

Review and Evaluation Committee

2001 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Report

INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF TASK

When the 1997 Annual Conference approved the new design for the General Board, it authorized that the first major review by a group other than the General Board would be conducted by a specially scheduled Review and Evaluation Committee to be elected in the year 2000 and to present its final report to Annual Conference one year later, in 2001 (page 611, 1997 Annual Conference minutes). That interim limited report focusing primarily on the new design was then to be followed by a full review and evaluation in the normal 10-year cycle with election of the new Review and Evaluation Committee in 2005 and the report scheduled for 2007.

After hearing reports in 1999 which revealed that the new design for the General Board had created a ripple effect raising questions about long-held understandings about polity, practices, and procedures in our denomination, Standing Committee broadened the assignment by recommending, "the task of the Review and Evaluation Committee therefore becomes one of reviewing the comprehensive effect of redesign of the General Board of the Church of the Brethren." Among the issues the committee was asked to consider are:

Who is the official representative of the denomination in ecumenical relationships?

Who is the official voice of the denomination in position statements?

Who should maintain and distribute the denominations polity manual?

Who should provide clarification on questions of denominational polity? What should be the continuing role of the Interagency Forum in the denomination?

How should Annual Conference agencies and the Council of District Executives relate to each other?

What should be the composition of the Interagency Forum?

What should be the term of service for the various elective offices of the denomination?

What role should the Annual Conference Office play in the denomination's organizational structure? Funding issues surrounding any enhanced or expanded role should be addressed.

In summary, the Annual Conference officers suggested that:

Prior Review and Evaluation Committees focused on the General Board, so it became the responsibility of the General Board to implement any suggestions. This newly elected Review and Evaluation Committee, however, is uniquely different from its predecessors. Its task now looks beyond one church agency to the interplay between five reportable/accountable church agencies and to the organization to which they are accountable: Annual Conference. It also includes the relationship between one group and the professional organization known as the Council of District Executives. Because of the expanded task, the Annual Conference officers believe that this Review and Evaluation Committee may make suggestions to any of the five accountable/reportable agencies, to the Standing Committee, or bring recommendations to the Annual Conference itself.

PROCEDURE

Because of the requested time for reporting, the committee realized that a comprehensive procedure for input from across the denomination would not be possible. Nevertheless, significant input was desired.

Questionnaires were submitted to the Annual Conference agencies, to the Council of District Executives, and to the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee. Interviews with these groups also provided additional input.

It was apparent to the committee that the expansion of our assignment by the Standing Committee invited more than a routine review and evaluation. Because of the broad scope of work as defined by the conference officers, this report will consist of (1) a preliminary overview; (2) a section of observations (indicated in shaded print); and (3) responses followed by either suggestions (*in italics*) which hopefully will be taken seriously by those to whom they are directed, or recommendations (**in bold**) which will need Conference action.

The committee agreed that it would not be responsible to identify serious concerns without suggesting how they might be remedied. However, in responding to directives, we are not volunteering detail for implementation which should follow this report. The Committee does believe that the same urgency which was indicated in the one-year report request should also be applied to the implementation of material which may be passed by Annual Conference.

A BRIEF HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

Until 1947, the mission and ministry of the Church of the Brethren were carried out by separate committees and/or boards with specific responsibilities. In 1947, Annual Conference created the General Brotherhood Board as the single administrative unit answerable to Annual Conference, a move which was intended to unify the work of the church under one organizational and supervisory board with five commissions. Twenty years later, concerns about centralized power and denominational giving led to restructuring which placed major administrative responsibility for the General Board in the hands of a five-member Administrative Council with three commissions, a move intended to provide a team approach to decision-making, to reduce the number of chief administrators to effect budget savings, and to provide new staff dedicated to being more responsive to the, direct needs of the local church. This organizational structure then went through minor changes but essentially remained in place until the passage of our present redesign which again reflected a desire to decentralize power in the Administrative Council, move the General Board into closer relationship to the congregations, and effect budget savings needed in light of declining giving to the work of the General Board.

Our organizational pilgrimage raises an important question. Has our effort to economize and be more available through restructure paid off? True, our present General Board has reduced its budget significantly, but is the total cost less to the church if the expenses of the extra boards and staff of Annual Conference agencies are factored in? As to availability, one respondent pointed out that only a few years ago there were 25 persons on the General Board, which had overall responsibility for Annual Conference actions. Districts and congregations were able to be in touch with those persons for conversations and information. Today, there are over 100 persons serving on the national boards of Annual Conference agencies.

Despite issues which surfaced during this brief review and evaluation of our organizational changes, the Committee does not believe our experience with the current redesign of the General Board calls for seriously considering a new design at this time. Comments and recommendations are focused on evaluations, encouragements, and changes within the present organizational structures which will clarify polity and relational issues which were either not clear in the redesign or have emerged as a result of it.

OBSERVATIONS AND RESPONSES

Observation 1: Proliferation of Funding Requests

There is a broad concern across the denomination about the number of requests for financial support coming from so many different sources. Historically, through unified giving, the General Board apportioned the giving on the basis of approved program priorities. When giving to the General Board declined, letters of protest suggested that one of the reasons was refusal to support the complete program because persons did not want their resources to go for certain specific programs. "There is money out there," the General Board heard, "if we allow individuals to designate their funds." For over a decade we have gradually moved in that direction, and

our denomination has changed substantially from unified giving to designated giving to those programs which individuals and congregations wish to support. The recent redesign and dismantling of many of the General Board's responsibilities, and Annual Conference's recognition of separate agencies, are a direct result of that direction.

Response to Number 1:

It may be that the level of competition for funds has increased, or it may be that the agency separation simply makes more visible the kind of dialogue which was previously internal within the General Board structure. The Committee suggests and strongly encourages that, in the interpretation of programs and in the solicitation of funds agencies exhibit mutual respect and support for one another. We are one body with differing parts, and it important that those parts exhibit mutuality and collaboration in their service to the church. As the apostle Paul says (1 Cor. 12: 25-26), "there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice it." As we move forward, it is the Committee's opinion that this is a direction the denomination needs to live with until we decide to implement a change.

Suggestion for Number 1

The Committee suggests that as a denomination we need to recognize that this new direction allows for and expects separate programs to enlist our support. It now becomes important for local churches and individuals to become aware of the programs offered, to receive a variety of requests, and to give due attention to equitable support to the entire denominational program. It becomes important for the various agencies to be cognizant of the solicitation load to which constituents are asked to respond and, if possible, find ways to collaborate on funding.

Observation 2: Position of the General Board

Prior to 1997, the General Board was charged with the responsibility to "plan, administer, and evaluate all phases of denominational program." The redesign of the General Board which replaced polity (under Chapter 11, General Board) with new material, and the subsequent recognition of separate agencies and boards, has established new territory for us. The action seems to have created a pervasive air of confusion among agencies, districts, and congregations about the normal policies and procedures under which we should now operate. Many questions have emerged, such as: "Who is in charge?" "Who speaks for the church?" "Who interprets the polity?" and "Who represents us ecumenically?" There is clearly confusion about the parity among various agencies. No longer is the General Board the clear leader with a general mandate. The Committee has reason to question whether the General Board really anticipated this result when the redesign was proposed. There are multiple references remaining in the Polity Manual to the General Board and its various responsibilities. While the General Board's jurisdiction was changed in the redesign process, denominational polity has not been revised to reflect the role of other agencies and resolve inconsistencies.

Response to Number 2:

At one time, the General Board carried almost the entire responsibility for denominational programming. Most of the agencies now reporting to the Annual Conference were either once a part of the board, or had direct connection with the board through dual board membership or through budgetary support.

While the denomination has moved to decentralizing authority by separating several agencies from the Board to give them independent status, it is clear that the General Board still carries broad responsibility for the Annual Conference programs. There are several reasons why the General Board has a special position in the denomination.

Its responsibilities are much broader than any other agency reporting to the Annual Conference. (The 1997 Manual of Polity (MOP) suggestion that the General Board will facilitate denominational ministries seems to support this position.)

Polity still refers to the General Board as "the administrative arm of the church" (Manual of Polity Chapter I, III., D). While there are several references in, polity to the General Board (e.g., the requirement that Program and Arrangements Committee of Annual Conference should work with the General Board on planning Conference) which may need editing to recognize the role of new agencies, some of the references still apply to the General Board's special role.

The General Board provides administrative and financial assistance to the Annual Conference without charge.

The General Board carries special duties for ecumenical and interfaith relationships.

All of the General Board members are still elected by Annual Conference.

Recommendation to Number 2:

The Committee recommends that the General Board's administrative authority for denominational programming be reaffirmed, except those specifically within the designated purview of other agencies.

Observation 3: The Title, Executive Director

The current title, "Executive Director," is inadequate to convey the leadership position of the General Board Executive.

Response to Number 3:

The Committee is recommending a change in the title because it believes, (1) that the General Board should be confirmed in a leadership role, (2) because there is a need for one of our executives to speak in public and ecumenical circles as the highest executive in the denomination, and (3) because the title is more consistent with the titles of the heads of other communions and better represents the General Board's executive as a leader of significant responsibility.

Recommendation to Number 3:

The Committee recommends that in keeping with this overall administrative responsibility on behalf of Annual Conference, the title "Executive Director" be changed to "General Secretary."

Observation 4: Procedures For Resolving Differences

There is currently no neutral entity in the denomination to resolve differences among agencies, interpret polity, and oversee envisioning for the denomination in an efficient and economical manner.

Response to Number 4:

In searching for resources to deal with the concerns it identified, the Committee first considered existing structures. The Committee evaluated the possibility that the General Board might handle the concerns. For the reasons suggested above, that did not appear to be a viable option. While the Committee recommends that the General Board's broad general authority be reconfirmed, the Board is no longer in a position to decide matters of interagency relations. The Standing Committee was considered. It is too large; it would be terribly costly to

convene the Standing Committee several times a year. The Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee was also considered. However its responsibilities are limited to planning and arranging for Annual Conference. It is not equipped to mediate interagency issues or to interpret polity. The Committee then turned to the possibility of some new entity that might serve like an executive committee of Annual Conference, but with a much more limited role than that of the Conference itself

The Committee looked at several possibilities as to name and makeup of such an entity, eventually choosing the name the Annual Conference Council. Because the proposed Council carries responsibilities that might otherwise be handled by the Standing Committee, the Committee first considered the possibility that the Council would be made up of Standing Committee members, elected directly from that body. It was decided, however, that the terms of Standing Committee members might make their tenure too short to give an experienced and consistent voice to the Council. Therefore, the recommendation for membership includes the current officers of Annual Conference, two former moderators, and a district representative.

In the choice of membership for the Council, the Committee affirms: (a) the importance of relating to the Annual Conference administration, (b) the value of past moderators who, having broad denominational perspective and valuable experience relating to Annual Conference polity and procedure, would likely have the confidence of the denomination and the agencies related to Annual Conference, and (c) the importance of an official district representative to signify the special role the districts play in the life of the denomination.

Recommendations to Number 4:

- 4a. The Committee recommends that the Annual Conference approve the creation of a six-member Annual Conference Council (the Council). The Council would consist of the current Annual Conference moderator, the moderator-elect, the past moderator, the Annual Conference secretary, plus one former moderator (excluding any who have served in the previous three years) and a current district executive, both elected by the Annual Conference for one four year term. The Council will establish its own rules of organization and procedure.**
- 4b. The Committee recommends that the Council report directly to the Standing Committee and make an annual report of its activities. It would meet twice each year or as often as needed to handle its agenda.**
- 4c. The Annual Conference executive, who would be employed by the Council and would be reportable to the Council, should serve as staff. The Annual Conference executive would continue to manage the programs and arrangements requirements for Annual Conference, but would also be the staff executive for the other functions of the Council. (The Program and Arrangements Committee will report to the Council.)**
- 4d. The Committee recommends that the Council should handle the following matters:**
 - 4d-1. Interpretation, revision, and publication of polity.**

This recommendation of the Committee responds directly to the question about polity added to this Committee's assignment by the Standing Committee. Historically, the General Board has overseen the editing and publication of the Polity Manual every few years. Much of the denominational polity, however, does not relate to the General Board. It seems appropriate to place the responsibility with the Council.

Other than informal advice given by the Annual Conference officers or staff, or opinions rendered by the Standing Committee, there has been no person or office designated to interpret polity. Under the Committee's recommendations, the Council is authorized to provide such interpretations.

4d-2. Oversight of Annual Conference directives to assure that they are lodged with the appropriate agency and that Annual Conference directives are met.

To a great extent, the General Board and the Annual Conference officers and staff have carried responsibility to provide a follow up to Annual Conference actions to make sure they were appropriately handled. Unless Conference action always makes clear which agency (or agencies) reporting to it should handle an assignment, there is likely to be confusion and maybe even a lack of coverage. Because the Annual Conference officers, under current polity, have no specific authority in this area and the General Board now shares Annual Conference duties with agencies over which it has no responsibility, this recommendation provides a viable means of handling Annual Conference actions.

After each Annual Conference, the Council, which includes the Annual Conference officers, should review Conference's actions, assign them to the appropriate agency (or agencies) and establish a means of seeing that the assignment is completed. If appropriate, a report of the assignment will then be made to Conference.

4d-3. Resolve differences between agencies as to jurisdiction, fundraising or other matters.

As indicated elsewhere in this paper, a weakness of the current denominational structure is the lack of clarity about jurisdictional boundaries. While On Earth Peace Assembly carries a clear peace program and witness, so does the General Board. The Association of Brethren Caregivers has a strong family-nurture component; so does the program of the General Board. All of the agencies have skilled staff working in the areas of money management and planned giving. All except Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) participate in fund raising, while BBT sells its services with the exception of those services performed directly at the bidding of Annual Conference. And there may need to be resolution of such issues as use of the property historically controlled by the General Board which now houses other independent agencies.

In cases of actual or potential conflict or overlap, who has authority to resolve the issues for the good of the denomination? At one time, the General Board clearly managed such issues; with the redesign and altered polity authority, that is no longer the case. The Committee does not believe it is feasible to reestablish the former position of the General Board, but it believes strongly that there should be a mediating authority. The Council should be empowered to handle such issues and should have the privilege of calling for the help of persons skilled in mediation and conflict resolution if it so desires. The Council should also mediate conflicts in fundraising and initiate steps to minimize multiple fundraising, duplication and competitive efforts.

4d-4. Serve as an executive committee for the Annual Conference.

While the most apparent duties of the Council have been spelled out in these recommendations, there will be other issues that also call for authority to resolve disputes or answer questions when neither the Annual Conference nor the Standing Committee is in session. In such cases, the Council should be authorized to act.

4d-5. Assume supervisory responsibility for the planning and arrangements for Annual Conference.

The Program and Arrangements Committee and the Annual Conference staff, both reporting to the Council, will continue to work as they do now. If policy decisions need to be made in planning the Conference, the Council would have authority to make the policy decisions.

4d-6. Have no responsibility or authority for initiating programs.

While the Council will carry important and significant authority responsibilities, it is intended that the Council should have only the judicial responsibilities as to interagency boundaries, interpreting existing polity, and serving as the executive committee for Annual Conference. Clearly, the Council should not be authorized to initiate programs or interfere with the administration or the authority of the church agency boards (except to the extent of suggestions, encouragement, or request for consideration as set out in these recommendations.) Under no circumstances can it alter or act inconsistently with polity and Annual Conference.

4d-7. The Council will share with the Standing Committee the responsibility to see that envisioning is an ongoing part of denominational planning.

Observation 5: Closed Meetings of Agencies

Policy provides "The meetings of the Board are open to the public, except for executive sessions which deal with personnel items (MOP Chapter I, III., D). Similar polity is provided for the Standing Committee (MOP Chapter I, III., A, (1), (f)). In the past several years, a trend toward closed meetings in both the General Board and Standing Committee seems to have reduced the important input our employed staff or district personnel might make to our administrative and programmatic decisions. The exclusion of those most knowledgeable about present program, and most capable of both helping in decisions and interpreting actions, seems not only undesirable, but inconsistent with who we are as a people. If desired, boards could prescribe how contributions from non-board members might be made to the meetings. Open invitations between agencies and to those interested in Standing Committee discussion would not only eliminate the necessity of having to clarify a plethora of official ex-officio members between all boards and agencies, it also would greatly reduce the number of meetings persons would be expected to cover.

Response to Number 5:

Some boards routinely schedule one closed session at each board meeting when personnel or other confidential issues are discussed and when board relationships and evaluation of board performance are considered. This practice prevents the presence of a closed meeting signaling punitive action or any action that might be a threat to the staff or particular program priorities.

Suggestion for Number 5:

The Committee strongly suggests that a policy of more openness to regular General Board, Agency, and Standing Committee business be implemented, with appropriate guidelines for defining acceptable procedure for non-board participation.

Observation 6: Role of Interagency Forum (IAF)

Standing Committee's initial envisioning of the need for the Interagency Forum (IAF) seemed to have merit as a way to promote congeniality and mutuality among participating Annual Conference agencies. It appears that the IAF has provided some helpful conversations between the agencies, but with few exceptions, it has not been effective in generating cross-agency agreements that have been beneficial. Nor has it found a way to collaborate on mutual staffing or funding agreements.

Response to Number 6:

The Committee strongly believes that interagency conversations have merit. The MOP (Chapter I, III., B, 1, (b), (5), p.22) lists among the duties of the moderator to "convene a biennial Consultation of Denominational Agencies and Institutions, with the executive director of the General Board as secretary of the Consultation, to promote greater cooperation among major Brethren agencies and institutions and to serve as a clearing house

for scheduling, programming, and major fundraising." Apart from meetings of the IAF, these conversations have been held only once since the polity was established. Such conversations may help in establishing cooperation. They may generate ways in which some services provided by agencies might be combined. They certainly have the potential for creating relationships that can develop trust and mutual respect. Our denomination can surely use a cadre of executive leadership which holds the best interest of the denomination at heart.

Recommendations to Number 6:

The Committee recommends IAF continue under the auspices of the Annual Conference Council. It should meet at least annually under the direction of the Council, or more often at the initiation of its own members. A representative of the Council of District Executives should be a member of the IAF.

Observation 7: The CLT Program

There are mixed reviews on the effectiveness of the Congregational Life Team (CLT) program. There have been very helpful contributions made in certain areas and frustration about arrangements and availability in others. The objections have not focused on personnel, but rather on the system and its delivery of redesign expectations. A concern noted is that decentralizing the staff sounds good in theory, but poses some problems in actual practice. While there has been some reduction in staff costs and some experience of value in geographic proximity, those values have been offset by other concerns, namely: (1) collegiality among staff suffers; (2) regular staff meetings are more problematic; (3) additional expenses for decentralized offices and support must be compared with the economics present in maintaining central office space and services; (4) the reduction of budget that required the General Board to reduce the number of available CLT persons intended in the original design and the large areas some must cover have not necessarily increased availability to district and local situations; (5) there is also concern among some districts and congregations as to whether decentralized generalists benefit the church more than the availability of centralized specialists. Some districts have staff and more local resources available to aid in their regular programs but occasionally need resource persons with special training skills for district or local needs.

Response to Number 7:

While there have been some problems in the CLT program, there have been some real successes and contributions. The Committee feels it is too soon to officially end the CLT program. Modifications may be in order.

Suggestion to Number 7:

The Committee observes that the General Board already has the authority to fine tune the program by adapting it, discontinuing some Parts of the plan, and/or offering other options for district and congregational support. The Committee believes this suggestion fits with the initial concern of the redesign: that the General Board find ways to be more available to congregations and districts in mutual ministry and mission.

Observation 8: Role of MMPC

There is broad consensus that the Mission and Ministries Planning Council (MMPC) program has been essentially ineffective. At best, it has been ponderous and slow; at worst, less productive than hoped. Perhaps the machinery required to operate the design (specifically the necessity of available funding before an idea might even be investigated) works against creativity and short circuits responses which might have proven to be significant mission endeavors. Others feel the funding requirement is necessary in order to comply with Annual Conference concerns about un-funded mandates.

Response to Number 8:

The Committee feels it is too soon to discontinue the MMPC program. The concepts and purposes are valuable. More time should be given to make adjustments in order to fulfill its purposes.

Suggestion to Number 8:

The Committee supports a position that would allow ideas to be considered before funding is in place. However, new mission initiatives should not be proved or implemented before acceptable funding is available. The Committee noted there has been some success in informal discussions between individuals and agencies which have resulted in mutually supported mission ideas. Those working in the area of mission development should have some freedom to participate in such discussions and perhaps MMPC might find ways to be more approachable and flexible in fulfilling its responsibilities, and possibly more energetic and prompt in its action recommendations.

Observation 9: The Effect of Redesign on Districts

Evaluation of the redesign from districts suggests that they have suffered no serious financial loss for their own programs, but have experienced additional expenses in covering certain services formerly provided by the General Board. (Specifically in pastoral placement procedures, and generally in production of support materials.) With but an exception or two, they are supportive of the persons serving as CLTs and feel good about the relationship. But there is a mixed review on whether it is easier to receive General Board assistance under the new design. A common feeling could be represented by such phrases as "business seems more complicated and ponderous than before" or "there are more hoops to jump through to get response and action." And there is a concern that the new design seems not to support the level of mutuality experienced previously between district executives and the General Board in relation to programs which involve both groups. The Committee did not receive strong concern from district representatives about the role and relationship of the districts to the organizational structure of the denomination.

Response to Number 9:

While the redesign may have required different paths to accomplish mutual goals, the committee feels that the situation might be improved among all groups related to Annual Conference if discussions were held between the district executives and the Annual Conference agencies to air these feelings and find avenues within the design which will allow for and increase the sense of high mutuality which is necessary for effective ministry by all groups.

Suggestion to Number 9:

The Committee suggests that the agencies and the Council of District Executives commit time to work together for the purpose of clarifying ways in which collaboration and mutuality might be increased.

Observation 10: Recognition of the Council of District Executives

There is a need to officially recognize the role that the Council of District Executives carries in the effectiveness of the denominational structure.

Response to Number 10:

The Council of District Executives was formed by the District Executives themselves in 1972 for purposes of social interaction, professional growth, and mutual support. The executives participate in the council at the good

graces and support of their employer boards. While the Council has been asked to accept assignments from time to time, specifically to designate one of its members to serve on committees for special planning or study, it has no official status in denominational polity. It is clear to the Committee, however, that the effectiveness of the new design, (with its multiplicity of agencies, fundraising, and programs), depends to a great extent on the good support and counsel of district executives.

The Committee recognizes that there is already a pattern of consultation between district executives and agencies through the Interagency Forum, through representation on study committees, in informal and formal consultation and collaboration, and through a high degree of communication and conversation. This is not only valuable and to be encouraged but ought to be strengthened and enhanced. The district executives are in a strategic position to anticipate and evaluate the effect upon the local districts and the congregations of national actions and programs, whether by Annual Conference or one of its agencies. The need for such consultation will become more acute as all the agencies make separate appeals to congregations within the districts.

At its meeting in May of this year, the Council of District Executives affirmed its commitment to the goal of a more effective witness among and by those in executive position in the districts. They said, "we covenant together through this organization to:

1. Establish and maintain collegiality and mutual accountability,
2. provide a forum for the exchange of personal and professional goals, insights, and concerns;
3. facilitate and encourage collaboration in the most effective use of human and material resources available through the congregations, the districts, and the national church;
4. strengthen communication between the respective structures of the church;
5. develop and maintain professional standards and expectations in order to enhance the services of the district executive leadership in the denomination;
6. live according to the "Covenant of Mutual Accountability" and "Professional Standards and Expectations" of district executive staff."

The Committee believes this covenant recognizes the Council's own understanding of its importance in effectively working on behalf of the larger church.

The Committee recognizes that a corporation or formal organization status acting as a legal agency of the denomination could pose jurisdictional, legal, and organizational problems. The recommendation below is intended to be the means by which Annual Conference confirms their importance, invites the Council of District Executives to receive that confirmation and invites its agencies to affirm that view of the Council of District Executives.

Recommendation to Number 10:

The Committee recommends that the Annual Conference recognize the Council of District Executives as an organization within the denomination, where Annual Conference agencies share information, participate in mutual ministry discussion, and explore the various voices of district and agency life, leadership, and ministries.

Observation 11: General Board Response to Annual Conference Directives

The Committee is aware of concerns within the denomination about the General Board straying outside the mandates of Annual Conference.

Response to Number 11:

The General Board has an executive function that fulfills legislation adopted by Annual Conference. Sometimes constituent member disagreement with Annual Conference actions has unfairly resulted in criticism of General Board actions. While there may have been instances in the past where individuals may have worked at variance with Annual Conference directives, the Committee is of the opinion that in recent history the General Board and its staff have been faithful in fulfilling the mandates of Annual Conference.

Observation 12: Effect of Redesign on the General Board Staff

The Committee is aware of concerns about the spirit and morale of the General Board and staff as they have lived through these three years of redesign.

Response to Number 12:

The Committee noted considerable anxiety among Board and staff members about procedures that were followed in the creation of the redesign and in its implementation. A certain amount of anxiety can be expected in any organizational change. Whether this present experience generated more or less than normal anguish at its beginning is difficult to say. The Committee believes significant efforts have been made to recognize and deal with hurts and disappointments and with uneasiness about job descriptions. At the present time, there appears to be a healthy sense of purpose and energy exhibited by the Board and its staff. There is a sense among the Board and staff that their style of working together has improved in these three years. Input was received expressing appreciation for the Board's effort to improve personnel relations. The Committee also received expressions of appreciation for the current style of General Board leadership including the strong spiritual base undergirding their decisions and the manner exhibited in processing their business.

Observation 13: Incorporation of Annual Conference

An expanded role for Annual Conference leadership through the implementation of the Council invites consideration of incorporating the Annual Conference.

Response to Number 13:

The Annual Conference meeting each year brings together several thousand people, and involves significant commercial arrangements. Contract claims, employment cases, and various personal injury claims could result in suits against the Annual Conference. The work of the proposed Council, the Standing Committee, and the work of related staff present additional possibilities for claims. While Annual Conference should rely on traditional insurance to protect itself, incorporation should provide additional protection, particularly against any claim that congregational, district, General Board or agency assets are vulnerable to injury claims against the Annual Conference.

Recommendation to Number 13:

It is recommended that the Council reevaluate whether Annual Conference should be incorporated and, if so, proceed with incorporation.

Observation 14: Who Speaks for the Church of the Brethren

When the Church of the Brethren or one of its agencies wishes to speak publicly on an issue of public interest, it is not clear who should speak on behalf of the denomination.

Response to Number 14:

Polity of the Church of the Brethren provides that the Annual Conference moderator is "the official representative of the church." (MOP, Chapter I, III., (B), (1), (b), (1)). As such, it is the moderator who best speaks for the denomination. There are, however, particular programs and service areas for which the Annual Conference has delegated responsibility to an agency (health matters to Association for Brethren Caregivers, ecumenical matters to the General Board, etc.). In areas related to those delegated areas, it seems appropriate for the executive or the board chair of the agency to speak on matters relating to that program.

Recommendation for Number 14:

On matters dearly related to programs managed by a church agency (even in ecumenical contexts) and not perceived to be highly controversial in the denomination, the executive (in coordination with the chair) should be free to speak and to take public positions. If the topic is not substantially related to a program area specifically delegated to an agency, and in all matters reasonably expected to be highly controversial within the denomination, the moderator of Annual Conference should speak for the church. If an agency executive advocates that the church speak on such an issue, it should be referred to the moderator. It would be a matter of wisdom and good faith for executives to confer with the moderator on the effect which any statements on public policy might have on the entire denomination. And it would be the moderator's prerogative to authorize an appropriate spokesperson, either from the related agency, or another qualified person to speak for him/her in behalf of the church.

Observation 15: Annual Conference Funding

Annual Conference funding is not sufficiently stable now. Adding the cost of the Council and some increase in staff will aggravate the problem.

Response to Number 15:

The Annual Conference is at the heart of the denomination's life. It must be adequately funded. While the denomination should continue to seek ways to reduce or control the cost of Annual Conference, it will always be expensive. The addition of the Council should not involve heavy extra costs. There will be travel and meeting costs for a limited number of meetings for three persons, (the two past moderators and the district representative). Also, the requirement that the Annual Conference executive take on more responsibility, will require at least one added staff member.

Among the ways that funding might be done:

1. Add an assessment to each congregation sending delegates to Annual Conference in proportion to the number of delegates.
2. In addition to Annual Conference offerings, assess each agency reporting to the Annual Conference for the privilege of having access to district and congregational funds.
3. Because the General Board is designated as the agency of the denomination which carries the broadest administrative responsibilities for Annual Conference program and exhibits, it could be required to pay the cost of Annual Conference and all Annual Conference offerings would be remitted to the General Board. The same arrangement can be considered as to all the agencies, prorated in some equitable manner.

Existing polity (MOP, Chapter I, VII, p. 23) would imply that proposals on funding might be assigned to the Program and Arrangements Committee. However, the Program and Arrangements Committee's agenda for their allotted meetings to prepare for conference is already heavy. In addition, any proposal from them might appear to some as self-serving. The Committee believes the matter of Annual Conference funding should be assigned to the proposed Annual Conference Council.

Recommendation to Number 15:

It is recommended that pending Conference's approval of the creation of the Annual Conference Council, that it be authorized to bring a proposal for properly funding Annual Conference.

Observation 16: Appropriate Terms of Office

There was a concern that the redesign might require changes in the term of some of the offices related to Annual Conference.

Response to Number 16:

The Committee found no evidence that terms of office needed to be changed.

Observation 17: Positive Results of the General Board Redesign

Review and Evaluation reports should not only review what might need to be improved or changed, they should also acknowledge what has been and is being accomplished.

Response to Number 17:

The Committee believes that the abundance of things for which we can be thankful and appreciative in the work of our denomination far outweighs the bumps that have occurred in our redesign. There is much more to celebrate than to lament. To list all these successes would greatly increase the length of our report, and the material is available from the General Board and agencies in their reports to this Conference and in their interpretive pieces. A review of these reports reveals an impressive and far-reaching list of ministry and service programs operating with the approval and support of the Church of the Brethren.

In addition, the Committee also notes the following:

- a. Despite an uncertain beginning in the new design, there is now a good feeling about the style of the General Board's working together.
- b. Despite some sense of confusion about how to apportion contributions within the redesign, there is great appreciation among the General Board and the agencies for the way in which the denomination has continued to support their work on behalf of Annual Conference.
- c. There is a sense of appreciation for the efforts the General Board has made at becoming more accessible and visible at the congregational level.
- d. There are positive feelings about a noticeable increase in a strong spiritual underpinning of our denominational actions and statements.
- e. There has been an increase of strategic plans and related goals among boards accountable to Annual Conference. That fact, and the presence of job descriptions for personnel that can be reviewed regularly by the Board and agencies themselves, bodes well for foundational material which will be available to the next review and evaluation committee.

Observation 18: Implementation

If part or all of this report is approved, a method of implementation will be needed.

Recommendation to Number 18:

The Annual Conference Council, if approved, or the Annual Conference officers if the Council is not approved, shall take appropriate steps to see that any approved recommendations are implemented. They shall determine which items or recommendations need to be brought back to Annual Conference for further approval.

CONCLUSION

This concludes the report. The Committee wishes to express appreciation for those who took the time to make thoughtful responses to the questionnaires; to those who fraternally and helpfully engaged in face-to-face conversations; and to Ellen Layman, who volunteered her editing skills to the finished report.

Respectfully submitted,

2001 Review and Evaluation Committee

Joan Daggett

Earle W. Fike, Jr., chair

James Myer

Pat Royer

Phillip C. Stone

Action of the 2001 Annual Conference: Earle W. Fike, Jr. introduced the report with all review and evaluation committee members sharing in its presentation. *The delegate body adopted the report by a two-thirds majority vote.*

Committee expenses for travel, lodging, meals, and misc.

July, 2000 to June, 2001	<u>\$4,202.62</u>
Total Committee Expenses	\$4,202.62