

At the General Secretary's request, the Mission and Ministry Board's communication governance policy has been revised and reviewed by the Admin Team for the Board's consideration. The proposed update reflects today's communications, marketing, and constituent engagement environment; clarifies authority, roles, and delegation; and establishes communications as a strategic, integrated function supporting the denomination's mission, relationships, and public witness. It also distinguishes the Board's governance responsibilities from administrative standards and procedures, which are maintained separately under the Executive Director of Engagement and Communication's direction.

Mission and Ministry Board Communications Governance Policy

Purpose

The Mission and Ministry Board recognizes that effective communications are essential to carrying forward the mission of the Church of the Brethren. Communications, engagement, marketing, and brand stewardship help strengthen relationships, foster participation in the life and ministries of the church, communicate the church's witness with clarity and integrity, and support faithful stewardship of the denomination's identity and public presence.

This policy establishes the governance principles, authority, and expectations that guide communications conducted on behalf of the Mission and Ministry Board. It is intended to promote strategic, integrated, and mission-centered communications that support the church's ministries, strengthen relationships across the denomination and beyond, and encourage consistent stewardship of the Church of the Brethren's public witness.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish clear lines of authority and accountability for organizational communications.
- Promote thoughtful planning and coordination of communications, engagement, and related marketing activities across the ministries of the Mission and Ministry Board.
- Strengthen relationships and trust through timely, accurate, accessible, and mission-centered communications.
- Encourage communications that reflect the values, polity, and witness of the Church of the Brethren.
- Foster collaboration across ministries while allowing appropriate flexibility in day-to-day communications.
- Support organizational learning and continuous improvement through regular evaluation of communications effectiveness.

This policy establishes governance expectations. Administrative procedures, editorial standards, brand standards, digital communications standards, social media standards, and crisis communications procedures shall be maintained separately under the direction of the General Secretary.

Guiding principles

Communications undertaken on behalf of the Mission and Ministry Board should:

- Support the mission, strategic priorities, and actions of the Mission and Ministry Board and Annual Conference.
- Reflect the values, polity, and public witness of the Church of the Brethren.
- Strengthen relationships across the church and with the wider community.
- Be guided by thoughtful planning, informed by an understanding of the people and communities the church seeks to serve.
- Encourage meaningful engagement and participation in the ministries of the Church of the Brethren.

- Seek to understand the needs, experiences, and perspectives of congregations, districts, ministry partners, donors, volunteers, and the wider community through ongoing listening and engagement.
- Communicate with honesty, humility, grace, transparency, and respect.
- Encourage understanding, dialogue, and discernment rather than unnecessary division.
- Honor the diversity of the church while affirming our shared identity in Christ.
- Strive to communicate in ways that are accessible, understandable, welcoming, and appropriate for diverse audiences.
- Reflect faithful stewardship of the Church of the Brethren's identity, reputation, and public witness.

The Mission and Ministry Board recognizes that effective communications are strengthened by strategic planning, informed by listening, and carried out through coordinated communications, engagement, and related marketing efforts that advance the church's mission and ministry.

Governance and authority

The General Secretary serves as the chief executive officer and primary spokesperson of the Mission and Ministry Board, and retains final authority over official organizational positions, public statements issued on behalf of the Mission and Ministry Board, and communications involving significant organizational, legal, theological, governance, financial, personnel, or reputational matters.

The General Secretary shall designate the Executive Director of Engagement and Communications to provide executive leadership for the Mission and Ministry Board's communications, engagement, marketing, media relations, digital communications, and brand stewardship responsibilities. The Executive Director of Engagement and Communications shall advise the General Secretary and Admin Team on strategic communications matters and coordinate communications across the ministries of the Mission and Ministry Board in support of organizational priorities.

The Executive Director of Engagement and Communications is responsible for:

- Developing integrated communications, engagement, and related marketing strategies that support the mission and strategic priorities of the Mission and Ministry Board.
- Coordinating communications planning across ministries to promote consistency, collaboration, and effective stewardship of organizational resources.
- Providing strategic counsel to organizational leadership regarding communications, engagement, constituent relationships, and public witness.
- Overseeing administrative communications standards, editorial guidance, brand standards, and related procedures approved by the General Secretary.
- Monitoring and evaluating communications effectiveness to support organizational learning and continuous improvement.

Administrative responsibility for implementing this policy rests with the General Secretary and the Executive Director of Engagement and Communications.

Strategic communications, engagement, and coordination

The Mission and Ministry Board recognizes that effective communications are most successful when they are thoughtfully planned, strategically coordinated, and integrated across the denominational ministries.

Communications should not function solely as a means of sharing information, but as an essential component of building relationships, strengthening participation in the church's ministries, and advancing the mission and public witness of the Church of the Brethren.

Communications, engagement, and related marketing activities should be developed in alignment with the Mission and Ministry Board's mission, strategic priorities, and denominational goals. Planning should consider the needs and perspectives of intended audiences, encourage collaboration across ministries, and seek opportunities to communicate the church's work in ways that are timely, meaningful, and consistent.

The Executive Director of Engagement and Communications shall work collaboratively with ministry leaders to support integrated planning across the denomination, helping to identify opportunities for coordinated communications, constituent engagement, and shared storytelling that strengthen the church's relationships with congregations, districts, ministry partners, donors, volunteers, and the wider community.

Communications originating from departments, ministries, commissions, and programs of the Mission and Ministry Board shall be coordinated through the Executive Director of Engagement and Communications or their designee, to promote consistency with denominational priorities, established communications and brand standards, and approved administrative procedures.

Routine communications may be developed and approved according to administrative procedures established by the General Secretary. Communications involving significant denominational policy, legal matters, personnel issues, financial matters, matters of theological interpretation, or issues likely to affect the Church of the Brethren's public witness or reputation shall be reviewed with the General Secretary prior to publication or release.

The Mission and Ministry Board recognizes that communications planning is strengthened through ongoing evaluation, listening, and engagement. Insights gained through communications and engagement activities should inform future planning, strengthen relationships with the church and its partners, and support continuous organizational learning and improvement.

Brand stewardship

The Mission and Ministry Board is entrusted with stewarding the Church of the Brethren's public identity as an expression of the church's mission and witness.

Brand stewardship extends beyond the appropriate use of names and visual identity. It includes the thoughtful and consistent expression of the Church of the Brethren's mission, values, voice, messaging, visual identity, and public witness across all organizational communications and through the experiences by which people encounter the denomination and its ministries.

Consistent stewardship of the Church of the Brethren's identity strengthens recognition, trust, and understanding while supporting meaningful engagement with the church's ministries. It also reflects the Mission and Ministry Board's commitment to faithful representation of the denomination's witness in all forms of communication.

The Executive Director of Engagement and Communications shall establish, maintain, and provide guidance for the implementation of denominational brand standards approved by the General Secretary. Such standards shall provide administrative guidance for the appropriate use of the Church of the Brethren's name, logos, visual identity, messaging, and other elements representing the denomination's identity.

Nothing in this policy is intended to limit the identity, governance, or communications of districts, congregations, Annual Conference, or other Church of the Brethren bodies acting within their own authority. At the same time, the Mission and Ministry Board affirms the value of thoughtful stewardship of the Church of the Brethren's shared identity in ways that strengthen the denomination's collective witness and public understanding.

Digital communications

The Mission and Ministry Board recognizes digital communications as an essential means of engaging with congregations, constituents, ministry partners, and the wider public. Digital communications should support the denomination's mission by strengthening relationships, extending the church's witness, encouraging participation in its ministries, and providing timely, accessible, and trustworthy information.

Digital communications should be guided by the same principles that govern all denominational communications and should:

- Support the Mission and Ministry Board's strategic priorities and ministry objectives.
- Reflect the values, identity, and public witness of the Church of the Brethren.
- Be coordinated with broader communications, engagement, and related marketing strategies.
- Promote accessibility, inclusion, and meaningful engagement.
- Protect confidential information and respect applicable privacy requirements.
- Be administered in accordance with denominational standards established by the General Secretary.

Administrative standards governing websites, social media, email communications, digital platforms, emerging technologies, accessibility, security, and other digital communications shall be maintained separately from this policy.

Public statements

The Mission and Ministry Board occasionally adopts statements addressing matters of faith, church life, and public concern. Such statements generally address broader issues, trends, or ongoing concerns that warrant discernment by the Board. In developing these statements, the Board utilizes its consensus model of decision-making, seeking to speak with one voice while reflecting the church's shared commitments and witness. When appropriate, the Board may recommend its statements for adoption by Annual Conference.

The General Secretary or their designee may issue public statements on behalf of the Church of the Brethren and/or the Mission and Ministry Board in response to emerging events or circumstances requiring a timely denominational response. Such statements shall be consistent with the mission, values, strategic priorities, and previously adopted actions and positions of the Mission and Ministry Board and Annual Conference.

The Executive Director of Engagement and Communications shall advise the General Secretary regarding the development, timing, coordination, and dissemination of public statements to help ensure they faithfully reflect the church's witness and are communicated effectively, consistently, and in ways appropriate to their intended audiences.

When feasible, the General Secretary should provide advance notice to Board members prior to the release of significant public statements. The Board does not ordinarily take action to affirm or endorse statements issued by the General Secretary after they have been released, recognizing the General Secretary's delegated responsibility to articulate the church's witness within the scope of this policy. The Board may, however, determine that a matter addressed in a General Secretary statement warrants broader discernment and may subsequently develop its own statement.

The Leadership Team, acting within its own authority and responsibilities, may also issue statements related to its work. Because the Leadership Team is separate from the Mission and Ministry Board, its statements are distinct from those of the Board.

Denominational participation in joint statements and sign-on letters

From time to time, the General Secretary or their designee may be invited to endorse or participate in joint statements, letters, or other public expressions developed by ecumenical partners or other organizations.

In determining whether to participate, the General Secretary may consult with the Board's officers or Executive Committee, as appropriate, and shall consider whether the proposed statement:

- Is grounded in biblical and theological convictions consistent with the witness of the Church of the Brethren.
- Aligns with Annual Conference statements, Mission and Ministry Board actions, and the Board's strategic priorities.
- Reflects the mission, values, and public witness of the Church of the Brethren.
- Strengthens, rather than dilutes, the denomination's distinctive voice and relationships with recognized ministry and ecumenical partners.
- Demonstrates a commitment to faithful action as well as public witness.
- Communicates respectfully, avoiding unnecessarily partisan or divisive rhetoric while speaking clearly to matters of faith and conscience.
- Provides an appropriate opportunity for the Church of the Brethren to bear faithful public witness.

The General Secretary retains discretion to endorse time-sensitive statements or letters on behalf of the Church of the Brethren when prompt action is necessary, and the proposed statement is consistent with the principles outlined above.

Crisis communications and organizational response

The Mission and Ministry Board recognizes that significant events or circumstances may arise that affect the denomination's ministries, disrupt organizational operations, impact the safety or well-being of individuals, and/or require a coordinated organizational response. Such situations may include, but are not limited to, emergencies, natural disasters, public health incidents, technology or facility disruptions, personnel matters, legal or financial issues, or matters of significant public concern.

During such events, timely, accurate, compassionate, and coordinated communications are essential to supporting those affected, maintaining organizational effectiveness, and preserving public trust.

The Executive Director of Engagement and Communication, on behalf of the General Secretary, shall maintain a Crisis Communications and Organizational Response Plan that establishes administrative procedures for responding to significant organizational events. That plan shall identify communication responsibilities, spokesperson roles, decision-making and approval processes, internal and external communication procedures, and operational guidance appropriate to the nature and scope of the situation.

The Executive Director of Engagement and Communication shall advise the General Secretary regarding communications strategy during significant organizational events and coordinate communications activities in accordance with the Crisis Communications and Organizational Response Plan. When appropriate, the General Secretary shall keep the Board informed of significant organizational events and communications undertaken in response.

Organizational leadership and coordination

Effective communications require collaboration across the ministries of the Mission and Ministry Board. The General Secretary shall establish appropriate leadership and organizational structures to support strategic planning, coordination, and collaboration for communications, engagement, brand stewardship, and related organizational initiatives.

The Executive Director of Engagement and Communications shall work collaboratively with ministry leaders to encourage integrated planning, strengthen coordination among ministries, and promote communications that advance the Mission and Ministry Board's strategic priorities. The General Secretary may establish advisory or

coordinating groups, as appropriate, to support organizational planning, communications coordination, constituent engagement, brand stewardship, and other responsibilities related to this policy.

Communications planning should be integrated with organizational planning whenever practical so that communications, engagement, fundraising, program development, advocacy, and other ministry initiatives support one another and advance the church's mission in a coordinated manner.

Evaluation and organizational learning

The Mission and Ministry Board is committed to continual learning and improvement in the ways it communicates, engages, and serves the church.

The effectiveness of communications, engagement, brand stewardship, and related marketing activities across the ministries of the Mission and Ministry Board shall be evaluated regularly using appropriate qualitative and quantitative measures. Evaluation should support organizational learning and continuous improvement by informing strategic planning, communications priorities, constituent engagement, organizational effectiveness, and stewardship of the Church of the Brethren's identity, reputation, and public witness.

Evaluation may include consideration of such factors as:

- Effectiveness in advancing denominational priorities and strategic objectives.
- Quality, consistency, and accessibility of communications.
- Constituent engagement and participation.
- Collaboration across ministries.
- Stewardship of organizational resources.
- Denominational reputation and public understanding.
- Opportunities for innovation and continuous improvement.

Findings should be used to strengthen future planning, improve organizational effectiveness, and support faithful stewardship of the church's communications and engagement responsibilities.

Denominational name, logo, and brand

The name, logo, and visual identity of the Church of the Brethren are important expressions of the denomination's identity, mission, and public witness. The Church of the Brethren name and logo are registered trademarks and shall be used only for authorized purposes in accordance with denominational brand standards.

The Executive Director of Engagement and Communications, on behalf of the General Secretary, shall ensure that denominational brand standards are established and maintained to provide guidance for the appropriate use of the Church of the Brethren's name, logo, visual identity, messaging, and other elements representing the denomination's identity. These standards shall support consistent stewardship of the Church of the Brethren's identity while recognizing the distinct governance and ministries of districts, congregations, Annual Conference, and other Church of the Brethren bodies acting within their own authority.

Nothing in this policy is intended to limit the authority of those bodies to communicate on their own behalf. Rather, the Mission and Ministry Board affirms the value of thoughtful collaboration and consistent stewardship of the Church of the Brethren's shared identity in ways that strengthen understanding, trust, and the denomination's collective witness.