

“State of the Church” Frequently Asked Questions

From October 2020 to February 2021, the Annual Conference Moderator hosted the “Moderator’s District Q+A” sessions in partnership with the Annual Conference Moderator-Elect and Secretary; Twenty-four ZOOM sessions were held in 14 districts across the denomination. The focus of the sessions was the “state of the church.” The Q+As were open to all, both clergy and laity; districts were encouraged to publicize them widely.

The questions that follow arose from those sessions; they are not exhaustive of every question on the hearts and minds of our constituency. Rather, they are representative of inquiries posed by both clergy and laity in a variety of districts. The responses to each question, also are not exhaustive; additional detail, however, is found in the endnotes.

Additional questions are welcome.

Abortion

- What is the Church of the Brethren position on abortion?

In sum: “The Church of the Brethren opposes abortion because the rejection of unborn children violates the love by which God creates and nurtures human life.

“We recognize that our society contributes to unwanted pregnancies in many ways and gives too little care to those who must bear the consequences.

“We recognize also our responsibility to work for a caring society that undergirds women who choose to carry pregnancies to full term, a caring society that [also] protects integrity of conscience in decision-making in relation to pregnancy and childbearing while also acting to protect the unborn.

“We hold ourselves accountable to develop constructive, creative alternatives to abortion in the communities of which we are a part.

“We hold in love and will support those who choose to give birth to children and the children themselves, as well as those who believe conscientiously they must terminate pregnancy.

We acknowledge our lack of compassion, our judgementalism, and other sinful attitudes that separate us from the love by which God calls and redeems us.”¹

Authority and Accountability

- Overall, what is the Church of the Brethren’s approach to authority and accountability?

It is a system of mutual trust and shared responsibility between the Annual Conference, districts, congregations, and ministers.

- The Annual Conference is the highest authority in the Church of the Brethren; all aspects of the denomination are accountable to its actions.² Annual Conference, however, delegates authority to districts for holding congregations accountable.³
- Ministers are accountable to both the district and Annual Conference.⁴
- In carrying out accountability, we communicate: 1) “The actions of [the Annual] Conference are directives for the whole life of the church, and implementation is assumed to take place within a reasonable span of time.”⁵ 2) “Groups and individuals have channels of review when decisions of Annual Conference are questioned.”⁶
- In carrying out accountability we do not utilize “acts of enforcement by decree. Rather, education, consultation, and patience are [to be employed].”⁷
- Overall, there is to be “mutual trust and shared responsibility between local, district, and denominational structures.”⁸ “The goal of the...[accountability] process is to find God’s truth together in a respectful Christian community.”⁹

- How do we hold districts accountable to Annual Conference actions and decisions? It is apparent that districts vary in their compliance with official statements of the church.

There is no explicit process in our current polity to hold districts accountable. There are, however, understandings related to accountability and districts:

- “Grounded in its discernment of its unique vision and mission, the purpose of the district shall be to administer and coordinate the religious and business activities of the Church of the Brethren within the bounds of the district.”¹⁰
- “Districts are strongly encouraged to review their policies, processes, and procedures to ensure that they are in harmony with Annual Conference actions and decisions, replacing or removing these policies, processes, and procedures as necessary. We urge districts to work at discipline in a redemptive rather than a punitive spirit, considering the full life and faithfulness of the parties involved.”¹¹
- “Each district is encouraged to put in place framework for processing a congregational disagreement with an Annual Conference action...The process should be flexible enough to allow for the wide variations of each case, yet specific enough that it has accountability and direction...The goal of the district response process should be to help the congregation move to an understanding of the Annual Conference action and willingness to support the action, or at least a willingness to refrain from taking any action that would be interpreted as being defiant or insubordinate.”¹²

Annual Conference

- Is the next Annual Conference going to be held by zoom?

The 2021 Annual Conference will be held entirely online using the Covision virtual platform.¹³

- Is anything planned at the 2021 Annual Conference that would recognize the schism that we are dealing with?

Yes. An early business session of the 2021 Annual Conference will include a dialogue between the General Secretary, David Steele, and Moderator Paul Munday about the state of the church. This conversation will touch on the current schism within the denomination. After this dialogue, there will be a talk-back session with David and Paul available to Annual Conference delegates and participants.

- Will the 2021 Annual Conference agenda be the same as the proposed 2020 agenda?

Yes. The agenda centers around the proposed Compelling Vision for the denomination.

- Who came up with these Annual Conference statements and papers? Why should we give them any weight?

Annual Conference statements and papers are crafted by a study process set up by Conference delegates to respond to queries initiated by congregations via their district conferences or to recommendations from Annual Conference committees, the denominational board, or AC agency boards. The finalized documents represent hours of Bible study, in-depth research, and fervent prayer.

All official Annual Conference statements and papers must be affirmed by at least a majority vote of the delegate body of Annual Conference. Annual Conference statements and papers have “weight” because they are the official voice of the denomination on pressing issues of faith and discipleship.

- Who is responsible for the Annual Conference ballot, and how can it reflect the diversity of our denomination to a greater extent?

The Nominating Committee of Standing Committee prepares the Annual Conference ballot. They do so through a process of discernment and prayer, as they consider the nominations submitted by the church at large. They submit a ballot of four nominees per position to Standing Committee, which selects two nominees per position. The resulting ballot is then voted on by the delegate body of the Annual Conference.

The Nominating Committee of Annual Conference works intentionally at issues of inclusion and justice: “Each year the Nominating Committee explains the goals, needs, and procedures of our election process to the Standing Committee and to the delegate body. Delegates are reminded to work towards a balance of age/gender/ethnic representation.”¹⁴

“In 1983, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1999, and 2001, the *Call to Accountability for Equality of Representation on Annual Conference Ballots* for more equal use of all persons was reaffirmed.” A part of this reaffirmation is a continuing “standard practice to look at our progress over the past five years.”¹⁵ An annual progress report is presented by Nominating Committee to Standing Committee and to the full delegate body before they vote.

In addition to Nominating Committee’s intentionality, “congregations, districts, and agencies are called to do quality leadership development, giving leadership experience to a wide variety of persons to prepare them for possible denominational leadership, in

particular to identify and call forth ethnic/minority leadership. All nominees for denominational leadership are encouraged to have participated in at least one intercultural experience in the past five years.”¹⁶

Biblical Authority

- What is the Church of the Brethren position on the authority of Scripture?

We affirm: “Scripture sets forth God’s word with power and authority. Because those who speak for God in the biblical account were guided by the Holy Spirit, all scripture is attested as ‘inspired of God’ or ‘God-breathed’ (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible is...a canon of faith and life for the community of believers.”¹⁷

While not devaluing the Old Testament, the Church of the Brethren affirms, in particular, “that the New Testament is our rule of faith and practice.”¹⁸

Black Lives Matter Organization

- Has the Church of the Brethren given funds to the Black Lives Matter organization?

No. While it is possible that Church of the Brethren individuals or congregations have given funds to the Black Lives Matter organization, no official part of the structure of the Church of the Brethren has given funds to this group.

However, a lack of financial support for the Black Lives Matter organization is not to be confused with a lack of resolve to address racism; in line with the Bible’s commitment to justice and equality for all (Isaiah 1:17; Acts 10:34-35; Colossians 3:11; Revelation 7:9), we believe Black lives matter. The Church of the Brethren is vitally committed to combating racism in all its manifold expressions.¹⁹

Communication

- There are a lot of people in the congregation who don’t have a clue what is going on in the larger church (denomination and district). How can we inform people in our congregations?

Ask your pastor to write a pastor’s column or permit you to write a column for your congregation on the topic: “Keeping in Touch with Our Wider Church Family.” That column can ask members/participants to sign up directly at <https://www.brethren.org/news/> for *Newsline*, the free Church of the Brethren email newsletter. Other ideas are found in the endnotes.²⁰

- With communication being a level of accountability, is there a better way that we as a denomination can communicate and let the whole denomination know that yes, an incident happened and this is the response, rather than it always coming through all the different back channels?

The breakdown of communication in our denomination is a major concern; clearly, new methods for connecting with our members/participants and congregations are needed. For now, we encourage members/participants and congregations to:

- Provide direct access to *Newsline* as noted above.
- Practice Matthew 18:15ff, going directly to persons connected with incidents that are problematic and troubling.
- Trust leadership that they are acting in the best interests of the church. Accountability is often a personnel matter requiring confidentiality; thus, there is often an absence of public details. Such a reality is not to be confused with an absence of accountability.

Other ideas are in the endnotes.²¹

- The Leadership Team typically takes weeks or months to react to developments in the church. What can denominational leadership do to be more accessible and have more timely communication with pastors and lay persons?

The Leadership Team manages a large agenda; thus, it is not always able to respond immediately to every item requiring its attention. In addition, members of the Leadership Team have multiple responsibilities beyond their involvement on the Team, requiring time and energy.

The recent Moderator’s District Q+A sessions are one attempt at more immediate access and timely communication. Preceding those events, several years ago, were an extensive series of listening sessions conducted by the general secretary in each district. In addition, the general secretary visits each district conference on a regular, rotating basis.

Compelling Vision

- How will the Compelling Vision be adopted—by vote or by affirmation—and will there be an opportunity to amend it?

“In keeping with the timeline set forth at the beginning of the process, the compelling vision will be brought to Annual Conference [2021] for affirmation by the delegate body. Discernment of the compelling vision emerged from the work of the whole church through significant conversations that took place at Annual Conference 2018 and 2019, in districts, and with various constituency groups. For this reason, the Annual Conference officers have determined that the process for affirming the compelling vision must be one of creative, prayerful engagement through continued conversation, rather than a process of motions and amendments. Therefore, at the [2021] Annual Conference we will strive for consensus under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we move toward affirmation of the compelling vision that God is calling the Church of the Brethren to carry out together.”²²

- When will the 13-week Bible study on the Compelling Vision be ready and how will it be distributed?

The Bible studies are now available at: <https://www.brethren.org/ac/compelling-vision/>

- What difference will it make once the Compelling Vision is adopted for the future of the Church of the Brethren?

We pray it will make much difference.

We believe a focus on Jesus and Mission (the heart of the Compelling Vision) will lessen strife, as we major in what we all agree on: Christ and Witness.

The issues dividing us are critical. But more critical is our common conviction that “Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Savior of the World and the Head of the Church, according to the Scriptures”²³ and that witness in His name in our neighborhoods (local and global) is the most important thing we are called to do.

The beauty of the proposed Compelling Vision is that it encourages us to live out our witness in Jesus in varied ways, according to our unique calling and context. Thus, it embodies unity in diversity as we all rally around Jesus yet witness to Him in diverse ways.

Overall, Jesus promises that as we focus on Him and His mission, vitality comes to us as we drink of and share living water, “an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life” (John 4:14 MSG).

Covenant Brethren Church (CBC)

- What is your understanding of the reasons why congregations are leaving the Church of the Brethren and deciding to join the CBC?

The reasons vary. One often repeated is that a different system of enforcing the church’s positions on homosexuality/same-gender weddings is needed. While both denominations have similar positions on these issues, accountability varies in the CoB from district to district when ministers/congregations stray from the church’s official stance. There have also been claims that the Church of the Brethren does not uphold Biblical authority; the actual issue, however, is the interpretation of scripture (hermeneutics). Both denominations uphold the Bible as God’s Written Word, our rule for faith and discipleship.²⁴

It is important to stress that congregations leave the Church of the Brethren for a variety of reasons; not all leave to align with the Covenant Brethren Church.

- What would you say is the fundamental difference between the Covenant Brethren Church’s (CBC) approach to accountability and that of the Church of the Brethren?

The Covenant Brethren Church’s approach is centralized, working at accountability through a single Executive Board.²⁵

The Church of the Brethren’s approach is shared, working at accountability through a system of mutual trust between the Annual Conference, districts, congregations, and ministers.²⁶

- How many churches have joined the Covenant Brethren Church denomination and how many more are anticipated to leave for the CBC?

The current number of CBC congregations is available at their website.

We are not anticipating a large movement of churches leaving the Church of the Brethren to join the CBC.

- Why was there not a statement about the CBC earlier than there was? Didn't you know this was going to happen?

The Leadership Team discerned it was important to issue a statement only after CBC took intentional, public steps to become an official denomination. This happened when the CBC gathered at the Antioch Church of the Brethren, Woodstock, Virginia on November 16, 2019, officially adopted the name Covenant Brethren Church and choose a location for a central office. Shortly thereafter, on November 21, 2019, the Leadership Team released its first statement.²⁷

- Why is the Leadership Team opposed to dual ordination for pastors and dual affiliation for congregations by the Church of the Brethren AND the Covenant Brethren Church?

Dual affiliation/ordination polity is designed for persons who can affirm that both denominations with whom they are aligned are faithful. The CBC by design is a schism intentionally separating from the CoB because they find the CoB unfaithful to the authority of scripture.²⁸ By joining/affiliating with CBC, an individual/congregation is affirming that the CoB is unfaithful, thus deciding “they cannot be church together with the Church of the Brethren.”²⁹

We pray congregations and pastors will find the Church of the Brethren faithful, respecting its beliefs, practices, and polity. Though far from perfect, the CoB strives diligently to be true to God's Word.

- The opening line of the Leadership Team Statement about the CBC talked about division in the CoB caused by the Covenant Brethren Church. Why was it phrased that way, that this group is causing a division when a division has really existed for some time and this group is formed for those who cannot live any longer in that neighborhood of division?

The CBC by design is a schism, thus divisive. Divisiveness has been with us for some time. However, biblically, divisiveness is not remedied by more division. Rather, “the way ahead is through conversations that seek to discern God's purposes through the study of scripture and prayer, yearning for the Holy Spirit to reveal God's will for our life and witness.”³⁰

Forbearance

- What role does the 2008 Statement on Forbearance have on the disagreements that we have as Brethren?

The statement reminds us that forbearance contributes to peacebuilding. Such a stance “does not require one to accept what another believes, but it does require one to listen and try to understand what another believes without demeaning, personal attacks, or acting to disenfranchise the other person.”³¹

Jesus Christ and Religious Pluralism

- Does the Church of the Brethren believe that Jesus is God's Son, Savior of the World and Lord of the Church, as defined by the Bible?

Yes. In 1991 the Annual Conference declared that “Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Savior of the World and the Head of the Church, according to the Scriptures.”³²

- Would you say that all CoB congregations affirm this conviction?

We cannot know conclusively whether all persons and congregations in the Church of the Brethren affirm this conviction. However, the fact that all CoB congregations celebrate the bread and cup (the ordinance of the unique Work of God through the Cross, through Jesus) indicates that CoB participants/members affirm Jesus as Savior and Lord, as defined by the Bible.

Health and Wellbeing of the Church of the Brethren

- What do you see is the spiritual temperature of our church?

We are in exile. Like the Israelites of old, we are moving through difficult terrain both in terms of larger culture and the church. We are struggling and we are divided.

- Lament, then, is a dominant theme, as we identify with the heart-cry of the Israelite people in exile: “By the rivers of Babylon we sit down and weep when we remember Zion. On the poplars in her midst we hang our harps...How can we sing a song to the Lord in a foreign land?” (Psalm 137:1-2, 4 NET).
- Nevertheless, we strive for hope, remembering there will be a better day, as we listen for God’s promise “to all those [in] exile”: “‘I know what I have planned for you,’ says the Lord. ‘I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope’” (Jeremiah 29:4, 11 NET).

- What impact do you anticipate there will be on the funding and staffing of the Church of the Brethren denominational program in the aftermath of many congregations’ departure to the CBC? How are the denomination’s finances holding up with the pandemic and all?

Denominational finances are holding their own. Some units of the denomination have been hit harder than others, such as Brethren Press. This is due to many factors, including the pandemic, but donors have been supportive.

Ongoing, even stronger gifts, however, are needed.

We do not anticipate a significant impact on core ministries of the Mission and Ministry Board since most departing churches were not supporting those ministries. The impact on special funds such as the Global Food Initiative and the Emergency Disaster Fund of Brethren Disaster Ministries remains to seen.

- When the dust settles and we kind of sense who we will be together, how will we process our grief, recommit to our values and our understanding of what it means to be CoB, so we truly live into the new vision with heart and energy and mind and commitment?

We pray the proposed Compelling Vision will contribute significantly. For example:

- The Compelling Vision Bible studies (now available³³) provide an excellent resource for entering into our values and understandings as the Church of the Brethren.
- The table conversations about the proposed Compelling Vision which are part of the 2021 Annual Conference will provide time for talk about both our laments and hopes.
- As we act on the Compelling Vision after Conference there is the prospect of new energy as we move forward with Jesus, in mission, despite our wounds.

Pandemic

- Have there been any positive elements of the pandemic on our life together as a Church of the Brethren?

Yes. Congregations are discovering the necessity of adaptation, a required part of any church renewal. One visible expression is the number of congregations learning to do church virtually, an ongoing requirement for any vital church. The February 27, 2021 denominational virtual worship service explored this development.³⁴

- Will the pandemic change the denomination permanently, and if so, in what way?

In all probability it will, but we do not know precisely how. In tandem with the Bible's teaching on exile, we needn't fear outcomes. As God assured the dislocated Hebrew people, God assures us: "Don't be afraid, for I will protect you...When you pass through the waters, I am with you...When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned...For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your deliverer" (Isaiah 43:1-3 NET).

On Earth Peace

- What has been the Leadership Team's response to the On Earth Peace decision to join the Supportive Communities Network (SCN)?

The Leadership Team concluded that "by taking this action [i.e., joining SCN], On Earth Peace's decision to join the Supportive Communities Network conflicts with OEP's official agreement to serve as an Annual Conference agency." That agreement, as recorded in current denominational polity, states that On Earth Peace will "commit itself to providing ministry that is within the scope of Annual Conference directives and congruent with articulated values of the Church of the Brethren."

The Leadership Team statement "appreciates that much of On Earth's work engages the Annual Conference decision to 'extend Christ-like comfort and grace to homosexual and bisexual persons.' However, On Earth Peace's decision to join SCN positions OEP in opposition to Annual Conference's current discernment about covenantal relationships for homosexual persons."³⁵

"The Leadership Team believes that On Earth Peace's decision is of sufficient consequence to require On Earth Peace to enter into intentional, serious, prayerful engagement with the Standing Committee and the delegate body of Annual Conference. The Leadership Team believes an outcome of that engagement should be a determination of OEP's Annual

Conference agency status, given their decision to join the Supportive Communities Network.”³⁶

Same-Gender Marriage

- What is the current Church of the Brethren understanding regarding same-sex marriage?

“At this time, ministers and congregations are not authorized by Annual Conference to perform same-sex weddings. A majority of the delegate body is clearly opposed to homosexual covenantal relationships. A significant minority disagrees with this decision.”³⁷

- Is it true that some Church of the Brethren pastors have conducted same-gender marriages? How common is that, and why is that allowed to happen without punishment?

Church of the Brethren pastors do not report the weddings they conduct to either their district or a national denominational office; thus, there is no official way to know if Church of the Brethren pastors have conducted same-gender marriages. With that said, there have been instances when districts have held ministers accountable for conducting same-gender marriages.

There is to be accountability to all actions of the Annual Conference including the Conference’s stance that “covenantal relationships between homosexual persons is an additional lifestyle option but, in the church’s search for a Christian understanding of human sexuality, this alternative is not acceptable.”³⁸ Our approach to accountability, however, is not one of punishment or “acts of enforcement” by decree. Rather, education, consultation, and patience are [to be employed].³⁹ Accountability details are a confidential matter between the pastor and the district, who holds the pastor’s ordination.

- Does the Church of the Brethren have a position on licensing and ordaining persons living in a homosexual lifestyle?

Yes. In 2002 the Annual Conference determined it “inappropriate to license or ordain to the Christian ministry any persons who are known to be engaging in homosexual practices and will not recognize the licensing and ordination of such persons in the Church of the Brethren.”⁴⁰

- Overall, “we acknowledge that Christ calls us to live together as one body, centered in Christ in a life of grace. We will not take lightly decisions that will terminate an individual’s ministerial credentials or disorganize a congregation.”⁴¹

It is important to underscore these accountability understandings are not just applicable to same-sex marriage, but to all aspects of denominational polity and all statements of the Annual Conference.

Unity and Reconciliation

- There is much talk about wanting to seek unity in the church. What is meant by unity in that context?

Among other things: 1) empathy for all, including those with whom we differ or consider Enemy;⁴² 2) gathering around Jesus as our center point affirming that: “Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Savior of the World and the Head of the Church, according to the Scriptures.”⁴³

- Are there attempts to bring reconciliation to these congregations that feel they need to leave because of these divisions?

Yes. Denominational leaders, whenever possible: 1) Underscore our yearning for reconciliation and unity, acknowledging there are issues that need to be addressed;⁴⁴ 2) Respond to every request to “come to the table” to address concerns, clarify misunderstandings, and confess oversights or errors; 3) Encourage persons to advance conflict resolution through the pattern of Matthew 18:15ff.; 4) Commend strategies for moving through our conflict, such as the “Way Forward” process in the Atlantic Northeast District.⁴⁵

- Can this schism with CBC be resolved? If so, how, and if not, why not?

Yes. 1) By confessing we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Both the Church of the Brethren and the Covenant Brethren Church have erred and need to repent. 2) By remembering that we agree on far more than we differ. In fact, on two of the most pressing issues for the Covenant Brethren Church, abortion and same-gender marriage, the Church of the Brethren and CBC, in substance, have basically the same positions.⁴⁶ In addition, both the CoB and the CBC recognize the need for congregational liberty. 3) By developing a way forward (beyond what the CBC view as disingenuous “promises”) through the central reason for our divide: differing views on the nature and practice of accountability; 4) By recognizing: God hates schism. The slant of scripture is toward unity in Christ, despite differences (1 Corinthians 1:13-17; Ephesians 4: 1-3).

- Is reuniting with the CBC churches really the vision we have, that maybe in the future there can be a reunification of CoB and CBC? It has not happened in our history, but is it possible that we would do that now, maybe in a few years when things are calmer?

That could be. As a living peace church, the Church of the Brethren is committed to “...discover afresh ‘the things that make for peace’ and discern through honest and prayerful discussion how to put this knowledge into action...”⁴⁷ That commitment applies to the conflict and division within our own church family.

- Is there any thought or planning going into acknowledging the schism with the CBC at our next AC or virtual gathering, to say goodbye and cut that break, to allow the denomination to grieve that and look forward?

Yes and no. Yes, at the beginning of the 2021 Annual Conference the General Secretary and the Moderator will engage in a 10-minute presentation on the current state of the church, including acknowledging the schism in the denomination; this will be followed by a talk-back session. But, no, there is no plan to officially say goodbye to CBC congregations/ministers. Given our continuing hope for reconciliation, we feel such action is premature.

¹ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1984-abortion/>

² “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.” 1968 Minutes {1965-1969), “The Frequency and Organization of Annual Conference: 316; “Church Polity, Including Referendum on Merger and Continuation of Ecumenical Concerns, 337. See page 1 of chapter 1 of the *Manual of Organization and Polity* (<https://www.brethren.org/ac/ppg/>).

³ “Annual Conference ... delegates authority to the district for holding congregations accountable, since congregations are expected ‘to support faithfully the program of the Church of the Brethren, recognizing Annual Conference enactments of the Church of the Brethren as having governing force in its life’ and to carry out their ‘ethical responsibility to support the denomination.’ Annual Conference expects the district, however, to wield its authority in a spirit of seeking the mind of Christ together: ‘The goal of the ... process is to find God’s truth together in a respectful Christian community.’” - 2017 Report of the Leadership Team and the Council of District Executives on the Authority of Annual Conference and Districts regarding the Accountability of Ministers, Congregations, and Districts (<https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2017-report-authority-of-annual-conference-regarding-accountability-of-ministers-congregations-and-districts/>), which cites within this quotation the 2000 Minutes (2000-2004), “Congregational Structure,” 206; 1996 Minutes (1995-1999), “Statement of Ethics for Congregations in the Church of the Brethren,” 331; and 2004 Minutes (2000-2004), “Query on Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions,” 1276.

⁴ Ministers “are accountable to both the district and the denomination. Annual Conference charges districts with the responsibility of credentialing ministers in the Church of the Brethren, and the denominational Office of Ministry works to resource and support districts in this process.” (page 18 of <https://www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2020/09/ministerial-leadership-paper.pdf>)

⁵ See p. 1 of chapter 1 of the *Manual of Organization and Polity* (<https://www.brethren.org/ac/ppg/>), where this is quoted from the 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.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ 2004 “Query on Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions” (<https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2004-congregational-disagreements/>) in the first paragraph of section V.

¹⁰ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2021/01/MOP-Chapter-3-Jan.-2021-ed.pdf> (section A.2. on p. 2)

¹¹ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2017-report-authority-of-annual-conference-regarding-accountability-of-ministers-congregations-and-districts/> (from the “Accountability of Districts” section near the end of the document)

¹² <https://www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2021/01/MOP-Chapter-3-Jan.-2021-ed.pdf> (page 21)

¹³ <https://mailchi.mp/brethren.org/newslines-for-march-13-9515169>

¹⁴ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/election-procedures/> and <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2001-review-of-calling-process/> See the committee’s first recommendation in the 5th paragraph of the 2001 Report of the Committee just before the appendixes.

¹⁵ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2020/07/call-to-accountability-2021.pdf>

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- ¹⁶ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/election-procedures/> This is based on (a) the 2001 call for leadership development (<https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2001-review-of-calling-process/> in the fourth recommendation of the 2001 report) and (b) the 2007 “Separate No More” report (<https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2007-separate-no-more/> in the “Denominational Recommendations” section).
- ¹⁷ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1979-biblical-inspiration-authority/> (item 6 in section I)
- ¹⁸ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1998-new-testament/> (see the Reaffirmation section)
- ¹⁹ <https://www.brethren.org/news/2020/what-does-the-lord-require-a/> <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2007-separate-no-more/>
- ²⁰ - Include the Newline Digest (a summary of the Church of the Brethren’s email newsletter) in your congregation’s newsletter. A link to that resource follows: <https://www.brethren.org/news/newline-digest/>
- Encourage your pastor to announce all information that comes in the Source Packet and check brethren.org frequently.
- Encourage congregational members/participants to sign up for your district’s email newsletter. A link to District office contact information follows: <https://www.brethren.org/about/districts/>
- Encourage every member of your congregation to subscribe to Messenger, the official magazine of the Church of the Brethren. In particular, form a Messenger Club with a Messenger representative to help promote the magazine. A link to help you do just that follows: <https://www.brethren.org/messenger/subscribe/>
- ²¹ Promote and make more visible our denomination’s website, www.brethren.org, and the denomination’s resource packet, SOURCE. Contact the denomination’s communications team at cobnews@brethren.org for more information on both communication tools.
- ²² <https://www.brethren.org/news/2020/compelling-vision-recommendation-to-annual-conference-is-released/> The original wording was that this would take place at the 2020 Conference, but that business agenda was of course deferred to the 2021 Conference.
- ²³ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1991-religious-pluralism/> in the second to last sentence.
- ²⁴ <https://covenantbrethren.org/statement-of-faith/>; <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1979-biblical-inspiration-authority/>
- ²⁵ <https://covenantbrethren.org/bylaws/>
- ²⁶ See p. 1 of chapter 1 of the *Manual of Organization and Polity* (<https://www.brethren.org/ac/ppg/>), where this is quoted from the 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. See also this FAQ document’s section on Authority and Accountability.
- ²⁷ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2020/09/statement-on-the-covenant-brethren-church.pdf>
- ²⁸ <https://covenantbrethren.org/frequently-asked-questions/>
- ²⁹ <https://www.brethren.org/news/2020/leadership-team-issues-update-in-response-to-activities-of-the-covenant-brethren-church/>
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2008-resolution-urging-forbearance/>. The quote can be found at the end of the “In the Bible and Our History” section.
- ³² <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1991-religious-pluralism/>
- ³³ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/compelling-vision/>
- ³⁴ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/online-worship-2021/>

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2017-report-authority-of-annual-conference-regarding-accountability-of-ministers-congregations-and-districts/> in the “Accountability of Ministers” section.

³⁸ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1983-human-sexuality/>

³⁹ See p. 1 of chapter 1 of the *Manual of Organization and Polity* (<https://www.brethren.org/ac/ppg/>), where this is quoted from the 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.

⁴⁰ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2002-query-on-licensing-of-homosexual-persons/>

⁴¹ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2017-report-authority-of-annual-conference-regarding-accountability-of-ministers-congregations-and-districts/> in the “Accountability of Ministers” section.

⁴² <https://www.brethren.org/ac2021/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2020/11/Trail-Thoughts-FALL-2020-COLOR.pdf>

⁴³ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1991-religious-pluralism/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2020/09/statement-on-the-covenant-brethren-church.pdf>;
<https://anabaptistworld.org/conservative-brethren-exploring-separation/>

⁴⁵ <http://ane-cob.com/wayforward/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1984-abortion/>; <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2017-report-authority-of-annual-conference-regarding-accountability-of-ministers-congregations-and-districts/>;
<https://covenantbrethren.org/bylaws/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2003-call-for-a-living-peace-church/>