

**Church of the Brethren**  
**Annual Conference Discussion of Query #3,**  
**Licensing/Ordination of Homosexual Persons**  
**2 July 2002 \*\***

[**Tape 11, Side B, (begins about 1/3 of the way through the tape), 11:30 a.m.** Continuation of singing of “Move in Our Midst,” led by Rachel Peterson.]

**Moderator Paul Grout:** We know that our time is limited for our next item of business, but we will, we will introduce it now, and then continue after the lunchtime break, with this item. We’ll introduce it at this point at least. We’re looking now—New Business Item 3, Query on Licensing and Ordination of Homosexual Persons to the Ministry of the Church of the Brethren, found on page 211. **Sister Cathy [S. Huffman, Annual Conference Secretary].**

**CH:** Before I read the query, I would like to share with you that the Annual Conference Officers have agreed that the Standing Committee recommendation cannot be counted as polity but should be recognized as an official Annual Conference position, even as the Paper on “Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective” is an official statement, and not polity. The recommendation seems to have polity implications, but polity changes must be advertised 30 days before a vote. Standing Committee has agreed that its recommendation should have a two-thirds vote, even as the position paper on Human Sexuality was passed by a two-thirds vote because of the desire to have fuller consent on an issue that is surrounded by such strong feelings. I am now going to read the query.

**Whereas:** the 1983 Annual Conference Statement on Human Sexuality indicates that in the church’s search for a Christian understanding of human sexuality, the homosexual lifestyle is not acceptable, and

**Whereas:** Annual Conference has delegated the authority to license and ordain persons to the District Ministry Commission and the District Board, and

**Whereas:** an action taken by a District Board to ordain an individual is done so on behalf of the entire denomination, and

**Whereas:** there has not been consistent interpretation of the 1983 statement on Human Sexuality, to the point that some District Ministry Commissions, District Boards, congregations, and individuals seem to be on opposite ends of the spectrum of understanding regarding this issue, and

**Whereas:** the wide divergence of interpretation that currently exists within the denomination threatens to destroy the trust that is necessary for systems of ministry training, credentialing, and pastoral placement, and

**Whereas:** a clear definitive answer of interpretation from Annual Conference would provide beneficial guidance for all districts, congregations, and individuals.

The delegates of the Northern Ohio District Conference, meeting on Saturday, August 11, 2001, do hereby bring the following query: Is it appropriate in the Church of the Brethren for a District Ministry Commission and/or District Board to License and/or Ordain any person who has a

homosexual orientation and who is not celibate or has not experienced conversion to a heterosexual orientation?

And this query comes to us from Northern Ohio.

**Moderator:** From the Standing Committee, Brother **Jim Myer** [Atlantic Northeast District].

**JM:** Brother Moderator and Fellow Delegates and members of the Church of the Brethren, the first thing that happened to me the other day in the first session of Standing Committee, as I entered the room, I was handed a sealed envelope. Upon opening it, I saw that I was being asked by the officers to present this item of business to the Annual Conference. I want you to know that was not my emotional high of the week. [Laughter.] I don't think I had the kind of feeling that I suspect some people have when they win the Lottery. Of course, the purpose for this is, that those persons who know they're going to have to report will be especially good listeners during the discussion, so some of that can be relayed on to the delegate body. I can say the Standing Committee took its task seriously. It did not seek to oversimplify or give a quick answer. There was fairly long and vigorous debate. And all the sessions of Standing Committee this year were in open session, so there were really no big secrets held. When I say we did not attempt to oversimplify, I think of a little story that may help to illustrate what I mean by oversimplifying. I heard about two men who were riding together on a long train ride and they sought to become acquainted. The one asked the other man what he was and what he did and he said he was an astronomer. And then the astronomer asked the other man who he was. He said he is a minister. With that, the astronomer shifted in his seat a little and seemed a bit uncomfortable and said, "Well, I must confess, my wife and I, we used to go to church but we don't anymore, but as, as we understand it, religion all boils down to living a good life and being nice to your neighbors." The minister looked over at the astronomer and said, "You know, this is interesting because my wife and I have some interest in astronomy too, but as far as we're concerned it, it really all boils down to this: 'Twinkle, twinkle little star, what [sic] I wonder what you are.'" [Laughter] So there was really no attempt to come back with some kind of little "twinkle, twinkle" answer. A wide range of discussion was heard. I could almost predict that if you wish you had the opportunity to say something to the Standing Committee this year, I can almost guarantee it was said. In fact, I'm going to share a sampling of about a dozen things I heard.

"The Query is calling for increased clarity."

"Just what is the Query asking for?"

"There is increased diversity in our congregations."

"We need to call sin 'sin.'"

Someone quoted from a pamphlet, "The Bible has no Sexual Ethic, only a Love Ethic."

"The church should not stand in the way of using the gifts of homosexual persons."

"The effects of ordaining homosexuals is something I don't want."

"Is this a query that should be given to the districts?"

"We should follow the example of Jesus, how he dealt with people."

"We have different understandings of sin."

"Sometimes love asks us to make tough choices."

"We are usually easy on our own sins and hard on others' sins."

Just a sampling of the things that were said. Now I'd like you to look at the yellow sheet on the recommendation from Standing Committee. You'll notice that there are three paragraphs. I want to make just a couple comments on each paragraph, and then read the answer.

Paragraph One. It's obvious that this was not a unanimous decision from Standing Committee. People do come out at different places. But still we need guidance and some direction to maintain body life.

Paragraph Two deals with the 1983 Paper. Standing Committee believes the 1983 Paper still speaks adequately for the church. We recall it was a very extensive study. It says some tough things and some tender things to heterosexuals. It also says some tough things and some tender things to homosexuals.

But for nineteen years we have been able to live with the 1983 Paper on Human Sexuality without any major divisions among us. That is seen as somewhat of an accomplishment, and we should think long and hard before deserting it.

Paragraph Three deals specifically with the licensing and ordination of homosexual persons and affirms the need for exemplary conduct among us. I would like to read the recommendation.

The Standing Committee acknowledges that it is not of one mind at this time. Nevertheless, in order to function together effectively as a denominational body, we must set a standard for our life together.

Standing Committee recommends to the 2002 Annual Conference that the 2002 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren continue to affirm the 1983 decision known as "Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective." We understand that paper to conclude that homosexual practice is unacceptable behavior in the church, and therefore implied to be sin. We also understand the 1983 paper to have strong encouragements for the church to be open and welcoming and to develop helpful and compassionate ministries toward homosexual persons. We would urge that the balance represented in these two primary components of the 1983 paper be maintained in the Church of the Brethren.

In answering Query # 3 on the licensing and ordination of homosexual persons, we recognize that the 1983 paper does not address this particular issue. However, it is our understanding that the conduct expectations of the general membership, as stated above, should most surely also be expected of those licensed or ordained. Therefore, we consider it inappropriate to license or ordain to the Christian ministry any persons who are known to be engaging in homosexual practices, and will not recognize the licensing and ordination of such persons in the Church of the Brethren.

A two-thirds majority vote is required. Brother Moderator, I move the adoption of the Standing Committee recommendation.

**Moderator:** We receive that, Brother Jim. Thank you. Because of the hour, we wanted to introduce this to you. We [pause] we'll invite the District to have a response as we come back together. We'll have announcements in just a moment. I think the thing I would say is that this would be a good time, this lunchtime for, obviously, sustenance of food, rest as much as possible, and prayer. Because this is such a heavy issue, I think, I feel at this time, and because we are really in the middle of this issue, I won't feel comfortable with our time of humor prior to, prior to our doing business when we come back. We'll just assume that we're continuing this business that's on the floor when we come back. We'll have time for prayer, of course, and perhaps singing together. But I think that probably in this case won't be the time to have that. I'd ask Brother Duane to come to the podium for announcements, but I would like to, after those announcements, close this session in prayer.

**[Duane Steiner (Conference Executive Director):** Announcements. Among other things, he reported that there were 932 delegates and 2870 registered non-delegates.]

**Moderator:** I'll offer the prayer of Paul, the Apostle Paul, in Ephesians, Chapter One, verses 18-23. "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of God's power toward us who believe." Amen.

[Lunch Break.]

**Woman (?):** I invite you to stand and let's sing together, "Praise, I will Praise You, Lord." [Singing.] And number 37, "Open My Eyes that I May See."

**Moderator:** Remain standing please. **Sister Judy,** would you introduce our guests?

[**Judy Mills Reimer** introduces ecumenical guests.]

[Applause.]

**Moderator:** You hear the welcome. **Brother Kirkpatrick**, would you pray for us?

**Clifford Kirkpatrick, Clerk, Presbyterian Church USA:** Sisters and Brothers in Christ, would you join me in prayer. Gracious and loving God, we give you thanks for the unity that you have given us in Jesus Christ. We're grateful for the ties that bind us together in love, in common faith, and in common mission to the world. We pray that your spirit would be upon us, that indeed we might be one in Christ, that the world might believe, that we might be a model to all the world of what it means to live in peace and in unity and in harmony and in justice with one another. We give you thanks this day for all that the Church of the Brethren has meant and continues to mean to the church ecumenical, for its gifts, for its contribution, for its people that it shares so willingly. And those of us from the church ecumenical lift up in prayer to you this church and all of those delegates gathered here today, that as you deal with difficult issues, you indeed may deal with those in the mind and the spirit and the heart of Christ. So that together as each of us works in our own way we may make that contribution to building up the body of Christ as a body in love, in spirit, in hope, and in joy to share with all the world the love that we know in Jesus Christ. Be with us this day and in the days to come. We make our prayer in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

[Voting on composition of Denominational Name Study Committee.]

**Moderator:** I remind us that we're now opening business. Query on the Licensing and Ordination of Homosexual Persons to Ministry in the Church of the Brethren, beginning on page 211. This query was brought to us from the Northern Ohio District. And Northern Ohio District has a response to us through **Sister Kathy Hess**. Sister Kathy.

**KH:** Brother Paul and Brothers and Sisters, the Northern Ohio District Board initiated this query as a means of seeking clarity and uniformity regarding the administrative details pertaining to ordination and licensing from one district to another. Problems were perceived arising from the calling and credentialing of persons for ministry as a result of the wide diversity of understanding regarding the issue of homosexuality within the Church of the Brethren. Although licensure is not transferable from one district to another and the oversight for licensure remains within the licensing district, ordination, on the other hand, does transfer from one district to another. Therefore, since districts do not have the same understanding for determining licensing and ordination, potential issues of mistrust arise within the broader pastoral placement and ministry training systems. The question of this query was not meant to be divisive. This query was intended to form a neutral framework for encouraging discussion and dialog within the denomination for the purpose of providing clarity and uniformity for ordinations and licensure of individuals within the Church of the Brethren. This query comes from Northern Ohio, enveloped with prayer, and hoping that this query would foster spiritual growth and strengthen trust within the life of the Church of the Brethren. Northern Ohio does accept Standing Committee's recommendation as an answer to our query.

**Moderator:** Thank you, Sister Kathy. Now, in preparation for our discussing of this issue, the Officers have determined that we'd like to hear perhaps twenty minutes of conversation with one another before we hear an amendment. Just a concern, that if we so quickly begin working on this as business, without listening, that that might get in our way. And so the next, the next number of minutes, the next 20 minutes, we'll just want to hear at our microphones, folks that are wanting to respond, directly related, but, directly related to the query response. [Many people walk to the microphones.] Is there anyone who would like not to respond? I see some hands. I shouldn't start with such humor, but we're at the microphone observers, as you would understand, had a horrible time figuring out who, which microphone, came first. Now, [aside to Officers. Pause] Forgive, we'll do the best we can. Microphone 3.

Thank you. I'm **Brooke Meadows from Stone Church of the Brethren, in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.**

**Moderator:** Sister.

**BM:** Brother Moderator, yesterday, you asked us not to clap, not to applaud any speeches. And I'd like to take that one step further. I'd like to challenge each of you to also remain silent as you sit in your seats and keep from commenting. I speak now neither for nor against the recommendation from the Standing Committee. Instead, I'd like to ask each of you, because of my experience yesterday, to remain silent. Yesterday, as I sat in my seat, I heard several people speaking out, mostly in disagreement, just to the people next to them, about something that someone else was currently saying at the microphone. And today we face another topic, another issue, that many of us are unlikely to change our minds about. And, so what I would like to ask of you, is that you respectfully listen to each person who stands before either of these four microphones. When you remain silent, you can listen. And when you remain silent, you make it so that others can listen. Thank you.

**Moderator:** Thank you, Sister. Microphone 4.

**Kristi Zimmerman-Frost, Skyridge Church of the Brethren, Michigan District.**

**Moderator:** Sister.

**KZF:** I rise in opposition to the Standing Committee's recommendation. Annual Conference and the denomination have given the power of discerning ministry calls to the districts. If we make the districts' power conditional by affirming this motion today, we are setting a dangerous precedent. Regardless of how you feel about the issue of homosexuality, once we pick a group to exclude from church leadership, it opens the door of exclusion. What group will be excluded next?

**Moderator:** Sister. Microphone 1.

**Pete Sanchez, Atlantic Northeast District, Myerstown [Pennsylvania] congregation.**

**Moderator:** Brother.

**PS:** Brother Moderator, I know you want us to state our position, and I will state it this way concerning the matter. I stand in favor of God's will concerning this issue. I'm deeply troubled by this issue that we have before us, only because of this: if dialog is allowed to continue, I fear that opinions, feelings will be created that shouldn't be allowed in this room, and shouldn't be in our hearts really. We have a very sensitive and controversial issue before us. And I'm reminded of some things that we were told at our District Pre-Conference briefing. One was to, as delegates, go home, read the 1983 Paper and be on our knees before God and ask for wisdom and discernment on how to vote concerning this matter. My fear is that if we're, listen to a lot of dialog, all this dialog is really trying to either convince or unconvince us of our positions, if we already have one. Brother Moderator, you also stated at that briefing that I believe God is somewhat tired of our opinions and dialog and I believe, concerning this issue, I think he's possibly holding his hands over his ears. I agree with the Sister that said there's a time for silence. I believe that is now. But you also stated that, at briefing, the reason for that silence is so that we can be open and listen to what God wants us to do. I would move that at this time, Brother, you call for the question.

**Moderator:** Hmm. Thank you Brother. We've asked that 20 minutes be given to conversation and we'll hold to that for now. Microphone 2.

**Joyce Petry, from the Antelope Park congregation, Lincoln, Nebraska, Western Plains District.** I rise to speak in opposition to the Standing Committee recommendation. I acknowledge with gratitude

that they start their response by saying that they were not of one mind when they were discussing this topic. Nevertheless, having said that, they went ahead and decided to pretend that we are of one mind. Since 1983, that has been exactly what this denomination has been doing. We have been keeping our heads firmly planted in the sand, resolutely and blindly pretending that we are of one mind and one heart on an issue on which we do not, clearly, do not agree. The response of Standing Committee simply perpetuates the myth that we have been living with for these past 19 years. Standing Committee's response to this query is simply not adequate for the year 2002. My concerns for their, to their response take a good many different directions. The first would be a concern that we as a denomination might decide that it is a good idea to tell God whom God should be giving gifts for ministry [End of Tape 11, Side B]

Tape 12, Side A.

[continuation of **Joyce Petry's** comment] God, to decide who to give these gifts to. I trust our District Ministry Commissions, our District Boards, to decide what people have been given gifts for ministry in our denomination. I trust our congregations to decide for themselves who they would call to minister among themselves. A second and equally great concern is the leaning towards trying to rid ministry in the Church of the Brethren of sinners. I have my ordination card with me today and feel like I'll hand it over if you want it. Because I am a pastor who sins regularly and that's not likely to change. My fear is that if you are going after the supposed sin of the homosexuals today, that tomorrow you'll be after me and my sin.

**Moderator:** Thank you, Sister. Microphone 3.

**June Blouch, Annville [Pennsylvania] Church of the Brethren, Atlantic Northeast.**

**Moderator:** Sister.

**JB:** I am prejudiced as I speak on this issue because I am the mother of a lesbian daughter who came out to us 24 years ago. Our daughter and her partner of 18 years adopted a Cambodian baby who is now nearly 4 years old. Through our daughter and her partner we have met some very talented and interesting gay and lesbian people. I don't understand the fear that people have about homosexual persons. In regard to this paper I speak against it for several reasons. Reason 1: I planned to present as my opposition to this paper related to a change in church polity. However and I understand that polity may not be an issue. This body needs to decide whether we are discussing policy or polity. Reason #2: We are denying the talents and services of a group of people on the basis of selected scriptures without consideration to the greater message of love and inclusiveness. Reason #3: Passage of this paper would declare that we have decided that there are greater and lesser sin. Not many years ago divorce and remarriage was not heard of in our denomination. Now we have ministers who are divorced and remarried. Hopefully, the forgiveness, love, and inclusion, which we offer to divorced and remarried persons can be extended to our homosexual sisters and brothers. It hurts to know that our daughter, who is a church-loving person, is not welcome in the Church of the Brethren. As concerned as I am about my Church offending and excluding homosexual persons, I'm also concerned about the unity of the body and those persons who will be offended if this paper is defeated.

**Moderator:** Thank you, Sister. Microphone 4.

**Wayne Sutton, Miami First Church of the Brethren [Miami, Florida, Atlantic Southeast District].** I want to speak in favor of the Standing Committee's position on this. The spirit cautions me not to, if this should pass, not to feel a triumph, a sense of triumph in this or a sense of having won because there still is the work of reaching out to people, to these people, and bringing them into God's community. I had a new opening, or insight, into a familiar scripture, that I'd like to share. The story of Zacharias. We were asked earlier this week, what was it that provoked Zacharias-- Zacchaeus, not Zacharais--Zacchaeus' repentance. I woke up Sunday morning with that question on my mind. I reread it and you know the

story Zacchaeus, the tax collector, sinner, thief, he's up in a tree looking at Jesus passing by. The first insight I had was that Jesus looked up and saw him—he saw him. The second thing was that Jesus, after Jesus told him he wants to come to his house and stay, or eat, the people started to grumble, and I thought, those pesky Pharisees, they're always judging, and that's how I've always read that. But the spirit told me this morning that, I mean Sunday morning, that this was a bad reading. That actually that they were right in sensing that there was something wrong with this picture, with this holy person being in the presence of the sinner. That this just didn't work, that there's a tension that is built when holiness comes into the presence of sin and as that tension builds, Zacchaeus finally said, oh right, I'm going to give half of everything I own to the poor and I'm going to pay back fourfold everything that I've stolen, Lord, and at that point Jesus says, "Salvation has come into this house." I want this church to be holy in the way that Jesus is holy. I want to be holy in that way because I don't have any holiness of myself, it's only his and we can do that, we can do that, Brethren.

**Moderator:** Brother. Microphone 1.

Brother Moderator. **Wayne Grumbling, Christ our Shepherd Church, Greenwood, Indiana. South/Central Indiana District.**

**Moderator:** Brother.

**WG:** Brothers and Sisters, it's a very difficult issue for all of us. Our district has been processing related items to this quite a bit this year and on District Board I felt an obligation to do a lot of additional reading. It hasn't, hasn't changed my theological point of view and part of the reason I have my sackcloth on is that it continues to break my heart for my behavior as well as anyone else's, and for my lack of behavior. My point of view is that I agree with what the Standing Committee has recommended. But I agree in that because we're given the Good News to share with everyone. I've done a lot of reading about what's natural and I agree that probably the vast majority of people that have a homosexual orientation whether they're practicing or not never chose that. Those things occurred and the other factors involved that occurred before they could understand it. But the question I want to ask for myself, as a person who has a fallen nature, as well as, not against but on behalf of those who struggle with a homosexual orientation is, is that all we can have? Can we only have this fallen nature? Or can our nature be transformed, not just in heaven, but now? By the infusion of God's divine nature in our hearts. I want to claim for myself that healing. I do not want to restrain that from homosexual brothers and sisters and say, no, yours is so deep, just get used to it, it's okay, we won't complain. Christ said to us that anyone who sins is a slave to sin and I know what's that like personally and I wouldn't wish on anyone that they have to stay there. And I wouldn't tell anyone that because our culture doesn't have enough understanding of God or belief in his power or acceptance of his word that they can't reach out and claim. When I go to extended family gatherings, I have a close relative who comes and so does his roommate. And we do not fight or yell or complain. But if he asked me my view, I would tell him of God's love and God's power. And when we ordain people to leadership and say we can't even expect people that close to God to step up and trust him for healing, we discourage others and we also cause confusion in our districts as we deal with these things. I believe what Annual Conference's Standing Committee has recommended would be good procedure for us and should be implemented in a way of love. And if we accept this truth, it's not to win, as the brother said, and it's not to go out and hit somebody else and say, "You're a sinner," it's to say, none of our fallen natures are irredeemable. None of us have to be locked out of God's love, not just in heaven, but now. I want to extend that as well as receive it.

**Moderator:** Brother. Microphone 2.

**Esther Frey, Standing Committee Delegate from Illinois/Wisconsin [Mount Morris congregation, Mount Morris, Illinois].** I was one who stood in opposition to this particular paper on the Standing Committee. We did have a considerable amount of dialog. There's a difference between debate and dialog. But I want to tell you something that happened at the end of Thursday afternoon after this paper was approved by a small majority, and it was a majority. There was a sense of heaviness that seemed as

if it couldn't be lifted for a long time. Individuals afterward came talking with each other and some of us talked together and we listened to each other and some of us wept together and by Friday we didn't take another vote on the paper but we did have a sense of coming closer together than we were before. I had hoped that we'd have a motion that would say, let's look at this. **Kathy Hess** said that the purpose of the query was dialog and we haven't had any real dialog in this denomination. We've had quite a bit of talking and recrimination but I haven't heard much dialog in it. I'd hoped we would delay a decision on this. The coming together of individuals on the Standing Committee has given me hope that somehow in the delegate body and in the church we could do that kind of thing. We discovered we all loved God, we loved Christ as he showed us God, we loved the church, we loved the Bible, and we can quote Bible. And I do want to give you, remind you of a few things in the Bible. Jesus said, just before he left his disciples, I will send you the spirit and the spirit will lead you into Truth. We've learned a lot of things, about many, many things in the world, and a lot more than technology, in the time since then and the Spirit I think can still lead us. All being one doesn't mean we all have to agree. I think Brother Paul has made that rather clear. Let me remind you that when Peter was on the housetop he found that Jesus and God said, what God has made clean--

**Moderator:** Sister, I need to honor our time schedule.

**EF:** Oh, I wrote it down, but it didn't all [unintelligible word]

**Moderator:** Bless you. Bless you. Bless you. Microphone 3.

**Alan McLearn-Montz, Illinois/Wisconsin District, Freeport congregation [Freeport, Illinois].**

Brother Moderator, Brothers and Sisters, I oppose the Standing Committee's recommendation for the same reasons as my sisters from Michigan, Nebraska and Pennsylvania, have stated. I also have another concern. I was hoping to get to the microphone first so I could share this as a preliminary, but I'll share it now anyway. It seems to me as if Standing Committee's recommendation would allow for anybody on District Ministry Commission to use the question of whether or not you are a homosexual and whether or not are you practicing, are you a practicing homosexual as a litmus test. My concern, my question to you is, as my sister from Nebraska pointed out, sin is sin, and if we use a question such as this, it takes just one person to ask a question, if we use this as a litmus test, then should we not also use as a litmus test, "Are you currently engaged in premarital or extramarital affairs?" Sin is sin, and I don't agree, that homosexuality is a sin, as my one brother from Greenfield, Indiana pointed out that and you all heard his statement, I will not restate it. I agree with him. I therefore, for all these reasons, stand opposed to Standing Committee's recommendation. Thank you very much, Brother Moderator, Brothers and Sisters.

**Moderator:** Brother. I'm going to receive one more, one more response and then after that the floor will be open to other responses including amendments. Microphone 4.

Brother Moderator, **Shawn Kirchner, La Verne congregation, Pacific Southwest District.**

**Moderator:** Shawn.

**SK:** I also rise in opposition to the proposal, in particular in relation to the notion that we need to seek uniformity--because we are not of one mind. And even the 1983 paper that this proposal is based upon was based on far more than one mind. I want to lift a precedent in Brethren history relating to Sister **Sarah Major** born in the 1800s to a Brethren world that did not really accept the fact that the gift of preaching might be born into a woman. And there was actually--her case was brought to Annual Conference. And it was decided that she should be silenced. And so a committee was sent to silence Sarah Major. However, the committee found themselves unable to enforce Annual Conference's decision out of their own good conscience, and an elder, reporting back to Annual Conference, said, "I would not give my voice to silence someone who can out preach me." And God is no respecter of persons. And people are gifted by the grace of God, by God's generosity. And I believe God desires that those gifts be shared widely with the community. And after, after this committee was unable to carry out the decision,

Sister Sarah Major was allowed to use her gifts, and she did speak at many churches who would accept her. I'm not asking that we go one way or the other. I'm asking, let us be of more than one mind because we are. If there are places that can accept the leadership of a gay or lesbian person, gifted as Sarah Major was, maybe that's okay. And if there's places that just can't handle it, sorry, that's all right too. But I don't think we need to seek an absolute uniformity and therefore I rise in opposition to the proposal.

**Moderator:** Brother. [To officers: "I think I made clear enough where we are." Response: Yes.] I'm assured that I made clear enough just a moment ago where we are. Microphone 1.

**Bud Seckler, Cando congregation, Cando, North Dakota, Northern Plains District.**

**Moderator:** Brother. Brother.

**BS:** Brother Moderator, Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ. The International Peace Gardens lies on the border between North Dakota and Canada. Six miles south is Camp Mon-Dak. Three weeks ago our lodge burned to the ground. Only the chimney and the fireplace, with a white stone cross in it, remain standing. And although I stand in favor of Standing Committee's recommendation, I speak in love and sympathy with anyone who struggles with his or her sexuality. The issue before us tests the standard: the New Testament is our creed. In friendly correspondence with a fellow Church of the Brethren pastor, one who as I understand him, approves of homosexuals in leadership. He states that he believes there are unequivocally three passages which oppose, clearly oppose, homosexual actions. Then he writes, "The issue is whether the Bible is right." You know these passages, but to be reminded, Leviticus 18:22 says, "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman. That is detestable." Romans 1:27 states, "In the same way, the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another." The biblical statements are clear. The New Testament repeats what the Old Testament prohibits. The issue is, do we believe the Bible is right? Is the New Testament our only creed? Will we stand with the New Testament as our only creed? I pray so. I stand in favor of Standing Committee's recommendation.

**Moderator:** Brother. Microphone 2.

**Judy Myers-Walls from the Lafayette congregation in South/Central Indiana.**

**Moderator:** Sister.

**JM-W:** I have serious concerns about the recommendation. I believe that God gave us the ability to understand ourselves. We do that in a variety of ways. We have scientists who teach us about medicine, who have learned about psychology which helps us with understanding mental health, we have other scientists who have studied sexuality. And the scientists explore one level of knowledge; our faith and spirituality help us to interpret that knowledge and decide what we want to do with it. But we do need to understand all levels of knowledge and how that has changed over time. As a human scientist myself, I am aware that scientists have found that sexual preference is not an illness, it is not a disorder, and that it is also not a choice. So I have, if I believe that is true, and the vast majority of scientists do believe that, then to call homosexuality a sin I think is similar to blaming someone for being too tall or saying it's a sin to be a night person rather than a morning person, and very close to the racism that unfortunately some of our churches have experienced in the past. So I think we need to consider that mental health in some ways may be improved when people accept the sexual tendencies that they have within them. I have seen that happen. I think we also need to recognize that suicide levels among adolescents who are gay or lesbian are very high. If we are to help people be whole people we need to understand all aspects of them. We need role models who are gay and lesbian for those youth to understand that there is hope in spite of who they are or perhaps because of who they are. And we need leadership that accepts all gifts of a person in spite of one characteristic that we may not like.

**Moderator:** Thank you, Sister. Microphone 3.

**Judy Sheard, Ambler Church of the Brethren, [Ambler, Pennsylvania], Atlantic Northeast District.**

For years in the Church of the Brethren I have been reading articles and hearing people talking about a serious shortage of pastoral leadership, and congregations across the country have been asked to help people in the congregation discern whether or not they might have a calling. And every time that this is discussed, it is recognized that the calling comes from God. We call people in a congregation based on gifts for ministry that we see displayed in their lives. And we also recognize that these gifts are God-given. If we can recognize that God is the giver of the gift and that God does the calling, then it would seem to me that we need to let God be in charge of the eligibility list. And I would hate to see our denomination put ourselves in the position where we are telling God that we will not allow to be ordained a person who God has already seen fit to gift and to call to ministry and I stand in opposition to the Standing Committee recommendation.

**Moderator:** Microphone 4.

I'm Dale Brown, can you hear me all right?, from the **Elizabethtown congregation [Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, Atlantic Northeast District]**. We've had a committee that's tried to discern where our church is, where we are on this question. We've had very extensive Bible studies, and it would be interesting to just go into all of that. But through where I am after all these Biblical studies, that I still have a lot of respect for people who take the Bible seriously, like our brother in quoting the passages that he did, even though I, I'm not there. But the real concern that has grown with me is that the sin that Jesus hated more than any other sin, just read Matthew 23, the whole chapter, is hypocrisy. And I can just illustrate that, as some of the people have been referring: I have been guilty of gluttony and I've had sort of a lifetime relationship with that. We have some of our pastors, it's very difficult for them to change that lifestyle. They're gluttonous. But I don't want to take them out of the church and move them—I love them. I love them, but yet we have. . . And so I ask, why, why? You can, and did I say that you can find all kinds all kinds of Scriptures in the Bible. It says that gluttony is a sin. Well, I ask why this one issue, which is the supreme test and not along with a whole lot of other issues? Why has this become the issue? And I think it's because with this Two Kingdoms that we live in, that our Moderator's been talking about, that it's out there in our society, they're fighting about it, there's a lot of hatred. It's a political issue. And it's invaded us. And we have been influenced by the world coming in. Otherwise, I don't think we would, that this would be the issue it is. It might be an issue but it would only be an issue along with a lot of other issues. And I'm, I'm sorry that the world's gotten into us to divide us.

**Moderator:** Brother. I do want to make a comment at this point. The comment is that these sharings have been extremely respectful, and they've covered the breadth somewhat of how we feel. And I just want to honor you for, for not, your spirit feels right to me, for not clapping, for not, and even, in this case, please in any other case, please feel free to "Amen," but in this case, it doesn't feel it's appropriate. I appreciate the tenor of the speeches that have come, and the, and the way our delegate body is listening. The other thing I'm saying is, we have a lot of people lined up at the microphones. I'm not ready to hear, to stop this, but we begin to have heard, and I'll continue to be listening, to a sense of the body for when--you hear me. Microphone Number 1.

**Chris Foster, Troutville Church, [Troutville, Virginia], Virlina District.**

**Moderator:** Chris.

I stand before you ashamed. I am even ashamed that we are even discussing this particular topic at our Annual Conference. And at times I become ashamed of being even associated with the Church of the Brethren because of this topic that will now make, make it in, into the national papers. We're discussing a query and we call it an issue, but it's not really an issue, it's an issue, it's not an issue, it's a thing of sin. It's about what is right and, and what is wrong, and what is sin and what is not sin. This is an attempt to bring the Kingdom of God into God's Kingdom. That's what this is about. I'm ashamed but I'm also filled with righteous indignation and also anger inside. We tend to forget that sometimes Jesus did become angry. We forget about the whip, we forget about the tables, and Brother Dale brought up about

the woes in Matthew Chapter 23. And it does seem like we might be pinpointing this particular issue, but the problem is, is that it's being put into our face and we're having to respond to it. We're not being asked to advocate other particular sins, but we're being asked to advocate this particular sin. The '83 paper is written in a good political format, but at times it's weak. "Homosexual behavior unacceptable, implied sin." No, it, it is sin. There will be no complete unity in a church where a deceiving spirit is allowed to take a stronghold. There will be division and conflict. I'm speaking of course of the Deceiver himself. Those who choose to believe and to teach that homosexual activity is not a sin are not led by the Holy Spirit but by a deceiving spirit. The Holy Spirit does not contradict God's word. "Born this way,"—a partial half-truth. We're all born with a sin nature. What if I were to say I was born with a high testosterone level and I couldn't control myself? What if I was prone to drug and alcohol addiction, would that be okay? What if I liked children, would that be okay? Would somebody tell me what sin is? And I am also discouraged by the leaders in our Church of the Brethren, our leaders failed us in World War I, and I am concerned now that they are failing us once again. And those who teach and advocate such behavior should be removed from leadership positions [Moderator breaks in: Brother, forgive me.] [Some applause.]

**Moderator:** Microphone 2.

My name is **Mark Bennett**. I come from the **Mountain View Church, in Bunker Hill, West Virginia, near Martinsburg [Mid-Atlantic District]**.

**Moderator:** Brother.

**MB:** Thank you Brother Paul. And, the assembly here, I've been associated with the Church of the Brethren denomination for a little less than three years. I'm a member of the Church and this is my first Annual Conference as delegate. Wow. [Laughs.] Oddly enough, though, I found that the Church of the Brethren have really helped me in my faith walk, and discussions like this I find that stretch us and make us grow. And I'm sure as we talk about this that things are gonna work out according to what glorifies God and not what serves self-interests or agendas. But also these discussions stir memories in me and that's why I'm standing here now. When I was a teenager back in the 70s and late 60s, homosexuality was not accepted by society and neither was it talked about so publicly. In other words, people weren't declaring that "I am a homosexual." And the reason for it was, is the stand that the Church had which was declaring that homosexuality is a sin according to God's word. It is therefore I stand in support of this query. But what's happened over the years and since I have been subjected to society and TV shows and media and people propagating [sic] what is right and what is wrong, they've made this lifestyle seem more acceptable. And they've even used terminology to make it sound better. And a young lady here yesterday had mentioned that the term "gay." And I had the same situation with my son. We was watching a movie, *The Bishop's Wife*, and they said, hey, the term, gay, what's that mean? Well, it doesn't mean happy anymore. It's a lifestyle that is contrary to what God says. The prophets Isaiah and the Apostle Paul warn us when there'll be a time, a day to come, when evil will be presented as good and good presented as evil. And we are told in Ephesians Chapter 5 verses 11 and 12 "Have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness but rather expose them for it is shameful to speak of these things when we are done, it is done by them in secret." Psalms 82 talks about that God stood in the midst of the judges who accepted the world's ways instead of God's ways and he was so angered at sin that he could not sit down among them. So the real threat to our society is not those who oppose immorality and stand on God's word, but those who promote it, and clearly this has gone too far. We must embrace God's words and refuse to allow immorality in. Thank you.

**Moderator:** Microphone Three.

My name is **Jim Garber, Manchester, Indiana Church of the Brethren, South/Central Indiana District**. I want to make a comment about process rather than the issue itself. You commented, Brother Moderator, earlier on that this was not a polity issue which would require a 30-day advance announcement. There's reason for that obviously because matters of a great import need early introduction and discussion. It's hard for me to believe that we would in three days' time vote yea or nay

on an issue of such import as this one, whether you're for it or against it, which would I think throw District Ministry Commissions into great turmoil in understanding their role in the District as well as the national church. I stand in opposition for that reason. I was tempted to offer an amendment. I'm sure you're glad I didn't do this, but I would have, I was tempted to amend the motion to include all of the people we've, some people, mentioned earlier such as pastors who refuse to participate in the calling of women to ministry and that kind of thing. I think you probably would have denied it because it was frivolous. But it is certainly a, points out an irony of the issues we're currently discussing. One final comment: we have lived in this Church for the last several years with a slogan called, "Continuing the work of Jesus peacefully, simply, together." I think if you look under Jesus's comments and his sayings and his parables, he makes no comment about gender, homosexuality. I think we should do the same.

**Moderator:** Microphone 4

**Matt Guynn, South/Central Indiana District, Richmond congregation.**

**Moderator:** Brother Matt.

**MG:** I believe that it would be a grave mistake to pass this query, to pass this motion. This Annual Conference periodically deals with issues that are deeply contentious in which there is no clear way forward. Brethren at different times in history denied the full participation of people of color and the full participation of women. In the year 2002 for most of us this is seen, these decisions are seen, as regrettable mistakes. I believe that the passage of this motion in five or ten or twenty years' time would be seen as a similar regrettable mistake. I believe that we currently face just such a contentious issue and I admit that there is no clear simple way forward. But perhaps God is moving among us now, creating something new. Perhaps God's reconciling intention for all of humanity can continue to touch and transform each of us. Thank you.

**Moderator:** Brother. [Pause.] I'm going to hear from one more speaker and then I'm going to ask the officers to help me gain a sense of where we are, a sense of the meeting, a sense of what they're hearing and what I'm hearing in terms of our process. Microphone 1.

Brother Moderator, I'm **Dana Snider, from Middlebury Church of the Brethren, Northern Indiana.**

**Moderator:** Brother.

**DS:** The other evening you challenged me to look at my life and repent issues that would help me in my faith walk. I sorted through that list rather carefully and came up with the sin of omission, of not speaking up on the behalf of the marginalized people of our society. And to me that's the homosexual issue that we're talking about. I think we have been unfair in working with them and inviting them to be a full member with human rights, and I'm ashamed that I have not responded more firmly and forthrightly before now. Little did I know that I would walk out of that meeting, pick up a blank sheet of paper, and tell me my next assignment was the next day. And here I am to make an attempt at an issue that I wish to bring to you. I speak in loyal opposition to this query. I feel it needs a provision for conscientious objecting, allowing for some diversity on this matter. We are not of one accord on a lot of issues, whether it's displaying the flag, participating in the military, women in leadership, the exclusivity of the Christian faith, the death penalty, patriotism, and the list goes on. I greatly respect the Manchester church for taking the stance of being an open, inviting, affirming congregation to gay or homosexual people. I also respect the Skyridge church for also affirming a gay person in being considered for ministry. In my 1W service I got introduced to homosexual people. So for 50 years I have wrestled with a lot of the issues that we've talked about here. But I've worked with them, I've played with them, I've worshipped with them, I've cried with them, I've dreamed with them, I've hoped with them. And I sense the integrity of their souls to be just as pure as the integrity of the souls of heterosexuals. I feel the church has been wrong in many ways in the past in interpreting what might be righteous living. We have been, we have silenced, shunned, and even killed people in the past. One person advocated the world was round when

the people thought it was flat. We had issues of burning witches at the stake, redheads, having twins, being lefthanded have all been looked at askew over the years. In my lifetime, there have been a lot of, we are beginning to give more human rights to all of God's children, irregardless to race, ethnic background, women, children, other religions. In lots of cases [**Moderator:** Brother, thank you so much.]

**DS:** Thank you.

**Moderator:** I'm going to confer with some officers. I have a note here, should we sing aloud or pray. I think I'd like us just to pray. [Silence.]

[Tape 12, Side B . Starts almost 1/3 of the way into the side.]

**Moderator:** Our officers, sharing with our officers, we feel like we are open to continuing the microphone. We sense that the, our delegate body is listening, is not ready to vote, and so we will proceed through with some more response. Microphone 2.

I'm **Chuck Boyer from the La Verne congregation, in the Pacific Southwest District.**

**Moderator:** Brother Chuck.

**CB:** About a year ago I sat at my desk and reflected on how the issue of sexual inclusivity impacts our congregation. And I began to list the families in our congregation who have a child, a grandchild, a parent, spouse, or sibling, who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and I listed 32 families. 32 families. Now that's not all of the families because not everybody's going to come to their pastor and talk about that. Some persons choose not to. We have in our congregation, in practically every position of leadership, board, commissions, officers, we have gay/lesbian people in leadership. And all I can say to you, brothers and sisters, is, come, if you're so led and worship with us and be with us. And I would remind us that over the years there have been many, many, many denominational leaders who have been gay and lesbian and who have not been free to share that or saw no need to share that. And that's certainly at their discretion. I speak in opposition to the Standing Committee recommendation. I want to thank the Standing Committee for their hard work. And I do also Paul, want to join you in thanking people, with only a few exceptions, who have been thoughtful, and I thank us for listening to each other. Thank you.

**Moderator:** Microphone 3.

**Bill Christiansen, Franklin Grove congregation, Illinois/Wisconsin District.**

**Moderator:** Brother Bill.

**BC:** Brother Paul. A couple stories. Two years ago, not to date but today, as we returned to worship following the close of business of Annual Conference, many of the delegates were greeted by a man and his church, Fred Phelps, holding black placards with white letters that said, "God hates gays" or fags. Conference goes as they walked by formed a circle, and as we prayed the Lord's Prayer, we were called blasphemers. As we sang 118 out of our hymnal, we were screamed at with hate. Women, God fearing women, were called whores, and Christian Peacemaking Team brought ice-cold beverages to these people. My wife and I entered worship that night in tears. We sobbed through worship. We shared the Eucharist in that worship and we started to feel a healing. I went home and threw away the sermon I had prepared for Sunday morning, and I preached, "I have seen the beast and I have met legion." [Mark 5:9/Luke 8:30?] Jesus tells us that there is only one unforgivable sin, and that's blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and I believe hate in the name of Jesus Christ is such blasphemy. I had a phone call this past week from a gay man, who asked to meet with me. He has M.S., he's 32 years old, and he called me to ask me to prepare to do his funeral because his church has excluded him. Thank you, Brother Paul.

**Moderator:** Microphone 4.

Hello, I am **Matthew Witkovsky from the Stone Church in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, of the Middle Pennsylvania District.** And I'm **Corinne Lipscomb of the First Church of the Brethren of Springfield, [Springfield, Illinois], from Illinois/Wisconsin.** **CL:** And we rise in opposition to this query, the response. **MW:** We, as youth of the church, we, we believe that God has given everyone a calling. And the calling is one of the most important things, for us to discern what we are going to do in our life. God calls many people to becoming pastors and teaching to all of us. God also calls homosexuals and because of this, we need to support them. And, there, it can't be that we exclude homosexual people from sharing in the ministry and becoming ordained ministers just because of their sexual orientation. They are also called by God, as is everyone else here is that has become a pastor. And so therefore we need to support them and we also need to let them become pastors in our church. **CL:** Each person that feels the call to the ministry has the right and deserves the respect to be judged as an individual and not as a group to be shut out by the church. Thank you. **MW:** Thanks.

**Moderator:** Thank you, Sister, Brother. Microphone 1.

Good afternoon, Brother Moderator. **David Stiles, Pastor, Curryville congregation, Middle Pennsylvania District.** I would like to stand in support of the Standing Committee's recommendation, and I would like to say that I believe this issue is actively, actually a symptom of a larger issue in the church, and not just the Church of the Brethren, I mean the Church in North America. We've progressed to the point where we in the church are allowing the world's viewpoints to influence our opinions of the Bible rather than the Bible influencing our opinions about the world. Over the last 20 to 30 years the gay community has hit us with a mass marketing plan to sanitize and sell the homosexual lifestyle as normal and to villainize anyone who would oppose their viewpoints. So as the church has allowed this kind of worldly thinking to influence us on this issue and other issues, something else has happened. Mainline denominational churches and churches like ours have been in a steady decline, losing 25% of their membership since 1960. If you look around your community, however, at the churches that are thriving, that are blooming, that are growing, they are the churches that preach the word of God without compromise, without apology, and without twisted reinterpretation. I've heard a lot of stories this afternoon, but with a few notable exceptions, I haven't heard a whole lot about the word of God in these comments. So I would challenge us to see what the word of God has to say about this. If we were to ordain homosexuals, we would be following others down a dangerous path of theological suicide. And to me that line of thinking is no different than if I were to say to my congregation, I am a man with a lot of hormones, God made me that way and you just have to deal with it. So while I'm your pastor, I'm going to have two or three extramarital affairs and you're just going to have to deal with it, because that's the way God made me. My church is doing pretty well, it's growing rapidly, and I don't say that to be blowing my own whistle, but I've found one thing. People grow when we help them up to the bar of God's standards, not when we lower the bar of God's standards and tell people that we don't have to follow what the Bible says. We reach out a hand of fellowship and love, accepting people where they are, whatever their orientation is, and love them into the Kingdom of God and show them how God wants us all to live. Yes, we are all sinners. But there is a standard that God calls us to live by, and our job is to reach out to everyone, regardless of their orientation, and help one another to live by God's standards. God bless you, Brother, I do not envy your job.

**Moderator:** Thank you, Brother. I'm inclined to go across. We've had a speech from Microphone 1, a response to hear from Microphone 2, 3, and 4, and then see where we are.

I'm **Warren Kissinger, a member of the University Park, Maryland, Church of the Brethren, Mid-Atlantic District.** I rise to speak in opposition to the recommendation. We Brethren have maintained that the scriptures, particularly the New Testament, and the teachings of Jesus, are the foundation and ground of our faith and practice. It is evident that the Bible is negative toward same-sex behavior. However, Jesus is silent on this issue. But Jesus teaches against divorce and the remarriage of divorced persons. He has very strong language against wealth and greed. Jesus enjoins nonresistance and love of

enemies. Paul in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14 says that women should keep silent in the churches and that it is a shame for women to speak in the church. If scriptures were interpreted in an absolute fashion, the ordination of divorced persons, or persons of wealth, or persons who participate in military service, or women, would be prohibited. But we have redefined scripture so that the ordination of these persons is accepted. The question I think we must consider is this: on what grounds do we prohibit the ordination of gay persons while accepting the ordination of divorced persons, or persons of wealth, or persons who participate in military service, or women. I have the strong suspicion that, that the basic issue is not biblical and theological, but psychological. For many men at least the thought of same sex relations produces a psychological dynamic and even trauma, which is dealt with not by seeking counseling and therapy but by taking refuge in biblical and theological absolutes. In my work as a pastor and as a librarian I have worked with many, with numerous gay persons and invariably have found them to be efficient, competent, and responsible. As Brethren we represent a tradition that has emphasized community, love of neighbor, and following after Jesus. Perhaps the time has come to widen our circle and to accept the rich and varied gifts which persons we too long have rejected and discriminated against [Moderator: Forgive me, brother. Thank you.]

**Moderator:** Microphone 3.

I'm **Wendy Matheny** and I think it's fitting that in this past year I'm from three different congregations, the **Peoria Church of the Brethren, in Illinois/Wisconsin, the North Manchester Church of the Brethren [I don't even know which district], and the Washington City in Washington, D.C.** And in the past year, as a young adult, my first year of college, I've really been struggling with a lot of things. And I've realized that, I've looked at this issue on both sides. And what I can't understand, what I do understand, is that God has given me my gift as a person, my gifts as an individual, my gifts as a part of a greater whole. He's given me my sexuality, he's given me my gender, he's given me everything. Now while I am a heterosexual individual, I have made many friends who have been given the gift of their homosexuality or their bisexuality. And I do not see how a gift from God can be considered a sin. And looking at the scriptures, I agree, you do have to take them into context, and you cannot take an absolute approach. But how can we as a church support something that excludes so many people that we obviously love. And the one thing that keeps coming to mind, and I think Brother Paul said it the first night, was that we have to break down ourselves first, and so my best recommendation to anyone voting or considering this would be to take the log out of your own eye first before you go picking at the speck of sawdust in someone else's.

**Moderator:** Microphone 4.

My name is **Carissa Fralin**. I'm from **Spirit of Joy Fellowship in Western Plains District or Western, Northern, what is it? Western Plains?** What district am I in? I just moved there, you'll have to forgive me. My concern regarding the Standing Committee recommendation is that I believe it to be inconsistent with Church of the Brethren statements in the past. Specifically, reading the Standing Committee recommendation that the paper concludes that homosexual practice is implied to be sin, and therefore, persons engaging in that should not be licensed or ordained into the ministry. Historically, in the Church of the Brethren we have not hesitated to name sin. For example in the 1934 statement against war we say very clearly and without hesitation that "All war is sin." And therefore we say that those who participate in war or the practice of it willingly engage in sin. In that same paper, however, it states that veterans can become members, that we will be respectful of each other's different opinions, and that we will relate to each other in love. And at no time did we as a denomination say that we would not license or ordain men and now women who are veterans, who have served in the military, or who receive any benefits from Veterans' Administration. In contrast to this, the 1983 Human Sexuality paper does not say that homosexuality is sin. It does speak of relating to each other in love, and working for justice for our homosexual brothers and sisters. So I would ask this conference, and specifically this delegate body, two questions. First, are we willing to name certain groups that we will intentionally keep out of ministry and participation in the life of the church, allowing open discrimination to be one of our denominational statements? Once we begin down this road, I am afraid that turning back will be difficult. I do not

believe homosexuality is a sin. But for those who do, I would ask my second question. Are you willing to categorize sin, saying one sin is worse than another? If we are willing to say as a denomination that homosexuality is sin, therefore concluding that these persons should not be ordained, then which sin will be chosen next? And which group will be the next one stopped from licensing and ordination? I stand in opposition to the Standing Committee recommendation. Thank you.

**Moderator:** Thank you, Sister. [Pause. From the delegate body, “Question.”] I’ve heard the call for the question, I can’t ignore that. I can take a moment pause though. Read the recommendation of Standing Committee please.

**Cathy Huffman:** The Standing Committee acknowledges that it is not of one mind at this time. Nevertheless, in order to function effectively as a denominational body, we must set a standard for our life together.

Standing Committee recommends to the 2002 Annual Conference that the 2002 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren continue to affirm the 1983 decision known as “Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective.” We understand that paper to conclude that homosexual practice is unacceptable behavior in the church, and therefore implied to be sin. We also understand the 1983 paper to have strong encouragements for the church to be open and welcoming and to develop helpful and compassionate ministries toward homosexual persons. We would urge that the balance represented in these two primary components of the 1983 paper be maintained in the Church of the Brethren.

In answering Query # 3 on the licensing and ordination of homosexual persons, we recognize that the 1983 paper does not address this particular issue. However, it is our understanding that the conduct expectations of the general membership, as stated above, should most surely also be expected of those licensed or ordained. Therefore, we consider it inappropriate to license or ordain to the Christian ministry any persons who are known to be engaging in homosexual practices, and will not recognize the licensing and ordination of such persons in the Church of the Brethren.

**Moderator:** All who support this recommendation—I have heard “point of order,” “point of privilege.” Where are we? Two? Microphone 2.

Brother Moderator, **John Willoughby, the Hope Church of the Brethren, [Freeport, Michigan], Michigan District.**

**Moderator:** Brother John.

**JW:** As I understand the recommendation of Standing Committee, this is a policy that does not recommend, I’m sorry, that does not recognize the licensing or ordination of homosexual persons. However, church polity does not, or, requires the recognition of ordinations and does not ban the ordination of homosexual persons. So, the point of order is, we have a policy that is trumping polity, and is that something that we can do?

**Moderator:** Invite my sisters to respond to this interpretation to, if you can offer it in a more precise understanding than I can. Let me make a stab at it. In the Church of the Brethren, most, so much of the decision we make, on the Annual Conference floor, it’s supposed to have tremendous, great, great influence over our body. We have not been a church that has operated, forgive, if this isn’t the proper term, in an ecclesiastical way, to create laws that we’re carrying books around. And so we give latitude to the interpretation of districts and churches, and so as this comes before us, we pray it will be persuasive. We pray this as we vote now, and we do vote, we understand these decisions to be the will of the body. But they still have to be received—do you hear what I’m saying? Sister, could you say it more precisely? My sister likes this. It seemed very, it seemed a little ambiguous, but my sister heard the heart of it. This vote does mean something. It’s not to be taken lightly or casually. We’re seeking the mind of Christ. We’re using a voting system. I’m not going to talk about that. I’m talking about what’s before us. We’ve discussed the concern and I’m ready to vote.

Voice from Floor. Another point of order, Brother Paul.

**Moderator:** Pardon me. I heard two points of order when I came, from either side of me, and I feel a need to look toward Microphone 4.

Thank you, Brother Moderator. **Sherry Reese Vaught, Mansfield First Church of the Brethren, Northern Ohio.** I called a, to ask us to have, I wonder if it's appropriate for us, for me to ask for a paper ballot in this issue. I feel that this is such an important issue, and an issue where there are strong feelings on many sides and a very difficult issue with which there is not always safety to be able to speak one's conscience in one's church or on the delegate floor and I would really appreciate the consideration of a paper ballot in this issue.

[Conversation among officers.]

Voice from Floor: Point of Order.

**Moderator:** Related to this question? Related to this question?

Yes.

**Moderator:** Sister.

**Myrna Wheeler, Pacific Southwest District, Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren.** On page 60 of our book, Roman numeral two (b), please note that merely calling question from the floor is not the same a motion for the previous question and does not obligate the Moderator to take a vote. I'm not sure we're ready for a vote.

[Conversation among officers.]

**Moderator:** Let's deal with the first Point of Order first. If you do vote, I'm going to ask you, don't answer it quite yet, do you want a paper ballot. If you do, you'll of course raise your hand. If you do not, you will raise your hand. [Laughter.] All those in favor,

Brother Moderator, may I raise a Point of Order? [Laughter.]

**Moderator:** I feel like I've lived this moment before in nightmares. [Laughter.] Microphone 4.

I'm **Bill Eberly from Manchester Church of the Brethren [South/Central Indiana].**

**Moderator:** Brother Bill.

**BE:** I humbly want to disagree with the Officers and with the Standing Committee. In my judgment, this is purely and simply a polity order. And when you're dealing with the criteria and qualifications for ordination, that's about as true a polity as you can get. I don't know where this 30-day advance notice came from, but if that's the case, Standing Committee should not have sent this paper to the delegate body. They should have waited till next year so we had adequate time to process it as a matter of polity. I'm going to give a special motion. I would like to move that this matter be postponed until next year.

From floor: Second. Second.

**Moderator:** We hear a second to that motion.

Point of Order. Brother Moderator, **George Baker, Tyrone Church of the Brethren, Middle District, Pennsylvania District.** You can't make a motion on a Point of Order.

[Conversation among officers.]

**Moderator:** Let me proceed with what we have on the floor. First of all, we have on the floor before you a vote, a decision to make related to paper ballot. All those in favor of having a paper ballot, would you please raise your hands? Opposed, same sign. [Laughter.] The delegates will gather from the laughter in the decks that you're very close. We'll need to make a count. [Voices call, "Point of order."] Having misgivings, and some frustration, but you can see the importance of our having an order to our life together. And Robert's Rules of Order in this case is what we've chosen. And that's what we're under. And we can understand that we're under. We're going to do the best we can to interpret those rules, some of them now that are being challenged are fairly minute because we're don't often deal with them. We're going to give our best under, we're going to do a new reading, and give our best response to what we're reading.

[Conversation among officers.]

**Moderator:** Reading from Robert's Rules of Order, that as soon as there is a request for a paper ballot, we must have it, and our sister's explanation for that was probably a good one. [Scattered applause.] That's done. Now. [Some delegates stand up.] It's a good thing, and you need to do that. Please don't move from your seats unless you really have to, if you get what I mean. But otherwise, we want to continue here, and we'll give you a stretch. If we don't see something—we think we might be getting closer, so we'll give you, we might have to give you a break, but just take a good stretch break, and now let's sit down. [Laughter.] I know, I know. Thank you. As we're reading Robert's Rules of Order, we believe a motion can't be made from a Point of Order. I'm willing to, I want to do, we need to also be responding to you and what you want.

Point of Order.

**Moderator:** Three.

**Suzanne Schaudel from the Lancaster Church of the Brethren, Atlantic Northeast District.** Before we vote, I think it's helpful that we who are voting know what we're voting on. If we vote yes, that means we are approving what Standing Committee came up with—

**Moderator:** We'll reread that all when we get to it.

**SS:** Yeah, even though we can read it, I want to know what it means if we vote yes and if we vote no. That's the clarification that I'm asking for. In other words, if there's not a two-thirds vote in favor of this statement by the Standing Committee, then the query is dead. Is that right?

**Moderator:** No, no.

**SS:** Well, that's where I need clarification.

**Moderator:** And that's, that's a good proper clarification. If I could, if I could get some things done, and just stay right where you are to make sure that you hold me accountable to what you're asking, will you? The first question before us is, are you ready to vote. We're going to stop for a time of prayer before we move into a final vote, but I need to ask you first, are you ready to vote. If you are, please raise your hands. Opposed to, being, not ready, raise your hands. Okay. We seem to be ready to vote. Now, Sister, your question, if you would just stay right where you are because it's an important question, and we'll do the best we can to give you an interpretation. If [pause]. A vote of yes supports the recommendation. A vote of no--and yes has to be by two-thirds majority, we understand that—a vote of no, or less than two-thirds majority, means that this recommendation from Standing Committee, that Standing Committee has met on, that Standing Committee now brings before you, that that recommendation is defeated. Now, if

that's defeated, if that's defeated, that doesn't mean that it leaves us. It means that that goes to the 2003 Annual Conference as New Business. And the Standing Committee that meets prior to that Conference brings again a recommendation to the Conference floor. Sister Secretary, if you have an addition to that, something that would help us—

**Cathy Huffman:** Page 59, number b5. If the final answer presented in response to a query is totally rejected by the Conference, the query shall be regarded as unanswered, and shall be immediately disposed of as though it were an item of New Business. Which means, the query is not returned, it is unanswered, it will be before the 2003 Standing Committee to work at as a new business item to develop a new recommendation to be brought back to the 2003 Annual Conference.

**SS?:** Thank you.

One more Point of Order please.

**Moderator:** Microphone 1.

**Jobic Riley, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, Atlantic Northeast District.**

**Moderator:** Brother.

**JR:** I and some others, I'm sure, were planning to propose amendments, and it was suggested by you a while ago that we would have an opportunity to present amendments, so I wonder if that still can be within the scheme of things.

**Moderator:** I just took a vote, I just asked for a vote. I asked the delegate body if they were ready to vote and I received an overwhelming yes.

**JR:** Thank you, Brother Moderator.

**Moderator:** Brother.

From Floor: Point of Clarification.

**Moderator:** Microphone 3.

**Dennis Coffman, [Harrisburg Church], Atlantic Northeast District.** Bill Eberly raised a question in his Point of Order. He was out of order in making an amendment, but I would like a answer in reference to the question that he asked. Was Standing Committee out of order in bringing this kind of answer to us in reference to polity?

**Moderator:** We're ready to vote. We will work at giving a specific answer to that out-of-order amendment to folks that seek that answer, but at this time we think we need to move to vote. Microphone 4.

I have a point of clarification please, **Moderator. Joe Loomis from the University Baptist and Brethren Church in State College, Middle Pennsylvania.** I'd like to disagree respectfully with **Cathy** on her interpretation of point 5 on page 69. If I can read that, and provide my interpretation, and see where we are.

**Moderator:** One moment. [Conferring with officers.] Brother, if you'd rephrase that.

**JL:** I would like clarification on the interpretation of point 5, page 59 [sic] as just presented by our sister. And I would like to make a statement so that you understand my misunderstanding. [Laughter.]

**Cathy Huffman:** Do you want to answer? Okay, let me get to. . . okay. In our manual of polity, page 15, under Standing Committee responsibilities: “Standing Committee studies all queries and items of new business and recommends answers to the delegate body.” That is the supporting language to “as though it were an item of new business” what happens to it, that it goes back to Standing Committee.

**JL:** The statement says, “The query shall be regarded as unanswered and shall be immediately disposed of as though it were an item of new business.” And “disposed of,” not “and then referred back” to another Conference, it’s disposed of. That’s my understanding of that statement.

**Moderator:** If that were, I saw that word before, Brother, and I think that word may be misleading. It doesn’t mean, like throwing it in a wastebasket. It means “handled.” Would the tellers please distribute the paper ballots? Paper ballots, we’ll hold them, and then we’ll enter into a time of prayer.

[Singing of “Gentle Shepherd.”]

**Moderator:** Everyone has a ballot. And if anyone doesn’t have a ballot, they should wave their hand. Let’s enter into a time of prayer. [Silence.] We’ve taken a good bit of time. We’ve gone over the recommendation. The Chair feels that we don’t need to read the recommendation again. There are two votes. A “yes” supports the recommendation, and so a “yes” on your paper means that you support the recommendation of Standing Committee. A “no” means you stand against the recommendation of Standing Committee. Yes or no. You may vote. [Pause.] If you don’t fold the papers—if you’ve done that, it’s okay, but just, just kind of, without, this is a, just pass to the left without, let’s not look at the votes of other people. Hand them upside down if that helps.

[End of Tape 12, Side B]

[Tape 13]

[Reports 10, 7, 8. All accepted.]

**Cathy Huffman:** Sister Moderator-Elect, I have the results of both balloted elections. The results on the paper ballot for New Business Item #3: Yes, 650; No, 274. That is more than the two-thirds needed to accept the Standing Committee recommendation.

[Some Applause.]

**Moderator-Elect (Harriet Finney):** Brothers and Sisters, let us respect one another in this.

\* \* \*

\*\*This transcript was made from a copy of the official audiotaped record, transcribed by Anna M. Speicher, Elgin, Illinois, in August and September, 2002. Spelling of names of persons and places was checked with the *Yearbook* office. Apologies are made for any errors in spelling that remain. Corrections will be made upon notification.