

## Ready at the Thresholds: Progressive Brethren Gather

November 13-15, 2009

Saturday Night Program

Individual responses to the question:

***What threshold does the Church of the Brethren need to cross and what action will I take to make that happen?***

*I have organized these, though doing so risks misreading what was intended. Also, it's clear that many responses belong in more than one 'category'. I know that it helps me to see smaller 'chunks' of responses that are at least somewhat thematically linked, though. I have removed names and personal information to protect privacy. Anything in square brackets has been generalized.*

*Note: There were a few responses that I was unable to read. If you don't see your response on this sheet, please send it to [nearhoofmay@windstream.net](mailto:nearhoofmay@windstream.net) and I will add it to the list. ☺*

### **Engaging the Denomination & Wider Church**

- Encourage NOAC planners to continue having progressive speakers at NOAC
- Speaker at National Youth Conference from the Progressive Movement
- Keep communications open
- Send in a "Jesus Story" for Annual Conference
- Suggest progressive speakers for NYC & AC
- I will write a narrative about the importance of my work with Nicaraguans for promoting living my understanding of Jesus' love (Jesus story for AC?)
- To help the Church of the Brethren cross a new threshold, I will...remain engaged at District and National levels.
- Go to Annual Conference for the first time in 10 years.
- Write a Jesus letter for [Annual Conference]
- Continue to organize youth and young adults in the CoB – NYC 2010 and young adult group of leaders committed to work for LGBT justice in the church (in cooperation with BMC)
- Work to establish a relationship with multicultural office.
- I will commit to making our church a safe place for [my daughter] – for whoever she becomes as she grows.

### **Support the Progressive Movement**

- Work to organize a Progressive Brethren Movement group in my district.
- Support for a progressive CoB organization
- I will encourage the VOS Coordinating Council to expand its efforts to resource the progressive/inclusive Brethren movement.
- Give form to the "movement's" identity – draw together a cluster of leaders, draft founding document, plan a 3<sup>rd</sup> annual gathering
- What about a coalition of our 3 groups and we feed into them – therefore more clout!

### **Communications/Media**

- I am willing to create/edit a quarterly "Progressive Brethren Newsletter" that gathers info from varying groups and helps articulate vision, Christology, etc.

- Share info regarding our whole lives – sex ed – curriculum – UCC – Steve Clapp is doing an evaluation (per request of the UCC) – the report and resources should be communicated across our churches.
- Online group
  - Inclusion – do it ourselves; raise issue again and again
  - Support leadership
  - Nurture changes with encouragement/support
  - Model inclusive language and welcoming behavior; teach children (example too)
  - Support each other even in widespread w/message boards, blogs, etc.
  - Address fear
  - Letter-writing (distance)
  - Reach out to young adults (how?) – inclusion
  - Contemporary worship

### **Speak Up**

- I will use language of the FEMININE DIVINE in public worship
- I will not be ashamed to claim and own my faith
- Risk speaking up
- Communicate faith in a way that has integrity for me; I will encourage members of our congregation to do more of this and model it
- Tell others about progressive principles of this group; try to remain optimistic about teaching and opening the eyes of our conservative friends.
- I will step outside my comfort zone to speak and act.
- To be intellectually and theologically honest! And risk sharing our beliefs. And be creatively patient.
- I can educate and inform others.
- Tell my story. (2)
- Make T-shirts that communicate my truth without apology.
- ...talk about experiences at the Summit when I get back to [my congregation]
- Tell the Story for the Story, let it speak. Then we can talk about Paul, what his life and world were like, whether we can look at him and take and leave some of what he says.

### **Work In the Congregation/Church**

- Reclaiming who Jesus is and doing his work by continuing to put before Sunday school class issues and encouraging and modeling action
- I will help my congregation with the issue of welcoming lgbt people.
- Initiate conversations among winter members of [my] congregation. Break Silence!
- Start another discernment process in our congregation and connect that to action in the district.
- Empower Jr. High Sunday School class to own their curriculum
- I will help the church welcome and include anyone on the margins (Truth is about being more than static principles)
- I will work to change the conversations that prevent us from continuing the work of Jesus by accepting invitations to leadership opportunities, by more fully engaging with the church institution and not walking away.
- Hear the voices and empower them especially the youth and young adults who are the hope and the future. I will continue to listen and encourage when possible.
- Support prisoners when they come out of prison

## **Engage Leadership**

- Speak out against bad leadership
- Call forth dedicated Brethren persons for ministerial/pastoral leadership.
- Model inclusion; support encourage leadership that includes (is included)
- Call out bad behavior in leadership

## **Resourcing**

- Begin creating a narrative
- A visionary narrative of the Common Good
- Share resources that express a biblical foundation of love not fear.
- Gather or create resources for children & families.
- Spend a year studying the first 7 chapters of John. Begin theology at “God is love”.

## **By the Manner of our Living**

- To get over my fear, let others know that God loves everyone
- Continue to meet people where they are and ask questions that may open them to new insights in theology and christologies
- Be open to all people. Love, love, love Jesus.
- No matter what happens – love one another. That’s gospel!
- Listen with love, build some bridges, walk with wonder. ACT.
- To be more willing to take risks
- More open at work; be a better example.
- Move from survival mode to adventure mode
- Search for truth. Live the love of God together....how to?
- Living as the incarnation of Christ out in the world starting with my neighbor
- Taking hospitality to my neighbors to the next level
- “Come to the Edge” Do I have the courage to take the next step and fly off the edge? If not me, then who?
- Get through thanksgiving with extended family
- Threshold of peace witness: continue as strong witness and advocate.
- I’m going to come to the Progressive Summit next year.

## **Paradigm Shift / Raising Consciousness / Education**

- We need to decide if we can agree to disagree
- Agree as a church to support radical departure and experimentation
- Staying relevant.
- Threshold – broader more open reading of scripture that is open to new understanding
- I will be more active in encouraging and understanding among peoples and cultures through information and perspective.
- Do not ignore longstanding, as yet unsolved, issues, e.g., women’s rights and the plight of children.
- My goal is to keep my mind open to new possibilities in relation to one another.
- Educate myself on gender identity.
- We need to recognize the hurt many have suffered as a result of exclusion.
- I will push this: AMA affirms same-sex union on basis of health and safety. Not supporting same-sex unions encourages discrimination.

## **Slogans for the Progressive Movement and a New Denominational Name**

- Slogan: Erase the Fear, Embrace the Power
- Erase the shame, Embrace the Common Good

- Erasing “the Shame” – marginalization; Erase the Fear – homosexuality is “catchable” or a choice; Claim the Grace/Power
- Alternate name for CoB: Household of God

This one was hard to categorize, in part because I couldn't quite tell if the “online group” was to be the place for all the bulleted things to happen. It looked like that, but....

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And finally, a note to Carol & Ken from Margaret H:

Carol: Can we do a training session for our neighboring regions? Maybe at Bridgewater or more north?

Ken: Have an active group called Another Voice, which addresses issues of peace & justice. Have a film night once a month addressing environment, sexuality, political issues, war & peace.