

...being built together

—Ephesians 2:19-22

Throughout the decades, we have wrestled with all kinds of topics of the day—from war, to equality for women, to biblical authority, to human sexuality, to abortion, to end-of-life decision making, and many others. No matter what or how challenging the topic, one thing has remained constant and clear. Namely, how we are to love and live together in the midst of genuine differences over any of these topics. In 2017, On Earth Peace is lifting up this common thread of forbearance in our governing statements—as a key marker of our faith, how we diverse Brethren are “built together” in unity for continuing the work of Jesus. Ask OEP@OnEarthPeace.org for a booklet with all these excerpts.



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We reaffirm that education, consultation, and patience are characteristics of Brethren polity and that implementation of Annual Conference directives does not depend on acts of enforcement.

2004 Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions [255]

If we are to understand and address the most critical problems of our time, we must see the underlying, connecting causes of these problems.

1986 Making the Connection [167]

We acknowledge our lack of compassion, our judgementalism, and other sinful attitudes that separate us from the love by which God calls and redeems us...Over the years Brethren sought to follow the example and teaching of Jesus that religion and morality are ultimately voluntarily decided before God. Believing that the heart and soul of morality is the free choice of persons who love other persons, Brethren generally have been unwilling to rely upon military force, police force, capital punishment, religious inquisition, or punitive legislation. Brethren have sought rather to develop helping institutions and service for those who suffer, to introduce a note of compassion.

1988/1972 Abortion [697]

Brethren affirm the value of continued existence of diversity in our communion, emphasizing unity and love rather than judgment and rejection...When our lives are Christ-centered, we can disagree without being bitter or divisive. It is a mark of the working of the Holy Spirit that we can hold one another in love and fellowship even though there is diversity among us.

1979 Biblical Inspiration and Authority [407]

Forbearance does not require one to accept what another believes, but it does require one to listen and try to understand what another believes without demeaning, personal attacks, or acting to disenfranchise the other person...We accept Annual Conference positions as invitations to agree rather than mandates to obey.

2008 Urging Forbearance [341]

In Jesus Christ there are no qualifying limits to God's justice and peace. All the walls are down. The grace and love of God are being extended to everyone. The tradition itself must give way to God's justice.

1977 Justice and Nonviolence [238]

As the community searches for agreement in faith and practice, it must practice the faith which places supreme regard for the way God loves us, and the way we express that love to one another. Humility in presenting individual opinions, courtesy in listening and responding, and charity in relation to those who disagree should all be understood as extensions of a faithful practice of the affirmation.

1998 The New Testament as Our Rule of Faith and Practice [459]

We should cease thinking of Annual Conference as a political battleground where we strive for the victory of our own opinion and demean the character or position of a sister or brother. A win/lose mentality does not fit historic or contemporary understandings of our affirmation. While we probably cannot go back to decisions by unanimous consent, we should retain some of its charitable spirit in our own manner of speaking and listening to one another.

1998 The New Testament as Our Rule of Faith and Practice [511]

The Church of the Brethren seeks by processes of education and spiritual nurture to help its members to allow a spirit of peace and an attitude of nonviolence to develop within themselves as an outgrowth of deep religious conviction...knowing full well that, in so doing, violence may fall upon us as it did upon Jesus.

1970 War [326]

