

Church of the Brethren

Ministerial Leadership

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP POLITY

Table of Contents

A. <u>Preamble</u>	1
1. Background.....	1
2. “For Such a Time as This:” Communities of Call, Support, and Accountability.....	1
3. Current Rationale.....	2
4. Responsibility for Ministerial Credentialing.....	2
B. <u>Introduction</u>	2
1. Ministry of the body.....	2
2. Called out and set apart.....	3
3. Circles of Ministry.....	3
a. The Calling Circle.....	3
b. The Ministry Circle.....	3
c. The Covenant Circle.....	3
C. <u>History and Theology of Ordination in the Church of the Brethren</u>	4
1. Biblical Theological Perspective.....	4
2. Historical Theological Perspective.....	6
3. Ministry Circle Theological Perspective.....	8
D. <u>Calling Circle</u>	9
1. Calling.....	9
2. Steps in the calling process.....	9
a. The Calling Cohort.....	10
b. Responsibilities.....	10
c. Covenant of Accountability.....	11
d. Calling (pre-licensing) Interview.....	12
e. Licensing Service.....	12
E. <u>Ministry Circles</u>	13
1. <u>Licensed Minister Circle</u>	13
2. <u>The Set-Apart Ministry</u>	14
a. The Credentialing Process.....	14
1) Pre-Commission/Pre-Ordination Interview.....	14
2) Recommendation to the District Board.....	14
3) Recommendation to the Congregation.....	14
b. Commissioning or Ordination Service.....	15
3. <u>Commissioned Minister Circle</u>	15
4. <u>Ordained Minister Circle</u>	16
F. <u>Accountability</u>	18
G. <u>Reinstatement of Ordination</u>	19
H. <u>Moving Between Circles</u>	19
I. <u>Receiving Ministers from Other Denominations</u>	19
J. <u>Ministers serving Congregations with Dual Denominational Affiliation</u>	20
K. <u>Additional Recommendations</u>	21
L. <u>Glossary of Terms</u>	23

The implementation of denominational statements on the ministry is managed by the Church of the Brethren's Office of Ministry.

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP POLITY¹

This paper contains the polity and procedures for calling and credentialing of ministerial leadership for the Church of the Brethren. The polity included here is a revision and replacement of the 1999 Ministerial Leadership Paper and all previous polity documents, including denominational polity on Lay Speakers. This paper affirms consistency with all other Annual Conference statements related to ministerial leadership.

A. PREAMBLE

1. Background

Leadership that is called out, well trained and appropriately educated is a vital part of the life of the church. We have experienced a variety of ways of calling leadership throughout our history as Brethren. In particular, we have long been in conversation about the meaning and value of the call to ordained ministry. Every decade of the 20th century heard a call for a common understanding of what it is that ordination means for our life together. We continue to hear that call.

The most recent revisions of ministerial leadership polity came in 1985 and 1999, as well as a document on Plural Non-Salaried Ministry in 1998. In 1985, Annual Conference adopted a wide-ranging paper that included scriptural, historical and theological explanations of credentialed ministry in the Brethren tradition. In 1999, Annual Conference adopted a new polity paper that addressed leadership needs expressed by district executives. This document is a response to feedback and reflection from district executives and others involved in implementing the current polity. It is an attempt to combine the biblical, historical and theological sources of a Brethren understanding of ministerial leadership with the necessary and particular expectations and procedures of credentialing ministerial leaders today.

2. “For Such a Time as This:” Communities of Call, Support, and Accountability

More recently, as our congregations and districts face times of great transition, a variety of issues have been raised about how we conceive ministry in the Church of the Brethren. There is a deep desire to instill a culture of call within the church and to develop intentional discernment processes as individuals explore a call to ministry within the context of the community of faith. In addition, ministers need encouragement for building and maintaining healthy support networks throughout the life of ministry. Issues range from logistical questions about how to ensure well-trained ministerial leaders to theological questions of what it means to be a credentialed, set-apart minister. In addition to these structural and theological questions, we are also painfully aware that

our ministers themselves are struggling mightily. Loneliness and isolation have become a serious issue for ministerial leaders, and this pain needs attention for both the health of our individual brothers and sisters as well as the health of the denomination.

In the face of such transition and in the context of life and faith today, there is a contextual and cultural imperative for the church to take seriously the need for well-trained, well-formed ministerial leaders. This paper incorporates expectations that value and respect both the depth and breadth of our ministry training programs.

3. Current Rationale

This paper is intended to address many of these pressing questions, offering both a history and theology of ministerial leadership in the Church of the Brethren as well as a consistent polity for calling, training, credentialing and sustaining ministerial leaders. It is an attempt to balance the diverse needs for ministerial leadership across the denomination with the urgent call for healthy, supportive systems of accountability for our ministerial leaders themselves.

4. Responsibility for Ministerial Credentialing

Annual Conference charges district boards with the authority and responsibility for the credentialing of ministerial leadership for the Church of the Brethren. District boards, ministry commissions, and staff are indispensable for the implementation of any polity of ministerial leadership, but especially so as we move into new ways of calling, credentialing and supporting our leaders. Bethany Theological Seminary, the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership and the Brethren Higher Education Association play vital roles in training ministerial leaders for work in the Church. During the extended process of creating this new polity, the Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry has sought to be in conversation with all of these bodies. In addition to the work of the Ministry Advisory Council and the Council of District Executives, this paper has been formed in consultation with the Mission and Ministry Board, the Annual Conference officers, other denominational staff, and as many other Brethren constituencies as possible. In truth, calling forth leadership is the responsibility of the whole church, and we work together at every juncture to make this happen.

B. INTRODUCTION

1. Ministry of the Body

Our life together as Brethren has long reflected a strong agreement with the concept of the priesthood of all believers: every sister or brother baptized into faith enters into the ministry of the Church. Ministerial leadership, then, begins with every member and grows out of strong congregational leadership. Deacons, trustees, Sunday school teachers and countless others offer their time, talents, and selves to keep congregations healthy and vital.

Figure 1



Baptized Believers

- Articulate personal faith in Jesus Christ.
- Evidence of discipleship/faith-filled life.
- Sharing gifts of time, talent, treasure.
- Spiritual Practices: Bible study, love feast, active prayer life, stewardship, commitment to community/body of Christ.

2. Called Out and Set Apart

From this large circle of baptized believers and leadership within a community, we also call out what we have referred to as “set apart” leaders: men and women whose gifts, abilities, and identities we observe as being particularly suited for ministry and church leadership. These are the sisters and brothers among us to whom we entrust our common life of faith. We expect them to remind us that “our life, as theirs, comes from God” (1985 Annual Conference Statement, “Calling and Ordination”).

3. Circles of Ministry

This polity outlines several “circles” of ministry, all emerging from the larger circle of the priesthood of all baptized believers.

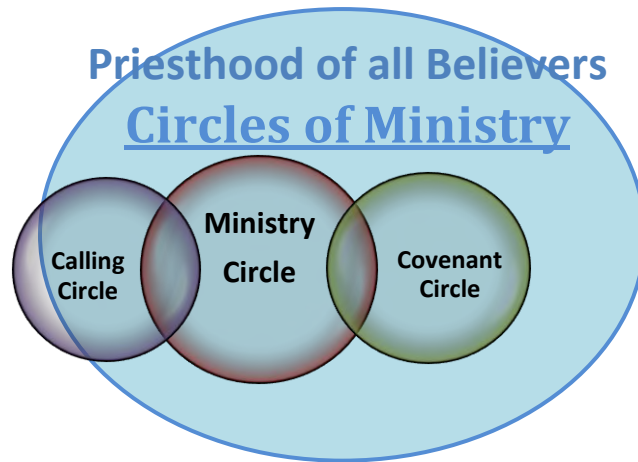


Figure 2

a. The Calling Circle

A “calling circle,” the first step toward a circle of credentialed ministry, is called forth from the larger circle of community and includes representatives from an individual’s congregation, district, and calling cohort (a special small group focused on discernment during the time of calling and preparation). The calling circle ensures that individuals engaged in the processes of discernment and training are surrounded by sisters and brothers who covenant to share in support and accountability throughout the calling, training and credentialing processes.

b. The Ministry Circle

The Ministry Circle consists of three smaller circles: the Licensed Minister Circle, the Commissioned Minister Circle, and the Ordained Minister Circle. Each of these circles, called forth from the context of the larger circle of the priesthood of all believers, is designed to call and equip leaders for a particular kind of ministry. The Licensed Minister circle offers a restricted and limited recognition for leaders in the midst of their ongoing discernment, training, and preparation for a credentialed circle of ministry. The Commissioned Minister circle is designed for leaders called to one specific ministry in one specific congregation. The Ordained Minister circle is intended for ministers called to a broader ministry that may span multiple congregations or ministry settings over the course of their lives of service.

c. The Covenant Circle

Like the Calling Circle, the Covenant Circle exists to ensure that ministerial leaders are accompanied throughout their life of ministry. Ministerial leaders who choose to join a

Covenant Circle offer support and accountability to one another. A Covenant Circle may meet for continued learning, Bible study, or simple sharing and fellowship. Covenant circle participants will commit to going above and beyond the basic requirements for commissioning and ordination. They will invite others to join them on a journey of excellence, pay particular attention to calling and mentoring others on the journey, join colleagues for annual continuing education events, and covenant to serve the church as spiritual leaders.

C. HISTORY AND THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION IN THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

Ordination in the Church of the Brethren has always been a particular calling or naming of gifts, and has always been understood in relation to the calling community.

1. **Biblical Theological Perspective**

The Church of the Brethren views ministry in the light of a belief in the “priesthood of all believers.” The Old Testament proclaims that at Mount Sinai the entire people of Israel were called to be a “priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). The New Testament adapts this language to the community of faith who are now followers of Jesus (1 Peter 2:9), emphasizing again what came to be known as a “priesthood of all believers.” All who belong to God in Christ are priests, participating through baptism in Jesus’ calling and through the Spirit to be God’s presence in the world. This priesthood of all believers is basic to our understanding of ministry. Membership in Jesus Christ is enrollment into the ministry of the priesthood of all believers.

The Bible does not institute one pattern for ministry, nor does it establish what we know today as “ordained” or “set-apart” ministry. It is clear, however, that there were people in leadership, and individuals fulfilled particular roles in God’s service on behalf of God’s people. There were a variety of forms of leadership within the communities of both Israel and the church.

It is evident in the Old Testament that God’s call came to many individuals, both men and women. These chosen ones fulfilled a variety of leadership roles in the society: prophets and poets, judges and other officials, singers and musicians, scribes and historians, artisans and craftsmen, priests and Levites, and kings and queens. While many of these functions could be passed down within a family, others were not bound to heredity. Indeed, God’s call often came unexpectedly to those on the margins, to the humble and dependent on God, and to those who would hear the voice of God calling them to something beyond themselves for the good of the people.

In the New Testament, men and women gathered around Jesus, becoming disciples. After the resurrection and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, Jesus’ fearful followers became transformed into the church (Acts 2; 4). Since this very early stage in the development of Christianity, it has been understood that being baptized in Jesus Christ means that God’s Spirit calls all those who are baptized to be Jesus’ disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; John 3:5; Acts 2:37-42; Romans 6:1-4; 8:1-30; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:23-28; 1 Peter 3:21).

As in the Old Testament, the New Testament witnesses to a plurality of leadership and roles that are fluid, allowing for specialized ministry in particular contexts without a uniformity of structure. In the New Testament, we do not see a pattern in local congregations of a single bishop or pastor, which is perhaps the “normal” or “traditional” structure most familiar in our time. This pattern is a later development, originating in the second century. In the New Testament, leadership roles were held by women and men. While some texts seem to limit women’s participation due to specific circumstances within particular local communities at that time (1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:8-15), others indicate that women actively served in

roles involving vocal and prophetic leadership (Acts 2:17-18; Acts 21:8-9; Romans 16; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16).

The New Testament uses several terms for roles or positions of leadership within local congregations. Some serve as elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17; 21:17-18; 1 Timothy 5:17-19; Titus 1:5-6; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-5), others as deacons (Romans 16:1; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13), some as “overseers” or “bishops” or “pastors” (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9), others as traveling preachers or evangelists (Acts 21:8-10; 1 Timothy 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 4:5; 2 John 10-11; 3 John 5-8), and prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1). Some leaders served in local communities without apparently moving from place to place in order to minister (Acts 16:40; 20:17; Romans 16:6, 12, 15, 23; Philippians 4:2-3; Colossians 4:15; 2 Timothy 4:20; Titus 1:5; Philemon 1-2). Others, like Paul, traveled extensively, began congregations in many locations, and continued to nurture them through visits or letters. For example, Timothy, Titus, and Phoebe each traveled extensively to provide leadership and mediate conflicts in collaboration with Paul (Romans 16:1-3; Corinthians 16:10; 2 Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:5-7; Galatians 2:1; Philippians 2:19). Prisca (also called Priscilla) and her husband Aquila had the distinction of hosting house churches in three different cities: Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome (Acts 18:1-4, 18-21; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:3-5). Whether exercised in one congregation or many, these varied leadership roles are “gifts” from God to the church so that “some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11).

These functions or gifts are not ends in themselves. Leadership exists within the church, both local and universal, in order “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13). The function of leadership is to promote and encourage believers to engage in ministries that edify, promote unity, and help us—with the Spirit’s power and presence—to be molded into the image of Christ. This vision of ministry pushes us beyond ourselves to the service of others and to the work of the Kingdom of God, which transcends any particular congregation or denomination. Leadership exists as it serves the community, calling its members to the example set forth in Christ.

Scripture values knowledge and wisdom, not as marks of status over others, but as blessings that benefit all of God’s people (Psalm 119; Proverbs 1:1-7; Ephesians 4:11-16; 5:15-20). Although the New Testament does not name formal educational requirements for leadership in the church, many passages speak to the importance of learning and teaching (e.g., Matthew 28:16-20; Romans 15:4; Philippians 1:9). The Greek word often translated “disciple” (*mathetes*) literally means “learner” or “student,” suggesting that all followers of Jesus are called to be life-long learners. Disciplined learning is especially important for anyone who is called to teach others (James 3:1-4).

Whether leadership is local or trans-local, the call to leadership comes from the community. Three examples from the book of Acts illustrate this practice. First, the “whole community” selected the seven individuals to serve in the task of the distribution of food to the widows of the growing Christian community (Acts 6:1-6). These individuals were chosen as being “of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” to attend to a particular need in the Jerusalem church. Second, in response to the leading of the Spirit, when Paul and Barnabas are commissioned to what is traditionally known as their “first missionary journey,” the leadership of the church at Antioch laid hands on them (Acts 13:1-3). Third, the decision of the Jerusalem Council to include Gentiles with a few limited stipulations as part of the community of faith was communicated by letters carried out by two recognized leaders and prophets, Judas Barsabbas and Silas. This was done by “the apostles and elders with the consent of the whole church” (Acts 15:22-35). In each example, we see a proper “setting-apart” of individuals for particular tasks or ministries, resulting from a process of discernment by the community.

2. Historical Theological Perspective

Historically, ministerial leadership among the Brethren has been fluid and has adapted to changing circumstances. In Schwarzenau, Alexander Mack clearly assumed a “set apart” leadership role, as he baptized the seven other initial members. The earliest Brethren leaders held outside occupations while they carried out ministerial tasks. For example, Peter Becker was a weaver, Christopher Sauer was a printer, and John Kline was a farmer. Leery of the professionalized ministerial leadership they saw in other Christian denominations, Brethren did not provide a salary, but expected that the minister hold another occupation that would provide financial support. Eighteenth-century Brethren frequently identified ministerial leaders by their duties. Deacons, responsible for the material needs of the congregation and for the annual visit, came to be known as “visiting Brethren” while those that assumed preaching duties were commonly referred to as “laboring Brethren,” as they labored for the Gospel. References to elders also begin to appear in the eighteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, Brethren developed a three-fold ministry of first-degree ministers, second-degree ministers, and elders. First-degree ministers were undergoing trial to determine if they were indeed gifted for ministry. Second-degree ministers had the responsibility of overseeing congregations. Elders oversaw multiple congregations and were considered to be the most spiritually mature leadership. Elders provided counsel and direction for congregations and for the Brethren as a whole, as evidenced in their oversight of Annual Meeting. They held a key role in resolving congregational disputes and providing advice.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there were several key debates relating to ministerial leadership that have continued to have implications for Brethren. First was the issue of providing a salary for ministers. Brethren in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries believed that paying a minister was akin to selling the Gospel. They also expressed concern that if ministers received compensation for ministerial duties, they might water down the Gospel or become unwilling to speak the truth in love because their livelihood was dependent on regular congregational giving. In 1861, Annual Meeting expressed this perspective, “Resolved that we are opposed to a treasury for the exclusive benefit of the ministry, but that every church should encourage their ministers to be more active in their calling and also to support them in all cases of necessity.” Likewise, in 1890, Annual Meeting reiterated, “We think it wrong for churches to give, and brethren to receive a stipulated amount for preaching.” Despite this statement, in urban settings, congregations had begun to provide financial compensation for ministers. Philadelphia had the first salaried pastor before the end of the nineteenth century. Brethren in urban centers faced challenges as they attempted to maintain regular jobs and execute ministerial duties. The often more flexible schedule of rural farm life allowed for more travel and ministerial activities in certain seasons than did a nine-to-five work schedule that was the norm in small towns and cities. Another factor in the rise of paid ministerial leadership was that some congregations in the west and south had difficulty obtaining ministerial leadership. Brethren periodicals, beginning with the Gospel Visitor in the 1850s, display requests for ministers to come from the east to these often lonely corners of Brethren establishment. In 1911, Annual Conference provided the first official approval of paid ministry. From that point forward, there was a transition from non-salaried free ministry to salaried pastoral ministry throughout the denomination. One of the implications of this shift was a sense that ministers belonged to the whole denomination, rather than to a particular congregation or even a specific region. If ministers were not tied to a particular job or location for their livelihood, then there was the presumption that they could move easily.

At the turn of the twentieth century, we begin to see another change. Throughout the first two hundred years of the church, most congregations had a plural ministry, or multiple ministers that served their congregation. Some congregations still had “preacher’s benches” that sat at the front

of the meetinghouse for the ministers and elders, exemplifying that multiple persons would be involved in leadership. A group of ministers frequently worked together to care for a cluster of meetinghouses. However, with the turn to salaried and therefore a more professionalized mode of ministerial leadership, most congregations could only afford and came to expect that a single pastor would bear the responsibility for ministerial leadership.

A third important change that occurred from the late nineteenth to the twentieth century was the role of formal education for ministry. Early Brethren ministers operated under an apprenticeship model, whereby presiding elders and ministers would oversee younger ministers. Younger ministers would receive increased responsibility as they demonstrated an ability to complete their assigned duties, eventually progressing to the higher degrees of ministry. Congregations expected ministers to engage in rigorous personal Bible study and reading. There are abundant stories of elders, such as Peter Nead, rising every morning at 4:00 a.m. in order to read Scripture for several hours before setting out to do his daily work. Brethren had a strong suspicion that formal education might lead to errors, particularly in abandoning certain principles of Christian living, such as nonconformity. Brethren also feared that arrogance, rather than humility, would accompany formal education and a more professionalized ministry. In 1917, for the first time, Annual Conference established educational credentials for elders and ministers. These requirements consisted of a high school education as well as a two-year Bible course and a two-year reading course. This requirement could be met, however, after the person had already been elected to the ministry.

A fourth concern was the proper role of the community in ministerial discernment. Annual Meeting repeatedly asserted that it was the job of the community to identify gifts for ministry. In 1853, for example, Annual Meeting asserted that a person could not be promoted to the office of minister by the elder body alone, but rather had to have full approval of the congregation. It was not up to the individual, or even other ordained persons, but rather it was the role and responsibility of the community, the priesthood of all believers, to discern gifts for ministry. In the early-twentieth century, Brethren allowed that an individual could recognize his or her own call to ministry. Annual Conference instituted a process whereby the person would consult with an elder about the calling, undergo an examination process and then have the matter submitted to the congregation. It is important to note, however, that the individual cannot go it alone. The congregation still became involved in the discernment process and in assessing and recognizing the gifts of the individual.

Throughout the twentieth century, there were several changes in the terminology for ministers. First, the distinction between first- and second-degree ministers was dropped and the terminology of licensing and ordination was adopted. Then in 1955, Annual Conference changed the role of presiding elder to moderator. In 1967, Annual Conference discontinued the office of elder in denominational polity.

Another significant change in the twentieth century involved the full inclusion of women as part of the set-apart ministry. While exceptional women, such as Sarah Righter Major and Bertha Neher, assumed some of the tasks of ministerial leadership (particularly preaching) prior to the twentieth century, it was in 1922 that Annual Conference determined that women could receive a permanent license to preach and teach. In 1958, Annual Conference recognized the full ordination of women.

Historically, Brethren have adapted ministerial leadership in order to accommodate the changing needs of congregations. When non-salaried ministry became a limitation in urban and more secluded settings, Brethren allowed for the possibility, although not the requirement, of salaried ministers. When women began to assume more pastoral congregational tasks, Brethren recognized their gifts through licensing and ordination. What is clear through all of these changes

is that ministerial leadership for Brethren arises out of the communal context in an attempt to lead and meet the needs of these communities. Brethren have attempted to hold together the functions and duties that a person performs as minister along with what a person symbolizes as part of the ministerial office. Ministry is not a simple set of tasks to perform, but rather involves representing Christ within the community through multiple pastoral tasks, such as pastoral care, speaking the truth in love, proclaiming the Gospel, and administrative work. The set apart minister, both salaried and non-salaried, represents the priesthood of all believers and Brethren heritage and witness to the wider world.

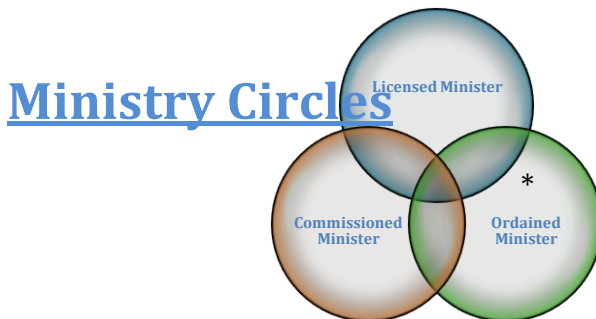
3. Ministry Circle Theological Perspective

This revised polity incorporates the historical notion of “degrees of ministry” into a new credentialing structure of “Ministry Circles.” Each of the ministry circles is designed to effectively form, equip and support ministers for a particular sort of ministry within the denomination. These ministry circles are intended to enable the church to call out more leadership, to include all in ministry (within the context of current polity), and to encourage individuals to take seriously the intentional discernment of their call within the gathered body of Christ.

The concept of circles of ministry begins and is embedded within the priesthood of all believers. Since the Church of the Brethren practices baptism as an enrollment into the ministry of the body of Christ, we view every baptized believer as a minister or “priest,” living out Christ’s call in the world. A calling into credentialed ministerial leadership, then, is a calling forth from the larger circle of the ministry of all.

This paper outlines three circles of ministry – the Licensed Minister circle, the Commissioned Minister circle, and the Ordained Minister circle. The process of calling forth, training and credentialing leadership into these circles is an important process and requires investment and cooperation from several bodies within the church: an individual, a congregation, a district, the denomination, and a spiritual companion group named the “calling cohort.”

Figure 3



***Ministerial Leaders**
 Ability to articulate personal faith in Jesus Christ.
 Evidence of discipleship/faith-filled life.
 Demonstrated qualities and gifts for ministry.

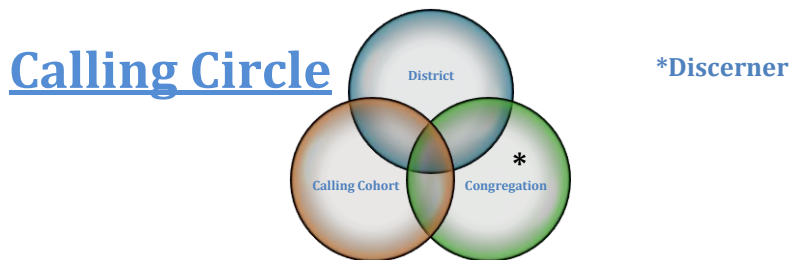
Annual Conference charges district boards with the responsibility for credentialing, and districts work closely with congregations in the calling process. This paper provides polity for the entire denomination, carried out through districts in partnerships with congregations and individual ministerial leaders. Credentialed ministers in the Church of the Brethren are accountable, then, to the church: congregation, district, and denomination.

D. CALLING CIRCLE

1. Calling

Calling is a naming and encouraging of an individual’s God-given gifts for ministry in the church. Because the Church of the Brethren values the process of calling, the journey into credentialed ministry begins with a time of intentional and structured discernment involving an individual, the individual’s congregation, the district, and a calling cohort. When engaged faithfully, the processes of intentional and structured discernment are honest endeavors that include a sincere openness to the leading of God. Discernment may lead toward credentialed ministry, but it may also lead elsewhere. Membership in a Church of the Brethren congregation is an essential and vital part of this calling process. If an individual without a congregational home finds they are entering into discernment about ministerial leadership, a relationship with a local Church of the Brethren shall be developed and cultivated over an extended period of time. Membership in a local Church of the Brethren congregation is required in order to continue in the calling process.

Figure 4



A sense of call to ministry can come in several ways: personal initiative, congregational initiative, or initiative by the church at large. Once an individual senses a call, the first step is to enter into prayerful discussions with the appropriate congregational group, i.e. ministry commission, leadership team, deacon group, or calling committee.

Congregational initiative best characterizes the manner of ministry calling common in plural non-salaried ministry settings. When it is determined there is a need to strengthen the team for effective ministry, the congregation prayerfully considers a call to one who demonstrates character, gifts, and spiritual maturity needed for ministerial leadership.

2. Steps in the calling process

After discussion, the appropriate congregational group shall communicate with the district executive to report that the individual is interested in testing her or his sense of call to ministry.

The individual **discerner** then enters into a time of Exploration of Call, in partnership with the **congregation**, the **district**, and a **calling cohort**. A cohort is "a group of individuals who support and adhere to one another." (*Roget's II: The New Thesaurus*, Expanded Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, 198) This not only implies support but also a common bond, a closeness that extends beyond companionship. The calling cohort is a special small group of brothers and sisters who commit to walking alongside the individual exploring a call to ministry. They will spend time together in prayer, study, and gifts discernment while offering guidance, encouragement, and reflection on the gifts, qualities, and potential for the ministerial call and leadership. The time of exploration of call should typically last between one and two years.

a. The Calling Cohort

The discerner and the congregation, in consultation with the District Ministry Commission select the calling cohort.

Guidelines for the calling cohort

Will include:

- An ordained mentor appointed by the District Ministry Commission

Encouraged to include:

- A congregational companion: a member and representative of the discerner’s home congregation
- A district companion: a representative of the discerner’s district, in addition to the ordained mentor

May also include:

- A spiritual friend
- A trusted peer
- A teacher or professor

This calling cohort, named by the individual discerner and the congregation in consultation with the district, will remain intact throughout the calling, training, and discernment process. The responsibility of convening the group rests with the individual discerner. The individual discerner shall schedule the cohort to meet as often and as many times as needed for discernment of call, but the group shall gather together no fewer than 4 times prior to a Calling Interview. If a member of the calling cohort is unable for any reason to remain an active participant, it shall be up to the individual discerner in consultation with the calling cohort to decide whether to replace the individual and if so, by whom. The cohort continues meeting up until the time of credentialing, and beyond, should they so choose. A calling cohort may meet in person or via conference call, videoconference or some other means of gathering geographically diverse groups into the same space.

b. Responsibilities

During this time, each group has particular responsibilities for moving through the time of discernment:

1) The **discerner**:

- Expresses a desire to explore a call to ministry;
- Enters into conversation with pastor, district executive, mentors, etc;
- Practices prayerful discernment, Bible study, and spiritual disciplines;
- Participates in the district process;
- Consults with congregational and district leadership to select and convene the calling cohort;
- Convenes, schedules, and meets with the calling cohort at least 4 times.
- Explores ministry training options consulting with calling cohort, congregation, district, and ministry training program leadership.

2) The **congregation**:

- Invites and/or receives the discerner’s exploration of call;
- Holds prayerful conversations of call within the appropriate congregational leadership group;

- Notifies the district of the discerner’s interest in exploring a call;
- Selects, with the individual discerner and in consultation with the district, the members of the calling cohort;
- Engages in prayerful communication with the discerner and the calling cohort;
- Continues in conversation with the district;
- Walks with the discerner through the district interview and beyond.

3) The **district**:

- Oversees the calling and credentialing process;
- Explains the expectations and differences of Commissioned and Ordained ministry to the congregation and the discerner;
- Invites and provides resources for exploration of full range of ministry training and educational programs in consultation with ministry training program leadership.
- Consults with the individual discerner and the congregation to select the members of the calling cohort;
- Provides tools for gifts discernment and Readiness for Ministry, referencing Office of Ministry Paper, “Candidates for Ministry Readiness for Ministry Program.”
- Performs background check;
- Continues in conversation with the congregation and the discerner;
- Conducts a pre-licensing interview;
- Works with the discerner to determine the status of call and what next steps might be.

4) The **calling cohort**:

- Serves as a spiritual companion to the discerner through the times of calling and ministry training;
- Meets at least 4 times during the calling process for Bible study, prayer, theological reflection, and discernment;
- Continues in communication with congregational leadership;
- Is available to be present at the calling interview;
- Helps to process decisions and possible next steps with the discerner, including the development of a Covenant of Accountability.

c. Covenant of Accountability

As the time of exploration draws to a close, the individual **discerner** works closely with the **congregation, district, and calling cohort** to create a “Covenant of Accountability.” This document outlines the responsibilities of each body during the time of training and formation of a Licensed Minister.

1) The **discerner** agrees to:

- Enter or continue in the approved educational program appropriate to the ministry circle toward which they are headed.
- Continue to be actively engaged in the life of the congregation.
- Meet annually with the appropriate district representative(s) for accountability, reaffirmation of call and renewal of Covenant of Accountability. Licensed Ministers who do not demonstrate accountability and inclination in continued preparation shall not be reaffirmed as a Licensed Minister.
- Continue meeting at least quarterly with the calling cohort for conversations of discernment.

- 2) The **congregation** agrees to:
 - Continue in prayerful discernment and support with the Licensed Minister, offering prayer, conversation and nurture during the time of training and formation.
- 3) The **district** agrees to:
 - Offer resources for preparation
 - Consult annually with the Licensed Minister for accountability and reaffirmation of call.
- 4) The **calling cohort** agrees to:
 - Continue meeting with the Licensed Minister at least quarterly for conversations of discernment and prayerful support.

d. Calling (pre-licensing) Interview

At the end of the time of exploration, the **district** conducts a calling interview. The District Ministry Commission arranges for and conducts an interview with the candidate. A District Ministry Commission is the district group responsible for calling and credentialing ministerial leadership. This group should be made up of carefully selected people, clergy and laity, men and women, who are trained in their responsibilities and in these calling and credentialing processes.

The “Pre-licensing Interview Guide” provides the format for the interview, including the candidate’s aims for the ministry, natural ability, moral and spiritual fitness, and willingness to prepare for the roles and responsibilities of ministerial leadership. A District Ministry Commission may invite members of the calling cohort to be present during the calling interview.

At the conclusion of the interview, a District Ministry Commission may:

- 1) approve the individual discerner as a Licensed Minister, affirming the Covenant of Accountability and inviting the discerner to begin or continue training toward either the Commissioned or Ordained Ministry circle;
 - 2) invite the discerner to further discernment;
- or
- 3) affirm the discerner in a vocational call outside credentialed ministry.

If the District Ministry Commission approves the individual as a Licensed Minister, they then recommend them as such to the congregation. A congregational vote shall be taken to affirm their support of the candidate.

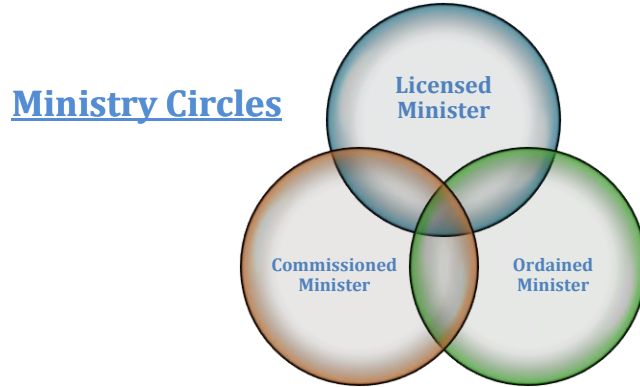
e. Licensing Service

Upon affirmation of the congregation by a simple majority vote, the district executive or a representative of the District Ministry Commission will conduct a service of affirmation, acknowledging formally the Licensed Minister’s new recognition and the collaborative Covenant of Accountability during a regular congregational worship service. These actions shall be reported to the District Board. Within 30 days after an affirmation service, the appropriate paperwork will be sent to the Office of Ministry.

E. MINISTRY CIRCLES

Each of the ministry circles is designed to effectively form, equip and support ministers for a particular sort of ministry within the denomination. The process of calling forth, training and credentialing leadership into these circles is an important process and requires investment and cooperation from several bodies within the church: an individual, a congregation, a district, the denomination, and a spiritual companion group named the “calling cohort.” Just as the calling process is a mutual endeavor, the life of ministry is also a process of accountability, mutual support and peer relationships – both within and across the different ministry circles.

Figure 5



1. Licensed Minister Circle

A Licensed Minister is an individual who has been affirmed in her or his continuation of training and discernment toward a particular ministerial leadership role. The district recognizes a Licensed Minister during the service of affirmation, and this recognition is valid for one year. The district may annually reaffirm the Licensed Minister up to 9 times (10 years total), provided the Licensed Minister demonstrates accountability and inclination in continued preparation and continues to fulfill their responsibilities as stated in the Covenant of Accountability.

The Covenant of Accountability outlines the responsibilities of each body during the time of training and formation of a Licensed Minister, and provides guidelines and a roadmap toward one of the set-apart ministry circles. The Covenant of Accountability may be revised during the annual review and reaffirmation of a Licensed Minister.

A Licensed Minister, in certain circumstances with the approval of the district ministry commission, may serve in a ministerial leadership role. A Licensed Minister must complete denominationally approved ethics training before serving in this way. In addition, a Licensed Minister serving in a ministerial role shall have a Church of the Brethren ordained minister as a supervisor.

Ministry Circle

Figure 6



- Continued discernment of call.
- Nurture relationship with district and calling cohort.
- Ethical and moral integrity.
- Demonstrate qualities and gifts for ministry.
- Active membership in congregation.
- Commitment to Church of the Brethren.
- Enrolled in approved ministry training program.
- Meets regularly with mentor/supervisor.
- Spiritual practices: Bible study, love feast, active prayer life, stewardship, commitment to community/body of Christ.
- Establish practice of attention to holistic healthfulness.

2. [The Set-Apart Ministry](#)

The two circles of Commissioned Ministry and Ordained Ministry make up what the Church of the Brethren calls the Set-Apart Ministry. These credentialed ministerial leaders have the authority to perform all ministerial services and to oversee the ordinances practiced by the denomination, in compliance with the 2008 Ethics in Ministry Relations Paper.

A set-apart minister, by both word and deed, is a representative of the faith community. In denominational and ecumenical settings, the minister symbolizes the spirit that the Brethren believe to be important about themselves.

Ministry in the Church of the Brethren is embedded in the communal life of the body of Christ. It is from, for, and on behalf of the community of faith. Those called to the set-apart ministry are always called into this sort of servant ministry that exists in the context of community.

Commissioning and Ordination to ministry in the Church of the Brethren are not authorization to practice an individual, personality driven, “lone ranger” or “calling card” ministry. They are instead a calling forth of leadership for the particular, embodied, congregational ministry of the church’s life together.

While baptism functions as enrollment into the whole ministry of the church and carries with it certain expectations of a life of faith, set-apart ministers are held to higher standards of leadership. In the Church of the Brethren, these expectations for ministerial leaders include the ability to express a clear commitment to Jesus Christ demonstrated by a vibrant spiritual life, the practice of regular spiritual disciplines, a healthy physical and emotional lifestyle, a commitment to Church of the Brethren faith heritage and values, ongoing study of biblical texts, history and theology, and a commitment to actively upholding the Covenant of Accountability.

a. The Credentialing Process

When a Licensed Minister is nearing the completion of training for a particular set-apart ministry; discerns spiritual and formative readiness for ministry together with spiritual friends, the calling cohort, and the congregation; and pending a specific ministerial call, the District Ministry Commission will hold an interview with the Licensed Minister, utilizing the Pre-Commissioning or Pre-Ordination Interview Guide.

1) Pre-Commission/Pre-Ordination Interview

During the interview, the Ministry Commission may:

- a) affirm a call to the particular circle of ministerial leadership,
- b) invite an individual to further training, formation, or discernment,
or
- c) affirm a vocational call outside of set-apart ministry.

2) Recommendation to the District Board

When the District Ministry Commission affirms a call to set-apart ministry, they will make a recommendation to the District Board for approval of the call. The District Board shall affirm the call by a simple majority vote.

3) Recommendation to the Congregation

Upon the affirmation of the District Board, the District Ministry Commission shall notify the pastor, board chair, or other appropriate persons in the congregation so that a congregational vote can be taken to affirm the call. A representative of the District

Ministry Commission shall be present for the congregational business meeting to take the vote. A congregational affirmation is by 2/3 majority vote.

b. Commissioning or Ordination Service

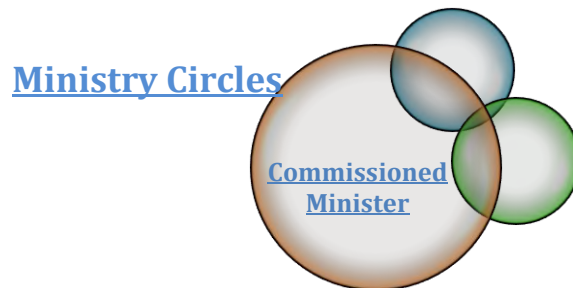
After both the District Board and the congregation have affirmed a call to ministry, the district executive, or their designee, or a representative of the District Ministry Commission will conduct a service of commissioning or ordination during a congregational worship service (regular or special).

3. Commissioned Minister Circle

The Commissioned Minister Circle is one of two circles of credentialed set-apart ministry. This circle is designed for ministerial leaders called to one specific ministry in one specific setting. The commissioned credential is not transferable from one setting to another. The call to commissioned ministry originates in a particular congregation and leads to ministry in that same, originating congregation. The Church of the Brethren values the small-church setting, and has long encouraged both the practice of calling out those already among us to lead and the value of a minister’s commitment to and covenant with those who have called them out. Because so many congregations need and call this kind of leadership, consistent processes for calling, training and sustaining these localized leaders in particular settings is very important.

While commissioned ministers are accountable to the larger church body in the form of the district and the denomination, their ministry is restricted to one specific congregation or ministry setting. A Commissioned Minister holds the legal credential of clergy, and is commissioned to perform all ministerial services and to preside at the ordinances practiced by the denomination in the specific congregation for which they have been commissioned. The Commissioned credential is not transferable from one congregation to another or from one district to another. It is intended for a particular ministry in a particular setting.

Figure 7



The Commissioned Minister circle includes certain expectations of formation, training, practice, and accountability. **Commissioned Ministers** shall:

- a. Be an active member of a Church of the Brethren congregation.
- b. Complete training through:
 - Education For Shared Ministry or
 - Academy Certified Training Systems or
 - Training in Ministry programs or
 - another specifically designed curriculum of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership;

- c. Articulate and provide statements of:
 - obedience to God,
 - a personal faith in Jesus Christ,
 - openness to the continual infilling of the Holy Spirit,
 - understanding the nature and mission of the church from a Church of the Brethren perspective, and
 - the meaning and purpose of scripture;
- d. Demonstrate evidence of discipleship and a faith-filled life;
- e. Demonstrate leadership ability and maturity of judgment;
- f. Affirm the expectations and commitments of ministerial leadership, including a declaration of intention to make church service a major concern of one's lifework;
- g. Be familiar with and comply with the Church of the Brethren Ethics in Ministry Relations Paper including participation in ethics training at least once every five years;
- h. Support the basic beliefs and practices of the Church of the Brethren as determined by Annual Conference;
- i. Engage regularly in healthful spiritual, physical, emotional and relational personal practices;
- j. Meet regularly (at least once per quarter) with a mentor, spiritual friend or peer coach assigned by the District Ministry Commission in consultation with the minister;
- k. Participate in a cohort group for the purpose of continued spiritual formation, accountability and mutual support;
- l. Demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning as evidenced by fulfilling the Annual Conference Guidelines for Continuing Education
- m. Participate in a credential renewal process facilitated by the Office of Ministry and conducted by districts every 5 years.

If a commissioned minister begins to discern a change in call to a new ministry and/or a new setting, re-commissioning within the district is an option. In order to proceed, the commissioned minister shall engage in discernment with the District Ministry Commission as their Calling Cohort. This discernment may include the need for additional training, ministry formation, and identification of gifts and skills. If a District Ministry Commission affirms re-commissioning, they will make a recommendation to the District Board for approval of the call.

If a commissioned minister begins to discern a major shift in call toward the Ordained Minister Circle, the commissioned minister shall consult with the District Ministry Commission. With the approval of the District Ministry Commission, a commissioned minister may re-enter the calling process as a Licensed Minister, establish a calling cohort along with a Covenant of Accountability to assist in discernment processes including any training or formation needed to move toward Ordained Minister Circle.

4. Ordained Minister Circle

The Ordained Minister Circle is the second circle of credentialed set-apart ministry. This circle is designed for ministerial leaders called to serve the church in capacities that expand beyond a specific congregation. Ordained ministers are accountable to the wider church in the forms of district and denomination, and their ministry is carried out in various forms within a particular district and across the denomination. The Church of the Brethren values the work of trans-local

church leaders and has long practiced a kind of connectional church structure, from the historical tradition of “visiting elders” to today’s collaborative district and denominational leadership. The Ordained Minister Circle acknowledges this need for leaders trained and formed in the larger church and provides standards and expectations for the calling out, training, credentialing and sustaining of these ministers.

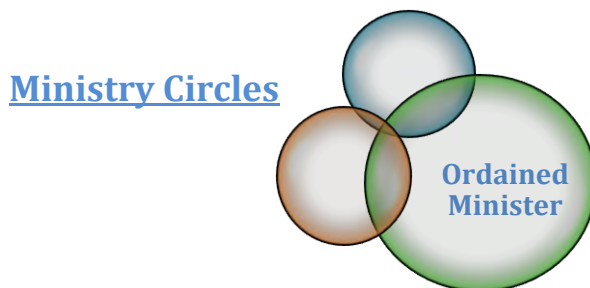
Ordination is recognition of a person for leadership in a particular area of service. The following “areas of service” are recognized and monitored by the district boards:

- a. Pastor of a congregation.
- b. Person serving a congregation in self-supporting ministry.
- c. Administrator or teacher in a theological seminary.
- d. Teacher of religion in a school, college, or university.
- e. Staff persons with districts, the denomination, and other Annual Conference agencies.
- f. Missionary assigned to pastoral or evangelistic duties.
- g. Chaplain (e.g., chaplaincy in a hospital, hospice, long-term care facility, campus, prison, or industrial setting).
- h. Person serving in a specialized ministry under the auspices of a congregation or other institutional entity (e.g., youth ministry, Christian education, camp administrator, ecumenical ministries, spiritual direction, pastoral counselor, church planter).
- i. Ministers retired from their area of service.

Because of the Church of the Brethren’s historic and living emphasis on non-resistance and peacemaking, the Church of the Brethren is not a legal endorsing body for military chaplaincy; therefore it is not an approved area of ministerial service.

If an ordained minister senses a call out of one location and into another, an intentional conversation with the district executive is in order. Together they may discuss options for discernment including whether an intentional conversation with the District Ministry Commission is in order.

Figure 8



The ordained minister circle includes certain expectations of formation, training, practice, and accountability. **Ordained Ministers** shall:

- a. Be an active member of a Church of the Brethren congregation;
- b. Complete one of the following approved educational programs:
 - The Master of Divinity degree from Bethany Theological Seminary or another institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools

- The Training in Ministry program through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership provides an alternative for those who find it impossible or impractical to complete a Master of Divinity degree. It also offers appropriate ministry training to supplement the education of those who may hold degrees in higher education other than those named here.
- The Academy Certified Training Systems programs, district or regional programs certified by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, provide still another alternative training track.

Persons holding other degrees of higher education (e.g. a B.A. in Ministry, an MA in Theology, a PhD in Education) may complete an M.Div. through Bethany's residential or distance programs or supplement their degree with the appropriate courses from the TRiM program.

- c. Articulate and provide statements of obedience to God, a personal faith in Jesus Christ, openness to the continual infilling of the Holy Spirit, understanding the nature and mission of the church from a Church of the Brethren perspective, and the meaning and purpose of scripture;
- d. Demonstrate evidence of discipleship and a faith-filled life;
- e. Affirm the expectations and commitments of ministerial leadership, including a declaration of intention to make church service a major concern of one's lifework;
- f. Have a specific ministerial call as defined under the "areas of service;"
- g. Be familiar with and comply with the Church of the Brethren Ethics in Ministry Relations Paper, including participation in ethics training at least once every five years;
- h. Support the basic beliefs and practices of the Church of the Brethren as determined by Annual Conference;
- i. Engage regularly in healthful spiritual, physical, emotional and relational personal practices;
- j. Meet regularly (at least once per quarter) with a mentor, a spiritual friend, or peer coach assigned by the District Ministry Commission in consultation with the minister;
- k. Serve as mentor to peer colleagues and those being called into ministry;
- l. Participate in and be willing to offer leadership for a cohort group for the purpose of continued spiritual formation, accountability and mutual support;
- m. Demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning as evidenced by fulfilling the Annual Conference Guidelines for Continuing Education
- n. Participate in a credential renewal process facilitated by the Office of Ministry and conducted by districts every 5 years.

F. ACCOUNTABILITY

Based as it is upon the Spirit's empowerment but also upon a process of discernment and designation by the church, ministerial leadership is not seen as a right as much as a gift and a naming of gifts.

All licensed, commissioned and ordained ministers are accountable to both the district and the denomination. Annual Conference charges districts with the responsibility of credentialing ministers in the Church of the Brethren, and the denominational Office of Ministry works to resource and support districts in this process. Ministers remain accountable through the five-year credential review

process, participating in continuing education, and regular training in ministerial ethics. Ministers serving as pastors of congregation are also responsible for ensuring that yearly district and denominational statistical report forms are completed and submitted.

Every five years, District Ministry Commissions, in consultation with the Office of Ministry, shall conduct a credential review process. At the conclusion of these reviews, credential cards will be renewed for those ministers in good standing. In addition to the regular five-year reviews, District Ministry Commissions may also review credentials at any point. Ministerial credentials may be reviewed at any point under conditions deemed appropriate by a District Ministry Commission.

Reasons for termination of a credential may include the following:

1. The credentialed person voluntarily chooses to discontinue his or her ministry to enter into another type of calling for which a ministry credential is not designated or desired.
2. The credentialed person, for reasons other than illness or diminishment due to aging, ceases to be active in the life and work of the church.
3. The credentialed person cuts himself or herself off from the ministry through some indiscretion so that usefulness for the leadership services designated by a ministerial credential is no longer tenable in the Church of the Brethren. In the event of indiscretion, after due process according to the paper on "Ministerial Ethics - 2008," the District Board may terminate a credential.
4. The credentialed person's commissioning or ordination may be terminated by the District Board if the individual fails to fulfill his or her vows of membership and commissioning or ordination.

Ministers credentialed in the Church of the Brethren are also responsible for participating in lifelong learning. The Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry provides Annual Conference Guidelines for Continuing Education, and all ministers shall abide by these guidelines.

Credentialed ministers are also required to participate in an official denominational ethics training course every five years. The Ministerial Ethics paper outlines this requirement.

G. REINSTATEMENT OF ORDINATION

If a District Board terminates an ordained status, an individual may seek to become a candidate for reinstatement by following the normal procedures for ordination outlined in this paper.

H. MOVING BETWEEN CIRCLES

For a variety of reasons, ministers may wish to move from the Commissioned circle into the Ordained circle, or vice versa. Ministers wishing to move from one circle to another shall spend time in intentional discernment with the District Ministry Commission and complete all requirements and expectations of that credentialing circle.

I. RECEIVING MINISTERS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS

Congregations may call a pastor presently ordained in the Church of the Brethren, since this implies approval of the District Board. A congregation may not call a pastor from another denomination without following these guidelines in consultation with the district executive.

An ordained minister from another denomination wishing to serve in ministerial leadership and be credentialed in the Church of the Brethren must enter into an intentional time of discernment and orientation overseen by the District Ministry Commission. The word *denomination* refers to a church body that has established standards and procedures, similar to the connectional polity of the Church of the Brethren, for calling, educating, and ordaining persons for ministerial leadership. During this period the individual may serve as a Commissioned Minister for a term of service. This period, which should last no less than 2 years, will include:

1. Documentation of ministerial standing and satisfactory written assurance from the appropriate ordaining group within the minister's denomination as to his or her moral, spiritual, leadership and educational qualifications required by Church of the Brethren polity.
2. Orientation to Church of the Brethren history, theology, beliefs, polity and practices through courses in these areas offered through Bethany Theological Seminary or the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.
3. Prayerful discernment about which ministry circle the individual is being called to enter.
4. Any additional education and/or training required for particular ministry circle.
5. Regular meetings with a discernment cohort group.
6. A completed background check.
7. Completion of approved ministerial ethics training.
8. Verbal commitment in the "transfer of ordination interview" and a public commitment at the time of installation to teach and uphold the beliefs, practices, and polity of the Church of the Brethren.
9. Provide a written acceptance of the ordination polity and policies of the Church of the Brethren in completing the "Pre-Ordination Interview Guide."

An ordained minister from another denomination wishing to serve in ministerial leadership without transferring credentials to the Church of the Brethren may serve as a Commissioned Minister for a term of service, but still must enter into the discernment and orientation process overseen by the District Ministry Commission.

With the guidance of the district executive/minister, and upon approval of the District Ministry Commission a congregation may call an ordained minister from another denomination as interim pastor. This individual is not required to seek membership and ordination in the Church of the Brethren, but must agree to provide documentation of ministerial standing and articulate in writing a commitment to teach and uphold the beliefs, practices, and polity of the Church of the Brethren.

J. [MINISTERS SERVING CONGREGATIONS WITH DUAL DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATION](#)

An ordained minister who is called to serve a dual ministry (an approved ministry in his or her denomination and an approved ministry in the Church of the Brethren) and who elects to maintain membership and ordination in his or her denomination, may be recognized as an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren for the duration of that dual ministry, so long as the following conditions are met:

1. That the minister becomes a member or an associate member of the Church of the Brethren he or she is serving.
2. That the District Ministry Commission be assured in writing of the good standing of the person within his or her denomination and make the appropriate recommendation to the District Board.

3. That the minister express a willingness to teach and uphold the beliefs, practices, and polity of the Church of the Brethren, including the requirements for ordination in the Church of the Brethren, through a verbal commitment in the interview with the District Ministry Commission and a public commitment at the time of installation.
4. That the minister agrees to participate in a period of orientation and discernment with a cohort group.

K. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To Annual Conference Delegates:
 - a. Ensure that this paper receives attention and study within their congregations so that all members of the church are aware of the content and process of this paper.
2. To Individuals and Congregations:
 - a. Take seriously the shared responsibility of calling forth leadership for the whole church.
 - b. Willing to walk alongside those exploring a call to ministry.
 - c. Utilize the study guide that accompanies this paper.
3. To Ministerial Leaders:
 - a. Take seriously the roll of calling and mentoring others into ministerial leadership.
 - b. Pay attention to their own well-being, including spiritual disciplines, self-care, life-long learning, and developing networks of support beyond the ministry setting.
 - c. Become familiar with the opportunities and possibilities for peer coaching, spiritual direction, spiritual friendship, etc.
4. To Districts:
 - a. That credentialing committees become familiar with this paper through participation in orientation and training sessions provided by the Office of Ministry.
 - b. That credentialing committees participate in intercultural competency training sessions in order to become sensitive to non-dominant cultural differences.
 - c. Become familiar with the full range of ministry training and educational programs of the Church of the Brethren.
 - d. Utilize gift discernment tools and Readiness for Ministry program in the calling and ministry inquiry processes.
 - e. That when a calling or credentialing interview is held with a non-dominant culture candidate, the interview committee include representation from the culture of the candidate and consider conducting the interview in the language of the candidate.
 - f. Provide nurture and support for ministers for their life of service.
 - g. The Layspeaker designation is no longer a part of the Ministerial Leadership polity of the Church of the Brethren. Districts should be in conversation with individuals carrying this designation to explain the new polity and to discuss district-based non-credentialed leadership options.

5. To the Council of District Executives:
 - a. That the council encourages districts to follow the procedures in this paper in order to provide consistency throughout the denomination.
 - b. That arrangements be made for careful training of their members so that they can skillfully counsel with individuals and congregations in the various aspects of calling, credentialing, and sustaining ministerial leaders included in this paper, and so that they can guide inquiries and processes.
 - c. That the council in collaboration with the Office of Ministry holds a professional growth event focusing on intercultural competencies in the context of calling and credentialing of ministerial leadership.

6. To Bethany Theological Seminary and other Ministry Training Programs:
 - a. That Bethany Theological Seminary collaborate with the Office of Ministry to develop calling and discernment resources to assist in the formation and training of calling cohorts.
 - b. That Bethany Theological Seminary develop interpretation pieces to help the denomination understand its role in forming and training quality ministerial leaders.
 - c. That Bethany Theological Seminary and the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership collaborate with the Office of Ministry to develop interpretive pieces to aid in communicating the full range of ministry training and educational programs.
 - d. That Bethany Theological Seminary develop recruitment and retention strategies for graduate level ministry training for non-dominant culture students.

7. To the Office of Ministry of the Church of the Brethren:
 - a. That the Office of Ministry in cooperation with the Ministry Advisory Council of the Annual Conference and Council of District Executives take measures to ensure that there is consistency in following the processes outlined in this paper.
 - b. That the Office of Ministry develop orientation, training, and interpretation resources for the denomination and its membership giving special attention to training district calling and credentialing committees.
 - c. That the Office of Ministry collaborate with Bethany Theological Seminary to develop calling and discernment resources to assist in the formation and training of calling cohorts.
 - d. That the Office of Ministry collaborate with Bethany Theological Seminary and the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership to develop interpretive pieces to aid in communicating the full range of ministry training and educational programs.
 - e. That the Office of Ministry collaborate with the Council of District Executives and the Ministry Advisory Council in reviewing and revising the “professional instruments” portion of Readiness for Ministry.
 - f. That the Office of Ministry develop study guides and resources for cohort groups.
 - g. That the Office of Ministry collaborate with ministry partners in developing resources and tools to assist ministerial leaders in paying attention to their own well-being.
 - h. That the Office of Ministry collaborate with ministry partners to develop and define the Covenant Circle for set-apart ministerial leaders in the Church of the Brethren. The Covenant

Circle is intended to encourage and enhance spiritual leadership, excellence in ministry, well-being, and vitality.

- i. That the Office of Ministry assures that this document, a summary, and its accompanying resources are translated into Spanish and Creole.
- j. That the Office of Ministry collaborates with the Council of District Executives as it holds a professional growth event focusing on intercultural competencies in the context of calling and credentialing of ministerial leadership.
- k. That the Office of Ministry supports districts with clarification and encouragement of the work of plural non-salaried ministry congregations as well as new models of bi-vocational ministry teams.

L. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Calling Circle - the first step toward a credential circle, the calling circle is called forth from the larger circle of community and includes representatives from an individual's congregation, district, and calling cohort

Cohort: A cohort is "a group of individuals who support and adhere to one another." (*Roget's II: The New Thesaurus*, Expanded Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, 198) This not only implies support but also a common bond, a closeness that extends beyond companionship.

- **Calling Cohort** - a small group of brothers and sisters who commit to walking alongside an individual exploring a call to ministry. The calling cohort meets during the time of calling, training, and discernment, and includes an ordained mentor appointed by the District Ministry Commission and companions from an individual's congregation and district. It may also include spiritual friends, trusted peers, or teachers/professors. The calling cohort spends time together in prayer, district executives study and gifts discernment.
- **Accountability Cohort** – a small group of brothers and sisters in ministry committed to walking with one another. The accountability cohort meets regularly during ministers' time of service in their ministry settings, and is intended to offer structures of continued spiritual formation, accountability and mutual support.

Commissioned Minister – is a credentialed minister whose call is to a specific ministry in a particular congregational setting. The commissioning credential is valid in one congregation and in one district. Commissioning is not transferable from one congregation to another and not transferable across districts.

Credentialed Ministry – the designation of those leaders who demonstrate particular gifts and abilities for ministry are called forth from the priesthood of all believers into set-apart ministry and are granted either a Commissioned Minister credential or an Ordained Minister credential by a District Board.

Council Of District Executives – is an association comprised of the executives of the denomination's districts that meets twice each year to participate in mutual ministry discussion and explore the various voices of district and agency life, leadership, and ministries.

District Ministry Commission – is the district group responsible for calling and credentialing ministerial leadership. This group should be made up of carefully selected people who are trained in their responsibilities and in these calling and credentialing processes. It is also referred to as "calling and credentialing team."

Licensed Minister – is a restricted and limited recognition for leaders in the midst of their ongoing discernment, training, and preparation for commissioned or ordained ministry.

Ministry Advisory Council – is an advisory group created by and reportable to Annual Conference for facilitating effective ministerial leadership in the Church of the Brethren. The Council is comprised of representatives from the Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry and General Secretary, Bethany Theological Seminary, the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, the Council of District Executives, and the Brethren Higher Education Association.

Ordained minister – A credentialed minister whose call is to a broad ministry that may span multiple congregations or ministry settings over the course of their lives of service. The ordination credential is valid across the denomination and transferable across districts.

Spiritual Friend - a kind of formative relationship similar to spiritual direction, “typically more mutual and equal than other forms of guidance and has as its end shared encouragement in the love of God,” (Beasley-Topliffe, ed., *The Upper Room Dictionary of Spiritual Formation*, Upper Room, 2003).

¹ 2014 Minutes, “Revision to Ministerial Leadership Polity,” 224-260. As its opening paragraph states, this document replaced the 1999 Ministerial Leadership Paper and all previous polity documents, including denominational polity on Lay Speakers. It also integrates the 1998 “Polity for Free Ministry” into this document and therefore replaces previous polity about plural non-salaried ministry – see 2014 Minutes, “Revision to Ministerial Leadership Polity,” 221.