

## Responding to a Congregation Considering Withdrawal

(guidelines approved by the district executives in consultation with the Office of Ministry)

1. District leadership receives communication or becomes aware that a congregation is calling into question its relationship with the Church of the Brethren. Date: \_\_\_\_\_
2. District leadership including staff and/or appropriate board, commission, or committee leadership responds to communication from the congregation in order to listen to concerns, communicate polity, discover “where” the congregation is in its decision-making process, and to assure that the congregation develops a process that follows denominational polity and congregational plan of organization. Date: \_\_\_\_\_
3. District leadership encourages and assists congregation with a reconciliation process that will include, but not be limited to gatherings for prayer, listening, conversation, and discernment. (Matthew 18) Date: \_\_\_\_\_
4. District executive staff and ministry commission leadership engage pastor(s) in conversation to listen for his/her voice, to listen for concerns about the congregation and his/her ministry, and to share ethics and credentialing implications as needed. Date: \_\_\_\_\_
5. District board representative(s) shall be present at all congregational forums (business meeting) where a recommendation for withdrawal from the Church of the Brethren is being considered. Date: \_\_\_\_\_
6. In the event that a congregation takes formal action to withdraw from the Church of the Brethren, *“the district of the Church of the Brethren in which it is located, or the successor, shall have the right to take charge and control all of the property and therefore to hold, manage, and convey the same at the discretion of the district.”* Date: \_\_\_\_\_
7. The District Board shall specify that *“that part of the congregation, whether a majority or minority of its membership, which continues in unity with the Church of the Brethren shall be recognized as the lawful congregation and shall continue in possession of all the property of the congregation.”* Date: \_\_\_\_\_
8. The District Ministry Commission in consultation with the District Executive shall meet with the pastor(s) of the withdrawing congregation to discuss his/her commitment to ministry in the Church of the Brethren. Termination of ordination requires a recommendation to the District Board. Date: \_\_\_\_\_
9. The District Board shall at its next meeting (or a specially called meeting if needed) take any actions necessary to acknowledge the pain of separation and alienation and designate any necessary appointments for follow-up to the congregation’s action. Date: \_\_\_\_\_
10. If no part of the congregation continues in unity with the Church of the Brethren, the District Board shall formulate a recommendation to be taken to District Conference celebrating the ministry of the congregation and recommending its closure. Date: \_\_\_\_\_
11. The District Board shall also recommend to District Conference a plan for the use or disposition of the property of the withdrawing congregation according to the guidelines in Chapter 6, “Property Holdings and Financial Resources.” Date: \_\_\_\_\_