**Brethren Polity and Ordinances**

**Reading Packet**

Updated August 2023

**Documents Used During ALL Sessions, latest edition (review appropriate sections for each topic):**

* “A Manual of Procedure for the Brethren Church”
* “A Manual of Pastoral and Congregational Procedures”
* “The Brethren Pastor’s Handbook”
* “Brethren Positions on Social Issues”
* “Brethren Beliefs”
* “NBO Ordination Manual”
* “NBO Licensure Manual”
* “NBO Commissioning Manual”
* “NBO Policy Manual”

**Section 1 – Historical/Theological Foundations of Brethren Polity**

* Significant Appearances of the Peoplehood Formula – Dale R. Stoffer (1p)
* Quotations in Anabaptist Literature Describing the Church – Dale R. Stoffer (1p)
* The Essence of the Believers’ Church: A Summary Statement – Richard E. Allison, from D.Min. final document, 1974 (2pp)
* A Descriptive Statement of The Brethren Church – *The Brethren Annual*, 1907 (1p)
* History of Brethren Church Organization – Ronald W. Waters (3pp)
* “What Is Brethren Church Polity? (And Why Should I Care?)” – Dale R. Stoffer, “Let Us Be Brethren” series, *The Brethren Evangelist*, June 1988 (2pp)
* “Church Polity.” – I. D. Parker, Chapter 6 in *Two Centuries of the Church of the Brethren; or, The Beginning of the Brotherhood. Bicentennial Addresses at the Annual Conference, held at Des Moines, Iowa, June 3-11, 1908*, Brethren Publishing House, 1908, pp 153-169 (17pp)
* “What Do Brethren Believe about the Church?: An Organizational Design for The Brethren Church” – Jack L. Oxenrider, *The Brethren Evangelist*, June 1982, pp 6-7 (2pp)
* Foundational Models of Church Life – Dale R. Stoffer (1pp)
* Articles of Incorporation of the Brethren Church – *The Brethren Annual*, 1957, p 93 (1p)
* “Mission, Vision & Core Values of The Brethren Church” – The Brethren Church, 2017 (15pp)
* “The Believers’ Church Defined” – Donald F. Durnbaugh, Chapter 1 in *The Believers’ Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism*, Macmillan, 1968, pp 3-33 (31pp)
* “Brethren Church Essentials” – Jason Barnhart and Emery Hurd (1p)
* “List of Top Twelve Characteristics (Distinctives) of the Brethren Church – Dale Stoffer and Jason Barnhart

**Section 2 – Decision Making – Biblical Reconciliation**

* “Seeking the Mind of Christ through Consensus” – Dale R. Stoffer, *The Brethren Evangelist* (2pp)
* “Having Ears, Do You Not Hear?” – interview with Eugene Peterson, CTPastors, February 2009 (ancient practices help us stop merely studying the Bible and start listening to it) (4pp)
* “Guidelines for Biblical Reconciliation” – G. Emery Hurd
* “Leading Without Power”, metanoia ministries, #70, September 23, 2014 – Jim Van Yperen

**Section 3 – Local Church Government**

* “A Manual of Pastoral and Congregational Procedures”
* “Brethren Church and Elder Boards” – Dale R. Stoffer (1p)
* “Basic Models of Local Brethren Church Organization – Ronald W. Waters (5pp)
* “Church Membership” – Ronald W. Waters (4pp)
* “Cheyenne Brethren Church Incorporation and By-Laws” (for example only)
* “Cheyenne Brethren Church Ministry and Policy Manual” (for example only)
* Video from “Pilgrimage of Faith” – Polity and Organizational Life

**Section 4 – Regional Government**

* Regional Reorganization Chart (06/15/2016 Revision) (1p)
* “Moving Forward” – Ronald W. Waters, *The Brethren Evangelist*, Sept/Oct 2015, pp 8-9 (2pp)
* “Congregational Clusters” – Ronald W. Waters, *The Brethren Evangelist*, Nov/Dec 2015, pp 18-19 (2pp)
* “Composition of the Regional Boards of Oversight” – Dale R. Stoffer, *The Brethren Evangelist*, Jan/Feb 2016, pp 14-15 (2pp)
* “The National Board of Oversight” – G. Emery Hurd, *The Brethren Evangelist*, [winter 2017 ?], p 9 (1p)
* “Regionalization and Church Planting” – John Swope, *The Brethren Evangelist*, Spring 2017, pp 8-9 (2pp)

**Section 5 – National Government**

* “A Manual of Procedure for the Brethren Church”

**Section 6 – Break Week**

**Section 7 – Ordinances of the Brethren Church, Part 1**

* “The Value of the Ordinances” – C. F. Yoder, chapter in *God’s Means of Grace*, Brethren Publishing House, 1908 (4pp)
* The Biblical Ordinance of Anointing and Prayer for the Sick – Delbert B. Flora (4pp)
* “What the Old Brethren Said about Anointing” – Galen R. Hackman, *Messenger*, March 1994, pp 20-23 (4pp)
* Child and Infant Dedication – Tom Sprowls, Jr., The Brethren Church of Medina [Ohio] (2pp)
* Confession of Faith and Baptism (6pp)
* Baptism by Trine Immersion: A Symbol Relating to the New Birth – Jerry R. Flora, adapted from *God’s Means of Grace*, Brethren Publishing House, 1908, pp 120-273 (9pp)
* The Laying on of Hands (1p)
* Confirmation – from *The Brethren Pastor’s Handbook* old edition (2pp)
* “The Concept of Membership in The Brethren Church” – General Conference Polity Committee, *The Brethren Evangelist*, June 1988, pp 10-12 (3pp)
* “Should The Brethren Church Accept into Membership People Previously Baptized By *Any Form* of Believer Baptism” – Dale R. Stoffer, *The Brethren Evangelist*, April 1995, pp 5-7 (3pp)
* Smoky Row Brethren Church Policy on Accountability and Discipline – addendum to the constitution/bylaws, November 24, 1991 (3pp)
* The Lord’s Supper: Pedilavium, Agape, Eucharist – Jerry R. Flora, adapted from *God’s Means of Grace*, Brethren Publishing House, 1908, pp 283-416 (10pp)
* Celebration of Threefold Communion – Smoky Row Brethren Church, April 16, 1992 (2pp)
* “The Brethren Pastor’s Handbook”
* “Brethren Heritage of the Lord’s Supper: Introduction” – Dale R. Stoffer, Chapter 8 in *The Lord’s Supper: Believers Church Perspectives*, Dale R. Stoffer, ed, Herald Press, 1997, pp 157-160 (4pp)
* “The Agape in the Brethren Tradition” – Jeff Bach, Chapter 9 in *The Lord’s Supper: Believers Church Perspectives*, Dale R. Stoffer, ed, Herald Press, 1997, pp 161-168 (8pp)
* “Footwashing Within the Context of the Lord’s Supper” – John Christopher Thomas, Chapter 10 in *The Lord’s Supper: Believers Church Perspectives*, Dale R. Stoffer, ed, Herald Press, 1997, pp 169-184 (16pp)
* “Brethren Heritage of the Lord’s Supper: Eucharist” – Dale R. Stoffer, Chapter 11 in *The Lord’s Supper: Believers Church Perspectives*, Dale R. Stoffer, ed, Herald Press, 1997, pp 185-192 (8pp)
* Videos from “Pilgrimmage of Faith” on baptism and confirmation, communion, and annointing

**Section 8 – Ordinances of the Brethren Church, Part 2 (see section 7 above)**

**Section 9 – Eldership / Leadership in the Brethren Church and the Church’s Future**

* “Servant Leadership” – Ronald W. Waters (7pp)
* “Biblical Principles for Servant Leadership” – Fred Finks (4pp)
* “The Role of Deacons” – Park Street Brethren Church (3pp)
* “NBO Ordination Manual”
* “NBO Commissioning Manual”
* “NBO Licensing Manual”
* “NBO Policy Manual”
* “The Place of Jesus in Brethren Spirituality” – Brian H. Moore, Fifth Brethren World Assembly, Brookville, OH, July 11-14, 2013 (24pp)
* “Mission, Vision and Core Values of the Brethren Church”