

March 27, 2000

Dear Co-Laborers in the vineyard of the Lord,

With the Spring 2000 Minister's Meetings near at hand we desired to communicate with you.

A few years ago we sent a questionnaire to you for your input and evaluation as to what you thought the function and purpose of the Bishop Committee should be. We express appreciation for your response.

Drawing from your responses and what we felt we were hearing, we drew up a proposed Statement of Purpose, Function, and Structure for your evaluation.

We look forward to see many of you at the Minister's Meeting at Kalona, Iowa to further discuss and conclude on this matter.

In Christian love,
The Committee

Bennie Byler

Bennie Byler

Ernest Hochstetler

Ernest Hochstetler

Ivan Beachy

Ivan Beachy

Perry Troyer

Perry Troyer

Nelson Beachy

Nelson Beachy

BISHOP COMMITTEE

(Proposed statement of purpose, function, and structure)

A. Statement of Purpose:

1. The Committee is to serve as a resource and counseling body, remaining alert to trends or practices that may hinder the constituency's effectiveness.
2. The Committee is to be available to listen and give counsel to any church leaders who desire advice in resolving congregational problems.
3. The Committee is to take initiative in unusual situations to express concern to a congregation when it seems apparent they are operating unsuccessfully, or that conditions are fostering alienation from the larger body.
4. The Committee is to compile information and offer insights particularly applicable to our Amish Mennonite setting that would encourage unity in belief and practice among the larger body.
5. This Committee does not replace the three-member committee of bishops that congregations have chosen for assistance or for an investigation.

B. Functions and Responsibilities:

1. The primary function of this committee is to stay abreast of trends or teachings that pose specific deceptive dangers to the constituency.
2. They are responsible to present Biblical Principles and Practical Applications of current concerns at the annual Minister's Meeting.
3. They may solicit suggestions and concerns from constituency ministers and lay brethren.
4. When requests for counsel are received, the Committee shall seek to give proper priority to help the congregation resolve their own problems.
5. The Committee is to respect congregational autonomy in addressing concerns, or if asked to assist in resolving conflicts.

C. Structure:

1. This Committee is accountable to the ministerial body.
2. One person shall be elected at the annual Minister's Meeting by the ministerial body to serve a five year term on a five-member committee. Continuous tenure for any one person is limited to one term. A person who has served a full term is eligible for re-election only after a two year absence from the committee. The ministry of the hosting community is responsible to receive nominees from the ministerial body and conduct the election of a new member.
3. Changes in designated function or responsibility of the committee shall be approved by the ministerial body at the annual Minister's Meeting.