

December 1997

Dear Ministering Brethren,

Greetings to all in the name of the Lord Jesus, the One who is head of the church, the One who purchased the church with His own precious blood. It is good to remind ourselves that the Lord who loves us has richly provided for our victory and is justifiably grieved at our unfaithfulness.

It seems good to us, and we find it needful to communicate with the Ministerial body from time to time. Proper communication is the key that unlocks and opens many doors and reaches hearts and lives. It's this key that helps us understand each other. We are reminded of a common statement: "a heart to heart talk". It's the heart that the Bible refers to as the inner part of man. Let us not lose the heart to heart touch. Let us consider the precious value of this key: 1. It is free. 2. It's a master key, one that reaches all hearts and circumstances. 3. It's available for whoever would use it.

May we yet recognize that not all communication is up-building. To strike with our little member (the one that no man can tame), is communicating. The devil communicated with Eve, but with a lie and deception. So may we continue to communicate properly with Christian love.

We as a committee met Friday December 5, 1997. We are evaluating ways in which we can function most effectively.

In the Spring 1997 Ministers Meeting, Arthur, Illinois, you showed strong support for the committee effort to continue. A decision was also reached to start rotating members serving on this committee.

We appreciated your positive response by a hand-raised vote concerning the radio and TV. We have learned that there were those who felt the emphasis on the use of the radio was too weak to be satisfactory. This was certainly not our intention. Something that weakens, rather than strengthens our faithfulness, should not leave any questions. The appeal is simply that in cases where there is lost ground to be gained, that it becomes the object of diligent, corrective attention.

The majority of our people continue to feel we ought to retain our congregational pattern. We agree that an Executive Committee is not acceptable.

There is also a wide spread concern that the tendency to drift effects all of us. As congregations we can either help or hinder one another.

Assuming that both of these concerns are valid, we can only conclude there must be an effective way to protect congregational integrity, at the same time effectively addressing our common concerns. Here is where it becomes needful to use the key to proper and open communication.

We use the term: autonomous church structure (Self governing; independent). We also refer to the term: Inter-church structure (Inter relating with a larger body). While the autonomous structure has been the basic view and practice of our Beachy constituency, it must be balanced with sensitivity toward, and respect for each other and for the larger body, the general constituency. We cannot be arrogantly independent.

May we use the example of a local church fellowship, concluding for spiritual safety and avoiding evil influence, certain amusement parks, etc. are not to be patronized. It then becomes the responsibility of the father, the leader in the home to administer the results. The consequences would be most devastating if a father should chose to rebel and not support the body decision.

In John 17 Christ the Great Intercessor, prayed for the Church, for the faithfulness of the saints, that the church may be kept pure, and prayed especially for the unity of the church.

The Apostle Paul gave exhortation to unity in Ephesians 4: v. 2 with all lowliness and meekness, v.3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, v. 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith. We are not our own, we are bought with a price. The German would say we are bought with a high price. This brings us to our knees, with humble and grateful hearts.

In closing we share a few valuable insights coming from a fellow minister. We need congregational sensitivity to the inter-congregational structure and an alertness and care about how the influences of our doctrinal and practical positions are effecting other congregations.

It does not seem that congregational autonomy is violated by some inter-congregational appeals when there is significant concern about the influence of some practices.

Congregational commitment to respect basic inter-congregational issues would seem appropriate for the sake of keeping up inter-congregational fellowship and ministries.

May we work toward appropriate measures to accomplish and administer Biblical goals for the church.

We continue to welcome and invite your input.

For Christ and the church.

The Committee

*Bennie Byler*  
Bennie Byler (Chairman)

*John Mast*  
John Mast

*Leonard Overholt*  
Leonard Overholt.

*Ernest Hochstetler*  
Ernest Hochstetler

*Perry Troyer*