

BRETHREN PASTORAL AND CONGREGATIONAL
MANUAL OF PROCEDURES
2019 Edition



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Introduction

This publication began as a compilation of documents relating to pastoral and congregational relationships and procedures. “The Message of the Brethren Ministry” was adopted by the National Ministerial Association of The Brethren Church (now known as the National Association of Brethren Church Elders) in 1921 as a summary statement of Brethren teaching. The “Report of the 1986 Ordination Study Committee” was adopted for implementation by the association in 1987. The section on pastoral and church ethics was adopted by General Conference in 1987. Other sections were adopted by the association in 1976 and appeared in a publication entitled “Ministerial Examining Procedures of The Brethren Church.” More recent changes in polity have required yet further changes to publication.

As has been common in our Brethren heritage, many of these documents were developed to answer particular needs in the church at the time. At times they appear to conflict with one another. This more synthesized version is now presented to provide more consistent guidance while still allowing for flexibility of particular contexts.

Because we live in an imperfect world, no one procedure is perfect for every situation. This document is offered as a set of guidelines for working in an orderly and Christian manner. May the Holy Spirit guide our relationships with one another to bring praise and honor to our Triune God.

Introduction to the 2019 Edition

This document has appeared in several different formats since it originally was created in 1991. Since that time several other editions have appeared, seeking to conform the policies contained in the document to reflect current language and practice and to offer the document in an electronic format. In all of these editions there was no attempt to synthesize various policy statements adopted over a period of years into a single systematic and comprehensive document.

Various recent developments have made a thorough revision of these earlier editions necessary. (1) Most significantly, the transition from districts to regions, initially approved by General Conference in 2015 and supported by all districts since that time, has led to numerous structural changes in the denomination. This action necessitates many edits in the processes outlined in this document to bring them into conformity with the new regional structure and with certain changes that have also been approved at the denominational level. (2) This revision offers the opportunity to synthesize previous policy statements adopted over time by the National Ministerial Association (now the National Association of Brethren Church Elders) or the General Conference into a single document. Because previous editions had not attempted to synthesize these policy statements, there was some inconsistency, if not conflict, between some of these statements. This new document provides a comprehensive and, ideally, a consistent presentation of these denominational policies. (3) This revision updates policies to reflect current practice and terminology in the denomination.

For historical purposes, all previous policy statements that had appeared as discrete documents in this manual will be retained as appendices at the end of the manual.

The Calling, Licensing, and Ordination of Pastors in the Brethren Church

A Theological Overview of Ordination

It is important to realize that our English word “ordination” comes from a Latin rather than a Greek word. In the early fifth century Jerome, in his Latin Vulgate translation, used the Latin word *ordinare* (to set in order, arrange) as a synonym for the Greek *cheirotoneo* (to appoint, choose; used twice in the New Testament: Acts 14:23, 2 Cor. 8:19). The English word “ordain” was later used by the King James Version to translate 24 different biblical words. We therefore face two problems with regard to the word “ordain.” (1) The English word has so many shades of meaning that there is no direct one-to-one correspondence between the Hebrew and English and Greek and English words. (2) In using a Latin word to describe the technical practice, we may import connotations from Roman Catholic usage. The solution to both problems is to go back to the original Hebrew and Greek words to understand what is meant by the English word “ordain.”

In the Old and New Testaments, the practice of ordination is most generally connected with the rite of laying on of hands. This rite was used on various occasions and had several important purposes. In sacrificial settings, the laying of hands on an animal conveyed the idea of atonement for sins and substitution through the transference of sin and guilt (this becomes a type of Jesus’ sacrificial and substitutionary death). The laying on of hands is used in the context of passing on a blessing (Gen. 48:14; Matt. 19:13, 15). In the New Testament it is frequently connected with healing by Jesus and His disciples. Reception of the Holy Spirit is commonly, though not necessarily, linked with the laying on of hands in Acts. Finally, in both testaments hands are laid on people when they are consecrated or set apart for a special service or function. This variety should caution us about too narrow a definition of ordination, for a person could have several “ordinations” (as in the case of Paul in Acts 9:12, 17; 13:3).

In the more technical usage of ordination, the laying on of hands seems to have a threefold significance with past, present, and future implications. As confirmation, the act looks backward as a formal recognition of a person’s calling and gifts for service. As consecration, the act serves as a present setting apart of the person for God’s service. As commissioning, the act looks forward as a charge to carry out the function and responsibility of a particular office.

Ordination possesses both divine and human aspects. It is a formal recognition of God's call in a person's life and affirms both that those spiritual gifts needed for a special calling are present and that God promises grace to fulfill the responsibilities of the task. But ordination also includes human components. It assumes that God's calling must be confirmed by human witnesses as well who can testify to the evidence of the divine call. The act of laying on of hands is also performed by persons with the appropriate authority who can likewise vouch for the person's character and integrity. In the ordination process, God and human beings cooperate to provide the best possible leadership for the further advance of God's kingdom purposes.

Because ordination in the technical sense is always linked to the performance of a special task or function, the implication is that the authority and responsibility recognized in ordination should cease when the function ceases.

Definition of Terms

1. Calling

Calling, like ordination, has a broader usage in Scripture than the way we customarily employ it. Calling frequently refers to God's appeal or invitation to salvation (1 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 4:1, 4; 1 Thess. 2:12). Only rarely is it used in the narrow sense of commissioning a person to a special office or function (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; cf. Acts 20:28). In both usages the stress is upon God's initiative in the matter. The human aspect of the process is in reality a response to this initiative. Thus the congregation *affirms* the divine call while the elders *confirm* it, and they jointly *set apart* the individual for God's service. It should be stressed that a call implies a task.

2. Office and Function

It is appropriate to keep these two terms together for they are related as noun to verb. Office tends to be more static in nature while function conveys the idea of activity. While office can be conceived apart from function, we need to beware of attaching unique status or authority to the office of elder itself. The Brethren are not in the Catholic tradition in which special status is given the priest by virtue of ordination to this office. Rather we are in the Protestant tradition in which our authority as elders derives from our administering the Word of God to our people (note that early Brethren elders were called "Servants of the Word").

The word "function" is used by the NASB and NIV translations in Rom. 12:4 to refer to the activity each member of the body has within the church. The context provides an important reminder for us. Paul uses a dynamic, living analogy when dealing with these concepts--the analogy of a body whose members are functioning in God-given ways in order to achieve the

divine goals of edification of the body, glorification of God, and service to the world (cf. Eph. 4:11-16). We must therefore remember that structure should always be the servant of our goals and needs.

A Model for Brethren Ministry

Based on the above considerations, we would set forth the following model for Brethren ministry.

1. Who properly should be termed an elder?

We endorse the continued use of the term “elder” to refer to the ordained leadership of the church. Not only does it have biblical and historical roots, but it also has less “baggage” and ambiguity than words like minister, bishop, and overseer and is a bit broader than the word pastor.

The primary sense of the word elder should be to designate those who have been ordained and hold membership in and are pastoring a local Brethren church. Additionally, the title elder should be extended to the following special cases (only if they have previously been ordained):

- Those retired from pastoral ministry
- Those serving in the national office
- Those serving in Ashland Theological Seminary or the religion department of Ashland University
- Those serving in a church-related position recognized by the National Board of Oversight and the appropriate Regional Leadership Team

We would discourage Brethren congregations from the creation and use of elder boards in their local church governance. This structure is derived from a Presbyterian form of church polity that is inconsistent with the limited congregational polity of the Brethren Church. It further creates confusion when the term “elder” is used for both an ordained person and a lay leader in the congregation.

We would, however, encourage the historic Brethren practice of having more than one ordained elder in a local congregation. It may be the case that one or more of these elders may not be paid. Congregations with multiple elders should seek to use the gifts and abilities of all elders within their congregation, including retired elders.

NOTE: For detailed information about procedures related to commissioning and ordination in the Brethren Church, see the latest versions of the *Manual of Commissioning Procedures* and the *Manual of Licensing and Ordination Procedures* on the Brethren Church website. All necessary forms are found in these manuals for those considering commissioning or licensure and ordination in the Brethren Church.

2. The normal process for licensure and ordination in the Brethren Church

A. Call by a Brethren congregation

In the Brethren Church the ordination process begins and ends with the local congregation. Though an individual may sense the call of God in his or her life, this call needs to be affirmed and confirmed by the congregation of which the person is a member. The congregation normally would have a formal vote, affirming whether the congregation sees in the individual those biblical qualities that should be expected of an elder (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

B. Licensure

If the congregational vote is affirmative for the individual, he or she then should come under the care of the Regional Leadership Team. At this stage the individual, upon a positive initial interview, will be considered a licensed pastor. The Brethren Church takes seriously various biblical safeguards related to ordination. Licensing pastoral candidates for a limited period of time (from a minimum of one year to a maximum of five years) fulfills three biblical conditions related to ordination: to avoid the ordination of candidates “hastily” (1 Tim. 5:22), to afford them some experience in the work of pastoral ministry so they may not be “novices” when ordained (1 Tim. 3:6); and to give them opportunity to “prove” themselves worthy and fitted for the high office to which they aspire (1 Tim. 3:10). Licensure, then, is to be considered a probationary step toward ordination.

The Brethren Church grants licensed pastors the right to perform the following practices without supervision:

- To preach and teach the Gospel
- To pastor a local church and do related preaching
- To solemnize marriage where state law permits
- To conduct funerals
- To dedicate infants
- To hold conference offices
- To conduct other pastoral duties except for those below

A licensed pastor may perform the following practices under the supervision of an ordained elder of The Brethren Church:

- To baptize
- To confirm following baptism

- To conduct communion
- To anoint the sick (In special cases, the anointing of the sick may be cared for in the absence of an elder, but only when an elder is contacted and specific instructions are given by telephone, email, or in person. In the event an elder cannot be reached the service may be conducted with immediate notification of circumstances as above.)

Only ordained elders shall ordain elders, deacons or deaconesses.

Each licentiate shall have assigned an ordained elder as a mentor by the Regional Leadership Team. This elder, or another elder who is available, is responsible for providing supervision in the case of services in which the licentiate is limited, at the request of the licentiate. This mentor should provide encouragement and support to the licentiate.

C. Fulfillment of requirements for ordination

Only those people should be ordained who: (1) are biblically qualified, (2) have the requisite training, (3) are pastoring a congregation, and (4) have been recommended for ordination by a local church, appropriate Regional Leadership Team, and the National Board of Oversight.

The Brethren Church currently recognizes two means of obtaining the educational training expected of all those seeking ordination. The individual may complete either (1) a Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Practical Theology, or a Master of Arts in Biblical Studies degree at Ashland Theological Seminary or another seminary or an equivalent degree approved by the National Board of Oversight or (2) a reading and study course that has been approved by the National Board of Oversight. In either case the candidate for ordination must complete the three Brethren courses—History, Doctrine, and Polity and Ordinances—either at Ashland Theological Seminary or in the online format offered by the Brethren Church National Office.

The licensed pastor continues to meet with the appropriate Regional Leadership Team at least yearly until he or she is approved by that team to appear before the National Board of Oversight for final examination for ordination. If the candidate for ordination is approved for ordination by the National Board of Oversight, he or she then moves to the final stage of the ordination process: the ordination service by the congregation in which the candidate holds membership at the time.

D. Ordination by the candidate's congregation

It is important to note that a person is not considered to be an ordained elder in the Brethren Church until he or she has been formally ordained by the church in which membership is held. The primary responsibility for arranging the ordination service rests with the candidate for ordination. Details for the service can be found in *The Brethren Pastor's Handbook*, available on the Brethren Church website.

3. The duties of a Brethren pastor are:

- To preach and teach the Gospel
- To administer the ordinances of the Brethren Church
- To provide counsel and oversight, together with the administrative board, to the ministries of the church
- To visit people, members and others, and be devoted to the care of the aged, the poor, the sick, and dying. This should be done in concert with the deacons of the church.
- To provide leadership, along with the administrative board, in the governance of the church
- To exercise discipline, together with the deacons, with tact and mercy
- To support without prejudice the organizations, institutions and goals of the Brethren Church, distribute Brethren publications, and support the decisions of the Regional Leadership Team and General Conference.
- To keep a careful record of the work, as to additions, losses, funerals, weddings, pastoral calls, attendance, and participation by the pastor and church in various activities, that such data may be supplied to the church's administrative board and to the Brethren Church National Office.
- To cooperate, as far as possible, in religious, social, civic, educational, fraternal, musical, recreational, and other community activities, to the glory of God.
- To leave to a successor a comprehensive list of the members and families of the church's constituency, relationship, and addresses.
- To seek to honor the high calling of pastoral ministry in holy living.

4. Positions taken by the Brethren Church on the ordination of women and of divorced people

The Brethren Church has had ordained women as far back as the 1890s. In 2002 the elders in the Brethren Church established the policy that all candidates for ordination were to be examined without regard to "sex, color, and nationality."

In 1992 Brethren elders adopted the position that people who were divorced or who were divorced and remarried could be considered as candidates for ordination on a case-by-case basis. Five criteria were to be used in the evaluation process: (1) the candidate's divorce history; (2) whether the candidate went through a process of forgiveness and restoration following the divorce; (3) whether the candidate's personality reflected issues that may have contributed to the divorce and could hamper ministry; (4) if remarried, the health and quality of the current marriage; and (5) the candidate's current view of divorce and remarriage.

5. Commissioning

A. Distinction between the words “ordain” and “commission”

There is little actual difference between these two words; both denote the setting apart of someone for a particular task or function. Nevertheless, for practical purposes ordination should be reserved for setting apart elders for at least two reasons: (1) historical precedent and (2) proper recognition of the office of elder/overseer/bishop as the Servant of the Word and overseer/shepherd of God’s flock. Commissioning should be the term used in other cases.

B. When commissioning is appropriate

Commissioning can have broad usage within the church. There are some who gain their livelihood from the church but do not meet other qualifications for ordination (for example, those in music, youth, Christian education, and counseling). These should receive commissioning only. They could be called “Minister of _____,” “Director of _____,” etc. A church should feel free to develop any appropriate title providing the concept is understood. These persons would appear before the Regional Leadership Teams but not the National Board of Oversight. (The IRS recognizes commissioned Christian workers.) Commissioning is also appropriate when a particular ministry is limited with respect to time. Short-term missionaries should thus be commissioned.

6. The status of elders who leave the Brethren ministry

A. Those who go to other denominations and want to return

When elders leave the Brethren ministry for service in another denomination, the ethical procedure should be for them to move their membership to that denomination as well. The unofficial practice of dual membership for elders and dual recognition of their office as elder should be discontinued. When elders leave the Brethren Church, they should no longer be recognized as elders by their former region and the national organization. If at some point they desire to return to Brethren ministry, their case will be handled in the same way as any other non-Brethren minister seeking a Brethren pastorate, with the exception that they must bring a letter of recommendation from the Regional Leadership Team having oversight of the region in which they formerly served if they seek a pastorate in another region.

The appropriate procedure for this case would be for the local congregation that desires to hire a pastor who formerly served in the Brethren Church to contact the Regional Leadership Team for tentative approval of his or her employment. **This should be done before the person is formally hired.** Initially, the pastor would have the authority of a licensed minister. At such time as the pastor can meet with the Regional Leadership Team, the team will review the pastor’s former service in the Brethren Church and any record of service in another denomination. The Regional Leadership

Team may recognize the pastor's previous ordination in the denomination or recommend some further steps to be taken by the pastor prior to formal recognition of their previous ordination. In no case should this latter case extend beyond one year.

B. Those not functioning in an eldership role

There is a need to distinguish between different situations among elders no longer functioning in a pastoral role.

1. Leave of absence

For those elders who feel they need a period of rest or special study, they may request from the Regional Leadership Team a leave program. The elder should have an agreement with the appropriate Regional Leadership Team before leaving pastoral service and appear before the team before resuming active service. During the leave, the elder should be required to be under the supervision of a Brethren elder and communicate annually with the appropriate Regional Leadership Team. Generally, the leave of absence should not last for more than two years. After two years, if the Regional Leadership Team does not approve an extension, the person will be placed on the inactive list (see below). This procedure should also be followed by those elders who desire to pastor in the Brethren Church but cannot find a church immediately.

2. Inactive elder

Those elders who leave pastoral ministry without requesting a leave of absence will automatically be placed on an inactive list by their Regional Leadership Team after one year of inactivity. When this occurs, no elder credential is to be issued by the National Board of Oversight. In order to be reinstated to the elder roster, they must go before the Regional Leadership Team of the region in which they most recently served. After three years of inactivity, the person's ordination will lapse.

7. The status of non-Brethren pastors in the Brethren Church

A. Licensed or Ordained Pastors

Licensed and/or ordained pastors of other denominations may serve as pastors or supply preachers at the invitation of a local Brethren church provided that the appropriate Regional Leadership Team has been notified in advance of the pastor's formal hiring. It is expected that such pastors come under the care of the Regional Leadership Team and begin a process, in the case of

a previously ordained pastor from another denomination, to have their ordination recognized by the National Board of Oversight. Initially, the pastor would have the authority of a licensed minister. The process of recognition will involve taking the three required Brethren courses (History, Doctrine, and Polity and Ordinances). However, they may not administer the ordinances except under the supervision of a Brethren elder. An ordained Brethren elder should be assigned by the Regional Leadership Team to serve as the pastor's mentor. The pastor should move his or her membership into the local Brethren church during this process. It is recommended that once the pastor's previous ordination is recognized by the National Board of Oversight that the local congregation which he or she is serving arrange a formal service of installation for the pastor. This entire process should normally take about one year.

A pastor who has been licensed by another denomination should follow the process for licensure and ordination in the Brethren Church outlined above and in the *Manual of Licensure and Ordination Procedures*.

In the case of a pastor from another denomination who has not been baptized by any form of believer's baptism, he or she should receive believer baptism before completing the ordination or the recognition of previous ordination process.

B. Non-Brethren pastoral candidates

A layman of another denomination who unites with any local Brethren church is not eligible to apply for licensure until the expiration of one year from the time of becoming a member of a Brethren church. Should the church or the candidate desire, at the completion of one year, application may be made according to the regular procedure for licensure and ordination as outlined in this manual.

8. Special considerations

A. Lay pastors

The use of lay pastors may be necessary in interim situations and in our smaller churches. Such lay pastors do not need ordination but should be authorized by the Regional Leadership Team and commissioned for this work.

B. Deacons

Given the mixed practice in our churches regarding the tenure of deacons, we would suggest that the term "commissioning" be used, though in those churches which set apart deacons for life the term "ordain" would still be appropriate.

9. Relationships between the various Regional Leadership Teams as well as with the National Board of Oversight

- A. All minutes and decisions of Regional Leadership Teams related to commissioning, licensure, and ordination should be forwarded to the National Board of Oversight. This procedure provides greater continuity and understanding throughout the denomination.
- B. Whenever an elder moves from one region to another, pertinent records should be forwarded to the appropriate Regional Leadership Team.

10. National certification of commissioned, licensed, and elder pastoral leaders

Responsibilities of the Regional Leadership Teams

It is the responsibility of each region to develop and submit to the National Ordination Board annually a list of elders in good standing, defined as those who hold elder credentials, a member in good standing of a Brethren Church, not currently under discipline by their region, and fulfill one of the following:

1. Those currently in active ministry in a Brethren Church
2. Those who are working at the National Office, Ashland University, Ashland Theological Seminary
3. Those who are working in an identified Brethren mission field
4. Those who are serving in other ministry contexts that the Region has identified as Brethren ministries
5. Those who have reached the age of 65 or older while an elder in good standing and are given retired status
6. Those who are not currently in ministry, but have received a leave of absence from their region for pastoral transition purposes

It is the responsibility of each region to develop and submit to the National Board of Oversight annually a list of commissioned and licensed pastors in good standing, defined as those who hold proper credentials, a member in good standing of a Brethren Church, and not currently under discipline by their region.

Responsibilities of the National Board of Oversight

1. The Board shall receive annually from each region a list of elders in good standing, commissioned pastors, and licensed pastors within the region from the Regional Leadership Team members representing each region.

2. The Board shall vote upon the list, with any issues with an individual to be addressed by the Board members within that elder's region.
3. Upon approval of the list of elders in good standing, the Chair shall present the list to the National Office as the list of elders eligible to receive elder credentials at General Conference.
4. Upon approval of the list of commissioned and licensed pastors in good standing, the Chair shall present the list to the National Office.

The Concept of Membership in the Brethren Church

What Is Church Membership?

Though church membership, as we know it today, is not a concept with which the New Testament is familiar, it is a logical inference from the concept of the church developed by Paul. His use of the “body” imagery (or, more specifically, the body of Christ) as a picture of how the church should function (see Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; Eph. 4:1-16) likens believers to “members” of a physical body who act in concert for the glory of God and the edifying of the body itself.

Paul makes an assumption in these passages that American Christianity fails at times to appreciate. Commitment to Christ includes commitment to his body, the church. The church here is not to be understood in an invisible or spiritual sense, but in the concrete sense of a local body of believers. Note in this regard 1 Corinthians 12:13 in which Paul indicates that baptism by the Spirit, which is the foundation for our salvation, incorporates us into the body of Christ. As Paul shows in the following context, he understands this body in very concrete terms.

Paul suggests therefore that two commitments are expected of every Christian: commitment to Christ, which is the basis of our salvation, and commitment to a body, which is a key means to our sanctification or growth in the Christian life. Though for purposes of definition, it is important to distinguish these two commitments, they should be thought of as a unit. Commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior should always lead us to commitment to his body as represented in a local body of believers. We distort this biblical truth when, in our presentation of the gospel, we fail to teach the new believer about the necessity – not for salvation but for Christian growth --of involvement in a local church. The first commitment looks forward to the second as its practical fulfillment, the second looks back to the first as its presupposition.

The Requirements for Church Membership in the Brethren Church

In order to become a member of a local Brethren congregation, a person should fulfill several requirements:

- The person must have made a commitment of faith to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

- The prospective member should have been baptized by trine immersion or, in the case of an individual baptized in another denomination, by any form of believer baptism.
- There must be the willingness to recognize Christ's Lordship in all areas; failure here will inevitably lead to disruptions in the body. Membership should therefore include a commitment to regular participation in the life of the local congregation, proportional giving of one's financial resources, and living a life worthy of the Christian calling.
- Since local bodies as well as denominations have a right to order their lives within the limits of Christian freedom, the prospective member should be willing to accept the procedures and practices agreed upon by these bodies.
- Because this is commitment to a body and not an institution, there should be a commitment to the other believers in the fellowship with the goal of mutual growth through encouragement, love, prayer, and correction.
- The person should understand that failure to live up to these commitments will necessitate the loving admonition of the church with the possibility of disfellowshipping if a member fails to heed such admonition.

Membership, Discipline, and Restoration

One of the elements that caused the Brethren to break from both the established churches and Radical Pietists in Germany was the lack of discipline in these groups. Our concept of membership must include the dimension of discipline and accountability; otherwise we are being neither biblical nor Brethren. All too often, the development of an inactive membership roll is a "painless" way of dealing with members who have gone back on their membership vows, while roll revision, without contacting lapsed members before their names are taken off the rolls, amounts to "passive discipline." Ideally, there should be only one type of membership, active membership. Inactive membership is a contradiction in terms in the Church.

Various forms of holding people accountable for their membership vows have been used by Brethren congregations. One is the covenant renewal approach in which all members renew their membership commitments yearly. Those not renewing their vows are dropped from membership, though the pastor or deacon should visit such people prior to removal from the membership roll in order to ascertain the reasons for failure to renew. A second form of accountability is the traditional yearly deacon visit. A deacon visits every member of the church once a year to mutually discern and encourage faithfulness to the membership covenant. If more Brethren churches developed such a practice, it would not only lead to a stronger, more committed church body, but it would probably also lead to a renewal among the deacons and deaconesses of many churches. A third approach would be more informal. The pastor along with deacons and deaconesses would once a year review the membership roll and take note of any members who were no longer an active part of the congregation. Either the pastor or a deacon would follow up with the member and ascertain

whether they still were committed to their membership vows. If they could not, in good faith, do so, they should be removed from the membership roll. Obviously, this last approach needs to take into account whether the person is a shut-in or is no longer physically able to attend the church.

As intimated above, it should be a set policy in the church that no one is removed from the membership roll without a visit by the pastor and/or deacon. This procedure could have several positive results. It could lead to a restoration of more lapsed members. It could acquaint the pastor with problems in the church that need addressed. It certainly would deepen the spiritual life of the congregation if people knew the pastor and deacons were taking the membership vows of their people seriously.

Membership as It Relates to General Conference Statistics

Each local church has the right to define what constitutes membership in that church, subject to the restrictions provided in the “Manual of Procedure” and based on a biblical understanding of what it means to be a part of the body of Christ. However, it is important that local churches use a uniform method of reporting numbers to the General Conference. Local practices also should reflect as much as possible the definition of membership recognized at the national level. The standard for reporting an individual as a member of the local church for General Conference purposes should include:

- Regular participation in the life of the local congregation
- Faithful stewardship of one’s resources: time and abilities, as well as finances
- Lifestyle worthy of the Christian calling

The membership roll should be reviewed annually to ascertain the standing of each member. This review process should not be viewed solely in the formal sense of revising the roll for statistical purposes, but should even more be seen as an opportunity to draw back into active fellowship all those who might have lapsed in their commitments to the Lord and the church. No one should be removed from membership in the church without first being contacted by the pastor and/or the deacons of the church.

Legalistic standards for membership should be avoided. Each church is encouraged to take into account individual circumstances. It is far better to be inclusive when the spirit is right than exclusive when the standard is not met. To declare an individual out of good standing with the church is, in a sense, to say that that person is out of good standing with the Lord.

Churches should not discard the names of those who are not in good standing and who have not affiliated with another church. Churches should maintain a list of former members, including their address, year baptized, year became a member of the church, and year removed from membership in the church. Further, churches should maintain regular contact with these former members when possible, through the church newsletter or any other means for maintaining the relationship. The goal should always be to restore a brother or sister to fellowship with Christ and His church (James

5:19-20). Note also that every pastor should be responsible for passing on to the next pastor an accurate listing of members.

Reception of Members

In the Brethren Church, candidates for church membership present themselves before the gathered body of Christ to make public commitments to their fellow church members (much as we make a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ) and to receive commitments in return. These promises are solemn vows made before God and to one another. These are not to be taken lightly, either by the new members or by the present members of the congregation.

Candidates for membership are asked to listen to each question carefully, and if in agreement, to answer, “I do” or “I will.”

In presenting yourselves for membership in the congregation:

- Do you renew your profession of faith in Jesus Christ as your saving Lord and will you live, from this time forward in faithful obedience to His Word? (I do.)
- Do you understand and accept the faith and practice of this church? (I do.)
- Will you continue in your own spiritual growth and encourage the growth of others through your regular participation in services of worship, study, and fellowship offered by this church? (I will.)
- Will you support the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ through this church by giving of your time and financial resources in the way the Bible teaches, and by using the abilities and spiritual gifts God has given you? (I will.)
- Will you pray regularly for the life and ministry of this church, for its pastor, its leaders, and your fellow members? (I will.)
- Will you seek to live in harmony with the fellow members of this church; will you support them with your prayers and your encouragement; and will you, in a spirit of love and submission, both give counsel to and receive counsel from your brothers and sisters in Christ? (I will.)

Members of the church are then asked to stand and make these commitments to the new members:

- Do you, the members of the _____ Church, renew your commitment to Jesus Christ as your saving Lord, and do you renew your commitments to one as members of this church? If so, answer, “We do.”
- Do you enter into solemn covenant with these persons being received into church membership, and do you promise them your encouragement, your counsel, and your prayers? If so answer, “We do, by the grace of’ God.”

The pastor then extends “the right hand of fellowship” -- a handshake -- and welcomes each person into the membership of the church. It is also appropriate to give a word of introduction of each new member to the congregation and to invite all church members to welcome each one into membership following completion of the service.

Note: This section on church membership was adapted from the document approved by the General Conference of The Brethren Church in 1988 as the denominational statement on membership.

Guidelines for Pastoral and Congregational Ethics

PREAMBLE: In order to establish and promote better working relations between the Brethren, note the following guidelines for pastoral and congregational ethics.

Pastoral Ethics

1. The pastor should live in a manner that testifies to the message proclaimed and exalts the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. The pastor should promote all the programs and goals of The Brethren Church.
3. The pastor should maintain proper dignity in all relationships within the church and in the community.
4. The pastor should grow in Christ likeness and should be involved in continuing educational opportunities to increase effectiveness in ministry.
5. The pastor should abide by the terms of the agreement with the church.
6. The pastor should never measure service by financial considerations.
7. The pastor should care for the parsonage as though it were personal property.
8. The pastor should not allow outside interests to deprive the church of efficient service.
9. The pastor should recognize the value of long-term pastorates and should build the kind of relationships that make this desirable.
10. The pastor should not consider a call from another church whose pastor has not resigned.
11. The pastor should not bargain between churches or negotiate with more than one church at a time.
12. The pastor should give serious attention to keeping physically and emotionally fit.
13. The pastor should minister to the entire congregation.
14. The pastor should be frank, courteous, and cooperative with other pastors.
15. The pastor should manage personal financial affairs with dignity and honor.
16. The pastor should not interfere in the affairs of another congregation.

17. The pastor should guard all confidential information very carefully.
18. The pastor should recognize the sanctity of the pulpit.
19. The pastor should, when leaving a pastorate, encourage total support of the new pastor by the entire congregation.
20. A pastor should not return to a former congregation to visit members or perform services, either weddings or funerals, without first contacting the current pastor.
21. A pastor should have a wholesome relationship with the Regional Leadership Team.

Church Ethics

1. The church should demonstrate in the lives of its members that Jesus Christ is Lord of all life.
2. The church should promote all the programs and goals of The Brethren Church.
3. The office of elder is a holy calling and should be respected and esteemed.
4. The church should desire and help the pastor to grow in ability to serve Christ and His church and should encourage and make possible continuing educational opportunities for the pastor.
5. The church should develop a clearly stated contractual agreement with the pastor and abide by it.
6. The church should recognize that the pastor is entitled to an adequate salary and should take the initiative in providing it.
7. The church should provide an adequate and well-kept parsonage for the pastoral family, or an adequate housing allowance.
8. The employment agreement should apply only to the pastor, not to the pastor's family. The pastor's family should assume the role that is expected of any other family in the congregation.
9. The church should recognize the value of long pastorates and should encourage the kind of relationship which makes this possible.
10. The church should extend a pastoral call only after contacting the Regional Leadership Team and making a careful investigation of the candidate.
11. The church should negotiate with only one pastor at a time.
12. The church should develop a budget which promptly meets all its obligations, including those to the pastor.
13. The church should expect the pastor to minister to the entire congregation.

14. The church should realize that hostile or unfriendly criticism of the pastor is unchristian, and should take steps to eliminate such criticism.
15. The church should only lend money to the pastor by written agreement.
16. The church should provide sufficient maintenance help so that those tasks do not become the responsibility of the pastor.
17. The church should avoid criticism of a former pastor and the comparing of former pastors with the current pastor.
18. The church should encourage its members to involve the new pastor in all functions (e.g. funerals, weddings, etc.) related to the pastoral office as soon as that role in the congregation is assumed.
19. The church should understand the pastor's need for periods of recreation, vacation, and rest.
20. The church, through its officially designated representatives, should have a wholesome relationship with the Regional Leadership Team and the Regional Resource Coordinator. The church should feel free to contact them if needed.

Guidelines for Congregations in Pastoral and Congregational Relations

In order to promote harmony and more fruitful ministry we recommend the following discipline for Brethren churches:

That the church gives a pastor an “open-end call.”

1. An open-end call is one in which a call is given to the pastor to serve as pastor for an indefinite period of time. (For instance, the call would not be for a “one-year, two-year, or three-year” term.)
2. The main reason for an “open-end” contract is that the pastor and the congregation can plan for a more wholesome, long-range growth program for the church. This will give stability to the church as it removes the uncertainty and sometimes unrest which occurs when the time nears for recall of the pastor.
3. The pastor shall continue to serve until such a time as he or she resigns, under the provision of item “D,” or until such time as the congregation decides to terminate his or her relationship as pastor as defined in item “E.”
4. If the pastor desires to terminate a relationship with the congregation as pastor, notification in writing of those intentions shall be given to the moderator. Services to the congregation shall continue for a three-month period until the resignation is effective or for such a period of time as may be agreed upon by the pastor and congregation.
5. Every congregation should have written into their By-Laws the process by which a pastor may be removed by the church. Such procedure also should be made a part of the pastoral contract. It is advised that said procedure should have the following elements: a) a formal request from the governing board or multiple members, b) opportunities for resolution other than termination, c) adequate announcement of any meeting of the congregations involving the termination of a pastor, d) a super majority (2/3 or ¾) be required for termination of a pastor.
6. The pastoral contract’s financial provisions—base salary plus allowances (i.e., housing, utilities, retirement, health insurance, travel, books and magazines, etc.) and vacation time—should be reviewed for updating annually by the congregation.

II. Support of the Regional Resource Coordinator, Regional Leadership Team and National Office

1. Each Church should maintain a healthy and regular relationship with their Regional Leadership Team, and make them aware as soon as possible of issues involving the relationship of pastor and congregation.
2. Church leaders need to remain aware and educated about the resources available through their region and the national office.

The Pastoral Care Committee in the Local Church

The following proposal is intended to help local churches in the process of providing more intentional care for the pastoral household. The following ideas are primarily suggestive. We present this model to encourage intentional pastoral care within congregations and consistency among congregations. Each local church is free to adapt this document to suit its particular situation. This document has been prepared in light of the growing need to encourage and strengthen pastoral households in local churches.

1. We recommend the creation of a Pastoral Care Committee in each local church.
2. The Pastoral Care Committee exists to promote the care of the pastor and the pastor's family in the following areas: physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, relational and financial.
3. The method of operation of the Pastoral Care Committee will be a relational rather than a business model. A business model is more formal and less personal in nature.
4. We recommend that the pastor selects committee members with the affirmation of the congregation or administrative board. Representation from other boards, committees, ministries, etc., within the church is not necessary. Neither should there be any ex-officio members of the committee. It is suggested that the committee have three members, each serving a three year term on a rotating basis. The person with the longest tenure could be the chairperson. Since the committee is relational in nature, limiting tenures is not necessary (i.e., an outgoing member could be reappointed).
5. The Pastoral Care Committee may make reports and / or recommendations to the congregation or administrative board when necessary.
6. Guidelines for the Pastoral Care Committee to follow in exercising its role:
 - a. Be an advocate for the pastor and family.
 - b. Discuss with the pastor and mutually agree upon a policy of confidentiality with exceptions.
 - c. Educate the congregation on sensitivity to pastoral family needs.
 - d. Practice creative encouragement.
 - e. Communicate with the Regional Leadership Team at least quarterly to report activities and to use them as resources.

- f. Be prepared to invite a crisis-intervention team or a transition team to the church in the event of conflict, retirement death, or other forms of departure of a pastor from the church. Conduct this process in cooperation with the appropriate regional and national personnel.
- g. Plan for and expedite Pastor Appreciation Day (or month) each year.
- h. Meet possibly monthly, or at least quarterly, or at the call of pastor or chairperson.
- i. Develop a separate Pastoral Care Committee for each staff person in a multiple staff situation.

Pastoral Status and Discipline

Any group which organizes and provides procedures for receiving of members into its group, has the authority and responsibility to discipline its members if and when it becomes necessary. This authority and responsibility belongs to the Regional Leadership Teams and the National Board of Oversight.

We have several intentions:

1. In the light of increased liberty and permissiveness in all areas of life, we intend that the sacredness and high calling of ordained pastors shall be maintained according to scriptural standards.
2. Our primary concern is the Church as the Body of Christ. The pastor, as a recognized spiritual leader, needs to be constantly disciplined in the scriptural standards for that office. If the pastor does not do that personally, then it becomes necessary for the Regional Leadership Team to do it.

Membership and Standing

As the Regional Leadership Team must approve all applications for licensure and ordination of potential pastors holding their church membership in the Region, it signifies that such potential and incoming pastors come under the jurisdiction of the Regional Leadership Team.

Thus, we understand that membership in this group is composed of those pastors who now hold their membership in a Brethren church, whose credentials as ordained elders in The Brethren Church have been approved and accepted by the National Board of Oversight and in the case of the licentiate, a current year's license, from their respective Regional Leadership Team.

We understand the responsibilities and code of ethics, for the pastor, to be that as outlined in scriptural passages such as 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-11, and as outlined in "Guidelines for Pastoral Ethics." If discipline of a pastor becomes necessary, based on these biblical standards or other ethical or doctrinal issues, we recommend the following procedures be enacted.

Procedure When Discipline of a Pastor Appears Necessary

Realizing the occasional, but definite need for discipline of a pastor, the following shall be recognized as binding upon the pastor involved:

1. When complaint is brought to the Regional Leadership Team concerning a pastor, the team shall hear the evidence as presented.
2. The team shall carefully weigh the evidence as presented in the complaint.
3. If there appears to be evidence of misconduct, the team shall conduct the investigation by:
 - a. Counseling with the particular pastor involved and explaining the charges which have been made, what the rights and privileges are, and what can happen if definite action becomes necessary. Those visiting the pastor shall endeavor to pray with and for that person and for those who have brought the complaint, in an effort to work out the problem at this level.
 - b. Counseling with those issuing the complaint against the pastor. Seek to get the facts, times, dates, specific instances, etc., rather than hearsay, personal prejudice, etc., and seek to pray with the complainant(s) for all involved in the matter (see 1 Tim. 5:19).
4. After the investigation is completed, the team shall meet, and after a session of prayer for the pastor and others involved, including the complainant(s), the team shall determine what action, if any, should be taken. The team in this session shall seek to determine whether the accusations are valid.

The team at this session shall also seek to contact the pastor and set a time when pastor and team can meet together for a sharing time on the charges.

If the earlier meeting with the pastor (see item 3a above) reveals that he or she appears to be free of the charges brought, and if the team feels that the pastor is speaking the truth, then this feeling shall be reported to the one(s) who filed the complaint. It may then be necessary to conduct a meeting at which the complainant(s) and the pastor shall appear, to discuss the charges together. The findings of this meeting shall be reported to the full team. If the pastor is free of guilt and the complainant(s) push the issue and disrupt the pastor's ministry, then the complainant(s) are to be disciplined even to the point of revoking their membership if necessary.

If guilt is apparent, the team should then seek to arrange a meeting with the pastor, at which time a reviewing of previous proceedings shall take place. An effort shall be made to find a way of making things right by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

If the pastor denies any guilt, wrongdoing or transgression and asserts that the charges are false, the team will then need to meet in closed session to determine their action.

Possible Actions

1. Clear the pastor of all charges, and so notify him or her and the complainant(s). When things go this far, it possibly would be well to recommend that the pastor change pastorates.
2. Recognize that the charges indicate beyond a reasonable doubt, a measure of guilt and transgression on the part of the pastor. In less severe charges, a reprimand to the pastor, and a prayer for amnesty on the part of the complainant(s), is in order. The pastor will then be asked to seek guidance and counsel from the Regional Leadership Team, or to seek professional counseling, to help put things into proper perspective. Counseling with the local congregation would also be in order if it were the source of the charges.
3. In situations where gross guilt is in evidence and there is no sign on the part of the pastor to change, the unfrocking procedure shall take place.

Unfrocking a Pastor

At this time it is understood that this action shall be between the Regional Leadership Team and any pastor as defined above as being an ordained elder of the Brethren Church holding membership in a Brethren Church.

1. By resolution or recommendation, the Regional Leadership Team shall declare that the privileges of the eldership have been removed from the pastor.
2. The pastor shall be informed in person and/or by registered mail of the action of the Regional Leadership Team; namely, that he or she is no longer privileged to act in the capacity of an ordained elder or licensed pastor in the Brethren Church, or in the Region where he or she ministers, or in any Brethren Church within the region. That person shall cease to use the title of “pastor,” “elder,” “reverend,” or “minister” or any related titles.
3. Letters of the action of the Regional Leadership Team and its meaning shall be sent to the officials of the congregation (a) where the person was pastoring; and/or (b) where that person holds his or her membership.
4. The General Conference Executive Board, the National Board of Oversight, and the National Association of Brethren Church Elders, shall be notified in writing of the action of the Regional Leadership Team in this matter.
5. The Regional Leadership Team will notify all other Regional Leadership Teams of the action taken in unfrocking a pastor.
6. No church shall grant a letter in good standing to an unfrocked pastor.

Areas of Problems Which Could Lead to the Unfrocking Process

1. Moral deviation, such as living in adultery, sexual misconduct with any woman or man in or out of the pastor's congregation. This would include any form of sexual deviation. It would also include language, conversation, and sermons or counseling which would teach or promote immoral or sexual practices not in keeping with the standards of scripture that are to be exemplified in the Christian life.
2. Doctrinal deviation where it is causing division in the church. This includes deviation from the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, or the abuse of minor doctrines. It also includes heresy of the spirit, or those sins of the spirit which are characterized by attitudes of self-righteousness, censoriousness, isolationism, or exclusivism.
3. Other conduct unbecoming a pastor as defined in 1 Timothy 3 and other related passages and in codes of ethics.

Addendum

Failure of the pastor to respond to directives of the Regional Leadership Team to appear and answer charges made shall be deemed sufficient evidence for the unfrocking procedure to take place.

In all cases the unfrocked pastor shall have the right of appeal to the National Board of Oversight.

Discipline of Church Members

The New Testament Church, our divine model, is a very relational and communal organization. The communal will of the body, honestly expressed, is its guiding standard. All decisions, arrived at through this Biblical process must be respected. Any member, for any cause, refusing to peacefully abide by the will of the body, places themselves in a rebellious attitude and in bad standing. The fidelity of a Christian's faith may come into question if they persist in placing their judgement above the will of the body of the church. No one manifesting such a rebellious spirit should, after an appropriate process of reconciliation and discipline is attempted, continue to be considered a member in good standing of the church. "Study the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another," is a piece of inspired counsel that ought to disarm the few bent on "rule or ruin." If the body has made a mistake, that mistake can be rectified in time. Let those who are sure such a mistake has been made manifest the spirit of Christ and abide the time until such disagreement may be removed.

Each church will need to develop a process for Biblical reconciliation and possible discipline of its members, and identify those leaders in the church entrusted with the process. It would also be advisable that this same body regularly review the status of members of the church, and develop clear definitions of the responsibilities and expectations of members. Paul's advice to the Ephesian Elders would warrant such a procedure. (Acts 20:28-31.)

Here is a suggested process for such reconciliation and discipline:

Biblical Reconciliation Guidelines

By Pastor G. Emery Hurd

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Based Upon the Following Scriptures:

On Procedure:

Matt 5:23-24; Matt 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-12; Titus 3:1-10; Luke 6:37-42

On Relationship:

Proverbs 27:5-6, 17; Hebrew 3:13; James 5:19-20; Galatians 6:1-2; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Ephesians 4:15

NOTE: Prayer is a vital part of this process, and intentional prayer should be pursued at every level and before each advance to the next level.

1. Self-Reconciliation – Every believer should individually submit to the authority of God, the Bible, and if committed to a body of believers, to the counsel of that particular body.
2. Private Reconciliation – Any brother or sister, who is offended by another, has the option to simply forgive the wrong. For this to be true all the following conditions must exist:
 - a. I will not talk about this to others
 - b. I will not hold this against the person
 - c. I will not permit this to influence my relationship with this person. (this does NOT include the issue of trust, which is earned. However, if forgiven, the person must be given the opportunity to reasonably re-earn trust)
 - d. If unable to do ALL the above, it should be advanced to the next level
3. Personal Reconciliation – Any brother or sister, who is offended by another, or believes they may have offended another, or believes that a pattern of sinful behavior exists, has a Biblical obligation to privately speak to the offender or victim, for the purpose of forgiveness and reconciliation. This should be a private matter, not involving the church corporately. If an offended individual refuses to do this, then the matter is kept at this level until they choose to act. Frequently the pastor will act on behalf of a congregation if the issue is a widely known public issue that impacts the entire congregation (ex: embezzlement of church funds). In other matters the pastor may act simply because as a brother/sister in Christ they are frequently the first to become aware of an issue that may need discipline. Possible outcomes:
 - a. If the parties are reconciled, and forgiveness and or restitution, if applicable, is asked and received, the matter stops. No additional conversation occurs, and the matter is closed.
 - b. If the parties are unable to agree on reconciliation and/or repentance, it moves to the next level.
 - c. If a party refuses to meet after several honest attempts, it moves to the next level.
 - d. NOTE: No other persons are involved or made aware of the issue other than the parties involved.
4. Supportive Reconciliation – If personal reconciliation fails, the offended party or the victim may request for additional witnesses to the reconciliation process. These should be individ-

uals of good standing in the church community, mature, and respected by the body. These are usually members of the pastoral staff and/or deacons (male or female). Some additional suggestions:

- a. The witnesses should not be persons directly impacted by the issue being addressed
 - b. The witnesses should not be obviously biased toward either party
 - c. The witnesses should be made aware of the efforts of the parties to reconcile by the parties themselves.
 - d. Invitations to meet and the results of those meetings should be sent to the parties and the witnesses by certified mail, return receipt requested.
 - e. The purpose of the witnesses is to assist the two parties in finding reconciliation by helping the parties listen to each other, applying scripture accurately, assisting in finding common understanding, and affirming the reconciliation.
 - f. If the parties reconcile and forgiveness and or restitution, if applicable, is asked and received, the matter stops. No additional conversation occurs and the matter is closed.
 - g. If the parties are unable to agree on reconciliation and/or repentance, it moves to the next level.
 - h. If a party refuses to meet after several honest attempts, it moves to the next level.
 - i. NOTE: No other persons are involved or made aware of the issue other than the parties involved and the witnesses.
5. Corporate Reconciliation – If supportive reconciliation fails, the offended party or the victim may request for a meeting with the designated body within the church responsible for discipline, which is usually the Deacon Board. These should be individuals of good standing in the church community, mature, and respected by the body. Some additional suggestions:
- a. The members of this body should not be persons directly impacted by the issue being addressed
 - b. The members of this body should not be obviously biased toward either party
 - c. The members of this body should be aware of the reconciliation efforts made to this point by the parties and the witnesses involved.
 - d. Invitations to meet and the results of those meetings should be sent to the appropriate body and the parties by certified mail, return receipt requested.
 - e. The purpose of the body is to assist the two parties in finding reconciliation by helping the parties listen to each other, applying scripture accurately, assisting in finding common understanding, and affirming the reconciliation.
 - f. If the parties reconcile and forgiveness and or restitution, if applicable, is asked and

- received, the matter stops. No additional conversation occurs and the matter is closed.
- g. If the parties are unable to agree on reconciliation and/or repentance, it moves to the next level.
 - h. If a party refuses to meet after several honest attempts, it moves to the next level.
5. Congregational Reconciliation – If corporate reconciliation fails, the offended party or the victim may request for a meeting with the congregation. This should be a members only meeting, strictly enforced, with the sole agenda of said meeting to be announced as “a matter of reconciliation” without reference to parties or issues. The congregation meets under the rules of its by-laws, and after hearing from the parties involved, the witnesses, and the designated body within the church responsible for reconciliation, is asked to determine whether the offending party should remain a part of the body (a member). Some additional suggestions:
- a. ALL members are welcomed to attend.
 - b. Announcement of said meeting should follow the guidelines for announcing any special congregational meeting.
 - c. The members of this body should be aware of the reconciliation efforts made to this point by the parties, the witnesses and the disciplining body involved.
 - d. Invitations to meet and the results of those meetings should be sent to the parties by certified mail, return receipt requested.
 - e. The purpose of the congregation is to provide one last opportunity for reconciliation by helping the parties listen to each other, applying scripture accurately, assisting in finding common understanding, and affirming the reconciliation.
 - f. If the parties reconcile and forgiveness and or restitution, if applicable, is asked and received, the matter stops. No additional conversation occurs and the matter is closed.
 - g. If the parties are unable to agree on reconciliation and/or repentance, a congregational decision is made regarding the offender’s status in the body, using whatever guidelines are found in the by-laws. A super-majority (2/3 or ¾) is suggested.
 - h. If the congregational body decides that the offense is not worthy of discipline, the matter stops. No additional conversation occurs and the matter is closed.
 - i. If the congregational body decides that the offense is worthy of discipline, the offender is notified of the results of the decision, and they are removed from the membership of the church. Their ability to hold other positions in the church would be determined by the church’s by-laws. Other specific restrictions may also be appropriate (for example, a convicted sex offender may not be permitted to work alone with children)
 - j. If a party refuses to meet the congregation still proceeds with the decision process.

- k. NOTE: No other persons are involved or made aware of the issue other than the congregants that were in attendance at that closed meeting. The church may choose to designate individuals who will respond to direct queries, provided those queries were initiated by the offended party (for example, if the offender tells a friend something, and that friend asks the church for clarification, the church would be in a position to respond since the confidence was already broken by the offender to that specific party. Extreme sensitivity and tact is required.
7. Post Discipline Actions – Unless the offender is considered a public threat to safety, they are still permitted to attend services, and the congregation is still permitted to maintain regular contact, with the purpose of still bringing the person to a point of reconciliation to the body. If the person at any time communicates a desire to be reconciled, the effort should be welcomed. If the original “victim” is unwilling, this would become a separate issue of discipline. If reconciliation, forgiveness, and or restitution, if applicable, is asked and received, the person should be reinstated as a member with the full privileges of a member (the issue of trust is one where the member must be given a reasonable opportunity to regain it. For example, a former Sunday School Teacher may be required to serve as a substitute first before once again teaching).
8. Public vs. Private Repentance – Repentance is usually a private affair, with the parties privately receiving said repentance. If the offense is to the entire church, or has reached a level where the entire church has become involved, then public repentance may be preferred. Remember that the relationship between the offender and God and the offender and the offended parties is the priority. Even when public repentance is deemed necessary, it is not necessary for a person to proclaim their actions to the entire congregation, since visitors and others not aware of the situation would be exposed unnecessarily. For example, a person coming forward during a Sunday Service, and the pastor communicating to the body that the person has come forward to repent of an area of sin in their lives is probably sufficient.
9. Process for Members, Believing Friends, and Non-Believing Friends. Members are subject to the entire process outlined above. Friends of the church are subject to all parts except 6) Congregational Reconciliation, because they are not members. Friends after non-repentance at the Corporate level would be prohibited from serving in any office or ministry within the church until repentance occurred Non- Believing Friends of the church are not subject to church reconciliation because they are still on their journey to be reconciled to Christ.

(Appendix 1) *The Message of the Brethren Ministry*

Adopted by the National Ministerial Association, 1921

The message which Brethren pastors accept as a divine entrustment to be heralded to a lost world, finds its sole source and authority in the Bible. This message is one of hope for a lost world and speaks with finality and authority. Fidelity to the apostolic injunction to preach the Word demands our utmost endeavor of mind and heart. We, the members of the Brethren Church, hold that the essential and constituent elements of our message shall continue to be the following declarations.

1. Our Motto: THE BIBLE, THE WHOLE BIBLE, AND NOTHING BUT THE BIBLE.
2. The authority and integrity of the Holy Scriptures. The ministry of the Brethren Church desires to bear testimony to the beliefs that God's supreme revelation has been made through Jesus Christ, a complete and authentic record of which revelation is the New Testament; and to the belief that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, is the infallible record of the perfect, final and authoritative revelation of God's will, altogether sufficient in themselves as a rule of faith and practice.
3. We understand the basic content of our doctrinal preaching and teaching to be:
 - a. The pre-existence, deity and incarnation by virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 - b. The fall of all people, their consequent spiritual death and utter sinfulness, and the necessity of their new birth;
 - c. The vicarious atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ through the shedding of His own blood.
 - d. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in the body in which He suffered and died and His subsequent glorification at the right hand of God.
 - e. Justification by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of which obedience to the will of God and works of righteousness are evidence and result; the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of the world and the life everlasting of the just;
 - f. The personality and deity of the Holy Spirit who indwells the Christian and is a personal comforter and guide;
 - g. The personal and visible return of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven as King of Kings and Lord of Lords; the glorious goal for which we are taught to wait, watch and pray;

- h. The Christian should “be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of the mind”;
- i. The Christian should observe, as a duty and privilege, the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, among which are (a) baptism of believers by triune immersion; (b) confirmation; (c) the Lord’s supper; (d) the communion of bread and wine; (e) the washing of the saint’s feet; and (f) the anointing of the sick with oil.

This declaration of faith shall be used only as the message of the Brethren Ministry and not as a creed for the denomination.



A RESOURCE OF THE BRETHREN CHURCH