

August 12, 1991

Dear Ministering Brethren and co-laborers in the vineyard of the Lord,

Greetings in our risen Savior's name.

Jesus said: "And upon this Rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. 16:18b. It is with this confidence that we continue to labor for the Lord and the church.

You will remember the discussion at our 1991 Ministers Meeting in Wellesley, Ontario, and the deep concerns expressed by the ministerial body. You will further remember the choosing of a committee composed of five Bishop brethren to assist and to provide some form of guidance and prepare a statement of position on various issues confronting our Beachy constituency; some of which are very fundamental doctrinal issues.

Our first response would be that our need is not for a detailed discussion of the eighteen or twenty items mentioned. It is rather that of building conviction for principles of holiness and non-conformity. These are the affirmations of a lifestyle that says Jesus is Lord, and God's inspired Word is truth. May we heed the call to commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

However, let us remember that the vision of our forefathers moved them to draw up a confession of faith, "Dortrecht Confession of Faith 1632." As the need arose updates were made, including the booklet Mennonite Confession of Faith, which includes the eighteen articles. Another update was made at the 1958 Ministers Meeting at Grantsville, Md., which is recorded in the history book: The Beachy Amish Mennonite Fellowship Churches, author Elmer S. Yoder, pages 269-272. We also give recognition of the many helpful articles in our publications, such as the Calvary Messenger. There seems to be a cry for another update. Is it not true that we are a people who need constant reminders? We should welcome any help to build faith and curb apostasy, (the falling away from the faith).

We all agree that we do not want a conference setting nor take the executive board approach. However, the other extreme has left us hanging with some weakness.

Is there not something we as a constituency unitedly could choose as co-laborers together with God and His eternal Word, that would strengthen the Christian faith and organizational church structure while still leaving congregational structure intact? "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." Rev. 3:2a.

Are we not a bit too disjointed and individualistic minded for the best interest of the church? Eph. 4:13. May we also take positive and proper steps toward preserving the faith for future generations. Our affluent society forces many added temptations upon us. Let us join hearts and efforts to

curb further drifting and, by God's grace, reclaim lost principles. May these efforts be a blessing and bring stability to our churches and encourage us as we continue to teach and uphold sound doctrine.

May we refuse to accept the negative response that an effort to bring about awareness is hopeless and that it will be unheard and unheeded. We firmly believe there yet remains sufficient strength and conviction to heed the warning signals and to evaluate our church structure and teaching program.

God alone knows the consequences, both for time and eternity, if the present course is persistently maintained.

Would God be pleased and glorified, and would it be in compliance with His Word to compile a statement in booklet form addressing our position, belief, faith and practice on Biblical principles including the issues at stake?

If the constituency would choose to support this approach, the committee would then draw from gifted and concerned brethren to formulate this booklet. Before the statement is finalized we would seek support from the larger ministerial body, either in a special meeting or in the spring 1992 Ministers Meetings. May we make this effort a high priority for Jesus' sake.

We are your servants, and invite your input and helpful ideas. Send your response by October 1 to: Perry Troyer, 10930 Lafayette P.C. Rd., Plain City, Ohio 43064.

We are including the list of issues of concern which were shared by the ministerial body at our 1991 spring Ministers Meeting.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Bennie Byler*

Bennie Byler (Chairman)

*John Mast*

John Mast

*Leonard Overholt*

Leonard Overholt

*Eugene Eicher*

Eugene Eicher

*Perry Troyer*

Perry Troyer

1. Divorce and remarriage
2. Excommunication and shunning
3. Television
4. Radio
5. Video
6. Sisters veiling (size)
7. Instrumental music
8. Public bathing
9. Casual wear
10. Rock, country, secular music
11. Courtship standards
12. Sports
13. Lords day activities
14. Proper chaperoned youth - motels, materialism, etc.
15. Hair styles - both sides
16. Mutual respect for committee work
17. Effective teaching program for parents
18. Scriptural unity