

“Following is the Reply from Standing committee regarding the appeal filed by the Northview Church of the Brethren regarding the action taken at the October District Conference. The Northview congregation and the S/C District have agreed to posting this reply in its entirety.”

June 30, 2007

Northview Church of the Brethren  
Louie Rieman  
Paul Schrock

South/Central Indiana District  
Allen Kahler  
Gerry Longenbaugh

Dear Sister and Brothers:

Thank you for your participation in the appeal brought to Standing Committee June 28, 2007, and for the spirit and manner in which you each presented points of view regarding the action of a specially called South/Central Indiana District Conference October 21, 2006. You kept the focus clear and the atmosphere open as you both shared your statements and interacted with the Standing Committee as well as with each other.

In the Standing Committee’s deliberation following your presence with the Committee, the delegates focused their response on the primary question, as agreed upon by both parties. That issue, as confirmed with both parties by the Standing Committee Appeals Committee, was whether “the action taken by the South/Central District Conference to authorize punitive action against congregations is inconsistent with processes established by Annual Conference.”

Since both parties based their arguments on the 2004 Annual Conference document, “Query on Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions,” Standing Committee also had extensive discussions on the stated implications, as well as the unsaid implications, of that paper. It seemed to some that the paper did give permission to districts to design without restrictions a policy for dealing with congregations that disagree with Annual Conference actions; it seemed to others that such a policy or process should not impose disciplines but acknowledge the actions of a congregation and continue efforts at reconciliation.

Several delegates expressed their disappointment that both parties “argued from silence,” i.e. based their comments on the absence of specific directions from Annual Conference on matters of discipline. However, a persuasive factor was the agreement by both parties that there is no written prohibition in Annual Conference minutes against a district imposing a discipline upon a congregation.

Some delegates reflected upon the creative tension between obedience and conscience which has been valued by Brethren throughout our history. Others acknowledged that tension, but felt that unity and conformity also are traditional Brethren values. Still others lifted up the historical fact that the Church of the Brethren was born of dissent based on conscience

Standing Committee's decision is *that for districts to take punitive actions against congregations that disagree with Annual Conference decisions is consistent with the Annual Conference process as outlined in the 2004 Annual Conference paper, "Query on Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions."*

May God forgive and be merciful to us in the midst of our conflicts, and may God's Holy Spirit melt our hearts until we are humble enough to Proclaim the Power of God.

On behalf of the 2007 Standing Committee,

Fred W. Swartz, Conference Secretary