



# Church of the Brethren

May 2017

*Though the Brethren as a group have existed for nearly three hundred years, we subscribe to no formal creed. We simply try to do what Jesus did. Jesus brought a message of life, love, and hope. But he offered much more than inspiring words: He understood that people's spiritual needs also include day-to-day human ones – food, health, rest, comfort, friendship, and unconditional acceptance. "I am the way," he told his followers. He showed them how to trust, how to care, and how to help. Steadily, lovingly, even radically, Jesus went about saving the world – by serving its people. Because we believe his message, we seek to do the same.*

– Church of the Brethren Identity Pamphlet

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings to you in the name of Christ our Savior!

I am grateful for the many ways your district and local congregations faithfully strive to live out the Gospel – to simply try to do what Jesus did. The vital ministries of our Church of the Brethren congregations small to large are at the heart of our Church. We should never diminish the essential role that each unique part of the body plays in our common ministry together.

As you may know, I am committed to visiting all the districts in my first year with you as general secretary to hold listening sessions. As I have visited with you, I have been uplifted and encouraged not only by your hospitable and hopeful spirit but by your commitment to our common ministries together in the Church of the Brethren.

As we know all too well, there are a number of loud voices on either side of the issues we face that are demanding our attention and have dominated much of our time these past number of years. My efforts at intentional listening are to hear the voice of the church – listening for God's voice arising not from the loudest few, but from the gathered community. As I listen, there is no doubt that some of you clearly resonate with the dominant voices, yet the prevailing voice emerging from the listening sessions is one of hope – hope that we remain one Body in Christ continuing our struggle – together.

We have not been doing "together" very well as a Church. I am aware that many are weary of the struggle, yet as disciples of Jesus we are called to another way of living – a way that is not always easy and requires struggle. I would invite you to join me in our continued struggle to follow Jesus. It is my hope that we might change our adversarial posture to one of serving one another – one in which we stoop to wash the feet of our brother or sister in Christ. I believe such a change in posture positions us to listen more intently to one another – thus better able to love and care for the other. I believe that such a posture of service would be transformational for our Church.

*Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.*

My friends, I do hope you can see that our struggle together is worthwhile. We are doing good ministries together locally in our congregations and districts and denominationally. Our efforts at offering the cup of cold water model to the world that we are about another way of living – the way of Jesus. May we not forget that through our simple acts of service, we too are working to save the world – in Jesus' name.

I invite you to join me in another way of living.

Your servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Steele". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

David Steele  
General Secretary