

ANE Way Forward Background

There have been ongoing conversations within ANE between and among individuals and churches over issues such as the authority of Scripture and what it means to be the church in the world today. For some, this has caused tension and a questioning of whether or not they can remain in fellowship with the Church of the Brethren. Others have felt threatened by the language used by some to address their concerns over these issues. There are many within the district wondering what all this will mean for us as the church.

In order to begin to discern a way forward for ANE amidst our differences, focusing on our purpose in Christ and what that means for us as the Body of Christ, intentional conversations and actions were initiated to begin this work together. Below is a timeline of events leading up to the June 16, 2020 District Board meeting.

May 23, 2019

On May 23, 2019 approximately 150 district ministers and congregational leaders gathered at Hempfield CoB, along with district and denominational leadership, to discuss the state of the district and denomination and how we move forward amidst our differences. All the questions and responses shared were documented and processed into a report which was shared with the district.

June 20, 2019

At the June 20, 2019 Board meeting a list of members to potentially serve on the District Working Group (now called Way Forward Team) was approved. Using the data from the May 23 meeting, the team was to begin to discern a way forward for ANE amidst our differences, focusing on our purpose in Christ and what that means for us as the Body of Christ. The team members called were:

Sue Eikenberry, *Chair (Cornerstone COB)*
Doris Abdullah (*Brooklyn First COB*)
Mark Baliles (*Indian Creek COB*)
Enten Eller (*Ambler COB/Living Stream COB*)
Nancy Hess (*Mountville COB*)
Bob Kettering (*Lititz COB*)
Brian Messler (*Ephrata COB*)
Pete Kontra, *District Executive (Hempfield COB)*

August 13, 2019-February 27, 2020

The Way Forward Team met regularly to create the Way Forward Report.

October 2019 ANE District Conference

Members engaged in small group conversations. The questions for discussion by each of the groups were:

- What aspects of Brethren and Atlantic Northeast District heritage are best suited to achieving our vision as stated in the Atlantic Northeast District Vision Statement? What are those things about being Brethren that most unite us?
- What does it mean in terms of everyday activities for the Atlantic Northeast District to be following the Vision Statement? What are examples of things that your congregations do that fit the ANE vision?
- Given the culture around us today as well as the culture within the church, what could be some ways in which we can covenant network together to move our vision forward and follow Jesus as He has commanded in Matthew 25:34-40 and in Matthew 28:19-20?

March 17, 2020

The Way Forward Report was shared with District Board during its scheduled meeting.

May 13, 2020

The ANE Executive Committee and Way Forward Team met to discuss how we might engage the District Board in preparing the members for the June 16 meeting where the Way Forward Report is presented with the goal of it being affirmed and the Covenant adopted by the Board.

June 9, 2020

A District Board Way Forward Report briefing was held where all Board and Way Forward Team members were invited to share their reflections, affirmations, concerns, and questions about the Way Forward Report.

June 16, 2020

At the District Board meeting, the Way Forward Report is presented with the goal of it being affirmed and the Covenant adopted by the Board.