

Record Group A220

Board of Reference and Counsel. Records, 1928-1990.

4.6 linear feet.

Historical note

The Board of Reference and Counsel, or *Fürsorge-Komitee*, was established at the 1927 sessions of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. According to the 1933 MB General Conference Constitution, the Board was to “[watch] over the spiritual welfare of the churches and [advise] . . . them when serious questions arise concerning doctrine and church policy.” The 1981 constitution gave the Board a similar charge: “The Board shall watch over the spiritual life of the Conference and its churches and give guidance and direction in matters of faith, doctrine, and Christian life. It shall, when deemed necessary, initiate appropriate action or serve as a reference body in issues of spiritual and social concern.” The Board of Reference and Counsel also had the authority to convene study conferences “for the purpose of examining various aspects of the Christian faith and discipleship.” A final—and somewhat unrelated—responsibility of the board was to “deal with all matters relating to the affairs of the conference” when the conference was not in session. These administrative chores consumed much of the Board’s attention, leaving it little time to address its primary mandate.

Concern over this dual mandate caused the General Conference in 1990 to dissolve the Board of Reference and Counsel and to divide its responsibility between two new Boards. The Board of Faith and Life took over the duties related to faith, doctrine and Christian life; the Executive Council assumed responsibility for conference administrative matters.

Scope and content note

This record group contains minutes, correspondence and study conference proceedings created by the Board of Reference and Counsel, 1928-1990. It also contains records related to the 1982 “Church Member Profile” project, a survey which was conducted in 1982 under the auspices of the Board, and a subject file of doctrinal issues relevant to the Mennonite Brethren Church prepared by Clarence Hiebert at the Board’s request in 1975. Finally, this record group contains material from four ad hoc committees called into existence by the Board of Reference and Counsel: the Women’s Task Force, the Commission on General Conference Structure and Office Location, the Conference Restructuring Task Force, and the Task Force on Internationalization.

Organization and arrangement

This record group is organized into five series: I. Minutes and reports, 1928-1990. II. General correspondence, 1928-1990. III. Study conference proceedings, 1956-1989. IV. Church Member Profile, 1981-1985. V. Doctrinal issues file, 1975; VI. Ad hoc task force records, 1979-1989.

Series I-III and VI are arranged chronologically. Series IV is arranged chronologically by form of material. Series V is arranged alphabetically by topic.

Language note

All minutes through 1945 are in German with typewritten English translations. Most correspondence through 1945 and some correspondence thereafter, and some study conference papers through 1956 are in German.

Restrictions on access

Some items related to a specific disciplinary case in 1943-1944 are restricted. These items remain in their original file but are contained in a sealed envelope. Persons wishing further information or access to this material should contact the Director of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies.

(A220: Board of Reference and Counsel)

Citation guidelines

Cite as: General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Board of Reference and Counsel Records, Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno, Calif.

Location of associated materials

The correspondence files of Conference Chairmen Herb Brandt and Edmund Janzen, located in the Executive Committee Records (record group A210) contain considerable information regarding the work of the Board of Reference and Counsel. Records of the Board of Faith & Life and the Executive Commission, the bodies that succeeded the Board of Reference & Counsel, may be found in records groups A380 and A390, respectively.

Contents list

Box 1

Series I: Minutes and reports, 1928, 1939-1990

Box 2

Series II: Correspondence
General Correspondence, 1928-1990

Box 3

Vision Statement responses, 1988

Series III: Study Conferences (see box 6 for copy set)

12-15 December 1956 (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

- J. H. Quiring, "The Scriptural Concept of the Church and Its Implications for the Organizational and Structural Functions for the Mennonite Brethren Church."
- P. R. Lange, "Let This Mind."
- Waldo Wiebe, "The Biblical Teaching on Sanctification."
- G. W. Peters, "The Baptism and the Infilling of the Holy Spirit."
- A. H. Unruh, "Grundzüge der Theologie der Väter der M.B. Gemeinde."
- J. J. Toews, "The Gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Believer."
- David Ewert, "The Scriptural Teaching on the Preservation of the Believer."
- B. B. Janz, "Grundzüge im Character der Glaubenstellung unserer Väter."
- Lando Hiebert, "The Scriptural Principles of a Separated Life."

12-15 July 1958 (Denver, Colorado)

- D. Edmond Hiebert, "The Experience of Salvation as Viewed From the Standpoint of Conversion and Regeneration."
- "Report: Questionnaire on Trends and Needs in the Mennonite Brethren Conference."
- R. M. Baerg, "The Scriptural Pattern of the Diaconate."
- Waldo Hiebert, "The Scriptural Definition of the Nature of the Church."
- B. J. Braun, "The Scriptural Teaching on Organization and Government of the Local Church."
- J. B. Toews, "Separation and Remarriage."
- G. D. Huebert, "Our General Concept of Biblical Eschatology."

District & Provincial conferences in response to 1956 and 1958 study conferences:
North Saskatchewan: 1956, 1958

(A220: Board of Reference and Counsel)

South Saskatchewan: 1956

Manitoba: 1956

Pacific District: 1956, 1958

10-13 July 1959 (Herbert, Saskatchewan)

Arthur G. Willems, "The Inspiration of the Scriptures."

F. C. Peters, "Church and State in the New Testament."

A. E. Janzen, "Christian Ethics from the Biblical Standpoint."

Wesley Prieb & Jake Loewen, "The Christian and Race Relations."

Waldo D. Hiebert, "Christian Ideals in Marriage and Sex."

Clarence Hiebert, "A Biblical Study on the Subject of Feet-Washing."

David B. Wiebe, "The Biblical Teaching on Man."

B. J. Braun, "'A Model Constitution' for the Local Church of the Mennonite Brethren Conference."

23-24 November 1967 (Reedley, California)

J. H. Quiring, "Dealing Redemptively With the Divorced and Remarried."

A. B. Voth, "Christian Responsibility in Relation to Planned Parenthood."

Frank C. Peters, "Consensus and Change in Our Brotherhood."

Marvin Hein, "The Church, Its Regulations, and the Individual Member."

7-9 May 1968: "Study Conference on Evangelism and Discipleship" (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Arno Wiebe, "Principles of Discipleship for Mennonite Brethren Churches."

R. M. Baerg, "Doctrinal Priorities for Evangelism."

Orlando Wiebe, "Functional Fellowship for Evangelism."

G. W. Peters, "Remarriage of Divorced in Light of Scripture."

John Redekop, "The Christian and Labor Unions."

J. J. Toews, "Strategy of Outreach."

5-6 March 1970: "Study Conference on the Ministry" (Buhler, Kansas)

Waldo D. Hiebert, "Recruitment of Servants in the Church."

John Regehr, "The Place of Preaching in the Contemporary Church."

Orlando Wiebe, "The Commissioning of Servants in the Church."

Rudy Wiebe, "The Ghetto, The Launch Pad, The Desert."

16-17 August 1971 (Denver, Colorado)

David Ewert, "An Approach to the Current Charismatic Movement."

Marvin Hein, "Church Membership: Its Essence and Necessity."

Vern Ratzlaff, "A Christian Perspective on Abortion."

Victor Adrian, "The Whole Gospel to the Whole Man (The Relationship of Proclamation to Social Action)."

10-11 May 1974 (Clearbrook, British Columbia)

Elmer A. Martens, "The Use of the Old Testament in the Church."

Waldo D. Hiebert, "The Place of Feeling in Christian Experience."

Leonard B. Siemens, "The Christian and His Material Possessions."

Edmund Janzen, "The Church and the Urban Frontier."

16-18 December 1976: "Mennonite Brethren Hermeneutics Conference" (Fresno, Calif.)

Erwin Penner, "Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy."

Response: Delbert L. Wiens

Elmer A. Martens, "The Problem of Old Testament Ethics."

Allen R. Guenther, "Creation: A Hermeneutical Study in Genesis 1:1 - 2:3."

Howard Loewen, "The Pauline View of Woman."

(A220: Board of Reference and Counsel)

Devon H. Wiens, "The Gospels."

25-27 January 1978: "Study Conference on Eschatology" (Fresno, Calif.)

A. J. Klassen, "The Blessed Hope of the Church." (no copy available)

David Ewert, "The Last Days."

John E. Toews, "The Tribulation of the Church."

Abe Dueck, "Millennialism and the Mennonite Brethren Church."

Victor Adrian, "The Place of Israel."

J. A. Toews, "The People of God in the Light of the Parousia."

8-10 May 1980: "Current Issues in Church Leadership" (Clearbrook, British Columbia)

Victor Adrian, "The Call and Ordination to the Ministry."

John E. Toews, "Leadership Styles for Mennonite Brethren Churches."

Response: Herb Neufeld

Herbert J. Brandt, "Church-Pastor Relations."

Response: Arthur Flaming

Marvin Hein, "The Service of the Divorced and Remarried."

Response: Mervin Dick

David Ewert, "The 'Place' of the Woman in the Church."

Response: Karen Berg Neufeld

15-17 October 1986: "The Mennonite Brethren Church as a Covenant Community" (Fresno, California)

Raymond O. Bystrom, "A Converted and Baptized People."

Response: Herbert Neufeld

Response: Ed Boschmann

Howard J. Loewen, "The Mennonite Brethren as a Confessing Church."

Response: Robert Friesen

Response: Victor Neufeld

Edmund Janzen, "The Mennonite Brethren Church: A Covenanting People."

Response: John Vooyo

Response: Katie Funk Wiebe

Gerry Ediger, "The Leading Ministry in a Covenant Brotherhood Community."

Response: Vern Heidebrecht

Response: Abram G. Konrad

Herb Kopp, "A Serving People."

Response: Ron Penner

Response: Frances F. Hiebert

27-29 April 1988 (Calgary, Alberta)

Marvin Hein, "Church Membership Issues."

Larry Martens, "Peacemaking and the Church."

Abe J. Dueck, "Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Peace."

Report of Findings Committee

2-4 August 1989: "The Nature and Ministry of the Church" (Normal, Illinois)

John E. Toews, "The Nature of the Church."

Response: Jim Holm

Timothy J. Geddert, "The Ministry of Women—A Proposal for M.B.'s."

Ed Boschmann, "Women's Role in Ministry in the Church."

Erwin Penner, "The Lord's Supper and the Church."

Response: John Wall

Findings Committee Report

(A220: Board of Reference and Counsel)

Series IV: Church Member Profile

Master copy of questionnaire, n.d.

J. B. Toews correspondence, 1981-1985

Work papers, n.d.

Work papers from 1974 study, 1971-1972

Profile results, January 1984

Profile results, July 1985

Study conference papers, 11-13 July 1985

Box 4

Series V: Doctrinal issues files (prepared by Clarence Hiebert): A-L, ca. 1975

Box 5

Doctrinal issues files (prepared by Clarence Hiebert): L-W, ca. 1975

Series VI: Ad hoc task force records

Women's Task Force, 1987

Commission on General Conference Structure and Office Location, 1979

Conference Restructuring Task Force, 1985-1988

Task Force on Internationalization, 1989.

Box 6

Copy sets of Study Conference papers, 1956-1989