

PLAN OF ORGANIZATION
WESTERNPORT CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN, INC.
OF THE WEST MARVA DISTRICT
198 OAK VIEW DRIVE
WESTERNPORT, MARYLAND 21562

We, the Westernport Church of the Brethren, being open to the Spirit's guidance, shall strive to fulfill God's Mission as described in the New Testament.

PREAMBLE

This plan shall endeavor to promote the unity of the Body of Christ while attempting to present the faith and practice of the Church of the Brethren. It shall be the Family of God, the Household of Faith, and the Pillar and Ground of the Truth, as revealed in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF THIS ORGANIZATION OUTLINE

We recognize the need for every member of the Church to take an active part in the life of the Church. We further realize that the program of the Church must reach into all areas of life. This Plan of Organization aims to help the congregation fulfill this responsibility. It is designed to be a tool of the Congregation. It aims to put into writing the rules and practices that govern this Church and her program. This organization puts into the hands of the laity, the administration of the Church and her program. Above all, through this plan, it is hoped the Church will better serve God and increase His Kingdom on earth.

II. AFFIRMATION OF FAITH AND PURPOSE

This Congregation

- A. Is founded upon the faith that there is but one God who is a personal God who in holy love created, sustains, and orders all.
- B. Confesses Jesus Christ as the Lord of the Church and of all life.
- C. Believes that the Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts and minds of believers, creating and sustaining the church through the gospel, giving guidance and comfort, and uniting believers with their Lord and with one another.
- D. Maintains the New Testament as its only creed and rule of faith. In the Holy Scriptures is recorded God's search for all persons, which is climaxed in God's redemptive act in and through Christ. Through the Bible, God still speaks and continues to accomplish God's redemptive purpose.

- E. Believes that the gospel is the good news that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Through the gospel, God's sovereign will and Christ's redeeming grace are revealed.
- F. Holds that the church is the body of Christ and is under the Lord's mandate to be faithful in accepting and transmitting the gospel by word and deed.
- G. Consider that all members of the congregation are responsible for the total ministry of the church.
- H. Accept the ministry of the Church to be the proclamation and fulfillment of the gospel for all people and the nurture of individual believers in the Christian faith and life.

III. RELATIONSHIP TO THE WHOLE CHURCH

A. The Church Universal

The local church is part of a larger whole, which comprises the complete body of Christ. The local church, therefore, shall recognize other Christian bodies and denominations, and shall seek to cooperate with, and give direction to, the united effort of the church.

B. The Church Denominational

The congregation shall covenant to support faithfully the program(s) of the Church of the Brethren, recognizing Annual Conference enactment's of the Church of the Brethren as having governing force in its life in so far as they promote the faith and purpose of the church as declared in the Affirmation of Faith and Purpose (Section 11 of this document). If Annual Conference renders a decision that is controversial, any member of the church will have the right to call for a vote of the church council on whether or not the decision will be followed in the local church. If such a vote is called for, a 2/3 majority must be rendered against or the Annual Conference decision will be followed. We shall remain a member of the Church of the Brethren or its successor. The congregation shall send delegates to those official conferences of the Church of the Brethren which it is entitled to have representation.

In case of strife or division, if any part of the congregation refuses to abide by its obligations as a member of the Church of the Brethren, that part of the congregation (whether a majority or minority of its members which continues in unity with the Church of the Brethren) shall be recognized as the lawful congregation and shall continue in possession of all the property of the congregation.

If the congregation (a) disbands, (b) departs from membership in the Church of the Brethren or (c) so decreases in number and financial strength as to render the congregation unable to fulfill its purpose, the district of the Church of the Brethren in which we are located, or the successor, shall have the right to take charge and control of all property, and thereafter to hold, manage and convey the same at the discretion of the district. All action taken by the district relating to

the property of a congregation shall be in conformity with the provisions of the Policy Manual for the Church of the Brethren.

IV. MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the church shall be open to all who have professed their faith in Jesus Christ and who endeavor to serve Him through the church in all of their life. People are invited to respond to God's call to them by entering into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. A partial expression of their personal commitment to Jesus Christ is the invitation to become part of the living body of Christ known as the church. When persons respond to this invitation, the church shall take steps to prepare them for membership. Part of this preparation should consist of classes of sufficient length on the meaning of church membership. Such classes offer an opportunity for persons to explore the faith and history of the wider Christian community, to study the particular story and distinctive emphasis of the Church of the Brethren, and to become familiar with the life and expectations of the congregation they will be entering. In addition to providing membership classes, the pastor and/or deacons shall choose to identify persons who will serve as sponsors of new members to assist in their orientation into the life of the church. In whatever ways persons are prepared for membership, the pastor or minister has a key role to play.

A. RECEPTION OF MEMBERS

1. By confession of faith and baptism by trine immersion as practiced by the Church of the Brethren.

a. Baptismal Vows are as follows:

Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son and do you receive Him and trust Him as your Savior?

Do you turn away from all sin and will you endeavor by God's grace to live according to the example and the teaching(s) of Jesus?

Will you be loyal to the church, upholding her by your prayers and your presence, your substance and your service?

The candidate will answer, "I do" to the above vows.

2. By letter of transfer from another officially recognized Church of the Brethren as listed by Annual Conference

3. By reaffirmation of faith.

4. By letter of transfer from another denominational church providing the person considering membership is satisfied with his/her experience of baptism and is demonstrating a Christian life.

B. MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP

According to the New Testament, life in Christ means life in the body of Christ. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body"(1 Cor.12:13), so that we, "though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another" (Rom.12:5). Membership in a local fellowship of believers, the congregation, is the way in which we affirm and live out our membership in Christ's congregation, is the way in which we affirm and live out our membership in Christ's larger body, the church universal. In our interrelatedness with other Christians in the local church, we experience the fullness of the gifts of the Spirit, we discover ways to be faithful to our covenant with God and each other, and we're able to support one another in carrying out our common calling as the people of God. So it was in the house churches of the earliest Christians, and so it is in the life of God's people today.

From the time of its beginnings, the Church of the Brethren has affirmed the importance of church membership and sought ways to make church membership more meaningful. It is appropriate, therefore, for the congregation and its members to reflect on their mutual accountability to one another. On the one hand, the congregation has a covenantal responsibility to care for its members, to encourage growth in freedom and discipleship, to help members discover their gifts and find ways to serve, and to provide ministries that respond to both spiritual and physical needs. On the other hand, each member has a covenantal responsibility to participate regularly in the life of the congregation, to seek the counsel of the church in living out the way of Christ, to challenge the church to greater accountability to its calling, to respond to opportunities to serve in the congregation and beyond, and to contribute to the church's ministries in every way possible. Congregations may use these general guidelines as a basis for developing more specific expectations for their membership.

At the heart of our calling as members of Christ's body is the summons to follow Christ as His disciples. Christians do not live unto themselves but are called to seek first the kingdom of God, to risk themselves for Christ's sake, and to take up the way of the cross. It is no easy task to accept and practice the costly grace of radical discipleship. In the community of faith, however, we find courage and strength to live out our discipleship in solidarity with others.

Each church member is expected to:

1. Develop the practice of daily devotions, prayer, Bible reading and meditation in the home.
2. Attend Sunday worship and Bible Study at the church
3. Participate in the Communion and the Council meetings of the church
4. Give proportionately, systematically, and regularly of their money, in order to support the ongoing ministry of the church
5. Assist with the church program, tasks and responsibilities when asked or when they see a need.

6. Dedicate and consecrate their time, talents and efforts in helping to build God's Kingdom here on earth and in our church community.

C. MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION

1. ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP/INACTIVE MEMBERS:

An **active member** is one who attends and supports the church program(s) as defined under Meaning of Membership.

Any individual who has been baptized into Christ's Church, but who does not wish to transfer or otherwise move their membership to this congregation, can vote on church issues and hold leadership positions in this body provided they have continually and faithfully worshipped with us and actively participated in the life of the church for a minimum of one year.

A **limited membership** list will be kept by the church secretary. For this purpose a limited member shall be considered one who is physically unable to fulfill the above requirements of the Meaning of Membership but support the church programs as much as able.

An **inactive member** is defined as a member who attends and supports the church programs but who does not meet the guidelines of Active as defined under the Meaning of Membership.

2. NON RESIDENT:

Non-resident members are those who live beyond a reasonable driving distance from the church, yet show their interest and concern for the church by regular money contributions and attendance as frequently as possible. They shall be encouraged to become active with a congregation in their residential area. A Non-Resident member does not have voting privileges nor are they eligible to hold any office or leadership position in the church.

3. SEPARATED MEMBERS:

Separated members consist of those people who were received into the church as members, but who no longer participate in the church's life or carry out the commitments expected of members, and who for three consecutive years fail to respond to invitations to reaffirm or renew their relationship with the congregation. Whether the causes of separation have to do with the individual, the congregation, or both, the congregation shall continue to explore ways to restore the broken relationship. Guidelines for working at reconciliation and restoration may be found in the 1976 Annual Conference statement on "Discipleship and Reconciliation." For statistical purposes, members whose residence are unknown and cannot be ascertained for three consecutive years will also be designated as separated. A Separated member does not have voting privileges nor are they eligible to hold any office or leadership position in the church.

NOTE: Permanent records of active, inactive, non-residents, separated and past members will be kept by the church secretary to be reviewed annually by the Deacon Body, Pastor and Financial Secretary.

D. MEMBERSHIP TERMINATION

Membership in this congregation of the Church of the Brethren may be terminated in one of the following ways:

1. Death
2. Transfer of membership by letter. A letter of transfer is the property of the congregation and shall go from the granting to the receiving congregation.
3. Withdrawal: This action shall be taken by the congregation at the written request of the individual
4. Removal: The congregation may act to remove a person's name from the list of members when:
 - (a) A member has joined another church, but failed to request a letter of transfer
 - (or)
 - (b) The congregation upon recommendation by the Church Board determines that all attempts at reactivation or reconciliation have failed.

V. CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETING

The Congregation Business Meeting is the final authority and governing body within the local congregation: it is the church in business session. The congregation in business meeting shall hear reports and evaluate past accomplishments, study present conditions and give direction to the future program (s) of the church, record the voice of the congregation on current issues where Christian witness is urgent, and provide opportunity for sharing and coordinating differing points of view. The business meeting shall also elect officers, adopt budgets, rule on policy and organizational matters, and authorize church officials to act on behalf of the congregation. All active members shall be eligible to vote in the Congregational Business Meeting.

The annual Congregational Business Meeting shall be held in October or November with the date being announced at least 30 days in advance. Other Congregational Business Meetings may be called by the Church Board as is deemed necessary, provided it is publicly announced at least 7 days in advance.

A. Officers of the Church

1. The officers of the Congregational Business Meetings shall be the Moderator, the Church Clerk, the Treasurer, and the Financial Secretary. The Moderator shall be elected by the Congregational Business Meeting. The Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be appointed by the Church Board subject to approval by the Congregational Business Meetings
2. The legal officers for the corporate body shall be the Church Board Chair, the Church Clerk, Church Treasurer, and the Chairperson of the Commission of Stewards.

- a. The Church Secretary, if a member, will serve as Church Clerk.
- b. If the Church Secretary is not a member of the congregation, a Church Clerk will be appointed by the Board.

IV. CHURCH BOARD

There shall be a Church Board, hereinafter referred to as the Board, consisting of from ten to sixteen members elected by the Congregational Business Meeting. The Church Clerk, the Treasurer, and the Chair of the Deacons shall also be members of the Board. The Pastor and Moderator shall be ex-officio without vote.

The Board shall be vested with administrative powers to plan, coordinate, integrate, and supervise the ongoing programs of the congregation. The Board is primarily responsible for long-range planning, goals and programs, and the initiation of new programs. The Board shall be empowered to act on behalf of the Congregational Business Meeting ad interim except for those actions specifically reserved for the Congregational Business Meeting set forth in this constitution and bylaws.

The Board shall organize itself annually by naming a chairperson and a vice chairperson from among its elected members. The Church Clerk shall serve as secretary for the Board. After organizing itself, the Board shall name a chairperson for each commission from among its remaining elected members. Then the Board shall divide its elected members into commissions on the basis of personal aptitude and interest.

A. Commissions

There shall be three commissions, thus:

1. Commission on Nurture (the inner mission of the church)
2. Commission on Witness (the outer mission of the church)
3. Commission on Stewards (the stewardship function of the church)

The commissions shall be created by, and be responsible to, the Board. Each commission shall be comprised of three or more members including a chairperson named by the Board.

The Moderator, Board chairperson, and Pastor shall be ex-officio members without vote on all commissions. Each commission shall elect its own vice chairperson and secretary.

B. Deacons

Deacons shall be elected for a trial period of one year and then may be elected, upon recommendation of the Deacon Body and approved by the Congregational Business Meeting, for life. The Deacon Body will review Deacon's performance annually and Deacons may be removed with congregational approval as a result of their failure to perform their duties and

responsibilities as defined in the Deacon's Manual or upon a written resignation from the individual. The Deacon Body's central interest is the spiritual and physical well being of the church family. Its duties differ significantly from the tasks of the commissions, whose responsibilities are expressed in programs aimed to support, nurture, teach and direct the ministry and mission of all the congregation. In contrast, the Deacon Body is concerned with the personal needs of the congregational members.

The congregation shall determine the number of active members that make up the Deacon Body. It is recommended that the congregation consider maintaining a Deacon Body of one active Deacon for each ten active members of the congregation, calling more as necessary to meet the needs of the congregation. Lifetime deacons who due to age, illness, or other circumstances have concluded their active service as a deacon may be given the title "Deacon Emeritus". These persons may continue to serve in an advisory capacity.

The office of Deacon is a congregational office and does not automatically transfer when a Deacon moves into a new congregation. The call to participate in the Deacon Body comes as a decision of the congregation based on the individual's qualifications and the needs of the congregation.

The Deacon Body is accountable to the congregational business meeting and shall report to the Executive Committee and Board. The Deacon Body chairperson serves as a member of the Executive Committee and the Church Board by virtue of office.

The responsibilities and duties of the deacons are to be performed as defined in the Deacons' Manual.

C. Committees

1. Executive Committee

The Board shall create an Executive Committee comprised of the Board Chairperson, the Board Vice Chairperson, the Commission Chairpersons, the Treasurer, the Deacon Chair or Vice Chair person and the Church Clerk. The Moderator and Pastor shall be ex-officio without vote. The Board Chairperson shall serve as chair of the Executive Committee.

2. Continuing Committees

a. **Nominating Committee.** There shall be a Nominating Committee consisting of from three to six members elected by the Congregational Business Meeting from a ballot prepared by the Board. The Pastor and Moderator shall serve as ex-officio. The Board shall appoint the chair from the elected members.

b. The Congregational Business Meeting and/or the Board may constitute or authorize committees as might be necessary to assist with the ongoing work of the church.

3. Short term Committees

The Congregational Business Meeting and/or the Board may constitute or authorize short-term committees to carry out specific assignments. When the specific assignment is achieved, the committee shall be dismissed.

As needed, depending upon the workload and the size of the congregation, a commission may seek authorization from the Board for continuing of short-term committees to carry specific commission assignments. Where possible, commission members shall serve as committee chairperson.

D. Other Organized Groups

Various other special interest groups or age groups may be organized upon the authorization of the Board and the approval of the Congregational Business Meeting. All organizations within the congregation shall exist to aid in fulfilling the mission of the church and are subject to the oversight and direction of the church.

E. Records

1. Official Documents

The following official documents related to the ongoing activities of the congregation shall be preserved:

- a. Deeds, legal and governing documents.
- b. Minutes: Congregational Business Meetings, Board, Executive Committee, and other active groups within the congregation.
- c. Records which document congregational program activities shall be preserved.

Members by name, date received into membership and the date and reason for removal from the roll.

Ordinations

Baptisms

Weddings

Deaths

Annual statistical reports

Financial statements—(7 yrs. Minimum)

Employed officers

d. Publications

1. Weekly worship bulletins and programs for special events

2. Newsletters
3. Directories
4. Books, pamphlets, and brochures published by the congregation

2. Ownership of Records

All correspondence and records created by persons elected, appointed or employed to act on behalf of the congregation while acting in that capacity, are the property of the congregation held in trust for the use and benefit of the Church of the Brethren. The congregation charges the Stewards Commission with the responsibility and safe care of their records and documents.

F. Church Officers' Duties

All officers shall be members in good standing of the congregation and shall serve faithfully in their respective offices. The Moderator shall be chosen from outside the congregation and shall be an active member in good standing of the Church of the Brethren.

1. The **Moderator** shall be the official head of the congregation but shall recognize the pastor as the spiritual and executive leader. The Moderator shall preside at the Congregational Business Meeting, and perform all other duties that pertain to the office. The Moderator shall be considered an ex-officio member, with voice, but without vote (except in the event of a tie), at all board, commission and committee meetings.

In the event of the Moderator's inability to serve, the church board chair will fill the position.

2. The **Church Clerk** shall keep accurate minutes of the Congregational Business Meeting, the Board, and the Executive Committee. Minutes shall be kept in a volume provided for that purpose and they shall be and remain the property of the congregation. The clerk will do the annual statistical report.

3. The **Treasurer**, who shall be an ex-officio member of the Commission of Stewards and a member of the Executive Committee and the Board, shall keep a book of accounts of the congregation. The Treasurer shall receive the financial secretary's bank deposit slips for all contributions, disburse funds upon proper order of the treasury, make written reports of all transactions monthly to the Board and to the Congregational Business Meeting, or at such intervals as the Board may decide. The Treasurer shall report the general state of finances to the Board on call and shall also submit accounts to an audit annually at the direction of the Board. The Treasurer shall report quarterly and other times as requested to the Commission of Stewards.

4. The **Financial Secretary** shall receive, keep records of, and deposit in the bank for the Treasurer all contributions from the members and other public and private offerings, and all other receipts. At least two persons shall count and verify in writing all public offerings. The second person shall be appointed by the Board.

All financial officers shall give corporate surety, in amount determined by the Board for which premiums shall be paid by the congregation. (This corporate surety is included in the insurance policy maintained by the congregation.)

G. Church Board Functions

The Board shall:

- (1) Fulfill the directives of the Congregational Business Meeting.
- (2) Assign, supervise, and coordinate the work of the Commissions.
- (3) Project long-range planning, set goals, and initiate new programs.
- (4) Interpret rules and procedures for commissions and committees.
- (5) Make all appointments for which the Board is responsible.
- (6) Prepare a ballot for use by the Congregational Business Meeting in electing the Nominating Committee members.
- (7) Fill all vacancies in elective officers occurring between Congregational Business Meetings and fill such other vacancies not otherwise provided for in this constitution or its bylaws.
- (8) Act on recommendations from the Executive Committee on staff vacancies and present recommendations on personnel and terms of employment to the Congregational Business Meeting for all professional staff personnel. Non-professional staff may be employed by the Executive Committee, with approval by the Board.
- (9) Prepare the agenda for the Congregational Business Meeting
- (10) Establish proposals for outreach giving and suggest guidelines to commissions for budget planning.
- (11) Review the proposed budget for presentation to the Congregational Business Meeting.
- (12) Approve and supervise, within the limits established by the Congregational Business Meeting, the expenditures of all funds.
- (13) Provide for an annual audit.
- (14) Allocate and define authority with respect to the establishment of bank accounts and the signing of checks and legal documents.

- (15) Receive, consider, and make disposition of concerns brought by a group or individual.
- (16) Report its activities and actions at the Congregational Business Meetings.
- (17) Bring recommendations to the Congregational Business Meeting when major church policy needs revision or is involved.
- (18) Enlist the help and counsel of the District Executive Minister and/or other district personnel in program planning and handling of special concerns.
- (19) Approve expenditures up to \$1,000.00. Any unbudgeted expenses above \$1,000.00 will need to be approved by a Congregational Business Meeting.

Any unbudgeted non-emergency expense over \$250.00 would require approval of the Church Board.

H. Commission Responsibilities

Detailed responsibilities of each commission are listed in the congregational bylaws.

Each commission shall prepare annually a tentative budget for its program area, which shall be submitted to the Board for use in preparation for the total church budget.

Along with the responsibilities herein listed, additional duties and instructions may be assigned to the commissions by the Board when deemed to be in the best interest of the congregation. The activities of the commission are subject to review by the Board and regular reports shall be made to the Board.

1. Commission on Nurture

The Commission on Nurture shall be responsible for fostering the spiritual life of the congregation through music, worship, education and fellowship.

2. Commission on Witness

The Commission on Witness shall be responsible for directing the congregation's witness to the world through evangelism, church extension, ecumenical relations, missions, social actions, and ministry to the needy.

3. Commission on Stewards

a. The Commission on Stewards shall be the legal trustees of the congregation with the responsibility for acquiring, holding, and conveying property in accordance with the decision of the board and/or congregation.

b. The Commission shall be responsible for the care, protection and maintenance of all church property.

VII FISCAL YEAR AND CHURCH YEAR

The fiscal year for the congregation shall be the same as the calendar year. The church year shall be considered also the same as the calendar year. Salaries and extended contracts shall be negotiated at the regular budget building time for the upcoming year.

VIII BUSINESS MEETINGS

A. The Annual Congregational Business Meeting shall be held in October or November each year. Other regular meetings may be held as determined by the Congregational Business session. Special meetings may be called by the Moderator or the Board upon giving seven days written notice. The date of the annual business meeting and other special business meetings shall be given to the District Executive encouraging the Executive to attend when possible.

B. The Board shall meet quarterly. Special meetings of the Board may be called by the Board Chairman or the Moderator with at least 24 hours advanced notice. In the event of an emergency, a meeting can be called with less than 24 hours advanced notice.

C. Commission and committees shall meet regularly on a bi-monthly basis or as the Board may direct.

D. Adequate advance notice of all business meetings shall be given to the membership.

E. Quorum

1. Although it is desirable to have as many members present as possible for the Congregational Business Meeting, a quorum shall be considered to be those in attendance at a duly publicized and authorized meeting.

2. For meetings of the Board and the commissions, a majority of the elected members shall constitute a quorum.

F. Rules of Order

Unless otherwise specified in these bylaws, Robert Rules of Order shall be the official rules of order for the Congregational Business Meeting and the Board meetings.

G. Amendment/Changes

The constitution and the bylaws of the congregation may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a Congregational Business Meeting. Written notice of the proposed amendment/change must be given at least 30 days prior to the meeting.

IX. BY LAWS

A. Executive Committee

The function of the Executive Committee shall be as follows:

1. Act for the Board between meetings.
2. Meet with the pastor quarterly or more often as needed, in an advisory capacity and serve in maintaining good ministerial relations with the congregation.
3. Recommend qualified personnel to the board for employment as church secretary and/or custodian.
4. Represent the congregation in screening and nominating all professional personnel for employment by the Board and/or by the Congregational Business Meeting, such as the pastor, associate pastor, administrative assistant, parish visitor, youth minister, director of Christian nurture, director of Christian witness, or a minister of music. The employment of the pastor and other professional staff shall be in keeping with approved denominational placement procedures and in consultation with the District Executive.
5. Stipulate carefully and review annually the terms of employment for all employed personnel. When the terms have been mutually accepted, they shall be set forth in writing and considered an agreement between the church and its employees.
6. Define clearly and review periodically the division of responsibility and the lines of authority when there is a multiple staff. Counsel with the pastor and any other employees regarding terms of employment, duties and working relationships.
7. Counsel with the pastor and other staff members regarding vacations, professional growth, and in-service training opportunities.
8. Recruit capable men and women for the ministry, giving them encouragement and guidance during their training and making recommendations to the congregation and district regarding licensing and ordination.
9. Arrange for pulpit supply and other ministerial services during the absence of the pastor.
10. Counsel with the pastor when to cancel a worship service, due to acts beyond human control.
11. Assist the pastor in coordinating and giving balance to the various program aspects within the congregation's organizational structure.

B. Nominating Committee

1. A key committee to the life and work of the church is the Nominating Committee.
2. The committee shall prepare a ballot, which will be approved by the board, for the use of the Congregational Business Meeting in the election of
 - a. Officials of the church
 - b. Board Members

- c. Delegates to District Conference and Annual Conference
- d. Such other officers as required by the Congregational Business Meeting.
- e. As much as possible the ballot shall contain a minimum of two names for each vacancy.

C. Commission on Nurture

The functions of nurture should not be viewed as ends in themselves, but as providing experiences that enable effectiveness in extending the ministry of Christ in today's world. It is important to maintain flexibility and variety in planning wide range of experience(s) that give promise of meeting the varying needs of nurture felt by the members of the congregation.

The Commission's specific functions include:

1. Worship

- a. Coordinate the planning of varied corporate worship experiences.
- b. Plan for seasonal events and special historical celebrations.
- c. Develop proposals and provide guidance for the ministry of music.
- d. Give consideration to the use of fine arts in the congregation's program.
- e. Provide opportunities and suggestions for personal and group meditations or reflections.

2. Education

- a. Provide opportunities and resources for formal study in church school classes, membership classes, short-term courses or school in specific interest areas, training courses for group leaders.
- b. Encourage formal study beyond the congregation by recommending participation in related courses in adult education in community college, in short-term summer schools, or in lay training programs sponsored by church/interchurch agencies.
- c. Provide opportunities and resources for informal study; through clubs, house groups, intercultural groups, occupational groups, community affairs groups, or other small groups, outdoor education efforts, camps, retreats.
- d. Develop a library that offers an adequate guided reading program for all members.
- e. Give consideration to educational values to talkbacks in discussion of sermons.
- f. Encourage the use of audio-visuals in the interpretive-educational tasks.

3. Fellowship

- a. Plan congregational social opportunities.

- b. Give consideration to fellowship occasions for the community surrounding the church.
- c. Provide guidance for needs of specific fellowship groups such as adult, youth, church school classes, clubs, etc.
- d. Develop plans and secure leadership for interest groups such as hobby, parents, recreation, therapy, etc.

D. Commission on Witness

This Commission represents the church's witness to the world, its witness to individuals, to groups, and to society. Its functions help the church to present the claims of Christ upon all persons and upon all social structures of society. It aids the congregation in bringing the Gospel of Christ to all persons and in manifesting God's Kingdom of love, justice, peace, security and freedom among all persons. It assists the church in serving as one of God's instruments in dealing with the social problems and needs of the local community, the nation, the world. It provides channels for the congregation to extend its ministry to those outside its fellowship and in turn to the world.

The Commission's specific functions include:

1. Church Extension and Evangelism

- a. Work with other congregations and the district in developing new congregations.
- b. Discover those persons in the community who are not actively related to a church.
- c. Plan and carry on appropriate forms of evangelism (personal visitation, fellowship, educational, preaching, etc.)
- d. Prepare, encourage, and support members in speaking up for Christian values and concerns in occupation, neighborhood, community, and civic groups.
- e. Make available a brochure introducing the congregation to the community.

2. Social Education and Action

- a. Familiarize the congregation with Brethren social issues.
- b. Send delegates to conferences and seminars on social concerns for purposes of information and training.
- c. Interpret the church's peace position and alternative service, and counsel all young persons regarding draft choices.

3. Social Services

- a. Explain Brethren Volunteer Service to youths and adults, and recruit members for service.

- b. Plan volunteer services projects in the community and congregation: also recruit for summer service projects elsewhere.
- c. Aid and support institutions in the community for the mentally and physically handicapped and needy.
- d. Provide help and counsel to members of the congregation when needed.
- e. Collect material aid for relief abroad and disasters at home
- f. Sponsor overseas people-to-people projects such as student exchanges, resettlements of refugees, and sending members to overseas seminars, work camps and tours.
- g. Promote the use of Brethren publications.

E. Commission of Stewards

The work of the Stewards is directly related to witness and nurture: it is enabling and equipping the mission of the church. It is never mere maintenance.

Basically, the Commission of Stewards should plan for the wise use and development, of the congregation's resources in time, ability, property, and money, individually and corporately, that they may be dedicated to the purpose of God. This commission should work with the Commission on Nurture for study of stewardship, including family money management and the stewardship of giving.

The Commission will need to fulfill the following functions:

1. Stewardship of Financial Resources

- a. Call persons to be good stewards of accumulated possessions.
- b. Administer the funds of the church.
- c. Be concerned for an adequate corporate stewardship of the congregation: including the ratio of resources going to outreach.
- d. Give counsel to the Church Board on anticipated resources and expenditures to annual budget preparation.

2. Stewardship of Property

- a. Act as legal trustees, acquiring, holding and conveying property as decided by the congregation
- b. Supervise the care, maintenance and development of property.
- c. Provide adequate insurance coverage.
- d. Provide adequate equipment for use of the congregation.

3. Records and Documents

- a. Be responsible for safe care of the records and documents of the church.

F. Personnel Tenure

1. The term of office for all elected of the Congregational Business Meeting shall be three years. There shall be no limit on the number of terms an individual may serve.
2. If any board or commission member is absent from meetings without cause for 50% of the meetings, that office will be declared vacant.
3. Approximately one-third of the elected offices shall be elected in any one year.

G. Employed Staff

1. Pastor

The congregation shall employ a pastor when needed, a person whose faith and educational qualities, aptness to teach, preach, counsel, and administer, have been examined in consultation with the appropriate authorities in the Church of the Brethren.

The pastor shall be properly ordained. (In special situation a licentiate, or a Minister from another denomination, may serve upon approval by the District Board.) The pastor shall accept and adhere to the faith and the practices of the Church of the Brethren and the local congregation as set forth in this constitution. The pastor's life and conduct shall witness to Christian faith.

The pastor shall be the spiritual shepherd of the congregation and the executive director of the church program. The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the Board, the commissions and the committees. Normally the pastor shall preach and teach, administer the sacraments, visit, counsel, and in various other ways aid the congregation in worshiping and serving God.

2. Additional Professional Staff

When the congregation has grown to sufficient size the employment of additional trained staff shall be considered so as to assure the continued growth of the congregation and to provide adequate leadership for the parish. Other staff members suggested are a director of Christian nurture, a director of Christian witness, an associate pastor, a minister of music, an administrative assistant, a congregational visitor, a youth minister or others.

3. Office Secretary

The local church shall provide secretarial assistance for the pastor and the church office. Part-time secretarial assistance shall be provided until such time as the workload and financial resources suggest full-time service. The Secretary will serve as Church Clerk if a member of the Church.

4. Custodian

Custodial services shall be provided for the care and supervision of the church buildings and ground.

H. Staff Employment Procedures

1. The terms of employment for all employed staff shall be carefully stipulated and reviewed annually. When the terms have been mutually accepted, such terms shall be set forth in writing on approved forms and shall be considered an agreement between the contracting parties.

2. When there is a multiple staff, the division of responsibility and the lines of authority shall be clearly defined and periodically reviewed by the appropriate church officials. Although there must be close cooperation and harmony between staff members, in the final analysis all personnel are responsible to the congregation for the conduct of their offices.

3. The selection and call of a pastor and other professional staff, as well as the termination of their services to the congregation, shall be done in keeping with approved Church of the Brethren procedures and after seeking the counsel and guidance of the authorized officials of the Church of the Brethren.

4. A two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting in a duly called Congregational Business Meeting shall be regarded as sufficient plurality to express the will of the congregation in extending a call or in voting to continue leadership of a pastor.

5. The office of secretary shall be employed by the Executive Committee in consultation with the Board and Pastor. The office secretary shall be responsible to the pastor.

6. The custodian shall be employed by the Executive Committee in consultation with the Board and the Pastor and be responsible to the Commission of Stewards.

This Constitution shall become effective, when it receives at least two-thirds approval of all those voting at a duly called Congregational Business Meeting.

Date: 09/25/1994	Adopted
10/20/2000	Revised & Approved by Congregational Business Meeting
08/04/2002	Revised & Approved by Congregational Business Meeting
10/ /2006	Revised & Approved by Congregational Business Meeting
11/ /2008	Revised & Approved by Congregational Business Meeting
10/30/2011	Revised & Approved by Congregational Business Meeting
11/5/2017	Revised & Approved by Congregational Business Meeting