

**MINUTES OF BROTHERHOOD COUNCIL**  
held at  
INDIANA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, MARION, INDIANA  
June 5, 2018

The 2018 Annual Conference of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church (New Conference) was held this year at the Indiana Wesleyan University. This setting proved again to be a very suitable place for our Conference, and our Western hosts provided for us with kindness and loving hospitality. While the hour of our arrival on Friday was a little rainy, the remainder of the days of the meeting offered very favorable weather and created a very pleasant atmosphere for all.

The series of services began on Saturday, June 2, with preaching services at 10 am, and concluded Tuesday evening, June 5.

Following 3 days of worship, the Brotherhood Council Meeting was held on Tuesday, June 5. Following is a record of that council.

**Devotional Service**

The Tuesday Council began at 9:00 am. A Conference Committee of 9 elders had been selected Saturday afternoon to preside over this meeting. After an opening regarding the burdens of life, devotional thoughts were drawn from John 14:12-18. Teaching regarding the Holy Spirit; His work in our lives, and how we can yield to His working. The moderator then offered appropriate introductory comments before entering into the business of the meeting.

**Report on Marriages and Divorce**

Marriage is a divinely-sanctioned institution that God intended for the blessing of humanity in this life, as well as a portrait of His relationship with His redeemed people -- both in the present and in future glory. There are certain distinctive features in a God-approved marriage, and they include the following:

1. Marriage is intended to be one man and one woman for life.
2. Neither party has a former or current spouse still living.
3. Both parties have given their consent to marriage.
4. Both parties have made a clear commitment to each other.
5. The marriage commitment has been publicly acknowledged.

Humanity, on the other hand, has corrupted the view and teachings of God on what marriage is intended to be, and cultural norms regarding marriage vary greatly around the globe and across the centuries. God has recognized distortions created by human wanderings and refers to them in Scripture as marriages, yet they clearly are not blessed or honored by Him.

It is important that born-again individuals rightly divide the Word of God and use His inspired counsel to pattern their lives for His glory. Entanglements resulting from using societal and cultural viewpoints relative to marriage, instead of God's standards, result in great grief and turmoil, and in some cases eternal damnation. One ought always to be on safe ground with God and never to be in a compromised or insecure place.

Our counsel to this brotherhood of churches is:

**Wherein a husband desires to reunite with a wife who divorced him and married another, we believe the Scriptures require that they live separated and celibate. They should remain faithful in needful ways to those with whom they have made covenants, being ready, when necessary, to provide material support and in all things showing mutual respect and godly character. We encourage the congregation where these individuals reside to assist them and offer further counsel as needed.**

There are several considerations derived from Biblical truths that provide a basis for this counsel. Four of them warrant special mention, and each of them arrives at a similar end.

**First Consideration:** The Sanctity of a Vow

God requires every vow to be honored. Central to marriage is a commitment, or vow, of mutual fidelity between husband and wife. Divorce does not nullify the vow made before God between spouses, and the Bible makes no provision for the annulment of a marriage. To break the marriage vow is a sin against God, as well as against the other spouse.

The individual who leaves a spouse and marries another promises the same fidelity and now has two mutually-exclusive vows to fulfill. To reunite with the first spouse would violate the vow made to the second spouse. The only way before God to honor both vows is to remain in a state of singlehood.

**Second Consideration:** The Nature of Adultery

Adultery is the forsaking of a vow, or commitment, of love to a spouse in favor of another lover. Whenever "another love" is introduced, whether in heart or actuality, adultery occurs. Adultery is not only a sin against the original spouse, but it is also a sin against God who observes the conduct and the wayward heart. The entanglements of adultery may be many, but there are three common circumstances that warrant particular mention:

A. Adultery may involve unfaithfulness toward a spouse through a relationship with another person to

whom there is no marriage. When one sins against a spouse by seeking another lover in this manner, the spouse who was wronged may receive the offender back since there has been no vow of continuing love made to another. Repentance, forgiveness, grace, and mercy are magnified when an original marriage is restored after such a trial of unfaithfulness.

B. Adultery may involve unfaithfulness toward a spouse through a relationship with another person to whom there is a marriage established. When one sins against a spouse and marries another, the original spouse may not receive them back again, as another vow of continuing love has now been made to another individual. To break the second vow and return to the first spouse causes both to commit adultery against the second spouse. To honor God, those involved in such a relationship should separate and live in singlehood.

C. Adultery may involve one not previously married who then marries a divorced person with a living spouse. This becomes an adulterous desecration of the vow originally made to the other living spouse. To honor God, individuals involved in such a relationship should separate and live in singlehood.

Third Consideration: Jesus and Moses

Jesus stated to the people of His day, regarding marriage, that God made them male and female and that these two individuals were to cleave together. He also stated, concerning divorce, that from the beginning it was not so. He further explained that Moses' precept allowed divorce because of the "hardness of your hearts."

This Mosaic precept was an allowance for divorce upon the specific condition that uncleanness was found in the woman, whereupon she could go and become another man's wife. It also stipulated the first husband was not to take her back again, even upon the death of the second husband. Such an action was a moral sin and abomination before God.

Jesus taught that God's divine intent for marriage was "from the beginning." He further emphasized the sacred standard God holds for marriage. Moral sins identified in connection with marriage in the Old Testament are not reduced or lessened in the New. Conversely, Jesus often expanded morality beyond physical actions to the root sins of the heart. To honor God's high standard, one should not take back a spouse who has married another, but both individuals should live in a state of singlehood.

Fourth Consideration: God's Recognition of Adulterous Marriages

Jesus clearly taught that remarriage after divorce, while the former spouse is still living, is adultery. He said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a

woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." He also said, "Whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

Some have suggested that God does not consider a marriage that follows divorce to be an actual marriage. There is, however, no support in the Scriptures for this thought. Jesus clearly recognized adulterous marriage relationships as marriages, referring to them as such and to the individuals involved as being husbands or wives. It is preferable to say that God only "honors" or "blesses" the non-adulterous marriage. It is not accurate to say that God fails to recognize an adulterous marriage. Thus, any form of adulterous or perverted marriage should be abandoned, and the individuals should live in singlehood.

Concluding Thoughts

It has been our desire to study and present these truths in the spirit of humility and love. It has been our intention to gently and kindly express the principles considered. In our effort to rightly divide the Word of Truth, we acknowledge we are fallible men subject to the frailties of the flesh.

We feel great compassion for all who may find themselves or their loved ones in difficult circumstances and broken relationships, and we extend our love to those affected in any way. We are confident the blessing of God will rest on all who walk in His ways and uphold His standards. Our God is holy. May the Lord give us strength and enable us to encourage and bless each other in keeping His ways.

**Question:** Will you approve this Report?

**Answer:** Yes.

(Please see Appendix following the record of this Council for the Scriptures Considered for this Report).

Query from Cascade Valley, WA

While the answer to the 2013 query on rebaptism has given sufficient direction on our position with our members who request rebaptism, and with trine immersion being our universally accepted method for new conversions, it would be helpful to have clarity regarding our position on believers who wish to unite with our fellowship but have been baptized by a different mode. The last paragraph of the query states, "We realize different circumstances can arise in each district, calling for a need for each congregation to have the freedom to biblically decide each case based on its needs." Some have interpreted this paragraph to apply to the whole document, but others feel it only applies to our members requesting rebaptism. To clarify the answer given to the query from 2013, do our individual congregations have liberty to use biblical

discernment in receiving or denying believers who are applying for membership based on the testimony of their lives and commitment to function within the scriptural authority of our churches, instead of the mode of their baptism?

**Answer of Subcommittee:**

Trine-immersion baptism has been practiced by our brethren from the inception of the Brethren movement more than three centuries ago, and we understand it to be the mode practiced from the earliest days of the Christian church. It is a biblical mode and seems to harmonize the various Scriptural passages on baptism more effectively and completely than any other. We do not believe we will move closer to Christ and His teachings through the adoption of any other mode than the one currently practiced.

In many cases, devout and obviously born-again individuals have been baptized with another mode. Their sincerity as genuine believers is not questioned, and neither is their status in redemption. The question addressed in this query has only to do with their admission into fellowship in this brotherhood of churches.

The Bible teaches a believer's baptism only, and no allowance is made for any other. Jesus clearly taught, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16) Peter's writing on baptism states, "Baptism (is) ... the answer of a good conscience toward God." (1 Peter 3:21) From these passages it is clear that one must first believe and that one must be able to give an answer before baptism has any merit in God's sight. Christian baptism must be applied only to those who first believe.

The New Testament word for baptism is the Greek word baptizo, which means to immerse, to submerge, or to overwhelm. The word is derived from the Greek root bapto, which means to dip, as in Luke 16:24 and John 13:26. A careful study of the New Testament teachings on baptism would seem to lead the sincere inquirer to the conclusion that baptism means to immerse.

Immersionists practice baptisms in a variety of ways. Some immerse three times (trine immersion), while others immerse once; some immerse with a forward action, and others practice a backwards action in baptism. There are various Scriptures, including Matthew 28:19-20 and Romans 6:5, which strongly support a forward, three-fold action in baptism, as practiced in our fellowship and by the church from antiquity.

The counsel given by this brotherhood in 2013 was intended to provide unity of direction. It was well-intentioned, but it has been variously understood. We desire to provide a clear answer to the question in the 2018 query, to be faithful in upholding Scripture where it speaks, and to be charitable where it does not. We desire to be patient and welcoming to those who

seek to fellowship with us and to be respectful of other Christian fellowships, as well.

To address the current question, we offer the following eight statements:

1) New converts among us will be baptized using our current mode of trine immersion.

2) Every converted individual must receive a believer's baptism.

3) A previously-baptized believer requesting fellowship with us is strongly exhorted that baptism means immersion, and the Scriptural basis for immersion baptism is to be clearly set before them.

4) A previously-baptized believer requesting fellowship with us is to be instructed from the Scriptures supporting a three-fold action in immersion, and a request is to be made for that individual to sincerely consider this Biblical teaching.

5) If a previously-baptized believer, for whatever reason, does not feel to receive the counsel of this brotherhood of churches on trine-immersion baptism, the local church receiving the request for fellowship is to be voiced as to what counsel she would provide them.

6) In the event that any previously-baptized believer would be given membership into this brotherhood of churches without having received trine-immersion baptism, it is to be understood that the granting of a church letter to them, if such should ever occur, would not privilege the recipient church to reexamine the matter of their Christian baptism.

7) In the event that any previously-baptized believer would be given membership into this brotherhood of churches without having received trine-immersion baptism, the counsel given in the second paragraph of the answer to Query #1 of 2013 is to be heeded.

8) In the event that any previously-baptized believer would be given membership into this brotherhood of churches without having received trine-immersion baptism, some suitable modification may be needed when asking them the first question on the Annual Visit.

**Question:** Will you approve this Query with the answer of the Subcommittee?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Letter of Explanation From The Elders  
Sent to Assist in Virginia**

May 24, 2018.

To the Conference Committee of 2018,

Regarding the 2017 conference committee request of the disunity in Virginia, a national Elders meeting was appointed for September 2017. From this meeting in September two of the Elders from Shenandoah District, Darrell Boyd and Billy Boone named Glen Landes and Lowell Filbrun to assist them in bringing

peace to the concerns of Elder Leonard Hubbard and to the members in Virginia.

After phone calls, communications and prayers between the five Elders, Leonard Hubbard, Darrell Boyd, Billy Boone, Glen Landes, and Lowell Filbrun, efforts were made by each to conform to the recommendation of the adjoining elder paper of March 2017.

On November 6, 2017 the two assisting Elders, Glen Landes and Lowell Filbrun met with the three Shenandoah Elders, Leonard Hubbard, Darrell Boyd and Billy Boone. After devotions and prayer, the papers of acknowledgment and forgiveness were read and discussed. With this came confession, tears, reconciliation, a peaceful coming together, and the presence, comfort and miraculous power of the Holy Spirit was sincerely felt and experienced by all present.

A written and signed commitment from the members who were out of communion was read saying, "We recognize the error of forming a district when not receiving the visit according to historical practice. We are sorry for all the pain we have caused all the members. We also are asking forgiveness for all the offenses we have caused. Will you please forgive us?" All the members of Shenandoah were voiced that evening to see if they would lay all the past matters down and move forward together with two districts in a five-year grace and healing period, after which the adjoining elders will be available to help in further assistance. This suggestion carried by a majority voice.

Later, Leonard Hubbard of Covenant Valley, requested an oversight Elder. The selection was Brother Everett Wray, the adjoining elders were then voiced to honor their request allowing them to make this choice.

We do not feel our suggestions and assistance were without error and acknowledge that this was not the normal way to start a new district. We do not recommend this be repeated in the future without an adjoining elders organizational meeting. We acknowledge this did not meet every one's expectation of what we were asked to do. We are sorry for the pain this has caused and are begging for your forgiveness.

We all know when a bone in our body is broken it takes time to heal, likewise when we hurt each other, healing many times is slower than it should be, forbearance, repentance and forgiveness can always be improved on by all humans, especially those in the house hold of faith. Jesus could say, during a storm, "Peace be still," and the storm settled. May we all reach out with love and kindness to each of our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as Jesus taught do unto others as we would like to be treated. Then we can truly experience the peace of God that passes all understanding.

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ

forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Col 3:13-14

Your servants, Glen Landes, Lowell Filbrun

### **Appeal from the Conference Committee of 2018**

Concerning the attempts toward reconciliation that were made by two elders from Ohio, and the resulting establishment of a new district in the state of Virginia:

There have been many efforts made toward unity that have fallen short in the past several years. The recent effort toward resolution has also not brought a satisfactory peace among all the members in our brotherhood.

We confess that we have had difficulty as a body of elders being completely united in our efforts. This is an ongoing concern, and we will be continuing our efforts toward unity.

We make an appeal that this Brotherhood accept the expressions of the brethren that were sent to Virginia. This matter longs for rest, and it is the desire of the members in the local area to move on and attempt to heal the differences that may exist. May the Lord bless our people as we work together in love.

The Conference Committee of 2018

### **Polity Paper (Part 3 of the 4-part Document)**

#### **III. Polity**

Polity is a term used to describe church organization, government, and collective practice. It is a general outline set forth to assist us as we work together in a unified manner. Polity is not the ultimate goal of the redeemed, but merely provides a framework wherein godliness may be cultivated; brotherly love is that which gives power to the witness of God's people. For this reason, the need for genuine brotherhood in our local churches is emphasized, where relationships of sincere love and care toward brethren and sisters are felt and seen. Such Biblical relationships of brotherhood must first exist in the local setting before they can be enjoyed in an extended setting.

The following statements are set forth for the Old German Baptist Brethren Church (New Conference) to further develop the Polity Statement accepted on July 3, 2009. This is an outline of generally accepted collective practice and is given with the hope that brethren and sisters being led by the Spirit will give themselves to one another in humility. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" (2 Cor 3:6).

## Local Brotherhood

**A. The Local Church.** The church functioning in a local setting is a primary place where the blessing and glory of God is to be encountered, and where the vibrant relationships of true Christian experience are developed and nurtured. It is here that brotherhood is lived, where the reality of being children in the family of God takes on a personal meaning for each member as mutual love and accountability are shared among brothers and sisters. It is in this environment that Christ Jesus becomes a visible manifestation of the Gospel. Ac 2:46-47; Eph 3:21; Phil 1:27; James 2:2

**1. Decorum.** Scripture teaches that there is propriety and order within the local assembly. In an atmosphere of love, dignity, and respect, the Holy Spirit labors in the hearts of brethren and sisters to knit them together, that the body may increase unto the edifying of itself in love. 1 Cor 14:26, 40; 1 Tim 3:15; Titus 1:5

**2. Members.** Members of the local church are those who have responded to the call to be born again, have been baptized by trine immersion, and continue to walk in faith and obedience to the Word of God. As a part of this fellowship, they are willing to live in harmony with the agreements of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church (New Conference). As participants of the local church, members are accountable to the congregation and willingly accept and submit to Biblical counsel and/or discipline. Matt 18:15-17; Ac 2:41-42, 5:13-14; Rom 12:5; Eph 4, 5:21

**3. Districts.** Each local church is situated in a geographic area with mutually agreed-upon boundaries. Members residing within each district place themselves under the leadership of that congregation and participate in all the responsibilities of the church. (At times boundary exceptions may be made for appropriate reasons when mutually agreed upon by the affected congregations.)

**B. Leadership.** Leadership in the church must follow the Biblical model, where a Christ-like ministry is emphasized in shepherding and teaching the flock. The Lord will bless His people through leaders of such character. Ac 6:1-7; Eph 4:11-16; 1 Tim 3; 2 Tim 2:2; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-11

**1. Elders, Ministers, and Deacons.** Elders, ministers, and deacons comprise the leadership of the local church. Each congregation determines their own needs and, heeding Biblical qualifications, selects from among themselves Spirit-filled men to labor in their behalf. Brethren called to serve in the preaching

ministry, as they gain experience and are found faithful in their calling, are eventually given more responsibility. Ultimately, with the approval of their congregation and the elders of adjoining districts, they are ordained as elders. 1 Tim 3:1-13

**2. Presiding Elder.** Each congregation has an elder who is primarily responsible for its functional and spiritual oversight. He counsels with his fellow ministers and deacons, and with the church, in order to shepherd and direct them in the ways of God. While it may sometimes become necessary for a local church to reach outside its own membership in calling for a presiding elder, it is usually preferable for him to reside among the members.

**3. Responsibilities.** The Spirit calls leaders in His church to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and to be godly examples in every area of life. The primary calling of ministers is to preach the Word and address spiritual needs, while that of deacons is to oversee natural needs. Brethren called to these responsibilities work together in such needful areas as prayer, care for the fatherless and widows, visiting, anointing of the sick, counsel, communion, and discipline.

**C. Vital Biblical Functions.** Certain Biblical functions are vital for the spiritual growth of each congregation. By the Spirit's enabling power the local church endeavors to meet the needs of the members in the following areas: 1 Cor 12; Eph 4:11-16; Titus 1:5a

**1. Worship.** Worship in a collective capacity is commanded in Scripture and is crucial for spiritual growth and development in the church. Each local assembly has regularly appointed times for public worship, and all members are encouraged to arrange their lives to make regular attendance a priority. Ps. 111:1, 149:1; John 4:23-24; Ac 14:27; Heb 2:12, 10:25

**2. Council.** Collective council is the place for consideration of the natural and spiritual needs of the congregation and its witness within the local community. Under the established leadership of its ministers and deacons, each congregation has regularly appointed times to consider any needs presented and make attempts to lovingly care for them. Matt 18:17; Ac 15:4, 6, 22; 1 Cor 6:4

**3. Communion.** Each congregation comes together, at least once each year, to be refreshed in a love-feast occasion and to participate in the communion ordinances of the house of God. This time of remembrance is commanded by the Savior for His church and each member in good standing makes an effort to participate. Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-28

**4. Discipleship.** One of the great purposes of the Holy Spirit in the local assembly is the nurturing of

spiritual growth. The continuing development and perfecting of the saints, as well as the discipling of seekers, may be enhanced through many avenues, including teaching sessions, Bible studies, and other efforts. Discipleship that leads to growth in godliness is a work in which every member with their unique giftings can engage. John 13:33-34; Ac 11:26; Rom 15:1-7; 1 Cor 12:25-26; Gal 6:1-2; Col 3:12-17; 1 Peter 3:8

**5. Accountability and Discipline.** As brethren and sisters meet with issues of sin, discipline, and correction, primary consideration is given to Matthew 5:23-24 and Matthew 18:10-22 in affecting reconciliation between members. There are additional Scriptural principles pertinent for restoration on a congregational level. Accountability and discipline are to be exercised with great carefulness and discretion. Matt 5:23-24; 18:10-22; Rom 15:14; 1 Cor 5; Gal 6:1-2; 1 Thess 5:12; 2 Thess 3:15; 1 Tim 5:20

**D. Regular Worship Services.** Stability and blessing result when each member, whether a part of the local brotherhood or the extended brotherhood, knows what to anticipate as they assemble for public, Sunday worship. These services begin with singing, brief exhortation and prayer, and continue with a Biblical message, suitable following testimony, and a closing prayer. Hymns are sung at appropriate times throughout the service, unaccompanied with musical instrumentation. Preaching emphasizes the centrality of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Scriptures. Reading is generally from the King James Version of the Bible. A Collection of Hymns and Sacred Songs is the hymnal used. (Other times of devotion may utilize other hymnals and be conducted with a different format.) Neh 8:8; Ps 100:2; Mark 16:15; Ac 8:35; Rom 10:14-15; 1 Cor 1:18-21, 14:29, 33, 40; Col 3:16; 2 Tim 3:16-17, 4:2; 1 Peter 1:25

### Extended Brotherhood

**A. The Extended Church.** As brotherhood is a blessing to be experienced at the local level, so it is also a blessing to be experienced as an interconnected body of churches at an extended level. The Scriptures speak of a oneness, love, communion, and interdependence experienced between the local churches of the Apostolic period. In a world with many divergent and deceptive teachings, brethren and sisters united on Scriptural understandings can fellowship and commune together – trusting, encouraging, and building each other up in faith and godliness. 1 Cor 16:19; Gal 1:2; Col 4:16; 1 Thess 2:14

**1. New Conference Churches.** The New Conference churches are congregations who are willing to support the mutual agreements of the Old

German Baptist Brethren Church (New Conference) and to work unitedly with the extended brotherhood. By representing at Annual Conference, either by messenger or letter, a congregation is declaring each year that it is willing to labor harmoniously with the extended brotherhood.

**2. New Districts.** When a new district is to be formed, brethren make a request to their current home district and upon approval of their request, mutually agree upon geographic boundaries. The home district and its adjoining elders are involved in this organizational process. The members of a newly-formed district select a presiding elder who can further shepherd their establishment.

**3. Church Plants.** Planting churches in new localities is an effective means of enlarging the witness and influence of the Gospel. Church plants need to have enough members to be viable, and express a clear and unified purpose as they form. Members relocating into new areas are encouraged to place their current membership in one district as they work through this organizational process. The elders from adjoining congregations are to offer support in these efforts.

**B. Basic Procedures.** Certain key procedures are to be upheld by each local congregation within the extended brotherhood.

**1. Forms.** The Forms of Practice accepted at the 2012 Annual Conference, when followed within each local congregation, promote a consistent brotherhood practice and provide a pattern for teaching. These forms address practices such as baptism, the annual visit, anointing, election and advancement of church officials, and the keeping of ordinances at the love-feast. (See Appendix A, Forms of Practice.)

**2. Church Letters.** When a brother or sister in good standing with their local church relocates into the geographic bounds of another district, a church letter is sent recommending them to the care and oversight of the new congregation. This practice attempts to establish ongoing support and accountability both to the relocating member and to the local churches of the brotherhood wherever this letter is received. Ac 18:27; Rom 16:1-2; 2 Cor 3:1

**C. District Relationships.** All congregations in the extended brotherhood support and uphold one another, endeavoring to work together in harmony with each other in the promotion of unity and mutual respect. Col 4:16

**1. Adjoining Districts.** Congregations with adjacent geographic boundaries are considered to be adjoining. In this relationship, they have great opportunity to uphold each other in the many practical

aspects of faithfulness and fellowship. In cases of special need, and by mutual consent, other congregations may also be considered adjoining.

**2. Ministerial Support.** An atmosphere of brotherly love is promoted as the ministry of one congregation actively supports the worship services and (when summoned) the council settings of other congregations. This expression of brotherhood presents a united testimony to the world around us and promotes harmony throughout the extended brotherhood.

**3. Assistance to Congregations.** If disorders or grievances arise in a local assembly that cannot be resolved in a peaceable manner, that congregation should call the elders from the adjoining districts to assist them as they seek to restore peace and unity.

**D. Leadership Accountability.** Stable and godly leadership is essential to both a vibrant local brotherhood and to a well-functioning extended brotherhood. Those tasked with shepherding and caring for the various flocks are to be closely linked as they walk in the Spirit with each other. Consequently, whenever leadership is being installed, or when a brother in leadership is to be examined by the local church for his actions, the elders from the adjoining districts are to be invited to assist or preside over such matters and to give counsel. Ac 20:17-38; Gal 2:11,14; 1 Tim 5:17,19-21; Heb 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5

**E. Brotherhood Harmony.** Christian brotherhood is experienced and maintained as each member humbly exercises in the power of the Holy Spirit with love and goodwill toward every other member. 1 Peter 1:22, 2:17, 3:8; 1 John 3:16

**1. Consideration in Local Decisions.** Each local assembly, as they make decisions, should consider in love how their choices may affect others within the larger brotherhood. When a local issue may create conflict with other congregations, wisdom and love necessitate bringing the subject to Annual Conference for consideration by the extended brotherhood.

**2. Queries.** Questions or issues that a local church considers necessary to present to the brotherhood's Annual Conference are carried by their appointed messengers and properly placed into the hands of the brotherhood council. (Consideration should be given to the possibility of placing unnecessary burdens on future generations.) Ac 15:2, 28

**3. Striving for Unity.** The Scriptures teach the need to patiently tarry one for another in order that the Holy Spirit may unite God's people. To peaceably resolve issues when differences occur, the minority willingly submits to the majority, so as to assist in

achieving unanimity. "... Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." Ps 133; 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 4:13-16; 1 Peter 5:5

**F. Annual Conference.** Annual Conference is a yearly gathering of New Conference churches for the purposes of worship, Christian fellowship, and consideration of issues that affect the extended brotherhood. Ac 15:4-6

**1. Brotherhood Participation.** Participation within a brotherhood requires willing service and godly submission. The decisions of the Annual Conference, as we counsel together, are used as guidelines for local churches.

**2. Messengers.** Local churches send messengers to each Annual Conference. When circumstances prevent a congregation from sending two messengers, it either sends a single messenger or submits a letter stating its willing service and submission to the brotherhood. Messengers are brethren who are in good standing, who honor the Word of God, and who promote brotherhood unity. It is generally best to give first consideration to those serving as ministers and to respect those ministers who are more experienced.

**3. Conference Committee.** The Conference Committee is a group of nine elders chosen annually from among the messengers present at Annual Conference. The new committee chooses its own moderator, secretary, and reading clerk. The duty of this committee is to oversee the matters of the business portion of that year's conference. (Ministers who are not messengers facilitate the messenger body's selection of the Conference Committee.)

**4. Conference Business.** Matters that are felt necessary to consider at Annual Conference may be presented in the form of a letter, query, or report from either a New-Conference church or a committee authorized by Conference. Such matters are to be properly placed into the hands of the Conference Committee, who decides how to process each article of business.

**5. Subcommittees.** Queries received by the Conference Committee are delegated to subcommittees comprised of the messengers. Each subcommittee selects its own foreman and secretary, and has the privilege of proposing a direct answer to the query, suggesting it be resolved locally, or recommending it be laid down.

**6. Resolution of Queries.** During the brotherhood council, a query is read with the proposed answer from the subcommittee. The messengers from the submitting congregation then explain the origin of the question, followed by the subcommittee foreman's

explanation of their labors. The assembly is then given opportunity to discuss the matter and is voiced for a decision. After an attempt to pass the subcommittee's answer, there may be a need for additional discussion or an alternate answer. If necessary, the issue may be laid down or deferred to a subsequent time.

**7. Committee of Arrangements.** In order to facilitate the Annual Conference, a Committee of Arrangements (COA) is selected by the hosting congregations or region. It is the responsibility of this committee to arrange for the selection of a location, oversee the financing of the meeting, and ensure that responsibilities for hosting the meeting are delegated among the members. Requests for significant changes in the conference format (either by the COA or others) should be submitted to the brotherhood assembly.

**Question:** Will you approve this Polity Paper?  
**Answer:** Yes.

### **Brotherhood Service Committee Report**

Marion, Indiana  
June 1, 2018

To the Annual Conference of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church—New Conference:

The Brotherhood Service Committee wishes to commend our young people for their faithfulness to non-resistant principles taught by our Lord in every avenue of their lives.

It is still the responsibility of all young men to be registered with the Selective Service System within 30 days of their 18th birthday. Failure to do so may result in a letter and/or fine from Selective Service System. Some states have automatic registration via driver license. If in doubt or there are any questions, contact your district CO Advisor for help with registration process.

The current balance in the Brotherhood Service Committee checking account is: \$ 9,075.63

#### **CASP Update**

We had a successful CASP project in 2018 which was completely funded by your generosity. We are open to a CASP project in 2019, providing we have sufficient interest among staff and draft-age young men. We are committed to our pilot projects with CASP and Selective Service, and encourage our young men between 18-25 years of age to participate in a project, if possible. Contact your local CO advisor of your willingness to participate.

Thank you to all participants, donors and others for your continued support and prayer.

The current balance in the CASP fund is: \$ 2,345.79.

We encourage members to support future CASP projects by sending donations to the Brethren Charity Fund, earmarked for CASP Fund.

Please continue to pray for the continued peace of this nation and the freedom to worship and practice as we understand the scripture. We encourage each to continue to love our fellow man as Christ taught us to do.

Brotherhood Service Committee

**Question:** Will you approve this report?

**Answer:** Yes.

### **Website Advisory Committee** **Annual Report**

June 2, 2018

Greetings of grace and peace to the brothers and sisters at the 2018 Annual Conference. Following is a summary of the activities of the Website Advisory Committee during the past year.

Since going live, the reformatted website has been a blessing and, in some cases, a challenge as we endeavor to meet the various needs of those using the site. We appreciate the input received from site users and encourage future communication with the Advisory Committee and Webmasters. We also encourage patience and understanding as we balance requests for improved functionality for the needs of our diverse user base with the constraints of time, technology and financial stewardship.

Over the past year, there have been 77,607 site visits by 18,697 users from 89 countries and all 50 states. Those visits break down as follows:

- Calendar feature: 90,703 pageviews
- Sermons feature: 69,691 pageviews
- News feature: 62,459 pageviews
- About feature: 40,006 pageviews
- Resources feature: 12,424 pageviews

Our efforts over the past year have focused on enhancing users' site navigation experience by improving the Congregations and Sermons pages. The sermon repository is a work in progress for which we thank the Webmasters and local district contacts for their diligent efforts. Over the past few months we have worked on improving the filtering system to assist those who are searching for specific sermons and subject matter. We are also working with a third party vendor to review the structure of content on the website.

The Advisory Committee thanks the brotherhood congregations for their generous financial support over the past year. To cover the cost of on-going site maintenance and improved functionality we request funds of \$7.00/member. Please send funds to Brethren Charity Fund, Inc. P.O. Box 365, Brookville, Ohio 45309

Brother Grant Fullmer's term of service expired last August, and we have chosen Brother Tim Deaton as the committee Chairman. We have also chosen Brother Leonard Meador as Treasurer.

Our desire is that the brotherhood website will be a blessing to our members as well as others around the world who are seeking to know more about Jesus Christ. In the past year we have received over thirty requests for spiritual guidance and information about our brotherhood. To this end we labor and trust God for the fruit of those labors.

The Website Advisory Committee

**Question:** Will you approve this report?

**Answer:** Yes.

### **The Scheduling Committee Report**

Peace and love to all in Jesus' precious name. Once again we have felt God's presence and the wooing of the Holy Ghost as we have met for another season of worship and fellowship. May the almighty God of heaven continue to bless us.

The Ohio districts will be hosting the 2019 Conference at Cedarville University, May 25th-28'.

The Northwest districts have agreed to host the 2020 Annual Conference. The date and location is yet to be decided.

The Kansas districts along with our members in New Mexico, have agreed to host the 2021 Annual Conference, Lord willing. Date and location to be decided.

We extend a hearty thank-you to Indiana Wesleyan

University and all their staff for all their labors and hospitality to us in making this conference a memorable time for us. God bless!

In behalf of the Scheduling Committee,

Rick Kingery, Secretary

**Question:** Will you approve this report?

**Answer:** Yes.

### **Conclusion**

The Brotherhood Council Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm after appropriate closing thoughts and a hymn of thanksgiving and praise. Many lingered for awhile and offered fond parting expressions to each other. We returned to our homes encouraged. God has been with us in our services and our efforts toward unity; providing for our needs in every way. How can we be silent when our God has been so faithful in His provision for us all?

In behalf of the Brotherhood,

Conference Committee -- Ron Bowman, Darrell Boyd, Galen Flory, Norm Layman, Dennis Wray, Mark Grover (moderator), Lowell Miller (secretary), Randy Brubaker (reading clerk), and Larry Bower (assistant reading clerk).

(Please see Appendix below for the "Scriptures Considered" portion of the Report on Marriages and Divorce.)

## SCRIPTURES CONSIDERED – MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

### I. God's design for marriage

#### **A. In the beginning**

- Gen 2:18-24 God and Adam's unified understanding
  - God said it was not good for the first man to be alone. A suitable partner was needed for companionship and procreation.
  - The account of God making the woman indicates that she was taken from the side of man and designed to be a suitable (compatible) help to him.
  - "Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" indicates the oneness God designed in the compatible union of man and woman.
  - Leaving and cleaving is an important part of the marriage relationship.
  - God's design is that when a man leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife, He accounts them as one flesh.
  - This Scripture indicates marriage was instituted by God at the time of Creation, before the fall of man, and is used many times in the Bible as a foundation for later Biblical teaching on marriage.

#### **B. The sanctity of marriage**

- Ex 20:14 His moral law given
  - The seventh of the Ten Commandments forbids adultery, as did Jesus.
  - This law of God identifies adultery as wickedness and a sin worthy of His wrath.
  - This law of God identifies one of God's moral principles, indicating it is something very important to Him.
- Lev 20:10-13 Violations of His moral law have consequences
  - Transgression of the moral laws of God required swift punishment under the Law of Moses.
  - Adultery, incest, and homosexuality required the penalty of death.
  - The severity of the punishment reveals God's hatred of these sins.
- Lev 21:7-15 His heart concerning the priesthood
  - Priests were required to be sanctified and pure in all their marriage and family relationships and could not marry a divorced woman or a harlot.
  - The High Priest was to marry only a virgin.
- Num 30:1-16 His heart concerning vows
  - In all these precepts, it is emphasized that what we say, and what we vow, matters before God, and we are held accountable. (See also: Deut 23:21-23; Ecc 5:4-6).

#### **C. The consecration of marriage -- no marriage with the heathen**

- Deut 7:1-4 Teaching on and consequences foretold
- Ezra 10:1-19, 44 Consequences realized and measures taken
- Neh 13:23-27 Seeing the result and making intentional resolves
  - Marriage was to be a holy union, and those within the covenant were not to marry with those outside the covenant.
  - In order to maintain separation from ungodly, heathen peoples around them, those in Israel who were living in violation of God's law were required to separate from their heathen wives and children.
  - There are times when God is willing for families to be separated, such as when the state of marriage is adulterous.
  - In that day, the issue was spiritual adultery in marrying the heathen. In our day, the issue is adultery from marriage to someone who has a living former spouse.

### II. Moses' allowance

- Deut 24:1-4 His divorce and remarriage provision
  - Under the Mosaic law, when a man had taken a wife and found some uncleanness in her (nakedness or shameful immorality), he was permitted to give her a writing of divorcement.
  - This bill of divorcement was a document the man would write out himself and give to his wife to take with her.
  - The woman could then go become another man's wife after her first husband divorced her.
  - The woman could never become the first man's wife again, even if the second husband died, because she was now defiled.
  - It was an abomination before God (something God hates or detests) for the first husband to take the defiled wife back under these circumstances.
  - To take back the defiled woman caused the land to sin.
  - Though the Scripture doesn't detail why she was considered defiled, the following possibilities exist:
    - Uncleanness was found in her.
    - The first husband had previously rejected her.
    - She had afterward married another man.
    - Some combination of these.

- This Scripture was in controversy in Jesus' day, but when our Lord was questioned about it by the Pharisees, He said, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." (Matt 19:8) Notice also Mark 10:5-6: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female."

### **III. God's relationship with Israel and Judah -- an allegory of the marriage relationship**

#### **A. A love relationship**

- Isa 54:1-6 His relationship illustrated
  - God's relationship with Israel is likened unto a marriage relationship.
- Hos 1-3 His love for Israel and Judah
  - This passage allegorically portrays God's love for Israel and Judah, despite their unfaithfulness.
  - Hosea was instructed by God to take Gomer, an immoral woman, to be his wife.
  - Jezreel was Hosea's son; it is not clear whether Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi were Hosea's.
  - Gomer left the marriage relationship with Hosea for immorality (adultery) with other men.
  - Hosea desired Gomer's return to himself, and God instructed him to act on this desire.
  - In all of this, Gomer (also a picture of Israel) was guilty of the sin of "playing the harlot" and of "whoredom," not of remarrying others.
  - No mention is made of divorce or remarriage in this passage, and the only husband that is mentioned as Gomer's is Hosea.
- Jer 31:31-33 His relationship with Israel is based on a covenant
  - God states he performed the duties of a husband to the people He brought out of Egypt.

#### **B. The consequences of unfaithfulness**

- Ezek 16 His covenant can be broken through unfaithfulness
  - God's relationship with His people is pictured as a marriage relationship based upon a covenant, which was broken through unfaithfulness.
- Mal 2:10-16 His teaching on the treachery of unfaithfulness
  - The marriage bond of which God speaks included a covenant.
  - Dealing treacherously is being unfaithful to, betraying, or divorcing your spouse.
  - God hates divorce.
  - In making two one, God's desire is to seek a godly seed.
- Jer 3:1-25 His heart concerning harlotry
  - God reminds His people of the precept given in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 against a man taking to wife a woman to whom: 1) he had previously been married, 2) he had then divorced, and 3) was later married to another man.
  - God states that they remembered this prohibitory precept well enough to verbalize it.
  - God states that even though the law had instructed them not to take a wife back under the stated circumstances, He Himself would be willing to take them back upon their repentance.
  - Allegorically, through repeated idolatry, His people had been guilty of much wantonness and adultery.
  - God summarized this situation by stating that He had married them, and they had treacherously departed from Him and committed whoredoms.
  - It is not clear that His unfaithful wife was ever considered married to those heathen nations.
  - The repentant cry of His people would eventually be directed to their God, and He would respond to their repentance by extending divine mercy.
  - This relationship was based upon a covenant.

### **IV. Poetic expression**

#### **A. The joy of God-honoring relationships**

- Prov 5:18-21 Blessed, rejoicing, and pleasant satisfaction
- Eccl 9:9 Joyfulness in labor and portion of this life
  - Marriage is intended to be a joyful and life-long experience.

#### **B. The curse of the adulterous life**

- Prov 6:26-35 Lacking understanding, destroys own soul, dishonor, jealousy, vengeance
  - This scripture warns of the extreme jeopardy that adultery brings to all participants.

## **V. Teachings of Jesus**

### **A. Fundamentals of life in the kingdom (Sermon on the Mount)**

- Matt 5:27-30 He expands morality beyond mere outward obedience
  - The sin of adultery originates in the heart.
  - Lusting after a woman is a form of adultery.
  - Drastic measures are taught by Jesus to avoid lust and adultery.
  - The result of continuing in adultery is to be cast into hell.
- Matt 5:31-32 He gives enlightenment to Moses' writing of divorcement.
  - The Law (in certain limited circumstances) allowed divorce; Jesus' teaching forbade it.
  - The "exception clause" for fornication gives no permission for remarriage after divorce.
  - A woman who is divorced and marries another man commits adultery.
  - A man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

### **B. Jesus answers the Pharisees on marriage and divorce**

- Mark 10:2-12 God's mind from the beginning on the permanence of marriage
- Matt 19:3-12 The exception clause and associated teachings
  - Only male and female joined in marriage.
  - Only within Biblically-defined marriage is the "one-flesh" relationship to be experienced.
  - Marriage that God joins together is not to be "put asunder."
  - Remarriage after divorce, while the former spouse is still living, is adultery.
  - Divorce came from man, and not from God. God did not approve of divorce.
  - Moses allowed divorce because of the hardness of their hearts.
  - Marrying another introduces the sin of adultery into the divorce situation.
  - Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, commits adultery against her.
  - "Let not man put asunder" implies that man can separate, sever, or divide the relationship that God has validated.
  - The "exception clause" for fornication gives no permission for remarriage after divorce.
  - The phrase, "...whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" indicates that the second marriage, though adultery, is still recognized as a marriage.
  - The response of the disciples suggests that Jesus gave them a clearer understanding of God's will for marriage.
  - This teaching may require some to live in an unmarried state.

### **C. Divorce and remarriage is an example of the lack of faithfulness**

- Luke 16:10-18 Comparative principles
  - Marriage expresses an example of faithfulness and stewardship.
  - Covetousness and self-justification are considered to be causes for the allowance to remarry after divorce.
  - Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery.
  - Whoever marries her that is divorced commits adultery.
  - The second union is called a marriage, even though it is adulterous.

### **D. Jesus' indirect teaching about serial marriages and cohabitation**

- John 4:16-18 His conversation with the woman at the well
  - The woman had had multiple marriages (five of them).
  - Each of her marriages had resulted in her having, at that time, a husband.
  - At the time Jesus met her, she was living with a man who was not a husband.
  - "Whom thou now hast" speaks of a relationship that is not husband and wife.
  - Simply living together in an immoral relationship does not constitute a marriage.

### **E. Adultery is sin and should be discontinued**

- John 8:3-11 A woman apprehended and accused of adultery
  - There is an "act" of adultery, and it is sin.
  - Jesus, in dealing with those who would trap him, did not condemn this woman to stoning.
  - "Go and sin no more" includes instruction to cease committing adultery.

## **VI. John the Baptist defends God's marriage standard**

### **A. Living in adultery is in violation of the law of God**

- Mark 6:14-18 Herodias is called Phillip's wife
- Matt 14:3-4 It is unlawful for you to have her
  - Herodias was called Philip's wife, though married to Herod at the time. (See also Luke 3:19-20).
  - John publicly chastised Herod for his transgression of the Law. (He was living in adultery).

## **VII. Apostolic teaching**

### **A. Marriage illustrations in the NT**

- Rom 7:1-3 A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives
  - This passage reveals God's continuing will regarding marriage.
  - The marriage bond continues as long as the first spouse lives.
  - The death of a spouse releases the living spouse from the bond of marriage.
  - If one divorces and, while the first spouse is still living, remarries, that is adultery.
- Eph 5:22-33 Christian marriage reveals the mystery of Christ and the church.
  - The husband is the head of the wife.
  - The husband is to love the wife sacrificially, even as Christ also loved the church.
  - A husband who truly loves his wife will tenderly nourish and cherish her.
  - The wife is to submit to, be subject to, and reverence the husband.
  - Marriage requires a husband to leave his parents and become united with his wife.
  - The one-flesh relationship receives the blessing of God in a marriage between man and woman.
  - The marriage union and experience is an easily-understood, natural illustration of the intimate, loving relationship that exists between Jesus Christ and His church.

### **B. Advice for blessing in marriage**

- Col 3:18-19 Love and submission
  - The wife is to submit to the husband as it is fit in the Lord.
  - The husband is to love the wife and guard against bitterness in their relationship.
- 1 Peter 3:1-7 Understand weaknesses and live in subjection
  - A wife is to be in subjection to her husband.
  - A wife in subjection even to a disobedient husband may win him to biblical godliness by her quiet and holy manner of living.
  - God desires women to have hearts toward their husbands, and to adorn themselves inwardly rather than with the arranging of the hair and the wearing of jewelry and apparel that attracts attention to herself.
  - A meek and quiet spirit in a wife is very precious to God.
  - A husband is instructed to dwell with his wife, giving honor to her and recognizing her nature and weaknesses, so they may together be heirs of grace, with unhindered prayers.

### **C. The consequences of sin and the blessings of repentance**

- Rom 1:24-31 Covenant breakers and sexual deviations incur the judgment of God
  - Covenant-breakers are included in a list of sins falling under the judgment of God.
  - This passage clearly teaches that homosexual unions are sinful (unclean, dishonorable, vile, unseemly, erroneous and reprobate).
- 1 Cor 6:9-16 Consequences of continued sin and the blessings of repentance
  - Certain sins, if unrepented of, bar one from heaven -- this includes adultery.
  - Individuals ensnared by sin, including adultery, can choose to repent, forsake sin, and receive forgiveness.
  - We see here a beautiful testimony of victory through cleansing, justification, and the sanctifying power of the Spirit.
  - Sexual union with a harlot constitutes a one-flesh relationship.

### **D. Various instructions concerning marriage**

- 1 Cor 5:1-6 The church is to discipline for immorality
  - The church is to discipline for fornication.
- 1 Cor 7:10-11 Separation is advised against, but if it does occur, no allowance is made for remarriage
  - The wife is exhorted to not depart from her husband.
  - If for some reason the wife departs, she is to live single or be reconciled to her husband.
  - The husband is exhorted to not put away (divorce) his wife.
- 1 Cor 7:12-16 Where there is a believing and unbelieving spouse
  - The believing husband is exhorted to not put away his wife.
  - A believing wife should not leave an unbelieving husband if he is willing to live with her.
  - One reason a believer is called to not depart from the home is that he/she is the one who has a sanctifying influence upon the unbelieving spouse and children.
  - If an unbelieving spouse chooses to depart, the believing spouse, in an effort to maintain peace, is not to feel under bondage to maintain the marriage at all costs.
  - The believing spouse is not necessarily in any disfavor with God when the unbelieving spouse has departed.
  - There is no indication in this passage that being "not under bondage" releases a spouse to remarry.
  - As the believing spouse remains faithful and works for peace, it may result in the salvation of the unbelieving spouse.

- 1 Cor 7:17-38 Keeping the commandments of God in every calling and being content
  - The call to salvation does not necessarily require a change in our earthly callings.
  - These verses are not encouraging those living in a sinful condition to continue in sin.
  - Marriage is permitted, but the unmarried state may allow for a more focused and consecrated life of service to the Lord.
- 1 Cor 7:39-40 Choices for widows
  - The wife is bound by God's law to her husband as long as he lives.
  - After the death of her husband, the widow has liberty to remarry "only in the Lord."
  - A widow is happier if she remains unmarried, according to Paul's judgment.
- 1 Tim 4:1-3 Preventing Godly marriage is a sign of the latter times
  - A requirement of general celibacy is a departure from the faith.
- Heb 13:4 Sexual relationship is honorable in marriage; outside of marriage it brings God's judgment
  - Marriage is an honored state, and there is no defilement in the physical marriage relationship.
  - Sexual immorality brings one under the judgment of God.

## DEFINITIONS

### Adultery

- Forsaking a commitment (or vow) of love and fidelity to one in favor of another.
- The sin of sexual or covenantal union when one party or the other has been previously married and the former spouse is still living.
- One who looks upon another with sexual lust has already committed adultery in the heart (Matt 5:27-28).

### Fornication

- Many forms of moral infidelity and under many possible situations, but is primarily used of those who are not married.

### Marriage -- When the Bible speaks of marriage, consider the following distinctions:

- Marriage that is approved by God and by society.
  - One man and one woman for life.
  - Neither party has a former or current spouse still living.
  - Consent of both parties.
  - Commitment to each other.
  - Commitment is publicly acknowledged.
- Marriage that may be allowed by society, but not approved by God.
  - Not gender specific.
  - Not limited to two individuals (polygamy).
  - Those who have a former or current spouse still living.
  - Not consensual.
  - Not a commitment.
  - Not publicly acknowledged.

The Bible recognizes both types as marriage. (Matt 5:32, 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; John 4:18; Rom 7:3)

### The Exception Clause

- Matt 5:32 ("saving for the cause of fornication") and Matt 19:9 ("except it be for fornication").
- There are various understandings of the meaning of "the exception clause," including (but not limited to) the following:
  - Applies only to a betrothal marriage -- the betrothal view.
  - Applies only to "causing" another to sin -- an early Christian view.
  - Applies to certain other circumstances.
- Clearly it is God's intent from the beginning that marriage is not to be severed.
- "The exception clause" gives no permission for remarriage after divorce.

### Covenant

- Mutual consent or agreement, containing specific terms.
- Remains in effect until all parties agree its terms have been met.
- Often placed into effect with a solemn ceremony or ritual.
- Available for others to inspect or view and to attest to its validity.
- In marriage, a solemn, witnessed agreement of mutual fidelity between the parties until death severs the relationship.