



REIMAGINING BRETHREN PRESS

A proposal for sustainable operations in a new publishing environment



BACKGROUND OF THE BRETHERN PRESS REIMAGINING TEAM

We are a group of people with diverse backgrounds and a passion for the church who have volunteered to work on the issue of the financial state of Brethren Press. We have attempted to do this through thoughtful study, conversation, research, and prayer within the context of our faith.

The root of the problem is that there is likely no path that Brethren Press can profitably operate under its current model and in the realities of the current market.

AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GREAT WORK

Before we get into the proposal's specifics, it is important to recognize that our Brethren Press staff have brought passion and skill to their craft at Brethren Press. We appreciate the work the Brethren Press team has done and continues to do.

PROCESS

We looked at numerous scenarios, and the following seems to be the best recommendation based on the information we have been provided. However, it includes several parts, and we think all parts should be implemented for the desired outcome to be achieved.

The recommendation was developed over several months, numerous meetings, and many email discussions.

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATION

Brethren Press should become a part CORE ministries.

Bringing Brethren Press into CORE ministries will remove the Brethren Press Gross Sales Contribution from future balance sheets.

EXPECTATIONS OF BRETHERN PRESS COMING INTO CORE MINISTRY – PART 1

- As part of CORE ministries, the mission focus of Brethren Press shifts to facilitating and fostering the mission of the Mission and Ministry Board and its strategic plan.
- Brethren Press staff, in consultation with the General Secretary, will refine the book publishing focus of the ministry, developing clear guidelines for publishing projects. Significant projects will need approval from the General Secretary or designee.
- Brethren Press will become the in-house publishing partner working collaboratively with other departments, enabling their reach into the life of the church to be expanded.

EXPECTATIONS OF BRETHREN PRESS COMING INTO CORE MINISTRY – PART 2

- Brethren Press will expand the reach within the Church of the Brethren, demonstrated by growing the customer base across product lines in Church of the Brethren congregations by 25% over the next 3 years.
- Brethren Press will continue to generate positive revenue against expenses (target of 7%), contributing to the overall financial health of Mission and Ministry Board. It is believed that the inclusion of Brethren Press as a part of CORE ministries will enhance marketability of products to Brethren congregations.

REFINING FOCUS

As part of the move to CORE ministries, all projects should be held to a litmus test of "does this publication capture a unique aspect of our faith or strongly forward our ideas?" If the answer is "no" or even "kind of," it will not be pursued. This may mean choosing not to do some projects that have traditionally been done. Still, it will allow spending energy on improving core products essential to the faith.

Brethren Press may sometimes be called upon to recommend other publishing houses for projects that have merit, but do not fit within their refined core purpose.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Brethren Press will direct the effort they are currently spending on marginal projects to reduce production costs, examine new core-directed ideas such as a subscription model, and look at ways to update and repurpose existing materials.

Brethren Press is encouraged to consider and present other creative ideas as they work to facilitate this new mission.

LEVERAGING EXPERTISE

The shift of Brethren Press into CORE will result in the loss of autonomy, but this will be balanced by clarity of mission, an opportunity to collaborate, and closer access to the resources of the Mission and Ministry Board. The goal is to move from being the publishing arm to a more integrated part of the ministries.

EXISTING DEBT

The current Brethren Press debt will not be written off at this time. With the elimination of the transfers, Brethren Press should be able to show enough positive revenue to retire the debt over the next decade or so. If this plan fails, the circumstances can be reexamined, but the numbers seem to indicate that this is an attainable goal.

AN OPPORTUNITY, NOT A BURDEN

The move to CORE ministries and the accompanying focus on Brethren Press as an essential part of the ministry will result in a beneficial shift for all involved.

The goal of this plan is not to shift responsibility solely to CORE but to share it among Brethren Press, the Mission and Ministry Board, and the churches it serves.

DISCUSSION