

MINUTES OF BROTHERHOOD COUNCIL

held at
CEDARVILLE UNIVERSITY, CEDARVILLE, OHIO
on
MAY 29, 2012

Once again, the brethren and sisters of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church – New Conference embraced the tranquil setting afforded by the campus and staff of Cedarville University for another brotherhood-wide conference. The familiarity of the setting and the brotherly love that permeated the throng, who gathered under the gracious hand of our Heavenly Father, enhanced and blessed this gathering of the saints again. Praying, singing and fellowshiping together – in worship service and beyond, from the hours of early dawn until late in the evening, in both public settings and private – the people of God joyfully worshiped and encouraged each other in the Lord Jesus. Three days and more of inhabiting heavenly places in Christ Jesus provided abundant opportunity for testimonies of Christian growth, a “calling out” to the lost and the rekindling of fervency and saintly zeal as the Holy Spirit moved among His people.

Following three days of worship, a session of counsel was engaged on Tuesday morning. The following is a record of that council.

Introduction

In preparation for the day, a Conference Committee of ten elders had been previously selected by the messengers of the churches sent from across the brotherhood. After a brief session of devotions, the organization of this committee was announced. The moderator appropriately instructed those present from Scriptures such as James 3:15-18, Philippians 2:3-8 and 2 Timothy 2:24 – after which, guidance was given as to how an orderly council could be blessedly experienced. The various items of business were then considered by the brotherhood.

Report from 2011 Committee Selected to Research Open and Close Communion

Definition of terms

“Open” communion – implies that the communion service is open to all professed believers, regardless of affiliation or practices. It can soon remove the responsibility of church discipline

and the responsibility of keeping herself pure, and have a leavening effect on the congregation.¹

“Closed” communion – excludes those who do not agree in doctrine and practice. It generally means a church limits participation to members of their own congregation.

“Close” communion – generally means that a church may partake at the Lord’s table with those of “like” faith, with those who share a common denominational belief, but not those of a different denomination; it describes the intimate fellowship at the communion table of those who are *united in doctrine and practice*.

Necessity of Biblical communion

The Lord Jesus Christ instituted the communion in the upper room. It was a time of intimate fellowship with His believers and *between* fellow believers.²

Jesus gave two reasons for communion:

1. Participation in communion as evidence that we have spiritual and eternal life³; and
2. To commemorate His broken body and shed blood.^{4, 5}

Therefore, we partake of communion to be found “in Him,” to obey His commands and to walk in His will.

Requirements for communion

The early church illustrates the Lord’s expectation: faith^{6, 7}, repentance⁸, believer’s baptism⁸, church fellowship⁹, unity of the Spirit¹⁰ and proper discernment of the body and blood of the Lord.¹¹

Issues that prohibit communion

There are many conditions that the Lord would not be pleased to be present in those around His table: divisions (disunity)^{12, 13}, heresies (departure from doctrine)¹², contentions¹⁴, fornication¹⁵, idolatry^{16, 17} and lack of covering for sisters.¹⁸

Others excluded from the communion table include those who have not repented and received a believer’s baptism, or have not aligned themselves with the body of believers they desire to commune with, or have not submitted to the Lord and fellow believers in the unity of the Spirit, or have not separated themselves from the world^{19, 20} or have

been set back from communion or disfellowshipped from the body of believers.

How, then, should we engage in communion?

1. One option, followed by some, is what is termed “open” communion. We recognize issues with this method which lacks accountability to fellow believers.

- What if a visitor was an unbeliever trying to bring discord?
- What if a visitor was a fornicator or adulterer living in sin?
- What if a visitor was an idolater, a worshipper of the devil?
- What if a visitor had never been baptized or was baptized only as an infant?
- What if a visitor was disfellowshipped by another church, and was not truthful with the Lord, or the church he was trying to commune with?
- What if a visitor was not willing to subject himself to church discipline?

The Scriptural answer to these questions is: “*put that . . . person from among you*” or “*with such an one no not to eat.*”

2. The other option, is what is defined above as “close” communion. The Scriptures teach that those who commune together at the Lord’s table must be of one common faith and common separation from the world.^{19, 20, 21} Communion (*common union*) implies a united body in Christ. This is satisfied in “close” communion. Members of the same fellowship are welcome to participate at any communion in their particular brotherhood of believers. Although called “close”, it is “open” to “whomsoever will” (i.e., to those willing to accept the call of the Spirit, be baptized, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and align themselves with a church fellowship committed to following the commands of Jesus and all Scripture).

In support of “close” communion

When we approach the Lord’s table, not only are we to examine ourselves *in particular* as to whether we properly discern the “Lord’s body,”¹¹ but also *in general* as to whether we are in unity with the body of believers. Likewise, the Bible teaches us to evaluate whether our thinking and our practice lines up with what the Apostle Paul calls “the faith.”²² So when we approach the Lord’s table, we have a personal responsibility to examine ourselves, and any unconfessed sin in the life of a communicant lies solely on the individual.

Likewise, the body with which we fellowship and commune has a responsibility. The church body is relieved of judging each other by knowing that all who are at the table have expressed *unity* by annual interrogation:

1. Are you of the same mind as you were when you were received into the church at baptism?¹⁴
2. Are you willing to receive and give counsel according to gospel order?²³
3. Are you at peace and union with the church?²⁴

In cases where there is *disunity*, the church body has a responsibility to see that the issue becomes resolved.^{13, 15, 25}

Various denominations have been formed due to doctrinal differences as well as differences in understanding concerning church practice. Those of different denominations are *not* in fellowship with each other. Therefore, if these differences are the basis of drawing denominational lines, it would be inconsistent to remove those lines at the communion table. *However*, this in no way is meant to judge the sincerity of those of other fellowships who may have similar doctrine.

“*Doctrine*”²⁵ includes not only what the Bible teaches concerning beliefs but also concerning church practice. Even if doctrine and practice are the same, those of differing fellowships are not *subject* to each other in church discipline. This implies that only members of the fellowship we submit ourselves to should sit at the communion table as *brethren*.

We practice close communion, and since it is based on Scriptural principle, it is something around which we should be united.

Close communion maintains the Biblical standard that the communion is for those in close fellowship, who are of “*like precious faith*”²⁶ and who are united in faith and practice. Close communion acknowledges the Scriptural authority that calls us to “*be subject one to another*”²⁷ and to those with oversight of the church having charge of the communion.

- It answers the need of the soul to commune with the Lord (vertical relationship) and the command of Jesus to remember His body and blood which was shed for the remission of sins.^{4, 5, 28}
- It answers the command of the Lord to commune with one another (horizontal relationship).²⁹
- It enables the church to maintain order at the Lord’s table and to truly honor and focus on the Lord in observing this ordinance.

- It bases the communion upon Christian unity and Christian fellowship, not upon friendship or sociability.

We feel to relate and encourage the following practices which we believe fulfill the Scriptures referred to in this paper, namely that our lovefeast and communion service promotes:

1. the *understanding* that everyone at the “Lord’s table” is qualified due to their profession of faith and subsequent baptism, either in the presence of this congregation or another in the same denomination;
2. the *examination* of our faith in the Lord Jesus and commitment to Him as well as to our brothers and sisters as the *annual visit* goes from home to home at least once a year;
3. the practice of the holy kiss, in *obedience* to Scripture, but more importantly, the *expression of love* and the *encouragement to faithfulness* that it embodies;
4. order in the house of God, as the *examination* of faith and preparation to commune through reconciling and counseling together has already been accomplished;
5. comfort level among those communing, as they have *very little reason to be distracted from discerning the Lord’s body because of disruption due to disunity among the body*;
6. the understanding that the fellowship we are part of and communing with also has the responsibility to *disciple* and *discipline* us, which encourages accountability to and with the same;
7. the practice of *feet washing*, ordered by the Lord Himself. Over the years this ordinance has been *spiritualized* by many, and the result has been a lack of emphasis on practicing a *literal upper-room* lovefeast, replacing it with the “Lord’s supper” only (the bread and cup).

Conclusion

In our desire to humbly obey and honor our Heavenly Father, when we gather at the Lord’s table, we believe it is Scripturally consistent and safe to practice "close communion" within our brotherhood, the Old German Baptist Brethren Church – New Conference.

Scriptural references

- ¹ 1 Cor 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
- ² John 13:1-30 [text omitted due to length]

- ³ John 6:53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.
- ⁴ 1 Cor 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.
- ⁵ 1 Cor 11:23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. 27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.
- ⁶ Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.
- ⁷ Rom 14:23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.
- ⁸ Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- ⁹ Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.
- ¹⁰ Eph 4:3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- ¹¹ 1 Cor 11:27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.
- ¹² 1 Cor 11:17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. 19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.
- ¹³ Rom. 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.
- ¹⁴ 1 Cor 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it hath been declared unto

me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

¹⁵ 1 Cor 5: 9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. 11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

¹⁶ 1 Cor 10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

¹⁷ 1 Cor 10:19 What say I then? that the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? 20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. 21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

¹⁸ 1 Cor 11:3 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. 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. 5 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. 6 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. 7 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. 8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. 9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. 10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. 12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. 13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? 14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? 15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. 16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

¹⁹ Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 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.

²⁰ 1 John 2:15 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. 16 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.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

²¹ 2 Cor 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

²² 2 Cor 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith;

²³ Rom 15:14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

²⁴ 1 Thess 5:13 . . . And be at peace among yourselves.

²⁵ 2 John 10 . . . if any bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house . . .

²⁶ 1 Peter 1:1 . . . to them that have obtained like precious faith with us . . .

²⁷ 1 Peter 5:5 . . . 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.

²⁸ Matt 26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, 28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

²⁹ John 13:14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

Question to the church (following the reading of the Conclusion of the Report): "In light of the findings of this committee and the discussion today, would this brotherhood support close communion?"

Answer: "Yes."

Report from 2011 Committee Selected to Review Forms of Practice

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; John 3:5-8; Acts 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; 1Cor. 1:13-15, 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:4-6; Col. 2:12; 1Tim. 2:4; Heb. 6:2; 1Pet. 3:21; 1John 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; Prov. 27:17; Lam. 3:40; Hag. 1:5; Mal. 3:16-17; Mat. 18:15-20; Mar. 3:24-25, 9:50; John 13:34-35; Acts 11:23; Rom. 12:6-18, 14:19, 15:5-7, 14; 1Cor. 1:10, 10:32-33; 2Cor. 13:5; Gal. 5:13-14, 6:1-4; Eph. 4:1-3, 13-16; Phil. 1:9-11, 27, 2:1-4, 4:1; Col. 1:23, 2:2, 6-8, 3:16-17; 1Thes. 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; James 1:6, 3:17-18; 1Pet. 3:8-9, 5:6-10; 1John 1:6-7, 3:14-19; 2John 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”* (James 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: Mark 1:30, 5:23, 6:13, 16:18; Acts 28:8; James 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 1 Timothy 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 1 Timothy 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 lovefeasts. 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; Acts 6:1-6; Rom. 12:3-13; 1 Cor. 16:15; 2 Cor. 8:18-21; Phil 1:1, 2:14-15; 1 Tim. 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 1 Timothy 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”* (2 Tim. 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; Acts 18:28; Rom. 10:14-15, 12:4-8; 1Cor. 1:21-25, 2:4-5, 9:16-19, 12:28-29, 14:3; 2Cor. 4:5-7, 5:18-20; Eph. 4:11-12; Col. 1:27-28; 1Thes. 5:11,14; 1Tim. 1:3-4, 3:1-7, 4:16, 6:20-21; 2Tim. 2:2, 15, 24-26, 4:1-5; Tit. 1:7-11, 2:1, 7-8; Jam. 5:19-20; 1Pet. 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 1Tim. 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”* (1Pet. 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: 2Cor. 8:18-22; Phil. 2:19-22; 1Tim. 3:1-7,10, 5:22; 2Tim. 4:5; Tit. 1:7-11; 1Pet. 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.

1 Timothy 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 1 Peter 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*” (1 Pet 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*” (1 Pet. 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; Acts 14:23, 20:17-32; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thes. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 5:17; Tit. 1:5-11; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:1-14; 3 John 9.)

Statement Regarding the Lovefeast

The brethren’s lovefeast 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 lovefeast 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 lovefeast 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 lovefeast 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; John 13:1-30; Acts 2:42, 6:2; 1Cor. 10:16-22, 11:2, 17-34; 2Pet. 2:13; Jude 12.)

Question to the church: "In light of the findings of this committee and the discussion today, would this brotherhood support the use of these forms as a general guideline?"

Answer: "Yes."

Query #1 (West Manchester District)

There is a concern among us with our present custom/practice of choosing the same elders year after year to serve on the Conference Committee.

While we have every confidence that it is not so now, an extended service in this capacity might tend toward personal elevation of brethren. Also, the thought of any individual or group becoming heavy-handed may be a distant one, but we feel it would be good to address this concern.

There are many Spirit-led brethren among us to share in this work. It does seem beneficial and even prudent that there would be some brethren on this committee with experience each year. Therefore, we would suggest the following:

- 1) No brother would serve more than four consecutive years.
- 2) Brethren being replaced would not be eligible for this committee again for another three years.
- 3) Any brother sent as a messenger to represent his district would be eligible to be on the Conference Committee that year.

To begin the implementation of this, the Lord willing, in 2013, three or four brethren from the 2012 Conference Committee could be chosen to serve on

the 2013 Conference Committee. In case of a tie, there could be either three or five as determined by the brethren tallying the votes. After those four (or three or five, as the case might be) are determined, the balance of the Conference Committee would then be chosen from among the qualified brethren.

Answer to Query #1:

We, your messenger body, are aware and sensitive to the concerns expressed in this query. We feel a great desire for the leading of the Holy Spirit in our choice for the Conference Committee. We feel that implementing a system to address this concern may hinder the Holy Spirit's work. In light of this, we, your messenger body, feel to continue our present practice used since 2010 and let it bear fruit to address this concern. The messenger body would like to share their reasons with the congregation. [The brotherhood agreed to pass this query with the answer of the subcommittee.]

Service Committee Report

The Service Committee wishes to commend our young people for their faithfulness. We encourage our young men to demonstrate the faith and nonresistant principles taught by our Lord in every avenue of their lives.

It is still a legal requirement for all young men to register with the Selective Service within 30 days (before or after) their 18th birthday. Any who missed that date should still register at any time prior to their 26th birthday. Only those who have met registration requirements may take advantage of an Alternative Service Program.

As of today, we know of no pending changes in the status of the draft. We have been blessed by the lack of a military draft for many years. However, this situation could change at any time. We strongly encourage and advise our young men to sign an adherent form at the age of 16 and a membership form when they are baptized. These forms are available from the C.O. advisor in each district or area.

We expect to hold C.O. meetings across the brotherhood later this year.

The CASP project in Brevard, North Carolina, from all reports, was a blessing to all and, we trust, to the glory of God. Thank you to all participants, donors and others whose prayers were offered.

We are grateful for the donation of a covered trailer for use in future CASP projects.

We feel the need to call for \$5 per member for the Service Committee treasury. Funds may be sent by each district to Brother Larry Bower, Treasurer.

We feel a need to add a brother from the state of Indiana to the Service Committee. We have selected Brother David Benedict, subject to the approval of the brotherhood.

The brotherhood accepted this report.

The Testimony Committee Report

Brother Kenneth Hopkins has chosen to resign from *The Testimony* Committee, and it is with reluctance that we accept his resignation, having appreciated his assistance in the work of publishing this monthly publication for our brotherhood.

To fill this vacancy, we have chosen Brother Larry Bower of the Morning Star district, in Ohio, subject to the approval of this brotherhood.

The brotherhood accepted this report.

Scheduling Committee Report

Since there are no offers to host the Conference, we feel that the Ohio members should be voiced for their willingness to host the 2014 Annual Conference to be held at Cedarville University.

The Ohio members agreed to host the Annual Conference in 2014.

Cedarville University has been a wonderful location for our first three Annual Conferences. Not only has the facility been an excellent fit, but we also appreciate that Cedarville has been willing to hold Memorial Day weekend open for us, even if we skip a year to hold it in another part of the brotherhood.

The Scheduling Committee has been given the task to schedule any future Annual Conferences that are to be held at Cedarville University. In working with this, we recognize the benefit to both Cedarville and our brotherhood of having further advance notice of the Conference location, whether it will be held here at Cedarville or another location.

The brotherhood agreed at the 2010 Annual Conference to plan for the Conference location two years in advance. This would require the selection of a “host” state (or states) be made earlier than two years, thus allowing them time to decide whether they wish to hold it at Cedarville or another location.

Question: “*Would this Conference be willing to consider a conference-hosting schedule?*”

Answer of brotherhood: “Yes.”

Question: “*Would this Conference be willing for the Scheduling Committee to prepare this hosting schedule to be published soon on the OGBBC website?*”

Answer of brotherhood: “Yes.”

Love and greetings to all as we meet together in Jesus’ name. We thank God for again blessing us with a wonderful time of worship and sweet fellowship.

Lord willing, the 2013 Annual Conference will be hosted by the Northwest districts at George Fox University, Newburg, Oregon, on June 15-18, 2013.

According to the rotation defined for the Scheduling Committee, we have selected Brother Ed Bauman from the Maple Grove district to replace Brother Gary Garber, subject to the approval of the brotherhood.

We wish to extend our sincere thanks to Cedarville University for all they have done for our fellowship. We are truly grateful for being able to worship in the quiet, peaceful setting that this facility affords us. May God bless Cedarville University and staff for their efforts.

The brotherhood accepted this report.

Conclusion

The 2012 Conference concluded with brief devotions at about 8:45 PM on Tuesday, May 29. One of the lasting impressions that will linger from this meeting was the frequency and fervency of the prayers of the gathered saints. Often, it was noticed that brethren and sisters would be communing with the Lord in times of mutual intercession. The committees who labored for the brotherhood characterized their efforts as being seasons of prayerfully and earnestly seeking the face of God. Young people in attendance

inspired those who were older with their obvious devotion and dependence upon the Heavenly Father and their fearlessness at being seen bowing before His throne. The prayer rooms were reported to possess within them an atmosphere of heavenly blessing. Various efforts were engaged to prayerfully minister to those possessing specific challenges and difficulties in their path of life. The flow of the Tuesday counsel was unexpectedly interrupted at least three times for specific prayers as needs arose and were identified in our midst. God was not negligent to this people who confessed their own inabilities and declared their dependence upon Him.

The blessing received from this Conference was experienced because God moved among us. While men of earth may scoff at the prospect of halting to pray, men of heaven have again declared that they are woefully inadequate but serve an amazingly-abundant Father in heaven. The humble sought Him, and He visited His people in amazing ways. To God be the glory; great things He hath done!

In behalf of the brotherhood,
Conference Committee – Billy Boone, Ron Bowman,
Darrell Boyd, James Bryant, Norm Layman, Lowell
Miller, Elwin Young, Mark Grover (moderator), Curt
Wagoner (secretary) and John Rumble (reading
clerk)