



Brethren Church  
National Board of Oversight  
Policy Manual

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# 1.0 Responsibilities and Structure

## 1.1 Responsibilities

- 1.1.1 Final examination and approval of candidates for ordination or for recognition of prior ordination.
- 1.1.2 Creation of uniform policies and procedures for examination and oversight
- 1.1.3 Serving as a board of final appeal in cases of regional discipline of pastors and elders and of congregations.
- 1.1.4 Maintaining a national list of all Brethren elders and licensed and commissioned pastors in good standing.
- 1.1.5 The National Board of Oversight is ultimately accountable to the decisions of General Conference.

## 1.2 Structure

### 1.2.1 Composition

- 1.2.1.1 Each Regional Leadership Team shall yearly appoint two of its members, one elder and one lay person, to serve on the National Board of Oversight. Divisions of the Brethren Church still functioning as Districts shall yearly appoint one elder to serve on the National Board of Oversight until they have a Regional Leadership Team.
- 1.2.1.2 The executive director of The Brethren Church or their appointee shall serve as a member of the board with voice and vote.
- 1.2.1.3 A Brethren theologian shall serve on the board with voice and vote. This appointment will be made by the executive director of The Brethren Church, with the approval of the Executive Board of The Brethren Church.
- 1.2.1.4 The board shall organize itself internally through the selection of a chair and a secretary.

### 1.2.2 Meetings

- 1.2.2.1 REGULAR MEETINGS: The National Board of Oversight shall meet at least annually, at a time and place to be determined by the Board.
- 1.2.2.2 SPECIAL MEETINGS: A special meeting may be called by the chair, or when a majority of the representatives on the board request such a meeting to the chair.

## 1.2.3 Officers

- 1.2.3.1 OFFICERS OF THE BOARD: The Officers of this Board shall be Chairperson and Secretary.
- 1.2.3.2 SELECTION AND TERM OF CHAIRPERSON. The Chairperson shall be selected by the procedure and serve the term outlined in the Manual of Procedure, Chapter 3, Section 3, article 4.
- 1.2.3.3 SELECTION AND TERM OF SECRETARY. The Secretary shall be elected during a duly called meeting of the Board with a majority of the ballots cast necessary for election. Nominations will be received from the floor provided the nominee accepts the nomination. Board Officers shall be installed at the close of the current meeting of the Board. Individuals may be reelected. The term of office for Secretary shall be one (1) year.
- 1.2.3.4 RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHAIRPERSON:
- A. Preside at all meetings of the Board.
  - B. Plan Board meetings with the help of the National Office and the Board members.
  - C. Plan the agenda for the meetings of the Board.
  - D. Supervise the gathering of necessary reports and materials for the Board, and the contact of Board members and Candidates.
  - E. Sign official documents as a signatory agent along with the Secretary.
  - F. Any other responsibilities assigned by the Board.
- 1.2.3.5 RESPONSIBILITIES OF SECRETARY:
- A. Keep accurate minutes of all the meetings of the Board.
  - B. Assist the Chair in the distribution of minutes and reports.
  - C. Sign official documents as a signatory agent along with the Chair.
  - D. Any other responsibilities assigned by the Chair or the Board.
- 1.2.3.6 RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARD MEMBER:
- A. Attend all meetings of the National Board of Oversight.
  - B. Actively participate in evaluating candidates for ordination.
  - C. Assist individuals within the region going through the process of Licensing and Ordination to fulfill the necessary requirements.
  - D. Represent the Region in presenting candidates for ordination.
  - E. Assure that a current list of elders in good standing is submitted to the Board at least annually.
  - F. Present materials necessary from parties involved within the region when a pastor, elder or congregation presents an appeal in a matter of discipline.
- 1.2.3.7 VACANCY OF OFFICE: When a Board Office becomes vacated for any reason, the Board shall select a replacement in accordance with 1.2.3.2 , with term lasting until the next regular election.
- 1.2.3.8 REMOVAL OF OFFICE: Any Board Officers may be removed from office by a three - quarter (3/4) majority vote at any duly called Board meeting.

## **1.2.4 Voting**

- 1.2.4.1 **QUORUM:** The Chair shall declare the initial quorum of any Board meeting by recognizing those representatives who have been duly selected by their respective organizations. Unless otherwise stated herein, a quorum for the purpose of conducting business of the Board or any Committee under Board authority shall be a simple majority of the duly recognized Board members.
- 1.2.4.2 **ELIGIBILITY:** Unless otherwise stated herein, the making and voting on motions within the Board or any committee under Board authority is restricted to those who are duly elected or selected members of the Board or the respective Committee or Task Force.
- 1.2.4.3 **METHOD OF VOTING:** For any motion or business item to be approved at any meeting of the Board or any committee under Board authority, an affirmative vote greater than fifty percent (50%) of the voting members present must be received, unless a higher percentage for passage is required herein. At the request of any voting member present, any vote taken at any such meeting will be conducted by secret ballot.

## **1.2.5 Other Committees and Task Forces**

- 1.2.5.1 **ESTABLISHMENT AND MEMBERSHIP:** The Board shall also create from time to time such other committees or Task Forces as may be required. All such committees or Task Forces must have written purposes, goals, and terms of existence and if in existence for longer than one (1) year, must have an annual review of its membership, goals, and need for existence recorded in the minutes of the Board.
- 1.2.5.2 **AUTHORITY:** Committees or Task Forces established by the Board shall have any responsibilities delegated to them by the Board.
- 1.2.5.3 **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Committees or Task Forces established by the Board shall be accountable to the Board.

## **1.2.6 Amendments**

- 1.2.6.1 **MANDATED POLICIES:** Any policy herein which is mandated by the Manual of Procedure of the Brethren Church, or by action of the General Conference or Executive Board of the Brethren Church cannot be modified without the consent of the respective authority establishing the policy.
- 1.2.6.2 **ALL OTHER POLICIES:** Any Policy of the National Board of Oversight, except for policies under 1.2.6.1, can be modified at any regular meeting of the Board. It is recommended that proposed changes be submitted to the Board in writing in advance.

## **2.0 Licensure and Ordination Examination and Oversight**

### **2.1 Examination of Candidates for Ordination or Recognition of Ordination**

- 2.1.1 The Board shall follow the procedures outlined in the current *Manual of Licensure and Ordination*.
- 2.1.2 The Chair shall be responsible for the collection of materials from candidates and regions and shall distribute said materials to the Board
- 2.1.3 The Chair shall communicate status of candidate materials to the Board members of the candidate's region.
- 2.1.4 The Board members of the candidate's region shall be responsible to assure that a candidate's materials are complete and in order.
- 2.1.5 The Chair shall develop timelines and deadlines to expedite the timely receipt and distribution of candidate materials for examinations.
- 2.1.6 Examinations of candidates for Ordination shall occur in face to face meetings with the board. Exceptions may be made for extraordinary circumstances with advance approval from the board.

### **2.2 Uniform Policies and Procedures for Ordination Process**

- 2.2.1 The Board shall annually review the *Manual of Licensure and Ordination* to assure that proper procedures are effectively outlined and will through Board members and National Office assure wide distribution of the current edition of the Manual.
- 2.2.2 The Board shall annually review the *Reading Program for Ordination* to assure it is current and comprehensive and will through Board members and National Office assure wide distribution.
- 2.2.3 The Board shall annually review the *National Board of Oversight Policy on Brethren Intensives* and will through Board members and National Office assure wide distribution.

## **3.0 National Certification of Commissioned, Licensed, and Elder pastoral leaders**

### **3.1 Board Responsibilities**

- 3.1.1 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 Board members representing each region.
- 3.1.2 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.
- 3.1.3 Upon approval of the list of elders in good standing, the Chair shall present the list to the National Office.
- 3.1.4 Upon approval of the list of elders and commissioned and licensed pastors in good standing, the Chair shall present the list to National Office as the

list of individuals eligible to receive ministerial credentials at General Conference.

## 3.2 Regional Responsibilities

- 3.2.1 It is the responsibility of each region to develop and submit to the Board annually a list of elders and Licensed and commissioned pastors in good standing, defined as those who hold elder credentials or are recognized as commissioned or licensed by their respective region, are a member in good standing of a Brethren Church, not currently under discipline by their region, and fulfill one of the following:
- A. Those currently in active Ministry in a Brethren Church.
  - B. Those who are working at the National Office, Ashland University, Ashland theological Seminary, or in Military Chaplaincy.
  - C. Those who are working in an identified Brethren Mission Field.
  - D. Those who are serving in other ministry contexts that the Region has identified as Brethren ministries.
  - E. Those who are not currently in ministry but have received a leave of absence from their region for pastoral transition purposes.
- 3.2.2 Active Brethren Elders currently in good standing not in a recognized Brethren ministry context who meet one of the following conditions shall, upon their request and approval by their region, be granted Retired Status.
- 1) Have served a minimum of twenty (20) years of service as an active Brethren elder.
  - 2) Served a minimum of five (5) years as an active Brethren elder and are at least sixty-five (65) years of age.
  - 3) Served as an active Brethren elder but were unable to continue to serve due to illness or disability.
- Service in another denomination, may, at the discretion of the region, be included in years served, provided that at the time of request the person was a Brethren elder in good standing. Retired Status elders will be accountable to the region in which they hold membership, or in the absence of membership in a Brethren Church their region of physical residence. Retired status elders will still be expected to maintain relationship with the Brethren Church and uphold the values of Brethren eldership, as determined by their respective region.
- 3.2.3 All retired Brethren elders in good standing shall have their ministerial credential fee at General Conference waived.
- 3.2.4 All Brethren retired elders may be reinstated to active status by requesting a change in status to the appropriate region in which they will be serving and having that region's RLT approve the status change. The RLT may request, at their discretion, written or oral materials for reinstatement to active status, and if the retirement is longer than five (5) years. may, at the discretion of the RLT, request a new written exam and an appearance before the NBO for a return to active status.

## **4.0 Appeal of Congregational or Pastoral Discipline**

### **4.1 4.1 Collection, Maintenance and Communication of Information regarding Pastors and Elders**

- 4.1.1 It is the responsibility of Regional Leadership Teams to collect accurate records of pastors and elders in their regions, including any negative activity including but not limited to criminal convictions, criminal registry listings, terminations for cause, or other disciplinary activities.
- 4.1.2 This information shall be communicated through the NBO reps for that region or the Regional Resource Coordinator to the Chair of the NBO, who shall have the responsibility to forward this information to a place of secure storage supervised by the National Office. The NBO Chair, the Moderator, and the Executive Director of the Brethren Church shall be able to access and disseminate this information.
- 4.1.3 When an elder transfer to another region, or a person seeks a pastoral position in a region, that region may request if any information is known about the person. This request must come from one of the NBO representative of that region or the Regional Resource Coordinator of that region in writing, and must be asked directly to the chair of the NBO, The Moderator, or the Executive Director of the Brethren Church.
- 4.1.4 The NBO chair, the Moderator, or the Executive Director of the Brethren Church shall communicate the results of a search of such records ONLY to the person or entity that made the original request. The release of such information must be communicated to all three parties (named in 4.1.2) in writing, including a copy of the written request, the entity making the request, and the date the request was fulfilled.
- 4.1.5 All parties involved will respect the confidential nature of any such communication.

### **4.2 Appeal of Elder or Pastoral Discipline**

- 4.2.1 The Board shall serve as the final board of appeals for individuals under discipline by their region.
- 4.2.2 An individual under regional discipline must submit the appeal in writing to the Board, stating the rationale for the appeal.
- 4.2.3 The Board will receive materials from the Board members of that region outlining the reason for the discipline action, the process followed, and any testimony or evidence relevant to the act of discipline.
- 4.2.4 The individual will also submit any materials they believe are relevant to their appeal.
- 4.2.5 The Board shall review all materials, interview the Board members from that region, the individual involved., and any witnesses.
- 4.2.6 The Board shall then decide the appeal, with the Board members of the region involved recused from the vote.
- 4.2.7 A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Board, less the recused members will be required to overturn the decision of a region.



- 4.2.8 The Chair or their designate will inform the Regional Leadership team, the individual, and the National Office in writing of their decision.
- 4.2.9 If both the chair and the secretary are from the region involved in the discipline, a temporary chair will be appointed by the remaining board members to oversee the appeal process.

### **4.3 Appeal of Congregational Discipline**

- 4.3.1 The Board shall serve as the final board of appeals for congregations under discipline by their region.
- 4.3.2 A congregation under regional discipline must submit the appeal in writing to the Board, stating the rationale for the appeal.
- 4.3.3 The Board will receive materials from the Board members of that region outlining the reason for the discipline action, the process followed, and any testimony or evidence relevant to the act of discipline.
- 4.3.4 The congregation will also submit any materials they believe are relevant to their appeal.
- 4.3.5 The Board shall review all materials, interview the Board members from that region, individuals chosen by the congregation to represent them in their appeal, and any witnesses.
- 4.3.6 The Board shall then decide the appeal, with the Board members of the region involved recused from the vote.
- 4.3.7 A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Board, less the recused members will be required to overturn the decision of a region.
- 4.3.8 The Chair or their designate will inform the Regional Leadership team, the congregation, and the National Office in writing of their decision.
- 4.3.9 If both the chair and the secretary are from the region involved in the discipline, a temporary chair will be appointed by the remaining board members to oversee the appeal process.