

Nominating Committee

22-1

Tim Sherman, chairperson

Note: This report was originally submitted to the Executive Leadership Team on April 18, 2023.

Thank you so much for entrusting us with the responsibility and privilege to serve our denomination by prayerfully seeking and selecting individuals to be placed on the ballot for ELT and Bishop. While it is a humbling and solemn task we are thankful to be able to serve on a wonderful team. We count it an honor.

Our process was similar to the past. We met six times over the past several months: 8/8/24, 9/18/24, 12/12/24, 1/23/25, 3/12/25, and 4/2/25. We started by reaching out to those that have served or were willing to serve in the past to see if they were open to being considered again. On November 20, 2024 an email asked for nominations for the positions needed with responses requested by December 10, 2024. We are grateful that we received 28 nominations for ELT, nine for Bishop and some were submitted more than once.

Once the nomination list was complete our team reached out to the individuals nominated to see if they were open to being considered. Once the consideration list was complete on January 23, 2025 we then asked each of them to fill out an information sheet so that we could prayerfully seek God's direction and wisdom. After receiving, reflecting upon and praying over them we met on March 12, 2025 to select two names to be placed on the ballot for each needed position. After they were chosen, we then spent time in prayer and reached out to their references to ensure that they would be fit for the position of ELT if elected.

ELT Ballot

East Clergy

Brent Liechty and Christopher Little

Central Lay

Tyler Bates and Dick Wood

North Lay

Michelle Cross and Bob Tobey

West Clergy

Jason Holliday and Brian Kramer

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A similar process was used for the role of bishop and we are thankful to have been able to receive the nominations, pray over them, and ask if they would be willing to be considered to be placed on the ballot for the role of bishop. As we engaged in this process the entire team is in agreement and submits the following:

God's hand has been so apparent to us during our national ballot preparations. Pastors across the denomination submitted amazing men and women to serve on the ELT. We have been overwhelmed, amazed, and thankful. Also, in the nomination process, nine pastors were nominated for the position of Bishop, one being our current Bishop. Eight of the nominees declined to run against our current Bishop as the common sentiment is that he is being led by the Spirit and, at this time, the one God has put in place to lead our denomination. God is working greatly in our denomination to spread His Gospel, create Unity, and build the Mission among His church. Fortunately, several of these men are willing to be considered to serve in the capacity of Bishop in the future. As a nominating committee, we have been greatly encouraged by the unity displayed and the dedication and support of our God, denomination, and Bishop Fetters. God is working powerfully among us. According to our by-laws, we must have two names on the ballot. We propose to the national conference that we (the nominating committee) be permitted to submit one name to the 2025 ballot for the position of Bishop in and under the spirit of Psalm 133:1:

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!"

Psalm 133:1 NIV

After much prayer and affirmation from God we (the nominating committee) believe God has put Bishop Fetters in this position, so we respectfully submit for approval one name for the position of Bishop, the Reverend Todd Fetters.

Sincerely,

Nominating Committee:

Tim Sherman, Chairperson

Steve Fish

Ben Gladhill

Jeremiah Greenland

Dalton Jenkins

Kristi McConnell

ELT Candidate Bios 32-1

The Executive Leadership Team consists of the bishop plus 12 other persons—six clergy, six laity. Eight of those persons are elected by the National Conference, four of them every two years to four-year terms. The other four are appointed by the new ELT to two-year terms. Report 41 lists all members of the 2023-2025 ELT, and identifies the four persons whose terms continue until 2027.

East Region, Clergy

Brent Liechty

Rising Hope Church, Shippensburg, PA

Brent Liechty is a 1998 graduate of Huntington University with a BA in Educational Ministry and has since served in four United Brethren Churches in Indiana (Monroe), Michigan (Gethsemane, which is now Heart O’The Lakes, Jackson Campus), and Pennsylvania (Crider’s and Rising Hope). He was ordained at National Conference in 2017. Brent has continued working towards his Master’s degree and has studied at Evangelical School of Theology as well as Bethel University.

Brent has a history in music ministry that has provided opportunities to build relationships in many United Brethren Churches in the US and Canada, which he believes would be beneficial if he were to be elected as a member of the Executive Leadership Team.

Why are you interested in serving on the ELT?

Brent: *“I want our churches to thrive. I want them to deepen their love for Jesus and their love for the lost around them.”*

Christopher Little

Devonshire Memorial Church, Harrisburg, PA

Christopher is a 2014 graduate of Geneva College where he studied music and ministry. Soon after, he received his Master’s in Christian Ministry from Wesley Seminary, with a focus in church planting and multiplication. Chris served at Mt. Pleasant and Devonshire before planting United House Church in 2019. He and his family have intentions of serving domestically with UB Global with a desire to start simple churches with Afghans.

Christopher says his life’s objective is to glorify God in all that he does and to thoroughly enjoy the Lord’s presence in his life.

Why are you interested in serving on the ELT?

Christopher: *“The UB is family to me. I care deeply about the wellbeing of the pastors, their families, and the leaders of the denomination. It would be an honor to support the vision and mission of the UB in this role.”*

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Central Region, Lay

Tyler Bates

Bethel Church, Elmore, OH

Tyler Bates is a retired chemistry and physics teacher who currently trains a stable of a dozen harness race horses. He grew up at Zion UB Church in Wilshire, OH where he was discipled by mentors who allowed him to grow in his faith at his own pace. According to Tyler, the five years he spent at Huntington College, were the years he truly made his faith his own.

Tyler has served on his church board for 25 years, the last ten of which he has been the board chair, and has served as an elder for the last 15. He has served a term on the ELT and is currently serving another partial term.

Why are you interested in serving on the ELT?

Tyler: *"I want to support our denomination and our bishop in any way I can. I enjoy serving with the wonderful Christian people who make up the ELT."*

Dick Wood

Shoreline Church, Oak Harbor, OH

Dick is a retired engineer who began attending Main Street Church in 1980. In 1983, he and his wife, Mary, helped to plant Shoreline Church in Oak Harbor, OH where they are still members today.

Dick has served in numerous roles in both churches he has attended including the roles of Sunday School teacher, admin board member, admin board chair, treasurer, Navigator, properties chair, small group leader and governance team member.

Why are you interested in serving on the ELT?

Dick: *"If this is where God wants me to be, I don't think I can say no."*

North Region, Lay

Michelle Cross

Heart O'The Lakes, Jackson Campus, Jackson, MI

Michelle is a member of Heart O'The Lakes Church and attends the Jackson, MI campus. She and her husband, Ramsey, found their way there while supporting a close friend who tragically lost a loved one. She says they were met with understanding and love and the church soon became like family.

Michelle has a wide array of ministry experience having served 3 years on the worship team, 2 years as a children's church teacher, 5 years as a youth worker, 2 years in the nursery, and a year on the governance team. She believes that God will use those who are willing to be used, no matter what their position.

Why are you interested in serving on the ELT?

Michelle: *"I believe in stepping out in faith and depending on God for my strength and guidance to make a difference. If chosen for this position, I will continue to rely on God for wisdom and understanding to help the United Brethren Church in any way I can."*

Bob Tobey

Colwood Church, Caro, MI

Bob is a retired school teacher and coach of 32 years. He and his wife, Jolene, have been attending Colwood Church and have served there in various capacities. Bob has served as a youth director, Sunday School superintendent, Sunday School teacher, administrative board chair, elder, and finance chair among other things.

Bob has also been involved in leadership at Camp Living Waters as a board member for 12 years and now serves on the Lane Home Board. At the denominational level, he has previously served a term on the ELT and has helped to organize the golf outing at the last 3 national conferences.

Why are you interested in serving on ELT?

Bob: *"I have served before and would enjoy the opportunity again."*

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West Region, Clergy

Jason Holliday

Living Grace Community Church, Fort Wayne, IN

Jason Holliday is the Lead Pastor at Living Grace Community Church in Fort Wayne, IN. He is a graduate from Huntington University (1996) with a degree in educational ministries and later received his Master of Ministry in Bible and Theology from Bethel University (2012).

Jason has served for over 20 years in two United Brethren churches in the Fort Wayne area. He held various roles including children, family and worship ministries at Emmanuel Community Church from 2004-2018 until he moved to Living Grace Community Church in 2018 where he now serves.

Why are you interested in serving on ELT?

Jason: *"I want to be used by God to advance His Kingdom. Whether that be through our local body, the denomination or beyond, I want to be more available & open."*

Brian Kramer

Emmanuel Community Church, Fort Wayne, IN

Brian Kramer was recently named the Co-President of Sonlife Ministries. Prior to that he served as a youth pastor for long stints at three United Brethren churches — Devonshire (5 years), King Street (17 years) and Emmanuel Community Church (13 years). He is a graduate of Messiah University and has done graduate work at Huntington University, Evangelical Seminary and Bethel University where he ultimately received his degree.

When Brian was a teenager, a youth group from a United Brethren church reached out to him and introduced him to Jesus. He says it is a movement that he has wanted to be a part of ever since.

Brian has served one term on the ELT and has been nominated for a second term.

Why are you interested in serving on ELT?

Brian: *"I was asked to serve another term and am willing to be considered."*

DISCIPLINE REVISION 33-1

Discipline Revision Proposals from the Defining Church Task Force
Changes in the proposals are indicated with **bold** or ~~strikethrough~~ type.

CHAPTER 11

Proposal 1. Definition of a Local Congregation

Chapter 11, "Local Church Organization"

New ¶421

Add the following as a new ¶401:

¶421 Definition of a Local Congregation

1. A congregation is a gathered expression of the global community that embodies the life of Christ in the world.
2. United Brethren churches, regardless of size, have the opportunity and freedom to pursue the expression of ministry and worship that will enable them to fulfill God's call upon them.
3. A United Brethren congregation is expected to be:
 - a. *Spiritually Alive*. They are people formed in the image and likeness of God, re-formed by their union with Christ, and being transformed by the indwelling Spirit in order to be conformed to the passionate love of our relational God for the world.
 - b. *Relationally Connected*. They are people created by God for community and unity, invited by Christ into deep, enduring bonds with each other, and choosing to share the life of the Holy Spirit together as a reflection of his triune love.
 - c. *Missionally Engaged*. They are people who join God where he is already at work, living as missionaries every day, and offering the good news of the redemption and restoration of Christ to their neighbors, locally and globally, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Proposal 2. Congregations and Churches

Chapter 11, "Local Church Organization"

New ¶422

Insert the following as a new ¶422.

¶422 Congregation vs. Church

The terms "church" and "congregation" are sometimes used interchangeably. However, in certain contexts, nuances make one term or the other more appropriate.

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1. *Congregation*. "Congregation" is best suited for contexts which involve the gathering of believers—the constituents, the body, the community.

2. *Church*. "Church" best fits references to the body of believers as a duly organized ecumenical entity for such purposes as official recognition from the denomination, national conference representation, assignment of senior pastors, annual reports, property ownership, closing, and IRS recognition.

Proposal 3. Organization of a Local Church

Chapter 11, "Local Church Organization"

¶421, "Organization"

Current wording of ¶421:

¶421 Organization

1. Size

A group of adults may organize as a local church when they achieve the following:

- a. ~~Adult members from 10 or more resident families.~~
- b. ~~An average worship attendance of 50 or more over the preceding twelve consecutive months.~~
- c. Have signed and returned the National Conference Covenant.

2. Structure

Each local church is free to establish the structure that will best suit the needs and ministries of the congregation and community, with the exception of the following requirements with regard to ¶422, "Local Board," ¶423, "Lay Delegates," and ¶424, "Personnel Relations Team."

Replace with the following and renumber as ¶423:

¶423 Organization

1. A congregation consists of any group of adults who have organized as a local church and have signed and returned the National Conference Covenant.

2. Each local congregation is free to establish the structure that will best suit the needs and ministries of the congregation and community, with the exception of the following requirements with regard to ¶422, "Local," ¶423, "Lay Delegates," and ¶424, "Personnel Relations Team."

Proposal 4. Local Board

Chapter 11, “Local Church Organization”

¶422, “Local Board”

Current wording (parts to be changed in bold):

¶422 Local Board

1. Name

The local board is the local church’s highest governing body. Churches are free to use other terminology as they see appropriate (board of administration, governing board, church council, elder board, etc.). Throughout the Discipline, “local board” or “board” are used in a generic sense to refer to the church’s highest governing group.

2. Purpose

The local board oversees all affairs pertaining to the local church.

3. Personnel

- a. The local board will consist of at least three members of the church.
- b. The senior pastor shall be a member of the board.
- c. Other members of the board will depend on the structure which the local church chooses to adopt.
- d. All lay board members must be members of the local church.

4. Duties

a. The board shall establish the structure that will best suit the needs and ministries of the congregation and **community**.

b. The board shall keep its rulings and policies in harmony with the policies and proceedings of the US National Conference.

c. The board shall provide for the selection of church leaders and lay delegates.

d. The board shall provide for the responsible handling and accounting of the church’s finances.

e. The local board has authority in all matters pertaining to persons holding the lay ministers license.

~~f. The local board shall recommend to the bishop those ministers who are qualified for a national conference license.~~

g. **The local board shall have the power to disband** a local church, subject to the provisions in ¶452.

h. **The local board shall have power to withdraw from the denomination**, subject to the provisions in Chapter 14, “Churches that Withdraw.”

5. Special Meetings

Situations may arise which call for the involvement of the bishop.

a. A special meeting of the local board may be **requested** by the bishop, the cluster leader, the senior pastor, **or upon a written request from** the local board.

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- b. The bishop will determine whether or not to actually call a special meeting.
- c. The bishop or his designee shall chair special meetings of the local board.

Replace with the following and renumber as ¶424:

¶424 Local Board

1. Name

The local board is the local church's highest governing body. Churches are free to use other terminology as they see appropriate (board of administration, governing board, church council, elder board, etc.). Throughout the Discipline, "local board" or "board" are used in a generic sense to refer to the church's highest governing group.

2. Purpose

The local board is **responsible for the continuing mission** of the local church.

3. Personnel

The local board will consist of at least three members of the church.

- a. The senior pastor shall be a member of the board.
- b. Other members of the board will depend on the structure which the local church chooses to adopt.
- c. All lay board members must be members of the local church.

4. Responsibilities

The local board:

- a. Shall establish the structure that will best suit the needs and ministries of the congregation and **context**.
- b. Shall keep its rulings and policies in harmony with the policies and proceedings of the US National Conference.
- c. Shall provide for the selection of church leaders and lay delegates.
- d. Shall provide for the responsible handling and accounting of the church's finances, **and all legal matters**.
- e. Has authority in all matters pertaining to persons holding the lay minister's license.
- f. **Can initiate the process of disbanding** a local church, subject to the provisions in **Chapter 14**.
- g. **Can initiate the process of withdrawing** the congregation from the denomination, subject to the provisions in Chapter 14.

Special Meetings

Situations may arise which call for the involvement of the bishop.

- a. A special meeting of the local board may be **called** by the bishop, or **requested** by the cluster leader, the senior pastor, or the local board.

- b. The bishop will determine whether or not to call a special meeting.
- c. The bishop or his designee shall chair special meetings of the local board.

Proposal 5. Lay Delegates

Chapter 11, "Local Church Organization"

¶423, "Lay Delegates"

Current wording (parts to be changed in bold):

¶423 Lay Delegates

1. Responsibilities

Lay delegates represent the local **church** to the **national conference**, and also serve as voting delegates at the **US National Conference**.

2. Qualifications

All lay delegates must be adult members of the local church they represent. The **church** shall not select anyone **who holds a National Conference license or is being recommended to the National Conference for license**.

3. Selection

Each local **church** may determine the method for selecting lay delegates.

Revise as follows (changes in bold)

¶425 Lay Delegates

1. Responsibilities

Lay delegates represent the local church to the **US National Conference** and also serve as voting delegates at the conference.

2. Qualifications

All lay delegates must be adult members of the local church they represent. The **congregation** shall not select any of the following as lay delegates:

- a. **Persons who hold a license from the Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team.**
- b. **Persons being recommended for a license from the Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team.**
- c. **Members of the church's pastoral staff.**

3. Selection

Each local **congregation** may determine the method for selecting lay delegates.

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Proposal 6. Personnel Relations Team

Chapter 11, “Local Church Organization”

¶424, “Personnel Relations Team”

Current wording:

¶424 Personnel Relations Team

1. Each **church** shall have a Personnel Relations Team. Its primary responsibility is to cooperate with the stationing committee in securing a new senior pastor when the need arises. The local board will determine the constituency of the Personnel Relations Team.
2. Depending on its structure, a **church** may give the Personnel Relations Team responsibilities in related areas, such as **the work and support of the senior pastor**.

Revise as follows (changes in bold):

¶426 Personnel Relations Team

1. Each **congregation** may form a Personnel Relations Team **or its equivalent, as helpful to its mission**. Its primary responsibility is to cooperate with the stationing committee in securing a new senior pastor when the need arises. The local board will determine the constituency of the Personnel Relations Team.
2. Depending on its structure, a **congregation** may give the Personnel Relations Team responsibilities in related areas, such as **support of the ongoing work of the pastor(s)**.

CHAPTER 9

Proposal 7. Congregations Arising from Church Plants

Chapter 9, “Organizing New Churches”

¶401, “Congregations Arising from Church Plants”

Current wording of ¶401 (deletions indicated):

¶401 Congregations Arising from Church Plants

A congregation may officially organize as a United Brethren church by following these steps:

- ~~1. The congregation must average 50 people in weekly worship for 12 months.~~
- ~~2. The congregation must include adults from ten or more resident families.~~
3. The congregation is willing to carry out the expectations of other churches in the national conference.

4. The congregation shows evidence of financial self-sufficiency and an ability and willingness to pay the partnership fee.

5. The congregation notifies the Executive Leadership Team, in writing, of its desire to organize as a church.

6. The church submits to the bishop a copy of the National Conference Covenant signed and dated by the chairperson of the local board ~~and by the senior pastor (or a leading layperson, should the senior pastor be chairperson of the local board).~~

7. The Executive Leadership Team votes to receive the congregation into full membership.

Replace with the following (addition in bold):

¶401 Churches Arising from Church Plants

A congregation may officially organize as a United Brethren church by following these steps:

1. The congregation is willing to carry out the same expectations as those of other churches in the national conference.
2. The congregation shows evidence of **sustainability and** financial self-sufficiency (including an ability and willingness to pay the partnership fee).
3. The congregation notifies the Executive Leadership Team, in writing, of its desire to organize as a church.
4. The congregation submits to the bishop a copy of the National Conference Covenant signed and dated by the chairperson of the local board.
5. The Executive Leadership Team votes to receive the congregation into full membership.

Proposal 8. Adopting Non-United Brethren Congregations

Chapter 9, "Organizing New Churches"

¶402, "Adopting Non-United Brethren Congregations"

Current wording of ¶402 (words to be changed in bold):

¶402 Adopting Non-United Brethren Congregations

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, invites existing congregations to be **adopted into** our fellowship. These steps should be followed when an existing congregation which is not affiliated with the United Brethren Church wants to **be adopted by** the national conference as a United Brethren congregation.

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1. The congregation will notify the Executive Leadership Team, in writing, of its desire to affiliate with the national conference.
2. The US bishop or his appointee will meet with leaders from the church to investigate such areas as:
 - a. The doctrinal teachings of the church.
 - b. The church's willingness to abide by the Discipline of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, and the Confession of Faith and Core Values of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ International.
 - c. The church's willingness to meet the expectations of all other congregations in the national conference.
 - d. The willingness of the church's members or constituents to individually become members of the United Brethren church, according to the procedures specified in the Discipline.
 - e. Evidence of financial self-sufficiency and an ability and willingness to pay the partnership fee.
3. The Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team will meet with the **senior pastor** to review issues of ministerial credentialing.
4. The US bishop or his appointee shall facilitate any other meetings designed to facilitate mutual understanding and familiarization.
5. A majority of the church's constituents or members must vote in favor of being adopted as a United Brethren congregation.
6. At least ten resident member families have been received individually as members of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, according to the procedures and requirements specified in the Discipline.
7. The church submits to the bishop a copy of the National Conference Covenant signed and dated by the chairperson of the local board and by the ~~senior~~ pastor (or a leading layperson, should the ~~senior~~ pastor be chairperson of the local board).
8. The Executive Leadership Team determines that the congregation meets the basic criteria for a church as stated in Chapter 13, "Local Church Organization."
The Executive Leadership Team designates the church as a congregation of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

Replace with the following (changes in bold):

¶403 Partnering with Non-United Brethren Congregations

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, invites existing congregations to **partner with** our fellowship. These steps should be followed when an existing congregation which is not affiliated with the United Brethren Church wants **to partner with** the national conference as a United Brethren congregation.

1. The congregation will notify the Executive Leadership Team, in writing, of its desire to affiliate with the national conference.
2. The US bishop or his appointee will meet with leaders from the church to investigate such areas as:
 - a. The doctrinal teachings of the church.
 - b. The **congregation's** willingness to abide by the Discipline of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA, and the Confession of Faith and Core Values of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ International.
 - c. The **congregation's** willingness to meet the same expectations as those of all other congregations in the national conference.
 - d. The willingness of the **congregation's** members or constituents to individually become members of the United Brethren Church, according to the procedures specified in the Discipline.
 - e. Evidence of **sustainability and** financial self-sufficiency (including an ability and willingness to pay the partnership fee).
3. The Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team will meet with the **pastor(s)** to review issues of ministerial credentialing.
4. The US bishop or his appointee shall facilitate any other meetings designed to facilitate mutual understanding and familiarization.
5. A majority of the **congregation's** constituents or members must vote in favor of **partnering** as a United Brethren congregation.
6. The **congregation** submits to the bishop a copy of the National Conference Covenant signed and dated by the chairperson of the local board.
7. The Executive Leadership Team determines that the congregation meets the basic criteria for a church as stated in **Paragraph 401, "Definition of a Local Congregation."**
8. The Executive Leadership Team designates the church as a congregation of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA.

Chapter 12

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Proposal 9. Senior Pastors

Chapter 12, “Duties of Senior Pastors”

¶431-437

Current wording:

¶431 To be holy in lifestyle.

1. By leading a life of prayer.
2. By spending time devotionally in God’s Word.
3. By setting an example of the Christian life within the church and community.

¶432 To preach and teach the Word of God.

1. By giving priority to study and preparation.
2. By having a preaching/teaching plan to present the whole Word of God.

¶433 To provide for the regular observance of the ordinances and ceremonies of the church.

1. By celebrating the Lord’s Supper.
2. By providing opportunities for Christian baptism.
3. By performing weddings and funerals.

¶434 To equip the believers for works of service.

1. By helping them find their spiritual gifts.
2. By training them to become proficient in the use of God’s Word.
3. By training them in the various aspects of ministry.
4. By allowing them to be involved in personal ministry within the local church.

¶435 To do and teach the work of an evangelist.

1. By doing consistent personal evangelism in the local church and the community.
2. By providing for training the believers in personal evangelism in both classroom and real life settings.

¶436 To be responsible for local church administration.

1. By overseeing the worship services.
2. By giving direction for the ministry of the local church.
3. By doing specific planning and goal-setting.
4. By reporting to the local board and submitting annual reports to the bishop.
5. By keeping accurate membership records.
6. By presenting the church Discipline.
7. By notifying the US bishop in writing at least 30 days before the effective date of resignation.

¶437 To provide pastoral care.

¶438 To promote national conference interests.

1. By regularly attending cluster meetings and national conference activities.
2. By promoting the ministries and partnership fee of the national church.
3. By presenting referenda items and overseeing referenda voting.
4. By promoting communications from the national office.

Replace the current Chapter 12 with the following, and insert it at the end of Chapter 7, “Ministers,” as a new ¶205.

¶205 Commitments of Senior Pastors

Senior pastors of United Brethren congregations shall:

1. Devote themselves to their own ongoing spiritual formation.
2. Provide for the proclamation and teaching of the Word of God in one’s congregation.
3. Provide for the regular observance of the ordinances and ceremonies of the church.
4. Do the work of evangelism and equip others in this work.
5. Make and equip reproducing disciples.
6. Provide for the equipping of believers for works of service.
7. Provide for ethical, effective local church administration.
8. Provide for the ongoing care and spiritual growth of members of the congregation.
9. Promote and enhance the relationship between the congregation and other United Brethren ministries.
10. Represent the work of this ministry to the larger community/context in which it is rooted.

Proposal 10. Churches in Crisis

Chapter 13, “Churches in Crisis”

¶441, *Crisis Intervention*

Current wording:

¶441 Crisis Intervention

1. Conditions

Any existing congregation shall require national conference intervention whenever it becomes unhealthy or shows consistent decline, as evidenced by any combination of the following:

- a. An average morning worship attendance of fewer than 50 for two consecutive years or more.
- b. Fewer than ten resident member families.
- c. Lack of financial stability and/or self-reliance.

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- d. Lack of clear and common purpose.
- e. Severe and unresolved internal conflict which damages the church's reputation in the community and hurts the cause of Christ.

2. Intervention Strategies

Such congregations may initiate their own plans subject to national conference approval and supervision, or an appropriate national conference entity may intervene to explore possible renewal and revitalization strategies. These may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. *Renewal Plan.* A renewal plan would help the existing congregation revitalize its ministry. Components might include an objective assessment of its spiritual health, the development of a renewed purpose, an addressing of any internal problems or obstacles, etc.
- b. *Restart Plan.* A restart plan would close the existing congregation and use its resources to start a new church in the same community with a new ministry focus, a new location, a new name, and/or a new pastor.
- c. *Maintenance Plan.* A maintenance plan would allow the congregation to decide to continue its present course, but without any further **outside** intervention and/or assistance.
- d. *Closure Plan.* A closure plan would close the church in accordance with the procedures below.

Revise as follows, including changing the chapter title to “Congregations in Crisis.”

¶441 Crisis Intervention

1. Conditions

Any existing congregation shall require national conference intervention whenever it becomes unhealthy or shows consistent decline, as evidenced by any combination of the following:

- a. Participation by too few people to fulfill the unique mission of the congregation.**
- b. Lack of financial stability and/or self-reliance.
- c. Lack of clear and common purpose.
- d. Severe and unresolved internal conflict which damages the church's reputation in the community and hurts the cause of Christ.

2. Intervention Strategies

Such congregations may initiate their own plans subject to national conference approval and supervision, or an appropriate national conference entity may intervene to explore possible renewal and revitalization strategies. These may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. *Renewal Plan.* A renewal plan would help the existing congregation revitalize its ministry. Components might include an objective assessment of its spiritual health, the development of a renewed purpose, an addressing of any internal problems or obstacles, etc.
- b. *Restart Plan.* A restart plan would close the existing congregation and use its resources to start a new congregation in the same community. **Components might include a new ministry focus, a new location, a new name, or a new pastor.**

- c. *Maintenance Plan*. A maintenance plan would allow the congregation to decide to continue its present course, but without any further intervention and/or assistance **from the US National Conference**.
- d. *Closure Plan*. A closure plan would close the church in accordance with the procedures below.

Chapter 13

Proposal 11. Closing a Church

Chapter 13, "Churches in Crisis

¶442, "Closing a Church"

Current wording:

¶442 Closing a Church

1. Initiating a Closure

The process for closing a church can be initiated by:

- a. The Local Board. The local board will notify the US bishop of its desire, and the local board and cluster leader will begin discussing the idea.
- b. The Bishop. The bishop may direct the cluster leader or another person to meet with a local board about the possibility of closing that church.
- c. Cluster Leader. The cluster leader or designee may direct the local board to call a meeting consisting of all members of the local church to discuss the possibility of closing the church.

2. Reasons for Closing

Reasons for closing a church can be based on such factors as:

- a. The church is weak in such areas as membership, attendance, finances, and purpose.
- b. There is a desire to merge with another congregation.
- c. The congregation is unable to carry out a meaningful ministry.
- d. The congregation consists of less than ten resident families.**

3. Closing the Church

The final decision will be made by the local board. When that decision is made, the following actions will occur:

- a. The local church will determine the disposition of the property. Any proceeds from selling the property will be transferred to a 501(c)(3) organization chosen by the local board.
- b. A letter will be sent to each member**, outlining possible options regarding church attendance and membership in nearby churches, information on what will happen to the church property, and any other relevant information.

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c. Members shall transfer their membership to the local church of their choice. If that is not done within six months, the US bishop may close the roll by removing the names from United Brethren membership.

d. It is recommended that assets from the sale of closed churches be given to the US National Conference to start new churches.

Revise as follows (changes in bold):

¶442 Closing a Church

1. Initiating a Closure

The process for closing a congregation can be initiated by:

a. *The Local Board*. The local board will notify the US bishop of its desire, and the local board and cluster leader will begin discussing the idea.

b. *The Bishop*. The bishop may direct the cluster leader or another person to meet with a local board about the possibility of closing that congregation.

c. *Cluster Leader*. The cluster leader or designee may direct the local board to call a meeting consisting of all members of the local church to discuss the possibility of closing the church.

2. Reasons for Closing

A decision to close a church may be based on such factors as:

a. The **congregation** is weak in such areas as membership, attendance, finances, and purpose.

b. There is a desire to merge with another congregation.

c. The congregation is unable to carry out a meaningful ministry.

d. **Participation by too few people to fulfill the unique mission of the congregation.**

3. Closing the Church

The final decision will be made by the local board. When that decision is made, the following actions will occur:

a. The local **congregation** will determine the disposition of the property. Any proceeds from selling the property will be transferred to a 501(c)(3) organization chosen by the local board.

b. **Communications with each member will outline** possible options regarding church attendance and membership in nearby churches, information on what will happen to the church property, and any other relevant information.

c. Members shall transfer their membership to the local **congregation** of their choice. If that is not done within six months, the US bishop may close the roll by removing the names from United Brethren membership.

d. It is recommended that assets from the sale of closed churches be given to the US National Conference to start new congregations.

Chapter 14

Proposal 12. Ramifications for Withdrawing

Chapter 14, “Churches that Withdraw”

¶452-454, “*Withdrawing: Ramifications for Churches*”

Current Wording of ¶452-454:

¶452 Withdrawing: Ramifications for Tax Exempt Status

1. A church that withdraws will no longer be included under the denomination’s federal 501(c)(3) non-profit tax-exempt status. This status, depending on local and state laws, may be required for:
 - a. Exemption from tax payments to state and federal authorities. Any contributions made to the church, such as tithes and offerings, cannot be claimed as charitable deductions.
 - ~~b. The filing of certain tax forms.~~
 - ~~c. Real estate tax exemption.~~
 - ~~d. U. S. Postal Service bulk mailing permits.~~
 - e. The receipt of many forms of grants and bequests.
 - f. Granting housing allowance to ministers.
2. These advantages will be gone until the church attaches itself to another non-profit group or establishes its own 501c(3) status.
- ~~3. Legal and other services will be needed to secure new 501(c)(3) status.~~

¶453 Withdrawing: Ramifications for Ministers

1. Ministerial licenses and ordinations will no longer be valid as of the withdrawal date.
2. Any members of the church who are licensed United Brethren ministers must surrender their credentials or transfer their membership to another United Brethren church.
3. Ministers may be unable to perform certain duties, such as weddings, depending on local or state laws.
4. Ministers will not qualify for housing allowance unless they are under the umbrella of a group with a federal 501(c)(3) status.
5. All participants in the denomination’s retirement program will be terminated from that program according to its requirements. Some current retirement benefits could be lost or affected.

~~¶454 Withdrawing: Ramifications for Churches~~

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- ~~1. The church will be on its own when it comes to securing a new senior pastor.~~
-
- ~~2. Members who are attending Huntington University will lose grants that go to UB members and UB churches.~~
-
- ~~3. A congregation which ceases to be a United Brethren church will need to revise its corporate status. This may require filing new articles of incorporation and bylaws.~~
-
- ~~4. The United Brethren name is to be removed from all signs and documents following the withdrawal, reflecting the lack of association with the denomination.~~

Remove ¶454, and condense ¶452-453 as follows:

¶452 Ramifications for Withdrawing

1. *Tax exempt status.* A church that withdraws will no longer be included under the denomination's federal 501(c)(3) non-profit tax-exempt status. The following may be affected until the church attaches itself to another non-profit group or establishes its own 501c(3) status.
 - a. Exemption from tax payments to **local**, state and federal authorities. Any contributions made to the church, such as tithes and offerings, cannot be claimed as charitable deductions.
 - b. The receipt of many forms of grants and bequests.
 - c. Granting housing allowance to ministers.
2. *Ministers*
 - a. Ministerial licenses and ordinations will no longer be valid as of the withdrawal date.
 - b. Ministers may be unable to perform certain duties, such as weddings, depending on local or state laws.
 - c. Ministers will not qualify for housing allowance unless they are under the umbrella of a group with a federal 501(c)(3) status.
 - d. All participants in the denomination's retirement program will be terminated from that program according to its requirements. Some current retirement benefits could be lost or affected.

Part V: The Local Church

Proposal 13. Chapter Order in Part V.

Current order:

9. Organizing New Churches
10. Joining the Church
11. Local Church Organization
- ~~12. Duties of Senior Pastors~~
13. Churches in Crisis
14. Churches that Withdraw

Change the order to the following (per proposal 9. the content of chapter 12 was moved to chapter 7), and revise all numbering as necessary:

9. Local Church Organization
10. Organizing New Churches
11. Joining the Church
13. Churches in Crisis
14. Churches that Withdraw

Chapter 8

Proposal 14. Administrative Divisions

Current ¶302:

¶302 Administrative Entities

The church shall consist of the following administrative entities:

~~1. Preaching Point~~

~~A preaching point is a group of people holding services in a place outside the bounds of an existing United Brethren church, with the goal of eventually becoming a full member congregation.~~

~~2. Appointment~~

~~A preaching point organized or not organized into a local church.~~

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3. Local Church

A duly organized group consisting of adult members from ten or more resident families. A resident family must include at least one person who is a member of the church. The family must also meet at least one of these requirements: live within ten miles of the church, regularly contribute financially, or regularly attend services.

Remove ¶302.1 and ¶302.2, and revise ¶302.3 as follows:

¶302.1 Local Church

A group of adult members duly organized according to ¶422.

(This paragraph continues with definitions of Mission District, Cluster, Region, Church of the United Brethren in Christ USA, and Church of the United Brethren in Christ International.)

