

NB 5. Proposed Memorandum of Understanding Updating Polity for Bethany Theological Seminary

As an innovative learning community grounded in an Anabaptist and Radical Pietist witness, Bethany Theological Seminary empowers every student to lead through spiritual engagement, faith-filled thought and transformative practice so that the world flourishes.

Introduction

Founded in 1905, Bethany Theological Seminary began with a vision that included spiritual empowerment, strong biblical scholarship, and an education rooted in a practical experience for the benefit of the church. Bethany's initial vision and today's mission rests on the denomination's unique Anabaptist and Radical Pietist heritage, which has informed the Seminary's curriculum and program since its founding.

In a spirit of mutuality, Bethany Theological Seminary affirms its long-standing relationship with the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference and seeks to be a supportive partner of its mission, program, policy, and polity, while affirming Bethany Theological Seminary's unique mission and institutional independence.

Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) restates board membership and composition in the "basis for annual conference agency status" as outlined in *Polity Regarding Annual Conference Agencies* as approved by the 2022 Annual Conference. The MOU serves as polity until *Agency Covenants* are developed in relationship with Standing Committee and adopted by the Annual Conference.

Function

Bethany is a graduate school of higher education accredited by the Association of Theological Schools and the Higher Learning Commission. As the only seminary of Church of the Brethren heritage and theology, Bethany provides for the educational requirement for those seeking ordination in the Church of the Brethren and supports the continuing education of the denomination's ordained and lay leaders. In addition, Bethany supports the program and administration of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, a partnership program with the Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry. In addition to formal programs for lay and ordained leaders, faculty of Bethany provide leadership for continuing education events at the Seminary, for districts, and throughout the denomination. As an institution of higher education, Bethany oversees the development, direction, and management of *Brethren Life and Thought*.

Board Membership, Composition, and Terms

The Board of Trustees of Bethany (hereafter referred to as Board) consists of no more than 25 members with a majority of the Trustees having membership in the Church of the Brethren or the Global Church of the Brethren. The remaining

1 members, if chosen outside the Church of the Brethren, shall possess knowledge
2 and skills that are desired and/or required to help bring expertise and vision to
3 the Board so that it can fulfill its strategic goals.

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5 New trustees shall be affirmed by the Annual Conference. Each term is for a pe-
6 riod of five years. Trustees may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms. There
7 shall be a lapse of at least one year following the completion of two consecutive
8 terms before a Trustee is eligible for appointment to additional terms. The
9 trustees of the Board will select a successor trustee to fill the unexpired term of
10 any trustee in the event of a vacancy due to the resignation or death of a trustee
11 before the end of a term. Partial terms of two years or less shall not be counted
12 in considering eligibility for re-election. The Board may appoint advisory people
13 who serve as non-voting members on the Board and/or its standing committees.
14 The Board Development Committee welcomes nominations through the Annual
15 Conference nomination process.

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17 Officers of Annual Conference, members of Standing Committee, and members
18 of leadership boards of other agencies reportable to Annual Conference are in-
19 eligible to serve concurrently as trustees of the Bethany Board.

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21 **Ex Officio Relationships**

22 The president of Bethany or a designee, shall serve as an ex officio member of
23 the Mission and Ministry Board. The general secretary of Church of the Brethren,
24 Inc. and a representative from the Council of District Executives shall serve as ex
25 officio members of the Bethany Board. Additional relationships may be devel-
26 oped with other agencies reportable to Annual Conference.

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28 Approved by the Bethany Board of Trustees at their March 22, 2024 board meet-
29 ing for consideration by the 2024 Annual Conference.