

Timeline of our Denominational Name

Womaen's Caucus of the Church of the Brethren

(related events are grouped together for clarity)

- 1708** Church begins with the baptism of five brethren and three sisters. No official name is chosen.
- 1836** First official denominational name for legal purposes, "**Fraternity of German Baptists**"
- 1871** Church renamed "**German Baptist Brethren**" for legal purposes
- 1888** A number of queries are sent to the Annual Meeting regarding a name change. Reasons for a name change included embarrassment about the word "German", a desire to have a name that was focused outwardly toward the world, frustration with the denomination's many nicknames, and questions about the denominations identity.
- 1902** Committee appointed to inquire how a name change would affect church property
- 1903** Committee appointed with the task of receiving legal council on changing a corporate name
- 1904** Annual Conference decides to spread the committee's findings throughout the denomination for discussion
- 1905** *The Gospel Messenger* creates a special column for members to write in their opinions on a name change
- 1906** Committee appointed to study the possibilities of changing the name
- 1907** Church renamed, "**Church of the Brethren**"
- 1958** Women are given ordination rights
- 1973** Questions of gender inclusion and the word "Brethren" are raised.
- 1975** Annual Conference study report on equality and language encourages "awareness that might result in a name change." "The issue is whether the church will continue to use language which divides and distorts God's people."
- 1988** Annual Conference passes a resolution for the support of the *Ecumenical Decade 1988-1998: Churches In Solidarity With Women*. The resolution called for the denomination to look at the treatment of women in the church and society and for the church to take the initiative in being inclusive.
- 1989** A query process for a study of the denominational name was begun at the Washington City Church of the Brethren in the Mid-Atlantic District
- 1990** Query rejected by Mid-Atlantic District.
- 1991** Query sent to officers of Annual Conference to consider sending query to Annual Conference. Query packets are distributed to Standing Committee, but action is postponed.
- 1992** Standing Committee appoints a "pre-committee" committee to study whether or not a committee should be formed to study the name of the church.
- 1993** "Pre-committee" committee makes a presentation to Standing Committee

suggesting a timeline for a name change by 2008. Committee is thanked and dismissed, with the knowledge that the conversation would continue. Later that year, 20 women and one man publicly change the name of the denomination to "Church of Reconciliation."

- 1994** Women's Caucus' Annual Conference booth invites people to suggest names for the denomination. Booth is met with enthusiasm and hostility.
- 1998** Womaen's Caucus Steering Committee decides to take the initiative for continuing the dialogue with hopes for a name change in 2008 (300th anniversary of the founding of the church).
- 2000** Two local congregations begin formal conversations and discuss the possibility of sending a query to their respective district conferences, inviting more conversation about the denominational name. No official decisions were made.
- 2001** The La Verne congregation in the Pacific Southwest District and the Ivester congregation in the Northern Plains District send queries to Annual Conference from their respective districts.
- 2002** The queries are combined and a committee of five was elected to respond to the queries by promoting a denomination-wide dialogue. The committee members were Ben Barlow, Jeff Carter, Alberto Gonzalez, Shawn Kirchner, and Shirley Spire.
- 2003** The committee reports to Annual Conference with a framework for conversation to be used in districts and by individuals. It poses five questions:
1. *What are you hearing about our denomination's name?*
 2. *Do you have any positive stories or experiences to share about the name Church of the Brethren?*
 3. *Do you have any negative stories or experiences to share about the name Church of the Brethren?*
 4. *Can you imagine why some might have differing perspectives about the name Church of the Brethren? If so, what would those be?*
 5. *How can we acknowledge differing perspectives and maintain unity in the body?*
- 2004** The committee issues its final report to the delegates, stating its finding of "overwhelming support" for the current name. Its only recommendation is to update "*A Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues.*" There is little discussion at the hearing or during the presentation to the delegates, and the report passes "overwhelmingly." Most delegates felt that the issue of a name change could be put aside.
- Fall 2004** Caucus Steering Committee brainstorms ways to further the conversation.