

Association of Grace Brethren Ministers Report to the Fellowship Council

By Joel Richards, President
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This report comes to you at the request of the Fellowship Council of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches.

The Distant Past

Our association grew out of the Progressive Brethren Movement. This association has experienced normal changes throughout its history, including several different revisions to its constitution and name. Our current association has been known as the Association of Grace Brethren Ministers since late in 1990.

Like most groups, our purpose(s) has been stated in various ways over the years. The essence however has had little deviation. We serve as an association to encourage, support and strengthen leaders who belong to Grace Brethren churches and to engage in activities for their benefit (current purpose statement).

The Recent Past

Our current organization is under going change. Over the past several years the officers of this organization became increasingly concerned about the inability to reach stated goals and purposes. The ongoing discussion led to the conclusion that the AGBM would best be served by moving toward the development and ultimate selection of a "Ministry Director." The decision to do this led to hiring Dr. Jerry Young to serve in the area of research and development. Six purposes were identified for the establishment of such an office. These have been listed before in previous reports but it is important to list them again because it gives a feel for the direction we want the AGBM to take. The purposes are as follows:

- \$ Empower someone will lead the leaders and seek to develop the AGBM into a proactive organization dedicated to enhance ministerial effectiveness with the FGBC
- \$ Empower someone who will work to develop an organizational culture of high expectation for ministry competence and learning
- \$ Empower someone who will lead the way in re-shaping the AGBM for the 21st century, someone who will work to see that the AGBM is an organization that is valuable to its members
- \$ Empower someone who will act as an advocate for ministerial members

- \$ Empower someone who will develop a network of individuals who can shepherd those ministers who need encouragement and support
- \$ Empower someone who will work for consistency in the licensing and ordination process.

The Executive Committee met three times last year. The first meeting was in conjunction with the Certification Summit held at Lititz. The summit was sponsored by *GBNAM* and was successful at several levels. Our second meeting took place at National conference. Our last meeting was held in Winona Lake. This was our annual “business” meeting with an emphasis on getting the ballot ready and sent for the new board of directors.

Our association met at National conference. We had three main objectives for this years meeting.

The first component was that of encouragement. Gifts were distributed randomly at the beginning of each session. There was a lot of fun in this. We feel it is important for the men in the trenches week in and week out to have a good time together.

The second component was the recognition of three deserving members. Glen Shirk was recognized as pastor of the year. Lester Kennedy was presented the Lifetime achievement award, and Jesse Deloe received the Excellence in Ministry award. There were also memorials available for members of our association who went home to be with the Lord the previous year.

The third component was a revisiting of the new by-laws. Jerry Young led us through each section with an opportunity for questions or comments after each one. The ultimate goal was to vote on the acceptance of the new prototype by-laws. It was approved.

The acceptance of the new by-laws meant we would pursue the new board of directors. The men to be approved were:

Ken Bickel, Mark Saunders, Randall Smith, Randy Weekley, Doug Courter, Robert Fetterhoff, Robert Soto, Terry Daniels, Greg Howell, and Ralph Molyneaux.

The ballot went out in December and the results were tabulated in mid January (2007). The aforementioned men were approved. Additionally, Joel Richards, Daniel White and Bud Olszewski retained their current offices.

The Future

A continued objective is in the area of communication. We are not moving backwards even though we have long way to go. Successes are:

A regular e-mail to our members

A return of the *Serving One Another* newsletter. The next issue is being drafted.

A new Blog updated regularly with relevant information to our members.. Also, our website is current.

And, communication is coming our way. This may not be new but it appears that there is a growing awareness of where people can go with questions, concerns, input and prayer requests, etc.

We are working toward doing some things in our communications that will be an encouragement to ministry leaders wives.

Another of our objectives this year is a continuation of dealing with new by-laws and structure. The next step in implementation will be for the new directors to begin to work on and develop the nature of their ministry as outlined in the by-laws.

The development of the ministry director's office is still an active objective.

The last component of our year is to work on a number of goals we have in mind. We will keep addressing them as we can. Two in particular have been discussed. One is dealing with ethics and the second is developing some direction for effective mentoring.

Long Range Thinking

1. Provide ministry certification standards which are accepted and recognized throughout the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches.

2. Provide standards for churches to follow in their relationships with pastors, especially as they relate to search and selection processes, compensation, continuing education, sabbaticals, and conflict resolution.

3. Provide ethical standards for pastors and ministry leaders which are accepted and recognized throughout the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches.

4. Create an environment of mutual accountability whereby pastors and ministry leaders are called upon to conduct themselves in a manner which honors the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Identify, qualify and encourage the professional development of young men and women who are being called by God to ministry in the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches.

6. Create an official roster of pastors and ministry leaders who are certified for service in the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, whether they are members of the Association or not.

7. Maintain ministry profiles for pastors and ministry leaders throughout the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches to the end that they may know each other better and serve one another more efficiently.

8. Create and maintain a system by which individual pastors and ministry leaders are recognized for excellence and faithfulness in ministry

9. Offer specific activities by which pastors and ministry leaders may grow toward excellence in ministry through such means as continuing education, networking and mentoring

10. Offer a comforting and counseling presence to pastors and churches which are struggling because they are unable to resolve conflict or achieve stability in ministry

11. Offer financial assistance, within the constraints of available resources, to those in ministry who are experiencing a temporary but serious financial crisis.

GrowGoLead

Our association, while supportive of all three elements of **GrowGoLead**, is most naturally aligned with the **Lead** part of the goal. We are working to make the leaders we have the best they can be and to actively recruit and support new leaders. Since it is possible that there are still some of our pastors and churches that are not aware of this goal it will be explained and encouraged in future publications.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Richards

President, AGBM