

Report of the Leadership Team

The Leadership Team provides executive leadership for the committees of Annual Conference and general oversight of Annual Conference. Members of the Leadership Team include the Annual Conference Officers (Moderator, Moderator-elect, and Secretary) the General Secretary, a district executive representing the Council of District Executives, and the Director of Annual Conference providing staff assistance. Some of the primary tasks of the Leadership Team include serving as an executive committee for Annual Conference, delegating tasks from the actions of Annual Conference, interpreting Annual Conference decisions and denominational polity, and providing general oversight for Annual Conference in consultation with the Program and Arrangements Committee and the Director of Annual Conference.

The Leadership Team convened for ten scheduled meetings in 2021. As is often the case each year, the Team's work included responding to correspondence from individuals, congregations, and groups expressing a variety of concerns and perspectives, and providing interpretations of denominational polity and Annual Conference position statements. Concerns regarding accountability, district viability, unity in the midst of our diversity, the importance of Matthew 18 for maintaining our relationship-based understandings of discipleship and church life, and our eagerness to find ways to help us all as sisters and brothers in Christ find ways to affirm our covenant with one another and move forward amid the tensions of our life as a diverse gathering of God's people were also part of our meetings this year.

Given the number of congregations that have withdrawn from the Church of the Brethren, the Leadership Team discussed how polity would have us determine the point at which a congregation has actually left the Church of the Brethren, as well as our strong desire that our sisters and brothers remain in the church as we work through our disagreements and discover how we are called to work with Jesus together.

The Leadership Team passed along several recommendations to the Mission and Ministry Board for its consideration as it proposed changes to the Church of the Brethren Inc. Bylaws. Early in the year, we engaged in considerable conversation providing interpretive input into the 2021 Annual Conference Officers Moderator's FAQ's, which were the direct result of and response to questions received through multiple district Question and Answer sessions sponsored by the 2021 Annual Conference Moderator. We worked alongside the Annual Conference Officers in providing input and counsel in their planning for the online Annual Conference. Given recent changes at Annual Conference due to the Compelling Vision process, the pandemic, and church life in general, the Leadership Team felt it was important to call a committee to consider if there might be changes needed in the Annual Conference experience. We appointed a sub-committee on "Doing Annual Conference Differently," received their report, and passed along their suggestions to the Program and Arrangements Committee to review. After several years of delay due to the Annual Conference Officers' decision to not conduct polity-related business during the Compelling Vision process and the cancellation of Conference due to the pandemic, the Leadership Team worked, in consultation with the leadership of the three Annual Conference Agencies, to finalize a new Agency Polity as directed by the 2017 Annual Conference. This work included several consultations with Agency leadership throughout the drafting process.

Leadership Team

General Secretary David A. Steele, chair

Moderator David Sollenberger

Moderator-elect Tim McElwee

Council of District Executives Representative Torin Eikler

Annual Conference Secretary James M. Beckwith, secretary