



ROMANS 16:2 (CEB)

WELCOME+ WORTHY

2024 CHURCH OF THE BROTHERS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

INTERPRETIVE STATEMENT

In today's society, we spend a lot of time wondering if we're worthy. And, whether we admit it or not, we spend a lot of time assessing others based on our own standards. We do this, because we've set up so many "rules" for ourselves since before we can remember – rules that have been influenced by our families, neighbors, teachers, and experiences. These rules are how we make sense of the world. They help us interpret and navigate our complex social constructs.

But, when taken to the extreme, they also can limit our understanding of the infinite worth of every human being. They can painfully and disruptively fracture our relationships. And they can run contrary to God's Word and the Holy Spirit's leading.

Since the early 18th Century beginnings of the Brethren movement, we've been a faith family that has chosen another way of living: the way of Christ. We are people called to live and experience our faith **together** in service to (and with) God and each other. And, every person in our faith community shares in the spiritual direction of the church. All of our spiritual gifts are needed if we are to function together as a healthy Body of Christ. Each of us is called to extend and receive Christ's love.

In his letter to the Church in Rome, the Apostle Paul introduces Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchreae, and tells the Roman Christians to "Welcome her in the Lord in a way that is worthy of God's people." As the one and only mention of Phoebe in the Bible, we don't know much about her. We don't know if she was a prominent church leader and ordained deacon, or if she was Paul's informal helper and supporter. We don't know what she looked like, if she was married, how she earned a living, or what her political views were.

But we do know that Paul viewed Phoebe as a valued sibling in Christ and an integral part of the Body, and he encouraged the Christians in Rome to welcome and build an authentic relationship with her as a child of God.

Like Phoebe, each of us brings our own unique abilities, experiences, and perspectives to this community. And it is through our willingness to share our faith journeys with one another – and to receive one another in the fullness of each person's being – that we can experience and see God's vision for us more fully – and, therefore, be transformed together by God's Spirit.

Let's explore our call to live together in community, abide in Christ and one another, and re- envision how we extend Christ's love to each other and ourselves in ways that are worthy of God's people.

– Madalyn Metzger, Moderator