

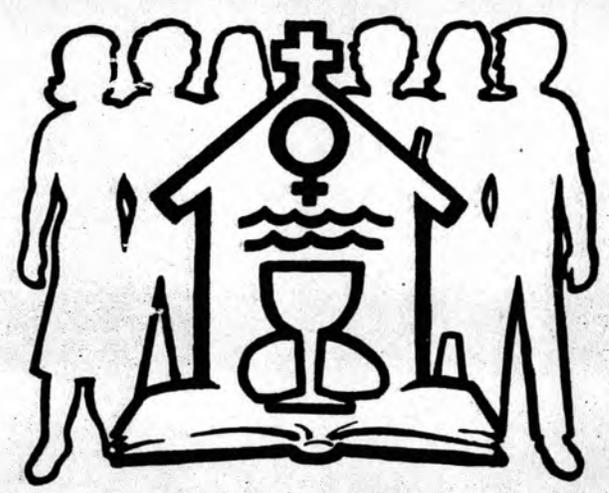
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Herb Giesbrecht

The Mennonite Brethren
Church as a

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Covenant
Community



Study Conference
of the
General Conference
of M.B. Churches
October 15-17, 1986
Fresno, California

FINDING REPORTS
M.B. STUDY CONFERENCE, OCTOBER 15-17, 1986

Session 1. "A Converted and Baptized People"

- A. Theological issues addressed., or needing addressing**
1. The relation of salvation (Spirit Baptism) and Water Baptism. There seems to be lack of clarity about our definitions, perhaps our theology. Or is it a true difference in positions? When are differences semantic or really differences?
 2. Definitions of infant baptism. When is a young child ready for professions of salvation, when ready for baptism, when ready for the celebration of the above in the Communion service?
 3. Not addressed but of a related nature is the matter of affirming membership in the church family-of persons who are developmentally disabled.
 4. Definitions of, consistent teaching on the privileges and responsibilities of church/body of Christ membership are needed. Guides for and teaching helps to use could help.
- B. Practical issues addressed**
1. Participation of non-members in church. Are they allowed to serve in service positions, in office, in key leadership roles?
 2. Inactive membership, absenteeism and status of such persons in the church. Is there a way to deal redemptively with them without losing them to the church and/or compromising the definitions of membership and covenant community we cherish?
 3. Related but in another way is the question of financial commitments to conference norms, reporting membership numbers with honesty. Consistent standards for all churches are needed.
- C. An observation.** The need for discipline, a call for commitment seems now to be coming more vocally from the young than from the old. Perhaps they have come through our modern world and seen the dangers of the looseness in it. One might wonder if we are now more frightened by the looseness of the world around us or the tightness of an older era. Some attention to who is speaking and whom we quote might be instructive about the relationships between us. Some attention to the worlds from which we speak/write can be helpful.

Session 2. "A Confessing People"

1. Discrepancies in belief and practices are being addressed on all levels: the paper, respondents, the M.B. profile, the pastoral letter from the Board of Reference and Counsel.
The very real dilemma of giving "soft" interpretations to certain parts of the confession have led those we teach about ourselves to ask whether we can be trusted to interpret any part of our confession with firmness.
There was an admission that we should distinguish between levels of conformance to the confession depending on age or newness among us. But there was a call that teaching leaders, at least, should be required to commit themselves to all aspects of what is a written and adopted confession. Either change our practice or admit our confessions are not static.
2. A long held and often repeated assertion about Mennonite Brethren confessions seems to be weakening, perhaps be shattering, i.e. that our confessions are descriptive, not prescriptive. Our practices are indicating that our confessions really do become creedal for us. Perhaps that is an attempt to make our pronouncements firm when our practice is not.

3. Our churches need teaching tools for baptism/membership classes about the Confession of Faith. The Board of Mass Media could be commissioned to produce materials in several media for local church use. We are aware that Kindred Press has in process a teaching guide aimed at high school level. The studies on the confession in the Leader and Herald were a help in that direction.
4. Finally, we noted yesterday that we come to these issues from different directions. Some of us are still moving away from the rootedness of an earlier era. Others are moving from modern rootlessness toward covenanting, disciplined community. Last night we heard a call for authority, for teaching, and for theology. But this call came from a different direction and exhibited a different tone and language than we have had in the recent past. Unlike an earlier stress on "systematic theology", it presented a theologizing that is more an activity, of word, worship, and witness than a checklist to determine orthodoxy. And it moves beyond the "biblical theology" which we embraced to flee the too-constrictive "systematics." Yet it calls us to "basics" and to "historic identities." Are we beginning to hear a translation of the Gospel which will truly be Good News for our contemporaries--and ourselves? Perhaps so. But many of us must wonder what it means. And few of us are yet voicing our unease, if that is what we feel.

Session 3. "A Covenanting People"

This morning's discussion showed that we are moving from one way of thinking about consensus and church and discipleship to another. From one point of view we might be tempted to think that the pendulum is shifting from individualism back to the communalism, as pendulums always reverse when they move too far in any direction.

But the frequent reference to bounded and centered sets, as well as other aspects of the discussion, shows that we are not being asked to return to the way of being a community that once characterized us. Something else is happening. Perhaps we are spiraling to another level.

For example, names stand for identity, and the call to change names is a call to reshape identity. Names not only follow change, they have the power to move. And we must be very careful how we name.

The shift has also surfaced in the way we confront each other. If there are "sides," they are not divisions between new-comers and old-timers. Our positions on the issues are determined by how we understand and react to the spirit of our age and to our vision of the Kingdom.

Because we are in transition, there is a need for leadership, whether "prophetic" or "administrative" to help clarify the issues and to inspire us to learn how we can all contribute to our own maturity as disciples, as congregations, and to the celebration and building of the Kingdom of God. Of course, in such times "false" prophecy is constantly possible. The plea to clarify what is the transcendent vision which makes Jesus' Gospel "good news" to our day is especially necessary.

What we also need to do is to learn how to work at covenant at the levels appropriate to small groups, to congregations, to our conference, and to Christians everywhere. As we become secure in our covenant relations at local levels we are freed to participate in appropriate covenanting at even larger levels. To be what we distinctively are, gives us a place for giving and receiving the special insights from other flocks in the Kingdom. Sometimes, apparently we must clarify who we are by seeing ourselves as "over-against" others. But we must constantly guard against caricatures of others. They too wrestle with their calling as we MB's with different backgrounds enrich each other.

Finally, we need to notice what has happened here, among each other. As Waldo Hiebert noted, there has been an openness and a concern which has resulted in boldness without anger and in seriousness with self righteousness.

Perhaps what is happening here and how it is happening is a model for covenanting as much as is any content we may agree on.

PEOPLE OF HOPE

Bible Study Outline
BORAC Study Conference
October 15-17, 1986

Theme: Kingdom People

Ps. 93.1 - "Yahweh is King"

The Coming of God — *People of God
Yearn for the coming of God.*

Jud. 5.3-4

Ps. 18

The Day of the Lord

The Kingdom of God

God is the King who rules his people

Ex. 19

The Coming Rule of God

universal -- Isa. 52.10, Jer. 3.17

righteous -- Isa. 4.3-6, Jer. 31.31-34

peace -- Isa. 2.2-4, 35.1-2, 5-10

Thesis: God is coming. Kingdom people long for the coming of God.

John E. Toews
October 15, 1986

PEOPLE OF THE KING

Bible Study Outline
BORAC Study Conference
October 15-17, 1986

Theme: Kingdom People

The Kingdom is Near

Mk. 1.14-15: 'the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is near;
repent and believe in the gospel.

The Meaning of Kingdom

*"Kingdom of God" not used as a phrase
as such in apocalyptic literature*

apocalyptic - God's future, end-time, rule is here

rabbinic - submit yourself to God's rule

Targums - the presence of God in power

Aramaic translations of O.T.

*presence and
in Kingly power among
His people. What God
does in history to demonstrate
His presence and power.*

The Coming of God

Mt. 11.12/Lk. 16.16

The law and the prophets were until John;
until now the Kingdom of God is powerfully breaking out,
and violent men are strongly attacking it.

Mt. 12.28/Lk. 11.20

If it is by the spirit of God (finger of God in Lk) that I cast out
demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.

Lk. 4.16-30

Thesis: the Kingdom of God means that God has come as king to rule in power.

Kingdom people are the subjects of the King.

John E. Toews
October 15, 1986

PEOPLE OF THE FATHER

Bible Study Outline
BORAC Study Conference
October 15-17, 1986

Theme: Kingdom People

God is Abba

Mt. 6.9/Lk. 11.2 - Father . . . your kingdom come . . .

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Lk. 12.22-32 - . . . be not anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on . . . all the nations of the world seek these things, and your father knows that you need them. . . Fear not, little flock, it is your father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.

Merciful Father

Not Lev. 19.2 - be holy because, I, the Lord your God, am holy.

But Lk. 6.36 - be merciful, just as your father is merciful.

Fathers Create Families

Mt. 10.37/Lk. 14.26 - If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Mk. 10.29-30 - Truly, I say to you, there is not one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or land, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

Mt. 23.9 - And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.

Thesis: God is the near, caring, faithful and merciful Father who creates a Kingdom family. Kingdom people are the children of abba. He is the model of who God is and who fathers shall be.

John E. Toews
October 16, 1986

Donald Bloesch The Trinity

*Patriarchal image =
@ crisis of fatherhood - in our time.*

PEOPLE OF THE SPIRIT

Bible Study Outline
BORAC Study Conference
October 15 - 17, 1986

linked with Spirit power of God.

Theme: Kingdom People

*(second) new Adam.
new Israel*

The Coming of the Spirit on Jesus

Mt. 3.13-4.11/Mk. 1.9-13/Lk. 3.21-22, 4.1-13

Mt. 12.28/Lk. 11.20

*holy war in the wilderness
(temptation) experience of Christ.
demons are linked directly to
Satan - by Christ. -
the Enemy of God.*

Jesus Joins the Battle with Demonic Powers

*direct conflict between the powers -
the power of God and demonic power.*

Mk. 1.23-28

Mt. 12.28/Lk. 11.20

Mt. 3.7 par.

Lk. 10.18

Mk. 3.28f./Mt. 12.31f./Lk. 12.10

*demon
exorcisms anticipate the victory
of God over evil (Satan).
powers of evil are being bound
and rebuked.*

Power over the Demonic Given to the Disciples

Mk. 6.7/Mt. 10.7/Lk. 10.17-20

Mk. 9.1

*Paradise is being opened by Christ's
entry of power - see the Kingdom of God
in power - Spirit must engage us
in actual warfare against evil -
holy warfare of Kingdom people are*

Thesis: It is the coming and working of the Spirit in and through Jesus that constitutes the coming of the Kingdom of God. Kingdom people are people of the Spirit engaged in battle against the powers of Satan.

people of the Spirit.

John E. Toews
October 16, 1986

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PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH

Bible Study Outline
BORAC Study Conference
October 15 - 17, 1986

Theme: Kingdom People (= church) *(= visible sign of kingdom)*

Jesus' Mission = gather God's end-time people

- Jesus chose 12 disciples (Mk. 3.14-16)
- Jesus healed people (Mt. 11.5/Lk. 7.22)
- Jesus taught the disciples to pray (Mt. 6.9/Lk. 11.2)
- Jesus interpreted his death in peoplehood terms (Mk. 14.22f. par.)
- Jesus spoke of the new people of God he was gathering

Matthew 16.17-19

Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona,
for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you
but my heavenly Father.

And I say to you: you are Peter
and on this rock I will build my church
and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

And I will give you the keys of the reign of heaven }
and whatever you bind on earth heaven shall bind } → = binding Satan and
and whatever you loose on earth heaven shall loose. } loosing people who were bound

Matthew 18.15-20

→ Jewish lit. → also ethical discernment regarding right/wrong

If your brother sins, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Joh 20:23

Thesis: The primary mission of Jesus was to gather God's end-time people to build the church as the visible sign of the kingdom. Kingdom people are church people who bind and loose Satan and demonically bound people, and who bind and loose disciple ethics.

John E. Toews
October 17, 1986

DISCUSSION GROUPS

<u>Group Number</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Group Leaders</u>
1	Butler, # 8	Herb Brandt
2	Butler, # 9	Harry Heidebrecht
3	Butler, #10	David Ewert
4	Butler, #11	Edmund Janzen
5	Butler, #N.O.1	Waldo Hiebert
6	Butler, #N.O.2	Larry Martens
7	Butler, Choir	Wally Unger
8	Butler, #S.O.	Bill Wiebe
9	Butler, #S.S.	Clarence Hiebert
10	Butler, #N.S.	Ed Boschman
11	Butler, # 12	Roland Marsch
12	Butler, # 13	Henry Schmidt
13	Butler, # 14	Jim Holm, S.D. ✓
14	Butler, # 15	Fern Hiebert
15	Butler, # 16	Henry Dick
16	MBBS, Okla. Rm.	Lorraine Dick
17	MBBS, Calif.Rm.	Katrina Poetker
18	MBBS, Man. Rm.	Malinda Nikkel
19	MBBS, BC Lounge	Joyce Schimpky
20	MBBS, Chapel	Sam Willems

BORAC Vision/Goals Formation Session
Study Conference
October 16, 1986

Thursday Afternoon Schedule

2:00 Introduction of the Session

Herb Brandt
Larry Martens

2:10 Individual reflection/writing on question 1: where will the Mennonite Brethren Church be in the year 2000 if present trends continue?

2:20 Small Group sharing of answers to question 1

Develop consensus about the 2-4 most important answers

2:50 Submit Group and individual responses to Findings Committee

Individual reflection/writing on question 2: where in the providence of God do you believe the Mennonite Brethren Church should be in 2000?

3:00 Small Group sharing of answers to question 2

Develop consensus about the 2-4 most important answers

3:30 Submit Group and individual responses to Findings Committee

Coffee break

4:00 Findings Committee Report on responses to questions 1 and 2, Ron Penner

4:30 BORAC share leadership responses to questions 1 and 2, John E. Toews

5:00 Hand out question 3: what do we have to do to realize our dreams for the Mennonite Brethren Church?

Close -- Herb Brandt

BORAC Vision/Goals Formation Process
Study Conference
October 16, 1986

Question of Probable Future: where will the Mennonite Brethren Church be in the year 2000 if present trends continue?

1. In terms of growth, there will probably be a modest quantitative growth in No. America (perhaps somewhat greater in Canada than USA); however, worldwide there will be significant, continuing increase, proportionately much more extensive, especially in Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, Japan and particularly Zaire.
2. In terms of unity, there will be more fragmentation and regionalism, with some loss of whole, local congregations and scattered individuals to our denomination. Moreover, fewer institutions will receive conference-wide support, such as seminary and colleges; perhaps missions will still be supported by No. American, but increasingly funds will come not from local churches but contributed by individuals.
3. There will be a much greater awareness of a global M. B. church, increasingly with mission in reverse, in which nationals from other countries will minister to us. Increasingly, also, there will be an internationalization of missions, with resources for both personnel and finances supplied by both North American and non-North American sources.

BORAC Vision/Goals Formation Process
Study Conference
October 16, 1986

Question of Possible Future: where in the providence of God do you believe the Mennonite Brethren Church should be in 2000?

1. M.B. identity. Having come thru our present identity crisis (with or without a change of name), we will accept ourselves as a covenanting people of God, embracing our ethnic diversities, and committing ourselves to being a prophetic people in a world (No. Amer.) that is increasingly and explicitly pagan.
2. Church growth. While there will be a wholesome growth rate quantitatively, that will not be the over-arching concern (to grow numerically) but to be a prophetic people, strong in the witness to society, addressing social issues with strength. Our witness will be legitimated by our life-style and voice in society.
3. Leadership and unity. Increasingly our leaders need to be trained in our theological schools of council themselves to our own confusion of faith. The result will be a greater unity at the Conference level.
4. Mission outreach. On the basis of a holistic understanding of the gospel and our place in society, the church will grow worldwide, with much more international cooperation and mutual assistance. Not only will No. America witness abroad, but M.B. leaders from other countries will minister to No. America.

SCHEDULE

Wednesday, October 15

2:00 - 5:00 p.m. - Herb Brandt presiding
Bible Study: "A Kingdom People," John E. Toews
Paper: "A Converted and Baptized People," Ray Bystrom - p. 1.
Respondents: Herb Neufeld, Ed Boschman
Discussion

5:15 - 6:45 - Dinner

7:00 - 9:00 - Wally Unger presiding
Bible Study: "A Kingdom People," John E. Toews
Paper: "A Confessing People," Howard Loewen - p. 15.
Respondents: Bob Friesen, Vic Neufeld

Thursday, October 16

8:30 - 12:00 a.m. - Waldo Hiebert presiding
Bible Study: "A Kingdom People," John E. Toews
Paper: "A Covenanting People," Edmund Janzen - p. 33.
Respondents: Katie Funk Wiebe, John Vooy
Discussion

12:15 - 1:45 - Lunch - *Byron B.*

2:00 - 5:00 p.m.
"The Mennonite Brethren Church in the Year 2000" -
A long-range goal and planning process led by Larry Martens,
Edmund Janzen and John E. Toews.

5:15 - 6:45 - Dinner

7:00 - 9:00 - Larry Martens presiding
Bible Study: "A Kingdom People," John E. Toews
Paper: "A Ministering People," Gerry Ediger - p. 45.
Respondents: Werner Heidebrecht, Abe Konrad

Friday, October 17

8:30 - 12:00 a.m. - Harry Heidebrecht presiding
Bible Study: "A Kingdom People," John E. Toews
Paper: "A Serving People," Herb Kopp - p. 64.
Respondents: Fran Hiebert, Ron Penner
Discussion
Conference Wrap-up, Herb Brandt

Findings Committee: Jean Janzen, Loyal Martin, Delbert Wiens

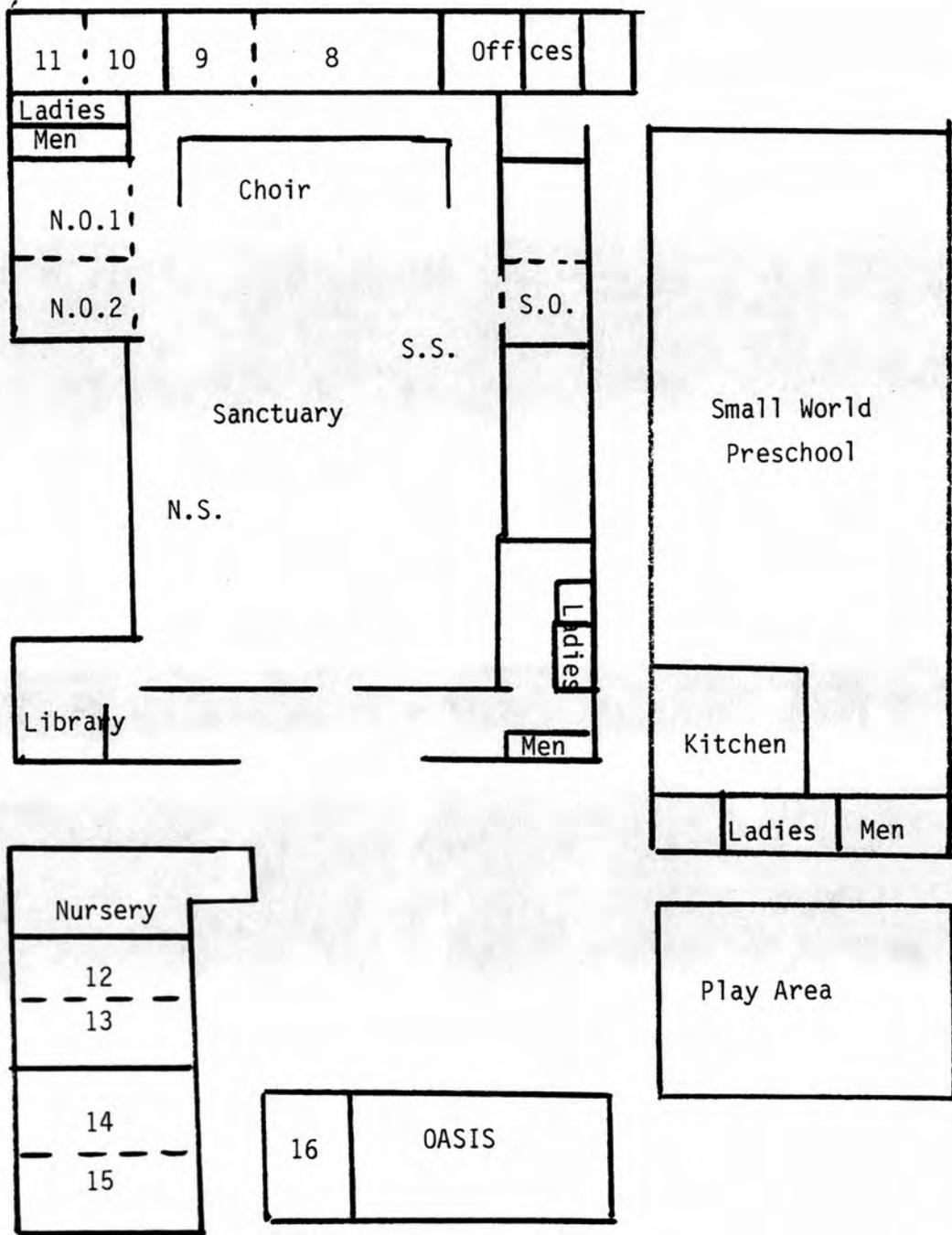
BUTLER AVENUE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH



WINERY AVENUE

BUTLER AVENUE

TOWNSEND AVENUE



PARKING LOT

to MBBS

to F P C

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary

CAMPUS MAP



- Administration Building
- Campus Center
 - 1 British Columbia Lounge (upper level)
 - 2 California Room
 - 3 Manitoba Room
 - 4 Oklahoma Room
 - 5 Ontario Lounge (lower level)
- Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS)
- Chapel
- Conference Offices
- Library
- Mission Memorial Court Apartments
- Prayer Chapel
- Shop

CHESTNUT AVENUE



PRAYER CHAPEL

LIBRARY

C.M.B.S.

ADMINISTRATION

SHOP

MISSION MEMORIAL COURT APTS.

BUTLER AVENUE

GARDEN AVENUE

To
Fresno
Pacific
College