

District Board Retreat November 8 and 9, 2019

Held at the Brethren Retirement Center

Saturday, November 9, 2019

Present: Dennis Delk, Andrew Wright, Fred Bernhard, Tom Bowser, Ron Mack, Sandra Jenkins, Sarah Friedrich, Jim Baker, Mike Yingst, Carl Eubanks, Todd Reish, Jen Scarr, Nick Beam, Laura Brown, Heather Fullen, Scott Fitzgerald, Carrie Drees, Julie Brewer, Dave Shetler, Mary Boone, Ann Stackhouse, Jill Schweitzer, Becky Maurer, and Glen Timmons, special guest

Gathering and Announcements

Opening Welcome!

Reflections on Stewardship with Glenn Timmons

Glen established a foundation for his comments in Paul's words and then challenged that the vote on the budget was a symbolic crack in the foundation of the district. The board is called to do spiritual and strategic work. Congregations have not remained the same and the challenge of the board is to also lead the congregations to stay focused on the spiritual gifts as well as the vital service to do the work of Christ not a drain of our energies. Is stewardship money? Think of Paul's words to Corinth. We are God's temple and the steward. Giving is where faith becomes real. This conversation is not easy but necessary. Learning requires us to let go of previous learnings to learn a new way.

The vote was a foundation. We must now build on it. **We must now remember that money follows vision. So we must ask where is God in all of this and then to follow through.**

District Conference Debriefing: The Budget Vote

Questions to board to consider and discuss:

What was it like to be in the room at district conference?

How did you experience the discussion around the budget?

39 for and 35 against was the vote

How do you think God is telling us in the budget vote; the crack in the foundation?

How do we communicate with the congregations so they feel the response to the message sent?

Visioning Task Team and Resources and Development Commission

Establishing directives and offering guidance

Sharing from small groups:

- How to be different but still meet the needs of people like funeral dinners: same but different
- Small churches who need to move from program planning to attract others and moving to meeting community needs. Moving from program to ministry
 - What do churches want or need from district? What the churches think they need vs receive from the District and how do we improve communication.
- Bi vocational ministry requires different supports so how do we move to support the trend.
- How do we present an exciting and alluring vision for people so that it isn't scary or overwhelming?
- If church could be anything what would church be? DO backward planning
- What can we rebuild from our broken pieces of foundation? Will church really be brick and mortar forever? What can we break? (If it ain't broke, don't fix it adage turned on its ear)
- Revolutionary rebirth, how do we bring others and not offend or ignore long term folks
- How do we be a revolutionary church without tithing?
- More freedom to proclaim identity: name who we are and what we stand for
- Reclaiming Jesus for the 21st century and proclaiming
- Be radical and do not be afraid to take a risk
- How do we merge the old with the new visioning?
- Should the board give guidelines for the task team?
- DO we send out a survey to all congregates of wishes and directions?
- What would someone outside the district tell us what to do?
- How do we fulfill the call of Christ without money?
- We need to be open to the future church, 10 yrs., 20yrs, how will you view the Church of the Brethren electronic or physical?
- Who and how will ministers be ordained in the future?
- Address fixed and growth mindset and conflicts with both
- Why is there structure of the district: DE, secretary, director of camping, etc.
- How do we project the future needs at this point
- How to address the heart of the disenfranchised
- If people are always saying no, what would they say yes to
- Vision needs to be organic not top down.
- What if the composition of this board was more diverse? What if we had the disenfranchised to be part of the board?
- What positives do we have that we can expand within the district? Ex. 5th Sunday groups,
- Deacon groups, reconciliation group discussions,
- Small churches give up on meeting the needs of those who meet to worship and become 100% focused on meeting the needs of the community. How do we give up on the property?
- What is the goal, fill pews, do the work of Christ?

Responses to the list:

- Listening ears of the district are not hearing
- Structure may need to be reconsidered at the multi-level

- Church began as counter cultural and it is becoming more reflective of cultural. The “if you don’t think like I do then I can’t be with you” is taking root rather than the beginnings of the COB as counter cultural as Christ centered.
- How do we be counter cultural today
- Is the church going to be a thermometer or a thermostat?

Jen suggests that we put this on paper and give it to the visioning team as guidance. The board agreed. The board needs to keep this on the agenda consistently not just put it on a team.

Guidance for the gifts discernment team for selecting the members of the task team:

We need risk takers, edge definers on the task team as well as diverse and inter-generational, gender balanced, age balanced, those within the church experiences and those who are new to the church experience. We suggest that there be 12-16. The team can feel free to have others called in for a meeting or two for input. A goal for the team and a time frame for the team needs to be set with Ty Pyles who has agreed to lead the team.

Dave suggested that the team consult with the denominational visioning team, especially the suggestions from the SOKD.

Resources and Commission:

Sharing from small groups:

- We need to define what “Kicking the can down the road” means.
- Follow up with helping pastors understand what the next steps need to be
- Share as much info on current resources are rather than the needs in person not print
- One budget with reserves in process
- One budget with no reserves
- And one budget with concept if money were not a consideration
- What if we took a leap of faith and operate with God will provide
- Clarification on purpose and mission of the commission
- Transparency of what the funds are and for what purpose as well as which fund things come from and why there are allocated as they are.
- Should there be a midyear conference for the budget education
- Educate on fair mission
- Engaging more people in discussion by inviting delegates to the commission meetings
- Invite congregations to design budget line items excluding salaries
- Rationalization for what is presenting as financial story
- How funding is determined
- Time talent and money budget sharing.
- If budget balanced what would be find to complain about?
- Are we a people of faith when it comes to the budget? We seem to be lacking in faith...
- What does it mean to kick the can?
- Is there a development part or is it just good stewardship?

- How to act out of abundance rather than panic of running out of money?
- How can we communicate that the work we're doing and taking money from Woodland Altars or churches who are leaving is perhaps our act of trusting God of using the money rather than hoarding or burying it underground. This seems to be a blessing but its being perceived as reckless. How can we act out of abundance rather than scarcity?

Educating about fair share to members not just communication

- One commission can do it all
- One group for just budget and one for visioning: clarification is that little time is spent on budget development because nothing much has changed through out the years. More of time is how to tell how we will be meeting the budget and how to communicate it. Rest of time is spent in how to support churches to develop resources
- Each commission has smaller groups under them. Perhaps we need one on legacy giving, one for education of the "pots of money"
- Narrative of the financial work of the district needs to be communicational and educational
- Our history, decisions and process need to be communicated not just of the budget but the work of the board.

Pass this to the commission and let them determine if they additional direction. They will report back to the board.

Bear Creek Property

Action Item: Authorize conversations with potential buyer

Bear Creek Church of the Brethren has ceased to exist. The Heritage Center is interested in the property. They have a team of 4 who meet with the Leadership Team (Chair, vice chair, Moderator of the conference and moderator elect) of the board. Should the property be sold to them just give it to them, develop a fair market price?

The board authorizes the leadership team to meet with the Heritage Center team about the property. Gary Crim has excused himself from this process since he has been counsel for both groups. As of 1/1/2020 12:01 am, the property will become the responsibility of the district. The leadership team will move to determine the value of the property and secure legal counsel.

**Lunch Nominations for Annual Conference Ballot were completed and given to Becky Maurer to share with Standing Committee

A Moment with Ministry Commission

- Action Item Ordination Withdrawal, Jim Chronister

Jim has retired and has determined that he will no longer wishes to be a minister and would like to be withdrawn from ordination. The board is in favor of allowing Jim Chronister to withdraw his ordination voluntarily.

Dan Denlinger ordination is terminated in the Church of the Brethren.

Reflections on the Larger Context with Dave Shetler

- There can be unity in diversity within the Church of the Brethren.
- 1880's there were splits over Sunday School, paying ministers, how to wash feet
- The ABC group feels that there can be only one way to think and act (uniformity and purity)
- The radical pietism side says we can disagree whereas the anti-Baptist says the conformity is more important.

Conversation about Association of Brethren Churches and Implications

Words from scriptures Dave shared on unity:

Unity, until, join, the bond of peace, humility, gentile, patience, maturity, pleasantness, good, patience, that the world may know, worthy, as god has forgiven us, accept each other with love.

AC documents tend to mention how we work together in unity not how to conform.

Background on ABC:

The confidential materials have been shared with district executives. Additional information may come soon. What troubles is that the meeting of the group was called for by invitation only and by someone who is on standing committee. It was done in secret. Several from our district were invited and we know who attended. They were ordained and that in itself is a problematic situation. They have already established a framework with guidelines and planning to meet again 11/17/2019. The plan is to invite other congregations to join them. Dave feels that the SOKD needs to be aware. BRF is Brethren Revival Fellowship were hoping to reform the COB from within and was established maybe 30-40 years ago.

This group is planning to contact congregations. What are we as the board going to do about this?

Do we respond? Do we wait for the denominational response?

The Board recommends that Duane Heck and Dean Garrett be called into a review process with the Ministry Commission based on ethical issues.

Further, the board will release a statement to the members of SOKD about the ABC movement. The letter will be crafted by the leadership team and the Ministry Commission. This statement will be released during the week of 11/8/2019.

The statement will be released by email and a hard copy will be mailed to each church.

Reorganization of the Board

- Connections Commission:
Julie Brewer, Ron Mack
- Resources and Development Commission:
Ron Mack, Sarah Freidrich, Jim Baker
- Shared Ministries Commission:
Jill Schweitzer, Ann Stackhouse, Laura Brown, Heather Fullen, Dennis Delk
- Ministry Commission:
Todd Reish, Carrie Drees, Tom Bower
- Missional Renewal Commission:
Phil Dell, Mike Yingst

Chairperson: Jenn Scarr

Vice chairperson: Todd Reish

Setting calendar for 2020

- January 11
- March 14
- May 9
- July 18
- September 12
- October 9-10 District Conference
- October 30-31 District Board Retreat

Minutes Submitted by:

PJ Arndts