

Church Structure

Community

The early Brethren had a strong emphasis and practice of community. The community shared these basic beliefs and practices.

- **What do the Scriptures say?** Instead of blindly obeying creeds and traditions, we earnestly study the scriptures to determine God's will for our lives.
- **How did the earliest disciples understand and apply it?** Realizing that the original scriptures were written to a different language, culture, and time, we look to the earliest Christians to better understand its true meaning.
- **How is the Holy Spirit working within us to confirm it?** Rejecting the idea that any single individual could fully understand scripture, we interpret and apply scripture as a community.
- **How will we obey?** If we believe God's Word calls us to do something, we commit to putting it into practice.

Instead of following one spiritual leader, the scriptures were to be studied, interpreted, and understood as a community. Revelations of the Holy Spirit will never contradict the scriptures and are to be shared with the community. There is wisdom and humility in this approach.

The Covenant Brethren Church Executive Board is set up with these beliefs and practices. We have nine Executive Board Members that serve for a term of time. Accountable to the larger church when voted in and accountable to each other as specified in our Bylaws.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

In a training session on business management, the instructor said that an entrepreneur owned business will eventually lose the entrepreneur. All of us will move on to another job, retire, or die. That is an obvious reality for business owners and Church pastors. If the entire church looks toward the pastor and has all their eggs in his basket, what will happen to the church when the pastor has moved on, retired, or died?

Looking back to the early church in the book of Acts, the 12 apostles did not have enough time to deal with some of the governing and physical needs of the growing church. The position of deacon was developed to assist with the governing and physical needs of the church.

Free Ministry Example:

We have one Free Ministry congregation in CBC. This is meant as an example and not a promotion of Free Ministry over Paid Pastor model. Many of the governing principles can be the same.

Ministers

- Multiple Ministers share the responsibilities of pastor.
 - Ministers decide what subjects, scriptures, or topics to preach on
 - Ministers oversee the order of worship on a Sunday Morning

- Ministers care for the spiritual needs of the congregation
- Ministers are part of the Church Board
- Ministers are called at a special church council meeting to serve as pastors of the church.
- Position is not paid, but most church take a love offering a few times per year to compensate the ministers.
- Calling of a minister is a lifetime calling with the minister going emeritus around age 70.

Deacons

- Multiple Deacon share the responsibilities of deacons.
 - Deacons care for the physical and some spiritual needs of the congregation.
 - Each deacon has a list of church members they are responsible for the year.
 - If the church still practices the annual visit, the deacons visit the church members on their list.
 - Deacons may care for external needs of the community outside the church.
 - Deacons may oversee a benevolence fund to help financial needs of the congregation.
 - Deacons oversee the Love feast.
 - Deacons fill the baptistry.
 - Deacons are part of the Church Board.
- Deacons are called at a special church council meeting of the church.
- Position is not paid.
- Calling of a deacon is a lifetime calling with the deacon going emeritus around age 70.

Strengths and weaknesses are shared among the church board. There is accountability and community within the church board. The loss of one member is not as large of an impact on the congregation. There is an encouragement of service within the congregation rather than an expectation of paid service.

Having a community approach to how we govern ourselves in an orderly and Loving manner is a strong foundation to build community within the church body. This community is to let the light of Jesus shine to the world around us.

John 13:35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.