

# Polity Statement

## Old German Baptist Brethren Church (New Conference)

July 3, 2009

In order to assist in the labors of organizing a renewed and united direction for our brethren and sisters, the following work is offered for the consideration of all who have a shared interest in this effort.

As we unite in this endeavor, we implore the mercy and divine guidance of our Heavenly Father - Who has, in His own way, brought us to this moment. Our desire as brethren and sisters, which we trust is pure, is to simply follow His leading and to be found faithful to the trust He has given us. We desire no easier path than our fathers have walked. We do not seek to enter into any compromise with our flesh or entertain a direction that will require any less commitment to the Lord Jesus and each other. We cherish the faith that we have been given, and we know that His Spirit is able to preserve our faith and practice in safekeeping, as we yield to Him and humbly seek His face.

In the fear of God, we offer the following:

I. We emphasize the necessity of uniting on the fundamentals of New Testament doctrine. We believe the Bible to be the ultimate authority in our lives, and that any other spiritual authority must align itself harmoniously with the written Word. We believe that Jesus Christ is preeminent in all things, that God is to be worshipped through Him, that He is the supreme authority over His church, and that we are added to His church only by coming to God through Him. We believe the Holy Spirit resides within and works primarily through individual believers, making Himself known in the church through His ministry within the diverse members of the body. We believe that justification is by grace through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, that sanctification emphasizes an increasing faithfulness throughout the Christian life, and that sanctification is the ongoing work of the Spirit conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ as we yield our lives to His guidance. We believe the New Testament church is under the direct control of Jesus Christ, that He has given all necessary elements of faith and practice to the church through His written Word, that no counsel of the church takes precedence equal to that of the New Testament, and that the church must never be elevated to a place of equality with Jesus Christ. In short, we believe in an uncompromising view of God's truth which He has graciously provided to humanity through the revelation of Himself in Scripture.

II. It is our commitment that our leadership follow the Biblical model, where shepherding of the flock, teaching and admonishing from the Scriptures, and a servant-based ministry is emphasized and promoted. The Holy Spirit will promote primitive and pure Christianity as taught in the NT through leaders of this character.

III. Due to the consideration of legal documents, government status, etc., for a name we suggest Old German Baptist Brethren Church (New Conference). A name change could be considered at a future conference. It is our vision to embrace our heritage with a resolve to maintain our commitment to the biblical faith and practice we have long believed to be taught and supported by a literal understanding of Scripture. We acknowledge the need for some readjustment in the administration of those principles in order to repair some of the excesses we have encountered.

IV. It is our intent, as we enter into the organization of a renewed effort, to continue (where practical) in the way we have been accustomed to worship. We expect to maintain a continuity of practice and appreciation for the forms and methods that we have participated in for many years, believing them to be an expression of biblical faith and doctrine.

A. We are committed to the understanding that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and needs no addition or amendment in any area of faith and doctrine. For that reason, we set forth no other creed or confession of faith, affirming that all that is taught in the Holy Scriptures is sufficient unto salvation.

B. We are committed to the keeping of the ordinances as we are instructed in the Scriptures (i.e. baptism, anointing, love feast and salutation).

C. We are committed to practice the scriptural principle of nonconformity in thought and lifestyle and to maintain our distinctive manner of dress.

D. We are committed to follow the scriptural imperative of the wearing of the sister's head covering as it is currently practiced.

E. We are committed to practice the scriptural principles of nonresistance and non-swearing in speech and conduct.

F. We expect to maintain our present method of election of officials and, where practical, our current form of worship services.

G. We are committed to demonstrate love, gentleness and forbearance in the exercise of our current basic form of church government and its biblically-sanctioned authority.

V. Because of the lingering discussion regarding whether Brotherhood decisions should be considered as obligatory or advisory, we offer the following statements. We would like to set aside the above terminology regarding the decisions of the Brotherhood, because this reduces the consideration of our agreements from a level of close relationship as brethren to a level that is merely legal. We believe, as we move forward, that each member should have a clear understanding that, with each decision that is made, there is surely a desire that we will submit ourselves to that decision, for the sake of peace and the united direction of the body. As we meet, then, with issues of discipline and correction, we expect to use the model offered in Matthew 18, *primarily*, to gently care for the flock. While there may be exceptions to the use of this model, we have a great desire to *gently* work with faltering sheep, or those who may not share a common vision. It is with carefulness and discretion that we believe the church should attempt, on occasion, to make use of the apostle's instruction: "Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

VI. It is also our commitment to bring before the whole body such things as may need consideration by the Brotherhood. Future changes should be legitimately introduced at the Brotherhood's annual conference and approved by the whole body. Where there are current concerns and feelings of immediate need, we desire to patiently tarry in charity until the Lord may give us unified direction. In this time of transition, we would encourage limiting our requests for change.

VII. In brief, this is a call to the committed who are willing to come together in a mutual pledge of Christian fellowship and discipline so that through us a light may shine in this dark world and honor and glory may redound to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We encourage all to not become overburdened by the cares of this world, to avoid being attracted toward the deceitfulness of riches, and to make no compromise with the powers of darkness. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."