

To: Fellowship Council Members
From: Liz Cutler Gates, Brethren Missionary Herald Co.
Date: January 28, 2011
Re: Update for Fellowship Council meetings

For 70 years, it has been the privilege of the Brethren Missionary Herald Company (BMH) to come alongside the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches in providing high quality communication tools and biblical resources for Christian growth and the study of theology.

The year 2011 should not be any different. In fact, we hope it's better.

We at BMH are excited about the Commitment to Common Ministry. It's a document that provides guidance and focus to our network of churches. It's also been a pretty good resource for copy for *FGBC World* magazine and its companion podcast. Already we have featured stories about church planting, leadership development, and integrated ministries in the pages of *FGBC World*. We've provided a platform in the magazine for the moderator to write about his vision for the FGBC. We'll do what it takes to keep the message rolling about this initiative in our network.

Our board has committed \$2,600 to the support of the Charis initiative worldwide. Those funds are providing a web presence for the international movement, guided by Terry White, BMH publisher and former executive director. Terry also serves as the "reporter" for the meetings, recording the event both in written form and photographically.

As I embark on my second year as executive director, it's an honor to report on the activities of BMH for the past year and to discuss any common concerns. Here are a few highlights:

Fellowship Communications – The debut of *FGBC World* in a magazine format has been well received. Currently it is being sent at no charge to 254 churches and more than 1,600 individuals. Budget cuts forced us to a quarterly schedule, but we hope to add back two special issues that will be financed through donations and advertising. One of these issues will most likely be a pre-conference report, highlighting the people and places of conference.

The magazine is now supplemented with a monthly podcast, which is available at the BMH Editor's Blog or may be subscribed to on i-Tunes. It features companion interviews to the printed features, breaking news stories, worship songs from our Grace Brethren pastors, and other audio items of interest.

The *BMH Editor's Blog* (fgbcworld-blog.com) continues to provide current news in the FGBC. We're registering more than 6,000 hits a month, unfortunately most of them when a tragedy strikes or someone dies. But it provides an important connection and communication function for our network of congregations.

We provide editorial services to the FGBC offices at no charge, including proof-reading the Ministry Handbook and overseeing the development of the *Why Associate?* brochure, which helps local congregations understand the value of being part of the fellowship.

BMH Books – We continue to see record-breaking gross sales for BMH Books. Our diverse customer base continues to return to buy our products. Praise the Lord!

We try to be selective in the titles we choose to print. We've recently released *God of Hope*, a project by a local author who is a former vice president at Toyota USA. His goal is to reach 10 percent of the world's population with the Gospel and we're along for the ride.

We've recently signed contracts with Tom Julien for his new book, *The Three Princes*, and with Grace College faculty member, Tammy Schultz, for her book, *Beyond Desolate*, (with Hannah Estebrook). We are also working with Dr. Doug Cassell on his memoirs of his time working at the Grace Brethren mission hospital in Africa, *Safari Surgeon*.

Brethren Heritage Involvement – Terry White continues to serve as a member and treasurer of the Brethren Encyclopedia Board Inc. (BE). They have begun planning for the next Brethren World Assembly, which will be held in 2013 near Dayton, Ohio. BE continues to warehouse their inventory in our building, which provides a little income for us.

I also serve on a committee to develop the Brethren Digital Archives, which has a mission to digitize, with maximum searchability, Brethren periodicals produced from the beginning of publication to the year 2000. This year we made tremendous progress. We've partnered with Lyris, the nation's largest regional membership organization for libraries and information professionals, to see the venture to completion. Grant funds make it possible to scan these publications at a rate far below the original \$150,000 estimate. It is now hoped to complete the project, including oversized documents, for approximately \$50,000.

The publications will be available at archives.org as well as at the web sites of the various groups represented. A complete set may also be accessed by computer at the Brethren Heritage Center, Brookville, Ohio. That set will contain publications that the group has determined will not be available on the Internet

We are grateful to be part of what God is doing through Grace Brethren congregations and associated organizations around the world. We want to make the best use of our resources to nurture Great Commission teamwork among the people and churches of the FGBC by building bridges of communication. Your questions, observations, and suggestions are welcomed at any time by the BMH staff.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Liz Cutler Gates".

Liz Cutler Gates, executive director