

## **QUERY: REGARDING GREATER CONGREGATIONAL LATITUDE ON MATTERS OF SEXUALITY**

Whereas the Church of the Brethren has now spent more than 40 years since the passage of the Annual Conference “Statement on Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective” without significant progress toward coming to be of one mind on the issue;

Whereas that 1983 statement said, “The church recognizes that highly personal issues are best resolved in the confidentiality of a private setting with pastor, counselor, or family rather than in the open debate of conferences and council meetings”;

Whereas the 2008 Annual Conference resolution on “Urging Forbearance” encouraged community discernment but noted, “Respect for freedom is seen in our traditional Brethren belief in ‘no force in religion,’ and so we avoid patterns of enforcement which violate the freedom of individuals and local groups”;

Whereas the denomination in its approach to governance has typically maintained a careful balance between local autonomy and denominational authority;

Whereas significant latitude has been given for discernment and diverging practices at the congregational level on matters including flags in the sanctuary, women in ministry, the peace position, and other issues to which Annual Conference has spoken;

Whereas districts have been uneven at best in their decisions to enforce policy related to sexuality, sometimes causing significant pain and trauma to individuals and congregations;

Whereas the Apostle Paul—speaking to a church that had disagreements with one another—said, “Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother or sister” (Rom. 14:13);

Therefore, might matters of human sexuality best be left to congregations for their own local discernment rather than trying to resolve this issue through denominational statements and judicial processes?

Submitted by York Center Church of the Brethren  
per vote of congregational meeting, Aug. 20, 2023

Dave Groff, convener; Prudy Widlak, recorder