

A Statement of Respectful Opposition  
*Introduction & Instructions*

***Introduction***

This statement began in discussions at the gathering of Voices for an Open Spirit (VOS) at Camp Mack in Indiana, November 22-24, 2002. The Camp Mack participants asked the VOS coordinating council to refine it and present it as a VOS statement. The council believes that many people in the Church of the Brethren share the concerns of the VOS movement. Therefore, the council decided to present this document more widely as a statement that many may wish to sign rather than simply as a statement from VOS as an organization.

It is being offered in three ways: 1) as hard copy, 2) through the VOS listserv and other email channels, 3) on the VOS website. The statement and the names of its signers will be presented to the Standing Committee of the 2003 Annual Conference, not as a business item but as an indication of the concern of many Brethren.

If you support this statement, please add your name and indicate your congregation and the date.

To return a copy of this statement with signatures, please mail it to:

Voices for an Open Spirit  
9 N. Union Street  
Elgin, IL 60123

# A Statement of Respectful Opposition

To the decision of the 2002 Annual Conference on  
*Licensing/Ordination of Homosexual Persons to the Ministry in the Church of the Brethren*

We are members of the Church of the Brethren. We are loyal and committed to the ideals of the Church of the Brethren. We believe that the church of Jesus Christ welcomes all persons and calls out leaders according to their gifts for ministry. Therefore, we express our opposition to the decision of the 2002 Annual Conference to categorically exclude some persons, namely “persons who are known to be engaging in homosexual practices,” from set-apart ministry. Our opposition is based on the following:

1. *Our understanding of the Biblical witness*—God created all humanity in God’s image (Gen. 1:27). God loves all people (John 3:16-17). And God desires righteousness and justice (Micah 6:8).
2. *Our understanding of human biology*—Homosexuality is a form of human sexuality. It is a natural and normal orientation for some people.
3. *Our understanding of call*—All members are ministers of the Gospel. We should not limit God’s call by decisions of Annual Conference, but must listen to and consider, on its own merits, each call that comes through the church or to an individual (1 Cor. 12).
4. *Our understanding of decision-making*—We do not push for action on controversial and troubling issues without study and thoughtful discussion where all voices are heard in love. Foremost to this discussion is an atmosphere of prayer, humility and discernment of the Spirit (Romans 12).

We urge Annual Conference to reconsider this decision, following procedures for handling strongly controversial issues as established in “Guidelines for Special Response Queries” found in the 1988 Annual Conference Minutes. We also urge districts to refrain from implementing this decision. We support congregations and individuals who, as a matter of conscience, refuse to participate in its implementation.

*(This statement and its signatures will be presented to the Standing Committee of the 2003 Annual Conference, not as a business item but as an indication of the concern of many in the Church of the Brethren. If you support this statement, please sign it and indicate your congregation, district, and the date. Thank you.)*

Name	Congregation	District	Date
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
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