

We Recommend

(Part III, 1978-2002)

Recommendations, Study Papers, and
other Leadership Resources

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other Leadership Resources

General Conference of
Mennonite Brethren Churches

Compiled and edited by

Abe J. Dueck and David Giesbrecht

Winnipeg, Manitoba
Historical Commission
Conferences of Mennonite Brethren Churches
United States and Canada

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Canada
and USA

We recommend -- (part III, 1978-2002) : recommendations,
study papers, and other leadership resources, General Conference
of Mennonite Brethren Churches / compiled and edited by Abe J.
Dueck and David Giesbrecht. -- 2d ed.

Includes index.

ISBN 1-895432-30-8

I. Dueck, Abe J. II. Giesbrecht, David III. General
Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Canada and USA.
Historical Commission. IV. Title.

BX8129.M371A1 2004
903441-3

289.7'3

C2004-

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Foreword

The year 2002 marked the end of a significant era of Mennonite Brethren history in North America. The final convention of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America convened in Abbotsford, BC on July 25-27. The General Conference came to a formal end on January 1, 2003.

During its approximately 124 years of formal existence (125 years including the unofficial 1878 convention), the Conference was at the core of Mennonite Brethren life, identity and ministry in North America and beyond. The Conference established Mennonite Brethren missions activity abroad as well as in North America in a more limited way. It sponsored a number of educational institutions, including Tabor College and, more recently, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. It defined many aspects of Mennonite Brethren theology and practice and was the guardian of the Confession of Faith. It was the vehicle by which a great deal of literature was published which informed and nourished congregational and family life. The regular conventions became the occasions where old friendships were sustained and new ones formed and where Mennonite Brethren separated by huge distances became bonded into a closely-knit spiritual family.

The conventions were conducted on an annual basis for some years, then later triennially, and finally on a biannual basis. These were occasions for fellowship and worship as well as for decision making. Minutes were carefully kept and published in the Yearbooks, initially in the German language and later in English. By the 1960s it became clear that the number of recommendations that had been passed was so large that it would be helpful to collect them and organize them so that they could be more easily accessed and utilized. The first person to undertake this task was A. E. Janzen, who compiled the recommendations of sessions 1 to 49, including years 1878 to 1963. Then, in 1978, Herbert Giesbrecht completed the compilation of the recommendations from 1966 to 1975. Both listings (Part I and Part II) were published in 1978 under the title, *We Recommend: Recommendations and Resolutions of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches* (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature, 1978). The methodologies of the two parts were different and the two sections were therefore not integrated.

The present volume completes the task of compiling the remaining recommendations for the period from 1978 to 2002. It should be noted that no Yearbook was published following the 2002 convention because the Executive of the Conference had completed the tasks needed to dissolve the Conference on the basis of decisions made in 1999. The final Memoranda of Understanding for the various ministries and other related material was published in the booklet,

1879-2002: *“like a fire burning in my bones” (Jeremiah 20:9): General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Executive Report: The Final Chapter.* These materials are not included in this volume.

Another important series of events interspersed between conventions at various times and places were the Study Conferences that were convened to deal with topics that were of concern within the Mennonite Brethren community. These conferences often provided the resources which were used to formulate the nature of recommendations to the General Conference. The first of these convened in 1956. Most were sponsored by the Board of Reference and Counsel (later Board of Faith and Life). Others were sponsored by the Historical Commission or Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Fresno, as well as by other agencies. This volume includes a listing of all the General Conference Study Conferences and the topics and presenters of the papers as well as some other study conferences sponsored more regionally but with broader participation. These papers are available at the various Mennonite Brethren archival centers in North America.

Finally, the editors felt that it would be helpful to include some other resources, including the places where conventions took place, the chairs or moderators, and a brief history of the Conference, including its predecessor in Russia and the USSR.

The editors are grateful for the work of Gabriel Hamm in entering the recommendations from the Yearbooks into an electronic format. We are also grateful to the Historical Commission for its encouragement and support for this project.

Abe J. Dueck
David Giesbrecht

I. Introduction: 130 Years of Mennonite Brethren Conference History in Russia and North America

Growth and Adaptation

The Mennonite Brethren Church had its formal beginnings in the midst of religious turmoil in the Mennonite settlements in southern Russia (Ukraine) around 1860. Only twelve years later, in 1872, the Mennonite Brethren organized a conference, the first of the Mennonite bodies in Russia to do so. The major Mennonite body from which the Mennonite Brethren had seceded (often referred to as the *Kirchliche*, or Church Mennonites), did not organize as a Conference until 1882. Eventually the Mennonite Brethren also participated in this organization, called the *Allgemeine Bundeskonferenz der Mennonitengemeinden in Russland* (General Conference of the Mennonite Congregations in Russia). The first Mennonite Brethren convention (conference) was held in Andreasfeld, not far from the Chortitza colony, and the congregation there was known as the Einlage congregation. Thereafter conventions were usually held annually in the spring at various locations. The Minutes of most of these conventions are no longer extant.¹ The last Mennonite Brethren convention, in what in the meantime had become the Soviet Union, met in Memrik in 1922.

The North American Mennonite Brethren Church had its beginnings in the 1870s when Mennonites in Russia began to look abroad for a place to settle where their religious beliefs and practices would be protected. The Russian government was beginning to encroach on various Mennonite beliefs such as nonresistance or pacifism. Between 1874 and 1880 approximately 10,000 Mennonites migrated to the mid-western states and another 8,000 to western Canada, particularly Manitoba.

Mennonite Brethren were not numerous among the first groups of settlers, but by 1876 they too began to arrive in more significant numbers in Kansas and before long they had settled in several states. The first Mennonite Brethren church to organize was the Ebenfeld congregation (1874) in Marion County, Kansas, not far from Hillsboro. Soon other congregations were organized in Henderson, Nebraska (1876) Ebenezer-Buhler, Kansas (1878), Bingham Lake, Minnesota (1878) and in Bruderfeld, Dakota (1878).

The first initiative toward the organization of a North American conference came in 1878 when Peter Regier from Henderson invited representatives from the other Mennonite Brethren settlements to a meeting in York County, Nebraska to discuss issues of common concern. Eleven representatives from two of the congregations met and issued a call for a conference at the same location in 1879. The first formally recognized

conference therefore convened in October 1879, only seven years after a Conference had been organized in Russia. For the next 30 years, until 1909, the Conference met on an annual basis at various locations.

Beginning in 1903 there was a growing realization that a new structure was needed. Congregations by now were dispersed in various regions from the mid-western states to the Pacific states and north into several prairie provinces. In 1909 a new structure was finally formed. Three district conferences were created—the Southern District (Kansas, Oklahoma and southern California, the Central District (Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oregon), and a Northern District (Canada and Rosehill, North Dakota). Subsequently some adjustments were made and a fourth district—the Pacific District (California, Oregon and Washington)—was formed in 1912. The district conferences usually met annually whereas the General Conference met triennially.

For the next 30 years this structure seemed to serve the North American MB churches adequately. However, significant changes were taking place, the most important of which was the advent of a new wave of immigrants from the Soviet Union in the 1920s following the Bolshevik Revolution and civil war. By far the majority of these immigrants settled in Canada's western provinces and Ontario. Over 20,000 Mennonite immigrants came to Canada from 1923 to 1931, and many of these were Mennonite Brethren who often began new congregations. In November 1945 the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (previously the Northern District) received its own charter and in 1946 Ontario became a member conference. In 1948 the South American churches in Paraguay and Brasil joined the General Conference as another district, although by the late 1960s these churches withdrew in favor of their own Conference. By 1950 more immigrants had arrived in Canada following World War II and the Mennonite Brethren memberships in the United States and Canada were about equal. Many other changes, particularly in education and leadership models had taken place. By 1954 the various issues had come to a head and the convention in Hillsboro, KS accepted a new conference structure. Two "area" conferences were established, one in Canada and one in the United States. Each area had subsidiary structures: district conferences in the United States and provincial conferences in Canada.

In 1960 several other significant changes took place. First, the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren joined the North American Conference. Secondly, a name change from "The General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America" to "The General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches" was proposed. Despite various concerns, the name change was approved in 1963.

The final chapter of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches began in 1996 when a selected group of individuals met for a Strategic

Evaluation Meeting at Camp ECCO in California to brainstorm about the future of the Conference. Many younger leaders in particular felt that the Conference had outlived its usefulness and was no longer relevant to them. Not everyone was convinced, however, and in 1997 a Task Force was created to formulate recommendations. The recommendations it brought also proved to be unsatisfactory. Finally, at a convention in Hillsboro in 1999, the Conference agreed to “divest itself of the ministries it currently holds” and transfer them to the national conferences by 2002. This process, while difficult at times, was completed in time and a final celebration was held in Abbotsford, BC in the summer of 2002. Officially the Conference came to an end on January 1, 2003, although a legal entity remains for fiduciary reasons. Some ministries, such as missions, seminary training, and the work of the Historical Commission, are still carried out under bi-national arrangements. Likewise, the Confession of Faith remains the Confession of both conferences with mechanisms for changes. Adjustments will continue and it is anticipated that bi-national gatherings will periodically take place for fellowship and consultation. However, the General Conference as such has ended after approximately 124 years of existence.

Boards and Committees for Changing Circumstances

The General Conference engaged in various tasks which were primarily carried out through its Executive and various boards and committees. In the early period these were often quite *ad hoc*, whereas later the structures became more solidified. The first committee to be established was the Foreign Missions Committee (1885), although Mennonite Brethren mission work preceded that date.

When the first Charter was approved under the Kansas State law in 1900, the Conference was registered under the name, “The American Mennonite Brethren (sic) Mission Union”. In 1909 a change of name was registered. It now became “The Conference of the Mennonite Brethren (sic) Church of North America.” The missionary purpose was central to the Conference from the beginning, although the 1909 Charter adopted amendments in order to include specific references to home missions, schools, and benevolent institutions. By-laws then spelled out in more detail how the Conference was to be organized and how it would function. The Charter and By-Laws together became the Constitution. The Constitution made specific provision for a Board of Directors (Trustees), the Executive Officers, a (foreign) Missions Committee, a (home) Missions Committee, a City Missions and Deacons Committee, and a Publications Committee.

The first significant revision of the Constitution was approved in 1936. It included a reference to the Confession of Faith and also spelled out a more detailed organization as follows:

1. Executive Officers
2. Committees
 - Spiritual Welfare
 - Directors
 - Foreign Missions
 - Home Missions
 - City Missions
 - Publications
 - Schools and Christian Education
 - General Welfare and Public Relations
 - Auditing
 - Program

In 1954, when the Conference was radically reorganized, a new constitution was adopted on a provisional basis. Numerous amendments were made in subsequent years, but the 1963 edition included the following boards and committees:

- Reference and Counsel
- Trustees
- Foreign Missions
- Home Missions
- Christian Literature
- Education
- Church Schools
- General Welfare and Public Relations
- Youth
- Auditing
- Program

In 1978 a provisional Constitution was adopted which included a Board of Mass Media and a Board of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. Home Missions was now no longer included, the Foreign Mission Board became the Board of Missions and Services, and the Youth Committee was eliminated.

In 1990 the Board of Faith and Life replaced the Board of Reference and Counsel and the Board of Resource Ministries replaced the previous Boards of Mass Media, Christian Education, and Christian Literature. An Executive Council was also added in 1990.

Confessions of Faith: Expressing God's Unchanging Truth in a Changing Environment

The early Mennonite Brethren did not immediately draft their own Confession of Faith. The group that seceded from the main Mennonite body in 1860 affirmed its theological agreement with Menno Simons and with earlier Confessions such as the West Prussian edition published in 1853 (Rudnerweide). In 1873 several congregations adopted the Hamburg Baptist Confession of 1847 with additions relating to footwashing and nonresistance. But this Confession never became an official Confession of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

The first definitive Confession of Faith of the Mennonite Brethren Church was adopted in Russia in 1900 and printed in Halbstadt in 1902. In 1902, the Mennonite Brethren Conference of North America also officially adopted this Confession. The first American edition was published in German in 1916. The first American English edition by H. F. Toews appeared in 1917.

Only minor changes were made in this Confession during the next half-century. However, in 1966 the Conference agreed to review the Confession and prepare a revised edition in contemporary language. After lengthy deliberations and the submission of many drafts, the revised Confession finally was adopted in 1975 and published in 1976. This Confession, unlike the previous one, had a rather short life span.

The next round of revisions came less than twenty years later. The process began in 1993 and was not completed until 1999 when the Conference accepted the Confession as well as Sidewalk, Digest, and Liturgical versions. By then it was clear that the General Conference was nearing its end and there was a strong desire to pass the completed project on to the national conferences. The Confession was renamed "Confession of Faith of the United States and Canadian Conferences of the Mennonite Brethren Churches." A process for future amendments was also put in place.

The Future

The new reality of two national Mennonite Brethren conferences in North America is still at a very elementary stage and needs to be tested over time. Some of the ministries, particularly that of global missions, have made the transition without much difficulty, partly because missions relies on voluntary contributions for its operations and partly because missions programs are essentially carried out abroad. The Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary is making the transition more gradually and with more difficulty. The Confessional issues will probably not be formally tested very soon, although preexisting regional differences may become more pronounced and create more tensions in the future. The Historical Commission, which continues as a bi-

national structure, has a more limited mandate and may be able to continue with relatively little change.

While the General Conference as a formal structure has disappeared from North America, it is clear that a rich legacy remains and that the recommendations and programs of the past will live on and draw from the legacy of the past century in many ways. Furthermore, at the same time that the General Conference has gradually disappeared, a new entity known as the International Committee of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB) has come into existence. ICOMB had its roots in the World Mennonite Brethren Missions Consultation in 1988 and has gradually evolved into a permanent structure with representatives from each of the national conferences. In time it may take on some of the functions which were carried out by the North American bodies in the past, although there are serious limitations to global efforts in many areas.

Mennonite Brethren have proven themselves to be open to change and have often prided themselves about being future-oriented. The degree to which they will continue to fulfill their mission in the future will also depend on the extent to which they can take advantage of the rich resources of their past, some of which are incorporated in the pages which follow.

Abe J. Dueck

1. See translations of extant Minutes in Abe J. Dueck, *Moving Beyond Secession: Defining Russian Mennonite Brethren Mission and Identity 1872-1922*. Winnipeg, MB; Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Productions, 1997.

III. General Conference Conventions, 1878 – 2002

Date of Convention	Convention Number	Meeting Place	Moderator
September 28-29, 1878	Unofficial	York County, NB	Peter Regier
October 18-20, 1879	1	Hamilton Co., NB	Johann J. Regier
October 18, 1880	2	Hamilton Co., NB	Abram Schellenberg
October 10, 1881	3	Hamilton Co., NB	A. Schellenberg
October 23, 1882	4	Reno County, KS	A. Schellenberg
November 12, 1883	5	Hamilton C., NB	A. Schellenberg
October 27, 1884	6	Gnadenau, KS	A. Schellenberg
October 19, 1885	7	Cottonwood C., MN	A. Schellenberg
November 1, 1886	8	Turner Co., Dakota	J. Regier
October 2-4, 1887	9	York Co., NB	A. Schellenberg
October 12-13, 1888	10	Reno Co., KS	A. Schellenberg
October 7-8, 1889	11	Cottonwood Co., MN	A. Schellenberg
October 19-20, 1890	12	Hamilton Co., NB	A. Schellenberg
October 12-13, 1891	13	Turner Co., SD	Cornelius P. Wedel
October 31 – November 2, 1892	14	Alexanderwohl, KS	A. Schellenberg
November 20-21, 1893	15	Cottonwood Co., MN	C. P. Wedel
October 8-10, 1894	16	Hamilton Co., NB	A. Schellenberg

October 28-29, 1895	17	Parker, South Dakota	A. Schellenberg
October 22-24, 1896	18	Ebenfeld, KS	A. Schellenberg
October 11-12, 1897	19	Cottonwood Co., MN	A. Schellenberg
October 31 – November 1, 1898	20	Winkler, Manitoba	A. Schellenberg
October 16-19, 1899	21	York & Hamilton Co., NB	A. Schellenberg
October 22-25, 1900	22	Reno Co., KS	A. Schellenberg
October 24-25, 1901	23	Cottonwood Co., MN	Heinrich Voth
November 10- 12, 1902	24	Washita Co., OK	H. Voth
October 26-28, 1903	25	York & Hamilton Co., NB	H. Voth
November 14- 16, 1904	26	Winkler, MB	H. Voth
November 13- 15, 1905	27	Ebenfeld, KS	H. Voth
October 29-31, 1906	28	Bingham Lake, MN	H. Voth
November 10- 12, 1907	29	Dalmeny, SK	H. Voth
November 9-11, 1908	30	Sued-Hoffnungsfeld, OK	H. Voth
November 22- 24, 1909	31	Henderson, NB	H. Voth
October 28-30, 1912	32	Hillsboro, KS	H. Voth
October 30 – November 3, 1915	33	Winkler, MB	M. M. Just
November 3-5, 1919	34	Mountain Lake, MN	H. W. Lorenz
November 19- 27, 1921	35	Reedley, CA	H. W. Lorenz

November 15-19, 1924	36	Corn, OK	N. N. Hiebert
Oct. 30 – Nov. 2, 1927	37	Henderson, NB	N. N. Hiebert
May 30 – June 4, 1930	38	Hepburn, SK	H. W. Lorenz
October 21-25, 1933	39	Hillsboro, KS	W. J. Bestvater
November 21-26, 1936	40	Reedley, CA	P. C. Grunau
October 21-25, 1939	41	Corn, OK	G. B. Huebert
May 26-30, 1943	42	Buhler, KS	G. B. Huebert
November 24-29, 1945	43	Dinuba, CA	G. B. Huebert
August 28-September 2, 1948	44	Mountain Lake, MN	P. R. Lange
July 21-26, 1951	45	Winkler, MB	B. J. Braun
October 23-28, 1954	46	Hillsboro, KS	B. J. Braun
October 20-23, 1957	47	Yarrow, BC	H. H. Janzen
November 12-16, 1960	48	Reedley, CA	Dan Friesen
August 3-7, 1963	49	Winnipeg, MB	Dan Friesen
November 25-29, 1966	50	Corn, OK	Frank C. Peters
August 23-26, 1969	51	Vancouver, BC	Frank C. Peters
November 11-14, 1972	52	Reedley, CA	Marvin Hein
August 9-12, 1975	53	Winnipeg, MB	Marvin Hein
August 3-6, 1978	54	Buhler, KS	John A. Toews
August 7-11, 1981	55	St. Catharines, ON	Henry H. Dick

October 12-16, 1984	56	Reedly, CA	Henry H. Dick
August 7-11, 1987	57	Abbotsford, BC	Herb Brandt
September 28- October 2, 1990	58	Hillsboro, KS	Herb Brandt
July 7-11, 1993	59	Winnipeg, MB	Edmund Janzen
July 6-9, 1995	60	Fresno, CA	Edmund Janzen
July 10-12, 1997	61	Waterloo, ON	Ed Boschman
July 8-10, 1999	62	Wichita, KS	Ed Boschman
July 25-27, 2002	63	Abbotsford, BC	Herb Koop

III. General Conference Recommendations

1. Board of Christian Education

1978: Foundation Series Sunday School Material (186)

The Board of Christian Education recommends that the General Conference Board of Christian Education assume the responsibility of cooperative user on behalf of the General Conference

1981: Curriculum endorsement (24-27)

1. The Board of Christian Education recognizes four Sunday school curricula as of approximately equal quality, though with different strengths and weaknesses. Scripture Press, Foundation Series, Gospel Light and David C. Cook curricula are all Biblically based and evangelical. In order to provide for the Sunday school curriculum concerns of our Mennonite Brethren Churches, we recommend that the Sunday school curricula for use in Mennonite Brethren churches be the Scripture Press or Foundation Series materials. We further recommend that the Christian Education personnel together with publications and marketing personnel staff continue conversation with Scripture Press involving a discount contract, imprint, teacher manual inserts and editorial changes. We further recommend that we continue to provide editorial input in Foundation Series, youth and adult materials, as we have done in the past five years.

2. We recommend that we discontinue publication of the *Adult Quarterly*.

3. We recommend that we discontinue publication of the German *Lektionsheft*.

4. We recommend that churches desiring German material use the *Bibelstudium* produced by the General Conference Mennonite Church.

Recommendation #1 was accepted.

Recommendation #2 was defeated.

Recommendation #3 was defeated.

Recommendation #4 was withdrawn.

M/s/c to rescind action on Recommendation #1.

M/s/c that we refer this matter, namely Recommendation #1, back to the Board for further consideration and study, to be brought back to this convention at a later time.

M/s/c That we lift Recommendation #1 from the table.

Revised Recommendation #1

Rationale

In order to encourage conference unity at least a minimum of curriculum options ought to be offered.

In view of the high percentage of Scripture Press Material usage, it is possible to enter into contract relationships with Scripture Press. This has editorial and financial benefits. This gives us the opportunity to develop Mennonite Brethren influenced materials. In order to provide a total curriculum plan for the entire age spectrum, it is usually best to use materials from the same publishers throughout the Sunday school.

Motion: Although we recognize the autonomy of the local church, we recommend that the Sunday school curricula for use in Mennonite Brethren churches be the Scripture Press or Foundation Series materials.

Amendment: That we delete the part re: the autonomy of the local church.

M/s/c (The amended motion was carried)

Recommendation 1.2

That the Christian Education personnel together with publications and marketing personnel shall continue conversation with Scripture Press and when it is feasible, enter into an agreement with Scripture Press, involving a discount contract, imprint, teacher manual inserts and editorial changes.

M/s/c

Recommendation 1.3

We further recommend that we continue to provide editorial input in Foundation Series, youth and adult materials, as we have done in the past five years.

M/s/c

1990: *Lektionsheft* (40,42)

That we continue to subsidize the publication of the *Lektionsheft* for coming triennium.

M/s/c

That we proceed with the development of a *Faith-Family Focus Curriculum* series

M/s/c to encourage the Board of Resource Ministries to proceed with this recommendation.

2. Board of Christian Literature

1978

Direction (126)

That support be given to the periodical *Direction* (publication of the schools of higher education) in the amount of \$800 per year during the next triennium.

M/s/c

Writers' Conference (126)

That a conference-wide writers conference be sponsored during the 1978-81 triennium, as well as continuing to assist institutes and colleges with regional conferences.

Accepted

Youth Publications (126)

That responsibility for publications directed to the ministry to youth be assigned to the Board of Christian Education of the General Conference.

Accepted

Publications (126-27)

That the conference endorse publication projections as given in the report.

Accepted

Publications Coordinator (127)

That BCL be authorized to engage the equivalent of a full-time coordinator of conference publications. While this position will be funded through the BCL, it is to be understood that the services of this individual will be available for consultation (and editing as time allows) to other agencies of the conference.

A motion was made to vote by ballot, but this motion was defeated.

Accepted [*Editorial Note: Original motion was accepted.*]

Elmer Martens (127)

That Elmer A. Martens be given a vote of thanks for his 12 years as Chairman of the Board of Christian Literature, for his vision and dedication to the task of publications within our conference.

Accepted

1981 (160)

1. That the conference grant the BCL an extension in mandate to include increased contact with and cooperative ventures with sister conferences

outside of the United States and Canada in the fields of Christian literature and historical endeavors.

Accepted

2. That the Conference endorse the mandate of BCL and its relationships to the two national boards of publication as outlined. **Accepted**

3. That the Conference endorse publications as outlined in this report.

Accepted

4. That the conference endorse a system of writing off printing costs using the BCL budget to decrease BCL indebtedness when necessary. **Accepted**

5. That the project of indexing the Zionsbote as proposed by the Historical Commission be approved. Cost would be \$3,500 per year; this amount has not been included in the Historical Commission budget. Accepted

1984 (120, 123, 125)

1. That all book publishing under the Kindred Press label at the General Conference and the national conference levels be assumed by BCL.

M/s/c

2. That Gilbert Brandt be hired as full-time BCL managing editor.

M/s/c *[Editorial Note: The job description of the Managing Editor is printed on pp. 120-122 of the 1984 Yearbook.]*

3. That the General Conference confirm the action of BCL to market Kindred Press publications through Herald Press. This agreement is to continue unless either or both parties to the agreement find it to be unsatisfactory.

M/s/c

Discussion: A delegate from Quebec asked that some publications be translated into French and/or Spanish. A retired Zaire missionary affirmed this suggestion. That the Board of Christian Literature be encouraged to do so.

M/s/c

3. Board of Mass Media (36)

We recommend that the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches endorse participation in the inter-Mennonite Media Group project known as the “Responsible Living One Hour TV Special” and that we budget \$5,000.00 per year for three years in support of this project.

Accepted

4. Board of Missions and Services

[Editorial Note: See General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Executive Report: The Final Chapter 2002 for the Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Mennonite Brethren Mission and Service International, Appendix B-D, pp. 23-38.]

1978

Expansion in Bangladesh (108-109)

The following explanation and recommendation was made:

Bangladesh, northeast of India, has the highest population density in the world. It is a Muslim country and reluctantly has accepted a few Protestant missionaries. Mennonite Central Committee responded to the intense physical needs of Bangladesh in 1972. Soon MCC inquired whether the Asian and North American Mennonites would like to follow up their relief work with mission work. Through this impetus, Asia Mennonite Services, an Asian Mennonite mission board, was formed and simultaneously the Board of Missions/Services seconded two missionary nurses to work with MCC in Bangladesh in anticipation that they would become a part of Asia Mennonite Services.

The missionary nurses found spiritual needs and asked for additional personnel. The India churches sent an Indian Mennonite Brethren couple for one term. Asia Mennonite Services has invited Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services to apply for a mission charter.

Recommendation: That Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services enter Bangladesh for church planting and community development ministries.

Accepted

Expansion of work among Russian-speaking People (109-110)

That Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services expand its ministry to Russian-speaking people.

Rationale

The first Mennonite Brethren mission work was among Russian neighbors. With the emigration and then flight of many Mennonite Brethren, our Russian mission work reverted to zero. About 20 years ago this work was

revived through the Russian radio broadcasts of Mennonite Brethren Communications.

During the past two decades contacts have been re-established with Russian believers. During the past five years many Mennonite Brethren have been granted exit visas. Some of these have already begun evangelistic ministry to Russia.

In these five years repeated reports have come from Russia about a new spiritual stirring among young and old alike. It seems that the new spiritual interest in Russia and our new resources through the Umsiedler in Germany make it incumbent upon the Board of Missions/Services to develop a comprehensive approach to Russian evangelism and church planting.

Motion: That we refer this recommendation and its preamble back to the Board for a re-working.

M/s/c

Office Relocation (111)

Motion: That a forum seriously reconsider moving the mission office to Winnipeg by 1981 and moving the United States desk to Fresno.

Amendment: That the words "by 1981" be eliminated and to add the words 'and that this question be brought back to the convention in 1981.

Carried

Revised Motion: That a forum seriously consider moving the mission office to Winnipeg and moving the United States office to Fresno and that recommendation thereto be brought back to the 1981 convention.

Carried

1981 (43-44)

Motion:

1. That we retain the practice of having two national offices for the administration of our Missions/Services program;
 2. That we de-emphasize the specific geographic location that these offices must be in, thus removing this consideration from constituency bias;
 3. That we allow BOMAS to determine the specific location of these offices based upon efficiency of function and financial consideration.
- Accepted with suggested changes in wording.

1984 (71-72)

1. We recommend that Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services establish fraternal relations with the Mennonite Brethren Churches in Angola to the end of encouraging them and assisting them in expanding their Christian witness in Angola.

M/s/c

2. We recommend that Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services, under their own auspices, seek to evangelize and serve in Pakistan with the purpose and hope of establishing Mennonite Brethren Churches.

M/s/c

3. We recommend that Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services begin mission activity in Portugal, evangelizing and serving with the purpose and hope of establishing Mennonite Brethren Churches.

The motion carried with a number of opposing votes .

1990 (85-88)

1. That the General Conference affirm the actions of Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services in accepting *Vision for the Future: Goals for the 1990s* as a working document and guideline for the 1990s.

M/s/c

2. That the General Conference approve the expansion of MBM/S ministry in Asia by entering one new country in 1993.

Rationale

(1) In our *Vision for the Future*, the following statement sums up the intent. “Seeking to enter one or two new countries where we do not presently work by: (a) Research and study of the potential and needs in a region in cooperation with our regional Mennonite Brethren partners, giving priority to the challenge of Asia; (b) Preparation of an appropriate strategy for the country chosen and the formation of an international team; (c) Seeking to enter one new country in 1993.” In keeping with this statement, Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services is researching new ministry opportunities in countries in Asia such as Thailand, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and other unreached people groups.

(2) More than half the world's people live in Asia. They constitute the largest bloc of unevangelized peoples in the world.

(3) Only a small percentage of MB Missions/Services missionaries presently serve in Asia (15 out of 131). Our missionary force in Asia has been decreasing because of visa difficulties in countries such as India and Indonesia. In thinking of needs in Asia, one is mindful that the largest bloc of unevangelized are the Muslims. We have just recently begun an evangelistic and church planting ministry in Karachi. Our team, presently consisting of three missionaries, will expand to five by early 1991. We believe we need to get a better grasp of methods and strategies in reaching Muslims before we make any major expansion in this area.

(4) Another large bloc of unevangelized peoples are the Buddhists-particularly in southeast Asia. We are making investigations in Thailand and are keeping a sharp eye on possibilities in the other Buddhist countries in that region.

M/s/c

3. That the MB Missions/Services mandate be expanded to a global mandate and that, while its primary focus be reaching people for Christ overseas, it also now includes groups in North America. It is understood that in implementing this mandate in North America, MBM/S will work in conjunction with regional agencies, such as national, district or provincial church extension boards.

Rationale

(1) Mission, by definition is the crossing of frontiers and so is applicable in North America as well as overseas.

(2) People from overseas are increasingly present within our own geographic borders. We are particularly interested in those who come from countries which are restrictive on missionary entrance.

(3) This expanded mandate represents a response to heightened interest in the pluralism of current North American society and requests from within the church constituency for Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services involvement in "cross-cultural" evangelism in North America.

M/s/c

4. That in keeping with the understanding of global missions, MB Mission/Services engage in a ministry of evangelistic outreach to international students in North America, in cooperation with Mennonite Brethren agencies.

Rationale

(1) International students continue to come in large numbers to North American educational institutions for advanced training.

(2) Both the pursuit of education and their being thrust into a new cultural and social environment make them open to new ideas and values.

(3) International students frequently return to leading positions in their home countries.

(4) There are many Mennonite Brethren teachers and students on campuses who have opportunity to relate to international students.

(5) There are a significant number of Mennonite Brethren churches in urban centers and in close proximity to university campuses.

(6) Many Mennonite Brethren members have the gift of hospitality and personal friendship.

M/s/c to amend as follows: Add “and institutions” at end of recommendation.

M/s/c the amended motion.

5. That in keeping with the understanding of global missions, MB Missions/Services engage in a ministry of evangelistic outreach to recent immigrant groups in North America, in cooperation with Mennonite Brethren agencies.

Rationale

(1) The recent influx of immigrants has resulted in concentrations of people groups seeking to retain their specific identity.

(2) Many of the new immigrants retain their links to their relatives and friends in their home countries thereby potentially providing an evangelistic network.

(3) Many immigrant groups live in proximity of Mennonite Brethren churches.

(4) Many Mennonite Brethren have an immigrant background themselves enabling them to identify more readily with the experience of recent immigrants.

M/s/c

1993 (93-104)

1. Lithuania

That the General Conference approve the expansion of MBM/S ministry in Europe by making a long-term commitment to work in the country of Lithuania in the following way:

(1) Our involvement to be coordinated with LOGOS involvement, as per our partnership agreement, and to be reviewed within three years according to the normal pattern of MBM/S country reviews.

(2) MBM/S to be open to involvement in all three of our traditional program emphases, i.e., evangelism and church planting, training and discipleship, and social ministries.

(3) MBM/S to accept the invitation of the Lithuanian Christian Charities Fund (LCCF) to enter Lithuania under their umbrella rather than to attempt to establish a separate MBM/S presence and identity at this time; this decision to be reviewed within three years.

(4) MBM/S to give priority to a cooperative ministry at this time in the establishing of congregations. Though the congregations may not take the Mennonite Brethren name, MBM/S personnel will demonstrate a strong and clear commitment to MB theology and the MB Confession of Faith.

(5) MBM/S involvement initially to consist of:

(a) one couple to serve in an administrative capacity for one more year (93-94) at Lithuania Christian College (LCC).

(b) one couple to serve in a chaplaincy/Bible teaching function at LCC, this assignment to be reviewed prior to the assignment for a second term.

(c) couples to serve in a pastoral role in Panevezys specifically and other locations where LCCF has emerging congregations as personnel and funds allow.

(6) The support and benefits package for workers to be adjusted to reflect the Lithuanian economic situation.

Rationale

(1) With the independence of the Baltic states followed by the collapse of the former Soviet Union, Lithuania has a tremendous thirst for things Western and especially the English language. Given that thirst, there will be many different Western influences. It is important that the gospel of Jesus Christ is shared in this country of 3.6 million people at this time. Although there are some other Western agencies entering Lithuania, their numbers are considerably less than in Russia and other sectors of the former USSR.

(2) While it is estimated that only 3,000 people in Lithuania are evangelical believers, there is demonstrated openness to the gospel. The Lithuanian Christian Charity Fund (LCCF) is experiencing significant responses to evangelistic ventures, including baptisms and the formation of new congregations which are distinct from traditional religions such as the Catholicism and Lutheranism. LCC is experiencing an openness to the gospel,

as evidenced by non-Christians attending voluntary college chapels and informal conversations about spiritual issues.

(3) Working with the LCCF is at this point a good option for MBM/S entry into Lithuania. LCCF's leader, Otonas Balciunas, has personal integrity and is open to such a relationship. The involvement of MBM/S would help improve the accountability structures and institutional strength of the LCCF.

(4) Although the LCC at this point is clearly a foreign institution which may or may not become indigenous to Lithuania, the college has a very positive witness. Its provision of English language instruction is addressing a felt need and serves as a bridge for providing biblical instruction and spiritual counsel.

(5) There is considerable enthusiasm in our North American constituency for current MBM/S involvement in Lithuania. If this move to long-term ministry is confirmed, it should not be difficult to recruit personnel and raise financial support for this new program. The proposed budget for Lithuania in 1993-94 is \$54,730.

Paragraph 4 of the recommendation was changed to read as follows:

“MBM/S to give priority to cooperative ministry at this time in the establishing of congregations. Though the congregations may not take the Mennonite Brethren name, MBM/S personnel will demonstrate a strong and clear commitment to MB theology and the MB Confession of Faith.”

Paragraph 5 of the recommendation was changed to read as follows:

“MBM/S involvement initially to consist of:

- (a) personnel to serve in an administrative capacity for one more year (93-94) at Lithuania Christian College (LCC).
- (b) personnel to serve in a chaplaincy/Bible teaching function at LCC, this assignment to be reviewed prior to the assignment for a second term.
- (c) personnel to serve in a pastoral role in Panevezys specifically and other locations where LCCF has emerging congregations as personnel and funds allow.

M/s/c

2. That the General Conference ratify the action of the MBM/S Board approving entry into Venezuela for long-term ministry with the following approach:

(1) To cooperate with the already established Chinese and Spanish-speaking MB churches in Venezuela for a ministry of evangelism, church planting, leadership training and social ministries.

(2) To encourage fraternal relationships between the Chinese-speaking and Spanish-speaking MB churches, thus moving toward a common Mennonite Brethren identity in Venezuela.

(3) To provide MBM/S missionaries for work in partnership with the Chinese-speaking and Spanish-speaking MB churches in Venezuela;

(4) With regard to the Chinese work:

(a) to acknowledge with appreciation the past support of the Pacific Grace MB Church of Vancouver and their expressed willingness to continue support; and

(b) to encourage the participation of other Chinese MB Churches with the hope of developing a stronger support base from which to reach out to Chinese communities in other parts of Latin America.

Rationale (95-96)

(1) The work in Venezuela was begun with resources from two local Mennonite Brethren churches in North America: Parlier, CA (Spanish) and Pacific Grace, Vancouver, BC (Chinese). Since the three resulting churches in Venezuela continue to require some outside assistance, it seemed appropriate for MBM/S to assume a coordinating role.

(2) The strong base of support in North America for this ministry is an important factor for building a strong ministry in Venezuela. The proposed budget for Venezuela work in 1993-94 is \$57,372.

(3) Venezuela's population of about 21 million has less than 3% evangelical Christians. However, the people seem both open and responsive to the gospel, as demonstrated by the growth of these works in just four years.

(4) The presence of a major Chinese community in Venezuela, perhaps the third largest in Latin America, provides us with a unique opportunity for open evangelism and church planting among Chinese. The flow of Chinese immigrants into the country, as well as departures for North America, is an ongoing phenomenon.

M/s/c

1995 (28-57)

1. Church Planting in Thailand: (45)

The Board of MBM/S recommends that the Conference affirm the board decision of Sept. 29, 1994, to commit to a 15-year church-planting program

among the Khmu people, based in Thailand, with outreach to Laos and southeast Asia is a holistic ministry; with reassessment every five years.

Rationale

Fulfilling a 1990 conference decision to increase mission in Asia, MBM/S missionaries Russell and Elizabeth Schmidt began service in Thailand in 1992, with the assignment of exploring and researching potential opportunities for church planting among the Buddhist population. Their research eventually focused on the Khmu, an unreached people group among whom the Schmidts had previously worked in Fresno for seven years. After language study, they conducted a pilot outreach project in a Khmu region at Tha Wang Pha, in northeastern Thailand, near the border of Laos. There are 20,000 Khmu in Thailand and 400,000 in neighboring Laos.

In a year and a half the Schmidts have seen numerous conversions to Christ. A number of villages desire to build churches. Local believers and a missionary with Far Eastern Broadcasting Company have joined in spreading the Word and edifying the faithful. Pastor Phone Keo, of the Fresno Khmu congregation, visited and ministered with much response in both late 1993 and a year later.

In summer 1994, independent evaluation by Reg Reimer, director of leadership development for World Evangelical Fellowship, affirmed the pilot project as successful and indicative of much church-planting potential. The report also praised the Schmidts for their excellent strategy and efforts. The board also received encouraging news from the Japan MB Conference that a Japanese couple had begun preparing for mission among the Khmu.

Upon reviewing the outside evaluation, reports by the Schmidts and the evidence of Japan MB readiness to contribute to a mission team, the board voted to place an international church planting team in the area, with the Schmidts as team leaders. Candidates Fritz and Susi Peters have been appointed to begin in the fall 1995. A full three-couple team seems probable in the not-too-distant future.

The board also recognized that churches which form will adhere to establish cooperative protocol of working under the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand, in affiliation with the Associated Churches of Thailand. Though not bearing the MB name, they will embody Anabaptist beliefs, theology, identity and principles of community. (p.45-46)

M/s/c

2. Biennial Budget

The Board of MBM/S recommends that the budget for 1995/96 be set at \$4.85 million; that the budget for the 1995-97 biennium be set at \$9.8 million.

Rationale

In the early 1990s, MBM/S budgets aimed for as much as \$5.6 million, a goal that did not materialize. Income at one point did reach \$5.2 million, but did not remain at that level. The need to downsize or “right-size” became urgent.

Though necessary, this reduction came at a time of exploding opportunity in the former USSR and new concern for the unreached peoples of Asia. Remembering our mandate to seize the day and share the light:

- MBM/S has sought to emphasize these growing priorities amid deepening budget cuts.
- We have also initiated church-planting projects in other pockets of the unreached in Venezuela, Peru, Uruguay and Burkina Faso.
- Personnel numbers in Latin America and Zaire have diminished accordingly.
- All workers took a 3 percent cut in pay.

Last year’s budget of \$4.6 million appears to have successfully brought finances into healthy balance. Many churches and individuals have increased their commitment and involvement in global mission to new levels. Our missionaries have received much affirmation and appreciation in their ministries with home churches. Direct mail, Adoption options, more focused constituency ministries, regional seminars and Pastors Overseas Program have heightened mission interest and awareness.

The board favors a budget that builds realistically for growth rather than calls workers home from overseas service. The recommended budget will enable MBM/S to expand in a few strategic areas, especially Thailand and Lithuania. It will provide a 5 percent salary increase to compensate for a 3 percent cut in 1994/95.

Strategy for the CIS

Theological Education-Priority #1 (54)

Theological education shall be the number one priority for MBM/S in the CIS, and St. Petersburg Christian University [SPCU] be the primary, though not necessarily the only, institution that we seek to help.

1. MBM/S will commit itself to a long-term involvement at SPCU with up to two faculty couples/units.

2. MBM/S will send short-term specialists to SPCU, especially for the masters program.
3. MBM/S will investigate ways to assist SPCU in the strengthening of their board and administration, e.g., by offering to have representation on the SPCU board, by providing short-term administrative staff/advisors and/or support staff.
4. MBM/S will be prepared to channel special project funds to SPCU for the construction of permanent facilities, without a commitment to fund-raising for that purpose.
5. Other Bible schools, colleges, etc., can be given assistance if there are good reasons to do so, and if we have adequate resources.
6. Estimated eventual cost-\$80,000 to \$100,000 per annum.

Rationale

- (1) The strategic importance of SPCU
- (2) historic and spiritual connections
- (3)The fragility of the school
- (4) The need for MBM/S to focus its energies.

Support for Indigenous Missionaries-Priority #2 (55)

Support for indigenous missionaries (evangelists, church planters, teachers) becomes priority number two in the MBM/S strategy for the CIS.

1. The amount of money allocated to this emphasis must demonstrate that this is the number two priority, e.g., begin with \$15,000 to \$25,000 for this purpose, including the \$8,000 in the 95/96 budget for the support of LOGOS workers.
2. MBM/S will begin adding this indigenous component by supporting national workers in Kyrgyzstan through the Ray of Hope Mission.
3. Staff will discern in discussion with Logos Germany and Ray of Hope Mission the most appropriate channel for the sending of such supportive funds.
4. MBM/S will continue to represent further opportunities for strengthening evangelism and church planting in CIS Central Asian and other republics by

funding indigenous mission workers, including the possibility of planting MB churches.

Rationale

- (1) Aside from MBM/S, there is extensive external interest in Western Russia and the Ukraine;
- (2) Central Asia is a needy area;
- (3) Central Asia has a large Muslim population which MBM/S has identified as a priority;
- (4) MBM/S has natural linkages with Bishkek;
- (5) MBM/S needs to focus its efforts.

Other priority involvements in the CIS are to include the following:

1. Possible Participation in a Mennonite Centre in Moscow

The MBM/S long-term strategy for the CIS is to include possible participation with other Mennonite agencies in a Mennonite Centre in Moscow.

(1) Staff will be given the mandate to explore the concept of a joint Mennonite Centre with other Mennonite mission and service agencies participating in the FSU Working Group of the Council of International Ministries.

(2) A proposal for funding and staffing shall be brought back to the board for the Spring 1996 board meetings.

(3) Initial projections suggest that the functions of such a centre might include the following:

- to provide a drop-in-centre for seekers of all kinds in Moscow and beyond, including remaining Mennonites;
- to provide a resource center for the distribution of information through literature, books, etc.;
- to explore mission/service potential within the CIS on behalf of sponsoring agencies;
- to seek to connect with Mennonite remnant groups (e.g., Omsk churches) and to find ways to minister pastorally to them insofar as they are open to such ministry;
- to nurture relationships with the church in the CIS, especially Evangelical Christian Baptists.

(4) The assumption behind this proposal is that each of the agencies will pursue its own mission and service mandate but that there is also common agenda such as the above which, in the interests of stewardship and cooperation, are best pursued together.

(5) Estimated cost about \$10,000 per annum.

2. Involvement in Lay Training

MBM/S makes a commitment to involvement in lay training in the CIS and, to begin with, explore the potential of providing support to Christian Camping International/Russia [CCI/R] in the development and operation of a Leadership Training Institute Centre [LTIC] at Anapa, under the following premises and to the extent described below.

(1) CCI/R is the Russian affiliate of Kingdom Ventures International [KVI]. KVI may be the lead agency that operates LTIC; other evangelical agencies may also become contributing partners/supporters.

(2) MBM/S commits itself to provide the following support for a period of three years assuming the program will begin in the fall of 1996.

-MBM/S will provide payroll services for North American KVI staff abroad. Presently MBM/S provides that service for four workers. This could easily increase to six or more.

-MBM/S will help qualified North American staff, such as the Director of LTIC but KVI makes the final decision about staff appointments.

-If requested, MBM/S will consider sending/supporting North American lead staff for LTIC, for example under the Vocational Missionary or Retiree Volunteer Program.

-MBM/S will provide financial support for students and Russian faculty. MBM/S should consider a financial contribution to this project totaling \$10-20,000 per year.

(3) After two years of operation the involvement of MBM/S will be reviewed before a further commitment is made beyond the initial three years.

(4) Estimated cost is \$15,000 to \$25,000 per annum.

M/s/c to approve the strategy statement

1997 (38-56)

That the Conference affirm the board decision of September 28, 1996 to adopt the document "Global Mission Guidelines: Vision, Priorities, and Strategies for Century 21" and thus support it as the official global mission policy of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

M/s/c

Resolution concerning Religious Freedom in Russia (52-53)

[Editorial Note: The following resolution was presented by the moderator.]

Be it resolved that the 416 delegates assembled in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada for the 61st convention of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Canada and the United States solemnly request on this 12th day of July 1997, that political leaders in Canada and the United States utilize their personal and diplomatic influence to prevent a dramatic loss of religious freedom in Russia.

In particular, we strongly urge our political leaders to convey to President Yeltsin and other Russian authorities, representatives and ambassadors the view that the proposal which would deny legal status to all religious organizations with less than 15 years of registered status, should not be enacted into legislation.

We strongly urge our political leaders to commend President Yeltsin and the Russian government for the great progress which has been made in providing religious freedom and other basic democratic rights but also to urge President Yeltsin and the Russian government not to adopt fundamentally anti-democratic measures which violate Russia's constitutional guarantees, which contradict Russia's international treaty obligations, and which reverse Russia's impressive progress in establishing democracy, a climate of freedom, and respect for human dignity.

This resolution shall be forwarded to:

Prime Minister Jean Chretien
Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy
Leader of the Opposition Preston Manning;
Other Members of Parliament
President Bill Clinton
Secretary of State Madeline Albright
Majority Leader Newt Gingrich
Senator Trent Lott
other Senators and Congressmen
Representatives of the Media
Ambassadors from Russia.

M/s/c

1999 (580)

That the Conference affirm the convergence of MBMS International and Youth Mission International programs under the MBMS International Board, effective no later than September 1, 1999.

Rationale

The convergence was first recommended by the Conference Restructuring Task Force in their 1998 final report. Both the Canadian Board of Evangelism and Mission USA, our current partners in YMI, have since affirmed this move. The convergence will be a natural fit due to our common purpose in global mission. It has the potential to increase mission interest in our common constituency; provide greater efficiency in decision making; and provide significant growth in a joint program. The YMI leadership team has also affirmed the convergence, and has worked with MBMS International staff to process structural issues and build stronger ties between the two agencies.

M/s/c

5. BOARD OF REFERENCE AND COUNSEL (After 1990, Board of Faith and Life)

[Editorial Note: See General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Executive Report: The Final Chapter 2002 for Memorandum of Understanding: General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Divestiture Process: Board of Faith and Life, Appendix A, pp. 19-22.]

- **Bible**

1978

Interpretation of Scriptures (12-15)

Our interest in the crucial contemporary issue of Biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) is to permit God through His Spirit to speak clearly and powerfully to us in our present situation. Our concern is to grasp the message of the Bible so that we might grasp the living God to the fullness of His self-revelation. Biblical authority, therefore, is fundamental to our understanding of God, His redemptive purpose in Christ and our task and mission in the world. Because our God is a speaking God, His revelation is both prepositional and personal.

We regard the Bible's affirmations about itself as determinative for our understanding of the origin and nature of the Scriptures (e.g. II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21). To accept Christ as Lord is to accept the Old Testament Scriptures as God's word as He did, and to acknowledge the New Testament as His word. As the inspired Word of God the Bible is the infallible and inerrant rule of faith and life for us and for all mankind. This principle of Biblical authority (*Sola Scriptura*) is to control our hermeneutics! We commit ourselves to the following principles of interpretation.

1. The interpreter must seek to understand the original author's intent.

Because God revealed Himself in history to men with varied personalities rooted in different cultures, a proper interpretation of the Scriptures requires a thorough going grammatico-historical exegesis.

Our understanding of the cultural context therefore, is helpful—the language and concepts of the day, the literature and literary forms. Biblical writers did not abstract themselves from their culture. Paul quotes pagan authors (e.g. Acts 17:28); Jude refers to contemporary religious writings. One must not presuppose that they merely echo these writings; they use or transform them for their own purposes. Therefore, a study of extra-Biblical

writings may throw some light on certain Biblical words, expressions, or references.

However, while we want to discover all we can of the Biblical background to help us understand the Biblical author's intention, we assert the primacy of the Biblical text. The Bible is its own best interpreter. We believe in the clarity (perspicuity) of the Scriptures and that every believer can understand and respond to its message. Therefore, painstaking Biblical studies and meditation should go together.

This means, for example, that we ought not to bring to the Bible a pre-understanding of man's need based on current philosophical, psychological or sociological perspectives—in order to understand the Gospel message in that perspective. Our understanding of man, for example, and his need before God is to be derived from the Scriptures and be under the Scriptures' control, and in that light we understand the wonderful redemption wrought by God in our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Old and the New Testament need to be seen as an organic unity.

Because all Scriptures are inspired of God, we look for and expect harmony in all of its parts. There is rich diversity and a complementarity, without contradictions.

However, Biblical harmony must not be confused with mechanical or wooden conformity. We need to recognize and search for the distinctive emphases of the various Biblical writers. For example, the Gospel authors organized similar events in different chronological order or selected aspects of the same events for different purposes. All agree on the central aspects of the accounts, but each at times approaches the event with a different interest.

Because of the rich diversity in the Scriptures, it is understandable that in interpreting Biblical teaching on some doctrines, such as eschatology, we may arrive at variant conclusions on details. This arises out of our own imperfect understanding of the Scriptures, as well as out of the fact that “the perfect” has not yet come: “Now we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, that which is in part will pass away” (I Corinthians 13:9). Nevertheless, we should diligently pursue our Biblical studies guided by the principle that the more evident and plain assertions of Scriptures help us understand the more difficult, more symbolic and problematic portions.

3. The interpretation of the Scriptures needs to take account of revelation as progressive.

God's redemptive acts are a chain of events spanning thousands of years culminating in the incarnation, death and resurrection of our Lord and the accompanying interpretation of the New Testament.

From the Old Testament to the New there is evident an expansion of God's self-revelation, a development of His redemptive plans, and an increasing clarity of His purposes. Within the Old Testament the prophets and psalms provide a further understanding of God's will than the Pentateuch; the New Testament goes beyond the Old. There are promises and fulfillment; types and anti-types; shadows and reality. Both Testaments find a central focus and finality in Christ. This Christo-centricity is to guide our interpretation of the whole Scriptures, even as our Lord taught us (Luke 24:44 ff).

Old Testament texts or events are referred to in the New Testament in continuity with their significance in the Old, but also with an expanded meaning not readily apparent in the earlier context.

4. Interpretation of the Scriptures and response to them requires the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit through whom the Scriptures came gives illumination to the mind and heart of man enabling him to understand them; "Now we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things fully given us by God...but a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them" (I Corinthians 2:12-14). It is the Spirit of God who authenticates the Word in our hearts; "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (I Thessalonians 1:5). Of particular significance is the need to seek the help of the Spirit in order to apply rightly the Word of God to the life situation we are in: "...that you may be filled with the Knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" (Colossians 1:9-10).

5. Interpretation of the Scriptures needs to be done with a right attitude within the believing community.

The Bible encourages us to hunger intensively after the Word (I Peter 2). Seeking the face of God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, meditating on the Word of God, seeking Him in prayer, responding in obedience to His voice—all are basic attitudes we need to cultivate in our personal and corporate lives. Insights into God's Word and the right application of it to our lives are not apart from spiritual struggle in His presence (Psalm 1; I Peter 2; Psalm 27; II Tim. 3:15-17).

The Bible also underscores the interdependence of the members of the body of Christ. We are to contribute to each others' growth to maturity (Ephesians 4). This calls for an interest in the understanding of Scriptures God has given to other members of the body of Christ—those who in past history

have served him faithfully, and those who today love Him and seek to bring every thought captive to Christ. Within the Priesthood of believers we acknowledge the words of the Scriptures: “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints...” (Ephesians 4:11, 12) We may, therefore, speak of the validity of a “congregational hermeneutics.”

Accepted

1987

Resolution on Inerrancy (65-66)

Preamble:

In 1978, at the General Conference convention in Buhler, an extensive statement on the inspiration, interpretation and authority of the Scriptures was adopted. Since then questions have been asked repeatedly about how this statement relates to the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. At the 1984 conference in Reedley, the Chicago Statement (without its preamble) was circulated, but no consensus was reached on what to do with it. The Board of Reference and Counsel was then asked to take the question under advisement and to come to the next conference with a resolution on this matter. The following resolution attempts to re-affirm the high view of biblical inspiration and authority, which is part of our Mennonite Brethren heritage. However, it also cautions us against making human definitions of inspiration the test of orthodoxy.

Resolution:

The Preface to our Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith states unequivocally that we hold to the “Holy Scriptures as the infallible guide for faith (i.e. doctrine) and practice (i.e. ethics)” (p.7). “The Mennonite Brethren Church has throughout its history emphasized biblical authority in all matters of faith and practice” (p.9). For 127 years the Mennonite Brethren Church has held firmly to the Holy Scriptures as the inspired and authoritative Word of God. Although our lives have not always conformed to the teachings of the Bible, we have always confessed that the Bible is the ultimate authority of what we believe and what we do. We have not always agreed in our interpretation of some of the passages in the Bible, but we have been united on the cardinal doctrines of the Bible, as these are set out in our Confession of Faith. We should, therefore, be profoundly and humbly grateful that God has kept our churches and our conference from divisions over the question of biblical authority. It would be a great pity if we should now, in an attempt to define more precisely what “inspiration” means, sow discord in our churches.

We recognize that the efforts that are made from time to time, to describe the interplay of the human and divine factors in the revelation of God, given to us in the Scriptures, arise out of a genuine concern for the spiritual welfare of the church. Such definitions, however, are human attempts to describe what will always remain, partially at least, a mystery.

The rallying cry of the Fundamentalists of a generation ago was “verbal inspiration.” In the literature of the twenties, when the conflict between fundamentalism and liberalism was sharp, one does not find the word “inerrancy,” nor does one find it in the Confessions of faith or in the doctrinal statements of Christian schools.

Today the language is “inerrancy,” and the expression “verbal inspiration” or “plenary inspiration” is seldom heard. Whereas, for most evangelicals these expressions—plenary inspiration, verbal inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy—are synonymous, we should remind ourselves that the catchword of one generation is not necessarily that of the next. The crucial test of orthodoxy should not be sought in current slogans, but rather in a constant concern to bring our life and our teaching into conformity with the Word of God.

How, then, shall we respond to the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy? First of all, we should take seriously what the framers of this statement say in the Preface: (1) “The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age.” (2) “We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief intensive conference and do not propose that this statement be given creedal weight.” (3) “We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, as we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.” (4) “We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God’s Word we shall be grateful.” Also, it should be pointed out that the scholars who formulated the Chicago Statement acknowledge (Article VII) that the mode of inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

The Board of Reference and Counsel therefore, recommends to our conference (1) that we reaffirm our statement on Scripture in our Confession of Faith: “We believe that all Scripture is inspired by God as men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit. We accept the Old and New Testament as the infallible Word of God and the authoritative Guide for the faith and life of Christian discipleship” (p.11 ff.). (2) That we identify with those who confess the inerrancy of the original documents of the biblical books. (3) That we accept the 19 articles of the Chicago Statement as a serious and valuable attempt to describe what it means to confess that the Bible is our ultimate

authority in faith and life. (4) That we recognize that the Chicago Statement is one of many attempts that have been made in the past to define what it means to confess that the Bible is the Word of God, with the strengths and weaknesses that always characterize such statements. (5) That we do not, however, make the Chicago Statement a part of our Confession of Faith. (6) That we recognize that the precision of any person's definition of revelation and inspiration (including our own) is not necessarily an index of his or her spiritual depth or faithfulness to God and his Word. (7) That our entire denomination commit itself anew to humble obedience to the Word of God and to the faithful proclamation of "the whole counsel of God." (44-46).

M/s/c

- **Confession of Faith (43-44)**

1987

It has been said of our Confession of Faith that it is "descriptive rather than prescriptive." This statement does not explicitly appear in our Confession of Faith, although the Preface does counsel us to regard all creedal statements and confession of faith to be more "descriptive than normative." The meaning and intent of such counsel may have been understood in 1978, but to many present day readers it is ambiguous and open to private interpretation.

In context, this statement reads as follows: "The Mennonite Brethren church has throughout its history emphasized biblical authority in all matters of faith and practice. This emphasis exalts the centrality of Scripture and counsels a proper use of creedal statements and confessions of faith as expressions of our understanding of Scripture. Such documents are to be regarded as descriptive more than normative. They are never to be given equal status with the Bible."

Reading the statement in context does help us to understand the intent of the word "descriptive" but does not clarify for us the intended meaning of the word "normative." Our Confession of Faith, in being descriptive, affirms a high view of biblical authority. Final authority rests in the Scriptures. Our Confession of Faith represents our corporate understanding of the message and intent of the Scriptures. It is not as authoritative as the Scriptures, but is authoritative to the extent that it is biblical. Because it is "descriptive," it is also not a closed statement of faith, but open to periodic review and revision.

The Introduction to our Confession of Faith strongly implies that it is also prescriptive and normative for our congregations. "It constitutes a commitment, a covenant of brotherhood..." It is to be considered as normative for membership, instruction, ministry and Scriptural discipline.

“Departure from the Confession of Faith constitutes a serious violation of the covenantal relationship of the brotherhood and hence may require the withdrawal of fellowship from individuals and churches guilty of such violation.” Although descriptive, it does not give liberties to individuals and churches to disregard or teach doctrines that are not in agreement with our Confession of Faith. In this sense it is both prescriptive and normative for our churches.

In the process of review and revision, however, the Scriptures and not our Confession of Faith is normative. We practice a corporate hermeneutic which listens to the concerns of individuals and churches, but discerns together the meaning and intent of the Scriptures. This safeguards our denomination from the extremes of individualism and private interpretations, but allows for free study and discussion. In this process, the Scriptures, not an existing Confession of Faith, are normative. The product of this process, however, becomes prescriptive and normative for our conference and its churches

Moved to refer the motion back to Board for revision and brought back later at this convention.

M/s/c

Revised Resolution on Confession of Faith (68-69)

It has been said of our Confession of Faith that it is “descriptive rather than prescriptive.” This statement does not explicitly appear in our Confession of Faith, although the Preface does counsel us to regard all creedal statements and confession of faith to be more “descriptive than normative.” The meaning and intent of such counsel may have been understood in 1978, but to many present day readers it is ambiguous and open to private interpretation.

In context, this statement reads as follows: “The Mennonite Brethren church has throughout its history emphasized biblical authority in all matters of faith and practice. This emphasis exalts the centrality of Scripture and counsels a proper use of creedal statements and confessions of faith as expressions of our understanding of Scripture. Such documents are to be regarded as descriptive more than normative. They are never to be given equal status with the Bible.”

Reading the statement in context does help us to understand the intent of the word “descriptive” but does not clarify for us the intended meaning of the word “normative.” Our Confession of Faith, in being descriptive, affirms a high view of biblical authority. Final authority rests in the Scriptures. Our Confession of Faith represents our corporate understanding of the message and intent of the Scriptures, but is authoritative to the extent that it is biblical.

Because it is “descriptive,” it is also not a closed statement of faith, but open to periodic review and revision.

The Introduction to our Confession of Faith strongly implies that it is also prescriptive and normative for our congregations. “It constitutes a commitment, a covenant of brotherhood...” “Departure from the Confession of Faith constitutes a serious violation of the covenantal relationship of the brotherhood and hence may require the withdrawal of fellowship from individuals and churches guilty of such violation.” It does not give liberties to individuals and churches to disregard or teach doctrines that are not in agreement with our Confession of Faith. In this sense it is binding for our churches.

In the process of review and revision, however, the Scriptures and not our Confession of Faith is normative. We practice a corporate hermeneutic which listens to the concerns of individuals and churches, but discerns together the meaning and intent of the Scriptures. This safeguards our denomination from the extremes of individualism and private interpretations, but allows for free study and discussion. In this process, the Scriptures, not an existing Confession of Faith, are normative. The product of this process is binding for all churches. Pastors, teachers and conference officers are expected to affirm and teach the Confession of Faith. (p .68-69).

M/s the adoption of the revised Resolution on Confession of Faith.

Vote was taken by ballot (69).

The **resolution passed** by a 59% vote of 300-209

Notice of Motion--Confession of Faith

Preamble

In view of the Resolution on the Confession of Faith, and in light of the significance of a common confession in our conference, the Board of Reference and Counsel submits the following recommendations:

Recommendations

1. That the first and last paragraphs of the Preface of the Confession of Faith be deleted and that the following be inserted as the last paragraph of the Preface, “Since the Confession of Faith represents our best understanding of what God’s Word teaches, we consider it normative for the life and teaching of the church.”
2. That all pastors and teachers in the church be expected to affirm and teach the Confession of Faith as normative.

3. That a BORAC initiated study process of the Confession of Faith, over the next triennium, in two study conferences be authorized.

M/s/c

BORAC withdrew the above Notice of Motion and presented the following resolution:

Resolved that we commit ourselves to work toward the unity of the Conference, and that we mandate BORAC to develop unity strategies that will forge confessional consensus and Conference unity.

M/s/c

1990

1. Proposed revision of Article XV, Confession of Faith: (106-110)

Current: We believe that Christians should live by the law of love and practice the forgiveness of enemies as taught and exemplified by the Lord Jesus. The church, as the body of Christ, is a fellowship of redeemed, separated people, controlled by redemptive love. Its evangelistic responsibility is to present Christ, the Prince of Peace, as the answer to human need, enmity and violence. The evil, brutal and inhuman nature of war stands in contradiction to the new nature of the Christian. The Christian seeks to practice Christ's law of love in all relationships, and in all situations, including those involving personal injustice, social upheaval and international tension. We believe that it is not God's will that Christians take up arms in military service but that, where possible, they perform alternative service to reduce strife, alleviate suffering and bear witness to the love of Christ.

Proposed: We believe that God in Christ reconciles people to himself and to one another, making peace through the cross. We believe the church is a fellowship of redeemed people living by love. Christians seek to be agents of reconciliation in all relationships, to practice love of enemies as taught by Christ, to be peacemakers in all situations, e.g., personal injustice, social upheaval and international tension. We view violence in all forms, e.g., abortion, abuse, rape, war, as contradictions to the new nature of the Christian. We believe that the evil and inhuman nature of such actions are contrary to the gospel of love and peace. We believe Christians are called to perform alternative service rather than to participate in war. Alleviating suffering, reducing strife, and promoting justice are ways of demonstrating the love of Christ.

M/s/c to approve Article XV

M/s/c to reconsider the motion regarding Article XV

M/s/c to refer this issue to BORAC (Board of Faith and Life)

Revised Article XV (114-115)

We believe that God in Christ reconciles people to himself and to one another, making peace through the cross. We believe the church is a fellowship of redeemed people living by love. We seek to be agents of reconciliation in all relationships, to practice love of enemies as taught by Christ, to be peacemakers in all situations. We view violence in all forms, as contradictions to the new nature of the Christian. We believe that the evil and inhuman nature of such actions are contrary to the gospel of love and peace. In times of national conscription of war, we believe we are called to give alternative service where possible. Our bond with other followers of Jesus transcends all racial, social, and national barriers. Alleviating suffering, reducing strife, and promoting justice are ways of demonstrating Christ's love.

M/s to amend "In times of...we believe many are called..."

Defeated by hand vote.

M/s to alter the reading to include a footnote defining violence as "destructive, deliberate violence."

Motion defeated by hand vote.

Question called for vote by ballot. **90.5% in favor** (337-yes, 35-no).

1993

[Editorial Note: For preamble to this Recommendation see pp. 16-17.]

1. That the Board of Faith and Life be authorized to initiate a rewrite of the Confession of Faith in a manner consistent with the terms of reference outlined below. (16-18)

Terms of Reference (for the proposed rewriting of the Confession of Faith)

The Board of Faith and Life proposes that the Confession of Faith be rewritten, as per the following outline:

CURRENT ARTICLES

1. God
Father
Son
Spirit
2. Revelation of God
3. Humanity and Sin
4. Salvation and Grace
5. The Christian Life
6. The Church of Christ
Organization, Christian
Nurture/Discipline
7. The Mission of the Church
8. The Christian Ministries
9. Christian Baptism
10. The Lord's Supper
11. Marriage and Christian Home
12. The Lord's Day and Work
13. Christian Integrity
14. The State
15. Love and Nonresistance
16. Christ's Final Triumph

PROPOSED CHANGES [*]

1. God
Father
Son
Spirit
2. Revelation of God
3. Humanity and Creation
4. Evil and Sin
5. Salvation
6. Nature of Church
7. Baptism
8. Lord's Supper
9. Mission of the Church
10. Other Faiths** [1]
11. The Christian Life
12. Marriage and Family
13. The Lord's Day
14. Society and State** [2]
15. Love and Nonresistance
16. Stewardship** [3]
17. Sanctity of Life** [4]
18. Christ's Final Return

*The Confession of Faith and the commentary on the Confession should address confessional issues (biblical-theological teachings and issues), not polity questions. The polity issues can be addressed in the pastoral implications section.

**New Articles

[1] Address the question of Jesus as the only way to salvation in relation to the other major religions.

[2] Incorporate the traditional confession re. the state into a larger statement about the relationship of the church and society.

[3] Address issues of money, materialism and environment.

[4] Address issues of abortion, reproductive ethics, technology and life.

Proposed Format

The Board of Faith and Life proposes the following format for the Confession:

1. The Confession itself with articles about the length of the revised articles IX, X and XV.
2. A commentary on each article that will provide the main Scriptures for the confessional stance and the main interpretive understandings behind the article. See Exhibit A (distributed in Convention Packet) for a sample commentary on baptism.
3. A pastoral application that addresses the main questions pastors and church leaders face in relationship to the confessional stance. See Exhibit B (distributed in Convention Packet) for a sample pastoral application on baptism.
4. An abbreviated and popular version of the Confession that can be used by churches and agencies of the church for the general public.
5. A liturgical version of the Confession for use in public worship.

M/s/c

2. Article IX

That the following revision of Article IX, “Christian Baptism,” in the 1976 General Conference Confession of Faith be accepted.

[Editorial Note: For Preamble see p. 20]

Current:

We believe that Christians should obey their Lord’s command to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To qualify for baptism, one must repent of sin and trust in Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord. We practice water baptism of the believer by immersion.

Baptism symbolizes death to sin and resurrection to the new life in Christ and the receipt of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a public commitment to discipleship. At baptism the believer enters into the full membership and work of the church. Local congregations may receive into fellowship those who have been baptized by another mode on their confession of faith.

Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:2-6; Colossians 2:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, 1 Peter 3:21.

Proposed: (20-22)

Confession

We believe that when people receive God’s gifts of salvation, they are to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptism is a sign of having been cleansed from sin. It is a covenant with the church to walk in the

way of Christ through the power of the Spirit.

Meaning

Baptism by water is a public sign that a person has repented of sins, received forgiveness of sins, died with Christ to sin, been raised to newness of life and received the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a sign of the believer's incorporation into the body of Christ as expressed in the local church. Baptism is also a pledge to serve Christ according to the gifts given to each person.

Eligibility

Baptism is for those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and commit themselves to follow Christ in obedience as members of the local church. Baptism is for those who understand its meaning, are able to be accountable to Christ and the church, and voluntarily request it on the basis of their faith response to Jesus Christ.

Practice

We practice water baptism by immersion administered by the local church. Local congregations may receive into membership those who have been baptized by another mode on their confession of faith. Persons who claim baptism as infants and wish to become members of a Mennonite Brethren congregation are to receive baptism on their confession of faith. Matthew 3:13-17; 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:2-6; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:12-13; Galatians 3:26-27; Ephesians 4:4-6.

M/s/c to accept the recommendation with a 94% majority (430-in favor, 27-against).

3. Article X

That the following revision of Article X, "The Lord's Supper," in the 1976 General Conference Confession of Faith be accepted.

Current

Members of the church observe the Lord's Supper as instituted by Christ. The elements, the bread and the fruit of the vine, symbolize Christ's broken body and shed blood. They remind us of His suffering and death for our salvation and our unity in Him.

In preparation for the fellowship of the Lord's Supper, every believer should examine himself and partake of the elements in a worthy manner. Those who have peace with God, live in peace with their fellowmen and have been baptized are invited to partake of the Lord's Supper, thereby testifying to His death until He comes.

The Lord's Supper expresses the fellowship and unity of believers with Christ. It is a supper of remembrance, celebration and praise which strengthens believers for true discipleship and service.

Matthew 16:24; 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-32; 14:26; Revelation 3:20.

Proposed Meaning

The church observes the Lord's Supper, as instituted by Christ. The Supper points to Christ, whose body was broken for us and whose blood was shed to assure salvation for believers and to establish the new covenant.

In the Supper the church identifies with the life of Christ given for the redemption of humanity and proclaims the Lord's death until He comes. The Supper expresses the fellowship and unity of the all believers with Christ. It is a supper of remembrance, celebration and praise which strengthens believers for true discipleship and service.

Practice

In preparation for the fellowship of the Lord's Supper, all believers examine themselves. All those who understand its meaning, confess Jesus Christ as Lord in word and life, are accountable to their congregation and are living in right relationship with God and others are invited to participate in the Lord's Supper. (The normal pattern in the New Testament was that baptism preceded participation in the Lord's Supper.)

Matthew 26:26-30; Acts 2:41,42; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-32.

M/s/c to accept the recommendation with a **91.5% majority** (421 in favor, 39 against).

1995

Article VI: Nature of the Church (23-25)

Called by God

We believe the church is the people called by God through Jesus Christ. People who respond in faith to salvation through Jesus are incorporated into the local church by baptism. Members of the church commit themselves to follow Christ in a life of discipleship. God empowers the church by the Holy Spirit to carry out its mission.

Body of Christ

We believe the church is the body of Christ. God established this new community to proclaim the reign of God and to be a living foretaste of God's redeeming rule on earth. The church is one body of believing men and

women from every nation, race, and class. The head of this body is Christ. The church is called to make Christ visible in its worship, ministry, witness, and mutual love and care.

Worship

We believe the church is nourished and renewed as God's people gather regularly for worship. The worshipping community celebrates God's faithfulness and grace, reaffirms its faithfulness to God, builds up the members of the body, and seeks God's will for its life and mission. The church observes baptism and the Lord's Supper to proclaim the good news of salvation.

[Footnote: One form of the church's worship is the practice of footwashing which can be a meaningful reminder of the humility, loving service, and personal cleansing that is to characterize the relationship of members within the church.]

Accountability

We believe that the church is a covenant community in which members are mutually accountable in matters of faith and life. They love, care, and pray for each other, share each other's joys and burdens, and admonish and correct one another. They share material resources as there is need.

The church is responsible to discipline members who fall into sin, and to forgive and restore those who repent.

Gifts for Ministry

We believe the Holy Spirit gives gifts for ministry to each member, as God wills. These gifts are to be exercised for the building up of the church.

God gives leadership gifts to some people to enable, empower, and order the diversity of gifts for ministry. The common life of the church is dependent on mature leaders who model Christ-likeness in their personal, family, and church life. The church is to discern such leaders prayerfully, and to affirm, support, and correct them in a spirit of love.

Organization

We believe the church exists as local bodies of believers, and as a worldwide community of faith. Local congregations are to follow the example of the NT church in seeking the counsel of the wider church on matters that affect its common witness and mission. Congregations are called to work together in a spirit of love, mutual submission, and interdependence.

Article IX: Mission of the Church

The Great Commission

We believe the gospel is the good news of God's salvation in Jesus Christ for all people. Christ commissions the church to make disciples of all persons and nations by calling them to repentance, and by baptizing and teaching them to obey all that he commanded.

The Great Commandment

Jesus teaches that disciples are to love God and neighbor. Believers are to witness to God's reign and salvation by telling the good news and by acts of love and compassion.

The Witness

We believe that every Christian is empowered to be a witness to God's salvation. The church as a body is a witness to the reign of God in the world. By its life the church is a city on a hill, a light to the nations, an alternate society that reveals the purposes of God to the world.

M/s/c to accept the documents and return them to BFL for further revision and processing with provincial/district Boards of Faith and Life (25, 27). Following further revision and processing the two articles will be published in the next publication of the Confession of Faith.

1997

Processing the Revised Confession (29-30)

Step 1: Present the draft copy of the revised Confession of Faith to the Waterloo '97 convention delegation.

Step 2: Circulate the Revised Confession of Faith workbook to all congregations. All member congregations of General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches will be asked to process the material and send workbook back to BFL not later than February 15, 1998.

Step 3: The Task Force will collate all substantive comments and present them to the Board of Faith and Life at the April, 1998 meetings.

Step 4: A leadership convocation be called for October 29-31, 1998, to give final shape to the Confession of Faith.

Step 5: Final approval and ratification of the Confession of Faith be sought at the 1999 convention of General Conference Mennonite Brethren Churches.

M/s/c to approve the suggested process for study, revision and approval of the Confession of Faith. **Motion carried** by voice vote with a few dissenting voices

1999

Confession of Faith

Article 1: God (46)

Change the headings from “God as...” to “God the...”

Approved by consensus.

Motion to delete the reference to mother, father, husband in the opening paragraph.

M/s/ Defeated. The original wording is retained

Motion to add the words “the Counselor” under the heading “God the Holy Spirit” so that the sentence reads, “The Holy Spirit, the Counselor, is the creative power . . .”

M/s/c.

Article 2: Revelation of God (46)

Change heading “The Bible as the Word of God” to “The Bible as the Written Word of God.”

Approved by consensus

Article 4: Sin and Evil (46-47)

Motion to change “our natural propensity to sin” to “our human sinfulness,” in the first paragraph.

M/s/c to change the wording as recommended.

Motion to change to “Sin is a power that enslaves humanity. Satan, the adversary seeks...”

M/s/c to change the wording as recommended

Article 5: Salvation (33)

Approved by consensus to add 1 Cor. 1:18 to references

In the last paragraph, second sentence, add the word “people” after “all”.

Approved by consensus.

Add after the phrase “they are saved by grace,” the words “through faith,” and add a reference to Hebrews 11:6.

Approved by consensus (47).

Article 9: Lord’s Supper (60)

M/s/c to move the footnote, which reads “The normal pattern in the New Testament was that baptism preceded participation in the Lord’s Supper,” on Article 9 into the text

Article 10: Discipleship (47)

In the last paragraph, add the words “are to” so that it reads, “Disciples are to resist worldly values...,” and replace “illicit” with “immoral.”

Approved by consensus

Article 11: Marriage, Singleness and Family (59)

Under the heading “Singleness” replace “choose it as a way of life” with “those who are single.”

Approved by consensus

Article 12: Society and State (59)

M/s to change the phrase “state-sanctioned violence” to “state-sanctioned authority.”

Motion **defeated**.

Suggest changing the phrasing in the last paragraph from “Believers do not participate in secret societies which demand the swearing of oaths and conflict” to “the swearing of oaths or which otherwise conflict.”

Approved by consensus

Article 16: The Lord’s Day, Work and Rest (36, 59)

Under “The Lord’s Day,” add the word “prayer” to the list of activities. “On the Lord’s day, believers joyfully devote themselves to worship, instruction in the Word, prayer, breaking of bread...”

Approved by consensus

Article 17: Christianity and other Faiths (59-60)

Change “promise” to “assurance” on last line of first paragraph.

Approved by consensus.

Change “can” to “may” in the line, “While elements of truth can be found.”
Approved by consensus.

M/s to delete the lines “The eternal destiny of those who have never heard the gospel is in God’s hands” and “The Judge of all the earth will do what is just.”
Defeated to delete the lines as presented

M/s/c to accept the revised Confession of Faith.

Approved by consensus the affirmation of the digest and sidewalk version subject to revision at the September 1999 meeting of BFL

2002

Name Change

Memorandum of Understanding: The title of the Confession of Faith will be changed from “Confession of Faith of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches” to “Confession of Faith of the United States and Canadian Conferences of the Mennonite Brethren Churches (19).

▪ Divorce and Remarriage

1981

Ministry of the Divorced and Remarried (48)

We believe that the Scriptures teach the permanence of marriage and that divorce and remarriage are violations of God’s will. However, we recognize that people often fail to live according to God’s will, and marriage relationships are broken, often resulting in divorce and remarriage.

We also believe that God’s Word teaches that where humans sin, that sin can be forgiven by God whenever there is repentance. We acknowledge that the intention of God in redemption is to extend forgiveness even for divorce and remarriage. We resolve therefore:

That we proclaim with conviction that the will of God for marriage is permanence. And, that we extend the forgiving grace of God to those who have experienced divorce and remarriage. And, further, that without relenting at all on our commitment to the sanctity of marriage we offer forgiveness and the opportunity for ministries without implying approval of the wrong that has been committed.

We encourage the local congregation involved to treat each situation individually to discern the attitude, the gifts and the quality of Christian character of the divorced and remarried.

We commit ourselves to instruct the divorced and remarried to recognize the seriousness of their offense against God and the community; that they allow the community of believers sufficient time to accept their repentance; that they consider service a privilege rather than a right; and, that they voluntarily step aside for a period of time and allow the church to determine readiness for service (1 Timothy, Titus 1).

We reaffirm the resolution adopted at our 1969 conference at Vancouver, i.e., “The services such members can render in a church will largely be determined by what the membership is ready to receive from them. However, we believe that a member who has been divorced, or divorced and remarried should not be eligible to serve on the deaconate or in the ministry” (1969 Yearbook p.16).

The scripture references in paragraph 5 were explained as being 1 Timothy 3:2, “An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.” And Titus 1:6, “If any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.”

M/s/. A ballot vote was requested.

Carried (335-129).

- **Gifts, Spiritual**

1981

Gift of Tongues (56-57)

We are grateful to God that there has been a renewed emphasis on spiritual gifts in the Christian church. Also, we gladly acknowledge that God in his grace continues to revitalize the life of his people by giving them a new awareness of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. And since the Spirit, like the wind, blows where it wills (John 3:8, “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is every one who is born of the Spirit.”), we must allow for diversity in the way people experience God in their Christian life.

We hold that the believer needs the gifts of grace to serve the Lord effectively, and that the church cannot fulfill its mission unless God empowers it by his Spirit and enables it by spiritual charisms.

Since God calls his people to different kinds of services, we recognize that he does not bestow the same gifts on all. This kind of diversity in the Body of Christ should not lead to dissension but to the enrichment of the church and the strengthening of its ministry. While this has been generally

accepted in our brotherhood, there is still considerable dispute on the gift of tongues.

We believe with Paul that God gives his gifts “to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor. 12:11, “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”). Therefore, if it pleases God to give the gift of tongues to some of our brothers and sisters, so that they may be enriched in their communion with God, we can only be thankful. It does not follow, of course, that everyone who claims to have this gift has received it from the Spirit, since glossolalia is known also in non-Christian religions. The test of authentic Christian experience, according to 1 Cor. 12:1-2 (“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led.”), lies in the believer’s confession of Christ’s lordship in his life.

We do not, however, understand the Scriptures to teach that tongues (or any other gift) is an indication of greater spirituality, or that it is proper for those who have this gift to exercise it in public where it is not understood and easily leads to division within the congregation. Christian love should dictate that what does not edify the congregation should not have a place in public worship.

Moreover, those who have the gift of tongues should not insist that others also try to get this gift, for Paul teaches clearly that this gift is not for everyone (1 Cor. 12:30, “All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?”). We need to remind ourselves, also, that the fruits of the Spirit (particularly love) are a clearer manifestation of Christian maturity than the possession of certain gifts.

Quite apart from the question of spiritual gifts, all of us need to seek God’s face daily for the renewal of our spiritual life through repentance, prayer and obedience to God’s Word, so that he might fill us with the Spirit both to live a life well-pleasing in his sight and to serve him effectively in those tasks to which he calls us.

The fourth line of the fifth paragraph was amended to read, “in public, when it is not interpreted.”

M/s/c amended motion.

- **Homosexuality**

1981

Homosexuality: (53-55)

The view that the Bible condemns homosexuality as sinful is being re-evaluated in many quarters today. New interpretations coming to us from

certain Christian scholars assert that homosexuality is simply a natural variation in human sexuality and a legitimate alternate lifestyle when it occurs in the context of a loving and committed relationship. Interpretations are being put upon biblical texts so that they no longer prohibit homosexuality.

In light of these new interpretations, it is incumbent upon us to articulate what we believe the Bible teaches regarding homosexuality. Thus we affirm

1. That both the Old Testament and the New Testament clearly condemn homosexuality as sinful.

a. Sodom's sin (Gen. 19:4-11, cf. Jude 7 among others) was homosexuality and not primarily inhospitality. The prohibition and condemnation of Leviticus 18:20 ("and you shall not have intercourse with your neighbor's wife, to be defiled with her.") and 20:13 ("If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their blood-guiltiness is upon them.") is directed toward the sin of homosexuality and not idolatry. The evil of homosexuality is also illustrated in the intention of the Gibeonites (Judg. 19:22-30).

b. Romans 1:26,27 ("For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned their natural function of the woman and burned in their desire towards one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.") condemns homosexuality and lesbianism as dishonorable and unnatural. Interpretations which state Paul is only condemning lust and promiscuity (and not engaging in homosexuality per se) or that Paul is only condemning heterosexually oriented people for engaging in homosexual acts (which for them are unnatural) are foreign to this text.

c. 1 Corinthians 6:9,10 ("Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.") and 1 Timothy 1:10 ("and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching.") list vices which exclude people from the kingdom of God, vices which are against both the Old Testament law and the gospel. These lists clearly condemn homosexual acts.

2. Homosexuality is a violation of the creation order (Genesis 1:27, “And God created man in His own image, in the image if God He created him; male and female He created them.”; Genesis 1:31, “And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”; cf. Matthew 19:4, “And He answered and said, “Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female.”). Adam’s masculinity and Eve’s femininity was not a result of chance but was a part of the Creator’s divine plan. Sexual differentiation is the basis for man and woman becoming “one flesh.” Not merely heterosexuality but monogamous marriage is the divine norm for man. Homosexual activity cannot be viewed simply as an alternate lifestyle.

3. Homosexuality, however, is not an unpardonable sin. Paul explains that some of his Corinthian converts, who had been homosexuals, were washed, sanctified and justified “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11, “And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.”). To receive forgiveness, however, the homosexual must repent, leaving behind any justification or practice of his sin.

4. Homosexuals who have repented should be welcomed as members of the church. Sinners saved by grace have no option but to receive forgiven sinners into fellowship without distinction and without contempt. The new convert will need special help and care to be established in holiness and fortified for times of temptation. Failure to live up to the biblical norms of morality will call for the discipline of the church which expects the converted homosexual to live a chaste life, just as it expects people with strong heterosexual drives to live chastely, whether they are married or not.

In item #2, the word “man” at the end of the second last line was corrected to read “mankind.” Line 1 of the preamble of the resolution was amended to read “The view that the Bible condemns homosexuality, which includes lesbianism, as sinful is being reevaluated in many quarters today.” Moved that the second sentence of the resolution, “New interpretations...committed relationship,” be deleted.

Carried.

Moved that the resolution be adopted with the amendments as noted.

Carried.

■ Hymnal, Worship

1987

Worship Hymnal Revision: (49,74)

Preamble

Our present *Worship Hymnal* has served us well for 16 years, since its publication in 1971 (150,000 copies printed). The previous Canadian Hymnal (1960) and USA Hymnal (1953) served these two constituencies for less than 20 years. In order to prepare for the next revision which is being increasingly requested, a 6-9 year process is envisioned to assess our needs, to review what we presently have and use, and to select appropriate hymns and worship aids for the years ahead. We recognize the crucial role the hymnal plays in our corporate worship in influencing and expressing our faith and life.

Recommendation:

That the conference authorize BORAC and BCL, in concert, to appoint a Hymnal Revision Committee to work on revising our hymnal to be completed by the mid-1990s. BCL shall be responsible to manage the revision process. The final edition shall be approved by BORAC.

M/s/c

1990

Hymnbook Revision (35-36)

1. That we delay aggressive implementation of producing a hymnal until the next convention in 1993.
2. That we assign the Hymnal Commission the ongoing responsibility of updating and adding to the *Sing Alleluia* collection and of making available to churches the copyright regulation information for overhead use and about using other resources.
3. That we recognize the significant role of hymnody in teaching and promoting right theology and Mennonite Brethren distinctives among us that other generic songbooks do not emphasize.
4. That we commit ourselves to the interests of our youth to begin a long-term plan that deals with the need to revise our hymnbook on a 20-25 year cycle.

5. That we open a Hymnbook Production account with our General Conference Board of Trustees and encourage the giving of funds to this account by our constituency.

M/s/c

1993

Hymnal (55-56)

That a worship hymnal be produced by the Board of Faith and Life. The contents of the hymnal are to be compiled by the Hymnal Commission and reviewed by the Board of Faith and Life. Marketing decisions are to be determined by BFL.

BFL shall proceed with production and printing provided that:

1. Hard data potential for sales justifies publication,
2. The price of the hymnal will be comparable to the lower median cost of currently produced hymnals (the range is \$10-14), and
3. The hymnal budget will allow for the Hymnal Commission to finish its work in order to have the hymnal ready for printing. This will require an additional \$27,000 to be included in the budget. Through a fundraising drive which has just been started \$5000 has been donated already. More funds are expected to come in for this purpose, the amount required for the budget now is \$22,000.

M/s/c (88% in favor, 12% against).

▪ **Pastoral Ministry**

1978

Pastoral Ministry: (10-12)

A resolution was presented. Since the resolution was not accepted it was not recorded.

Alternate Motion: That in view of the discussion, we should refer the paper back to the Board of Reference and Counsel for study and the presentation of a new resolution.

Accepted.

Revised Motion:

Though we recognize that all believers are called to ministry, some are called to special services such as pastor. A call to the pastorate is a call to excellent and rewarding work. It is a call to leadership modeled after the shepherding ministry of Christ.

The local church needs to recognize its responsibility in the calling, strengthening, and relocation of pastors. The pastor's effectiveness in ministry is just as much the responsibility of the church as the church's well-being is the responsibility of the pastor. Generous opportunities need to be provided by the congregation for young men who may be prospective pastors to minister in non-threatening situations so that gifts can be discovered and refined.

When a church calls a pastor, attention needs to be given to his understanding of the Mennonite Brethren heritage, functioning of the denominational family, and brotherhood loyalties. To insure perseverance and avoid casualties in the pastoral ministry, an evaluative process needs to be adopted by the church and pastor to insure an early and non-threatening warning system through which frequent indications of the pastor's effectiveness are constructively shared. The effectiveness of pastoral ministry should be improved through sharing of work with those having appropriate gifts in team ministry. When pastoral changes are made, care should be exercised in making such transitions without damage or loss of respect to either pastor or congregation.

Causes of pastors leaving the ministry vary and rest with both congregation and pastor. These are often related to unreasonable expectations.

Therefore we wish to affirm the following in the spirit of Galatians 6:6: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."

1. We reaffirm that God has given gifts to the church which need to be discovered, developed, and applied. Broad involvement in ministry is essential so that many can experience the satisfaction and personal growth that comes from rendering meaningful service and so that the local church strengthens its own reservoir of human resource.
2. We recognize that premature termination of ministry is caused by a combination of factors. Congregations and their leaders need to sense areas in which the pastor and his family will be in need of extra support and understanding and respond accordingly.
3. We urge congregations to provide the necessary time and means for the pastor and his wife to be involved in study leaves and opportunities for personal and professional growth.

4. Communication between congregation and pastor requires an ongoing evaluation of a pastor's ministry as well as that of the entire church so that the termination of the pastor's term of service is not a hurtful and destructive experience. Whatever procedure is adopted, to come to that point must not degenerate to an exercise in manipulation or dishonesty. Procedures need to be such that a confidence vote, if used, is only an affirmation of what pastor and congregation already know.

Accepted.

1981

Ordination (5-13)

I. Preamble

Over the years considerable diversity in the practice of ordinations has arisen in our district, provincial and national conferences. Not only is there diversity in ordination procedure, but there is also some confusion about the meaning and the practice of ordination as such. The Board of Reference and Counsel, therefore, studying this matter at some length, would like to propose that we move to more uniform ordination procedures.

We believe that the "laying on of hands" for ministry is a biblical practice. It's an act of corporate identification that communicates the blessing of God and his people upon the candidate. It's a personalized "marking out" of the person for the benediction of God for a ministry. In the Bible it is always associated with prayer and involves the setting apart of people for specific services. We do not hold that the "laying on of hands" is a sacrament by which people are given a special gift or position, but an act by which they are authorized to serve in the church's name (Acts 6, 13; 1 Tim. 3; 2 Tim. 1). The "laying on of hands" as an affirmation for ministry, should be done by the church's leaders in the name of the church.

We believe that pastors, Bible teachers, evangelists, missionaries, deacons and others who are asked to serve in some specific ministry in the name of the church should be "marked out" and affirmed by the "laying on of hands." The Board of Reference and Counsel would strongly urge our churches to identify those whom God has given gifts for various ministries and to encourage such persons to develop these gifts and to put them into the service of God, and to affirm such persons by the "laying on of hands." Where such persons are married, the church should make sure that both marriage partners share in the call to ministry and support one another.

We believe that since the New Testament Church practiced the "laying on of hands" for a variety of purposes, our practice might reflect this

diversity. For this reason we as a conference have in the past distinguished between ordination, commissioning and licensing. Whereas these terms may not be found in the New Testament, we have found them useful in distinguishing some of the ministries for which church members may be “marked out” by the “laying on of hands.”

We would, therefore, recommend that our M.B. Conference affirm people for ministry in the following ways:

1. **Ordination.** Ordination by the “laying on of hands” is the act of the local church and the Conference of affirming those called by God for the ministry of the gospel. Normally ordination calls for a lifelong commitment as long as health and strength permit. Ordination calls for an examination of the candidate by local church and a district or provincial Board of Reference and Counsel (or its equivalent). The person to be ordained shall subscribe to the M.B. Confession of Faith. Where a brother is to be ordained to the gospel ministry, his wife should share with him his commitment to that calling. Husband and wife should both be present at the examination and at the service of ordination. We strongly recommend that all churches follow the procedure outlines later in this document.
2. **Commissioning.** Commissioning by the “laying on of hands” is the act of the local church by which a person is “marked out” and affirmed by the congregation for a specific service for a period of time. Those commissioned by the church shall subscribe to the M.B. Confession of Faith.
3. **Licensing.** Licensing is the act of a local church by which it authorizes a leader in the church to perform functions for which state approval is required. It is understood that ordinarily such persons would be either commissioned or ordained. Such persons should also subscribe to the M.B. Confession of Faith.

In order that the M.B. Conference remain unified and that the pastoral/teaching ministry be held in high regard:

1. Those seeking ordination, or recognition of ordination by another denomination, shall be baptized by immersion, since that is the form of baptism practiced by the M.B. Church.
2. Those seeking ordination or recognition of ordination, shall not have been divorced, unless the divorce occurred in his pre-Christian state.

3. Those seeking ordination or recognition of ordination, shall be men. (Note: Requirements “1” and “2” are also applicable to the commissioning and licensing for the pastoral ministry.)

Those who are ordained to the ministry of the gospel should manifest a spirit of servanthood and not be lords over the church. The church, on the other hand, should respect their leaders, encourage and support them as those who have been called of God to teach and to guide the church and to watch over the souls of its members.

II. Ordination Procedures

1. Initiation of the ordination procedure:

- a. The local church may initiate the request of ordination for a ministerial candidate. The church council guides this procedure and requests the candidate to share his calling with the local church. It is necessary that the local church affirm this calling.
- b. A person sensing the call to the ministry may initiate the ordination procedure by sharing his calling and conviction with the church counsel and with the local church. It is necessary that the local church affirm the calling of the candidate.
- c. Missionary boards or agencies may request the ordination or commissioning of prospective workers.

2. Evaluation and examination of the candidate for ordination:

- a. When a local church has affirmed a person for ordination, the district or provincial Board of Reference of Counsel (or its equivalent) is notified. This board (or committee) then provides the candidate with an “ordination questionnaire” to be completed and made available to its members and to the local church pastor.
- b. The district or provincial committee examines the prepared questionnaire and conducts a personal interview with the candidate and his spouse. In this meeting the candidate’s views and positions regarding doctrinal views, the M.B. Confession of Faith and attitudes toward ministry and to conference loyalty are ascertained.
- c. When the district or provincial committee has examined the candidate and recommended ordination, the local church is notified and may then proceed with plans for the ordination service. The local church should not proceed with ordinations before the district or provincial committee has duly examined and recommended the candidate for ordination.

3. The Ordination Service

- a. The ordination service is planned and conducted by the local church.
- b. Representation and participation by the appropriate conference committee at the service are highly recommended and identify the candidate as a conference minister.
- c. The ordination service includes charges to the candidate and the local church, the laying on of hands, prayer of dedication to the ministry, and a response by the candidate. The spouse should always accompany the candidate for ordination in these procedures.
- d. It is advisable to invite neighboring M.B. churches to the ordination service.
- e. The person have been duly ordained should receive from the district or provincial committee a certificate of ordination. (*further suggestions may be found in the M.B. Ministerial Manual, Ch. IV.)

4. Recognition of ordination of workers coming to us from another denomination

- a. Such a person shall follow the same procedure for ordination as do candidates from our own conference: (1) completion of the doctrinal questionnaire, and (2) examination by the district or provincial committee.
- b. The local church shall conduct a “recognition of ordination service.” The former ordination shall be recognized without the laying on of hands. Representation from the conference at such a service is advisable.

III. Ordination Questionnaire

Instructions: This questionnaire is for completion by candidates for ordination to the ministry in the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. It is assumed that the candidate is familiar with the Confession of Faith of the Mennonite Brethren Churches and with the Constitution of the conference.

Please give your own convictions and views on all questions. The guide has been designed for brief answers. Some questions can be answered by a simple “yes” or “no.” A more lengthy answer is desirable where you are asked to express your views more fully.

Spiritual Life

- A. Give a testimony of your conversion experience, and your experiences in the life of the church.
- B. What are you doing to see that others come to know Jesus Christ?
- C. Relate your “call to the ministry.”
- D. Discuss your views of Christian discipleship.
- E. How do you nurture your own spiritual life?

Doctrinal

- A. Doctrine of the Scriptures.
 - 1. Do you accept the Bible as the final authority in all questions regarding faith and practice?
 - 2. Discuss briefly your views on the Scripture with reference to “inspiration” and “revelation.”
- B. Doctrine of God. Provide a resume of your views regarding:
 - 1. The nature of God.
 - 2. God in creation.
 - 3. God in redemption.
- C. Doctrine of Christ. Discuss briefly:
 - 1. His incarnations.
 - 2. His death and resurrection.
 - 3. His present lordship and final triumph.
- D. Doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Discuss the Holy Spirit in terms of:
 - 1. His part in the Trinity.
 - 2. His work in relation to the unbeliever.
 - 3. His work in the life of the believer.
 - 4. The place of the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit in the church.
- E. Doctrine of man and sin. Explain your view regarding:
 - 1. The state and the condition of the first man created by God.
 - 2. The nature of the fall of man and the consequences of that fall.
 - 3. The meaning of original sin.
 - 4. The meaning of sin in relationship to God.
 - 5. The penalty of sin.
- F. Doctrine of salvation. Write briefly on:
 - 1. The meaning of redemption.
 - 2. The relationship of justification to sanctification.
 - 3. God’s grace and human responsibility.

- G. Doctrine of the church. Explain your view regarding:
1. The nature and mission of the church.
 2. The significance of the local church.
 3. The church ordinances.
 4. Church membership.
- H. Doctrine of love and nonresistance. Give your view of biblical nonresistance.
- I. Doctrine of Spirit-beings. Define:
1. Angels.
 2. Satan and the occult.
- J. Doctrine of last things. Write briefly on:
1. The second coming of Christ.
 2. Resurrection and judgment.
 3. The eternal state.
- K. Social and spiritual issues. Give your view of:
1. Marriage of believers with nonbelievers.
 2. Divorce and remarriage.
 3. “Charismatic” movement.
 4. Observance of the Lord’s Day.
 5. Swearing of the oath, and secret orders.
 6. Social drinking and use of tobacco.
 7. Abortion.

Church polity

- A. What is your view of the functional structure of the local church?
- B. What is a pastor’s role in the local church?
- C. How do you visualize the implementation of a ministry of evangelism and social action through the local church?
- D. What is the meaning of brotherhood and covenant community?
- E. What is the role of women in the church?
- F. What is the relationship of the local church to the conference?

Denomination relationship

- A. Are you in full agreement with the Confession of Faith of the conference of Mennonite Brethren churches?
- B. Are you willing to work within the framework of the Constitutions of the conference of the Mennonite Brethren churches (district, provincial, national and general)?

C. Are you willing to give active support to the program of the conference of Mennonite Brethren churches and to serve in a brotherly manner with your fellow workers?

An editorial change was suggested as follows: In points 2 and 3 of the preamble, the wording is to be changed from “SHOULD subscribe to the M.B. Confession of Faith”: to “SHALL subscribe...” This change was **adopted** by consensus.

Motion to Amend

Although we celebrate God’s call to service to all His children, we realize that we have traditionally excluded some people from ordination and that many of our people are strongly committed to one or more of these exclusions. We also realize that we do not agree on how to interpret or apply the Scriptural passages that we have used to justify these exclusions. But in order that the M.B. Conference remain unified and that the pastoral/teaching ministry be held in high regard:

1. Those seeking ordination, or recognition of ordination by another denomination, shall be baptized by immersion, since that is the form of baptism practiced by the M.B. Church.

2. Those seeking ordination, or recognition of ordination, shall not have been divorced, unless the divorce occurred in his pre-Christian state.

3. Those seeking ordination or recognition of ordination, shall be men. (Note: Requirements “1” and “2” are also applicable to the commissioning and licensing for the pastoral ministry.

This amendment was **defeated**.

Moved to accept point 1 of the preamble. A vote by ballot was requested; but because of a concern for unity in our decision, the actual voting was tabled until a later session of the Conference.

M/s/c to accept the resolution on ordination, with the exception of points 1, 2 and 3 of the preamble.

M/s/c that 1, 2 and 3 of the ordination resolution preamble be lifted from the table and re-opened for discussion.

Moved that we adopt items 2 and 3 of the preamble. **Motion carried.**

It was agreed, by **consensus**, that the last sentence of the preamble be amended to read simply, “in order that the M.B. Conference remain unified,” deleting the rest of the sentence.

M/s/c that item 1 of the preamble be referred back to the churches via BORAC for further discussion and presentation to the Conference at a later date.

Church/Pastor Relations (13-14)

We believe that good church/pastor relations are based on the concept of the priesthood of all believers. All members of the body have free access to God and are called to minister according to the gifts given to them. God has gifted some members to be leaders to equip the church for growth and ministry. Some leaders are gifted for the pastoral ministry. Whenever factors prevent or hinder the proper functioning of each member in the body, relationships are affected adversely.

We acknowledge that our congregations frequently experience tensions between the pastoral leadership and the members. We believe that the deterioration or breakdown of relations can be avoided or resolved.

Therefore:

We affirm that a greater manifestation of love would do much to maintain good church/pastor relations. We appeal to the pastor to demonstrate a servant spirit in all matters of church life.

We encourage a stronger emphasis on multiple (plural) leadership and congregational government. We discourage a pastoral system that places too much leadership responsibility upon one man or upon a team of employed personnel.

We urge our congregations to work much more diligently at discerning potential pastors in their midst and at assisting them in the development of their gifts in preparation for ministry within the congregation.

We encourage congregations to undertake a study of pastoral leadership to help them understand the biblical model and function of the pastor.

We believe that pastoral evaluation should be an ongoing process. This evaluation should be made on the basis of a mutually approved approach or method. The decision for continuation or termination of the service of the pastor should come out of a process of discernment rather than simply by a vote of confidence. The leadership should exercise greater influence and give clearer directives when criticism and personal attacks are made on the pastor. The injunction to “speak the truth in love” should be obeyed when tensions need to be resolved.

Motion to amend the 4th paragraph of the 2nd column on page 10 [p. 13 in Yearbook] as follows:

We urge our congregations to pray the Lord of the harvest to call and send workers into the pastoral ministry, and to work much more diligently.

Carried.

1984

Baptism/Ordination of Pastors (111-112, 132)

A. Background

1. At the 1981 conference at St. Catharines, Ont., the Resolution on Ordination was adopted, except for the one item in the preamble which read as follows: “Those seeking ordination, or recognition of ordination by another denomination, shall be baptized by immersion, since that is the form of baptism practiced by the MB Church” (*See 1981 Yearbook* pp. 5-13). This item was referred back to the churches for further discussion and presentation to the conference at a later date.

2. The process adopted by the Board of Reference and Counsel, to study this question, was to ask church councils and/or congregations to view this question from both a theological and polity point of view. Upon completing this procedure they were to record their position with the Board of Reference and Counsel. Additional comments were also invited.

3. Many congregations have taken this matter very seriously, involving detailed processing and decision making. Of the 147 responses, 89 congregations favor the resolution, 41 disagreed with the resolution, and 17 were not able to come to a clear consensus.

4. It is impossible to report all of the 83 additional qualifying statements that were submitted with the above responses. But they can be grouped into four major concerns, i.e.:

a) Are we not advocating a double standard when we insist upon rebaptism of non-immersed members for ordination, but not for memberships?

b) Are we justified in asking that persons who have already testified to personal faith in Christ by another mode of baptism be immersed in order to comply with a polity position rather than because of theological convictions?

c) Can we remain consistent with our teaching if we do not immerse those who will be teaching and practicing baptism by immersion?

d) Is the essence of baptism “mode” conformity or uniformity in symbolic significance?

B. Recommendation

That the Mennonite Brethren Conference affirm baptism by immersion as a pre-requisite to ordination, recognition of ordination and licensing for pastoral ministry in Mennonite Brethren churches.

C. Rationale

1. Such a position is in keeping with our Confession of Faith.
2. The results of the study of this question by the congregations do not express consensus. This becomes significant when we take into account that about 120 churches did not respond. In view of this we should continue our practice as given in the 1981 resolution.
3. This position will insure the acceptance of all our ordained pastors in all Mennonite Brethren churches.
4. We agree that a case can be made from a theological point of view that immersion is not the essence of baptism; but the willingness of our ordained leaders to comply with the polity of the conference leads us to affirm our historical position.

M/s/c that the baptism/ordination recommendation be referred back to the Board of Reference and Counsel. Some opposing votes.

Statement of Board of Reference and Counsel concerning referral of the resolution on Baptism of Ministers:

The Board of Reference and Counsel has received and reviewed the referred motion regarding the baptism of ordained ministers. It does not have the time at this Convention to work through the issues in such a way as to offer further leadership. Therefore, the Board of Reference and Counsel will study the issue during the interim, in consultation with a wide range of church leaders. In the meantime, we ask the churches of the Conference to abide with the existing Conference resolution.

M/s/c. Some dissenting votes were registered.

1987

Orientation Program for Integrating Pastors (48-49, 74)

Preamble

BORAC recognizes the need to integrate more effectively those pastors and associate pastors who come to the Mennonite Brethren conference from non-MB faith traditions and institutions. At issue are common understandings of theology, polity and institutional conference loyalty. BORAC, therefore, presents the following as steps to implement a program of integration and orientation for the General conference.

Recommendations

1. That the General Conference develop a program for the orientation of senior and associate pastoral appointees whose pastoral preparation has not been in Mennonite Brethren schools.

2. That the General Conference ask the seminary to assume responsibility for developing an orientation program in consultation with BORAC.

3. That all new pastors and associates, appointed in the last two years, whose pastoral preparation has not been in Mennonite Brethren schools be asked to participate in a 2 ½ day orientation, January 24-26, 1988, at the MB Biblical Seminary.

4. That all pastors and associate pastors who assume a pastorate after January 1, 1988, whose pastoral preparation has not been in Mennonite Brethren schools be asked to participate in one orientation program during January at the MB Biblical Seminary.

5. That the General Conference offer to subsidize the local church where assistance is needed. The subsidy will not exceed one half of the total costs.

M/s/c

Baptism by Immersion as a Requirement for Ordination to Pastoral Leadership (47-48, 73)

In 1963 our conference opened the door to full church membership for those who had been baptized upon confession of faith in Jesus Christ by some mode other than immersion in water. However, such members were not to be transferred by letter from one local church to another. Local churches were, in fact, given freedom to deny full membership to non-immersed applicants.

In 1972 our conference took one step further and allowed non-immersed members, who had been accepted into the full membership of local churches, to transfer freely by letter form one church to another.

In 1981 this practice was re-affirmed. Also, it was reiterated that those seeking ordination, recognition of ordination by another denomination,

should be baptized by immersion, since that is the form of baptism practiced by the MB church.

Since there was considerable difference in opinion on requiring immersion for ordination to the pastoral ministry, the matter was referred to the churches for discussion. The Board of Reference and Counsel reported to the conference in Reedley in 1984, that our churches were quite divided on this issue. However, the board recommended to the conference that we continue, for the time being, to adhere to our former decision to require baptism by immersion for ordination.

The discussion on the conference floor in 1984, indicated the need for further study and resolution of this matter. The Board of Reference and Counsel is of the opinion that by allowing believers who are baptized by another mode, upon confession of their faith to become full-fledged members of our churches, the conference clearly indicates that it accepts different modes of believers' baptism as biblically tenable. (It does, however, rule out infant baptism.) Whereas immersion signifies primarily dying to sin and rising with Christ to newness of life (Romans 6), pouring signifies the receipt of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2,8,9,10,19).

The Board of Reference and Counsel, therefore, recommends:

1. That we re-affirm that the MB church understands the New Testament as teaching believers' baptism. (See Confession of Faith, p.17)
2. That we re-affirm that the MB church practices only one form of baptism and this be immersion. (See Confession of Faith, p.17)
3. That we re-affirm that only those who have been baptized upon confession of faith in Jesus Christ, regardless of the mode of baptism, be accepted as members in our churches. (See Confession of Faith, p.17)
4. When pastors are appointed, it is understood that they both teach and practice baptism by immersion. And it should be remembered that we do not baptize believers who are unwilling to become members of one of our local congregations. (See Confession of Faith, p.17)
5. That we encourage candidates for ordination to the pastoral ministry (or for recognition of ordination) who have been baptized by a mode other than immersion, to consider re-baptism, in order to serve with greater freedom in a denomination that practices immersion.
6. That, however, we accept also those candidates for ordination to the pastoral ministry who have been baptized upon confession of faith by some mode of baptism other than immersion.

Item 5: Amendment:

That we request candidates for ordination to the pastoral ministry (or for recognition of ordination) who have been baptized by a mode other than immersion to consider the option of immersion in order to serve with greater freedom in our denomination.”

M/s/c

Item 4: Amendment: That at baptism the believer enters into full fellowship and work of the church” replaces second sentence of item 4.

M/s/ Defeated

M/s/c to accept resolution.

Pastoral Care (86)

1. That all pastors of Mennonite Brethren Churches who have joined the Conference within the last two years be asked to participate in the 1988 Orientation Sessions as well as participate in the Global Missiological Issues Consultation and the School for Ministry.

2. That all pastors of Mennonite Brethren Churches who assume a pastorate after January 1, 1988 be required to spend the month of January at the Seminary in the new pastors’ Orientation Program.

3. That the General Conference fund one half of the cost of the orientation program and that the pastor’s church be asked to fund the other half as part of its commitment to orient the pastor to the Mennonite Brethren Church.

M/s/c

1995

Ordination (16-18)

1. That we retain ordination (laying on of hands) as the preferred practice of affirmation for those called to leadership in the denomination.

2. That when a pastor declines ordination, the congregation conduct a commissioning service that allows the person “license” in the eyes of the law and other agencies to practice ministry. This commissioning should apply only to that particular task and not to future assignments.

3. That in services of affirmation (especially ordination) there be instruction both for the leader and the congregation, indicating that such affirmation is not designed to confer status but affirmation for sacrificial service and ministry. This instruction should include warnings about the unbiblical tendency to allow ordination to foster a separation of clergy and laity.

4. That BFL formulate standards (for presentation at Convention '97) whereby those having been ordained and/or affirmed may have that affirmation withdrawn or may voluntarily surrender their credentials. We are thinking, for example, of cases where the once-affirmed are found guilty of sexual sin, financial fraud, or abuse of power and authority. The same could well apply to those who enter other occupations and may be prone to use their previous affirmation to enhance their marketability. Standards may include the following:

- a. Persons who withdraw from the denomination should surrender their credentials.
- b. Persons should not at any one time hold ordination/affirmation from more than one denomination.
- c. Persons should not use another denomination's ordination/affirmation while serving a Mennonite Brethren church.
- d. Retired ministers may retain their ordination/affirmation for purposes of gaining legitimate government allowances.
- e. When there are other questions regarding surrender of credentials we may appeal to the ethical conscience of the person involved, and/or call for the surrender of credentials in consultation with the conference.

5. That in all ordination/affirmation services the larger conferences (provincial/district and/or national) be involved in the examination and public affirmation service as a sign that congregations are part of a wider constituency. Suggestions for service components are found in the *Church Leadership Manual*.

6. That congregations be encouraged to formulate ceremonies (liturgies, rituals, etc.) to affirm other workers in the church who do not fall into those categories where we ordain, commission, and license.

7. That the Board of Faith and Life will arrange for a system whereby records of ordination/affirmation are compiled and periodic reviews are solicited.

M/s/c

1999

Credentialing Courses (30, 74)

That the credentialing bodies of the General Conference of MB Churches require all full-time pastoral staff members to complete approved course work in MB history, theology, and polity within two years of their appointment.

Implementation:

1. Costs for the courses be shared among participants, sending congregations, and regional and national credentialing bodies.
2. Course syllabi will be developed by BFL in consultation with the MB Biblical Seminary.
3. Courses will be offered annually by qualified instructors in the various regions if the Conference as needed.
4. Seminary credit will be negotiated.
5. The course will include face-to-face instruction, mentoring and readings.
6. Regional credentialing boards will continue to supervise completion of the ministry questionnaire, interviews, licenses, and ordination.

M/s/c to amend the motion to read: “to require all full-time pastoral staff members who have not studied at one of our MB institutions, to complete...”

M/s/c carried by a significant majority show of hands to accept the recommendation.

■ **Peace and Nonresistance**

1981

Love and Non-Resistance (50-51)

The Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith states:

We believe that Christians should live by the law of love and practice the forgiveness of enemies as taught and exemplified by the Lord Jesus. The church, as the body of Christ, is a fellowship of redeemed, separated people, controlled by redemptive love. Its evangelistic responsibility is to present Christ, the Prince of Peace, as the answer to human need, enmity and violence. The evil brutal inhuman nature of war stands in contradiction to the new nature of the Christian. The

Christian seeks to practice Christ's law of love in all relationships, and in all situations, including those involving personal injustice, social upheaval and international tensions. We believe that it is not God's will that Christians take up arms in military service, but that, where possible, they perform alternate service to reduce strife, alleviate suffering and bear witness to the love of Christ.

We are concerned that a goodly number of our church members (including some pastors) view our position on "love and nonresistance" as an optional doctrine. In some churches this doctrine is not taught; in some it is even opposed; and in some instances young men are even encouraged to take up arms in military service. This we consider to be a serious violation of our peace position and of the teachings of Jesus, as we have understood these in our history.

In the preface to our Confession of Faith it is stated that confessions of faith are not to be given equal status with the Bible. That is in keeping with our position that the Bible is our highest authority and that our understanding of it is never perfect, and that we must, therefore, always be open to new light.

However, when we accepted the present Confession of Faith, in 1975, that represented our church's understanding of the main doctrines of the Scripture, and such a Confession can be changed or modified only when our conference comes to a new understanding of some article in our confession through the study of the Scriptures.

We recognize that not all believers share our understanding of this biblical teaching, but we would strongly urge that when churches call pastors they make sure that they adhere to all the articles in our Confession of Faith. Those churches and boards in our provinces and districts that process the ordination of brothers for the pastoral ministry should insure that the person to be ordained shares our conference's position of "love and nonresistance." Also, pastors are encouraged to make sure that this doctrine is taught.

M/s/c.

- **Political Involvement**

1978

Political Involvement (6-8)

The Christian Church has been given a mandate to bring Christian concerns to bear in all situations; we have been instructed to bring the Gospel to “all the world” (Mark 16:15) and that directive allows for no exceptions in terms of either geography or society. No people or structures escape God’s concern or judgment. For faithful Christians an acknowledgement of this mandate probably requires cautious, selective involvement in the political realm. In contemporary North America this means that we accept the opportunities and challenges we face, realizing that opportunity plus ability creates accountability, but we also remember that for the Christian the church is always primary and the state, at best, secondary.

The Biblical commandment that we pray for those in positions of political authority implies that we should become informed about the political situation in which we find ourselves. That is the very least that is required of us. But most Christians believe that simply being informed is not enough. They believe that Christians should also vote, thereby both expressing a concern about what happens and seeking to influence the outcome. We agree with the view that in most situations voting can be seen as an expression of responsible Christian citizenship.

While realizing that there are differences of opinion on the matter, we also believe that in general it is proper to communicate our individual and collective views to government officials. Informed Christian citizens contribute in a positive way when they express support, concern, or insight as the occasion warrants. However, in any advocacy both ends and means must always be consistent with Christian standards.

Concerning standing for elective office we realize that the arguments are not all on one side and that here, again, there are important differences of opinion on the matter. We also realize that there is no “one to one” correlation between Anabaptist Christianity and any political creed or ideology. Accordingly, we suggest that local, non-partisan levels of office-holding may present important opportunities for service but that the situation becomes more complicated and difficult where party ideologies and party loyalties are important. Members of the brotherhood who contemplate campaigning for political offices should be aware of the probable tensions and difficulties involved and should discuss their situation with fellow Christians before making commitments.

To those of our number who, nonetheless, do feel called to political service we say: “Be salt and light; promote human dignity and decency, and do

not compromise on essentials. Additionally, always retain a stance of Christian criticality and avoid slipping into a conscience-easing ‘chaplainscy’ role of rationalizing whatever any party or government undertakes. Also, since the masses of Christians hold various political views, be doubly careful not to create bad publicity for God’s church.”

In general we affirm the belief that the church, not the state or government, is God’s primary medium of communication, vehicle of action, and bearer of the meaning of history. Whether in politics or in any other pursuit, we seek to serve in those situations and offices which enable us to practice Christian servanthood and do well to shun those in which our Christian servanthood and discipleship is compromised or weakened.

Accepted.

- **Race Relations**

1981 (51-53)

We frequently hear expressions of concern about discrimination in our churches and conferences. This matter was brought to our attention again at the 1978 conference, in the form of a prepared statement publicly read. In response to this concern we were instructed to prepare a position paper on race relations. We refer you to the 1963 Yearbook (pp. 42, 43) in which there is a thorough statement regarding our position on this matter. In addition to this previously adopted resolution we present this paper based upon our present understanding of the Scriptures, in the hope that each of us will practice loving acceptance of people from all cultures, languages and ethnic orientations.

Race Relations

An evaluation of the intrinsic worth of one human being by another is improper because all have originated from the same stock (Acts 17:26 NEB; “He created every race of men of one stock, to inhabit the whole earth’s surface.”) and consequently, have the same intrinsic value. Racial prejudice is a consequence of Satanic deception. It is a result of his evil influence that some people regard themselves as being of greater worth than others. This holds true, also, of racial discrimination.

Discrimination is the giving of preference to one person or group over another. Since God is the creator and owner of all things visible and invisible, he alone has the right to give preference to whom he wills. He revealed his love to one particular race more fully and accurately than to any other of all the sin-blinded races of the world (Deut. 4:32-39, 7:6-9). To God alone belongs this right and prerogative of preference.

Because we of the Mennonite Brethren faith profess to believe that:

1. All races of men and women have originated from one stock (Acts 17:26, “He created every race of men of one stock, to inhabit the whole earth’s surface.”).
2. All races of men and women are equally creatures of God by virtue of having been created by one father (Mal. 2:10, “Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?”; Isaiah 64:8, “But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father, We are the clay, and Thou our potter; And all of us are the work of Thy hand.”).
3. God has redeemed believers in Christ as instruments through which he wills to reveal his reconciling virtues to all races (1 Peter 2:9-10, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”; Matthew 28:18-20, “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I command you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”).
4. God wishes to abolish through Christ the enmity which separates people from one another (Eph. 2:11-16; Gal. 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”).
5. We are commanded by our sovereign Lord to whom we voluntarily have pledged our obedience, to do to others what we would that they do to us (Matthew 7:12, “Therefore whatever you want others to do for you, do so for them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.”; Lev.19:18, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.”; Matthew 19:19, “Honor your father and mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”).

We covenant together

1. To humbly confess our sins of omission and commission to God and to any persons or group against whom we have sinned, and to ask forgiveness and pardon.

2. To teach deliberately by word and demonstration in our churches, homes and social relationships near us and far from us that men and women of all races are equally creatures of God by natural birth.
3. To make an equal effort to proclaim and demonstrate the redeeming love of Christ to the ethnic and racial group within the boundaries of our continent as we do to those of other races outside the continental boundaries of our respective nations.
4. To return to the practice of our Anabaptist fathers imitating their efforts to include in our fellowship people from all nations and races while at the same time taking care to respect those customs and languages which are distinct to their cultures which do not violate the teachings and the love of Christ.
5. To do all within our power to make amends for the wrongs we have committed against those of other ethnic groups and races, remembering that by sinning against them, we sin against Christ.

M/s/c.

- **Urban Ministry**

1978

Mennonite Brethren and the Urban Challenge (9-10)

The Mennonite Brethren of North America live in a culture that is approximately 75% urban. The general trend for the foreseeable future continues to be further urbanization. The next two decades will see (say urbanologists and demographers) between 85-90% of all the inhabitants of the United States and Canada living in cities and towns of over 2,500. In the United States, about 30% of the people live in cities of over 100,000. Mennonite Brethren churches appear to be able to adapt to, and to minister effectively in the smaller towns. In large, multicultural, urban centers we must confess that we have not been too successful.

Acknowledging the fact that urbanism has become a way of life—not only for the culture that surrounds us, but also for the culture of which the Mennonite Brethren have become a part—we need to clearly set forth and accept the challenge of learning how to serve and minister to the urban masses. While the past century has been a century of revolutions, the revolution which most challenges the North American Mennonite Brethren church today is the move from rural to urban to metropolitan. The example of Jesus as well as that of the apostles, especially Paul, stand us in good stead. It is significant that most of the early Christian church communities were founded in the major cities of power—Corinth, Jerusalem, Antioch, Philippi, Rome, and Ephesus. It

appears to have been part of the strategy of the Holy Spirit to plant His church in the great cities of the Roman Empire.

The rural heritage of the Mennonite Brethren has tendencies to create fear and anxiety in our approach to urban ministry. We know cities to be places of loneliness and impersonality; they are places of complex racial injustice and social evil; they are oppressive in religious indifference and secularism; they are places of crime and sin. Yet it is precisely in the cities where the salt and yeast and light of the Gospel are needed the most and can make the greatest impact.

Therefore, realizing that the mandate of Mark 16:15 “Go ye into all the world...” includes the world of our cities, we wish to affirm that:

1. We accept the challenge of the urban frontier. We hereby recognize the importance of our church witness to our urban culture and commit ourselves to prayerfully find ways to serve our Lord in the urban culture.

2. We recognize that the nature of the church is determined by the nature of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This Gospel cuts across all class barriers. The fellowship of the Spirit prevents ethnic, racial, economic, intellectual, and sex barriers from being set up. The Kingdom is for all people, insomuch as Jesus died for all.

3. We assert that we are a covenant community based, among other things, on mutual service. Just as Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve, so we commit ourselves to be a servant church. We confess that it is easily possible to be imprisoned in buildings and static methods, which often prevent us from effectively reaching a mobile society. We wish to become more responsible students of our society so that our methods of ministry better reflect the whole Gospel. While we affirm aggressive evangelism, we mean by that the ministry to the total needs of man, modeling our methods after the methods of Jesus.

4. We continue to assert our prophetic ministry to the urban culture. Historically the Mennonite Brethren church stood for righteousness, justice, and mercy. We wish to continue in that prophetic tradition, recognizing that as imperfect as our witness is, God has called us to be light to a darkened world. Whether our witness is directed to inequities in the market place, in labor relations, in race relations, in government/state relations, et cetera, we wish to speak the truth in love, all the while urging that justice be done, “for righteousness exalts a nation.” We commit ourselves to be peacemakers and reconciling agents of the love of God.

5. We declare our openness to new patterns of ministry that take into account urban man’s anonymity, mobility and technology. We pray for increased

sensitivity and a compassionate spirit toward cities filled with needy people. Our churches must concern themselves with the activity of God in the world. Through urban studies courses in our seminary, colleges and Bible institutes, through urban church workshops and conferences, we will exercise our stewardship in planning so that it might seem “good to the Holy Spirit and us” to make us effective in urban ministries.

Accepted.

- **VISION STATEMENT**

1990

Conference Vision Statement (22-25)

A. The General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America adopt the above vision as an expression of its united purpose for the next decade.

B. The vision statement guides the actions of local Mennonite conferences and congregations as they initiate future programs, allocate human, material and financial resources, and discern and call future leaders.

C. All North American Mennonite Brethren schools and agencies focus their mission and execute their programs in support of achieving our common vision as Mennonite Brethren people. This support should be explicit in the published mission statements and projected programs of Mennonite Brethren schools and agencies.

D. The Board of Reference and Counsel publish, at the next three triennial conventions, a progress report on the realization of our vision based on specific submissions from our district and provincial conferences and our schools and agencies.

M/s/c

[Editorial Note: For text of Vision Statement see p. 22-25 in 1990 Yearbook.]

- **Women In Ministry**

1981

The Place of Women in the Church (46-48)

Many churches are asking whether we as Mennonite Brethren have been faithful to the Scriptures by restricting certain ministries in the church to men only. The Canadian Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns brought a

resolution on this matter to the Canadian Conference some five years ago. Since then the question has come up repeatedly at both local and conference levels and BORAC put it on the agenda for the study conference last May in Clearbrook, B.C. In view of the continuing debate on this matter we would like to present the following concerns and proposals to our General Conference.

1. We should be careful not to take our models for the husband/wife relationship and for the place of woman in the church from the current feminist movement, which is largely secular in orientation. We recognize, of course, that movements in society at times force students of the Bible to ask whether they have understood the Scriptures correctly, but the church must always hold a critical stance toward such movements, including also Christian interpretations which have denied Christian women their rightful place in family, church and society.

2. We would caution against those modern currents of thought which tend to minimize the significance of a woman's high calling to be a wife and a mother to her children, and we should do all that we can to strengthen the family and to establish it on biblical principles.

3. We, as men, confess that we have not always loved our wives and honored them as we should. However, we believe that the Scriptures teach that "the husband is the head of the wife" and that a wife's submission to a loving husband is in no way demeaning. True fulfillment comes to both husband and wife when they seek to serve one another, and to be submissive one to another (Eph. 5:21, "and be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord."), rather than in the desire for equality or even superiority. This, however, does not mean that we condone any form of oppression (either of men or women) in our society.

4. We recognize that the language of Scripture reflects the patriarchal societies in which the Bible emerged. We should not, however, sit in judgment over Scripture, for God's Word was given for all times and all cultures. It should be understood that when words such as "brother," "brotherhood" and the like are used for the believers we should not accuse those who use this biblical patriarchal language in teaching and preaching, of being anti-feminist. On the other hand we should avoid using sexist language that offends.

5. We acknowledge the great contribution of our sisters to the work of the Lord in the local church, in mission fields, and other areas of kingdom work, and we would encourage our churches to continue to discover and to draw upon the spiritual resources found in our sisters for various ministries in the church and in the world. This may also include participation in local church and conference ministries.

6. We do not hold that the reciprocal relationship between male and female, as established in creation, has been annulled by redemption. We do not believe that the Bible's teaching on the headship of the husband was bearing on the place of the woman in the church. We do not hold that the passages in the New Testament (such as 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2), which put restrictions on the Christian woman, have become irrelevant, even though therefore, do need to be re-applied. And while we recognize that women played a significant role in the early church—something we would encourage them to do in our day as well—we do not believe that the Mennonite Brethren Church should ordain women to pastoral leadership.

After discussion an amendment was passed to point #5, by adding at the end, the words, "if the Local Church so chooses;" and the heading of the resolution was changed to read, "Resolution of the Ministry of the Women in the Church."

Motion to receive the resolution with the provision that an explanatory paragraph may be added.

Carried

1987

Women in Ministry (46-47; 66-67; 72)

The Board of Reference and Counsel submitted a resolution in 1981 that was designed to affirm and free women for ministry in the church. The resolution was interpreted as too negative by the conference delegates. BORAC was mandated in 1981 and again in 1984 to prepare a more affirmative statement. BORAC submits the following resolution for approval and implementation in our churches:

We believe that God created both men and women in his image, and therefore both share an equal humanity before God (Gen. 1:27).

We believe that all Christians are joint heirs with Christ, and therefore both women and men experience full salvation in him (Gal. 3:28).

We believe that the Spirit grants gifts to all believers, irrespective of gender, for diverse ministries both in the church and in the world, and therefore both men and women minister God's grace (1 Peter 4:10).

We believe that God calls all women and men to serve in the church and in the world; we also believe he calls some women, as well as some men, for ministries within the context of the church (Acts 2:17,18; Eph.4:11ff.; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Peter 4:10).

We believe that since God has gifted and called both men and women, the church should recognize and affirm them in their ministry for the common good of the church (1 Cor. 12:7; Rom. 16:1-16).

We urge that the Mennonite Brethren churches free and affirm women for ministries in the church, at home and abroad—e.g. decision-making (committees and boards), evangelizing (visitation and discipling), teaching (Bible study and preaching), pastoral counseling (shepherding and soul care). We affirm women as associate pastors or “leading elder.” (We recognize that the ordination of women in ministry is an issue that is not addressed in this statement. It is not addressed because ordination is an issue in the Mennonite Brethren Church for many men as well as women. Therefore BORAC will address the question of ordination in the future.)

We acknowledge that the evangelical church, worldwide, is in transition in its understanding of the scope of ministries of women in the church and world. Many evangelicals believe that neither 1 Cor. 14:34, 35 nor 1 Tim. 2:11-15 “rules out the ordination of women as preachers, teachers or leaders in the church” (*Christianity Today*, October 3, 1986). Other evangelicals believe these texts are more restrictive. Mennonite Brethren people also differ in the interpretation of these texts. We recognize that significant exegetical issues are involved in these alternatives. Therefore BORAC recommends a careful biblical study process by our congregations on the role and ministry of women in the church, and has commissioned the preparation of a book and study guide of all relevant biblical passages

Motion to delete that sentence that reads “We affirm women as associate pastors but do not, at this time, endorse women as senior pastors or ‘leading elder’.”

Amendment declared **out of order** by parliamentarian.

Moved to delete the words of the paragraph that follow “at home and abroad.”
Parliamentarian rules this amendment **out of order**.

Motion to refer this resolution to the Board of Reference and Counsel for reconsideration and presentation at this conference.

M/s/c

Recommended revision of Final Two Paragraphs:

We encourage our churches to free and affirm women for ministries in the church, at home and abroad, in decision-making, evangelizing, teaching, counseling, encouragement, music, youth, visitations etc.

BORAC recommends a careful biblical study process by our congregations on the role and ministry of women in the church, and has commissioned the preparation of a book and study guide of all relevant biblical passages. In the meantime, the guidelines of the 1981 resolution remain in effect.

M/s/c

1990

Ordination of Women for Chaplaincy Ministries (126-127)

That the Conference approve the ordination or licensing of women, as required by state or provincial law, for chaplaincy ministries in care-giving and/or correctional institutions.

Rationale

1. The recommendation is ministry specific, that women be affirmed as caregivers by the Mennonite Brethren Church through ordination or licensing to chaplaincy ministries.
- 2 The recommendation is consistent with an earlier tradition of ordaining women for diaconal ministries in the church and in care-giving institutions.
- 3 Women are in great demand for chaplaincy ministries because women are experienced as affective caregivers and because hospitals and care-giving institutions are seeking to balance the number of men and women chaplains.
- 4 Appointment to chaplaincy ministries requires a master of divinity degree and denominational ordination or licensing, depending on district or provincial requirements.
- 5 Mennonite Brethren women who need ordination for appointment to chaplaincy ministries must leave the conference to seek ordination with a different denomination.

Referred to Board of Faith and Life

1993

Women in Leadership (33-38)

Terms of Reference

The Board of Faith and Life recommends the approval of the recommendation, Women in Leadership, with the following terms of reference:

1. That we understand the recommendation as a mediating and interim solution to diversity and disagreement in the denomination, including this Board. The Board's intent with this resolution is to act in a pastoral manner.
2. That we understand the issue of women in ministry as a polity issue that is based in disagreements about biblical interpretation. It does not involve a historical central theological teaching of the Christian church (e.g. Christology, salvation).
3. That this resolution supersedes the 1981 and 1987 resolutions.
4. That if a local church calls a woman to leading pastoral ministry, that affirmation is for that local church.
5. That this recommendation does not address the question of the ordination of women to pastoral ministry. Reflection on this issue will be part of the '94 Denver Consultation on ordination and authority in ministry.
6. That the Board of Faith and Life be authorized to work out some of the practical implications and issues of the recommendation (e.g. licensing, pastoral support systems) in consultation with district and provincial boards of faith and life.
7. That the Board of Faith and Life work on the continued study of the issues and the processing of disagreements with the goal of greater consensus and unity.

[Editorial Note: For Preamble, see p. 34]

Recommendation

The Mennonite Brethren Church has formally discussed the role of women in ministry since 1974. All study conferences and resolutions have affirmed the giftedness of women in ministry. All churches are blessing women for ministry within the congregation.

During the past triennium, Mennonite Brethren have again in good faith examined the biblical material and arrived at different and sometimes opposing views on the question of women in leadership. Despite our efforts, we are unable to come to consensus on the issue at this time. For these reasons, let us agree that neither this matter, nor the various convictions regarding it, shall be used to question or doubt one another's Christian integrity and faithfulness. We covenant that this issue shall not be a test of our faithfulness to Christ. We also resolve not to break the bond of fellowship with one another on this issue, but to allow for diversity of conviction and practice in the appointment of women to pastoral leadership in ways that are consistent with the governance patterns of the local congregation.

Amendment: To add the following statement to the end of the resolution: “We resolve to continue in prayerful study of Scriptures and affirm that the Bible remain authoritative and normative for the local congregation also in this area. We will continue to seek consensus in our Biblical interpretation.”

M/s/c

A ballot vote was called.

M/s/c that this decision shall be decided by a two-thirds majority vote.

A ballot vote indicated that the amended recommendation was **defeated** (39% in favor, 61% opposed).

1999 (30, 61-62, 68)

That women be encouraged to minister in the church in every function other than the lead pastorate. The church is to invite women to exercise leadership on Conference boards, in pastoral staff positions and in our congregations, institutions, and agencies. We ask women to minister as gifted, called and affirmed. We call the church to be increasingly alert to the gifts of women and to become more active in calling them to minister. We further call people in the Spirit of Christ to relate to one another in mutual respect as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Implications:

1. The 1981 resolution regarding ordination of women remains in effect.
2. Conference leadership roles should be open to men and women equally. If necessary, changes should be made in the structures by which boards are selected to facilitate service by gifted women.
3. Local congregations are called to free women to give leadership and service in all positions other than the lead pastorate.
4. Members of the Mennonite Brethren church are to pray for growing unity in biblical understanding and in the practice of affirming leaders.
5. Leaders are called to open the informal networks so that all members of leadership groups serve as full partners without any form of prejudicial exclusion from their inner workings, whether intentional or not, because of race, gender, age, or ethnicity.

M/s/c to amend as follows: change “them” to “women” on second to last sentence.

A ballot vote was requested.

M/s/c. (241-yes, 28-no).

- **Other Issues**

1978

Culture and Scripture (203)

That the Board of Reference and Counsel make this a matter of study during the next three years. **Carried**

1981

Next Convention (5)

The Board of Reference and Counsel moved a resolution as follows:

“The Mennonite Brethren will be completing 100 years of World Missions in 1985. BOMAS believes that this merits celebration. The BORAC, therefore, is planning to make the 1984 convention the occasion to introduce the concept of an international federation of Mennonite Brethren churches and to emphasize World Missions.”

Adopted

Study Helps (57)

Moved that we request BORAC to provide study helps on selected resolutions to our local congregations.

Carried.

6. Board of Resource Ministries (until 1990, Board of Christian Literature and Board of Mass Media)

[Editorial Note: See General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Executive Report: The Final Chapter 2002, Memorandum of Understanding Regarding General Conference Divestiture of Board of Resource Ministries, Appendix E, pp. 39-40.]

1993

Jubilee Curriculum (30)

That the Conference become a cooperative user of the *Jubilee* curriculum and that our churches consider this curriculum as an option for use in their Sunday schools.

M/s/c

With Publication (30)

That the Conference endorse the *With* publication for youth for use in our churches.

M/s/c

7. Board of Trustees

1978

Giving and Education (200)

1. That the Board of Reference and Counsel urge upon the member churches of our conference the teaching of systematic giving.”

Accepted

2. With respect to the stewardship department of this board the following are recommended:

a) That the deferred giving program of the stewardship program be continued.

Accepted

b) That the cost of operation of the deferred giving program be funded from the program earnings.

Accepted

c) That the educational ministry of the stewardship department be continued.

Accepted

d) That the educational ministry be funded as part of the Conference operating budget.

Accepted.

1981

RRSP Program (135)

That the Convention authorize this Board to proceed with implementation of an RRSP program in Canada and an I R A program in the U.S.A., details of which are to be established by this Board.

Carried

Donor's Fund (135)

That the Convention approve acceptance of the Canadian foundation known as the Donor's Fund from the Canadian Conference, to be continued as a work of the General Conference, subject to such changes in structure as this Board may deem expedient.

Carried

1984

Stewardship Education (147)

Walter Kehler moved that the Board of Trustees provide materials for stewardship education outside of budget funds to the amount of \$3,000.

M/s/c

1990

Transfer of Assets (125-126)

We, the General Conference Board of Trustees, recommend the adoption of the following resolutions:

(1) that the endowment, annuity, deposit and trust funds of the General Conference, together with all commitments, responsibilities, and super-vision therefore, and designated receivables, be and the same are herewith transferred to the respective national conferences to which they designated by the Board of Trustees as being the respective areas where said funds originated;

(2) that the physical assets of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, namely the physical plant and land located at 4812-4824 East Butler Avenue in Fresno, Calif., be transferred to the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, a California corporation. *It is understood that each National Conference (Canadian & U.S.) holds 50% of the interest in the seminary corporation;*

(3) that the stewardship services of the General Conference respective to the management of and accountability for all assets transferred also be transferred to the respective national conferences; and

(4) that the Board of Trustees of the General Conference, and the Board of Trustees/Management of the two national conferences be and are hereby authorized and empowered to make all transfers and necessary agreements, complete all documentation and do all things necessary to give fullest effect to the foregoing resolutions.

Rationale

The transfer of the functions and services of the General Conference Board of Trustees to the national conferences to serve as agents for the General Conference was approved at the 1987 General Conference and became operational immediately.

The transfer of assets concept has been endorsed by both national conferences at their 1986 conventions as approved and recommended by the national Boards of Trustees/Management.

The reasons for the resolutions to transfer the assets are namely, differing governmental regulations and requirements, differing tax-laws and incorporation laws, and more meaningful control and accountability. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to receive charitable gifts of property, process deeds of trusts, etc., when assets are owned and managed by an international board.

In Canada the assets are already legally in the name of the Canadian Conference; the same should be done in the U.S.

Add: It is understood that each national conference [Canada, U.S.] holds 50% of the interest in the Seminary Corporation.

M/s/c

8. Constitution and By-Laws

[Editorial Note: In 1978 a revised Constitution was provisionally accepted by the Conference (see 1978 Yearbook, p. 62), and formally accepted with further minor changes in 1981. The Board of Reference and Counsel was made responsible for bringing forward any amendments. In 1990 a new Constitution was accepted and responsibility for the Constitution was now placed with the newly created Executive Council (1990 Yearbook, p. 28). Because of these factors as well as because of the significant amount of material related specifically to the Constitution, these materials have been placed together in the following section rather than under one of the boards. The issues related to the dissolution of the Conference have also been placed in this section. However, the final Memoranda of Understanding respecting the divestiture of the various ministries in 2002 have not been included here. These can be found in the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Executive Report: The Final Chapter 2002(2003).]

1978 (62)

That the Convention approve the 1978 Constitution as outlined in the final draft.

[Editorial Note: See pp. 18-62 for Constitution and Bylaws.]

Motion: That we table this motion.

Defeated

Amended Motion: That we accept this constitution as a provisional document and then work on changes as to structure.

Accepted. Yes-152, No-124.

1978 (104)

Reducing the number of Board members (BOMAS)

That we reduce the number of Board members from 15 to 11.

Carried

1978 (177)

That we refer the recommendation of the Canadian Conference [1978] regarding the Board of Mass Media [that ARTICLE XII entitled “The Board of Mass Media” be deleted (*from the new constitution—Ed.*) and that we

encourage each area to develop this ministry] to the Board of Reference and Counsel for study in the interim.

Carried

1981 (36)

We recommend that the media ministries described in the constitution of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, Article XII, Section 3, be continued:

- to attend to the development of programs, ministries and services in the area of media according to the needs of the churches and Conference
- to study issues of common such as effective contemporary communications, impact of the media, and broadening and updating traditional views of communication;
- to represent the Conference in consultation and projects with other organizations.

This recommendation **became obsolete** since the delegation voted to retain Mass Media in the General Conference structure (*see below*).

1981 (42-43)

1. That the General Conference continue to be a brotherhood of churches from Canada and the U.S.A. under the name, “The General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches,” and that the following boards constitute its organizational structure: i.e.

- a) The Board of Reference and Counsel
- b) The Board of Missions and Services
- c) The Board of Trustees
- d) The Board of Christian Literature
- e) The Board of the MB Biblical Seminary

Accepted

2. That we delete the Board of Christian Education and the Board of Mass Media on the General Conference level. And that these functions be carried out by national, provincial and district conferences. Cooperating with programs and sharing of resources that will facilitate mutual enrichment and avoid duplication wherever possible, should be encouraged.

M/s/c to separate action on the Board of Christian Education and the Board of Mass Media.

Recommendation re Board of Christian Education was **defeated**.

Recommendation re Board of Mass Media was **defeated** because it lacked a two-thirds majority vote as required (267 for, 157 against).

3. That consideration be given to developing some sort of international federation of Mennonite Brethren churches for the purpose of sharing faith and fellowship, thus allowing for a cross-cultural, international celebration of faith.

It was agreed by consensus that we change the wording from “international federation” to “international fellowship.”

M/s/c

Constitution Committee Recommendations (49-50)

That the Convention approve the 1978 Constitution as outlined in the 1978 General Conference Yearbook, subject to the following amendments:

1. That the Articles be renumbered as follows:

- I. The General Conference
- II The Conference and its Component Constituencies
- III The Conference and its Churches
- IV Membership
- V Conventions of the Conference
- VI Elections and Terms of Office
- VII Organization of the Conference
- VIII Executive Officers, Program and Nominating Committees
- IX Board of Reference and Counsel
- X Board of Christian Literature
- XI Board of Missions
- XII Board of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary
- XIII Board of Trustees
- XIV Dissolution of a Church or Conference
- XV Amendment

2. That the following corrections be made:

2.1 Article 11, Sec. 3.3

Change “post-graduate theological education” to “graduate theological education.”

2.2 Article V, Sec. 4.1

Change “The Convention shall be held alternately in the Canadian and United States areas” to “The Convention shall be held alternately in Canada and the United States.”

2.3 Article I, Sec. 2, 2.1

Change “The General Conference consists of the Canadian Conference and the United States Conference” to say “The General Conference consists of the churches of the Canadian Conference and the United States Conference.”

That the constitution, as provisionally accepted in 1978 and printed in the 1978 *Yearbook*, be ratified, with several editorial corrections.

M/s/c.

1984

Board Membership: Notice of Motion (137-138)

That we change the constitution to allow the appointment of one member from the Department of Christian Education of our Seminary in Fresno to the Board of Christian Education.

[Editorial Note: This Notice of Motion appears not to have been acted on in subsequent years.]

1987

Task Force (49-50; 74)

Preamble

During the last triennium BORAC has been faced with matters pertaining to organizational structure and the need for conference personnel. In order to help resolve the need for structural changes and the need for a full-time General (Executive) Secretary, BORAC proposes the appointment of a Task Force to accomplish the following assignment.

1. Review the General Conference organizational structure and present changes as required.
2. Assess the need and create a statement of rationale for the appointment of a full-time conference personnel.
3. Prepare a written role description of such a person.

4. Present a proposal for implementation to BORAC and the General Conference.

Recommendation

That BORAC appoint a three member Task Force to prepare and present its proposal to BORAC during the next triennium.

M/s/c

Notice of Motion #1: Nominating Committee (50-51; 74)

Notice of intent to change the constitution to provide for change in the structure and function of the Nominating Committee. See Article VIII, Sec.6.

Background:

The function of the committee has been to solicit, compile and submit a list of nominees for some conference board vacancies. This function excludes the executive officers and nominating committee. This committee of three, elected with nominations from the floor, has functioned without a clearly defined job description, time-line expectation or budget provision. There is no provision for accountability to, or communication with, conference administrative leadership.

Resolution:

1. That we enlarge the committee to five persons with two elected from U.S. and two from Canada, and one appointed by BORAC and reporting to BORAC.
2. That the nominating committee be accountable to BORAC and report to BORAC.
3. That the nominating committee submit nominees for all conference board positions including the executive officers.
4. That the nominees for the nominating committee be submitted by BORAC, in concert with the nominating committee.
5. That BORAC call upon the nominating committee to present the nominees to the convention of the General Conference.
6. That BORAC establish a budget-line item for the work of the nominating committee.
7. That the constitution provide for staggered six-year terms for the members of the nominating committee so as to insure continuity.
8. That the nominating committee be authorized to function in harmony with this resolution immediately and that BORAC be charged with initiating the rewriting of the constitution to include these changes and present it to the 1990 convention for approval.

Rationale

1. These changes will provide for a better bi-national and geographic balance on the nominating committee.
2. These changes will broaden the discernment capabilities of the committee to discover and present the qualified leaders among us.
3. This change will provide a more thorough and thoughtful approach to this important function of discovering, selecting and presenting gifted, qualified, willing workers for the ministries of our conference.

M/s/c

Notice of Motion #2: Change of Name (51-52)

Notice of intent that the name General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches be changed to Mennonite Brethren Church of North America.

Rationale

1. In 1963 our name, the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America was changed to the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. The intent was to assume a name that would transcend national and geographical boundaries. It was believed that under this name it would be a simple matter to bring national conferences into one General Conference. Obviously that has not happened. Not is it anticipated that it will. Therefore, our name needs to restore the continental designation it formerly held.

2. Our name should be consistent with and reflect our theology. The word “churches” in our present name suggests a view of the church that accents local autonomy. The word “church” instead of “churches” would reflect more accurately our ecclesiology and our desired polity. The word “conference” is descriptive of a loosely bound confederation or association of churches. The deletion of the word “conference” would allow for a stronger emphasis on the word “church.” The use of the singular would draw attention to our unity and to our understanding of covenant community.

3. The term “General Conference” has been confused with the General Conference Mennonite Church. There is confusion among professional people such as attorneys and accountants as well as Internal Revenue Service with the use of the name “General Conference.” Deleting the words “General Conference” would remove this closed identity (p. 51- 52).

(See *Yearbook of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches*, 1963, p. 43-45).

Statement was given as a *notice of motion*.

Notice of Motion #3: Board of Christian Education and Board of Mass Media (28, 52-53; 74)

Notice of intent to change the constitution Articles X and XII.

1. That we delete the Board of Christian Education and the Board of Mass Media on the General Conference level, and that these functions be carried out by national, provincial and district conferences.

2. That the Board of Christian Literature assume these responsibilities not assumed by area conferences.

Background and Rationale

Following the 1978 convention, a special committee was appointed “to study the issues emerging out of conference action re. General Conference Structure.” (1981 Yearbook p. 41) This committee presented the proposals to BORAC. The result, in part, was the following recommendation to the convention in 1981:

That we delete the Board of Christian Education and the Board of Mass Media on the General Conference level. And that these functions be carried out by national, provincial and district conferences. Cooperating with programs and sharing of resources that will facilitate mutual enrichment and avoid duplication wherever possible, should be encouraged.

This recommendation was not approved for various reasons.

During the past six years BORAC has had this matter on the agenda repeatedly. Today BORAC affirms the position it took in 1981 and therefore, presents the above notice of motion.

We sense that there is a much broader readiness on the part of the conference to delete these two boards. We believe it is fair to say that both boards have struggled to define their functions and fill their roles. Their 1984 reports indicate this. BORAC, therefore, questions whether the agendas of these two boards merit General Conference board status.

There is a high degree of duplication and overlap with the work done on a national, provincial or district levels. We affirm the principles set forth in 1981: “We believe that the ministry of the church should be carried on at the level where it can best achieve its objectives. This mean that there are areas of ministry that can best be administered on a provincial or district level, and others that are best achieved if done on a broader base” (1981 *Yearbook*, p. 41).

The task of coordination could be done effectively through cooperation on the national levels. Certain aspects of Mass Media and production of materials can only be done on a national basis.

Production of materials could be done by an expanded Board of Christian Literature.

We believe it is time that we trim the structure of the organization of the General Conference and allow the work to be done closer to the local church.

Notice of Motion was **withdrawn**.

Notice of Motion #4: Board of Christian Literature (53, 83)

That the notice of motion given at the convention in 1984 to change Article XI of the Constitution of the General Conference be amended to delete Section 1-Composition and replace it with the following:

Section 1-Composition:

The board shall consist of at least nine members as follows:

Four members from each national conference and one member-at-large elected by the General Conference.

M/s/c

Notice of Motion # 6: Board of Trustees (54-55; 73)

Notice of Motion to amend the constitution: Article XV is to be revoked and the following substituted:

Board of Trustees:

Section 1-Composition

1.1 The board shall be composed of nine members.

1.2 The conference shall elect three nominees from each national conference.

1.3 The conference shall elect one additional nominee as a member-at-large of this Board.

1.4 The chairpersons of the Board of Trustees of the two national conferences shall be members of this Board by reason of such office; provided that they may be represented by their designates from time to time.

Section 2-Purpose

2.1 This Board shall act as the budgetary development and control agency of the Conference; as its legal signing authority; and as the responsible body for the administration, either directly or indirectly, of the physical assets of the Conference.

Section 3-Functions

3.1 To provide and maintain the legal status of the Conference including appointment of signing officers from time to time.

3.2 To review the budget proposals of the various individual boards and committees of the Conference and to report concerning same to the Conventions of the Conference.

3.3 To exercise a trusteeship function in respect to any board or agency of the Conference which incurs liabilities not authorized by the Conference.

3.4 To receive, administer and invest the capital, trust and endowment funds held or received by the Conference.

3.5 To delegate to the National Conference such of its functions or parts thereof as deemed expedient from time to time and to retain agents, employees or representatives to carry out such of its functions as may be expedient.

M/s/c

Notice of Motion #7: Board of Missions and Services (55, 84)

To change General Conference By-Law No.2, Article XIII, Section 1.

Section 1-Legal Status (delete this section)

The Board has acquired its own legal status by incorporating under the name "Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services." The Board of Directors of such corporation shall be comprised of the members of the Board as constituted herein. The objects and governing by-laws of such corporation shall be consistent with the Constitution of the Conference.

Rationale

The Board of Missions and Services is not incorporated as a legal entity.

The General Conference corporation has its beginnings as being a corporation under the name of the "American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union" in 1890 and has had several amendments changing the name to its present title: "The General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches."

M/s/c

1987

Dissolution of the Conference (55-56)

Notice and intent to amend the constitution to include the following:

The corporation of the Conference over which the Board of Trustees maintains control is organized exclusively for charitable and religious purposes, meeting the requirements for exemption provided by section 214 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, including for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

The property of this corporation is irrevocably dedicated to religious, charitable and educational purposes.

No part of the net earnings of the Conference corporation shall inue [sic] to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustee, officers, or other private persons, except the Conference corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth herein. No substantial part of the activities of the Corporation shall be carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of these articles, the Conference corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on by a corporation exempt form Federal Income Tax under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

Upon the dissolution of the conference corporation, if the same shall even occur, the Board of Trustees shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the corporations, dispose of all the assets of the corporation exclusively for the purposes of the Conference corporation in such a manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable and religious purposes and educational purposes, meeting the requirements for exemption provided by section 214 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), as the Board of Trustees shall determine. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the Court of Common

Pleas of the country in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organizations as the Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

Provisional Changes (84)

That the Convention give the Board of Trustees permission to act provisionally upon some of the changes in anticipation of final acceptance.
M/s/c

1990

General Conference Restructuring (27-35)

Assumptions

1. We are using the current name which is the “General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches,” hereinafter referred to as the “General Conference.”

2. We affirm the ongoing need for and viability of the General Conference.

3. Appointees from national conference boards have been included on General Conference boards for purposes of program coordination. Representation of district/provincial conferences or other agencies such as MB Communications was not considered viable.

4. All Boards of the General Conference should meet at the same time and place annually to minimize costs and to maximize coordination.

5. The nomenclature “Executive Council” has been used since our constitution shall continue to read that no one person can be a member of more than one board.

6. The members of the General Conference Executive Committee are the officers of the conference and of the Executive Council. All other boards will continue to organize internally.

7. The Council of Boards, consisting of all board members, shall function as the conference in interim.

8. Dissolution of boards implies termination of staff positions. Staff of former boards are eligible for appointments, subject to the decision of the new board.

9. Elected members of dissolved boards with unexpired terms would be recognized as nominees for the new board for the sake of continuity. Members of BORAC with unexpired terms will continue as members of the Board of Faith and Life.

10. Provision has been made for appointees-at-large to boards in consideration of deficiencies or special needs that might exist in boards. Candidates for such positions are nominated by respective boards and approved by the Executive Council. Their terms expire at the end of each conference triennium. They would serve as voting members of boards.

11. The term “ex-officio” is used as defined in Article 1, Section 2 of our existing constitution. It means a person who is a member of a board by virtue of office. Such a person has the right to vote unless otherwise specified by a board.

Restructuring Proposal

A. Council of Boards

1. Rationale: At present the Board of Reference and Counsel serves as conference in interim. Since all boards of the conference will meet annually at the same time and place, it is proposed that this body serve as conference in interim.

2. Membership: Its membership shall consist of all board members. The executive officers of the General Conference shall preside over this Council.

3. Function: The Council of Boards shall meet annually for reporting and consultation. It shall function as the conference in interim.

B. Executive Committee

1. Structure: The Executive Committee consists of the moderator, assistant moderator and secretary. The proposed General Conference executive secretary is an ex-officio member.

2. Function: They shall serve as the executive officers of the General Conference, the Council of Boards and the Executive Council.

C. The Executive Council

1. Rationale: Presently BORAC is responsible both for the administration of the General Conference and for theological and ethical watch-care. We are proposing a division of functions. The new Executive Council shall administer the General Conference. They shall give leadership to and coordinate the work of the entire General Conference.

2. Structure: The Executive Council shall consist of:

(a) The executive officers of the General Conference

(b) The chairpersons of the boards of the General Conference;

(c) The moderators of the national conferences

(d) The executive secretary of the General Conference, ex-officio member.

3. Function: The Executive Council shall advise, coordinate and administer the work of the General Conference. These functions shall include: coordinating the work of boards, long-range planning, creating conference vision. Budget review, resolving tensions, custodianship of the constitution, inter-Mennonite and inter-denominational concerns, international Mennonite Brethren relations etc. The Executive Council, through the executive committee, shall plan for triennial conventions in cooperation with the convention program committee. It is responsible to the General Conference at triennial conventions.

D. Board of Faith and Life

1. Rationale: The primary functions of the Board of Faith and Life are doctrinal and ethical guidance and watch-care. Our proposal for restructuring attempts to separate these functions and the administrative functions without completely detaching them from each other.

In our judgment, the elected conference executive officers need to remain informed and involved in these vital functions of the General Conference. We are therefore recommending that they remain as members of the board, but that the Board of Faith and Life elect its own executive from its elected members. Thus the moderator of the General Conference would not also function as chairperson of the Board of Faith and Life. This also frees the moderator to moderate the convention without also serving as spokesman for this board.

2. Structure: The Board of Faith and Life shall consist of 12 members.

(a) Seven elected by the convention: three from Canada, three from the U.S., one member-at-large.

(b) The General Conference executive officers: moderator, assistant moderator and secretary.

(c) One representative from each comparable national board; The Board of Faith and Life in Canada, the Board of Church Ministries in the U.S.

(d) General Conference Executive Secretary, ex-officio.

3. Function: This Board:

(a) Serves as the guardian of the Confession of Faith. Any changes or modifications to the Confession of Faith must be processed through this board for presentation to the convention.

- (b) Watches over the spiritual life of the General Conference and its churches and gives guidance and direction in matters of faith, doctrine and ethics. It shall, when deemed necessary, initiate appropriate action or serve as a reference body in issues of spiritual and social concern.
- (c) Functions as an advisory board to national and district/provincial conferences in matters of doctrine, ethics and polity.
- (d) Initiates appropriate disciplinary action when conditions contrary to the teaching of the Bible and the principles of the General Conference exist in our churches or conferences.
- (e) Convenes study conferences for purposes of study and discernment on issues of faith, discipleship or polity.

E. Board of Resource Ministries

1. Rationale: The Task Force proposes the dissolution of the boards of Christian Education, Christian Literature and Mass Media, and the creation of the new board called the Board of Resource Ministries. The new board shall have a comprehensive mandate, but it is not to be assumed that all the functions of the previous boards will be continued by the new board. Dissolution implies dissolution of existing boards and staff. The new board will determine its staffing needs and will arrange for an orderly transition. The accumulated deficit of the Board of Christian Literature will not be transferred to the new board. The Conference Executive will negotiate a solution with the Board of Trustees. We believe that there is a sufficient degree of commonality in the functions of these boards to warrant this change. The executive secretary of this new board shall also be responsible for the operation of Kindred Press.

2. Structure: The Board of Resource Ministries shall consist of 10 members:

- (a) Seven elected by the convention: three from Canada, three from the U.S., one member-at-large;
- (b) One representative from each comparable national board: Board of Christian Education in Canada and the Board of Communications in the U.S.;
- (c) One appointed-at-large;
- (d) Executive Secretary of the Board of Resource Ministries, ex-officio.

3. Function: This board shall:

- (a) Monitor the churches needs for print and non-print resources in all areas of church life, worship, caring, nurture, equipping, media, evangelism, missions and historical appreciation, and to produce needed resources.
- (b) Promote, demonstrate and support the use of good resource for local churches.
- (c) Promote and distribute Mennonite Brethren produced materials to the larger Christian constituency.
- (d) Function as a networking and coordinating link between boards and national conferences in matters of resource development.
- (e) Operate Kindred Press, the publishing arm of the General Conference.

F. Seminary Board

1. Rationale: The Task Force recommends several modifications to the Seminary Board. It is proposed that the alumni representative become a full member of the Seminary Board with full voting privileges. The term of office shall be three years, corresponding to our General Conference triennium. Furthermore, it is proposed that the current provision for the election of an additional member-at-large (existing 2.1.3) be changed to an appointee-at-large. Proposed changes to Section 4 were discussed with and agreed to by the Board of Trustees in April 1987

2. Structure: The Seminary Board shall consist of 12 members:

- (a) Nine elected by the convention: four from Canada, four from the U.S., one member-at-large;
- (b) One appointee-at-large.

- (c) One alumni representative, elected by the Alumni Association for a three-year term. This person shall be a voting member.
- (d) Seminary president, ex-officio.

3. Function: Changes be made to Section 4 giving the Seminary Board full responsibility to the denomination for the operation of the seminary.

G. Board of Missions/Services

1. Rationale: The Study Commission proposes changes in board structure to reflect the growing opportunity for cross-cultural ministries in North America. Current immigration patterns and a growing foreign student population have brought our mission field to us.

To provide for greater cooperation and coordination in ministry to these people, we propose the inclusion of a representative of each of the national boards of evangelism in the Board of Missions/Services. This change also anticipates the future potential for missionary recruitment from among these groups.

2. Structure: The board shall consist of 12 members:

- (a) Nine elected by the convention: four from Canada, four from the U.S., one member-at-large.
- (b) Chairperson or designate from the Boards of Evangelism of the U.S. and Canada.
- (c) One appointee-at-large.
- (d) Executive Secretary of the Board of Missions/Services, ex-officio.

3. Function:

- (a) The Board shall be responsible for the Missions and Services program abroad.
- (b) The Board shall work in partnership with National Conferences in evangelizing ethnic minorities and international students in North America.

H. Board of Trustees

1. Rationale: The function and scope of the Board of Trustees has changed significantly over the past several years. The Board of Trustees was formerly responsible for the administration of all the monetary assets of the General Conference, which included endowment funds, annuities, deposit funds and RRSP funds. The board was also responsible to grant loans to churches and conferences agencies. All these functions have been transferred to the respective boards of management of Canada and the United States Conferences.

While acknowledging these changes, the Task Force still sees a significant role for this board in overseeing the total financial operation of the General Conference. Accountability through elected representation must be retained. Objectivity in protecting the interests of the General Conference must be guarded. Consistency in General Conference representation during

any given triennium must be guaranteed. Considering all these factors we propose the following changes in structure.

2. Structure: The Board of Trustees shall consist of nine members:
 - (a) Three elected by the convention: one from Canada, one from the U.S., one member-at-large. These three elected officers shall constitute the executive;
 - (b) Four national representatives: the chairperson and assistant chairperson of the Canadian Board of Management and the chairperson and assistant chairperson of the U.S. Board of Trustees;
 - (c) General Conference treasurers from the U.S. and Canada, ex-officio.

3. Function: The Board of Trustees shall:
 - (a) Provide and maintain the legal status of the conference, including appointment of signing officers;
 - (b) Review the budget proposals of various individual boards and committees of the conference prior to presentation to the Executive Council;
 - (c) Exercise a trusteeship function in respect to all boards or agencies of the conference which incur liabilities not authorized by the conference;
 - (d) Establish appropriate liaison with all boards so as to be informed of the financial operations of the total conference;
 - (e) Delegate to the national conferences such of its functions or parts thereof as deemed expedient from time to time and to retain agents, employees or representatives to carry out such of its functions as may be expedient.
 - (f) Prepare the budget for the General Conference triennium.

I. Conference Executive Secretary

1. Rationale: The Study Commission proposes the appointment of a General Conference executive secretary. Under the proposed structure, this person would serve as an appointed executive officer of the Executive Council and as an ex-officio member of the Board of Faith and Life. The executive secretary would be an appointee of the Executive Council, and would be made available to the Board of Faith and Life for special assignments. The workload of the executive secretary would be monitored by the Executive Committee, to whom this person would also be accountable. Reasons for this proposal include:

- (a) Administrative load: We have evaluated the workload of the executive, particularly the moderator, and believe that the demands of work and time on an elected executive are excessive.
- (b) Vision and unity: The conference would be helped by a person who embodies and articulates a Mennonite Brethren identity and vision in our constituency.
- (c) Coordination and communication: More consistent coordination and communication between the executive and boards of the conference, and between the General Conference and national and district/provincial conferences should be achieved through an executive secretary.
- (d) Listening and liaison: An executive secretary would work from an office and be freer to travel, therefore more accessible. He would function both as a listener and as a liaison person between the General Conference and the larger constituency.
- (e) Faith and Life: The executive secretary would be significantly involved in processing matters of faith and life. Understanding and articulating conference doctrinal and ethical positions would be a significant component of the assignment.

2. Proposed job description:

- (a) Serve as the executive officer of the Executive Council with direct and indirect responsibilities:
 - (i) stimulate vision for the Executive Council in its leadership role in the conference
 - (ii) assist the conference moderator in preparing agenda and planning meetings
 - (iii) enable the Executive Council to fulfill its mission
 - (iv) coordinate the work of the Executive Council
 - (v) implement actions
 - (vi) prepare Executive Council budget;
 - (vii) coordinate plans for and administer triennial conventions
- (b) Assist the Executive Committee in representing them.
 - (i) at national and provincial/district conferences
 - (ii) in local churches that request council and input

- (iii) at inter-Mennonite, interdenominational, and international meetings.
- (c) Facilitate communication and coordination for the Executive Committee with the constituency through:
 - (i) consultation with national, provincial/district leadership and conference ministers
 - (ii) liaison with conference boards
 - (iii) identification of church/conference issues and concerns
 - (iv) articulation of church/conference vision.
- (d) Assist the Board of Faith and Life
 - (i) by serving as an ex-officio member of the board
 - (ii) by undertaking special assignments on behalf of this board
 - (iii) by preparing the Board of Faith and Life budget.

M/s/c that it be accepted and implemented provisionally.

M/s/c to approve the Restructuring Proposal as presented.

Some opposition.

1990

Conference Name Change (108-109)

Preamble: At the 1987 General Conference convention the Board of Reference and Counsel gave notice of motion regarding a name change for the General Conference. Such a change would involve a change to the constitution and thus needed to be proposed first as a notice of motion, and now as a recommendation. The rationale for this proposal was three-fold: (See *Yearbook of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches*, 1987, pp.51-52)

1. Deleting the term “General Conference” would eliminate the present confusion with the General Conference Mennonite Church.
2. Our name should reflect the fact that we are the Mennonite Brethren Church in North America. The present official name, since 1963, is General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. We should make the North American designation explicit to avoid confusion with other national conferences of Mennonite Brethren.
3. Our name should be consistent with and reflect our theology

of church. There are two important related changes being proposed: changing the plural “churches” to the singular “church,” and deleting the designation “conference” in favor of the singular “church.” This would accent our conviction that we are a single covenant community rather than a loosely bound association of local churches.

It is for these three reasons that the Board of Reference and Counsel recommends the following:

1. The official name of the “General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches” be changed to “Mennonite Brethren Church of North America.”

2. For the sake of consistency, and in recognition of the rationale summarized above, the national, district and provincial conferences of North America, where necessary, voluntarily consider the feasibility of adjusting their own official names to reflect the designation of the “Mennonite Brethren Church of North America,” for example, the “Mennonite Brethren Church in Manitoba.”

M/s/c to refer the issue to BORAC (Board of Faith and Life).

1993 (9)

That the Executive Committee (Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Secretary) be deleted from membership in the Board of Faith and Life. In place of the Executive Committee, one additional member at large shall be elected to the Board of Faith and Life, and one member of the Executive Committee shall serve as an ex-officio member of the Board.

Rationale

The reality of the workload experienced during this triennium, coupled with the need to expand the Executive Committee’s liaison function among the boards, is the basis for this recommendation.

M/s/c

1993 (9)

Notice of Motion: That the Constitution and By-laws of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches (specifically By-law No. 2, “General By-law Governing the Affairs of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches”) shall be amended to accurately reflect the structural changes accepted by the 1990 convention. These proposed changes

are specified in a newly revised draft submitted to each local church for purposes of review and discussion.

Rationale: The current (new) structure of the General Conference was accepted by the 1990 convention with the proviso that the Executive Council would review and amend the By-laws during the triennium in order to reflect composition of boards and the terms of board members and generally to “fine tune” the functions of the boards.

M/s/c

MBMS Board Membership (10)

To create the correct number of members, balance in terms of office, and continuity in boards, the following action was recommended: That the present chairman (US rep) and the present Vice-Chair (Canadian rep) of the Board of Missions/Services be appointed as members of the Board for a two-year term (until 1995).

M/s/c

1995

Change of Name (9; 87)

Moved that the name of the Conference be changed to “The Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.” (The word “General” would be deleted.)

Revised notice of motion: That the name of the Conference be changed to North American Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

No action was taken on the name change motion.

1995 (9)

Notice of Motion: Moved that the Articles of Incorporation (charter) be revised to ensure the legal continuance of the General Conference in perpetuity. (*The present charter expires legally in 1999 and according to the bylaws must be presented and then voted on one convention later: 1997.*)

Notice of Motion: Moved to authorize the Board of Trustees to rewrite the language of the Articles of Incorporation in contemporary English.

By-laws (87)

The Executive Council recommends that the revised By-laws which were provisionally accepted in 1993 in Winnipeg be approved (see Exhibit II for the revised Bylaws).

M/s/c

1997 (36-37)

Revised Recommendation

[Editorial Note: The original motion IB on p. 8 was not acted on].

We recommend the striking of a Task Force of three people (one each appointed by national leadership and the chair by Executive Council) to facilitate a “no-holds-barred” review in consultation with existing ministries, all levels of conference and local churches; to prepare an appropriate realignment/restructuring of the management of our ministries; to provide opportunity for strengthening our relationship with the other national Mennonite Brethren conferences; and to complete their assignment within this biennium by 1) preparing an interim report to Council of Boards for Sept./Oct.1998, and 2) bringing a recommendation for Executive Council for March 1999.

M/s/c to amend the motion so that the task force be enlarged to five people.

M/s/c to accept the recommendation as amended.

1997

Constitutional Change (7-8; 56-58; 92; 94-96)

[Editorial Note: The minutes in the Yearbook are unclear as to the precise nature of the final bylaw revisions acted on at the Convention.]

1. In response to the mandate for change, in consideration of the processing of the past biennium, and in anticipation of the dissolution of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, we recommend:

(1) That we adjust the Amendment by-law to allow us to suspend or waive any by-law provision by a two-thirds vote of the delegates.

M/s/c

(2) That the Executive Council initiate the process of realigning and restructuring the management of the ministries of our bi-national conference.

[Editorial Note: It appears that this item was not voted on.]

(3) That we suspend elections for the next term except to fill vacant positions.

M/s/c

(4) That we adjust the by-law which governs the Amendment of the Charter and the Confession of Faith to allow us to accept the completed and properly processed revision of the MB Confession of Faith at the next conventions. (This would eliminate the “Notice of Motion” requirement.)

[Editorial Note: It appears that this item was not voted on.]

2. We recommend that the composition of the Board of Trustees be reduced from nine members to five members. (This is the result of eliminating the two representatives from the Canadian Conference Board of Management and the two representatives from the U.S. Conference Board of Trustees.)

M/s/c

Rationale for the proposed amendments to the General Conference by-laws:

Article XIII: Board of Trustees

With a significantly reduced agenda and to reduce travel expenses, the Board of Trustees recommends that the size of the board be reduced from nine (9) to five (5) members by eliminating the Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, of the national boards of Trustees/Management from the General Conference Board of Trustees.

Article XV: Amendments

In anticipation of the possible dissolution of the General Conference, by-laws should be amended to allow revisions to the Charter and Confession of Faith at the same convention where they are introduced, to enable action to be taken at both the 1997 and 1999 conventions on these documents.

We also need a by-law to allow us to waive or suspend provisions that would prevent actions from being taken, and to allow us to suspend election procedures and term limits at the 1997 convention.

Current Article XIII: Board of Trustees

Section 1-Composition

- A. The Board shall consist of 9 members:
1. Three members elected by the conference: one from Canada, one from the United States, and one member elected at large
 2. Four national representatives: the chairperson and assistant chairperson or designates of the Canadian Board of Management and the chairperson and assistant chairperson or designates of the U.S. Board of Trustees
 3. General Conference treasurers from the United States and Canada (ex-officio).

Proposed Article XIII: Board of Trustees

Section 1-Composition

- A. The Board shall consist of 5 members:
1. Three members elected by the Conference: one from Canada, one from the United States, and one member elected at large
 2. The national treasurers of the United States and Canadian conferences (ex-officio).

Current Article XV: Amendment

Section 1-Charter and Confession of Faith

The Charter and Confession of Faith may be amended by the following procedure:

1. Notice of proposed amendment shall be given at the Convention of the Conference.
2. At least two months prior to the next Convention, the Secretary shall submit the proposed amendment to the churches for discussion.
3. At the next Convention, the proposed amendment shall be put to a vote and shall become effective if at least two-thirds of the delegates present vote in favor.
4. If carried, the amendment shall become effective as follows:
 - a) Amendments to the Charter shall become effective in accordance with existing laws applicable from time to time
 - b) Amendments to the Confession of Faith shall become effective immediately

Section 2: General By-law

The General By-law governing the Conference affairs may be amended at any convention, subject to the following procedure:

- 2.1 Notice of the proposed amendment shall be presented to the Executive Council as early as possible for consideration.
- 2.2 At least two months prior to the next Convention, the Secretary shall submit the proposed amendment to the churches for discussion.
- 2.3 At the next Convention, the proposed amendment shall be put to a vote and shall become effective if at least two-thirds of the delegates present vote in favor.
- 2.4 If carried, the amendment shall become effective immediately.

Proposed Article XV: Revision and Suspension

Section 1-Amendment

The Charter (Articles of Incorporation), the Confession of Faith, and the General By-law governing the Conference affairs, may be amended at any convention, subject to the following procedure:

1. Notice of the proposed amendment shall be presented to the Executive Council as early as possible for consideration.
2. At least two months prior to the Convention, the Secretary shall submit the proposed amendment to the churches for discussion.
3. At the Convention, the proposed amendment shall be put to a vote and shall become effective if at least two-thirds of the delegates present vote in favor.
4. If carried, the amendment shall become effective as follows:
 - a) Amendments to the Charter shall become effective in accordance with existing laws applicable from time to time
 - b) Amendments to the Confession of Faith and the General By-law shall become effective immediately.

Section 2-Suspension or Waiver

The General By-law governing the Conference affairs may be suspended or any provision thereof may be waived by at least a two-thirds vote of delegates present and voting at any convention.

M/s/c to amend the motion to read 4 months instead of 2 months.

M/s/c to revise the by-law to read “At the Convention, the proposed amendment shall be put to a vote and shall become effective if supported by at least two-thirds of the delegates present and voting.”

(Motion passed by a voice vote with a few opposing votes.)

1999

Dissolution of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in North America (9)

Revised Recommendations: Divestiture of the Ministries of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in North America (11-12; 45, 47; 71-72)

1. That the General Conference Executive Committee, together with the General Conference Board of Trustees, negotiate with the United States and Canadian Conferences to accomplish the transfer of all General Conference ministries and bi-national projects to the two national conferences on or before May 1, 2002.

Further Revised Recommendation #1:

1. That the General Conference divest itself of the ministries it currently holds subject to the acceptance of a transfer plan by the Canadian and U.S. Conferences, and that the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees be authorized to negotiate with the ministries and Conferences using the following schedule as a guideline:

1999-MBMSI

2000-BFL

2001-BRM

2002-MBBS

Ballots were cast on the recommendation.

M/s/c Yes=76%, No=24%.

2. That, upon transfer of the ministries to the national conference, the Board of Trustees determine the appropriate action to be taken with regard to the General Conference corporation and any related corporations, and file all legal documents necessary to accomplish such action. In so doing, the Board of Trustees shall be empowered to take action otherwise reserved to the convention by the General Conference By-laws.

Rationale: This gives the BOT the authority to file papers on behalf of the corporation, and if needed, to take action on issues related to matters overseas. It also allows the BOT to revise the by-laws if the corporation continues, as may be necessary. Currently, by-law changes require a two-thirds vote in convention.

M/s/c

3. That, after payment of all debts and liabilities, and disposable property and assets currently held by the General Conference and any property and assets designated for the benefit of the General Conference in the future, be transferred to the ministry for whose benefit they are designated. If there is no such designation, the property and assets shall be distributed as follows:

- property and assets originating in Canada to the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America;
- property and assets originating in the U.S. to the Mennonite Brethren Foundation;
- property and assets originating in any other country as determined by the Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees shall have the responsibility for making all such transfers and distributions and shall do so in a fair and equitable manner and in consultation with the national conferences and/or any affected ministry.

Rationale: This action reflects much of what has been previously done in divesting assets to the national conferences at previous conventions.

M/s/c

4. That no General Conference convention be held in 2001.

Rationale: It requires a two-thirds vote to suspend the convention.

M/s/c

5. That the terms of all members of General Conference boards and committees in effect following the 1999 convention continue until the transfer of the ministry of the board or committee to the national conferences.

Rationale: To prevent a limitation on terms in case boards need to continue.

M/s/c

1999

Articles of Incorporation (70-71)

That Article Four of the Articles of Incorporation (Charter) of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches be amended to read as follows: "The term for which this corporation is to exist is perpetual."

M/s/c

1999

Recommendation for Restructuring (102)

[Editorial Note: Exhibit C on p. 102 appears not to have been acted on.]

We recommend the striking of a task force of five people (one each appointed by national leadership boards, and three, including the chair, by the executive council):

- to facilitate a no-holds-barred review in consultation with existing ministries, all levels of conference and local churches;
- to prepare an appropriate realignment/restructuring of the management of our ministries;
- to provide opportunity for strengthening our relationships with the other national Mennonite Brethren conferences; and
- to complete their assignment within this biennium by:

1. Preparing an interim report to Council of Boards for September/October, 1998.
2. Bring a recommendation for Executive Council for March, 1999

9. Executive Committee (Conference Executive)

[Editorial Note: See also Constitution]

1999 (6)

M/s/c That all published reports and recommendations be considered moved and seconded by their respective boards.

10. Executive Council

[Editorial Note: *See also Constitution.*]

1993

Executive Secretary (10)

That Marvin Hein be asked to continue as Executive Secretary in a one-half-time assignment for the next biennium (through the 1995 General Conference convention). He remains accountable to the Executive Committee.

Rationale

The Executive Secretary is the only staff person employed by the General Conference; he serves both the Board of Faith and Life and the Executive Council in a much needed administrative function, and he is available in the wider constituency of the General Conference for church ministry.

M/s/c

1995

Executive Secretary (57)

The extension of the term of the executive secretary for two years, 1995-97.

M/s/c

Logo (9)

Acceptance of a new conference logo.

[*Editorial Note: This recommendation appears not to have been acted on.*]

1997

Service and Recognition Policy (8; 56)

We recommend that the Service and Recognition Policy be adopted.
The recommendation was **withdrawn**.

2002

Divestiture and Merger

To approve the Plan and Agreement of Merger (Item 1) and the Action of the Executive Council of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches (Item 4—attached hereto). (75)

M/s/c

[Editorial Note: For detailed documents pertaining to the divestiture of the General Conference ministries and the merger of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches and the US Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, see General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Executive Report: The Final Chapter 2002, called Like a Fire Burning, 1879-2002.]

11. Historical Commission

[Editorial Note: See General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Executive Report: The Final Chapter 2002, for Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission, Appendix F, pp. 41-42.]

1984

Governance/Relationships (109-110; 125)

A proposal for realigning the relationships between the Historical Commission of the General Conference; the Center of Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno, Calif.; and the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary.

A. Background: Existing Relationships

1. The Historical Commission is a sub-committee of the Board of Christian Literature. Its members are appointed by BCL subject to conference ratification.
2. The Center for MB Studies, Fresno, is the General Conference (GC) archival depository. It is administered by a separate board that is appointed by and is accountable to the Seminary board.

B. Recommendation: Proposed Relationships

1. It is proposed that the Historical Commission be a sub-committee of the Seminary board. Its members are to be appointed by the seminary board subject to conference ratification. Its memberships would be constituted as presently; two members from Canada; two members from the U.S.A. and one at large member.
2. The Center for MB Studies (Fresno) as the GC archival depository would be administered by the Historical Commission together with the Seminary. The commission would offer policy and development guidance. The administration of the Center would remain under the preview of the Seminary and Seminary board.

C. Rationale for the change:

1. It would more closely link and consolidate the work of the GC body concerned with historical concerns and the GC archival institution. At present the two entities have no formal linkage but are engaged in similar tasks.
2. It would recognize the substantial success of the Historical Commission in gathering the conference archival material and the need for its function to include oversight of the archival program of preservation and the continual

updating of conference materials. It would render obsolete the somewhat artificial distinction between the gathering and maintaining functions. The two are in fact linked together and a single structure would enhance the function of both.

3. The GC archival center needs to be linked to an academic institution. Centers that are not linked to academic communities become marginal to the life of a people. Since it would seem unwise to unlink the center from the seminary, it seems more advisable to link the Historical Commission and the archival center together and to make both responsible to the GC through the seminary boards.

4. Providing the Fresno center with direct linkage to the conference through the Historical Commission would parallel the structure existing in Canada between its archival center and the Canadian Conference. A modified linkage exists in the U.S.A. between the conference and its center in Hillsboro, Kans., in that there is no structural tie but there is a financial commitment of the national conference to that center.

M/s/c

That the Historical Commission, together with its budget, be transferred to the jurisdiction of the Seminary Board of the General Conference.

This recommendation will be dealt with later.

[Editorial Note: This recommendation appears not to have been dealt with separately but may have been part of the recommendation to accept the Seminary budget.]

***Wahrheitsfreund* Index (125)**

The Historical Commission was granted \$2,400 a year for three years to index the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren periodicals, *Wahrheitsfreund*.

M/s/c

1987

The Mennonite Brethren Church: A Missionary Movement (132)

Approval of the specified funding of \$20,000 for the third film in “the Mennonite Brethren Church: A Missionary Movement” series.

M/s/c

Deposit of Archival Records

We recognize that positions and service on conference boards, agencies, and committees is a trust that carries with it the obligation that the materials received or generated during the term of service be retained for posterity. The records of all conference agencies should be privately retained only so long as the individual actively serves in the conference position. When these materials become inactive, in the sense that the individual no longer serves in that position, they should be transferred to the official conference archives at the Center for MB Studies (Fresno). Work done for the conference (even though it is done on a voluntary basis and in scattered offices and homes) remains the property of the conference.

M/s/c

Cloud of Witnesses (132)

We recognize the Cloud of Witnesses as a General conference endowment program and endorse and encourage its active development.

M/s/c

1993**Congregational Heritage Preservation (52)**

That the Conference affirm the “Congregational Heritage Preservation” program and encourage congregations to work with the Commission towards the systematic preservation of their local records.

M/s/c

1995**Congregational Representatives (77)**

That the General Conference endorse the Historical Commission’s plan that congregations in North America appoint a congregational representative to work with the Commission as a liaison in the collection and preservation of congregational materials. The Commission further requests that the name of this individual be forwarded to the Historical Commission office at the Seminary by September 30, 1995.

M/s/c

12. Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary

[Editorial Note: See General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Executive Report: The Final Chapter 2002, for Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Appendix G-I, pp. 43-56.]

1978

Location (167)

That the Seminary remain at its present location in Fresno, California.

Accepted

Expansion (167-168)

That the Conference approve a campus expansion program, funded entirely by voluntary donations, consisting of the following:

Phase I: An addition to the Hiebert Library consisting of approximately 6,000 square feet, at an approximate cost of \$300,000, including furnishings. The addition to the library includes space for books, archives, and the Center for Mennonite Brethren studies plus additional study space.

Accepted

Phase II: Construction of a classroom student center wing consisting of approximately 9,000 square feet to be added to the south end of the Seminary/Conference Building at an approximate cost of \$360,000.

Accepted

Construction of each phase will begin when 75% of the estimated cost of the respective phases is available in cash or pledges. Therefore, building will progress as funds and pledges are made available.

1981

Phase II (95)

That this convention reaffirm its 1978 authorization enabling the seminary to proceed with Phase 2 of the campus development plan.

M/s/c

1984

Center for Training in Mission/Evangelism (126-28)

That the Mennonite Brethren Conference establish a Center for Training in Missions/Evangelism to be located at our Seminary.

Projections For A Center in Training In Missions/Evangelism

The Seminary Board of Directors proposes the establishment of a Center For Training In Missions/Evangelism at the Seminary. In broad stroke this Center will be a vehicle to coordinate field training in evangelism in urban and cross cultural settings, to engage in mission research and to be a resource for agencies of our Conference and for churches.

Background and Rationale:

1. Mission/Evangelism for the Next Decade(s)

From the first the Seminary has had a strong missionary commitment. The Board of Education in session in Hillsboro, Feb. 1955, implemented the establishment of the Seminary by setting out three programs of study, the first two of which were:

- (1) a two-year course with a major in Missions leading to the “Masters in Religious Education”
- (2) a three-year course with a major in Evangelism, leading to the Bachelor of Divinity.

Dr. G.W. Peters, Dr. J.B. Toews and Dr. Paul Hiebert have served as Mission Professors. Dr. Hans Kasdorf came as fulltime Mission Professor in 1978 and was soon joined by Dr. H.J. Schmidt.

The proposed Center could assist in mobilizing a mission commitment in our brotherhood similar to the way in which the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies has given a fresh and highly beneficial historical consciousness.

2. The Bible and Mission at the Seminary

A scriptural mandate for the church to engage in mission is non-negotiable. Mission/evangelism pulsates through the curriculum now. However, special resourcing through the Center would further

stimulate mission studies. The Center could also be a “laboratory” for channeling mission efforts in conjunction with academic study.

3. Mission in Constituency and the Seminary

A random questionnaire submitted to approximately 30 churches with almost 200 responses asked for reaction to the comment, “The Seminary should lay greater stress on mission.” The vast majority of respondents agree. However, only 47% of those aged 20-29 agree. The concern for mission must receive greater visibility. A Center would also serve helpfully as a resource for the churches.

4. Mission/Evangelism and the Conference Agencies

For more than two years the Seminary Board has weighed the advisability of establishing such a Center. In the winter of 1983 the Seminary convened a consultation of denominational leaders and representatives from the Board of Missions/Services and Boards of Evangelism in the United States and Canada. The board of Missions/Services at its April 1984 meeting fully endorsed the current recommendation.

The Focus of the Center

The Center For Training in Missions/Evangelism would have the following assignment:

1. Training in Mission through education/experience. The Center would coordinate “field” experiences for mission/church planting trainees. Such experience would take place in urban and cross-cultural settings. The Seminary is not a mission agency but a Center would coordinate academic and field education. For years BOMAS and the Seminary have offered a Church Mission Institute.

2. Research. M.B. approaches to missions/evangelism in urban settings and elsewhere could be vastly improved by some analysis of response patterns and strategies. Moreover sophisticated research by others needs to be “digested” and made available to Boards who work with policies and personnel.

3. Motivation and Inspiration. The missionary vision needs to be spelled out and the encouragement of pastors and leaders needs to be ongoing. Through workshops and conferences, lectureships and demonstrations, the mission interest could be fostered. The Center would network with similar centers elsewhere in the conference.

4. Consultation. The Center would serve with consulting teams to assist churches in evangelism and church planting, and work with BOMAS in orienting and updating missionaries, both new and those on leave.

Organization of the Center

1. The Center would be organized as an incorporated entity at the Seminary, governed by an advisory group of six-members to be appointed by Seminary Board of Directors.
2. The Center would be administered by a Director appointed by the Seminary Board of Directors on recommendation from the Center advisory group.
3. The Director, with faculty status, would be engaged for the first year(s) on a one-third load. Space for the Director and/or space for materials would be provided by the Seminary.
4. The funding for the start of the Center would be modest - \$5,000.00 has been allocated provisionally in the 1984-85 budget. Subsequent funding in the next year or two is envisioned as \$15,000.00

Recommendation

Whereas, in addition to the reasons cited above as rationale, the Mennonite Brethren Conference is observing its centennial in missions, and

Whereas, the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary now in its 30th year wishes to contribute significantly to the ongoing impetus of reaching men and women for Jesus Christ,

Be it resolved that the Mennonite Brethren Conference convening at Reedley, California establish a Center For Training In Missions/Evangelism to be located at the Seminary in Fresno and charged with the responsibilities as outlined above.

M/s/c.

1987

Mission Statement (142)

That the Mission Statement of the Seminary receive affirmation.

M/s/c

[Editorial Note: For Mission Statement see pp. 140-142 in 1987 Yearbook.]

Student Aid Endowment (143)

That a Student Aid Endowment of \$5,000,000 be established for the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. The earnings of the endowment will be designated as aid for students to assist with educational costs.

M/s/c

1993

Subsidy (51-52)

That subject to the approval of the Conference Executive boards by the National Conferences, each National Conference adjust its Seminary subsidy contribution by \$10,000 each year (Canada up, US down) until it reaches parity per member distribution, with the provision that neither Conference contribution shall exceed 60%.

M/s/c

That the Subsidy Task Force proposal be ratified, and become effective in 1993-94.

M/s/c

1995

New Seminary subsidy arrangement (9; 78)

The following proposals for revised funding are being suggested:

- a. That we affirm continued support of the Canadian and US conferences for a unified seminary.
- b. That the local guarantee subsidy provided by the national conferences be increased to \$635,000 for fiscal year 1995-1996 and be fixed at that amount for subsequent years.
- c. That we continue to work toward a 60/40 ration between Canadian/US subsidy support.
- d. That an exchange rate of a minimum of \$.82 be accepted for Canadian funds and phased in over a three-year period beginning fiscal year 1996-1997.
- e. That beginning in fiscal year 1996-1997, the Canadian Conference fund one-half of a full-time seminary fund-raiser position, similar to the position already established in the United States, to promote the seminary commitment in Canada and to raise funds for the seminary programs.

f. That this agreement shall be subject to review in or after FY 2000-2001, such review being called by the General Conference executive or upon notification of either partner of this agreement.

M/s/c with several dissenting votes.

Board Membership (10; 77)

That the number of directors on the Board of the MB Biblical Seminary be increased by the appointment of four additional members.

M/s/c There were several dissenting votes.

1999

Seminary Direction (21-22)

We recommend that the General Conference affirm the current direction being pursued by MBBS—“one seminary with three primary locations” plus extension via Internet and regional “suit-cased” courses taught by MBBS faculty. We also recommend that the Canadian and United States Conferences at their conventions in 2000 discuss, discern and affirm some model of ongoing bi-national theological training beyond 2002.

[Editorial Note: This Recommendation appears not to have been acted on.]

13. Other

- **Convention Scheduling**

1993 (8)

That the convention of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren churches be held every two years.

Rationale: The proposal to move the General Conference convention cycle from a three-year to a two-year format was initiated within the Canadian Conference in order to strengthen and expedite the programs and work of the General Conference. Accelerating response time to major issues (e.g., Confession of faith, By-laws, etc.) is perceived as important in the context of our new structure and an expanding Conference. The proposal has been positively endorsed by both national conferences. It now must be ratified by the churches in convention at the General Conference.

M/s/c

1999 (72)

M/s/c by a strong show of hands that the two national Executive Committees be strongly encouraged to plan periodic conventions for purposes such as celebration, fellowship, Bible study, or business, etc.

- **Mennonite World Conference**

1978

General Council Members

That our present members Marvin Hein, J. A. Toews and Edmund Janzen continue to serve during the next interim.

Carried

14. Convention Resolutions

1978 (203-205)

1. Introduction and recognition of host churches

One hundred years ago a sincere yet small group of Mennonite Brethren Christians from several states came together for the first time in North America to share their common bond in Christ's mission as their mission in a newly emerging brotherhood in America.

Now, one century later, we, as Mennonite Brethren have again gathered to consider the meaning of making Christ's mission our mission for our generation during the 54th Conference on M.B. Churches in North America.

Our assembling together for meaningful fellowship, inspirational encouragement and brotherhood discernment has been facilitated by the generous and genuine hospitality of the Buhler, Kansas congregation, one of our historic Mennonite Brethren Churches, which was organized in 1878, 100 years ago this year.

In order to meet in conjunction with the Mennonite World Conference in Wichita, Kansas last week, the Buhler congregation courageously and graciously invited us to their community on short notice. Their spirit of sharing and warmth has been most gracious and accommodating as they have hosted our convention.

We hereby resolve to express our heartfelt appreciation to the Buhler congregation, their pastoral leadership and the neighboring congregations who so adequately and faithfully hosted our 54th Conference of the M.B. Churches in North America.

2. Leadership in the conference:

The 54th Convention of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church meeting in Buhler, Kansas, was blessed of God in the provision of spiritual leadership. Their leadership resulted in both direction and motion. The direction in which they have pointed is that Christ's mission is indeed our mission. The resolution which they brought forward was intended to produce the motion.

Be it resolved that we thank God for His gifts of leadership to our conference. Be it also resolved that we express our thanks to the members of the conference executive, the members of the conference Boards and Committees that have served us. We echo the thought expressed in Romans 1:8 "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world."

3. Messages by the Brethren J.A. Toews, Elmer Martens, Waldo Hiebert, Hugo Jantz and others.

The clear, forceful keynote address by our Brother moderator and the instructive and practical devotional messages given by Brother Elmer Martens served very effectively to focus our attention on the great theme of the conference “Christ’s Mission—Our Mission” as well as the devotional message Sunday. Jesus Christ was lifted up as we worshipped Him and heard Him give us direction for our conference efforts and our individual lives.

Be it therefore resolved that we express our deep gratitude and appreciation to our brothers who served so well with their ministry.

4. Christ’s Mission—Our Mission

We are indeed privileged to be identified and commissioned as among “The Sent-Ones of Christ.” We are humbly grateful for the evident blessing of varied ministries, both in North America and world-wide.

We have been enriched by the presence of fraternal visitors from abroad and have been encouraged by their testimonial report and challenge.

We have been exhorted to be Christ’s Kind of Sent-Ones and to be responsive to His Model of servanthood.

Therefore, be it resolved that we re-affirm our commitment to the mandate of Christ’s mission being our mission.

We re-dedicate ourselves to carrying out that mandate through the multiple ministries of our brotherhood, even as expressed by the actions of this Convention. We recognize anew our despondence upon the grace of God and the enabling of His Spirit for the fulfilling of our assignment.

M/s/c

1981 (162)

Celebrating the call of God has been an enriching experience for the delegates and guests of the 55th Convention of the Mennonite Brethren Churches. We are grateful to God and the many people He has used to help us celebrate. Be it resolved that we commit ourselves to obedience to the call of God through His Word as it comes to us as various times and through different means.

Our response to the call of God has been evidenced in the many ministries the Lord has entrusted to us. We have been greatly encouraged by the good reports presented by the Boards of our conference.

We acknowledge with praise and gratitude what God has done through faithful brothers and sisters as they have carried out the mandate of their respective boards.

Be it resolved that we dedicate ourselves anew to God for service and to faithful intercession for those whom we have entrusted with the responsibilities of our conference ministries.

We celebrate the call of God in our lives through the love and unity that have been evident among us. We have again seen the brotherhood at work. The Lord has given us a spirit of openness and liberty. We have spoken the truth in love. We have had the freedom to question and to reject what we felt was not right. We have been able to disagree in love.

Be it resolved therefore, that we stand united on the decisions that we have made; that we inform our brothers and sisters in our churches of these decisions, and that we commit ourselves together with them to abide by these decisions and initiate change if needed through the appropriate channels.

The Ontario Conference and the host churches have helped us in our celebration by their love and generous hospitality. We recognize that hosting a convention such as this is no small task. Our hosts have done an excellent job. They have made our stay and our work here enjoyable. We thank God for the many people who gave of themselves and served us so faithfully.

Be it resolved that we thank our brothers and sisters and that we wish them God's blessing in their daily walk with God and in their future ministry.

Be it resolved that we submit ourselves to pray for one another and to pray for revival in our brotherhood.

M/s/c

1984 (147-48)

Today we humbly stand before our God and acknowledge His faithfulness. We came together to celebrate one hundred years of Mennonite Brethren missions. That we have done with grateful hearts and voice to God who made it all possible. We will not forget the powerful and moving experience of the procession of those who served in the mission we came to celebrate.

Today we stand together resolved to continue in the mission and to cause that procession of people to continue to grow until the whole world has heard the gospel of peace.

We came to celebrate because the gospel is growing and this has been evidenced through the many ministries the Lord has entrusted to us. We have been encouraged by the good reports presented by the Boards of our conference. We acknowledge with gratitude what the Lord has accomplished through faithful brothers and sisters as they served in their assignments.

Through our experiences of celebration we have dedicated ourselves anew to our Lord and to the mission He has called us to carry out. We resolve

to be faithful, both in service ourselves and in intercession for those whom we have asked to give leadership in conference ministries.

Our time of celebration has indeed been an expression of love and unity that God by His Spirit has given to us. The brotherhood has been at work. Even in diversity we have expressed unity and in disagreement, love. We resolve therefore, to grow in love and unity and stand united in the decisions we have made.

Our hosts, the people of the Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church have helped us greatly in making our time of celebration possible. We acknowledge their love, hospitality and generous spirit. We thank God for people whose hearts are open to the needs and concerns of others. God will not forget their labor of love. We leave here enriched by the beauty of their lives and the faithfulness of their service.

In our celebration we have come to understand afresh that to be honored by the Lord and appointed by Him is indeed no small thing.

We resolve, therefore, to appropriate the grace of God and the lessons taught by god's servants at this convocation and dedicate ourselves to walk with our god, to serve Him faithfully, to pray for one another, to pray for renewal, and to carry out the gospel known everywhere until the hope of Christ's coming is fulfilled.

On your behalf I would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to our moderator Brother Henry H. Dick.

1987 (144)

Our conference focused on glory to Christ in the church. Let us thank God for the gifted persons He sent among us. They have drawn our hearts toward repentance, called us to commitment and change, and focused our worship.

Let us thank God for the progression, even in our worship and our deliberations. The full range of our Christian commitment was covered in various ways through the flow of the conference. We moved from brokenness to energy, to a commitment to the person of Christ. We were called to remove the barriers that separate us from each other. In the midst of a strong call to integrity and faithfulness, we listened to each other. While we expressed sharp disagreements, pastoral concern emerged.

Let us pray and diligently work to have the peace-making which we confess to the world also characterize our walk with each other. May the God of peace who calls us into one body also sanctify our work with each other in that body.

We praise God for leaders who call us to the vision of evangelism, church planting, missionary expansion and the calling out of workers. Let us pray and sacrifice to demonstrate our response to that call.

Let us also thank God for diligent workers and pleasant accommodations. Our task was helped enormously by our host churches and the people of this area.

M/s/c

1990 (127-28)

From the 58th General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches the following might be an expression of our responsibility as Christian in this world of unrest.

1. Be it resolved that we encourage and stimulate our churches to continue to call people from all people groups to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. We rejoice in the presence of several delegates at this conference from our international community of Mennonite Brethren.

2. Be it resolved that we stimulate each other to live a Christ-like lifestyle in a world filled with violence, abuse and strife. This lifestyle reflects the dramatic change that God has brought to each of us through His grace, mercy and peace.

3. Be it resolved that we commit ourselves in unity to pray for each other, that we may be filled with the Spirit of God's power to carry out the Biblical agenda for the church as articulated in the Vision Statement.

4. We acknowledge that God hears and responds to the prayers of his faithful people. Therefore, be it resolved that we commit ourselves to prayer for the leaders of our nations as they seek solutions to the problems of a complex world. Further, be it resolved that our conference leaders communicate this commitment to the appropriate government officials of our respective nations.

5. Be it resolved that we affirm the leadership of our conference in their stance of flexibility, sensitivity, and willingness to model a spirit of submissiveness as displayed in our business proceedings. Be it further resolved to call each of us to follow Jesus in carrying (transmitting) such a spirit of mutual submission to our congregations.

6. Be it resolved that we recognize and express appreciation to those who have served faithfully and completed their leadership roles in our General Conference. These individuals are Herb Brandt (24 years), Waldo Hiebert (36 years), David Ewert (21 years), and Clarence Hiebert (30 years). They represent a combined ministry of 111 years of service. We affirm with the

Board of Trustees their appreciation for the more than 10 years of dedicated service of Marvin Reimer. We pray God's continued blessing in their lives.

7. We the delegates of the 58th Convention of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches thank the three churches of the Hillsboro area—Hillsboro., Parkview, and Ebenfeld Church, and Tabor College—who have ably and graciously hosted the delegates and guests to the convention.

We thank the presenters of messages, Herb Brandt, Lynn Jost, Edmund Janzen, Gerry Ediger, Ray Brystrom and those who served in area M.B. churches on Sunday morning, for the challenges they have given us to be submissive, to be citizens of the Kingdom, to be united in our common work, and to be courageous in the task. We commit ourselves to these challenges in our Christian walk and ministry in the coming triennium.

M/s/c to receive the report with suggestions by delegates regarding recognitions of fraternal guests and speakers to be noted.

1993 (128-29)

1. We wish to thank the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba and its Moderator Jascha Boge for being our gracious hosts. Further, we express our appreciation to Harry Olfert and the various commissions of the local Conference Steering committee for their excellent work in making our convention function so very well. We commend them for their hard work, their unceasing care for all of our needs, and their warm spirit of hospitality. To Pastor Ernest Baumgartner (and staff) of the Immanuel Pentecostal Church, we say a special word of thanks for the use of their marvelous facilities.

2. During the past triennium our General Conference has benefited from the significant ministry of a goodly number of our leaders; among them are the outgoing members of our Conference Boards, to whom we express appreciation for their faithful service. Also, we express gratitude to Larry Martens and John E. Toews for their contribution in Seminary leadership, to Victor Adrian for Missions and Services program directions, and to J.B. Toews for authoring an historical analysis of the faith-life of the Mennonite Brethren from 1860 to 1990.

3. We express our love and care to Mrs. Hilda Wiens of Regina, Saskatchewan as she adjusts to the untimely loss of her husband, Ted, who had been nominated as a member of the Seminary Board.

4. We request those international leaders/moderators present at this convention to convey our sincere Christian greetings to their respective

national conferences, assuring them that they, indeed, are a part of our world family.

5. We express our gratefulness to those who arranged and implemented the worship services that have moved us deeply. For those who carefully planned our worship experiences, for those who so capably and sensitively led us in music and scripture, and for those who ministered the Word—we are indeed thankful.

6. We encourage our delegates and guests to return to their home congregations committed to keeping a strong flame burning. We encourage local leaders to keep congregations aware of our Vision Statement, as summarized in the brochure included in the conference packet.

7. With respect to Women in Leadership, we reaffirm our vital interest, concern and support of women in ministry and leadership. We recognize our diversity in views, all generally based on our various interpretations of Scripture, and we affirm the continued and appreciated ministry of women in our congregations and conferences.

1995 (88-89)

1. We wish to thank our hosts, MB Biblical Seminary, Fresno Pacific College, and the Fresno area churches, for the efficient manner in which they have arranged for this convention. We are grateful for the work of the Steering Committee as well as the work of those who provided for child care and the activities program for children and youth.

2. We join with the Seminary in celebrating forty years of God's faithfulness in preparing men and women for ministry. We are grateful to God and to Elmer Martens, John E. Toews, Howard Loewen, and Hans Kasdorf for their many faithful years of seminary administration and teaching. We wish them well in their new assignments.

3. We are thankful to God and deeply appreciative of the many years of General Conference leadership by Edmund Janzen, Harry Heidebrecht, and John E. Toews. They have served faithfully and well in the General Conference for a combined total of over fifty years.

4. We thank all those who led us in worship and the five speakers who so ably led us through the theme, "A Firm Foundation for a Changing Future" (1 Cor. 3:11). We encourage our delegates and guests to return to their home congregations fully committed to our unique and universal Lord and to the task of sharing his unchanging love in a changing world.

5. We affirm the increasing interest in global outlook and have appreciated the presence of international guests with us. We encourage the Executive Council to continue this focus in future conventions.

6. We wish to recognize the strength and commitment both of experienced and emerging leaders of the Mennonite Brethren Churches. We encourage both younger and older leaders to value each other's strengths, counsel with one another regarding the future of the denomination, and continue to build only on the foundation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

M/s/c

1997 (64-65)

1. We thank the Mennonite Brethren Churches of Ontario for being our hosts. We thank especially the Waterloo, Glencairn and Kitchener MB Churches, Peter Durksen and the organizational committees for their excellent work in making our convention function well. They have worked hard and they have shown us hospitality. Thank you to Waterloo MB Church for the use of their facilities.

2. We thank our Conference Executive, Ed Boschman, Larry Martens, and Valerie Rempel and Executive Secretary, Marvin Hein, for their leadership during our convention.

3. We are thankful for those international leaders and moderators present at this convention and request that they convey our sincere Christian greetings to their respective national conferences.

4. We thank Ramsay Unruh and the worship team for the powerful way in which they have led us in worship during the convention.

5. We thank those who ministered the Word to us during the convention on the theme "Straight Paths for a Twisting World." Their efforts have led us toward renewal by identifying the boulders hindering our way and calling us to repentance and a passionate love for God and for all our neighbors.

6. We encourage our delegates and guests to return to their home congregations committed to pray for our conference leaders and for the new Task Force on restructuring; and committed to encourage participation from our local churches as input is sought by the Task Force.

7. We thank our Conference Boards for their inspiring and informative presentations at the convention, and for their willingness to serve in their vital roles as we fulfill the Great Commission together:

- the Seminary board for their continued commitment to produce passionate leaders who are biblically and theologically trained.

- the Board of Faith and Life for their diligence in giving spiritual leadership and direction to confessional issues.

-the Board of Resource Ministries for producing top quality materials in a variety of areas for use within our conference.

-the Board of Missions/Services for inspiring our participation as partners in global missions.

-the Board of Trustees for wisely and effectively managing the financial matters of the conference.

8. We affirm the growing significance of the International Committee of Mennonite Brethren. We give thanks for the strong spirit of cooperation present during this convention.

9. We pray that in the truest sense of peacemaking, Waterloo '97 be known as the place where the forces of change and the forces of continuity, unlike Napoleon and Wellington, left arm in arm committed to building a new and unifying vision.

M/s/c

M/s/c to include the names of the speakers, Elmer Martens and Ed Boschman, in the resolution.

1999 (75-76)

1. We thank the First Mennonite Brethren Church of Wichita for hosting the convention and their gracious hospitality. Specifically we thank the local committee led by Ernie Friesen, the individuals who helped with the numerous tasks. The kitchen staff not only served delicious meals and snacks but also did so with smiles and efficiency.

2. We thank the Executive, including Ed Boschman, Herb Kopp, Valerie Rempel, and Marvin Hein for the tireless and committed leadership during the past several years and during this convention. They led a convention which faced some difficult questions, but they allowed delegates to speak freely and showed an openness to the Spirit's guidance.

3. We thank those who ministered the word to us during the convention, particularly Ed Boschman and Brian Stiller, as well as those who led in worship and in prayer.

4. We thank Lorlie Barkman for the beautiful symbol which he created to highlight the theme of this Conference: "A Distinct Presence: The Aroma of Christ."

5. We thank the many international guests who participated in the sessions with us and request them to bring warm Christian greetings back to their home congregations and conferences.

6. We thank the various Boards and staff for their inspiring and informative reports about the work that is being carried on in North America and beyond.

-the Board of Faith and Life for the beautiful words of our new Confession of Faith and for engaging us in the process of revisions so that we all feel that we have contributed and can take ownership of this instrument of confession and witness.

-the Board of Resource Ministries for continuing to call our gifted writers and for providing “resources like no other” to individuals and churches of our constituency.

-to our Board of Trustees for their faithful stewardship of our financial and material resources and for their careful guidance during the process of transition to help us avoid the many pitfalls which might otherwise have overcome us.

-Mennonite Brethren Missions Services International for the faithful witness they have carried out on our behalf for over a century in various countries around the world and for new partnerships which they are establishing with brothers and sisters around the world. We also thank Elizabeth Thiessen for 41 years of faithful service in Columbia.

-the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary for the sensitivity to new realities in our conference and for exploring and implementing new means of delivering theological and practical training to leaders in our conference.

-to the Historical Commission for new and creative efforts to preserve and tell the story particularly through publications such as the new “Profiles” series and the “Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought.”

7. We encourage the delegates to return with renewed vision and commitment to their home congregations, and to report and encourage other members to support the many worthwhile ministries of our denomination.

8. We express our gratitude to God for his faithful guidance of our General Conference during the past century and pray for renewal and faithfulness as we begin to develop new forms for carrying out the ministries he has entrusted to us.

M/s/c

IV. Study Conference Papers, 1956-2003

1. List of Study Conferences and Symposia

A. Board of Reference and Counsel / Faith and Life

	Place	Date
i. Introductory Study Conference	Winnipeg	December 12-15, 1956
ii. Study Conference	Denver	July 12-16, 1958
iii. Study Conference	Herbert	July 10-13, 1959
iv. Issues Concerning the Church and Home	Reedley	November 23-24, 1967
v. Evangelism and Discipleship	Winnipeg	May 7-9, 1968
vi. Ministry, Men and Media	Buhler	March 5-6, 1970
vii. Issues Affecting the Life of the Local Church	Denver	August 15-17, 1971
viii. Church, the Word, and the World	Clearbrook, BC	May 10-11, 1974
ix. Hermeneutics	Fresno, CA	Dec. 16-18, 1976
x. Eschatology	Fresno, CA	January 25-27, 1978
xi. Mennonite Brethren Church Membership Profile	Fresno, CA	January 22-23, 1984
xii. MB Church as a Covenant Community	Fresno	October 15-17, 1986

- xiii. Peace and Church Membership
Calgary April 27-29, 1988
- xiv. The Nature and Ministry
of the Church Normal, Ill. August 2-4, 1989
- xv. Church Growth Consultation
Richmond, BC April 2-4, 1991
- xvi. Vision 1992: A Biblical Church
Agreeing Together Denver, CO April 1-4, 1992
- xvii. Ordaining, Using and Misusing
Authority in the Church Denver April 7-9, 1994
- xviii. Spiritual Warfare Calgary October 25-27, 2001

B. Missions and Services

- i. World Mennonite Brethren
Mission Consultation
Curitiba, Brazil February 17-21, 1988

C. Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno

- i. Symposium on Mennonite
Brethren History Fresno May 1-3, 1975
- ii. P. M. Friesen Symposium
Fresno May 4-6, 1978
- iii. Symposium on Faith
and Ethnicity Fresno November 19-21, 1987
- iv. North American Mennonite Brethren
at Mid-Century (1940-1960)
Fresno February 4-6, 1993

D. United States Conference: Board of Reference and Counsel

i. Authority and Interpretation of Scripture and
Creation and the Scriptures
Hillsboro November 22-24, 1966

ii. Exploratory Peace Study
Hillsboro March 19-20, 1980

E. Canadian Conference: Committee of Reference and Counsel

i. Faith and Ethics Winnipeg February 15-16, 1967

ii. Christology: Doctrinal Faithfulness in an
Age of Theological
Accommodation
Camp Arnes, Manitoba February 2-3, 1991

iii. Rite and Pilgrimage: A Study Conference
on Baptism and Church Membership
Winnipeg May 22-24, 2003

F. Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg

i. Influences Upon Mennonite Brethren
Theology Winnipeg November 21-22, 1980

ii. Inter-Mennonite Relations:
MBs and GCs in Canada
Winnipeg November 4-5, 1983

iii. Dynamics of Faith and Culture
in Mennonite Brethren
Winnipeg November 14-15, 1986

2. Papers Presented

A. Board of Reference and Counsel, Board of Faith and Life

i. Introductory Study Conference: Doctrinal Issues

Winnipeg, Manitoba
December 12-15, 1956

The Scriptural Concept of the Church and its Implications for the Organizational and Structural Functions for the Mennonite Brethren Church	Jacob H. Quiring
The Scriptural Doctrine o Sanctification	Waldo Wiebe
The Preservation of the Believer	David Ewert
The Scriptural Doctrine of the Separated Life	Lando Hiebert
The Gifts of the Holy Spirit To The Believers	Jacob J. Toews
Die Grundzüge der Theologie der Väter der M.B. Gemeinde	Abram H. Unruh
Grundzüge im Charakter der Glaubensstellung Unserer Väeter	Benjamin B. Janz
Let this Mind	Peter R. Lange
Baptism of the Holy Spirit and The Spirit-Filled Life	George W. Peters
<i>Note: Above paper not listed in Christian Leader report</i>	
The Scriptural Concept of the Church Report No. 1—Findings Committee	Waldo Hiebert, B.J. Braun, and John H. Epp

ii. Doctrinal Issues

Denver, Colorado,
July 12-16, 1958

The Experience of Salvation as Viewed from the Standpoint of Conversion and Regeneration	D. Edmond Hiebert
The Biblical Teaching on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage	John B. Toews
The Biblical Concept of the Nature of the Church	Waldo Hiebert
The Scriptural Teaching on Organization and Government of the Local Church	B. J. Braun
The Scriptural Pattern of the Diaconate	Reuben M. Baerg
Our General Concept of Biblical Eschatology	Gerhard D. Huebert

iii. General Study Conference
Herbert, Saskatchewan
July 10-13, 1959

Christian Ideals in Marriage and Sex	Waldo D. Hiebert
A Biblical Study on the Subject Of Feet-Washing	Clarence Hiebert
The Biblical Teaching on Man	David B. Wiens
Church and State in the New Testament	Frank C. Peters
The Christian and Race Relations	Wesley Priebe
The Inspiration of the Scriptures	Arthur G. Willems
Christian Social Ethics from the Biblical Standpoint	A.E. Janzen
A Model Constitution for an M.B. Church	B.J. Braun

iv. Issues Concerning Church and Home

Reedley, California

November 23-24, 1967

Consensus and Change in our
Brotherhood

Frank C. Peters

The Church, Its Regulations,
and the Individual Member

Marvin Hein

Dealing Redemptively with the
Divorced and Remarried

Jacob Quiring

Christian Responsibility in
Relation to Planned Parenthood

Abe B. Voth, M.D.

v. Conference on Evangelism and Discipleship

Winnipeg, Manitoba
May 7-9, 1968

Principles of Discipleship for Mennonite Brethren Churches (plus published version)	Arno Wiebe
Doctrinal Priorities for Evangelism	Reuben M. Baerg
Functional Fellowship for Evangelism	Orlando Wiebe
Remarriage of Divorced in Light of Scripture (plus published version)	George W. Peters
The Christian and Labor Unions (plus published version)	John H. Redekop
Strategy of Outreach (Questionnaires & Report of the Findings Committee Included)	Jacob J. Toews

vi. The Ministry, Men and Media

Buhler, Kansas
March 5-6, 1970

The Commissioning of Servants
in the Church (plus published version)

Orlando H, Wiebe

Questionnaire on Ordination

Recruitment of Servants in the
Church (plus published version)

Waldo Hiebert

Summary of Findings of
Recruitment of Servants in the
Church

The Place of Preaching in the
Contemporary Church
(plus published version)

John Regehr

Questionnaire for "The Place of Preaching
in the Contemporary Church"

The Ghetto, The Launch Pad, The
Desert (plus published version)

Rudy Wiebe

Questionnaire for "The Ghetto,
The Launch Pad, The Desert"

"Statements" of the
four basic Study Papers

vii. Issues Affecting the Life of the Local Church

Denver, Colorado
August 15-17, 1971

An Approach to the Current Charismatic Movement (plus published version)	David Ewert
A Christian Perspective on Abortion (plus published version)	Vern Ratzlaff
The Whole Gospel to the Whole Man	Victor Adrian
Church Membership: Its Essence and Necessity	Marvin Hein
Two Responses to Paper "An Approach to the Current Charismatic Movement"	?
Comments and Reactions to the Paper "A Christian Perspective on Abortion"	Walter Regehr
Response to "The Whole Gospel to the Whole Man"	Henry H. Voth
"Church Membership: It's Essence and Necessity" (Monday evening discussion)	

viii. Church, the Word, and the World

Clearbrook, British Columbia

May 10-11, 1974

The Place of Feeling in Christian Experience	Waldo Hiebert
The Use of the Old Testament in the Church	Elmer Martens
The Christian and his Material Possessions	Leonard B. Siemens
The Church and the Urban Frontier	Edmund Janzen

ix. Hermeneutics

Fresno, California
December 16-18 1976

Introductory Message	John A. Toews
Creation: A Hermeneutical Case Study in Genesis 1:1-2:3	Allen Guenther
Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy	Erwin Penner
Response	Delbert Wiens
What are the Gospels?	Devon H. Wiens
The Problem of Old Ethics	Elmer A. Martens
The Pauline View of Women	Howard Loewen

x. Eschatology Conference

Fresno, California

January 25-27, 1978

The Last Days	David Ewert
The Tribulation of the Church	John E. Toews
The Place of Israel	Victor Adrian
Millennialism and the Mennonite Brethren Church	Abe Dueck
The People of God in the Light of the Parousia	John A. Toews
Concluding Statements	

xi. Mennonite Brethren Church Membership Profile, 1972-1982

Fresno, California

July 11-13, 1985

Overview of the Study

Church Membership Survey Findings

Mennonite Brethren and North American Society

Perspectives and Interpretations:

Cultural Change	Delbert Wiens
Economics: Faith and Practice	Abe Dueck
The Influence of Rising Educational Levels	John H. Redekop
Theological Reflections	John E. Toews
Faith and Practice in Congregational Life	Roland Reimer
Discipleship and Evangelism	Isaac Block

Conclusions and Implications

Note: The above papers were published in *Direction* 14, 2 (Fall, 1985). Additional materials related to the study are at the Center for MB Studies in Fresno and the Centre for MB Studies in Winnipeg.

xii. Mennonite Brethren Church as a Covenant Community

Fresno, California

October 15-17, 1986

A Converted and Baptized People	Raymond O. Bystrom
Response to: A Converted and Baptized People	Ed Boschman
Response to: A Converted and Baptized People	Herbert Neufeld
The Mennonite Brethren as a Confessing Church	Howard J. Loewen
Response to: The Mennonite Brethren as a Confessing Church	Robert Friesen
Response to: The Mennonite Brethren as a Confessing Church	Victor Neufeld
The Mennonite Brethren Church: A Covenanting People	Edmund Janzen
Response to: The Mennonite Brethren Church: A Covenanting Community	Katie Funk Wiebe
Response to: The Brethren Church: A Covenanting People	John Vooy
The Leading Ministry in a Covenant Brotherhood Community	Gerry Ediger
Response to: The Leading Ministry in a Covenant Brotherhood Community	Vern Heidebrecht
Response to: The Leading Ministry in a Covenant Brotherhood Community	Abram G. Konrad
A Serving People	Herb Kopp
Response to: A Serving People	Ron Penner

Response to: A Caring People
Findings Reports

Frances F. Hiebert

xiii. Peace and Church Membership

Calgary, Alberta

April 27-29, 1988

Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Peace

Abe Dueck

Church Membership Issues

Marvin Hein

Peacemaking and the Church

Larry Martens

Findings Committee Report

xiv. The Nature and Ministry of the Church

Normal, Illinois

August 2-4, 1989

The Lord's Supper and the Church	Erwin Penner
The Nature of the Church	John E. Toews
The Ministry of Women: A Proposal for MBs	Timothy Geddert
Women's Role in Ministry in the Church	Ed Boschman
Findings Committee Report	Harry Heidebrecht, Gerry Ediger

xv. Church Growth Consultation
Richmond, British Columbia
April 2-4, 1991

Sponsored by Board of Faith and Life, the Center for Training in Mission/Evangelism, Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services, and the US and Canadian Boards of Evangelism

Planting Churches in North America Today	Paul Hiebert
Response	Jim Holm
Response	James N. Pankratz
Biblical Perspectives of Church which Mennonite Brethren Should Embrace	Herb Kopp
Response	Chuck Buller
Response	Vern Heidebrecht
Church Growth: Leadership Theology and M. B. Theology	James Nikkel
Response	Isaac Block
Response	John E. Toews
The Church Growth Theory and Mennonite Brethren Polity	John B. Toews
Response	Marvin Hein
Response	Herb Neufeld
Diverse Models/Strategies of Church Planting/ Growth Among Mennonite Brethren	Henry Schmidt
Response	Juan Martinez

Response

Dale Warkentin

Findings Report: *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, May 3, 1991, pp. 18-19

xvi. Vision 1992: A Biblical Church Agreeing Together

Denver, CO
April 1-4, 1992

The Nature of the Church—Implications for
Mennonite Brethren Congregations in the 90s
*Note: The above paper was withdrawn
and not presented (MB Herald, May 1, 1992, p. 15)*

Edmund Janzen

Reclaiming the Solitary Christian

Ron Toews

The Lord's Supper

Wally Unger

xvii. Ordaining, Using and Misusing Authority in the Church

Denver, CO

April 7-9, 1994

Ordination: A Discussion Primer

Tim Geddert

Note: The above was the only formal paper. Other materials available.

xviii. Spiritual Warfare

Dalhousie Community Church
Calgary, Alberta
October 25-27, 2001

The Third Wave Worldview: Biblical or Pagan?	Pierre Gilbert
Equipping Principles: for Spiritual Warfare	Randy Friesen
Mission and Power Encounter	Nzash Lumeya
Spiritual Warfare from the Perspective of Mental health	John Toews M.D.

B. Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services

i. World Mennonite Brethren Mission Consultation

Curitiba, Brazil
February 17-21, 1988

Some Strategy Issues in Mennonite Brethren Mission	Victor Adrian
Response to V. Adrian's Paper, "Some Strategy..."	Erwin H. Rempel
World Trends and Their Implications for Mennonite Brethren Missions	Paul G. Hiebert
Response to Paul Hiebert's	Marlin E. Miller
Mission Future: Issues We Face	Hans Kasdorf
Comments on Hans Kasdorf's Paper: Mission Future....	Melvin J. Loewen
Strategies For Cross-Cultural Mission: Past/Present and Future	Jacob A. Loewen
Response to Jacob Loewen's "Three Models/Strategies for Cross-cultural Mission"	Peter M. Hamm
Effective Church Growth Strategies	Takoa Nakamura
Effective Church Growth Strategies: The Case of Zaire	Shindany A. Fumu
The Role of Baptism and Church Membership in the M.B.	Dietrich Reimer

Churches Around the World	
The Role of Baptism and Church Membership in the M.B. Churches Around the World	Kilabi Bululu
What Can We Learn From Other Mission Strategies	Peter M. Hamm
Mennonite Brethren Distinctives	John B. Toews
Mennonite Brethren Distinctives	John J. Klassen
Being Peacemakers in the World of Unrest	Henry J. Schmidt
Being Peacemakers in the World of Unrest	Kusangila Kitondo
A Prioridade Da Evangelizacao Na Missao Da Igreja	Albert Enns
Evangelismo Como Missao Prioritaria Da Igreja	Alvo Waldow
Principles of Internationalization in the Mennonite Brethren Mission	Nzash Lumeya
Principles of Internationalization in the Mennonite Brethren Mission	Harold Enns
When Did You Leave Your Wife?	Ted W. Engstrom and E. R. Dayton

C. Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies: Fresno

i. Symposium on Mennonite Brethren History

Fresno, California, May 1-3, 1975

*Note: Revised papers published in Paul Toews, ed., **Pilgrims and Strangers: Essays in Mennonite Brethren History**. Fresno, CA: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1977.*

Mennonite Brethren Identity in the Context of Changing Theological Influences	John B. Toews
Keeping Body and Soul Together in Church History	Frank H. Epp
1525 Revisited? A Comparison of Anabaptist and Mennonite Brethren Origins	Cornelius J. Dyck
The Development of Mennonite Brethren Churches in North America: Some Reflections, Interpretations and Viewpoints	Clarence Hiebert
The Russian Origins of the Mennonite Brethren: Some Observations	John B. Toews (Calgary)
Incarnation and Ideal: The Story of a Truth Becoming Heresy	Delbert Wiens
A Vision for the Role of Mennonite Brethren Education Institutions in Mennonite Brethren Identity Formation	John E. Toews
Outline for Projected Mennonite Brethren History Course	Henry Krahn, Abe Dueck Herbert Giesbrecht
Past, Present and Future	Address by John A. Toews

ii. P. M. Friesen Symposium

Fresno, California

May 4-6, 1978

Brotherhood and Family: Implications of Kinship in Mennonite Brethren History	Alan Peters
The Significance of P.M. Friesen's History for Mennonite Brethren Self-Understanding	John B. Toews (Fresno)
The Russian Mennonite Intellect of the Nineteenth Century	John B. Toews (Calgary)
The German-Russian Tensions Among the Mennonites in Russia (1789 - 1917)	Harry Loewen
The Historiography of the Birth of the Mennonite Brethren Church: An Introduction	Peter J. Klassen
P.M. Friesen: The Historian	Abraham Friesen
Voices from the Past: The Polyphonic History of P.M. Friesen	Victor G. Doerksen
Johann Claassen: Trailblazer for the Brethren	Abe J. and Betty Klassen

iii. Symposium on Faith and Ethnicity

Fresno, California

November 19-21 1987

Ethnicity and the Mennonite Brethren	John H. Redekop
Mennonite Brethren in Three Countries: Comparative Profiles of an Ethno-Religious Tradition	Robert Enns and Al Dueck
Social Science Theory and <i>A People Apart</i> : Some Considerations	Miriam E. Warner
Ethnicity and Faith: Some Old Testament Perspectives	Elmer A. Martens
Assimilation in Israel: Reflections on the Actual and the Ideal	Allen R. Guenther
Doing Mission with a Universal Gospel and Cultural Diversity	Francis F. Hiebert
Ethnicity and Evangelism in the Mennonite Brethren Church	Paul G. Hiebert
A Symposium on Faith and Ethnicity Among the Mennonite Brethren: Summary and Findings Statement	Findings Committee

iv. North American Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Century (1940-1960)

Fresno, California
February 4-6, 1993

North American Mennonite Brethren and Issues of War, Peace and Nonresistance, 1940-1960	Abe Dueck
Decades of Transition: North American Mennonite Brethren in Politics, 1940-1960.	John H. Redekop
Autobiography	Waldo Hiebert
Autobiography	John B. Toews
Reminiscences and Reflections, 1940-1960	David Ewert
Ecclesiological Developments	Kyle, Richard
Economic Transformation of Canadian Mennonite Brethren	Ted Regehr
Economic Developments in the United States	Calvin Redekop
“She Hath Done What She Could:” The Development of the Women Missionary Services in the Mennonite Brethren Churches of the United States	Valerie Rempel
Canadian Mennonite Women’s Societies from 1940 to 1960: More than meets the Eye	Gloria Neufeld Redekop
Canadian Mennonite Brethren and Language Transition, 1940-1960	Gerry Ediger
Making a Home in the City: Mennonite Brethren Urbanization in California, 1895-1960	Kevin Enns-Rempel

D. United States Conference: Board of Reference and Counsel

i. Hillsboro, Kansas,

November 22-24, 1966

Nature of Biblical Authority	John C. Wenger
Grammatical Interpretation	John C. Wenger
Historical Interpretation	John C. Wenger
Christological Interpretation	John C. Wenger
Theological Interpretation	John C. Wenger
Perspectives for an Interpretation of the Creation Account of Genesis	David Ewert
The Problem of Chronology in the Genesis Account of Creation	David Ewert
The Biblical Record of the Creation of the Cosmos	David Ewert
The Biblical Record of the Creation of Man	David Ewert
Creation in the Old Testament in General	David Ewert

ii. Exploratory Peace Study

Hillsboro, Kansas
March 19-20, 1980

Peace and Nonresistance: A Bible Study	Edmund Janzen
A Theology of War in the Old Testament? A Reappraisal of Mennonite Thinking and a Study of Deuteronomic Theology Regarding War	Marlin E. Thomas
Selected Documents Regarding Peace, Love, Nonresistance, Peace-making and Reconciliation Emphasized by Mennonite Brethren Historically	Clarence Hiebert
Report on Trip to Washington D. C., Feb. 7-9, 1980	Henry H. Dick
Implementing a Congregational Dialogue on the Draft and National Service	Mike Klassen
The Mennonite Brethren and War Service	B. J. Braun
The Non-cooperation Position	Mervin Dick

**E. Canadian Conference: Committee of Reference and Counsel and
Mennonite Brethren Bible College**

i. Faith and Life Ethics Conference: Ministers and Deacons

Winnipeg, Manitoba
February 15-16, 1967

Marriage of Believers with Non- Believers	David B. Wiens
The New Testament Teaching Concerning the Diaconate	Herbert J. Brandt
The Inspiration of Scripture	Victor Adrian
An Approach to Problems of Christian Ethics	David Ewert

ii. The Blessed Hope: Second Faith and Life Conference

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

July 6-7, 1970

The Blessed Hope and the Christian Witness	Wally Unger
The Blessed Hope and Christian Stewardship	David B. Wiens
The Blessed Hope and Christian Ethics	Vern Ratzlaff
The Blessed Hope and Social Action	Harold Jantz
The Blessed Hope and the Eternal Kingdom	John Regehr

iii. Christology

Camp Arnes, Manitoba
February 2-3, 1991

Identifying the Problems: Symposium on Christology	John Redekop
Toward an Outline of Pluralism and the Exclusivity of Christ: A Biblical Perspective	John E. Toews
Pluralism and the Exclusivity of Christ: A Canadian Historical Anabaptist Perspective	Ian Rennie
Can there be Unity in the Spirit without Doctrinal Unity about Christ?	Kenneth Davis
No Other Name: A Biblical View of Atonement within Non-Christian Faiths	James Pankratz
Anabaptist/Evangelical Cooperation and Unity: How Much?	Wally Unger

iv. Rite and Pilgrimage: A Study Conference on Baptism and Church Membership

Winnipeg, Manitoba
May 22-24, 2003

MB Theology of Baptism	Lynn Jost
Affirmation of “MB Theology of Baptism”	Roger Thiessen
Critique of “MB Theology of Baptism”	Ed Boschman
Baptism among the Early Christians	Jon Isaak
Affirmation of “Baptism among the Early Christians”	Lorraine Dick
Critique of “Baptism among the Early Christians”	Gay Lynn Voth
Baptism and Membership . . . an alternative perspective	David Falk
Affirmation of “Baptism and membership . . . an alternative perspective”	Bruce Enns
Critique of “Baptism and membership . . . an alternative perspective”	Vidya J. Narimalla
The Church without Spot or Wrinkle	Walter Unger
Affirmation of “The Church without Spot or Wrinkle”	Gerry Ediger
Critique of “The Church without spot or Wrinkle”	Bruce L. Guenther

F. Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies: Winnipeg

i. Symposium: Influences Upon Mennonite Brethren Theology

Winnipeg, Manitoba
November 21-22, 1980

The Free Church Concept and its Implications for Mennonite Brethren Theology	Henry Krahn
The Free Church Concept and its Implications for M.B. Theology -revised for Direction	Henry Krahn
Influence of Fundamentalism	John B. Toews
Response to J.B. Toews	Harry Loewen
The Interaction of Economics and Religion the Case of the Mennonite Brethren in Canada (revised)	John H. Redekop
The Interaction of Economics and Religion: the Case of the Mennonite Brethren in Canada (published version)	John H. Redekop
Church & State: Developments among Mennonite Brethren in Canada since World War II	Abe J. Dueck
Response to Abe Dueck, "Church & State: Developments among Mennonite Brethren since World War II	Victor Doerksen

Seeking a Faith to Live By:
Modifying Influences Upon the
Faith Confessed by Mennonite
Brethren

Herb Giesbrecht

The State of Mennonite Brethren
Historical Research

Ken Reddig

ii. Symposium: Inter-Mennonite Relations: MBs and GCs in Canada

Winnipeg, Manitoba
November 4 - 5, 1983

Mennonite Brethren & General Conference Relations in Pre-WW1 Russia. Setting the Stage for Canada	John B. Toews
Congregational Relations of MBs and GCs In Canada	Gerhard Lohrenz
Singing the New Song Together: MB-GC Relations in Music	Peter Letkemann
The Mennonite Writer as Witness and Critic	Harry Loewen
Mennonite Brethren & General Conference Theology - A Common Center, A Single Foundation	Walter Unger
Mennonite Brotherhood: "Quo Vadis"?	George Epp
Exploring an Uneasy Relationship: A Meetinghouse Article	Harold Jantz

iii. Dynamics of Faith and Culture in Mennonite Brethren

Winnipeg, Manitoba
November 14-15, 1986

Program for Conference

A Religious or a Social Elite? The Mennonite Brethren in Imperial Russia	James Urry
Continuity and Change among Canadian Mennonite Brethren	Peter Hamm
The German Language, Culture and Faith	Jacob Loewen
The Moralities of the Mennonite Brethren	Delbert Wiens
The New Mennonite Brethren: In But Still Out?	Katie Funk Wiebe
Faith in Culture and Culture in Faith: Mennonite Brethren Entertaining Expansive, Separative and Assimilative Views about the Relationship	Paul Toews

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