

Clarity in the Midst of Troubled Times

Greetings to the Congregations of the Southern PA District Church of the Brethren:

We acknowledge that the Church of the Brethren is living in troubled times. Throughout the history of the Brethren there have been various times of controversy and diversity that have resulted in divisions within the Body of Christ. We are living in the midst of such a time. Even as we affirm the New Testament as our Creed, we admit to a wide diversity of scriptural interpretation and its application in the life of the Church. This diversity exists between districts, between congregations, and between individual believers within congregations.

As we grieve the ongoing divisions in our denomination, district, and congregations we must continue to hold one another in Christian love and constant prayers. Let us consider the possibility that no amount of divisions will ever totally eliminate diversity within any of the separate groups.

The official polity of the Church of the Brethren does not seem to be the main problem. Unfortunately, some individuals in leadership, within the Church of the Brethren and its agencies, have disregarded this polity. Their actions and publicly expressed viewpoints have caused much division and discontent.


In order to help our District and its Congregations to navigate these troubled times, we hope to provide some clarity about the role of Southern PA District in relationship to the larger denomination of the Church of the Brethren.

- The official polity of the Church of the Brethren is determined by the delegates of Annual Conference, not by denominational leaders or agencies.
- Denominational leaders have not been granted the authority to discipline or hold accountable congregations or credentialed ministers who disregard "Annual Conference Polity." That authority has been given to the Districts.
- The delegates of District Conference make the final decision on matters of Polity within the District.
 - o Southern PA District Conference delegates have already approved a Statement prohibiting officiating same-sex wedding ceremonies by any Ministers credentialed by the District. The use of Southern PA District buildings, camps, properties, or churches for the use of same sex weddings, or same sex commitment ceremonies is prohibited.
 - o The District Ministry Commission, in cooperation with the District Executive, has been tasked with providing guidance, support, educational opportunities, and accountability for the credentialed Ministers of the district.
 - o Licensed and ordained Ministers in the Southern PA District of the Church of the Brethren are bound by sacred vows to uphold the polity and doctrines of the Church of the Brethren as well as the authority of Scripture and its Truths.

- Congregations determine the policies and guidelines of their own congregational constitutions at their council meetings and are responsible for the accountability of their own members.

We as the elected members of the Southern Pennsylvania Board and your District Executive are committed to providing accountability and protection of conscience for the congregations of our District. With the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Scripture as our guide, let us move forward to the Glory of God.

In the Name of the One and Only Savior, Jesus Christ and on behalf of the District Board,

 District Board Chair

 District Conference Moderator

 District Executive

July 23, 2022

Members of the District Board

Joel Nogle, Westly Gingrich, Nicholas Wingert, Don Hubbell,
Ron Bell, John Hess, Ellen Yoder, Paul Bentzel, Liz Thorpe,
Mark Zeigler, Chris Elliott, Beth Nonemaker, Keith Nonemaker,
Kim Geisewite, Jay Finkenbinder, Ray Lehman, John Weber,
Jesse Miles, Keith Hollenberg, Elaina Richard