

A Pastoral Letter from the Council of District Executives

1 Out of concern for the state of our denomination, we, the Council of District Executives,
2 offer this pastoral letter to the Church and the gathered body at the 2011 Annual
3 Conference.

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5 We are acutely aware that we live in a time of great anxiety and apprehension, and we
6 recognize that tension exists within the church. We see this tension straining our bonds
7 of affection, trust and cooperation. In the months preceding Annual Conference, some
8 in our midst already were asking: "How will our denomination survive the internal and
9 external pressures placed upon it?" We also recognize that differing points of view over
10 Biblical interpretation and authority are causing deep pain with the denomination. We
11 affirm our belief in the authority of Scripture as a guide for our living, while
12 acknowledging that Brethren disagree on matters of interpretation.

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14 We see our Church struggling to find that narrow way between several Scriptural
15 mandates. Some in our body sincerely believe they are prophetically calling us to
16 holiness, purity and righteousness and out of the immorality and sinfulness of the
17 prevailing culture. Others sincerely believe they are prophetically calling our church
18 toward justice for the oppressed and excluded, and inclusion and welcome for those
19 with a different point of view. Members of the body wrestle with discerning sins to be
20 repented of or delivered from and what is to be celebrated as part of the diversity of
21 God's creation.

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23 We have observed the impact that the district standing committee hearings have had on
24 individuals and congregations. We have heard the cry of those who wish to keep the
25 church together while speaking truth in love to those who hold differing points of view.
26 And we grieve over statements made out of deep convictions but phrased in ways that
27 do not show the love of Christ.

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29 We, the Council of District Executives, are unanimous in our desire to do all we can to
30 keep the Church of the Brethren focused on our unity in our one faith in God revealed in
31 Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:5).

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33 Therefore, individually and as the Council of District Executives:

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35 we covenant to do the hard work of discerning the times that call for
36 forbearance and discerning the times that call for judgment (Acts 15).

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38 we covenant to pray for God's direction and truth for the church.

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40 we covenant to gather in community around the scriptures, seeking the mind of
41 Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

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43 We urge all members of the church to join us as we seek God's direction and the mind
44 of Christ. Further, we call our brothers and sisters to renew their baptismal and

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1 membership vows, to live and share in the bonds of Christian fellowship, to give and
2 receive Christian love, and to share and bear one another's joy and pain. May we, by
3 God's grace put aside anxiety, seek Christ's peace, and walk together in faith, hope and
4 love toward the future God has promised.

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6 These Biblical references informed the writing of this letter Jeremiah 7, 1 John 4, Acts 15, 1 Corinthians
7 13, Ephesians 4, Psalms 46, Romans 8 and Micah 4, John 14:27

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