

Womaen's Caucus, Church of the Brethren

Organization and Function

Rationale for a Women's Caucus developed June 1971:

A women's caucus can be a transformational force within the life of each woman, in the experience of the Church of the Brethren, and in the fabric of society. Women who link arms in this cause are saying "yes" to creating a new vision of themselves as worthy individuals and as active participants rather than submissive followers, in the affairs of all social institutions.

Transformation occurs as we dream about and work toward the fulfillment of ourselves individually and collectively and equally important as we assume personal responsibility for the directions of the Church and of society. Women may, in a very real sense, be able to hold a plumb line for society that will encourage all social institutions and human relationships to become more just, more egalitarian, and more loving.

(excerpted from a letter sent to Church of the Brethren women in 1971:
"Women Seeking to Transform and to be Transformed:
A Rationale for a Women's Caucus")

Upon the next 50 years

(Content provided by Bobbi and Sara, reviewed by the Steering Committee)

Constitution

Corporate Name

The corporate Name for this organization is Womaen's Caucus, Church of the Brethren.

Affirmation of Faith and Purpose

Mission: Womaen's Caucus is a network of feminists who identify with the Church of the Brethren. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and fueled by an awareness of the attitudes and practices of gender inequality, we strive to fulfill the prophetic task of creating a faith community free from attitudes and practices of injustice, beginning our work with a focus on gender.

Vision: Advancing equality of roles and opportunities for all women

Purpose:

Through education, Womaen's Caucus

- will build understanding of the intersectional issues facing women (e.g., sexism, economic inequalities, violence, reproductive rights) and the conditions that influence them.
- will help persons and organizations develop the needed skills to remedy the dynamics of power and injustice that contribute to gender inequality.

Through personal support, Womaen's Caucus

- will provide safe spaces for women to speak the truth about their life experiences and offer resources of support.
- will bear witness to the strengths and courage of feminists within the church.
- will work toward social transformation with like-minded groups inside and outside the Church of the Brethren.

Through advocacy, Womaen's Caucus

- will seek broad-based participation in activities intended to achieve gender equality.
- will speak loudly within the Church of the Brethren, calling it into accountability around issues of gender inequality.
- will act boldly to change practices that limit opportunities within the church for all persons to live and serve equally.

Relationship to the Whole Church

The Caucus relates specifically to the denomination through participation in the Annual Conference and district functions, advocating for women, engaging with the processes for identifying and selecting church leaders, and collaborating with organizations within the denomination.

If the Caucus disbands, the Executive Committee shall have the responsibility to transfer any assets to the Church of the Brethren General Board, Elgin, IL 60120, designated for women's programming OR to another organization which enjoys 5013C status.

Affiliation and Membership

Affiliation with Womaen's Caucus is open to all persons who wish to support its mission, vision, and goals. Categories of affiliation designated by the Steering Committee will be publicized in order for volunteers to annually self-identify their desired roles within the organization. For purposes of 501 (c)(3) records, persons who contribute financially to Womaen's Caucus will be identified as members in addition to their selected affiliations.

Steering Committee

Womaen's Caucus is led by a Steering Committee that carries out the business of Womaen's Caucus. Steering Committee members are selected on the basis of their involvement, interests, and willingness to commit their time and talents to the tasks of the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee is the final authority and governing body of the Womaen's Caucus, Church of the Brethren. The Steering Committee shall evaluate past accomplishments, study present conditions and plan the future program of the caucus. It will record the voice of the caucus on current issues where Christian feminist witness is needed and provide opportunity for sharing and coordinating different points of view. The Steering Committee shall also select officers, adopt budgets, oversee and rule on policy and organizational matters, and authorize officers to act on behalf of the caucus.

By-Laws

Personnel Selection and Tenure

- 1) The steering Committee shall consist of 6-12 members of the Womaen’s Caucus, each one representing geographical regions of the Church of the Brethren constituency. Steering Committee members shall serve renewable three-year terms and are selected on the basis of their involvement, interests, and willingness to commit their time and talents to the tasks of the Steering Committee. Terms begin each fiscal year and reflect efforts to stagger terms and develop leadership within the organization. The Steering Committee is expected to meet regularly throughout the year and gather in an extended retreat at least once annually to reflect on past accomplishments and consider ongoing needs.
- 2) Members of the Steering Committee annually designate one of its members as Convenor and a different member as Treasurer. The Convenor serves as primary spokesperson for the Caucus. Two persons who are not members of the Steering Committee are designated as Caucus Administrator and Newsletter Editor respectively. The Steering Committee shall pay on a consultant basis a Caucus Administrator to carry out specific tasks designated by the Steering Committee. The term of office for the Editor of the newsletter is renewable with the approval of the Steering Committee.
- 3) An Executive Committee comprised of the Caucus Convener, Caucus Treasurer, and an appointed Steering Committee member is authorized to make decisions which may be necessary between meetings of the Steering Committee. The Caucus Administrator participates in all meetings and events as directed by the Steering Committee. Officers are selected by the Steering Committee from within that body. The Steering Committee is responsible for appointing the Caucus Administrator and Newsletter Editor. The Convener is chosen within the Steering Committee.

Duties

Steering Committee

- 1) acts as Caucus representative when and where this is appropriate
- 2) leads Caucus activities and promotes affiliation and fundraising as appropriate
- 3) is responsible for on-going work of Caucus as Steering Committee initiates new programs, plans activities for Annual Conference, and seeks to develop leadership opportunities for women within the denomination.
- 4) provides leadership for Caucus affiliate groups.
- 5) provides direction for Caucus Administrator.
- 6) determines newsletter publication themes and timelines, ensuring that newsletter contents represent the values of Womaen’s Caucus. Provides materials and/or ideas for inclusion in *Femailings* to utilize the newsletter as a link with persons at the local level.
- 7) assists in administering the Mary Blocher Smeltzer Scholarship Fund and the Include The Sisters: The John L. Harvey Memorial Fund.
- 8) assumes responsibility for tracking denominational programs as agreed upon.
- 9) becomes knowledgeable about regional and district activities through newsletters, District Conferences, etc.

Convenor

The Convenor is a member of the Women's Caucus Steering Committee who is chosen to serve in this role. The responsibilities of the Convenor are the same as those of Steering Committee members with the following additions:

- 1) convenes Steering Committee and Executive Committee meetings
- 2) sets the Agenda (with Caucus Administrator) and facilitates planning of meetings
- 3) serves as primary spokesperson for Caucus
- 4) initiates and handles correspondence jointly with Caucus Administrator as appropriate
- 5) coordinates use of Mary Blocher Smeltzer Scholarship Fund and the Include The Sisters: The John L. Harvey Memorial Fund
- 6) provides supervision and acts as sounding board for Caucus Administrator.
- 7) orients new members
- 8) stays in touch with Steering Committee through electronic and non-electronic communication

Caucus Administrator

This person should be a Church of the Brethren feminist familiar with church structure who possesses secretarial/administrative skills and is willing to take initiative and articulate Caucus goals. Compensation is negotiated according to Caucus needs and available resources. The Caucus Administrator's performance will be reviewed and approved every two years by Steering Committee. Duties include:

- 1) Steering Committee
 - a. makes arrangements for virtual meetings (including virtual links, access to records or other documents) and in-person meetings including site, housing, meals, and transportation details
 - b. records and disseminates minutes and participates in Steering Committee meetings
 - c. facilitates nomination process for denominational elections at fall meeting
 - d. helps Convenor to orient new committee members
 - e. invites new members as directed by the Steering Committee
 - f. maintains records of all reports and important documents
 - g. disseminates newsletter through printing/ mailing and electronic distribution
 - h. submits information as required to maintain a 501(c)(3) designation
- 2) Annual Conference Activities
 - a. prepares Caucus booth and ensures staffing
 - b. coordinates arrangements for luncheon
 - c. participates in pre-conference activities, as needed
 - d. coordinates arrangements for insight sessions
- 3) Maintain Denominational Relations
 - a. annually updates Caucus contact information with denominational offices
 - b. arranges for Caucus presence at denominational leadership meetings
 - c. is familiar with denominational programs, systems
 - d. maintains contacts with Mission and Ministry Board, denominational leaders, staff, district executives, and pastors

- e. maintains contacts with official programs and like-minded groups of the denomination (e.g., Programs for Women, Brethren Volunteer Service, Brethren Mennonite Council, Global Women's Project, On Earth Peace, Association of Brethren Caregivers)
- 4) Correspondence/Records
 - a. cares for all necessary correspondence on behalf of Caucus
 - b. maintains affiliation records and *Femailings* subscription lists
 - c. keeps financial records
 - 5) Advocacy
 - a. seeks opportunities for Caucus involvements at local, district, regional, national events
 - b. advocates for women as guided by Caucus goals and purposes
 - c. encourages feminists to join and participate in Caucus
 - d. keeps current on issues related to women, particularly as they affect the church

In the absence of a Caucus Administrator, an individual may be contracted to carry out some or all duties with support of the Steering Committee.

Treasurer

This person is a member of the Steering Committee with responsibility for overseeing and reporting the organization's finances.

- 1) receives all contributions to the Womaen's Caucus treasury
- 2) disperses funds from the treasury as authorized by the Womaen's Caucus Steering Committee
- 3) keeps accurate record of all receipts and disbursements
- 4) prepares and submits financial reports as requested by the Steering Committee
- 5) receives and records all donations to the Mary Blocher Smeltzer Scholarship Fund and the Include The Sisters: The John L. Harvey Memorial Fund
- 6) issues scholarship money as authorized by Steering Committee

Newsletter Editor

This person should be a Church of the Brethren feminist familiar with church structure who possesses skills in writing, editing, design and publication. The editor works directly under the guidance of the Steering Committee and in keeping with the values of Caucus.

- 1) is responsible for the solicitation of articles
- 2) coordinates publication
- 3) gathers feedback and input
- 4) is responsible for newsletter format

Business Meetings

- 1) The Steering Committee meets minimally twice a year as agreed upon by members. Open meetings of the affiliates are held at the Annual Conference each summer and at other times through electronic media as desired.
- 2) The Executive Committee confers as necessary between meeting dates; any one of the committee members may call such meetings.

- 3) Adequate advance notice of Steering Committee meetings shall be given to the members. Meeting arrangements and Agenda are the responsibility of the Convenor and Caucus Administrator.
- 4) All members of Steering Committee, including the officers, shall have equal voice in the decision-making process.

Quorum

For meetings of the Steering Committee, a majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

Rules of Order

Group consensus is the understood basis by which decisions are reached.

Amendments

The Constitution and By-Laws of the Womaen's Caucus may be amended by consensus of the Steering Committee members present at any regular session provided that written notice of the proposed amendment had been given in the call of the meeting issued at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

Fiscal Year and Program Year

The fiscal year shall be the same as the calendar year. The program year shall be from the close of the Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren to the close of the following year's Annual Conference.

Signed:

Convenor

Rev. Dr. Bobbi Dykema

Caucus Administrator

Jonathan Bay

Adopted April 17, 1988

Amended: March 19, 1999, March 17, 2001, April 26, 2002, December 12, 2020

Articles of Incorporation/Organization

- 1) Womaen’s Caucus is organized exclusively for charitable, religious and educational purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code or the corresponding section of any future Federal tax code.
- 2) No part of the net earnings of the organization shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, directors, officers or other private persons, except that the organization shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of Section 501 (c) (3) purposes. No substantial part of the activities of the organization shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the organization shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishers or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the organization shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code (or corresponding section of any future tax code) or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170 (c) (2) of the Internal Revenue Code (or corresponding section of any future Federal tax code).

- 3) Upon the dissolution of this organization, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue

Code, or corresponding section of any future Federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the Federal government, or to a state or local government, for public purpose.

- 4) However, if the named recipient is not then in existence or no longer a qualified distributee, or unwilling or unable to accept the distribution, then the assets of this organization shall be distributed to a fund, foundation or corporation organized and operated exclusively for the purpose specified in Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code (or corresponding section of any future Federal tax code.)

These amendment statements are a true, correct and complete copy of the amendments to the organization document of Women's Caucus, Church of the Brethren, adopted by the Steering Committee on August 16, 1988, Amended March 19, 1999, Amended, March 17, 2001, Amended, April 26, 2002.