

Recommendation on the Subject of the Ordination of Women

Recognizing that there is no theological consensus among the Brethren concerning the ordination of women, we feel that this issue can best be resolved through the avenue of polity. We should at all times conduct ourselves according to the counsel of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:3 - "Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Therefore, we recommend, based upon Brethren polity as outlined in the Manual of Procedure for the Brethren Church, that:

A) Each local congregation reaches a consensus on the ordination of women through a study of pertinent Scriptures and/or other resources from the attached bibliography. The local church is ultimately responsible for the calling, licensure, and ordination of candidates for ministry. It should review these policies periodically.

B) Each district ministerial examining board shall examine candidates for licensure and ordination recommended to them by local congregations. It is the responsibility of this board to examine candidates in the areas of personal life, theology, ethics, and personal habits. Therefore, the sex, color, and nationality of the candidate shall not be criteria for approval or rejection.

C) The National Ordination Council should remain neutral on the sex, color, and nationality of candidates referred to them.

Individuals and local churches should be aware that some of our local churches may never call a woman to ordination in the Brethren Church. In Brethren polity a local church has an autonomous right to call whomever it desires [districts do have the responsibility, however, of examining all candidates prior to their hiring]. Therefore, individuals and churches should be aware that there will be differences in practice on this issue, and that mutual respect should be upheld by all the Brethren.

Respectfully submitted,
Special Task Force on Women's Ordination in the Brethren Church

Document History:

1983 – Six person task force formed to present document

1984 – Document presented to National Brethren Ministerial Association at the 1984 General Conference, where it was defeated by a vote of 39 for and 45 against.

2001 – Issue of ordination reopened by National Association of Brethren Church Elders (N.A.B.C.E.)

2002 – Document re-submitted for consideration and approved by majority voice vote at the NABCE meetings held at the 2002 General Conference.