

Faith and Practice

*Old German Baptist Brethren Church
(New Conference)*

2019

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Preface

In the Holy Scriptures God has long revealed His loving desire for all humanity; but in this age, it is to His beloved church that He has given the *"light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* The church is where the blessing and glory of God is to be encountered, where sinners are called to salvation, where saints are instructed and perfected in holiness, and where an observing world can see the true expression of the kingdom of God. It is to His church that He has given the responsibility of being *"the pillar and ground of the truth"* in a world ruined by sin and plagued with error. May we be faithful stewards of this great calling. *"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place"* (2Co 2:14).

In an effort to provide biblical clarity and direction for the Old German Baptist Brethren Church (New Conference), we offer the following outline. It is to be understood that these statements are not at any time to be elevated to equality with the Scriptures. It is our desire and hope that this endeavor will glorify God through the proclamation of truth, providing stability and consolation in an ever-changing world.

With devotion to our Lord and love for the church,

The committee of elders

Galen Flory | Grant Fullmer | Lowell Miller | David Rumble | Curt Wagoner
(Appointed by the elder body and approved by the 2016 Annual Conference.)

August, 2019

I. Vision

It is not for men to craft a vision for the church, but rather to embrace the vision that God gives us in His Word. This vision is expressed in the Scriptures in the overarching goal of bringing glory to God through 1) the glorious work of perfecting the saints within the church, and 2) the demonstration of the work of God's Spirit in His redeemed people as they take His Gospel to the world in word and life. In brief, the call is to ***glorify God*** through the ***edification of the saints*** and the ***discipling of the nations***.

In the power of the Spirit of God, our calling is to live and preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, centering upon the person and work of the Savior and the teachings of His kingdom. We believe the Holy Spirit will use this message to convict the hearts of men, calling them to repentance, salvation, holiness of life, loving obedience to His Word, and unity of faith. He will, through the diversity of gifts given to the church, gently feed, instruct, and discipline, that every man may be presented perfect in Christ. The lives of transformed saints living in a humble, closely-knit fellowship of believers will clearly display to a watching world the person of Jesus Christ as King, Redeemer and Judge of all.

With this understanding in view, we desire to abandon this world's philosophies and treasures, and to heed the clear scriptural call to simple and holy living. The redeemed, living collectively as the church, are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We desire to be united in doctrine, functionally organized in structure, and the visible presentation of a holy people walking together in committed discipleship with the Lord Jesus. In so doing, we will effectively bring glory to God as we show others the love, teachings, and peace of the Savior.

*Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.
Amen. (Eph 3:21)*

II. Doctrine

The following statements reflect fundamental truths we believe the Bible teaches. These truths are foundational to our faith and provide the biblical basis for pursuing the previously-stated vision.

We believe . . .

The Bible, in its original autographs, is the divinely inspired Word of God. It is infallible and inerrant, revealing God and His will in the Old and New Testaments. It is not the privilege of men to add to or subtract from any of its words or teachings. The New Testament is God's further and final written revelation to man. Its authority supersedes all other revelations, insights, and counsels. Psalms 119:105; Mark 13:31; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 22:18-19

We believe what the Bible says about . . .

God – There is one eternal, self-existent God who exists in the perfect oneness of the Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is perfect and glorious in all His attributes; the heavens and earth are full of His glory. Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 4:35, 39, 6:4; Matthew 28:19; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 John 5:6-7

The Father – He is the first person of the Trinity, the invisible, unbegotten Father of whom are all things. He is the source of every good and perfect gift and in Him is no variableness or shadow of turning. For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen. Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 1:3; James 1:17

The Son – Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the eternal Word of God and is equal with the Father. He became incarnate through the miraculous conception of the Holy Spirit, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, suffered and died for the sins of all humanity, and was resurrected from the dead. Being both fully divine and fully human, His work is entirely satisfying to God and eternally sufficient for the redemption of mankind. Isaiah 7:14, 53:11; Luke 1:35, 24:1-7; John 1:1-3, 14; 1 Corinthians 15:20; Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 1:1-3; 1 Peter 2:22-24

The Holy Spirit – He is the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Breath of God. He comes to convict of sin, quicken the spiritually dead, indwell the saints and enable the believer to live a holy life. He equips His people with gifts for the work of the ministry and brings them into the image and glory of Jesus Christ. He is the earnest of our inheritance. John 14:26, 16:7-14; Acts 1:8, 2:1-40; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 1:14, 4:1-16

Creation – In the beginning, by His word, God created the heaven and the earth in six literal days. He created all things for His pleasure and called it very good. He made man in His own image with a free will. Genesis 1; Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; John 1:1-10; Colossians 1:16-17; Revelation 4:11

Man – Adam, the first man, enjoyed unbroken fellowship with God until he sinned through disobedience. By Adam's sin death came into the world. Man, as a sinner, is self-centered, darkened in heart and mind, not seeking after God, dead in sins, and unable to redeem himself. Genesis 3; Psalm 14:2-3; Romans 3:10-18, 23, 5:12,19; Ephesians 2:5

Redemption – Jesus shed His blood, died as our substitute on the cross at Calvary, and paid the ransom for sin. He was resurrected from the dead, ascended to heaven triumphant over death, and is seated at the right hand of the Father as our intercessor. He gave himself as the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God! The sinless Christ was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Isa 53:4-6; Joh 3:16; 2Co 5:21; Col 1:20-22; Heb 7:25, 9:11-14; 1Pe 3:18

Salvation – Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ and is freely granted by God to all who believe in Jesus, repent of their sins, and are baptized. As this gift is received, the believer is made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Joh 3:3-7; Rom 6:1-7, 10:9-10; 2Co 5:17; Eph 2:8-10

Justification – On the merits of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God forgives the sinner, counts his faith as righteousness, and receives him as His child. The forgiven sinner is completely acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Act 13:38-39; Rom 3:24-26, 4:5-8, 5:1-2; 1Co 6:11; Php 3:9

Sanctification – For His own holy purposes, God sets the believer apart. This is both a position in Christ and a progression in holiness of life for the child of God. Joh 17:17-19; 2Co 7:1; 2Th 2:13-14; 2Ti 2:21; 1Pe 1:2, 15-16

Glorification – Salvation culminates in the promise that the redeemed will be fully conformed to the image of Christ when they are ushered into the presence of God. Rom 8:17-30; 1Co 15:40-54; Php 3:21; Col 3:4; 1Jo 3:2-3; Rev 22:5

Believer's Baptism – Upon confession of faith in Jesus Christ and His redemptive work, the repentant sinner is commanded to be immersed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. Water baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward God and represents our death to sin, burial of the old man, and resurrection to new life. Mat 28:19; Mar 16:16; Act 2:38, 10:44-48; Rom 6:3-6; Col 2:12; 1Pe 3:21

The Church – The church consists of those who are born again and who continue to walk in faith and obedience to the Word of God. It is the pillar and ground of the truth, and the body of Christ, of which He is the head. While the church is both invisible and universal, yet it is clearly to be experienced and portrayed in a visible manner in a local, congregational setting. Eph 1:22-23, 2:19-22; Col 1:18; 1Ti 3:15; 1Jo 1:7

Church Leadership – Within the church, God has given specific leadership roles. Some men are called to serve as elders, ministers, or deacons, and they are expected to shepherd God's people, to care for the flock, to teach the Word, to administer ordinances, and to be examples of the believers. In all things, they are to diligently and tenderly care for the saints, as Jesus taught and lived. 1Co 14:29-32; Eph 4:11-16; Php 1:1; 1Ti 3; Tit 1:5-9; 1Pe 5:1-4

Evangelism – Christ commanded the church to take the Gospel to the world, make disciples of all men, teach them to walk in obedience to him, and minister to the needs of all people. Psa 96:3; Mat 28:18-20; Mar 16:15; Act 26:16-18; 2Ti 4:5

Communion and Lord's Supper – Jesus instituted the bread and cup as emblems of His broken body and shed blood. These emblems are to be shared by congregated believers in close communion with the Lord and with each other in a time of sober reflection and joyous

expression of Christ's redemptive work. The Lord's Supper, distinguished from the communion, is a common meal; yet it is to be observed within the same setting in accord with the biblical record and early church history. Mat 26:26-28; Joh 13:1-30; 1Co 10:16-21, 11:20-26

Feet-washing – Jesus taught both by example and by commandment that feet-washing is a symbol of brotherhood, service, cleansing, and humility, and should be observed literally. Joh 13:3-17; 1Ti 5:10

Holy Kiss – The holy kiss is to be practiced as an expression of Christian love and commitment among the believers, brother with brother, and sister with sister. Rom 16:16; 1Co 16:20; 2Co 13:12; 1Th 5:26; 1Pe 5:14

Headship – The head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. Though created of equal value before God, Scripture teaches that man and woman are designed for and ordained to uniquely different roles and responsibilities. This order is to be respected and honored. In recognition and acceptance of this relationship, when praying or prophesying a man's head is to be uncovered and a woman's head is to be covered (veiled). 1Co 11:1-16; Eph 5:23; 1Ti 2:11-15; 1Pe 3:1-7

Anointing with Oil – Anointing with oil, accompanied by the prayer of faith, is honored by God in the forgiveness of sins and the healing of sickness, in accordance with His will. Jam 5:14-15

Marriage – Marriage is instituted by God to be the union of one man and one woman for life. According to our Lord's instruction, remarriage after divorce is forbidden if there is a living, former spouse. Believers should marry only in the Lord. Gen 2:21-24; Mat 5:31-32, 19:4-9; Mar 10:6-12; Rom 7:2-3; 1Co 7:39; Heb 13:4

Two Kingdoms – Earthly governments and the kingdom of heaven are separate entities ordained of God. Christ clearly taught that His kingdom is now in the hearts of believers and is to be distinguished from the kingdom of this world. Citizens of Christ's kingdom are to refrain from political involvement, living separate from the world's value system. Believers are called to obey earthly governments where their laws do not conflict with the laws of God and are to honor and pray for earthly authorities. Luk 17:21; Joh 17:14-16; Rom 13:1-7; 1Ti 2:1-2; 1Pe 2:13-17

Nonconformity – One who is conformed to Jesus Christ will be non-conformed to this world. God desires His people to live as strangers and pilgrims in this world, seeking a city not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. As such, modest lifestyles are to be reflected in the life of believers as they purpose to avoid the entanglements of worldly fashion or adornment, carnal entertainment and amusement, and the pursuit of material wealth. Rom 12:1-2; 2Co 6:14-7:1; 2Ti 2:4; Heb 11:8-16; Jam 4:4; 1Pe 2:11; 1Jo 2:15-17

Sanctity of Life and Nonresistance – Followers of Jesus should not take part in the destruction of human life for any reason nor in any acts of retaliation. Instead, they should live in a defenseless manner, demonstrating the love of Christ toward their fellow man, and their dependence upon God. Mat 5:39-46; Luk 6:27-31; Joh 13:34-35, 18:36; Rom 12:17-21, 13:10; 1Pe 2:19-23

Honesty and Non-swearing – In accordance with Jesus’ teaching, His followers are to speak the truth in love, swearing not at all. Mat 5:33-37; Eph 4:15; Jam 5:12

Unity in Practice – Jesus has an intense desire that His church be of one accord and of one mind in Him. Out of this harmony will flow a visible demonstration to the unbelieving world of our union with Him. When questions arise regarding practical application of biblical principle, His people are to prayerfully seek the mind of the Spirit, consider relevant Scriptures, and submit to each other in love in reaching agreement. Joh 13:34-35, 17:20-23; Act 15:1-31; Rom 14:15-19, 15:5-6; 1Co 1:10; 2Co 13:11; Eph 4:1-6; Php 1:27, 2:1-3; 1Pe 3:8

Discipline and Restoration – When trespasses and offenses occur in the church, a patient attempt at restoration should be undertaken in accordance with scriptural teaching. If a brother or sister remains unrepentant, the assembled church, after much forbearance, removes them from fellowship in the spirit of love. Upon a change of heart, a sincerely repentant individual is to be joyfully received back into fellowship. Mat 18:10-17; 1Co 5:1-13; 2Co 2:7-8, 6:14

Return of Jesus Christ – The glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, when the redeemed are to be gathered to Him eternally, has been the hope of the saints in all ages. His return will be heralded with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, culminating with the gathering of the faithful, both dead and living. 1Th 4:16-17; Tit 2:13; Rev 22:20

Judgment Day – Each soul will give an account of himself to God and shall be individually judged, for it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. The righteous will be resurrected to life eternal and the unrighteous will be banished to everlasting punishment. Mat 25:46; Rom 14:11-12; Heb 9:27; Rev 20:11-15

Satan – Created upright by God in the angelic realm, Lucifer rebelled and became Satan, the adversary of God and man; as such, he is now working in the world as the prince of the power of the air. He continually attempts to thwart the plan of God, enticing and tempting man to turn from God. His judgment was secured by Christ’s death and resurrection, and he will ultimately meet his eternal damnation in the lake of fire. Isa 14:12-15; Mat 4:3-11; 2Co 4:4; Eph 2:1-2, 6:12; Heb 2:14; 1Pe 5:8; 1Jo 3:8; Rev 12:9-10, 20:10

Eternity to Come – Anticipating an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled and never-fading, the redeemed look forward to a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. There, forever in the presence of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, all things will become new. Rom 8:18-23; 1Co 15:24-26; 1Pe 1:3-5; 2Pe 3:13; Rev 21-22

This brief summary of doctrine is not intended to be exhaustive or comprehensive. Rather, it is to provide a basic overview and a biblical answer to those who ask.

III. Polity

Polity is a term used to describe church organization, government, and collective practice. It is a general outline set forth to assist us as we work together in a unified manner. Polity is not the ultimate goal of the redeemed, but merely provides a framework wherein godliness may be cultivated; brotherly love is that which gives power to the witness of God's people. For this reason, the need for genuine brotherhood in our local churches is emphasized, where relationships of sincere love and care toward brethren and sisters are felt and seen. Such biblical relationships of brotherhood must first exist in the local setting before they can be enjoyed in an extended setting.

The following statements are set forth for the Old German Baptist Brethren Church (New Conference) to further develop the Polity Statement accepted on July 3, 2009. (See Appendix A, *Polity Statement*.) This is an outline of generally accepted collective practice and is given with the hope that brethren and sisters being led by the Spirit will give themselves to one another in humility. *"The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life"* (2Co 3:6).

Local Brotherhood

- A. **The Local Church.** The church functioning in a local setting is a primary place where the blessing and glory of God is to be encountered, and where the vibrant relationships of true Christian experience are developed and nurtured. It is here that brotherhood is lived, where the reality of being children in the family of God takes on a personal meaning for each member as mutual love and accountability are shared among brothers and sisters. It is in this environment that Christ Jesus becomes a visible manifestation of the Gospel. Act 2:46-47; Eph 3:21; Php 1:27; Jam 2:2
1. ***Decorum.*** Scripture teaches that there is propriety and order within the local assembly. In an atmosphere of love, dignity, and respect, the Holy Spirit labors in the hearts of brethren and sisters to knit them together, that the body may increase unto the edifying of itself in love. 1Co 14:26, 40; 1Ti 3:15; Tit 1:5
 2. ***Members.*** Members of the local church are those who have responded to the call to be born again, have received water baptism, and continue to walk in faith and obedience to the Word of God. As a part of this fellowship, they are willing to live in harmony with the agreements of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church (New Conference). As participants of the local church, members are accountable to the congregation and willingly accept and submit to biblical counsel and/or discipline. Mat 18:15-17; Act 2:41-42, 5:13-14; Rom 12:5; Eph 4, 5:21
 3. ***Districts.*** Each local church is situated in a geographic area with mutually agreed-upon boundaries. Members residing within each district place themselves under the leadership of that congregation and participate in all the responsibilities of the church. (At times boundary exceptions may be made for appropriate reasons when mutually agreed upon by the affected congregations.)

B. **Leadership.** Leadership in the church must follow the biblical model, where a Christ-like ministry is emphasized in shepherding and teaching the flock. The Lord will bless His people through leaders of such character. Act 6:1-7; Eph 4:11-16; 1Ti 3; 2Ti 2:2; Tit 1:5-9; 1Pe 5:1-11

1. **Elders, Ministers, and Deacons.** Elders, ministers, and deacons comprise the leadership of the local church. Each congregation determines their own needs and, heeding biblical qualifications, selects from among themselves Spirit-filled men to labor in their behalf. Brethren called to serve in the preaching ministry, as they gain experience and are found faithful in their calling, are eventually given more responsibility. Ultimately, with the approval of their congregation and the elders of adjoining districts, they are ordained as elders. 1Ti 3:1-13
2. **Presiding Elder.** Each congregation has an elder who is primarily responsible for its functional and spiritual oversight. He counsels with his fellow ministers and deacons, and with the church, in order to shepherd and direct them in the ways of God. While it may sometimes become necessary for a local church to reach outside its own membership in calling for a presiding elder, it is usually preferable for him to reside among the members.
3. **Responsibilities.** The Spirit calls leaders in His church to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and to be godly examples in every area of life. The primary calling of ministers is to preach the Word and address spiritual needs, while that of deacons is to oversee natural needs. Brethren called to these responsibilities work together in such needful areas as prayer, care for the fatherless and widows, visiting, anointing of the sick, counsel, communion, and discipline.

C. **Vital Biblical Functions.** Certain biblical functions are vital for the spiritual growth of each congregation. By the Spirit's enabling power the local church endeavors to meet the needs of the members in the following areas: 1Co 12; Eph 4:11-16; Tit 1:5a

1. **Worship.** Worship in a collective capacity is commanded in Scripture and is crucial for spiritual growth and development in the church. Each local assembly has regularly appointed times for public worship, and all members are encouraged to arrange their lives to make regular attendance a priority. Psa 111:1, 149:1; Joh 4:23-24; Act 14:27; Heb 2:12, 10:25
2. **Council.** Collective council is the place for consideration of the natural and spiritual needs of the congregation and its witness within the local community. Under the established leadership of its ministers and deacons, each congregation has regularly appointed times to consider any needs presented, and make attempts to lovingly care for them. Mat 18:17; Act 15:4, 6, 22; 1Co 6:4
3. **Communion.** Each congregation comes together, at least once each year, to be refreshed in a love-feast occasion and to participate in the communion ordinances of the house of God. This time of remembrance is commanded by the Savior for His church, and each member in good standing makes an effort to participate. Luk 22:19-20; 1Co 11:23-28
4. **Discipleship.** One of the great purposes of the Holy Spirit in the local assembly is the nurturing of spiritual growth. The continuing development and perfecting of the

saints, as well as the discipling of seekers, may be enhanced through many avenues, including teaching sessions, Bible studies, and other efforts. Discipleship that leads to growth in godliness is a work in which every member with their unique giftings can engage. Joh 13:33-34; Act 11:26; Rom 15:1-7; 1Co 12:25-26; Gal 6:1-2; Col 3:12-17; 1Pe 3:8

5. **Accountability and Discipline.** As brethren and sisters meet with issues of sin, discipline, and correction, primary consideration is given to Matthew 5:23-24 and Matthew 18:10-22 in affecting reconciliation between members. There are additional scriptural principles pertinent for restoration on a congregational level. Accountability and discipline are to be exercised with great carefulness and discretion. Mat 5:23-24; 18:10-22; Rom 15:14; 1Co 5; Gal 6:1-2; 1Th 5:12; 2Th 3:15; 1Ti 5:20

- D. **Regular Worship Services.** Stability and blessing result when each member, whether a part of the local brotherhood or the extended brotherhood, knows what to anticipate as they assemble for public, Sunday worship. These services begin with singing, brief exhortation and prayer, and continue with a biblical message, suitable following testimony, and a closing prayer. Hymns are sung at appropriate times throughout the service, unaccompanied with musical instrumentation. Preaching emphasizes the centrality of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Scriptures. Reading is generally from the *King James Version* of the Bible. *A Collection of Hymns and Sacred Songs* is the hymnal used. (Other times of devotion may utilize other hymnals and be conducted with a different format.) Neh 8:8; Psa 100:2; Mar 16:15; Act 8:35; Rom 10:14-15; 1Co 1:18-21, 14:29, 33, 40; Col 3:16; 2Ti 3:16-17, 4:2; 1Pe 1:25

Extended Brotherhood

- A. **The Extended Church.** As brotherhood is a blessing to be experienced at the local level, so it is also a blessing to be experienced as an interconnected body of churches at an extended level. The Scriptures speak of a oneness, love, communion, and interdependence experienced between the local churches of the Apostolic period. In a world with many divergent and deceptive teachings, brethren and sisters united on scriptural understandings can fellowship and commune together – trusting, encouraging, and building each other up in faith and godliness. 1Co 16:19; Gal 1:2; Col 4:16; 1Th 2:14

1. **New Conference Churches.** The New Conference churches are congregations who are willing to support the mutual agreements of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church (New Conference) and to work unitedly with the extended brotherhood. By representing at Annual Conference, either by messenger or letter, a congregation is declaring each year that it is willing to labor harmoniously with the extended brotherhood.
2. **New Districts.** When a new district is to be formed, brethren make a request to their current home district and upon approval of their request, mutually agree upon geographic boundaries. The home district and its adjoining elders are involved in this organizational process. The members of a newly-formed district select a presiding elder who can further shepherd their establishment.

3. **Church Plants.** Planting churches in new localities is an effective means of enlarging the witness and influence of the Gospel. Church plants need to have enough members to be viable, and express a clear and unified purpose as they form. Members relocating into new areas are encouraged to place their current membership in one district as they work through this organizational process. The elders from adjoining congregations are to offer support in these efforts.

B. **Basic Procedures.** Certain key procedures are to be upheld by each local congregation within the extended brotherhood.

1. **Forms.** The *Forms of Practice* accepted at the 2012 Annual Conference, when followed within each local congregation, promote a consistent brotherhood practice and provide a pattern for teaching. These forms address practices such as baptism, the annual visit, anointing, election and advancement of church officials, and the keeping of ordinances at the love-feast. (See Appendix B, *Forms of Practice*.)
2. **Church Letters.** When a brother or sister in good standing with their local church relocates into the geographic bounds of another district, a church letter is sent recommending them to the care and oversight of the new congregation. This practice attempts to establish ongoing support and accountability both to the relocating member and to the local churches of the brotherhood wherever this letter is received. Act 18:27; Rom 16:1-2; 2Co 3:1

C. **District Relationships.** All congregations in the extended brotherhood support and uphold one another, endeavoring to work together in harmony with each other in the promotion of unity and mutual respect. Col 4:16

1. **Adjoining Districts.** Congregations with adjacent geographic boundaries are considered to be adjoining. In this relationship, they have great opportunity to uphold each other in the many practical aspects of faithfulness and fellowship. In cases of special need, and by mutual consent, other congregations may also be considered adjoining.
2. **Ministerial Support.** An atmosphere of brotherly love is promoted as the ministry of one congregation actively supports the worship services and (when summoned) the council settings of other congregations. This expression of brotherhood presents a united testimony to the world around us and promotes harmony throughout the extended brotherhood.
3. **Assistance to Congregations.** If disorders or grievances arise in a local assembly that cannot be resolved in a peaceable manner, that congregation should call the elders from the adjoining districts to assist them as they seek to restore peace and unity.

D. **Leadership Accountability.** Stable and godly leadership is essential to both a vibrant local brotherhood and to a well-functioning extended brotherhood. Those tasked with shepherding and caring for the various flocks are to be closely linked as they walk in the Spirit with each other. Consequently, whenever leadership is being installed, or when a brother in leadership is to be examined by the local church for his actions, the elders from the adjoining districts are to be invited to assist or preside over such matters and to give counsel. Act 20:17-38; Gal 2:11,14; 1Ti 5:17, 19-21; Heb 13:17; 1Pe 5:1-5

E. **Brotherhood Harmony.** Christian brotherhood is experienced and maintained as each member humbly exercises in the power of the Holy Spirit with love and goodwill toward every other member. 1Pe 1:22, 2:17, 3:8; 1Jo 3:16

1. **Consideration in Local Decisions.** Each local assembly, as they make decisions, should consider in love how their choices may affect others within the larger brotherhood. When a local issue may create conflict with other congregations, wisdom and love necessitate bringing the subject to Annual Conference for consideration by the extended brotherhood.
2. **Queries.** Questions or issues that a local church considers necessary to present to the brotherhood's Annual Conference are carried by their appointed messengers and properly placed into the hands of the brotherhood council. (Consideration should be given to the possibility of placing unnecessary burdens on future generations.) Act 15:2, 28
3. **Striving for Unity.** The Scriptures teach the need to patiently tarry one for another in order that the Holy Spirit may unite God's people. To peaceably resolve issues when differences occur, the minority willingly submits to the majority, so as to assist in achieving unanimity. *"... Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility."* Psa 133; 2Co 13:11; Eph 4:13-16; 1Pe 5:5

F. **Annual Conference.** Annual Conference is a yearly gathering of New Conference churches for the purposes of worship, Christian fellowship, and consideration of issues that affect the extended brotherhood. Act 15:4-6

1. **Brotherhood Participation.** Participation within a brotherhood requires willing service and godly submission. The decisions of the Annual Conference, as we counsel together, are used as guidelines for local churches.
2. **Messengers.** Local churches send messengers to each Annual Conference. When circumstances prevent a congregation from sending two messengers, it either sends a single messenger or submits a letter stating its willing service and submission to the brotherhood. Messengers are brethren who are in good standing, who honor the Word of God, and who promote brotherhood unity. It is generally best to give first consideration to those serving as ministers and to respect those ministers who are more experienced.
3. **Conference Committee.** The Conference Committee is a group of nine elders chosen annually from among the messengers present at Annual Conference. The new committee chooses its own moderator, secretary, and reading clerk. The duty of this committee is to oversee the matters of the business portion of that year's conference. (Ministers who are not messengers facilitate the messenger body's selection of the Conference Committee.)
4. **Conference Business.** Matters that are felt necessary to consider at Annual Conference may be presented in the form of a letter, query, or report from either a New-Conference church or a committee authorized by Conference. Such matters are to be properly placed into the hands of the Conference Committee, who decides how to process each article of business.

5. **Subcommittees.** Queries received by the Conference Committee are delegated to subcommittees comprised of the messengers. Each subcommittee selects its own foreman and secretary, and has the privilege of proposing a direct answer to the query, suggesting it be resolved locally, or recommending it be laid down.
6. **Resolution of Queries.** During the brotherhood council, a query is read with the proposed answer from the subcommittee. The messengers from the submitting congregation then explain the origin of the question, followed by the subcommittee foreman's explanation of their labors. The assembly is then given opportunity to discuss the matter and is voiced for a decision. After an attempt to pass the subcommittee's answer, there may be a need for additional discussion or an alternate answer. If necessary, the issue may be laid down or deferred to a subsequent time.
7. **Committee of Arrangements.** In order to facilitate the Annual Conference, a Committee of Arrangements (COA) is selected by the hosting congregations or region. It is the responsibility of this committee to arrange for the selection of a location, oversee the financing of the meeting, and ensure that responsibilities for hosting the meeting are delegated among the members. Requests for significant changes in the conference format (either by the COA or others) should be submitted to the brotherhood assembly.

IV. Practice

Practice is a pattern of life that develops by either design or default. Scripture teaches that believers' outward lives should be guided purposefully by the Spirit's design. A people seeking to follow scriptural truth will desire to work together in pursuing godly practices in their daily walk. This may often result in mutual agreements for certain areas of life. Such common understandings present a practical demonstration of a united faith and further equip the church in teaching and making disciples.

A people desiring to walk together will acknowledge that each member of the body has a great influence and impact upon the others. It is out of brotherly love for one another that believers are willing to identify biblical principles and mutually set forth certain practices that uphold and promote those principles. Without the foundation of the principle, any practice will be short-lived or deteriorate into empty tradition. These brotherly agreements will be effective when each believer recognizes the need to limit oneself in the interest of maintaining both local and extended brotherhood harmony.

In this portion we set forth some applications of scriptural principle that we hold in common. We trust that all will genuinely seek to labor in humility toward a oneness in spirit and mutual endeavor, being separated unto God and presenting Christ to the world.

Personal Holiness

Because the Scriptures call us to personal holiness, those who are growing in sanctification will yield their whole beings to the Lord both in mind and behavior. A desire for holiness is born of a pure and cleansed heart. It is perfected through a living relationship with the Lord Jesus when pursued in the power of the Holy Spirit. Personal holiness is having the mind of Christ and results in behavior consistent with His character. It is nurtured by the reading of Scripture, worship and praise, meditation with the Lord, prayer, and fasting; and it leads to an abhorrence of all sin.

The denial of self, separation from the world's values and cravings, and the embrace of all of God's truths reflect an increasing sanctification in the child of God. Personal holiness is not an end in itself but a fulfillment of our purpose to glorify God, to walk in harmony with fellow believers, and to be a light to the world. The practice of personal holiness is placed first in this document because it is foundational to all the categories that follow.

Psa 24:3-4 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

Mat 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Mar 8:34-35 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

Rom 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

1Co 6:19-20 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

2Co 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Eph 4:22-24 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

1Th 4:7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

Heb 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

1Pe 1:15-16 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (Also see Lev 20:7.)

1Pe 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

2Pe 3:11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

Personal Witness

Because the Scriptures teach that we are to take the gospel to all men, we each endeavor to share the good news with a needy world. This witness proceeds from a heart that has tasted of the water of life, overflows with love toward all men, and moves us to do good by assisting in spiritual and humanitarian needs.

We follow Jesus' example, who was gentle, compassionate, and yet firm regarding truth. When men ask, we answer; when they seem careless and unconcerned, we prayerfully desire the Spirit to grant an opportunity to present the love of our Savior. In all things, we desire to be effective instruments for our Lord Jesus in the salvation of souls. Every aspect of the believer's life is to be an ongoing testimony of the surrendered and victorious Christ, including speech, conduct, and appearance.

The witness of the local church and the witness of the individual should harmonize in conveying the love of Jesus to a lost and dying world.

Psa 119:46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

Dan 3:16-17 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

Dan 12:3b And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

Mat 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Luk 21:14-15 Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. (See also Mat 10:18-20.)

Joh 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Act 4:33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

Act 8:4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

Act 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

2Co 5:18-20 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Gal 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

2Ti 2:25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

1Pe 3:15-16 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

Truth

Because the Scriptures teach that God is the God of truth, and His word is truth, His children are to exercise only in truth. We guard against any compromise in this area. Truth is not relative or of personal interpretation; Jesus is the truth, and all that is not of the truth is of the devil.

We willingly affirm the truth, avoiding oaths or any form of swearing, as these weaken the simple expression of truth. We do not participate in secret societies, but desire to keep a clear witness characterized by openness and honesty. We expect to keep promises and fulfill obligations in all areas of duty and to avoid leaving false impressions with others.

Deu 32:4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

Mat 5:33-37 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Joh 8:31-32 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Joh 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Rom 13:13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

2Co 4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2Co 8:21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

Eph 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

1Pe 2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

3Jn 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

The Home

Because the Scriptures teach many principles that give direction to the home, we place special emphasis upon it. A home dedicated to the Lord is complete even where God calls believers to live in singlehood. When marriage and children make up the home, God has indicated a specific structure and purpose for the family. God has established order through the headship of the husband, and He has defined the role of fathers and mothers in fulfilling their intended responsibilities of godly parenting. The Christian father is ordained of God to exercise headship and to be responsible for the biblical direction, training, discipline, leadership, and natural provision for his family. A Christian mother is to support and honor her husband in biblical submission and in the daily nurturing and care of the family.

The home is to be the protected environment for raising and nurturing children and instilling godly values. It is the duty of Christian parents to direct the hearts of their children to the Lord, training them in the way they should go and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The home is to be a setting of mutual love where fathers and mothers establish routines of consistent biblical discipline, cleanliness, orderliness, regular family devotions, prayer and song. Thus the home is a place that should be free from influences portraying violence, immoral behavior, wrong relationships, the pursuit of ungodly wealth or worldly values, or any other endeavors contrary to the Word of God. Every godly family is to pursue convictions of holiness that uphold the biblical standard and provoke one another to love and good works. God is honored when a family fulfills His design for the home.

Deu 6:6-7 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Psa 127:3-5 Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Pro 29:17 Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

Eph 5:22-6:4 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise); That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Col 3:18-21 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

1Ti 3:4-5 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

1Ti 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

Tit 2:3-5 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

Youth

Because the Scriptures call for the careful guidance and diligent preparation of our youth, our children are to be nurtured and disciplined in a setting that brings them to know the Lord, instills godly wisdom, and promotes the values of Christ's kingdom. This responsibility primarily lies with godly parents to teach and apply biblical principles in the home. All the influences in the lives of our youth, including church, school, and social acquaintances, should be carefully guarded so they align with these objectives.

Some activities that will strengthen parental training and bless older youth are Bible studies, instructional meetings, service opportunities, and personal mentoring by mature believers. Some destructive things that should be purposefully avoided include ungodly companionships, as well as the excessive use of social media and pursuits of fashion, spectator sports, and ungodly music. The enticements and snares of the world are many and diverse and must be intentionally resisted with discipline and accountability.

Psa 119:9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

Psa 144:12 That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace:

Pro 2:1-5 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. (See also Ecc 11:9-10.)

Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (See also Deu 6:6-7.)

Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Pro 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

Ecc 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

Eph 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

1Ti 4:12-13 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

2Ti 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2Ti 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

2Ti 3:14-15 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Tit 2:4-8 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Education

Because the Scriptures teach the need for parents to be diligent in the education of their children, it is important to be intentional and careful in educational choices. Parents of younger children must use wisdom in determining the sources and venues for their family's education – whether it be private, home, or public. They should continue to be actively engaged and watchful throughout this process. Utilizing schools or educational curriculums does not absolve parents from the responsibility of training their children. Souls are at stake and are molded by the environments in which they are placed.

Higher education presents certain hazards, but may be beneficial where young adults are discerning and purposefully pursuing a suitable occupational path. Caution should be exercised in considering academic environments and influences. It is wise to seek and receive counsel from parents and other spiritually-mature brethren, with the intent that each student pursuing extended education be supported in their walk with the Lord.

Deu 6:6-7 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Psa 78:4-8 We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

Pro 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. (See also Psa 111:10.)

Act 22:3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

Eph 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Col 2:3, 8 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

2Ti 3:14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

Occupations

Because the Scriptures teach that we are to occupy until the Lord returns, it is needful that we engage in occupational pursuits. The purposes of earthly vocations are to modestly provide for one's own household, to share with the less fortunate, and in all to promote the kingdom of heaven.

The choice of vocations is clearly governed by various biblical principles. It is a great blessing when fathers can provide for their families while working near the home, and mothers (except in unusual circumstances) are to be keepers at home. We do not yoke ourselves together with unbelievers in business ownership or willingly place ourselves in workplace settings where we cannot live without compromise.

Occupations should be avoided that may compromise biblical nonresistance, endorse any immorality, emphasize carnality in any way, or require commitments contrary to other scriptural principles. Some examples of jobs that fall into these categories include those connected with the military, law enforcement, or politics, as well as trial lawyers, bartenders, professional entertainers, and employment that requires union membership.

Scripture requires our employment to be tendered with all diligence, loyalty, and fidelity toward those we serve, that the gospel of Christ be clearly presented.

Luk 19:13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

2Co 8:13-14 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

Eph 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Eph 6:5-9 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

2Th 3:10-12 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

Col 3:22-23 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

Col 4:1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

1Ti 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

Tit 2:5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

1Pe 2:18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

Financial Stewardship

Because the Scriptures teach that God is the owner of all He has entrusted to our care, we recognize the great responsibility of being faithful stewards of His goods. Our natural inclination toward wealth and affluence is not consistent with this biblical teaching. Scripture condemns greed, covetousness, and materialism and has many warnings against indebtedness.

While money and substance can be great blessings when used for the kingdom and the welfare of others, they become snares to the careless. Riches are deceitful and present temptations that can destroy, choking the word from a believer's life. Covetousness, which is idolatry, is sin and often leads to things like consumer debt, gambling, and many vices. As a contrast, contentment and thankfulness are to be characteristics of the believer.

As we follow Christ's example and teaching, we seek to be diligent, live simply, and bless others, fulfilling all commitments and paying our bills. Obeying the call to biblical stewardship better enables one to provide for the needs of the family and give cheerfully to others. We desire to seek first the kingdom of God, trusting Him to provide for each need.

Psa 24:1 The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

Pro 22:7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.

Mat 6:19-21 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Mat 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Luk 6:24 But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.

Luk 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Rom 12:13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Rom 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

1Co 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

2Co 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Col 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: (See also Exo 20:17.)

1Ti 6:6-10 But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Civil Government

Because the Scriptures teach that believers are citizens and ambassadors of a heavenly kingdom and separate from the kingdoms of this world, we devote our full allegiance to the kingdom of Christ. Consequently, we abstain from participation in the civil affairs of the world. We do not vote or become involved in political issues, nor do we serve as jurors or as government officials. We do not participate in military or law enforcement activities. We do not use the law to forcibly gain our end.

We are called to pray for rulers, pay taxes, and obey civil authority when doing so does not specifically contradict the teachings of Scripture. We are to be lights shining in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.

Mat 5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Act 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Rom 13:1-7 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

1Co 6:1-8 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? ... Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

1Ti 2:1-2 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

1Pe 2:13-17 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

Personal Appearance

Because the Scriptures teach that the believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, we seek to glorify God through an outward expression consistent with the life of the redeemed. The Scriptures also call us to walk together in one accord, reflecting the mind of Christ in every way. These principles have importance in the area of personal appearance, especially as the world's focus increasingly emphasizes self-expression and changing fashions. We choose to be unified in a plain appearance reflecting humility, modesty, and purity, avoiding the world's trends and fads.

In harmony with Scripture, we uphold gender distinction in appearance. Brethren avoid long hair and following after the world's styles and fashions in grooming. When the beard is worn, it is to be worn with humility, not conforming to the fashions and trends of the world. The absence of the mustache, while a matter of tradition, is preferred among us. Brethren wear three-piece, stand-up-collar suits to worship and other formal occasions, though coats are often shed in warmer weather. In other settings, brethren wear modest, loose-fitting, non-stylish, long pants and full-button shirts. Neckties are not consistent with plain apparel.

In harmony with Scripture, sisters have long hair, simply combed and covered with the traditional cap-style covering. Sisters wear long dresses with a caped bodice and a concealing neckline. The traditional, loose-fitting dress pattern our sisters have worn for many years upholds modesty and simplicity. Simple outer garments that enhance modesty or provide additional warmth are worn as needed.

We choose simple clothing for ourselves and our families, refraining from flesh-appealing and eye-catching styles, messages, or graphics on our apparel. The scriptural teaching on outward adornment instructs that rings and other jewelry, tattoos, nail polish, and fashionable cosmetics are not appropriate for the child of God.

Deu 22:5 The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.

1Co 6:19-20 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1Co 11:1-16 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

Php 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

1Ti 2:9-10 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

1Pe 3:3-4 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Entertainment

Because the Scriptures teach that Jesus is the source of all true refreshment, we desire to seek Him alone as the One who satisfies our deepest longings. The god of this world counterfeits this true rest in a multitude of ways offering only false expectations through amusements and entertainments. Enticements to satisfy the thirsts of man through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life never provide lasting fulfillment.

Amusement parks, public sporting events and concerts, movie theaters, media and electronic gaming, and similar entertainments are venues that tend to divert our focus from God, diminish our appetite for godliness, and damage our testimony before the lost. Wholesome trips and times with the family, as well as service-type activities, can better refresh us and increase our love for God and others.

Mar 6:31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

Mar 7:22-23 ...foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. (See also Pro 15:14.)

Luk 16:15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Joh 4:13-14 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

1Co 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. (See also Exo 32:6.)

Gal 2:21 ...revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Eph 5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Tit 2:6-8 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

1Pe 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

1Pe 4:3-5 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

1Jn 2:15-17 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Media

Because the Scriptures call us to purity of mind and heart, we emphasize vigilant attention when using media. Electronic media, in particular, contains many hazards and presents great challenges to the walk of holiness. It is also drawing increasing scrutiny regarding its damaging influence in relationships, the social underdevelopment of individuals, shortened attention spans, etc. While we acknowledge there are some benefits associated with technology, many of the current media sources are untrustworthy fountains not aligning with the test of Philipians 4:8.

We avoid the use of the television and urge strong caution against the radio because of the deceptive doctrines and unsolicited evil influences they have upon the lives and destinies of men. With the advent of computers, smartphones and various internet connections, the corruptions and perversions of a wicked world are even closer and more subtle, calling us to a more intentional discernment and avoidance. The careless usage of the internet, along with casual browsing, is a snare to many.

Scripture places an imperative upon the head of each family for discipline, training, and godly example that should extend to the proper usage of all media. Parents and older ones should lead by example. It is a blessing when a local congregation works together in advocating disciplines and accountability in the use of media and mobile devices.

Psa 101:3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.

Psa 119:37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

Rom 8:5-8 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace ... Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

1Co 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. (See also 1Co 10:23.)

1Co 6:19-20 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1Co 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

2Co 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Eph 2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Eph 4:23-24 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Eph 4:27 Neither give place to the devil.

Php 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

2Ti 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

1Pe 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

V. Appendix

Appendix A: Polity Statement (Accepted July 3, 2009)

Appendix B: Forms of Practice (Accepted May 29, 2012)

Appendix A: Polity Statement

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 follows 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 New Testament 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."

Appendix B: Forms of Practice

May 1, 2012

To the brethren assembled in Annual Conference at Cedarville, Ohio, we extend Christian greetings.

We present the result of our labor as requested by the Annual Conference of 2011 for your consideration. Our responsibility consisted of “reviewing our present forms of practice mentioned in the queries” of 2011 “and recommending appropriate scriptural adjustments.” As we attempted to follow this directive, we reviewed and considered the forms of practice we have long utilized, and now offer some revisions in an attempt to make them more suitable in both language and scriptural presentation.

Throughout these labors, our concern has been often expressed that, in utilizing patterns for practice, a clear distinction should always be maintained between Bible teaching and the brotherly agreements describing our practice of that teaching. We emphasize our deep belief that, of themselves, neither forms nor lack of forms will improve our spirituality. Rather, it is intended that these patterns be a means of enhancing our Christian experience, drawing us together in the uniting love of the Holy Spirit, giving us a clear vision of Christ our Savior, and encouraging us in a walk of humility and holiness. It is our desire that in every aspect they be in harmony with the teaching of Scripture. In promoting a unified practice in our assemblies, we should ever keep in mind that it is only the Spirit of God, empowering through the Word of God, Who changes hearts, cleanses consciences, and brings brethren into close fellowship with each other and our Savior Jesus Christ.

To this end we have labored, and we commit this work for the consideration of our brotherhood.

James Bryant
Lowell Miller
Michael Miller
David Rumble
Curt Wagoner

PREFACE

In the embrace of scriptural truth, certain practices eventually develop that relate to the outliving of those truths. Whenever those practices pertain to the workings of the church, it is beneficial for the entire body of believers to know what to expect in certain significant situations. While there certainly could be multiple applications employed by God's people, an awareness of particular expectations will provide an environment of stability and blessing within the church.

When utilizing the forms of practice that follow, it should be understood that it was never intended for God's people to revert to cold mechanical rituals and then necessarily expect His blessing to rest upon them. Rather, the vibrant out-breathing of the Holy Spirit as He presents Himself to us ought to be visible in all our utterances. In the implementation of a universal corporate practice, every attempt should be made by those involved in administering to listen for God's voice and to allow Him to speak for the blessing and benefit of all. Brethren in the past have counseled, even when utilizing certain procedures, that we should allow room for the Spirit to give additional utterance. That need is as great today as it has ever been, and we strongly encourage that this would be so among us.

Not every detail of practice embraced by the church finds its direct commandment in the Word of God. Practice, however, must always align with scriptural truth and teaching, and make a sincere attempt to promote that truth. One of the primary purposes in the presentation of this work is to encourage a strong brotherhood agreement as to the manner of practice in these key situations. Additionally, this work can be utilized in the future by those who may desire teaching on these themes and may not have been involved in the formation of this effort.

Let the Lord Jesus be glorified in all our labors, and may His people be blessed.

BAPTISM

How are we to receive members from their first application until they are baptized according to the gospel?

First, the applicant is to be visited by two or more brethren concerning his understanding and commitment to the gospel principles of Jesus Christ. Areas suitable for instruction and confirmation include faith, repentance, self-denial, non-resistance, non-swearing, non-conformity to the world, and living a life of submission to the Word and Spirit of God.

Then, the matter is to be brought before the church, where the applicant is to confess his faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and his desire for baptism; further, those brethren to testify of his understanding and commitment to the above principles.

Then, in meeting or at the water, to read from Matthew 18:10-22 in public, and after appropriate comments upon the same, the applicant to be asked if he will be governed by these gospel principles.

Then, following prayer at the waterside, the following three questions are to be asked in the water:

Question: Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He has brought from heaven the saving gospel?

Question: Do you willingly renounce Satan, with all his pernicious ways, and all the sinful pleasures of this world?

Question: Do you covenant with God in Christ Jesus to live faithful until death?

Upon receiving affirmative answers, the administrator immerses the applicant three times forward with the following preface:

Upon this confession of faith which you have made before God and these witnesses, you shall, for the remission of sins, be baptized in the name of the Father . . . , and of the Son . . . , and of the Holy Ghost . . .

Then, after baptism and while yet in the water, the administrator is to lay his hands on the head of the applicant and offer up a prayer to God on his behalf as the Spirit may give utterance.

Finally, the new member is to be received into church fellowship by the hand and kiss.

(Some supporting Scriptures: Mat 3:13-17, 28:18-20; Mar 16:15-16; Luk 24:46-48; Joh 3:5-8; Act 2:21, 38-39, 41, 8:12, 14-17, 35-38, 9:17-18, 10:47-48, 16:14-15, 30-34, 18:8, 19:1-6, 22:12-16; Rom 6:3-11, 16:25-27; 1Co 1:13-15, 12:13; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:4-6; Col 2:12; 1Ti 2:4; Heb 6:2; 1Pe 3:21; 1Jo 5:6-8.)

ANNUAL VISIT

How are we to conduct the annual visit in each district among the members?

It is desired that the visiting brethren would attempt, so much as possible, to meet the members in their homes with their families. There, the following questions are to be asked:

Question: Are you of the same mind as when you were received into the church by your baptism?

Question: Are you still willing to receive and give counsel according to the gospel order?

Question: Are you living, as much as possible, in peace and union with all the dear members?

Upon receiving affirmative answers, liberty may then be given by the visiting brethren for the members to express themselves, suggest encouragement, or provide admonition for the saints in the local district – that for which the good of the church might require. However, nothing is to be accepted which is of a personal nature until Matthew 18:15-16 has been exercised to the best of one's ability.

The annual visit is intended to be a time of sincere reflection, encouraging affirmation, and divine blessing. The visiting brethren should also be alert to any spiritual or natural needs on the part of those being visited, and be diligent in providing for a loving response. A sincere effort should be made to provide an atmosphere of spiritual interest and concern, accompanied with the sharing of Scripture and with prayer.

(Some supporting Scriptures: Gen 45:24; Psa 119:59, 133:1-3; Pro 27:17; Lam 3:40; Hag 1:5; Mal 3:16-17; Mat 18:15-20; Mar 3:24-25, 9:50; Joh 13:34-35; Act 11:23; Rom 12:6-18, 14:19, 15:5-7, 14; 1Co 1:10, 10:32-33; 2Co 13:5; Gal 5:13-14, 6:1-4; Eph 4:1-3, 13-16; Php 1:9-11, 27, 2:1-4, 4:1; Col 1:23, 2:2, 6-8, 3:16-17; 1Th 2:11-12, 3:12-13, 4:1, 9, 5:11-13; Tit 3:8; Heb 3:6, 13-15, 4:14, 10:23-25, 12:14-16, 13:1; Jam 1:6, 3:17-18; 1Pe 3:8-9, 5:6-10; 1Jo 1:6-7, 3:14-19; 2Jo 4, 8-9; Rev 3:11.)

ANOINTING

How are we to conduct the anointing of members when requested?

In regard to the anointing, the apostle says: *"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord"* (Jam 5:14).

These words indicate that, if possible, at least two brethren should attend to this work.

We believe it is well to ask three preliminary questions prior to beginning the service, as follows:

Question: **Is it your desire to be anointed?**

Question: **Are you living, as much as possible, at peace with all men?**

Question: **Are you fully resigned to the will of the Lord?**

After affirmative answers, when time and situation permit, the passage that relates to this matter from James 5 may be read and briefly commented upon. The singing of hymns is also appropriate. Then prayer to God is to be made, requesting a special blessing upon the sick member, the administrators, and all present, as the Spirit may direct.

Then, the brethren proceed to anoint the head of the sick with oil three times, once with each of the following statements which express the scriptural intent of anointing:

You are anointed, in the name of the Lord,

. . . unto the strengthening of your faith,

. . . unto the comforting of your conscience, and

. . . unto a full assurance of the forgiveness of your sins

(or as the Spirit may give utterance).

Then, the ministering brethren lay hands on the head of the sick and pray especially for the immediate needs of the one anointed, while submitting all desires to the will of the Lord. Upon conclusion, those in attendance may offer their encouragement as the Lord provides direction.

We have been given examples of anointing in the New Testament. As to the practice among us, in cases of necessity we believe brethren who are not ordained may also administer the anointing.

(Some supporting Scriptures: Mar 1:30, 5:23, 6:13, 16:18; Act 28:8; Jam 5:14-16.)

INSTALLATION OF DEACONS

The office of a deacon is of New Testament authority. While the responsibilities of deacons may be adjusted from time to time as needs in the local church require, there are certain responsibilities that our brotherhood expects from our deacon brethren and their wives.

First, the Scripture specifies that both deacons and their wives ought to exemplify the qualities given in 1Timothy 3. It is expected that brethren serving in the office of a deacon will be virtuous in their character, pure in their conscience, and blameless in their conduct. They are expected to exhibit self-discipline in their personal lives and to be a blessing in their marriage and family relationships. They are expected to be both bold for Christ and humble in their approaches.

Next, it is expected that deacon brethren will have a heart for those in the church who are distressed. The pattern described in Acts 6, where the early church selected certain men to assist the widows and possibly others, indicates that some duties ought to be assigned specifically to brethren who do not have the primary responsibility of ministering the Word of God. While Acts 6 does not specify that the selected brethren were referred to as deacons, it appears that their description and duties closely correlate with the qualities specified in 1Timothy 3. For this reason, we expect our deacon brethren to be alert to any genuine needs (especially temporal) that exist among the members and attempt to properly address those needs. This includes visiting the widows and orphans, ministering to those afflicted by sickness or other causes, making inquiry of their financial and other needs, and then reporting those needs to the ministry so that the church can be given the opportunity to assist them. In handling financial matters for the church, deacon brethren must live above reproach and exercise great diligence. They should ensure that all gifts and expenditures are recorded properly and reports are made available to the church when requested.

In addition, it is expected that deacons will assume the primary responsibility in organizing the annual visit; that they will assist in our gatherings for worship through their song service, reading of Scripture, prayer, and exhortation or testimony (as needs require); that they will investigate matters when authorized to do so; and that they will willingly accompany the ministry when asked to assist in meeting the spiritual needs of the believers.

Further, it is the duty of our deacon brethren to see that the tables are served at the time of our love-feasts. This is to be accomplished by making every necessary preparation, by requesting other brethren and sisters to assist in these duties, and by overseeing the setting of tables in an orderly manner so that Christian love might be experienced by all.

Brother _____, the church has just expressed her confidence in you and asks that you humbly and willingly accept this new responsibility, pledging to live an exemplary life in all matters of faith and practice and upholding the general order of the brethren to the best of your ability.

Question: Do you, Brother _____, willingly commit to serving in the manner described?

Question to wife, if any: Do you, Sister _____, agree to assist your husband to the best of your ability in this new responsibility he has been given?

Upon affirmative answers, the elders will lay hands on the brother's head and pray over him, asking God's blessing upon his labors in the church. The congregation will then receive them and give them blessing and support in their duties. Encouragement and exhortation may then be extended to all.

(Some supporting Scriptures: Mat 20:27-28; Act 6:1-6; Rom 12:3-13; 1Co 16:15; 2Co 8:18-21; Php 1:1, 2:14-15; 1Ti 3:8-13; Heb 6:10-12.)

INSTALLATION OF MINISTERS

The office of a minister is of New Testament authority. The primary responsibility of a Christian minister is to faithfully preach the gospel (being fervent in spirit even in the face of adversity) and, through the exercise of a longsuffering spirit and with devotion to doctrinal purity, to reprove and rebuke sin, exhorting and comforting the saints.

It is evident from Scriptures such as Romans 10, that the church has the privilege of calling specific brethren to engage in the preaching ministry. It is also evident from Scripture that certain qualities ought to exist in those brethren who are so called. Passages such as 1Timothy 3 and Titus 1, while specifically referring to bishops, indicate that those who are called to teach and preach must be of exemplary character and conduct. The light of the glorious gospel of Christ shines most brightly through human vessels that are pure and undefiled, and radiate the love of God by their lives and speech.

A new minister is authorized to preach as an assistant to the older ministers and elders as he is given liberty by them to do so. He is expected to faithfully attend the meetings of the church; and when liberty is given to him, he is expected to exhort and preach in a faithful, humble, and willing manner as he is afforded grace to do. Should he not have the presence of older ministers or elders in these meetings, he is expected to conduct the meeting in the customary manner of the brethren to the edification of those who are present. He should be diligent to study the Word of God and passionate to share its message of salvation and instruction to the church and the world.

He is expected to make use of every suitable opportunity to exercise in the ministry through preaching and the giving of instruction, so that he may be *“approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2Ti 2:15). It is further expected that older ministers and elders will liberally extend to him the privilege of exercising in the preaching ministry, though he (as a younger minister) ought to be in subjection to the counsel of those who are older.

As a new minister, a brother is expected to labor for unity in the body of Christ, and to be amenable to the counsels given by the assembly as the Scriptures teach.

Brother _____, the church has just expressed her confidence in you and asks that you humbly and willingly accept this new responsibility, pledging to live an exemplary life in all matters of faith and practice and upholding the general order of the brethren to the best of your ability.

Question: Do you, Brother _____, willingly commit to serving in the manner described?

Question to wife, if any: Do you, Sister _____, agree to assist your husband to the best of your ability in this new responsibility he has been given?

Upon affirmative answers, the elders will lay hands on the brother's head and pray over him, asking God's blessing upon his labors in the church. The congregation will then receive them and give them blessing and support in their duties. Encouragement and exhortation may then be extended to all.

(Some supporting Scriptures: Isa 52:7; Jer 23:32; Eze 44:23; Mat 9:38, 13:52; Act 18:28; Rom 10:14-15, 12:4-8; 1Co 1:21-25, 2:4-5, 9:16-19, 12:28-29, 14:3; 2Co 4:5-7, 5:18-20; Eph 4:11-12; Col 1:27-28; 1Th 5:11,14; 1Ti 1:3-4, 3:1-7, 4:16, 6:20-21; 2Ti 2:2, 15, 24-26, 4:1-5; Tit 1:7-11, 2:1, 7-8; Jam 5:19-20; 1Pe 1:12, 4:11.)

ADVANCEMENT TO SECOND DEGREE

When brethren have exercised in the office of the preaching ministry for a suitable time, it is thought wise to eventually increase their responsibilities in the spirit of 1Timothy 3:10. The church has confidence in your fidelity and integrity as you have exercised in the preaching ministry. These new labors, which she proposes to place upon you, will of necessity require a greater sacrifice on your part, but will also result in a greater blessing for yourself and for others.

With the advancement to the second degree of the ministry, ministers are now granted the additional privileges of performing marriages, baptizing converts, presiding during the communion in the absence of an elder (or at his request, if present), and appointing meetings for public worship. These responsibilities are not to be assumed in a lighthearted manner, but are to be engaged with a fervent desire to promote the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth.

As you continue in your preaching ministry, you should be diligent in attending the meetings of the church and should labor in the kingdom faithfully, humbly, and willingly as you are afforded grace. Be fervent in your study of the Word of God, and be passionate to share its message of salvation and instruction to the church and the world.

As you exercise in the second degree of the ministry, it would be expedient to consider carefully the instructions given to bishops and elders in 1Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Someday, after you have faithfully served in this station, you may well expect further responsibility. You are encouraged to be watching and learning and maturing for those further duties.

Brother _____, the church now desires to place these greater responsibilities upon you, but in so doing, she still holds you to the apostolic injunction, *“ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble”* (1Pe 5:5).

Question: Do you, Brother _____, willingly commit to serving in the manner described?

Question to wife, if any: Do you, Sister _____, agree to assist your husband to the best of your ability in this new responsibility he has been given?

Upon affirmative answers, the elders will lay hands on the brother's head and pray over him, asking God's blessing upon his labors in the church. The congregation will then receive them and give them blessing and support in their duties. Encouragement and exhortation may then be extended to all.

(Some supporting Scriptures: 2Co 8:18-22; Php 2:19-22; 1Ti 3:1-7,10, 5:22; 2Ti 4:5; Tit 1:7-11; 1Pe 5:5.)

ORDINATION OF ELDERS

The office of an elder is of New Testament authority, and involves a specific assignment of responsibility to the brother who is ordained. When Paul and Barnabas circulated among the churches of Asia Minor, they *“ordained them elders in every church,”* and did so accompanied with prayer and fasting. When Paul later wrote to Titus, he instructed him to *“ordain elders in every city”* as he had been appointed. It is certainly the pattern of the New Testament that there would exist in each local church certain elders who have been ordained by the church.

1Timothy 3 indicates that the responsibility of an elder, or bishop, is a *“good work”* and that the elder, or bishop, must exercise in *“good behavior”* and possess a *“good report.”* Titus 1 emphasizes that the elder, or bishop, is to exercise as the *“steward of God.”* Other Scriptures, such as 1Peter 5, portray the importance of shepherding and guiding the flock of God by the steady hand of faithful elders. In all these passages, the tender compassion of the Father and the Son toward the church are emphasized; and it is the calling of elders and bishops to portray this compassion in the church.

The church has called you to the ministry of the Word, has advanced you in the labors you have been assigned, and now proposes to ordain you to the office of elder. In ordaining you as an elder, you will be given all the responsibilities belonging to the ministry (such as presiding in council meetings when official members are being examined, or to install ministers and deacons into their respective offices), in addition to those you have previously been given.

It will be your duty to faithfully preach the Word and to care for the spiritual needs of the membership, being yourself an example to the church and the world in holiness of life and purity of heart, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. It will be your duty in all affairs of the church to counsel with your fellow ministers and deacons, and with the church, *“taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock”* (1Pet 5:2-3). You are cautioned that great harm may be done to the flock of God when an elder develops an arbitrary, self-willed, or domineering spirit. Should you manifest such a spirit, the church will hold you accountable, perhaps taking from you the office which she now grants.

Brother _____, the church has just expressed her confidence in you and asks that you humbly and willingly accept this new responsibility, pledging to live an exemplary life in all matters of faith and practice and upholding the general order of the brethren to the best of your ability. You will be expected to unite your labors with all your fellow-elders across the brotherhood and to promote godliness and contentment among the flock of Jesus Christ. *“Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility”* (1Pe 5:5).

Question: **Do you, Brother _____, willingly commit to serving in the manner described?**

Question to wife, if any: **Do you, Sister _____, agree to assist your husband to the best of your ability in this new responsibility he has been given?**

Upon affirmative answers, the elders will lay hands on the brother’s head and pray over him, asking God’s blessing upon his labors in the church. The congregation will then receive them and give them blessing and support in their duties. Encouragement and exhortation may then be extended to all.

(Some supporting Scriptures: Jer 23:1-4; Eze 34:1-10; Mat 20:25-28; Act 14:23, 20:17-32; 1Co 4:1-2; Php 1:1; 1Th 5:12-13; 1Ti 3:1-7, 5:17; Tit 1:5-11; Heb 13:7, 17; 1Pe 5:1-14; 3Jo 9.)

STATEMENT REGARDING THE LOVE-FEAST

The Brethren's love-feast has been of longstanding practice in the church, as can be understood from the writings of our early Brethren ancestors. Our present manner of observing the love-feast varies somewhat across the brotherhood as to worship times, length of services, and certain seemingly-insignificant details that may be determined by local congregations. For example, some congregations have a morning worship service early on Sunday mornings, and others do not; some congregations have a farewell address on Sunday morning, and others have a regular preaching service; and some congregations have varied the menus of meals that are served during the weekend. While it is the current practice to hold love-feast services on the weekends, in years' past our forefathers often gathered mid-week to feast together in love.

Some allowances should certainly be made for variations of practice in details such as have been described in the preceding paragraph. When it comes to the evening communion service, however, a very high level of consistency and continuity ought to be seen across the brotherhood. More specifically, the evening should commence with a self-examination service, followed by a feet-washing service, the Lord's Supper (*agape* meal), the sharing of the holy kiss among the communicants, and the breaking of bread and partaking of the cup of communion. There should be no variation among the various congregations regarding this order. It is to be understood that the feet-washing service will be in the historic, double-mode practice to which we have long been accustomed, that the supper will be served only at the conclusion of the feet-washing service, and that unleavened bread and fermented wine will be utilized as the emblems of communion.

It is our strong desire, above all, to glorify God, to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ in our love-feast gatherings, and to be faithful to New Testament teaching. We do not claim infallibility in our understanding. Should further enlightenment develop among us regarding scriptural teaching or historic Christian practice (especially among the early church), it would be the responsibility of those who have become knowledgeable to bring the matter to the brotherhood for counsel that would better unify our practices.

(Some supporting Scriptures: Mat 26:20-30; Mar 14:17-26; Luk 22:14-20; Joh 13:1-30; Act 2:42, 6:2; 1Co 10:16-22, 11:2, 17-34; 2Pe 2:13; Jud 12.)

