



Church of the Brethren

May 5, 2021

Womaen's Caucus, Church of the Brethren
Steering Committee
818 SW 3rd Avenue #1299
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Sisters and Brother in Christ,

Thank you for your letter of April 19, 2021, conveying both affirmation and concern related to Tod Bolsinger's leadership at the 2021 Annual Conference.

You affirm accurately the intent of Tod Bolsinger's presentations: to develop adaptive leaders. The concern you detail regarding the "shadow side" (e.g., racism, etc.) of the Lewis and Clark metaphor used in Dr. Bolsinger's book *Canoeing the Mountains* is also accurate.

To clarify: Dr. Bolsinger's Annual Conference presentations will center on developing adaptive leaders; he will not be using the Lewis and Clark metaphor. A review of his topics and focus statements printed in the Annual Conference booklet reflect this emphasis.

With that said, we do not want to minimize the "shadow side" of the Lewis and Clark narrative or, frankly, the "shadow side" of our larger story as a country. Racism, inequity, and oppression are ingrained in our culture/history; that reality grieves us deeply. We join you in calling for remorse and repentance for the many injustices that are all too prevalent in our national narrative.

Moderator Paul Munday has worked with Dr. Bolsinger to ensure a focus and emphasis that will not include the Lewis and Clark narrative. However, Dr. Bolsinger is eager to be in conversation with persons who continue to have concerns. If any members of the Womaen's Caucus Steering Committee want to engage in conversation with Dr. Bolsinger, Paul would be happy to set up a Zoom meeting. This could be beneficial, considering the recommended practices in your letter that call for dialogue and greater understanding concerning Dr. Bolsinger's perspective before Annual Conference.

Another resource for understanding Dr. Bolsinger's viewpoint is a new video interview featuring him, recently posted at youtu.be/qut_fMLQhBw on the Annual Conference brethren.org/ac2021/leadership/ webpage via the "Featured Resource Leader" link in the left sidebar. In this new release, Dr. Bolsinger addresses the Lewis and Clark metaphor and its "shadow side," along with various other topics.

Your letter recommends adding additional elements to this year's Annual Conference related to your concern. The deadline for including items in this year's Conference schedule and programming was November 1, 2020. However, we are passing on your ideas to the

Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.

Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee to consider for future Annual Conferences. They will begin such planning this fall.

We are passing on your recommendation regarding denominational structure to the Leadership Team for their discernment; their next meeting is scheduled for September.

In closing, thank you again for expressing both your affirmation and concern related to Tod Bolsinger's leadership at the 2021 Annual Conference. Be assured we are "taking to heart" what you have written and join with you in a commitment to address racism and injustice in our national narrative and in the Church. To that end, we will continue to guide the message conveyed at the Annual Conference toward the promise of God's Adventurous Future for *all*.

If additional clarification would be helpful, do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely, in Christ,

the Annual Conference Officers

Paul Munday, moderator

David Sollenberger, moderator-elect

James M. Beckwith, secretary

Copies to: Program and Arrangements Committee
Leadership Team

Annual Conference exists to unite, strengthen, and equip the Church of the Brethren to follow Jesus.

Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.