

Unfinished Business

UB 1. Compelling Vision

Origin of the Study

In response to the 2017 unfinished business item entitled, “The Authority of Annual Conference and Districts regarding the Accountability of Ministers, Congregations, and Districts,” the 2017 Annual Conference adopted a recommendation from the Leadership Team and the Council of District Executives “that the church turn its attention to the framing of a compelling vision for how we will continue the work of Jesus together.”

2018 Compelling Vision Report from the Leadership Team and the Council of District Executives

In the weeks following the 2017 Annual Conference, the Leadership Team and the executive committee of the Council of District Executives (hereafter: Council) discussed the need to form a small working group to carry out the 2017 Conference’s decision to turn the church’s attention to the framing of a compelling vision. The Leadership Team chose 2018 moderator Samuel Sarpiya and general secretary David Steele, and the executive committee of the Council chose district executives John Jantzi and Colleen Michael to serve as a four-member Compelling Vision Working Group. Later, as it became clear that the vast bulk of the compelling vision process will take place during the 2019 Annual Conference, the Leadership Team recommended, and the executive committee of the Council agreed that the Compelling Vision Working Group would be expanded to include 2019 moderator Donita Keister and Conference director Chris Douglas, as well as the person yet to be elected to serve as moderator-elect for the 2019 Conference.

In its early meetings the Compelling Vision Working Group (Working Group) focused on identifying the purpose and preferred size of a Compelling Vision Process Team (Process Team) that would plan and implement the denominational process for discerning our compelling vision. The Working Group also identified leadership qualities it hoped Process Team members could exhibit and sought nominations from the district executives and the Leadership Team, requesting nominees who could represent the diversity of the Church of the Brethren.

The Working Group has set in place a timeline for the church to be led through a visioning process that will begin with Annual Conference 2018 and continue through Annual Conference 2019. It is our hope that this process will result in a distinctive new beginning for our life together as the Church of the Brethren. The process is intended to move us beyond our conversations, debates, and official statements into the experience of vision and purpose as we proclaim and serve Christ together.

One might inquire as to what kind of vision would be so attention-grabbing, convincing, powerful, and irresistible that it would merit a description of “compelling”? While we cannot anticipate how God will work through a body of believers seeking God’s vision, we can answer that such a vision can only be anchored in Jesus Christ. As the leadership for this visioning process, the Compelling Vision Working Group has embraced the following guiding statement as foundational to the visioning framework and process:

“Confessing Jesus Christ as Teacher, Redeemer, and Lord, we desire to serve Him by proclaiming, professing, and walking in His way together bringing His peace to our broken world. Join us in reclaiming a new passion for Christ and helping set a course for our future as the Church of the Brethren serving Him in our communities and in the world!”

It is our intention that conversations about this vision will start with Jesus Christ as the center of our existence as a denomination. Early in 2018 the Compelling Vision Working Group called seven individuals, who had been nominated by the district executives, to serve as the Compelling Vision Process Team, together with 2018 moderator Samuel Sarpiya, 2019 moderator Donita Keister, and Conference director Chris Douglas. The Process Team will work during Annual Conference 2018 and Annual Conference 2019 and also alongside district gatherings to engage the church in conversations that generate themes which lead us to a compelling vision of a distinctive direction for the Church of the Brethren. The Working Group will provide oversight of the process. Both the Working Group and the Process Team will remain constant in their membership until the process reaches its conclusion.

The Compelling Vision process will begin at the 2018 Annual Conference. One full business session and a portion of a second business session will be dedicated to engaging Conference attendees in the visioning process. Following the 2018 Annual Conference, it is hoped that each district will have at least one district gathering designated for providing input to the development of a denominational vision statement. The Annual Conference 2019 will be primarily dedicated, including most of its business sessions, to the development of a compelling vision for the Church of the Brethren. The Compelling Vision Process Team will plan these Annual Conference sessions, compile the data generated during sessions, synthesize themes that emerge, and report those themes back to the Annual Conference for affirmation. Following Annual Conference 2019 the Working Group, in consultation with the Process Team, will oversee the articulation of the finalized Compelling Vision that will inform our life together going forward.

The Leadership Team and the Council are aware that this process will be greeted in a variety of ways across the denomination. For some it may be difficult to imagine how a denomination that is divided around issues of Biblical interpretation and authority might ever find a common vision together. For others, cynicism and mistrust of leadership may cause disinterest in the process. Whatever

1 our challenges, it is our hope and prayer that the longing to be the Church Christ
2 has called us to be and the desire to see God's Holy Spirit work a miracle in and
3 among us will compel us forward to see God's vision revealed as we gather and
4 seek God together. We ask for your prayers as the Working Group and the Process
5 Team do their best to plan and carry out this visioning process. We encourage
6 all congregations to take part in these conversations, bringing your unique con-
7 tributions and sharing in the hard work of discovering God's plan for how we
8 will continue to be the body of Christ in this broken world.

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10 *Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God;
11 for God all things are possible." Mark 10:27 NRSV*
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13 In order to provide adequate time to focus on this compelling vision process,
14 the Leadership Team recommends to the 2018 Annual Conference:

15 **that all new business for the 2019 Annual Conference be set aside so that**
16 **the delegate body and other Annual Conference participants can focus**
17 **their attention on the essential conversations that will lead to discerning**
18 **the compelling vision that Christ intends for the Church of the Brethren.**
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20 **Action of the Leadership Team:** On February 26, 2018, the Leadership Team
21 adopted this recommendation to be presented for consideration by the 2018
22 Annual Conference.

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24 Leadership Team

25 David A. Steele, general secretary, chair

26 Samuel Kefas Sarpiya, moderator

27 Donita J. Keister, moderator-elect

28 James M. Beckwith, secretary

29 David D. Shetler, Council of District Executives representative

30 Chris Douglas, Conference director, staff support
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32 **Action of the 2018 Annual Conference:** General secretary David A. Steele pre-
33 sented the report on behalf of the Leadership Team and the Council of District
34 Executives. *Annual Conference received the report about the Compelling Vision*
35 *work and adopted its recommendation that all new business for the 2019 Annual*
36 *Conference be set aside so that the delegate body and other Annual Conference*
37 *participants can focus their attention on the essential conversations that will lead*
38 *to discerning the compelling vision that Christ intends for the Church of the*
39 *Brethren.* In accordance with Standing Committee's recommendation, this sig-
40 nificant change in standard practice was adopted by more than a two-thirds ma-
41 jority in a counted vote of 513-111.
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2019 Compelling Vision Report
from the Leadership Team and the Council of District Executives

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In the early months of 2018, the Compelling Vision Working Group (Working Group) – with nominations from the Council of District Executives – called Kayla Alphonse (Atlantic Southeast), Kevin Daggett (Shenandoah), Rhonda Pittman Gingrich (Northern Plains), Brian Messler (Atlantic Northeast), Alan Stucky (Western Plains), and Kay Weaver (Atlantic Northeast) to serve on the Compelling Vision Process Team (Process Team). The Process Team also includes 2018 Moderator Samuel Sarpiya, 2019 Moderator Donita Keister, and Annual Conference Director Chris Douglas. The 2020 Annual Conference Moderator, Paul Munday, was added to the Process Team upon election at the 2018 Annual Conference in July.

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In April 2018 this newly formed Process Team gathered for several days at the Elgin offices for its initial meeting to consider how it would facilitate the process of discerning a compelling vision for the Church of the Brethren and to determine specific details of the Compelling Vision conversations to be conducted during the business sessions of the 2018 Annual Conference in Cincinnati. The Process Team also built a basic framework for the activities and conversations to be conducted in the year leading up to the 2019 Annual Conference. Rhonda Pittman Gingrich was called by the Process Team to serve as chair.

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As we have moved through this process we have found that the Compelling Vision Process will be most impactful as a balanced process of discernment around some basic areas of visioning:

- How congregations serve and minister with energy and purpose in their daily life together, and how we might move into the future as vital congregations aspiring to new ways of living out and sharing our faith in Christ for the strengthening of one another and for the transformation of our communities.
- How we can more effectively come together as many congregations joining hands to carry out missions that require congregations to pool resources and join with global partners so that many can be served in the name of Christ.
- How we can discern the best avenues for transforming and managing the division and conflict that has been a barrier to our full effectiveness in ministry as the Church of the Brethren.

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An important foundational principle built into this entire process is the simple and profound act of engaging in conversation itself. Given the polarization and distrust in society and in the church, building relationships with and nurturing trust in one another is critical to the possibility of moving forward together. Our hope is that participants will build and strengthen relationships with each other as they reflect on questions together and engage in respectful conversation. We hope they will discover shared values and a shared sense of God’s call. Further, as the scope of these conversations and what we have learned from people across

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1 the denomination is reported, we hope trust can be built even more broadly be-
2 cause people will begin to discover where their sense of God’s call and their val-
3 ues intersect with the calling and values of people from many different places
4 and cultures within our family of congregations.

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6 At Annual Conference 2018, we began a journey of intentional discernment and
7 visioning. The initial set of questions for reflection and conversation were de-
8 signed to give us a snapshot of who we are, what we share, and what we might
9 find compelling. A complete data collection report from Annual Conference
10 2018 can be found at [www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2021/](http://www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2021/01/data-collection-ac-2018.pdf)
11 [01/data-collection-ac-2018.pdf](http://www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2021/01/data-collection-ac-2018.pdf). Working with this data, the Process Team moved
12 forward into the second phase of our process – conversations with as many
13 Brethren as possible through meetings conducted in district venues.

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15 The district conversations were designed to go deeper into themes that were re-
16 vealed during the conversations at Annual Conference 2018. Questions asked
17 helped us gain understanding about what brings joy and where repentance is
18 needed in our life together. We sought to learn what folks believe is most impor-
19 tant for being a church that makes a difference in people’s lives and in the world,
20 and how congregations are trying or would like to live that out. We wanted to
21 learn how individuals and congregations see themselves connecting to the larger
22 values and priorities of the Church of the Brethren, and we wanted to gather
23 input for changes needed in our denominational life together to help us over-
24 come division and be more faithful to God’s call. As we closed each session, we
25 sought input about what has been missing from the visioning conversation that
26 folks would like to see addressed. At the writing of this report (February 2019),
27 nearly 2000 individuals have participated in approximately 65 conversation
28 events. (A few events are yet to occur before final numbers can be reported).

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30 In addition to the district conversations, leadership from various parts of the
31 denomination has been engaged in answering questions about rebuilding or-
32 ganizational trust, examining the structural integrity of our life together, dis-
33 cussing core theological values, and understanding the depth and breadth of
34 unity and/or division among us. While we gained some understanding about
35 these areas through the district conversations, key leadership is helping us drill
36 deeper as we prepare for Annual Conference 2019 conversations.

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38 The responses received through these conversations will shape the conversation at
39 Annual Conference 2019. We will seek to move even deeper and think more specif-
40 ically about what it might look like to be a church that is indeed working for the
41 transformation Christ brings to people’s lives and the world. Each conversation
42 that took place will have impact on both the process and the resulting vision.

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44 The Working Group and the Process Team see this as a spiritual process that will
45 only succeed if we are spiritually prepared with hearts ready to receive the vision
46 God will reveal through our discernment. Part of the work of the Process Team

has been to provide resources for spiritual preparation throughout the spring and particularly in the weeks leading up to Annual Conference. 1
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In the months following Annual Conference 2019, the Process Team and the Working Group will consider all that has been revealed through this year-long process of conversation and listening, and a vision will take shape to present to the 2020 Annual Conference for consideration by the delegate body. It is our prayer that the final outcome will indeed *compel* us to join together with a renewed passion for how God is calling us, the Church of the Brethren, to move into the future as disciples of Jesus Christ. 4
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Action of the 2019 Annual Conference: General secretary David A. Steele presented the report. *Annual Conference received the 2019 report from the Leadership Team and the Council of District Executives about the work of the Compelling Vision Working Group and the Compelling Vision Process Team as an interim report and granted an additional year for their work.* 12
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**2020-2021 Report from the Leadership Team
and the Council of District Executives** 18
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The 2019 Conference granted an additional year for continuing work by the Compelling Vision Working Group and the Compelling Vision Process Team, which worked collaboratively as the Compelling Vision Team until the Compelling Vision was discerned from all the data and articulated in early 2020 as a proposal for the 2020 Conference. Further work since then has been overseen by the Compelling Vision Working Group. This year's report will be presented to the 2021 delegate body by the Compelling Vision Working Group. 21
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**2020-2021 Compelling Vision Report
from the Compelling Vision Team** 29
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In Proverbs 29:18 we are reminded that "Where there is no vision, the people perish, but they that keepeth the law, happy are they" (KJV). In *The Message*, Eugene Peterson paraphrases it this way: "If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; but when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed." 32
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When delegates and other conferencegoers arrived at Annual Conference in 2019, they were stepping into an unfolding process that had been launched in 2017 when the delegate body adopted a recommendation from the Leadership Team and Council of District Executives "that the church turn its attention to the framing of a compelling vision for how we will continue the work of Jesus together." The actual process of discernment began at the 2018 Annual Conference when the delegate body acted to suspend all new business at the 2019 Annual Conference so significant time could be dedicated to further conversations about compelling vision. This action was followed by some initial conversation, 38
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1 which continued through a series of conversations in districts and with various
2 constituency groups, resulting in the significant conversations that took place
3 at Annual Conference in 2019 in the context of worship, Bible study, and prayer.

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5 Although fruitful, it is unsettling to engage in a process when there is no pre-
6 conceived outcome. It requires faith. This has indeed been a journey of faith as
7 we have sought to open ourselves to God’s call and vision. The Compelling Vi-
8 sion Process was *not* intended or designed to “test”, directly or indirectly, the
9 desire of the body to maintain, change, or establish any particular official posi-
10 tion/statement of the Annual Conference. Rather, the intent was to change the
11 focus and tone of our internal discourse, attending to God’s Spirit moving
12 among us, intentionally seeking to identify that which unites us and to discern
13 that which God is calling us to be and do as the body of Christ in these times.

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15 Throughout, our work was shaped by the guiding statement drafted by the Com-
16 pelling Vision Working Group and affirmed by the Compelling Vision Process
17 Team at the beginning of the process:

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19 *Confessing Jesus Christ as Teacher, Redeemer, and Lord, we desire to*
20 *serve Him by proclaiming, professing, and walking in His way together*
21 *bringing His peace to our broken world. Join us in reclaiming a new*
22 *passion for Christ and helping set a course for our future as the Church*
23 *of the Brethren serving Him in our communities and in the world!*

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25 We launched the conversation at Annual Conference in 2018 with the question:
26 What compels you to follow Jesus? And from there, the questions we asked, our
27 analysis and interpretation of the data, and even the articulation of the vision
28 itself, reflected our commitment to this guiding statement as we sought to dis-
29 cern what it means to live as Christ-centered disciples, in a Christ-centered com-
30 munity, engaging in Christ-centered ministry.

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32 At Annual Conference 2019, both delegates and non-delegates were invited to
33 engage in conversations around 19 questions designed to deepen our discern-
34 ment.

- 35 • Thursday afternoon, we asked questions that helped us begin to dream
36 about the future, to affirm where God is already at work among us as a
37 Christ-centered community, and to help us think about our identity through
38 the lens of our Christ-centered practices and passions.
- 39 • Friday morning, we moved into questions designed to help us think more
40 deeply about what it means to be Christ’s community and how we can find
41 ways to live well with each other as followers of Jesus Christ.
- 42 • Friday afternoon we invited participants to take a closer look at some of our
43 historical Christ-centered core convictions which had been affirmed in the
44 District conversations—like discipleship formation, peace, and service. The
45 intent was to help us better understand these convictions and how we are
46 called to put them into practice in these times.

- On Saturday morning we moved to questions designed to inspire big dreams about the future of our calling and work together as disciples of Jesus Christ, as well as to help us start to envision what those big ideas could look like in practical and specific terms.

A complete list of the questions we asked is available at www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2021/01/annual-conference-2019.pdf.

The use of iPad technology provided by CoVision allowed for everyone’s voice to be heard—not just the voices of a few standing in line at microphones. We received between 750 and 1300 responses to each of the 19 questions. The iPad technology also gave us the opportunity to review that data in real time and share an immediate snapshot of the themes emerging in the conversations. By and large, a more thorough analysis of the data, completed by both our consultant, Auxano, and by team members, confirmed our immediate sense of the themes which emerged from the conversations at Annual Conference.

Some common (as in shared), familiar, and recurring themes were woven throughout the responses to all the questions:

- a desire to grow in Christlikeness;
- a commitment to love God and our neighbor;
- a commitment to nurture and embody Christian community;
- a commitment to the Bible as the Word of God (although questions of interpretation still linger);
- a commitment to service, not for the sake of service, but as an expression of Christian discipleship;
- a commitment to peace (although interpretation and expression varied);
- gratitude for and a commitment to nurture children and youth in our circle of influence; and
- a desire to nurture and embrace more ethnic diversity within the body.

But also woven throughout were shared and recurring themes that bore witness to the impact of our current struggle in our life together:

- sorrow and lament over our division and a longing for unity; and
- a sense of mistrust (of one another, of leadership, of the structures and process that hold us together) and a desire to restore trust.

Following Annual Conference, the Compelling Vision Working Group and the Compelling Vision Process Team worked collaboratively as the Compelling Vision Team for the purpose of distilling the data and discerning a compelling vision with the assistance of our consultant, Jim Randall from Auxano.

The resulting vision deepens and expands our understanding of the motto that hung above Christopher Sauer’s printing press: For the glory of God and our neighbor’s good. As the body of Christ known as the Church of the Brethren, it calls us to a shared Christ-centered commitment to radical discipleship, a mis-

1 sional mindset, and the priesthood of all believers. Further, the interpretive doc-
2 ument affirms our commitment to scripture. The vision is compelling in its
3 focus, simplicity, and flexibility. The vision and an interpretive statement follow.
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5 In keeping with the timeline set forth at the beginning of the process, the Com-
6 pelling Vision was to be brought to Annual Conference 2020 for affirmation by
7 the delegate body. Due to the deferment of 2020 business to 2021, it will now
8 be brought to Annual Conference 2021.
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10 With the cancellation of Annual Conference in 2020, the Compelling Vision
11 Working Group encouraged continued engagement around the Compelling Vi-
12 sion through Bible study and discernment. To facilitate engagement, we devel-
13 oped a thirteen-session Bible study exploring key words and phrases in the
14 vision and invited continued reflection on how a commitment to live into the
15 vision might impact our life together within congregations and across the de-
16 nomination.
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18 Discernment of the Compelling Vision emerged from the work of the whole
19 church through significant conversations which took place at Annual Conference
20 2018 and 2019, in districts, and with various constituency groups. For this reason,
21 the Annual Conference Officers have determined that the process for affirming
22 the Compelling Vision must be one of creative, prayerful engagement through
23 continued conversation, rather than a process of motions and amendments.
24 Therefore, at the 2021 Annual Conference we will strive for consensus under the
25 guidance of the Holy Spirit as we move toward affirmation of the Compelling
26 Vision that God is calling the Church of the Brethren to carry out together.
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28 A vision statement is not intended to be a statement of belief; nor is it intended
29 to address any particular issue, nor is it intended to reflect specific plans for a
30 particular project. Rather it is a statement about how we are called to embody
31 our beliefs as the people of God, it is about inspiring and shaping our ministry
32 and mission as the body of Christ in these times.
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34 In preparation for engagement in the process that will continue to unfold at An-
35 nual Conference 2021, we encourage people across the church to read the full
36 interpretive document, study the scripture passages that undergird the docu-
37 ment, use the Compelling Vision Bible Studies (which can be found in English at
38 www.brethren.org/ac/compelling-vision/bible-studies/ and in Spanish at
39 www.brethren.org/ac/compelling-vision/estudio-biblico/), and reflect on the
40 following questions:

- 41 • How does the compelling vision reflect the soul of your congregation? How
42 does it reflect the soul of the Church of the Brethren?
- 43 • How do you see this vision being lived out in your own neighborhood?
- 44 • What might you need to let go of?
- 45 • What are the issues facing your community which could be healed/ad-
46 dressed by the radical transformation and holistic peace of Jesus Christ?

- How might we work at calling and equipping innovative, adaptable, and fearless disciples to live and share the radical transformation and holistic peace of Jesus Christ?
- What are the creative ways your congregation, your district, or the denomination as a whole, might embody this vision?

Someone once explained hope in this way: “Hope is activated when we say to ourselves, ‘I am willing to trust, to wait without demanding answers, and to contribute myself to the most positive use of the present.’” As we have moved through this time of discernment, we have been called into a season of hope; we have been called to trust, to wait, to contribute. This has been and continues to be challenging, disorienting, and uncomfortable, yet creative, exciting, and hopeful. Remember what the apostle Paul tells us about hope in Romans 5: “suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

At the outset of the conversations at the 2019 Annual Conference, we asked participants to tap into this hope by describing a Christ-centered ministry in another Church of the Brethren congregation or the wider body that gives them hope. A complete list of responses to this question can be found at www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2021/01/ac-2019-hope-giving-christ-centered-ministries-pdf.

However, the conversations that took place throughout the process and at Annual Conference in Greensboro were themselves also a source of hope for many. While we know that the experience at Annual Conference 2019 varied from table to table and those at some tables did not have a positive experience, we also heard numerous anecdotal accounts of the ways in which relationships were transformed, trust was built, and unity was discovered in the midst of diversity as people wrestled with tough questions about our future together, shared their stories with honesty and vulnerability, listened with compassion and respect, and discovered common ground. These stories affirmed both the conversational nature of the process which encouraged widespread engagement and allowed for everyone’s voice to be heard and the way in which this work was set in the context of worship, Bible study, and prayer at Annual Conference. Although some qualified their expressions of hope, the vast majority of participants in the conversations at Annual Conference expressed a sense of renewed hope about the future in which God is calling us to engage as a result of this process. Perhaps a quote from one participant expresses the essence of this sense of hope: “Even with great disagreement, we are all passionate about the scriptures and discerning what God wants us to do.” So, aside from the resulting vision, perhaps moving forward the process has laid the foundation for a different way of engaging around difficult topics.

May hope continue to flourish among us as we seek to be faithful to God’s call in Jesus Christ.

- 1 The Compelling Vision Team
- 2 Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, Northern Plains, co-chair
- 3 David Steele, general secretary, co-chair
- 4 Michaela Alphonse, Atlantic Southeast
- 5 Kevin Daggett, Shenandoah
- 6 Chris Douglas, director of the Annual Conference Office
- 7 John Jantzi, district executive, Shenandoah
- 8 Donita Keister, 2019 Annual Conference moderator
- 9 Brian Messler, Atlantic Northeast
- 10 Colleen Michael, former district executive, Pacific Northwest
- 11 Paul Munday, 2021 Annual Conference moderator
- 12 Samuel Sarpiya, 2018 Annual Conference moderator
- 13 Alan Stucky, Western Plains
- 14 Kay Weaver, Atlantic Northeast

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Jesus in the Neighborhood 1
A Compelling Vision for the Church of the Brethren 2
(All cited scripture from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.) 3

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4 Three years ago, denominational leadership recognized that we had reached a 5
critical moment in our life together. While individuals and congregations were 6
engaged in faithful ministry, as a denomination, it could be said we were wan- 7
dering without a sense of unified purpose. Further, we were mired in soul-sap- 8
ping conflict. Something needed to change. 9

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11 As a body, we were called into a time of intentional discernment. Like Noah in 11
the ark, Moses before the burning bush, the Israelites in the desert, Ruth follow- 12
ing Naomi to Judah, Elijah on Mount Horeb, Mary during her visit with Eliza- 13
beth, Jesus entering the desert following his baptism, and Paul after he had been 14
struck blind, for almost two years, we dwelled in a challenging, disorienting, 15
and uncomfortable, yet creative, exciting, and hopeful season of waiting and 16
watching for God's presence and direction. 17

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19 Throughout, as a community, we were centered in Jesus Christ, guided by scrip- 19
ture, and led by the Holy Spirit, resulting in the emergence of a new, unifying, 20
and compelling vision for the Church of the Brethren. 21

VISION STATEMENT 22
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25 **Together, as the Church of the Brethren, we will passionately live** 25
and share the radical transformation and holistic peace of Jesus Christ 26
through relationship-based neighborhood engagement. To move us 27
forward, we will develop a culture of calling and equipping disciples 28
who are innovative, adaptable, and fearless. 29

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31 There is much in this rich vision to unpack as we look to scripture and theology 31
to further interpret each significant phrase. 32

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34 **"Together, as the Church of the Brethren..."** 34

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36 Bonded to Jesus Christ,¹ we move together toward God's New Creation.² In our 36
diversity we celebrate our unity in the person and work of the Savior, celebrating 37
the God who makes us one.³ We recognize we are more than individuals; we 38
are the people of God.⁴ In a world that favors independence and solo effort, we 39
choose interdependence and community.⁵ We do so in the context of our 40
Church of the Brethren heritage, living out our Anabaptist-Pietist ideals empow- 41
ered by the Holy Spirit,⁶ through congregational, district, and national min- 42
istries. We believe our faith legacy lives on as we risk adventuresome acts of 43
radical discipleship,⁷ utilizing every expression of the church, local and trans- 44
local. In doing so, we venture forth boldly as a faith family, expectant and inno- 45
vative,⁸ serving others and the God who makes all things new.⁹ 46

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3 1 **Romans 1:1-4** Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of
4 God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel
5 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared
6 to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead,
7 Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 8 2 **Revelation 21:1-4** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first
9 earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,
10 coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I
11 heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will
12 dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe
13 every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no
14 more, for the first things have passed away."
- 15 3 **Romans 12:3-5** For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of your-
16 self more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to
17 the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and
18 not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and
19 individually we are members one of another.
- 20 4 1 **Peter 2:10** Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not re-
21 ceived mercy but now you have received mercy.
- 22 5 **Acts 2:42-47** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking
23 of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were
24 being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common;
25 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had
26 need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home
27 and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all
28 the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.
- 29 1 **Corinthians 12 (12, 24b-26)** For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the
30 members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ...God as so arranged the
31 body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within
32 the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all
33 suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.
- 34 6 **Zechariah 4:6** He said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor
35 by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts."
- 36 7 **Matthew 16:24-25** Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them
37 deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life
38 will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."
- 39 8 1 **Corinthians 2:9-10** But as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human
40 heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"—these things God has re-
41 vealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.
- 42 9 **Isaiah 43:19** I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will
43 make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
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...passionately live and share..."

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This vision calls us to passionate discipleship, requiring us to embody an enthusiastic zeal that glows from within us as we live and share with others.¹ Our living should exhibit the vigor of one who is alive in Jesus Christ, thoroughly steeped in and guided by the Holy Spirit.² The manner in which we live should radiate in our homes and communities so our good works can be seen and God may be glorified.³ With the same passion that we live Christ-centered lives, we are called to share generously with our neighbors, in deed and by word, what we have experienced ourselves.⁴ We share so that our neighbors and our communities may participate in the blessing of abundant life in Jesus Christ, now and for eternity.⁵

1 **Romans 12:11** Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.

2 **Galatians 5:22-25** The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

3 **Matthew 5:16** [Jesus taught them, saying:] "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

4 **2 Corinthians 9:6-15 (8, 13)** And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work... Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and all others.

5 **John 10: 7-10 (10b)** [Jesus said to them], "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. **1 John 1:1-3** We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

"...radical transformation..."

Radical transformation occurs only through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is characterized by an all-encompassing, profound change within those who place full faith and belief in God incarnate as revealed in scripture—Jesus Christ.¹ This inner transformation manifests outwardly through a life that turns away from the values of a world alienated from God and seeks to understand and embody God's holy values as revealed in Jesus Christ.² Lives radically transformed by Jesus Christ become channels for the flow of Christ's powerful grace, unconditional love, and holistic peace in the world around us where the Holy Spirit continues to draw people into radical transformation for the glory of God.³

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3 1 **John 1:1-14 (1-2, 12-14)** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the
4 Word was God. He was in the beginning with God...To all who received him, who believed in
5 his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the
6 will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived
7 among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and
8 truth. **John 5:24-25** [Jesus said to them,] "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word
9 and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has
10 passed from death to life. Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the
11 dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." **John 10:10** [Jesus
12 said to them,] "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have
13 life, and have it abundantly." 2 **Corinthians 5:17** So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new crea-
14 tion: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! **Titus 3:5** He saved us,
15 not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy,
16 through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. **John 3:16** [Jesus answered him,]
17 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him
18 may not perish but may have eternal life."

19 2 **Romans 12:2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your
20 minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and per-
21 fect. **Ephesians 4:22-24** You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, cor-
22 rupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe
23 yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness
24 and holiness. **Galatians 2:20** It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And
25 the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself
26 for me. **John 3:5-7** Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of
27 God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is
28 born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from
29 above.'"

30 3 **Matthew 9:35-38** Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their syna-
31 gogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every
32 sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed
33 and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plen-
34 tiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into
35 his harvest."; 2 **Corinthians 5:18-21** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself
36 through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was rec-
37 onciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the
38 message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his ap-
39 peal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he
40 made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of
41 God. **Colossians 1:27-28** To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles
42 are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. It is he
43 whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may
44 present everyone mature in Christ. **Ephesians 3:20-21** Now to him who by the power at work
45 within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be
46 glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

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42 "...holistic peace..."
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44 In the beginning, God created the world in Shalom. Shalom is not simply the
45 absence of violence, but rather the presence of a holistic peace—right, or healthy,
46 relationships in four different ways:

- between us and God;¹ 1
- between us and other human beings;² 2
- between us and ourselves;³ 3
- between us and all of creation.⁴ 4

In Genesis 3 all four of these relationships become broken. Adam and Eve become estranged from God, their relationship with each other becomes distorted, they know their sin and experience internal brokenness, and their relationship with animals and even the ground is cursed. The rest of the Biblical story is an account of God’s varied and ongoing attempts to restore this original Shalom, ultimately culminating in sending Jesus Christ to bring about this restoration through his life, death and resurrection.⁵

When we speak of “holistic peace” we are referring to Shalom. Since God’s kingdom is already begun, but not yet complete,⁶ we are called by God to strive for and participate in Shalom, both in small, everyday ways and in large, systemic ways.⁷ For example:

- To help others learn about Jesus and become his disciples is to participate in Shalom. 18
- To work to transform conflict, whether between individuals or nations, is to participate in Shalom. 19
- To directly address mental health issues is to participate in Shalom. 20
- To care for God’s creation that has been entrusted to us is to participate in Shalom. 21

1 **Jeremiah 31:33** But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 2 **Corinthians 5:18-19** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. 25

2 **Luke 18:8-9** Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek out and to save the lost.” **John 17:20-21** [Jesus prayed,] “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” 32

3 **Romans 7:14-25 (14-15, 22-25a)** For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions, For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate...For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! **Mark 5:1-20 (14b-15)** Then people 46

1 came to see what it was that had happened. They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting
2 there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion; and they were
3 afraid.

4 **Genesis 9:8-10** Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing
5 my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is
6 with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as
7 came out of the ark. **Romans 8:18-21** I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not
8 worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager
9 longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not
10 of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will
11 be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children
12 of God.

13 **5 Romans 5:1-11 (10)** For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the
14 death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.
15 **John 3:16-17** [Jesus answered him,] "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so
16 that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did
17 not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be
18 saved through him." **2 Corinthians 13:4** For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the
19 power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the
20 power of God.

21 **6 Luke 17:20-21** Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming,
22 and he answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor
23 will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' for, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you."
24 **Mark 13:32-37 (33)** [Jesus said to them,] "Be aware, keep alert; for you do not know when the
25 time will come."

26 **7 1 Corinthians 3:9** For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's
27 building.

28 **"...Jesus Christ..."**

29
30 Jesus Christ is the living Word, the Son of God, fully divine and present with
31 God at creation.¹ He was sent from God as a human being, walking and living
32 in the neighborhoods of Judea proclaiming God's kingdom. We continue to de-
33 light in the presence of the living Christ through the Holy Spirit, empowering
34 us to live as Jesus' followers in our neighborhoods.² Therefore, we confess to-
35 gether:

- 36 • **Jesus Christ is our Redeemer** – Through God's extension of grace and our
37 repentance, Christ's redemption delivers us from sin. Our redemption
38 through Christ restores our broken relationship with God and our neigh-
39 bors.³
- 40 • **Jesus Christ is our Teacher** – Jesus' words, deeds and example are recorded
41 in scripture, teaching us how to live in reconciled relationships with God
42 and our neighbors.⁴
- 43 • **Jesus Christ is our Lord** – We pledge to Christ alone our loyalty and obe-
44 dience. All other loyalties are secondary to our commitment to follow Jesus
45 as his disciples.⁵

46

1 **Genesis: 1:1-2** In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a
formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over
the face of the waters. **Isaiah 9:6-7** For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; author-
ity rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting
Father, Prince of Peace. **John 1:1-14 (1, 14)** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was
with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we
have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

2 **Acts 1:1-8 (8)** [Jesus replied,] "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon
you; and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the
earth."

3 **Exodus 6:6-8** Say therefore to the Israelites, "I am the Lord, and I will free you from the bur-
dens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an out-
stretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my people, and I will be
your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens
of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and
Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord." **Mark 10:45** [Jesus called them and
said to them,] "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a
ransom for many." **Ephesians 2:11-22 (13,15-18)** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were
far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ...He has abolished the law with its com-
mandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the
two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the
cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you
who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in
one Spirit to the Father. **Colossians 1:13-14** He has rescued us from the power of darkness
and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the
forgiveness of sins.

4 **Jeremiah 31:31-34 (33-34)** But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their
hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one
another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of
them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no
more. **Matthew 16:24** Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let
them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **John 13:13-16** [Jesus said to
them,] "You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your
Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have
set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, ser-
vants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent
them." **Ephesians 5:1-2** Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love,
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

5 **Exodus 20:1-3** Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you
out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.
Romans 10:9 Because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart
that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **Philippians 2:9-11** Therefore God also
highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of
Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue
should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. **Revelation 17:14** They
will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King
of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.

1 **"...relationship-based neighborhood engagement..."**
2

3 The body of Christ is called to be generous, sharing its resources with those in
4 need.¹ Many congregations quickly and enthusiastically gather food, clothing,
5 and other resources to help those who face scarcity in relation to basic, physical
6 needs. This vision calls us to go beyond meeting physical needs to a place where
7 we, like Jesus Christ, are walking in authentic friendship with those who share
8 our geographic neighborhoods.² This means responding to needs and sharing
9 our resources without partiality or condescension in the face of any differences,
10 but rather with sensitivity, compassion, respect, and a genuine willingness to
11 learn.³ It is grounded in a deep understanding that every human being stands
12 in equal need of reconciliation with God, and when we have experienced that
13 reconciliation we become ministers of it through trusting, faithful, long-term
14 relationships with our neighbors.⁴
15

16 This is well done by the body of Christ when behavior toward those both within
17 and outside the body consistently and seamlessly embodies the call to love as
18 Jesus Christ loved, making the "walls" of the church virtually non-existent.⁵ In
19 these times, God is calling us to be the denomination challenging its congrega-
20 tions to live out a deep sense of love and care for the body, soul, and spirit of
21 each individual with whom we are privileged to engage, and an unmistakable
22 commitment to the overall well-being of the neighborhood.⁶ Such a focus brings
23 deeper meaning to the motto which hung above the Sauer printing press and
24 which many Brethren have claimed as their own: "For the glory of God and our
25 neighbor's good."
26

27 1 **Luke 3:11** In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has
28 none; and whoever has food must do likewise." **Hebrews 13:16** Do not neglect to do good
29 and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. **Acts 4:32-35** Now the
30 whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private
31 ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great
32 power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace
33 was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or
34 houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet,
35 and it was distributed to each as any had need.

36 2 **John 1:14** (*The Message*) The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbor-
37 hood.

38 3 **James 2:1-4** My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our
39 glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your
40 assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one
41 wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you
42 say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and
43 become judges with evil thoughts? **Micah 6:6-8** (8) He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
44 and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk
45 humbly with your God?
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4 **Romans 3:22-24** The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ [has been disclosed] 1
 for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory 2
 of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ 3
 Jesus. 2 **Corinthians 5:18-21** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through 4
 Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling 5
 the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of 6
 reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through 7
 us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be 8
 sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 9

5 **John 13:34-35** [Jesus said,] "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just 10
 as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are 11
 my disciples, if you have love for one another." 1 **John 4:7-21 (7,18-19)** Beloved, let us love 12
 one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God... 13
 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and 14
 whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. **Ephesians** 15
2:17-21 So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who 16
 were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are 17
 no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the 18
 household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus 19
 himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy 20
 temple in the Lord. 21

6 **John 14:23 (The Message)** "Because a loveless world," said Jesus, "is a sightless world. If any- 22
 one loves me, he will carefully keep my word and my Father will love him—we'll move right 23
 into the neighborhood." **Jeremiah 29:7** But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you 24
 into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. 25

"...culture..." 26

We will reorient the entire "nature and being" of our denomination around a 27
 missional (e.g., outwardly focused) mindset.¹ To this end, we call every element 28
 of our denominational system (Mission and Ministry Board, Annual Conference 29
 agencies, Districts, Congregations) to realign their language, norms, beliefs, sym- 30
 bols, values, and priorities around an external focus to reach persons for Jesus 31
 Christ and His other way of living.² We will create a culture of empowerment 32
 that encourages and equips the local church³ to reach persons with a compre- 33
 hensive message of salvation,⁴ declaring Jesus Christ as Lord of all life.⁵ 34

It is understood that such a kingdom emphasis summons congregations to respond 36
 prophetically, systemically, and globally, even while reaching out locally.⁶ We recog- 37
 nize such refocus will require loss but claim the biblical hope that as some things 38
 die, there is, nevertheless, the promise of new life.⁷ We further affirm such rebirth 39
 is a gift of the Holy Spirit; thus, we recommit to a renewed denominational lan- 40
 guage of dependence on God's provision⁸ and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ.⁹ 41

1 **1 Peter 2:9** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in 43
 order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his 44
 marvelous light. **Acts 1:8** [Jesus replied,] "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has 45
 come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to 46
 the ends of the earth."

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2 2 **1 John 1:1-4 (1, 3-4)** We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard,
3 what we have seen with our eyes... concerning the word of life... so that you also may have fel-
4 lowship with us; and truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We
5 are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.
- 6 3 **Ephesians 4:11-13** The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some
7 evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for build-
8 ing up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge
9 of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.
- 10 4 2 **Corinthians 5:17-19** So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has
11 passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to him-
12 self through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was
13 reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting
14 the message of reconciliation to us.
- 15 5 **Philippians 2:5-10** Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was
16 in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emp-
17 tied himself... And being found in human form humbled himself and became obedient to the
18 point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also exalted him and gave him the
19 name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bend, in heaven
20 and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to
21 the glory of God the Father.
- 22 6 **Luke 4:16-21 (18-19, 21)** When [Jesus] came to Nazareth... to the synagogue... [he read from
23 the scroll of Isaiah]: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring
24 good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of
25 sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then
26 he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."
- 27 7 **John 12:23-25** Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
28 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a sin-
29 gle grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who
30 hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." **Philippians 3:7-9 (7-8)** Yet whatever
31 gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard
32 everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his
33 sake I suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish that I may gain Christ.
- 34 8 **Proverbs 3:5** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all
35 your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. **John 14:12-14** [Jesus said
36 to him,] "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and,
37 in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever
38 you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me
39 for anything, I will do it.
- 40 9 **Hebrews 1:1-4** Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the
41 prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all
42 things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the
43 exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he
44 had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having
45 become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.
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“...calling and equipping...”

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It has been said that “God doesn’t call the equipped. God equips the called.” Within the Church of the Brethren, we affirm the “priesthood of all believers.”¹ Therefore, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we are all called to partner in God’s ongoing work of redemption.² Further, we can trust that God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, will equip us—individually and as a community—with all we need to do God’s will.³

However, that doesn’t mean it isn’t important for us to actively call and equip people to lead us in special ways. As we embark on this journey into our neighborhoods to live and share the radical transformation and holistic peace of Jesus Christ with grace and humility, it is incumbent upon us to be attentive to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our own lives and in the lives of our neighbors, to discern the God-given gifts in one another and ourselves, to call out those among us who can lead us into our neighborhoods, and to partner with God in equipping our faith communities—through teaching, prayer, communal study of Scripture, and a consistent, faithful openness to what God is calling us to do and be.⁴

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1 **1 Peter 2:4-10 (5, 9)** Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. **Romans 12:3-8 (4-6a)** For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.

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2 **Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. **Ephesians 4:7, 12-13** But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift... to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

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3 **Hebrews 13:21** [Now may the God of peace] make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. **Philippians 1:6** I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:4-31 (4-7, 27)** Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good... Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

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4 **Ephesians 4:15-16** But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.

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1 **“...disciples who are innovative, adaptable, and fearless...”**

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3 Discipleship connects not only the head (learning and growing in faith and
4 knowledge) and the heart (allowing us to feel the needs of those around us); it
5 also connects to our hands (challenging us to be the hands and feet of Jesus
6 Christ in this world).¹ Consider the disciples who walked with Jesus Christ and
7 the radical manner in which they lived out their call. They interacted with out-
8 casts, they engaged others in unique ways, they were molded and shaped into
9 evangelists, encouragers, empathizers, and those who empowered others. Even
10 in the first century, these radical disciples changed the way people thought about
11 life, faith, and community. Men and women, together, demonstrated a new hope
12 found only in Jesus Christ.²

13

14 To be disciples in the 21st century, we need look no further than those first dis-
15 ciples and the cloud of witnesses that came after them.³ Disciples throughout
16 the years were fearless⁴ in their pursuit of Jesus Christ. They were risk-takers,
17 seeking opportunities to let go of their needs and surrender to the call of Jesus
18 in their lives. They had courage to share the holistic peace and radical transfor-
19 mation Jesus Christ offered. At each step of history, disciples were innovative⁵
20 in sharing this transformation and peace in a constantly evolving world. New
21 ways of connecting, sharing the gospel, and building community change with
22 every generation. Like the disciples who preceded us, we need to be adaptable⁶
23 in both the means by and opportunities in which we share that hope. In a frac-
24 tured culture, we must be courageous and discerning of new ways to proclaim
25 Jesus Christ in order to passionately live out Christ’s call for our neighborhoods
26 and world.

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29 1 **Luke 10:26-27** [Jesus] said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He
30 answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and
31 with all your strength, and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself. ”

32

33 2 **Romans 5:1-5** Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our
34 Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and
35 we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our
36 sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and
37 character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been
poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

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39 3 **Hebrews 11:1-12:2 (12:1)** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,
40 let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with persever-
ance the race that is set before us.

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42 4 **Matthew 16:24-25** Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them
43 deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life
44 will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. **Acts 5:41** As [the apostles] left
45 the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of
46 the name [Jesus Christ]. 2 **Timothy 1:7** For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but
rather a spirit of power, and of love, and of self-discipline.

5	Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.	1
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6	Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I am referring to being in need, for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.	4
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	1 Corinthians 9:19 – For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them.	8
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