



THE UNITY OF THE BRETHREN

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

Fall Synodical Committee Meeting

October 4, 2014 - 9:00 a.m.

MINUTES

President James Marek called the meeting to order. Representatives from North Carolina - Pat Highfill and Leigh Ann Leinbach - joined the meeting by Skype.

There were 36 people in attendance (see attached Roll Call) as follows:

VOTING MEMBERS: Pastors (10): Rev Joe Emerson, Rev. Michael Groseclose, Rev Jimmy Hejl, Pastor David Johnson, Dr. Larry Koslovsky, Dr. Mark Labaj, Rev Joseph Polasek, Rev. Kay Polasek, Dr. Jerry Terrill, Rev Ron Winsman.

Lay members (14): Caldwell – Ron Dusek; Crosby – Debbie Clark; Cy-Fair – Roger Runnels; Dime Box – Marvin Chlapek, Fayetteville – Liz Ripple; Houston - Dorothy Hinson; New Tabor - Robert Schlechte; Ocker – Robin Brinkley; Rosenberg – Alice Kocurek; Snook – Connie Janac; Taylor – James Marek; Temple – Gayle Farrow; Wall – Dewyan Weise; Westheimer – Leroy Parthum.

Non-Voting: Ministerial student – Ben Kruse and 11 visitors.

1. Opening Devotional – Rev Joseph Polasek – Bro Joseph opened with a prayer. He began by stating how busy everyone is and all the things we have to do. He recalled a saying a football coach had, “excuses don’t get results.” He read from Luke 9: 57-62 where Jesus encountered 3 men and asked them to follow Him; one replied that he had to bury his father – he was busy like we are today. Bro Joseph asked “are we too busy for God?” We need to remember to put God first. He ended in prayer.

James thanked Jim, Dawn Marie & Joyce Baletka who have been providing food for our meetings for years; he also thanked the people who help get things set up for the meetings.

James led everyone in the reading of *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.”

2. Recognition of Outstanding Leadership in Mission Fund Raising – James presented Bro Mike Groseclose and his wife, Trish with a plaque for their work with the Rev Henry Beseda, Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament. Over \$7,500.00 was raised. Bro Mike explained how the tournament got started and announced they are making plans for another tournament next year.

3. Brethren Journal Update

a. Payment on Loan

Bro Mike reported the Journal is doing well. They are going to prepare a budget soon. A treasurer's report was presented (Agenda 3-a). They have paid back \$2000 on the \$7,000 loan taken from the Unity. There is a balance of \$10,067.36 in the account. They have not sent out a survey but have found from verbally talking to people – the majority want the Journal in printed form. They will probably have to increase the subscription rates for the printed form as the years go by. Discussion continues on the electronic format. Bro Mike gave credit to Ben & Pastor Kay Polasek for the work done on getting and collecting advertisements in the Journal.

b. Readership Survey

James wanted to clarify the suggestion made at the spring meeting about having a survey to see who would want the Journal in electronic form. The suggestion for the survey was to see how many would want the Journal electronically and how many wanted a printed copy. Those that wanted it electronically could get it that way and the Journal would continue to be printed.

4. Consideration of 2015 Mission Budgets

James reported that there is a good chance we will meet the foreign mission budget of \$67,000 this year; the home mission budget of \$67,000 will be about \$20,000 short. There are 16 regular donors (individuals and one church) that each give a little over \$75 a month – this totals almost \$24,000 annually.

Bro David Johnson, Chairman of the Home Missions Board, presented the Home Missions budget for 2015. He encouraged all churches to stretch out in their communities and become involved; he gave examples on fund raising. He reported on Cade Lake and “In God's Hands Ministry” (see Agenda 4-a). Bro David offered to bring a team to churches next year from Jan to April and present a skit that he wrote.

Proposed Home Missions Budget (Agenda 4-b) for 2015 - \$67,000 as follows:

Cade Lake Mission, Burlinson County: Rev Jim Heckman - \$49,000.00;

Operating Expenses - \$12,000.00 and In God's Hands Ministry - \$6,000.00

Joyce Baletka (member of the Foreign Mission board) reported on Foreign Missions. Kent (Foreign Mission Board Chairman) & Tami Laza are in Bethlehem, PA attending the meeting of the Board of World Missions. We have a seat on this board and Kent, as the chairman of the Foreign Mission Board, is our representative. Proposed Foreign Missions Budget for 2015 - \$67,000.00, same as last year (Agenda 4-c).

Dewyan Weise, Unity Treasurer, reported on the financial status of the Unity (see Agenda 16-e).

Dewyan, liaison to the Board for Grants and Bequests, reported that the balance as of 10/3/14 is \$417,743.51. James reported that these funds are an additional resource should the Synodical committee need it for a worthy cause.

Discussion on mission budgets. James explained briefly on how the budgets are derived for each missionary. Robin Brinkley asked questions on the Fund Balance report about the American Bible society, Brethren Fund, Contingency Fund, Brethren Journal, Ministerial Student fund – discussion.

MOTION: by Dewyan Weise to give the North Carolina guests speaking privileges at this meeting.

SECOND: by Bro Mike Groseclose.

Passes

MOTION by Dewyan Weise to support a budget for 2015 of \$67,000 to Home Missions and \$67,000 to Foreign Missions— total \$134,000.00 with any shortfall taken out of contingency.

SECOND: by Rev Kay Polasek

Passes.

Liz will send out the Missions giving chart on Oct 6 to all the churches and Unity contacts.

5. Insurance Renewals

a. Cade Lake Liability and Building

James reported that we have \$80,000 of coverage on the building at Cade Lake. It costs almost \$1600 a year; James is working on getting other bids.

b. Treasurer's Fidelity Bond

James reported that a \$100,000.00 bond is required – the cost is \$100.00.

6. Moravian (Northern Province) Decision / Our Response

James reported about attending this Synod in the Presidents report. At the Synod, there was discussion on ordination of gay and lesbian individuals, with the proposal passing with 70% in favor. James thinks we need to show support for the Moravians as we would a family member with whom we disagree. Regardless of how we may view the Moravian decision personally, we should still pray for the Moravians in this difficult time. He sees the Moravians as family with our roots in Jan Hus. The decision found on the Moravian website (Moravian.org) is included in these minutes (see Agenda 6). Discussion. Bro Jimmy Hejl reported on the Moravian Southern Synod, and they will be taking action on this subject at their Synod in 2018. Leigh Ann Leinbach (North Carolina) commented on this matter. There was other discussion. James suggested to get the Pastors together to discuss this. Dr. Koslovsky will plan to spend some time with pastors to get communication going with the clergy regarding this subject. There will be a pastors gathering at Camp Allen near Navasota on Oct 27-29.

7. Consideration of Pastoral License Renewal

Pastor David Johnson, pastor at New Tabor, is a licensed pastor in the Unity and has gone through education through the Hus International School (HIS) program. Bro David and Ben Kruse have completed their studies (Agenda 7) and each have a final project to complete.

MOTION: by Bro Mike Groseclose to renew a 1-year license according to the by-laws to Pastor David Johnson for a Pastoral ministry to New Tabor Brethren Church.

SECOND: Bro Larry Koslovsky

Passes

8. Consideration of Permanent Storage of Unity Records

James has been in contact with the Dolph Briscoe museum of Texas history on the UT campus regarding storage of the Unity's records and pastoral records. This museum already has the records of Rev. Joseph A. Barton. After we donate these records, we would no longer have ownership of the records. They would be available to the public for review. Discussion on where to store the Unity's records. As we give up ownership, we gain a way to preserve the records. James plans to sort through the records that are stored at the HUS Encampment soon.

James reported on the records of Bro Henry Beseda, Jr. (given to the Unity as part of his will) – they are being digitized by Kelly Zrubek. (Kelly – not a member of the Unity, but lives across the street from the Granger Brethren church - has also volunteered to be the new Unity webmaster.) After the records are digitized, the plan is to put them on the Unity website along with other records for people to be able to search. Copyrighting the records was questioned. Since no one had a problem with donating the records, James would pursue the plan to store them at a place like the Dolph Briscoe museum.

9. Consideration of mileage rate for convention (Art IV P (3) p 17)

The mileage rate for next year's convention is to be set at this meeting; if no action is taken, it will be set at \$0.25 a mile – round trip. Historically it has been .20 cents a mile. All the members of the convention get their mileage paid. Discussion.

MOTION: by Dorothy Hinson to pay \$0.20 a mile.

Motion dies for lack of second.

The by-laws will set the mileage rate at \$0.25 a mile.

10. Website Update

James reported that the executive committee made a decision to move on the Unity website and approved a \$2,000.00 expenditure with Brady Huddleston for a new website. The site is now under construction. Hopefully by the end of the year, we should have a new website that is much more user friendly. As part of the contract – Brady will do updates free for one year.

11. Nominating Committee for Unity Positions

Volunteers are being accepted for this committee, usually 3 or 4 people (see agenda 11).

Cathleen Schlechte has decided to relinquish her position as Editor of the Brethren Journal.

12. Convention Committee / Planning

Bro Mike reported on the convention plans. There was a massive repair project on the old Wesley church – they had to replace framing and 90% of the outside wood. The cost of this project was \$40,000-\$50,000; donations are appreciated. Wesley celebrated their 150th anniversary of the churches organization (1864-2014) this year and plan to celebrate this milestone at the convention next year.

The executive committee will handle the general planning of the convention. James is looking at ways this convention can memorialize the 600th anniversary celebration of Jan Hus martyrdom.

Bro Mike volunteered to be the chairman of this committee; volunteers should contact James.

We plan to start the convention on Thurs. morning in Nelsonville and be at Wesley on Saturday.

- a. **Convention Theme** - James' idea is "Created in Christ for a Purpose". Other ideas are welcome.
- b. **Speaker / Topic** - The main speaker will be Rev. Dr. David A. Schattschneider, former dean of Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem PA; he taught the History of Christianity at MTS from 1968 until his retirement in 2001; he served as dean of the seminary from 1986-2001. He is one of the pre-eminent scholars of Moravian history, particularly in the areas of Moravian missions and Jan Hus. We plan to have him present multiple sessions during the convention.
- c. **Memorial / Collaterals** - James presented an idea of a framed document that lists our beliefs and give to all the churches. This would be something to commemorate this event and also tie us together as a denomination.

13. Consideration of President's Travel Expense to Northern Province Synod

James stepped out for this item and Bro Mike took over to discuss this issue.

MOTION by Pastor Kay to reimburse James Marek \$691.83 (flight, meal, car - no hotel accomadations) for the trip to the Northern Province Synod (out of administration fund).

SECOND: by Connie Janac

Discussion.

Passes

Consideration of Kent Laza’s travel expenses to the Board of World Missions meeting:

It was approved at the October 5, 2013 meeting that the chairman of the Foreign Missions board fill this seat on the BWM.

MOTION: by Bro Mike to pay the expenses that have been incurred by our representative serving on the BWM and to pay the expenses in the future for the representative until further notice with the funds coming out of the contingency fund.

SECOND: by Dorothy Hinson

Passes

14. Transitional Executive Administrative Position

James discussed the possible need for a transitional position at the executive committee level. This position would be ongoing. This person would assist the executive committee to make sure that the decisions of the Synodical committee and Convention get done and would have knowledge of the Unity by-laws. The idea right now is for this to be a paid position, but is up for discussion. A job description would need to be drawn up. This is an idea of Dewyan Weise and he gave some ideas on this position.

15. Announcements

a. Rev Larry Butcher retirement – Bro Butcher retired at the end of August. Ben Kruse reported on the Community Christian Church of Rosenberg. It was asked to have the board president at Rosenberg be in contact with Bro Larry Koslovsky in regards to the scheduling of supply pastors.

b. Rev Vanessa Mitchell Resignation at Caldwell to return to full time teaching. Caldwell Brethren is searching for a pastor.

c. Rev Nello Strickland – says to say “thank you” to everyone for the cards and prayers. He plans to be preaching soon and encourages us to keep pushing missions.

16. Other reports: Board of Christian Education by Jennifer Chervenka:

Tami Laza, Chairman, is out of the state and the report was given by Jennifer, a member of the BCE and the Unity Youth Coordinator. The board is seeking clarification on the mission and purpose of the Christian Education board. A report was submitted (see agenda 16-a). They are going to send out a survey to all the churches that needs to be returned by Dec 1. They want to update the Catechism to make it printable, no changes would be made. A bibliography will be available on the Unity website of recommended Christian education resources. In preparation for the 2015 convention, the BCE is planning to have a Unity-wide conference on Jan Hus that would be presented by Dr. Mark Labaj.

Paper reports: Presidents report (Agenda 16-b); First VP report (Agenda 16-c); Secretary’s report (Agenda 16-d); Treasurer’s report (Agenda 16-e); Youth Coordinator report (Agenda 16-f); Christ Covenant Church report (Agenda 16-g).

MOTION by Bro Mike to adjourn

SECOND by Roger Runnels.

Passed.

Dr. Mark Labaj ended the meeting with a prayer. Meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Ripple

Secretary, Unity of the Brethren