

Unity of the Brethren Constitution & By-Laws
PROPOSED CHANGES (*in RED*)
From the Executive Committee as of 2-26-2025
FOR:

- Brethren Journal – Constitution and By-Laws
- Board of Christian Education
- Boards of Missions – Constitution and By-Laws
- Referendum – Constitution and By-Laws
- Convention Delegates
- Executive Committee

Will be sending soon - Hus Encampment Article XIV and Appendix A

Eliminating the Brethren Journal:

Constitution changes:

Article V. Administration, B. Executive, 2 and 4:

Delete: 2. ~~(g) an Editor and a Business Manager of The Brethren Journal;~~

Delete/Change: 4. All official reports and announcements shall be ~~published in the official publication of the Unity of the Brethren, The Brethren Journal~~ announced by the President of the Executive Committee, sent out by the Secretary and posted on the Unity of the Brethren website.

Article VII. Concluding paragraphs

F. If there is a need to change or amend this Constitution of the Unity of the Brethren, the Synodical Committee or a special committee appointed by them for that purpose, shall propose such changes to the Convention, ~~with an announcement made by the President and Secretary to all Synodical Committee members and posted to the Unity website~~ ~~publish the proposals in the official publication of the Unity of the Brethren, The Brethren Journal;~~ at least two (2) months before the Convention, and present them to that Convention for approval.

Brethren Journal By-Laws to change:

Article II, Congregations, L.

L. Each congregation shall give an exact account of its active communicant members. (Constitution Article IV, Section B, Paragraph 2a). The annual Brethren Fund assessment shall be based on the membership, divided among the following ministries:

18% to the Hus School Encampment;

10% to ~~The Brethren Journal;~~

~~O. The congregation shall elect a zealous agent for The Brethren Journal, who shall work diligently to gain more subscribers for The Brethren Journal.~~

Article VI, Synodical Committee, I.

I. The minutes of the Synodical Committee meetings and executive officers' meetings shall be ~~sent to all Synodical Committee members and posted on the Unity website~~ ~~published in The Brethren Journal~~ only insofar as their content is a concern of the denomination.

Article VIII., The Vice-Presidents, E.

- E. The second vice-president shall serve as Stewardship Coordinator, that is, as Synodical Committee liaison with stewardship programs of the Unity of the Brethren such as Mutual Aid Society, and Ministers' Benefits Program etc. ~~The second Vice president shall also serve as Chairperson of The Brethren Journal Business Committee.~~

Article XIII., Board of Christian Education, B. 6. This entire article is proposed to be eliminated. The following pertains to the Brethren Journal:

6. ~~Publicize events and meetings through The Brethren Journal and the Unity of the Brethren website so as to encourage a broad base of participation; and~~

~~Article XVI., The Publication of the Unity of the Brethren: The Brethren Journal~~

- ~~A. The publication of the Unity of the Brethren is The Brethren Journal.~~
- ~~B. The editorial policy of The Brethren Journal shall be determined by the editor, who shall be responsible to the Convention of the Unity of the Brethren and is under the supervision of the Synodical Committee.~~
- ~~C. Business policies shall be determined by a business committee.~~
- ~~D. The Convention of the Unity of the Brethren shall elect from the membership of the Unity of the Brethren a qualified editor and business manager. Both offices may be filled by the same person. The term(s) of office shall be two (2) years subject to re-election. The Synodical Committee shall set the salary of both offices.~~
- ~~E. The business committee of The Brethren Journal shall be composed of the second vice president of the Synodical Committee as chairperson, a secretary/reporter, and a treasurer. The secretary/reporter and the treasurer shall be appointed by the Synodical Committee, which shall also set the remuneration of the treasurer. Their term of office shall be two (2) years subject to re-appointment.~~
- ~~F. The editor, the business manager, and the business committee of The Brethren Journal shall be governed by the Publication Rules established by the Synodical Committee. (Appendix B: The Brethren Journal.)~~
- ~~G. If a vacancy is created in the office of the editor, business manager, or in the membership of the business committee, the Synodical Committee shall appoint someone to fill the vacancy.~~
- ~~H. The second vice president shall serve as the Synodical Committee liaison with this committee.~~

APPENDIX B – Publication Rules for The Brethren Journal:

~~Appendix B—Publication Rules for The Brethren Journal—The Official Publication of the Unity of the Brethren~~

~~I. NAME~~

~~The publication of the Unity of the Brethren is The Brethren Journal.~~

~~II. PURPOSE~~

~~As the publication of the Unity of the Brethren, it is the medium through which all official information and pronouncements of the offices and organizations of the Church are published.~~ Can be added to Secretary duties: “will be the medium through which all official information and pronouncements of the offices and organizations of the Church are announced.” See Article IX. Secretary, J. below

~~III. OFFICES~~

- ~~A. Editor~~
- ~~B. Business Manager~~
- ~~C. Business Committee~~

~~IV. DUTIES OF THE EDITOR~~

- ~~A. It shall be the responsibility of the Editor:~~
 - ~~1. To plan and supervise the publication of The Brethren Journal.~~
 - ~~2. To prepare and approve articles for publication.~~
- ~~B. It shall be the further responsibility of the Editor to maintain amicable relations with other Christian publications and offices of information.~~
- ~~C. The Editor shall be responsible to the Convention and under the Synodical Committee and shall make a report to the Convention as per Article XVI, Section B.~~

~~V. DUTIES OF THE BUSINESS MANAGER~~

- ~~A. It shall be the responsibility of the Business Manager:~~
 - ~~1. To keep an accurate record of all business transactions.~~
 - ~~2. To maintain a current subscription list.~~
 - ~~3. To solicit advertising, subscriptions, and donations.~~
 - ~~4. To transfer all funds to the treasurer of the business committee.~~
- ~~B. It shall be the further responsibility of the Business Manager to cooperate with the business committee in formulating and carrying out the business policies of the publication.~~
- ~~C. It shall further be the responsibility of the Business Manager to assure distributions of The Brethren Journal in accordance with the schedule determined by the Synodical Committee.~~
- ~~D. The Business Manager shall be responsible to the Convention and under the supervision of the Synodical Committee and shall make a report to the Convention.~~

~~VI. DUTIES OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE~~

- ~~A. It shall be the responsibility of the Business Committee:~~
 - ~~1. To formulate the business policy governing the publication.~~
 - ~~2. To make an annual review of~~
 - ~~a. subscription rates,~~
 - ~~b. advertising rates,~~
 - ~~c. printing costs and contracts,~~
 - ~~d. subscription lists,~~
 - ~~e. advertisers,~~
 - ~~f. donation lists, and~~
 - ~~g. gratis and exchange lists.~~

~~VII. DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE~~

- ~~A. The Chairperson:~~
 - ~~1. It shall be the duty of the Chairperson:~~
 - ~~a. To call meetings of the committee and preside;~~
 - ~~b. To assure completion of the annual review before the Fall Synodical Committee meeting.~~

~~B. The Secretary/Reporter.~~

- ~~1. It shall be the duty of the Secretary/Reporter:~~
 - ~~a. To keep the minutes of all meetings;~~
 - ~~b. To conduct all necessary correspondence.~~

~~C. The Treasurer.~~

- ~~1. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer:~~
 - ~~a. To keep custody of all funds and to make all disbursements;~~
 - ~~b. To submit books for audit by the auditing committee prior to each Convention;~~
 - ~~c. To make a report at each Convention.~~

Article IX., Secretary, J:

J. At the order of the president, the secretary will be the medium through which all official information and pronouncements of the offices and organizations of the Unity of the Brethren are announced. All proposed changes to the Unity website shall be submitted to the Unity Secretary who will forward approved changes to the Unity Webmaster.

Article XIII., Board of Christian Education

This entire article is proposed to be eliminated. Some of duties could be transferred to the Executive Committee if deemed necessary.

~~ARTICLE XIII. BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION~~

~~A. A Board of Christian Education shall be established by the Unity of the Brethren to further develop and promote programs of Christian education, such as the Sunday School, the State Youth Program, the Hus Encampment Program, and others aligned with the purposes of Christian education within the Unity of the Brethren.~~

~~B. The Board shall:~~

- ~~— 1. Coordinate and share information among the Unity's educational groups and between congregations toward common and more effective work for the Lord;~~
- ~~— 2. Develop goals and objectives for approval and evaluation by the Synodical Committee;~~
- ~~— 3. Strengthen church members' knowledge of the Christian faith by recommending and/or developing educational resources (e.g., a bibliography of resources for Christian education, confirmation materials, Sunday School teaching materials, and devotional materials) and events (e.g., confirmation retreats, Sunday School training opportunities, and lay leader training opportunities);~~
- ~~— 4. Counsel and encourage the local Sunday Schools in their ministry;~~
- ~~— 5. Work so that members would be brought into the best possible knowledge of the Word of God, using pure teaching of the Word of God, Christian songs, and prayers;~~
- ~~— 6. Publicize events and meetings through The Brethren Journal and the Unity of the Brethren website so as to encourage a broad base of participation; and~~
- ~~— 7. Publish and distribute the Catechism, certificates, and other denominational literature.~~

~~C. The Convention of the Unity of the Brethren shall elect a Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education, which shall be comprised of seven (7) qualified members interested in this responsibility of the Unity of the Brethren.~~

- ~~1. Five (5) members shall be appointed by the Synodical Committee from the membership of the Unity of the Brethren, recognizing interest as well as demographic and geographic distribution.~~
- ~~2. One member shall be the Youth Coordinator.~~

- ~~3. The term of office for all members except the Youth Coordinator shall be 2 years, subject to re-election or re-appointment with a maximum of 4 consecutive terms.~~
 - ~~4. If a vacancy is created on the Board, the executive officers of the Synodical Committee shall appoint a new member to fill the term of the vacant position.~~
 - ~~5. The third vice president shall serve as the Synodical Committee liaison with this board. (By Laws Article VIII, Section F, Paragraph 1)~~
- ~~D. Operating expenses of the Board of Christian Education shall be paid through the Unity in the usual manner.~~

ARTICLE XV. Boards of Missions

ARTICLE XV. BOARDS OF MISSIONS

- A. ~~A Board of Foreign Missions~~ A general Board of Missions is established by the Unity of the Brethren for the supervision of its program of World Missions and Home Missions. It shall be responsible to the Convention and under the supervision of the Synodical Committee.
- ~~1. The Convention of the Unity of the Brethren shall elect a Chairperson of the Board of Foreign Missions, which shall be comprised of seven (7) qualified members interested in this responsibility of the Unity of the Brethren.~~
 - ~~a. The chairperson may be, but need not be, a member of the Synodical Committee.~~
 1. The Chairperson shall be the First Vice-President of the Synodical Executive Committee.
 - ~~b.a. Six (6)~~ Five (5) other members shall be appointed by the Synodical Committee from the membership of the Unity of the Brethren, recognizing interest as well as demographic and geographic distribution.
 - ~~e. b.~~ The term of office for all members shall be two years, subject to re-election or re-appointment for a maximum of four terms or eight years.
 - ~~d. The first vice president shall serve as the Synodical Committee liaison with this board. (By Laws Article VIII, Section D) The liaison shall maintain contact by communication between the board and the Synodical Committee in order to ensure concerted action, cooperation, and to relay information at the executive level. The liaison position is a non-voting position for boards on which the liaison serves.~~
 2. The Board of Foreign Missions shall recommend expenditures through an annual budget of the funds contributed for foreign missions and for home missions. These funds shall be paid out by the Synodical Committee Treasurer upon authorization by the Synodical Committee.
 3. If a vacancy is created on the Board, the appropriate body shall appoint a new member to the position vacant, through the office of its executive board or committee.
- B. ~~A Board of Home Missions is established by the Unity of the Brethren for the supervision of its program of Home Missions. It shall be responsible to the Convention and under the supervision of the Synodical Committee.~~
- ~~1. The Convention of the Unity of the Brethren shall elect a Chairperson of the Board of Home Missions, which shall be comprised of seven (7) qualified members interested in this responsibility of the Unity of the Brethren.~~
 - ~~a. The chairperson may be, but need not be, a member of the Synodical Committee.~~
 - ~~b. Six (6) other members shall be appointed by the Synodical Committee from the membership of the Unity of the Brethren, recognizing interest as well as demographic and geographic distribution.~~
 - ~~c. The term of office for all members shall be two years, subject to re-election or re-appointment for a maximum of four terms or eight years.~~

- ~~d. The first vice president shall serve as the Synodical Committee liaison with this board. (By-Laws Article VIII, Section D) The liaison shall maintain contact by communication between the board and the Synodical Committee in order to ensure concerted action, cooperation, and to relay information at the executive level. The liaison position is a non-voting position for boards on which the liaison serves.~~
- ~~2. The Board of Home Missions shall recommend expenditures through an annual budget of the funds contributed for home missions. These funds shall be paid out by the Synodical Committee Treasurer upon authorization by the Synodical Committee.~~
- ~~3. If a vacancy is created on the Board, the Synodical Committee shall appoint a new member to fill the term of the vacant position.~~
- C. B. All contributions for mission work shall be sent to the Unity of the Brethren Financial Secretary. Funds shall be designated for foreign or home missions; if not indicated, the funds will be equally divided between both boards.

IF changes to the Board of Missions is approved, changes will also be needed to:

ARTICLE IV. CONVENTIONS

- B. The Official Membership of the Convention shall be composed of the following:
1. The delegates of local congregations in regular standing with the Unity of the Brethren who have presented proper credentials.
 2. Members of the Synodical Committee as the administrative officials of the Unity of the Brethren:
 - a. The executive officers, lay and pastoral, who are also the officers of the Convention;
 - b. The other lay members as elected officials (Article VI, Section A); and
 - c. The other pastors of the Unity of the Brethren as spiritual advisors and representatives of the spiritual work of the Unity of the Brethren (Article VI, Section A).
 3. Chairs of the convention approved standing committees/boards including, but not limited to: Pastoral Relations Committee, ~~Board of Christian Education~~, and Hus School Encampment Board of Trustees., ~~Foreign Mission Board and Home Mission Board~~

ARTICLE VIII. THE VICE-PRESIDENTS

- D. The first vice-president shall serve as ~~Outreach Coordinator, that is, as Synodical Committee liaison with such outreach programs of the Unity of the Brethren as Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board, etc.~~ Chairperson of the general Board of Missions.

We would need to also make this change to the **CONSTITUTION:**

Article V. Administration

B. EXECUTIVE

2. To execute its decisions and for the purpose of administering current matters of the Unity of the Brethren between regular biennial Conventions, the Convention shall elect: (a) the Executive Officers of the Synodical Committee (By-Laws Article VI, Section A); (b) a Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education; ~~(c) a Chairperson of the Board of Home Missions; (d) a Chairperson of the Board of Foreign Missions;~~ (e) a Chairperson of the Pastoral Relations Committee; (f) a Chairperson of the Hus School Encampment Board of Trustees; (g) an Editor and a Business Manager of The Brethren Journal; (h) a Pastoral Relations Committee as outlined in the By-Laws; and (i) Lay and Ministerial Alternates. The officers of the Synodical Committee and other personnel may be elected from the membership of the Convention or from the membership of the denomination at large. (By-Laws Article VI, Section B.) (Effective 1995 Convention)

Numbers and letters changed as needed.

REFERENDUM

Constitution Article VII, Sec F and By-Laws Article XXIV

Still working on this as there may be other areas to use the word “eligible”

ADD the word “eligible” with reference of what “eligible” means in By-Laws Article IV.
Conventions, S. – see below

CONSTITUTION, Article VII, F:

F. If there is a need to change or amend this Constitution of the Unity of the Brethren, the Synodical Committee or a special committee appointed by them for that purpose, shall propose such changes to the Convention, publish the proposals in the official publication of the Unity of the Brethren, The Brethren Journal, at least two (2) months before the Convention, and present them to that Convention for approval. In the event that the above mentioned criteria are not fulfilled, the Convention may not take action on the changes or amendments. If the Convention accepts the proposed changes by a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) majority, the Secretary of the Synodical Committee shall send these proposals to the **eligible** local congregations within thirty (30) days after the Convention for referendum vote. The referendum vote shall be held and the results reported to the Secretary of the Synodical Committee by the deadline stated on the referendum. If two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) of the **eligible** congregations approve the proposals by a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) majority of their vote (not a simple majority) such changes and/or additions shall become a part of the Constitution. If the **eligible** congregation does not send the results of its referendum vote to the Secretary of the Synodical Committee by the deadline, that congregation shall be counted as favoring all the proposals. (Ref. ByLaws Article IV., Section S.2.)

ARTICLE IV. Conventions, S. – add #2:

S. The following Convention decisions shall become valid only after a simple majority of the **eligible** congregations of the Unity of the Brethren have approved them in a referendum by a simple majority vote in a meeting called for this purpose: (a) decisions concerning financial matters, (b) any decisions receiving a simple majority vote, but failing to receive a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) majority vote by the Convention’s membership, and (c) Constitution and By-Laws revisions (which must be approved by the appropriate referendum vote given in Article VII, Section F of the Constitution and **Article XXIV XXI** of the By-Laws, respectively).

1. Rules of procedure, directing of the deliberations, other matters pertaining to the Convention and election of officers need not be referred to the congregations for a referendum vote.
2. **A congregation is considered eligible to participate in the referendum vote only if that congregation was represented by a lay person at the convention. If a congregation is not represented by a Synodical Committee Representative or Delegate at Convention, that congregation forfeits its privilege of the Referendum vote.**

ARTICLE XXI. Method Of Amendment

As these By-Laws are an interpretation of the Constitution of the Unity of the Brethren and become the administrative rules for guidance of officials and members of the Unity of the Brethren, they are subject to change through deletion or expansion at any Convention of the Unity of the Brethren. If the Convention approves the changes by a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) majority vote of the Convention, such changes shall be sent to the local **eligible** congregations within 30 days after the convention for referendum vote. The referendum vote shall be held and the results reported to the Secretary of the Synodical Committee by the deadline stated in the referendum ballot. If a simple majority of the **eligible** congregations approve the proposals by a simple majority of their votes such proposals shall become part of these By-Laws. If the **eligible** congregation does not send the results of its referendum vote to the Secretary of the Synodical Committee by the stated deadline that congregation shall be counted as favoring all proposals.

CONVENTION DELEGATES: Article II, Congregations:

- D. Unorganized preaching stations and church plants shall become full members of the Unity of the Brethren after they become organized (Constitution Article IV, Section B). They shall be provisional members of the Unity of the Brethren until such time as they formally organize. This status shall empower them to send a representative (with voice privileges only) to the Synodical Committee as well as a representative to the Convention (with voice privileges only) ~~in equal number to the delegates they would possess if they were an organized congregation.~~
- K. The congregation which is in official standing with the Unity of the Brethren shall have the privilege and the responsibility to send ~~one delegate as many delegates~~ to the Convention of the Unity of the Brethren ~~as Article IV, Section G of these By-Laws allows.~~ If a congregation is not represented for three Conventions in succession and sends no official excuse, its status as a member congregation in the Unity of the Brethren shall be reviewed by the Executive Committee and a report given to the next Convention, where its membership in the denomination shall be considered by the Convention.
- ~~M. The number of delegates a congregation is entitled to send to a Convention of the Unity of the Brethren shall be determined on the basis of these annual membership payments the congregation has made to the Brethren Fund. (By-Laws Article IV, Section G)~~

Article IV. Conventions, Section G;

- ~~G. Representation at the Convention is based on one delegate per 50 members or greater fraction thereof in each congregation entitled to be represented. Congregations with less than 76 members are entitled to one delegate, from 76 to 125 members to two delegates, etc.~~
- P. Mileage expenses and meals of the delegates, officials, pastors and ministerial students shall be prorated among the delegates and will be paid by the congregations according to their representation. The host congregation shall not pay any mileage expenses for its delegates; however they will be assessed for their meal expenses. Members of the Executive Committee shall have meals, mileage and lodging expenses paid by the Convention Expense Fund. Pastors of the Unity of the Brethren and members of the Convention shall have their Convention expenses (excluding lodging) and mileage expenses paid.
1. The mileage expenses of the members of the Convention shall be determined on the basis of the distance between the host congregation and the home congregation.
 2. A Convention Expense Fund is established. The Synodical Committee shall compute an estimated average Convention delegate expense and each congregation that sends a delegate shall send in that amount. ~~Each congregation shall send in an amount equal to the average delegate expense times the number of delegates it sends to the Convention.~~
- *The expense per delegate could be much higher across the board with only 26 attending instead of a possible 42; in 2023 28 attended ---**

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

By-Laws Article VI, Section A:

- A. The Synodical Committee shall consist of:
1. All pastors of the Unity of the Brethren (including licensed and associate pastors);
 2. Seven executive officers (at least three laypeople) elected by the Convention. In selection of the laypeople, not more than ~~two one~~ laypersons shall be chosen from one congregation. This shall include the lay alternate ~~so that no congregation is represented more than once when considering the lay executive officers and the lay alternate;~~
 3. One lay representative elected from each congregation at a meeting called for the referendum vote following each Convention. ~~If a congregation was not eligible for the referendum vote, they may still elect a representative at this time.~~ Lay committee/board chairs may be elected by their congregations as their lay representatives.