



# THE UNITY OF THE BRETHREN

“In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, love.”

**Spring Synodical Committee Meeting**

**March 28, 2015 - 9:00 a.m.**

**MINUTES**

President James Marek called the meeting to order. Everyone joined together in the singing of “To God Be the Glory” accompanied by Liz Ripple on the piano.

There were 56 people in attendance (see attached Roll Call) as follows:

**VOTING MEMBERS: Pastors (15):** Rev Linda Chandler, Pastor Tim Chaplin, Rev. Michael Groseclose, Rev Jim Heckman, Rev Jimmy Hejl, Rev Lawrence Junek, Dr. Larry Koslovsky, Rev Vanessa Mitchell, Rev Joseph Polasek, Rev. Kay Polasek, Rev Mark Sebek, Rev Nello Strickland, Rev Tommy Tallas, Dr. Jerry Terrill, Rev Larry Zabcik.

**Lay members (19):** Austin – Eric Hayes, Caldwell – Ron Dusek; Crosby – Debbie Clark; Cy-Fair – Roger Runnels; Dime Box – Marvin Chlapek, Fayetteville – Liz Ripple; Granger – Edwina Jezisek; Houston - Dorothy Hinson; Industry – Harvey Treybig; Nelsonville – Dan Merz; New Tabor - Robert Schlechte; Ocker – Robin Brinkley; Rosenberg – Alice Kocurek; Seaton – Leonard Mikeska; Snook – Connie Janac; Taylor – James Marek; Temple – Gayle Farrow; Wall – Dewyan Weise; Westheimer – Leroy Parthum.

**Non-Voting:** Ministerial student – Ben Kruse, 5 chairmen/organizations and 16 visitors.

**1. Opening Devotional – Rev Nello Strickland** – “Wake Me”: Everyone received a copy of “A Prayer to Keep Going” (Agenda 1) and together recited this prayer led by Bro Nello. Bro. Nello received this prayer while he was in the hospital and received permission to reprint it.

Instructions were given to look at line 11 and write “Wake me to be ready to \_\_\_\_\_” (fill in the blank) He read from Ecc. 3: 6-7. Bro Nello encouraged everyone to keep going with their spiritual journey. He ended the devotional by singing “In His Time.”

**2. Unity Prayer** – Bro Larry Zabcik led us in the Unity prayer. “Holy Spirit, as in the past you united different men and women and made them one, so bring us together in a oneness that celebrates our diversity of talent and ability. May our personalities blend in a superb harmony, as, laying our egos aside, we learn to prefer one another and to delight in encouraging the gifts we see in others. Let there be no star temperament, no prima donna behavior among us, but a sense of ensemble, as we try to be as anonymous as possible so that you can shine through our efforts to the glory of Christ. And when all is done may we be in the wings and HE in the spotlight, taking center stage and receiving all the applause! Holy Spirit, you who are fully God and yet so anonymous, hide us that we may reveal Him. Amen.”

**3. Setting of Convention Date – Recommend July 10-12, Friday-Sunday with early start on Friday** –Consideration for convention to be held at Nelsonville on Friday & Saturday and at Wesley on Sunday. Registration would begin at 9 a.m. on Friday.

**MOTION** by Bro Mike Groseclose to have the convention on July 10-12.

**Second** by Dorothy Hinson. Passes.

The Executive committee recommends to set the delegate fee for the 66<sup>th</sup> convention at \$250.00.

**MOTION:** by Dorothy Hinson to approve this recommendation of \$250.

**Second:** by Bro Mike Groseclose. No discussion. Passes.

#### **4. Invitation and notification to the Joint worship service for all pastors and Brethren –**

This convention will be about praise, worship and celebration. Plans are being made to memorialize the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the martyrdom of Jan Hus and celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary of Wesley Brethren Church. All congregations were asked to allow their pastor to be able to participate in this joint worship service. It is the desire of the committee that all Brethren will come and participate in this service.

**a. Convention Planning Update** – General business will be conducted on Friday & Saturday; a Unity-wide worship service will be held on Sunday at Wesley at 10 a.m. Rev. Dr. David Schattschneider, former dean of Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, will be the main speaker. He is one of the pre-eminent scholars of Moravian history, particularly on Jan Hus and Moravian missions. Bro Mike Groseclose announced that the convention invitation letter would be going out this week with hotel information. The secretary will be sending this out in the convention packets to all Unity contacts (also included – credentials forms & secretary's letter). Please make sure the person in charge of this gets this information.

A question was asked if the convention proceedings can be recorded by video. James reported that it is planned for the churches to be able to give a short report of their program & ministries. If you are interested in this, contact James.

**b. Electronic Voting** – Dawn Marie Baletka has offered the use of devices for electronic voting.

**c. Golf Tournament – Thursday July 9<sup>th</sup>** - Bro Mike announced that information will be sent out soon on the Rev. Henry E. Beseda, Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament for Missions. The tournament will be held again at the Faith Bridge Ranch Golf Club at Monaville, TX. (Agenda 4-c)

**5. Nominating Committee Update** – This is listed in the Presidents report (Agenda 19-a) Serving on the committee are Dorothy Hinson (chair), Marvin Chlapek, Ruth Ann Wuensche & Bro Joseph Polasek. James reported updates to the list.

**6. Consideration of License renewal for Tim Chaplin** – Pastor Tim has been serving at Temple for the past 2 years. The Unity is helping to support him with his education. According to the by-laws, each year served removes \$4000 from his loan. Tim gave an update on his education, he has 3 semesters left and may be graduating in 2016 - May or Dec. Bro Jimmy Hejl is serving as his mentor. Tim was asked to step out while the committee deliberated the license renewal.

**MOTION** by Bro Jim Heckman to renew the 1-yr license of Tim Chaplin to Temple Brethren Church. **Second** by Bro Jimmy Hejl.

Gayle Farrow reported on Tim serving at Temple. Bro Tommy asked for a review of what the by-laws say about a license renewal. Discussion. The by-laws state the fall meeting, but since we approved his license at the 2014 spring meeting, one year has passed and we would be going slightly against the by-laws. Motion passes. **ACTION** --- get the written report.

**7. Consideration of License issuance for Ben Kruse – Community Christian Church of Rosenberg** – Ben has been a ministerial student since March 2010, going through HIS. He has been filling in at Rosenberg on a regular basis since January 2015. Discussion. Ben gave a report on his progress. There have been some set-backs in his personal life in trying to finish his education in 5 years as stated by the by-laws. He has been to 12 Brethren churches doing pulpit supply. He does have a final project to finish. Ben was asked to leave the room. Discussion.

**MOTION** by Pastor Linda Chandler to issue a 1-yr license to Ben Kruse to Community Christian Church of Rosenberg.

**Second** by Bro Larry Zabcik.

Discussion. A short break was taken to take a look at the by-laws. Ben can get a license, but not ordained because he does not have college education. The best action seems to be for us to go through this process and get the formal requests from Rosenberg and from Ben and to consider Ben for a license in the fall. Discussion. From a bylaw standpoint, things have not been fulfilled.

Bro Nello wanted to amend the motion to not issue the license because Rosenberg has not issued a call. Amendment withdrawn.

FOR: 11. AGAINST: 16. Motion fails.

**MOTION** by Liz Ripple to extend Ben Kruse's student status for 6 months following Article III, E, 9-B. (Article III, E, 9-B --- Under unusual circumstances, this track of study may be extended if satisfactory progress is being made. Failure to complete the study within 5 years without an extension of the Synodical Committee revokes the ministerial student status.)

**Second** – no second. Motion dies for lack of a second.

**MOTION** by Alice Kocurek to extend Ben's ministerial student status for 1 year.

**Second** by Gayle Farrow. Passes. James thanked Ben Kruse for his service and reassured him that we are pleased with his progress and give him an extreme vote of confidence.

**8. Acceptance of Roy Janek as lay representative from West Brethren and of Eric Haynes as lay representative from Austin Brethren** – Dorothy Kocian has served as the West lay rep for 43 years and is resigning due to health reasons and Darrell Kolinek also wants to step down.

**MOTION** by Bro Mike to accept Roy & Eric to serve as lay reps on the Synodical Committee for West and Austin.

**Second** by Bro Larry. No discussion. Passes.

**9. Minister's Retirement Program update** – Rev Tommy Tallas gave a report. The committee members are Leonard Mikeska, Dan Merz, Tami Laza and Adelle Moorehead and Bro Mike is the Synodical liaison. This program was created many years ago and due to all the government regulations, pastors that have come into the Unity after 1999 are not eligible to participate. A need to modify the current Minister's Benefits Program has been identified and an effort is underway to restructure the program so that all Unity pastors are eligible to participate. Bro Tommy has consulted with an investment advisor, Jessica Forrest with Alpha Capital Management (an independent professional investment advisory firm in Austin) and is exploring the options. Leonard Mikeska is also helping Bro Tommy in this endeavor. The current program is designed for full-time pastors according to the by-laws, and has also been limited in the past only to ordained pastors even though this is not in the by-laws. These items can be reviewed. The committee will be meeting before the convention. Comments are welcome.

**10. Executive Assistant Position** (*\*Potential Convention Committee in addition to a Motions and Finance*) – This would be a potential position for someone that would serve as a non-voting member on the executive committee. This person would stay on as executive boards change and the responsibility would include making sure that unfinished projects assigned by the Synodical committee or convention would be completed. We would need to create a job description for a part-time paid position in the \$15,000 range. Dewyan explained further what this position could be. This topic is for further discussion and will be discussed at convention.

**11. Report on the Minister's Retreat** - Report given by Dr. Larry Koslovsky. Two retreats were held, one in Oct 2014 and another in March 2015 at Camp Allen in Navasota. Each time 8-10 pastors were able to attend. The pastors got together to worship, study and encourage each other. Bro Larry thanked the executive committee for the financial support which authorized \$2,500 in October and \$2,000 for March. He hopes they can continue to do this 2 times a year.

**12. Missions update** (\*Potential Convention Committee in addition to a Motions and Finance) James reported that in 2014, we collected over \$146,000 for missions. Each mission (foreign & home) had a budget of \$67,000.00. We are still about 15% short in Home Missions. (Agenda 19-a, Presidents report)

**a. How Funds are applied** – James reported that the excess in the Foreign Mission account will stay there because that is where they were designated to go. He expressed that these budgets are not competing against each other. We have tried to keep the figures current and relayed the information to the churches.

**b. Contingency Funds transfer to cover deficit in Home Missions** – The amount to be transferred to the home missions will be \$21,290.31 to fulfill the budget agreement from Oct 2013. James explained how this figure was derived.

Bro Jim Heckman stated that March is Pastor's 'Spouse' (*Wife*) appreciation month and asked that all pastors' spouses stand up and receive recognition. He then gave an update on Cade Lake and asked everyone to keep them in your prayers. The biggest need he has is for someone to work with the youth every week. He is also looking at expanding the sanctuary or build a new one and turn the existing one into classrooms.

Kent Laza (Foreign Missions Board Chair) reported on the Thiessen's. Anne and also Caroline Woo are battling breast cancer. The Thiessen's are now in Canada and have asked for help to get a computer and some software so Anne can continue her work as a teacher and send lessons to Mexico. They also would like a good cell phone. The cost is about \$750 for the items and \$60 a month for the cell phone plan. The Woo's are back in North Carolina and will not be working as missionaries for a while. They are concerned about their salaries. Phil & Eunice Raiford would like to attend the convention. Churches are asked to contact Kent if they would like a visit from them. Kent reported on the spring meeting of the Board of World Missions in Salem NC. He was impressed by their work and hope we can join them financially. Discussion.

**MOTION** by Gayle that we approve (not to exceed) \$750 for the computer/software and \$60 a month for the cell phone plan.

**Second** by Bro Lawrence Junek. Discussion. Passes.

**MOTION** by Gayle to amend the motion and add "and for the expense to come out of the Foreign missions fund."

**Second** by Bro Lawrence Junek. Discussion. Passes.

**MOTION** by Bro Mike to continue to support the budgeted amount for the Woos' for 2015.

**Second** by Marvin. Discussion. Passes.

**MOTION** by Bro Mike to amend the motion to include "and the Thiessens".

**Second** by Marvin. Passes.

**13. Potential By-Law Changes** (\*Potential Convention Committee in addition to a Motions and Finance) – Liz reported on some recommended by-law changes (see Agenda 13). James said another potential change to the by-laws would be to have the responsibility of website updates and changes to come through the secretary.

**14. Pastoral Changes** – Rev Vanessa Mitchell reported that she is back at Caldwell Brethren as their pastor. She resigned last summer, and Caldwell has called her back.

Bro Larry Koslovsky is serving Pasadena along with Crosby. Even though they are a smaller church, they participate well in the Unity. Bro Larry reported that there is some strength in being where we are at the present time, even though we are small.

**15. Website Update** – James reported on the progress of the website. We are still doing some finalizing on the site. Ben Polasek is still helping us with the new site. Kelly Zrubek is the new webmaster. She is not Brethren and is serving voluntarily. The new website is done in Word-Press. Kelly is more familiar with Wix. We will need something that can be maintained easily.

**16. Provisional Status of Rev James Henry and Good News Fellowship at Palm Beach** – Bro Larry Koslovsky reported on the status of Rev Henry and Good News Fellowship. **MOTION** by Bro Larry to put Rev James Henry on the retired pastors list, and release ourselves from the provisional status of the Good News Fellowship. **Second** by Pastor Kay. Discussion. Passes.

**17. Questionnaire Addition – Zealous Agent for Brethren Journal** – James expressed his thought on this as a way to show support and to have someone be an advocate for the Journal. Cathleen reported that there is a need to receive the vital statistics from each congregation. **MOTION** by Pastor Kay to add to the questionnaire a line asking each church to list a Zealous Agent for the Brethren Journal. **Second** by Dorothy Hinson. Passes.

**18. Remembering – Alma Frantiska Urban** – James read Miss Urban’s obituary (Agenda 18). Miss Urban, a lifelong member of Fayetteville Brethren, was the oldest living member in the Unity. She passed away March 19 at the age of 101 years, 10 months and 20 days. James Hejl, who turned 101 in Dec. now has this honor. Rosalie Leshikar (Nelsonville) will be 101 in October. She is the granddaughter of Josef Leshikar who was one of the first Brethren to come here from the old country. Miss Sylvia Vavra (Houston Brethren) is 99.

**19. REPORTS:** Presidents report – includes nominating committee slate of candidates (see Agenda 19-a); First Vice-President’s report (Agenda 19-b); Treasurer’s report by Dewyan Weise – (Agenda 19-c). Funds are based on a quarterly basis; Financial Secretary report (Agenda 19-d) – Dan Merz. He has some work to do with reconciling, will have this done by convention. He thanked Marvin & Alice Chlapek, James & Dewyan for all the help; Brethren Journal treasurer’s report (Agenda 19-e); Jennifer Chervenka (Youth Coordinator) reported that she is available to visit at churches. She also reported on camp programming and the need for camp counselors and directors. (Agenda 19 -f); Cade Lake Community Chapel (Agenda 19-g)

Bro Lawrence said that in Matthew 25, the scripture talks about going to visit the prisons. He reported on a prison ministry called Kairos. He asked for prayers for an event on April 16-19.

Diane Heckman reported that it is not profitable to have a bookstore since the availability of the internet. She still has some stock.

Bro Tommy wanted to go on record thanking James and the executive officers for the great leadership the last 4 years and 2 years

Leonard Mikeska reported on activities at Seaton Brethren. He said the sense of family is important in each of our churches.

**MOTION** by Leonard Mikeska to adjourn the meeting. **Second** by Robin Brinkley. Passes. Bro Jim Heckman ended the meeting with a prayer. Meeting adjourned at 12:20 a.m.

\* - *Potential Convention Committee in addition to a Motions and Finance*

Respectfully submitted,

*Liz Ripple*  
Secretary, Unity of the Brethren