

To: Fellowship Council Members
From: Liz Cutler Gates, Brethren Missionary Herald Co.
Date: January 29, 2010
Re: Update for Fellowship Council meetings

It was 70 years ago that a new magazine was introduced to the group that has become known as the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches. That magazine – the *Brethren Missionary Herald* – became the foundation for an organization that would provide communication services to our network of congregations. Since those early days, the Brethren Missionary Herald Company (BMH) has continued to build bridges of communication between the people and churches of our fellowship.

A new decade has dawned with new leadership at the helm of the company. It's my commitment to you that BMH will continue to lead the way in producing innovative communications that help our group of churches reach our corner of the kingdom.

It's my privilege to report on the activities of BMH for the past year and to discuss any common concerns. Here are a few highlights:

Fellowship Communications – For the past six years, we have produced *FGBC World* as a newspaper. With the first issue of 2010, it was changed to a magazine format. Much of the content remains the same, but we believe the new format will attract more readers and will be more effective in building bridges of communication. A companion podcast, or online radio broadcast, is planned. It will include expanded interviews and feature original music by our Fellowship's worship pastors.

At the same time, we redesigned and updated the *BMH Editor's Blog*. We moved servers, allowing us to use software that provides more flexibility of content and changed the web address to www.fgbcworld-blog.com. One new feature on this site is a Twitter Feed from Grace Brethren pastors and church or ministry staff. The blog continues to have more than 5,000 visitors a month, providing a valuable connection and communication function for our group of churches.

Monthly, BMH hosts the communication staff members from the national Grace Brethren organizations for networking and fellowship. We also look for ways to work together and this year, we've produced a new brochure that describes the FGBC – *A Common Commitment*. It is funded by the organizations so that our churches may have it at no cost (other than shipping). A companion website, www.commoncommitment.us, provides additional information about the Fellowship.

We are also working with Tom Avey and Phil Sparling to produce a new *Why Associate?* brochure that can be used with churches that are considering joining the Fellowship.

BMH Books – This past year has been the highest-ever year for gross sales for BMH Books. It was not the highest-ever year for net sales, because of discounting, because some of the sales were to authors, and because the time investment in some of the new products drove the net price of the first edition up. (This will be significantly lower if/when they go into reprint.) John Leonard, BMH books manager, deserves much of the credit for this record-breaking year. Already in the first two weeks of the year, we are preparing to reprint three books because sales have depleted our inventory. Even though we will cut back significantly on the number of new publications in 2010, I have every reason to believe that our year's sales performance will be very close to that of 2009. We have a diverse customer base, we are primarily committing only to new products which have a guaranteed

income base, and we are sharpening our printing/purchase practices (smaller press runs). In addition, our rights consultant and foreign sales market representative has produced some very nice orders from U.K. and elsewhere overseas. We anticipate those to continue in 2010.

Brethren Heritage Involvement – Terry White continues to serve as a member and treasurer of the Brethren Encyclopedia Board Inc. (BE). A newly-designed website may be seen at www.brethrenencyclopedia.org and plans have begun for the next Brethren World Assembly. 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. BMH and the Morgan Library at Grace College will host this group when it meets in Winona Lake, Ind., in March. Ultimately, my hope is to have the past *Brethren Missionary Herald* magazines archived digitally, but we are beginning with documents that are common to all the groups involved – those that pre-date the three-way split in the late 1800s.

Contract Services – We have continued our work this year of providing contracted services for AGBM (mail drop, handling finances, producing newsletter, and populating blog) and for GO2 Church Planting (now producing a newsletter for them). We continue to offer our core competencies to any organizations and churches who may wish to take advantage of them.

Emerging Leaders – As always, we seek ways to train and encourage leaders for the future, especially in the area of communications. Each semester, a Grace College journalism student intern joins our staff. (This semester, we'll have two!) Terry White traveled to the Philippines in September to train writers and editors and he continues to have an active involvement with Grace College & Seminary, teaching beginning and advanced writing students during the school year.

Staffing Changes – At the end of 2009, Terry White stepped down from executive leadership, wanting to focus on other activities. He continues on a part-time basis as publisher of BMH Books. At the same time, Jesse Deloe, who has served as senior editor, began serving in a consulting role. Beginning January 1, I began as executive director. I'm excited about the opportunities at hand and it is my vision to lead the way for ground-breaking communications in our network of churches.

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,



Liz Cutler Gates, executive director