted through email and, in accordance with
34 polity, an offer was extended to send notice of the meeting by first class mail for
35 any who requested it. All 35 members of Standing Committee responded online
36 to the invitation to set a date for the Zoom meeting. The officers had explained
37 that postal mail would be delayed because the General Offices had been closed
38 by government order due to the coronavirus pandemic, and no one requested a
39 first class mail notice of the meeting.

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41 On May 7, 2020, the 2019 Standing Committee was called to meet via Zoom
42 conference call. Thirty-three of the 35 members of Standing Committee plus the
43 immediate past moderator participated in considering two recommendations:
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Recommendations	1
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<i>From the Leadership Team:</i>	3
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The Leadership Team, in consultation with the Program and Arrangements Committee, recommends to the 2019 Standing Committee that the 2020 Annual Conference in Grand Rapids, MI July 1-5 be cancelled. We further recommend that the theme, program, and featured resource leaders for the 2020 Conference be deferred to the June 30-July 4, 2021 Annual Conference in Greensboro, NC. And we recommend that the Compelling Vision and other items of business (other than the ballot, which will be addressed in a separate motion) become the business of the 2021 Annual Conference.	5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
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<i>From the Nominating Committee of Standing Committee:</i>	14
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The Nominating Committee of Standing Committee met on April 30 and recommends to Standing Committee that the ballot for 2020 be deferred to 2021 with the understanding that:	16 17 18
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(1) Annual Conference-elected officers, committee members, and board members whose terms would be ending this year will be asked to serve an additional year in their position	20 21 22
	23
(2) committee members and board members who will be elected by the current ballot when the vote is taken in 2021 will serve one year less to complete their terms in the year they had expected to finish when they were nominated (the moderator-elect, however, will serve the full three years of the moderator role, as usual)	24 25 26 27 28
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(3) another ballot will be prepared during the coming year to replace committee members and board members whose AC-elected terms conclude in 2021.	30 31 32
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This recommendation applies only to Annual Conference-elected positions.	34
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Districts will continue to determine the elections and terms of service for their Standing Committee members and other district-elected positions.	36 37
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Annual Conference agencies will continue to determine the elections and terms of service for their board-elected board members. Any board-elected board members that were scheduled to be confirmed by the 2020 Conference will be confirmed by the 2021 Conference instead.	39 40 41 42
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Standing Committee approved the first recommendation by a vote of 33-1.	44
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1 The moderator and moderator-elect recused themselves from discussion of the
2 recommendation from Nominating Committee about the election process be-
3 cause the decision would affect the terms of their service. Immediate past mod-
4 erator Donita Keister chaired that discussion and abstained from voting.

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6 The second recommendation was approved by a vote of 33-0.

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8 In the aftermath of the decisions, the Annual Conference Office offered a refund
9 to all registrants. Many donated their registration fees, however, because they
10 were aware that the Annual Conference budget is funded only by the registration
11 fees and district assessments.

12
13 The Nominating Committee contacted all whose terms were scheduled to con-
14 clude at the 2020 Conference. All but one agreed to serve an additional year.
15 This is recorded in the “Elections and Appointments prior to the 2021 Confer-
16 ence” section that is appended to this report. In the one case, the position on
17 the board became a vacancy which the board could fill if it chose to do so. The
18 Nominating Committee also contacted all nominees on the 2020 ballot to as-
19 certain that they would be willing to wait for the election to take place in 2021
20 and serve one year less in order for the term of office to conclude when it had
21 been scheduled to end. All but two of the nominees agreed. The Nominating
22 Committee then recommended replacements for the two nominees who with-
23 drew from the 2020 ballot, and in early June 2020 Standing Committee voted
24 to affirm the Nominating Committee’s recommended nominees to complete
25 the 2020 ballot that will be part of the agenda at the 2021 Conference.

26
27 Even though the 2020 Annual Conference was cancelled, the 2020 Standing
28 Committee was convened by the Annual Conference officers for a reorganiza-
29 tional meeting via a Zoom conference call on Sunday evening, June 28, 2020.

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31 **2020 Standing Committee Delegates**

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33 **Atlantic Northeast**

- 34 2020 Kim Ream
- 35 2021 Donna Lefever-Hoover
- 36 2022 Jennifer Quijano West

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38 **Atlantic Southeast**

- 39 2021 Michaela Alphonse

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41 **Idaho/Western Montana**

- 42 2020 Warren E. Eilers

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44 **Illinois/Wisconsin**

- 45 2021 Dennis Webb

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Michigan

- 2020 John Willoughby

Mid Atlantic

- 2021 Craig Stutzman
- 2022 Kim McDowell

Middle Pennsylvania

- 2021 Carolyn Dean
- 2022 Loren Rhodes

Missouri/Arkansas

- 2020 Phil Miller

Northern Indiana	Southern Ohio/Kentucky	1
2022 Bob Johansen	2021 Becky Maurer	2
	2022 Fred Bernhard	3
Northern Ohio		4
2021 Ben Polzin	Southern Pennsylvania	5
	2021 Ken Geisewite	6
Northern Plains		7
2020 Bill Grove	Southern Plains	8
	2020 David Young	9
Pacific Northwest		10
2020 Dale Seese	Virlina	11
	2021 Edward C. Woodard	12
Pacific Southwest	2022 Susan Chapman Starkey	13
2020 Don Shankster		14
	West Marva	15
Puerto Rico	2021 Mark Jones	16
2020 Laura Y Arroyo Marrero	2022 David Ziler	17
		18
Shenandoah	Western Pennsylvania	19
2020 Janet Elsea	2020 Timothy Vaughn	20
2021 Jonathan Prater	2022 Joseph Brown	21
2022 Karen Shiflet		22
	Western Plains	23
South-Central Indiana	2020 Barbra Davis	24
2021 Kurt Borgmann		25
	Immediate Past Moderator	26
Southeastern	2020 Donita Keister	27
2020 Jeremy Dykes		28
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Thirty-one of the 34 district delegates were present on the Zoom call, together with immediate past moderator Donita J. Keister, to organize as the 35-member 2020 Standing Committee under the leadership of the Annual Conference officers: Paul Munday, moderator; David Sollenberger, moderator-elect; and James M. Beckwith, secretary.

The roll call officially seated the delegates. The delegations from Southern Pennsylvania and Virlina districts were each reduced by one delegate due to diminished district membership. An update on the Atlantic Northeast District's progress in clarifying and changing its district boundaries was reported. Subcommittee reports from the Review of Judicial Role and Appeal Process Committee and from the 2020 Nominating Committee were received and discussed. After a get-acquainted time in Zoom breakout rooms, the reorganized Standing Committee then confirmed the ballot for electing new Nominating Committee and Appeals Committee members.

1 Immediately following the reorganization meeting, 34 of the 35 Standing
2 Committee members participated in electing the new subcommittee members.
3 Election results:

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5 **2020-2021 Nominating Committee** – new members:

6 Bob Johansen (Northern Indiana)

7 Kim McDowell (Mid-Atlantic)

8 Loren Rhodes (Middle Pennsylvania)

9 Susan Chapman Starkey (Virginia)

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11 They joined second-year members Michaela Alphonse, Kurt Borgmann,
12 Becky Maurer, and Dennis Webb to form the 2020-2021 Nominating Com-
13 mittee. When the new Nominating Committee reorganized in July, it re-
14 elected Kurt Borgmann to serve as chair.

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16 **2021 Appeals Committee:**

17 Carolyn Dean (Middle Pennsylvania)

18 Craig Stutzman (Mid-Atlantic)

19 Jonathan Prater (Shenandoah)

20

21 Alternates to serve if a member of the committee must recuse him/herself:

22 1st Alternate – Ben Polzin (Northern Ohio)

23 2nd Alternate – Mark Jones (West Marva)

24

25 Jonathan Prater resigned from Standing Committee when he became a mem-
26 ber of his district's staff, and Ben Polzin became a member of the committee.

27

28 The Appeals Committee will be called together by the Annual Conference of
29 ficers if an appeal is received to be processed by the 2021 Standing Committee.

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31 On the evenings of July 1 and July 2, 2020 – two of the days when the 2020 An-
32 nual Conference would have been held – a virtual denominational worship serv-
33 ice, preceded by a children's worship service, and a virtual denominational
34 concert were provided by the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements
35 Committee. They were well-received. These events did not constitute an Annual
36 Conference, however.

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38 On January 26, 2021, the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Com-
39 mittee announced that the 2021 Annual Conference will be entirely online. It
40 had been previously announced that it would be a hybrid event, but due to the
41 continuing challenges of COVID-19, the committee deemed that it was not wise
42 to have an in-person component for Annual Conference in 2021.

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44 The online Conference to be held June 30-July 4, 2021 will be the 234th
45 recorded Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren.

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Report compiled by Annual Conference secretary James M. Beckwith, in consultation with David A. Steele, general secretary and Chris Douglas, Annual Conference director.

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