

BFC Conference Proceedings – 2025

Fourth meeting

Tuesday, April 29, 2025, 1:30 P.M.

Conference Moderator Daniel L. Williams called the pastors and delegates back to order for the Tuesday afternoon meeting at 1:30 p.m. Ronald W. Reed, an elder-delegate from Grace BFC, Reading, PA, prayed at the start of the session.

The First Reading legislation considered just prior to lunch was withdrawn by the Executive Board, which had introduced it.

Elections were conducted electronically. Results appear later in the account of this meeting.

In something new to BFC Conference, the first of two panel discussions focused on the topic of “Building Unity within Your Church.” Conference Secretary Ronald L. Kohl served as moderator while the panel included Calvin T. Reed, William G. Schlonecker, Robert A. Sloan Jr., and Daniel L. Williams.

Here are a few highlights of the discussion:

- What are some of the marks of a unified church? Schlonecker: Unified leadership – “So much so that it is obvious to the congregation that there is unity of leadership.” He used passages in Ephesians 4 and Romans that speak of the weaker brother being upheld and helped.
- Have you experienced a lack of unity in leadership in your ministry? Reed: We have been blessed [at Lebanon BFC] with a good spirit of unity, but unity is not unanimity. We don’t always agree on every detail,” he said, citing the challenge of COVID-19. “We were not all in agreement on the wisest course of action, but we were unified,” he said. “Everyone supported the final decisions that were made.” He noted humility as an essential characteristic of unity.
- How did coming through periods of disunity help you to learn and to grow as a pastor? Schlonecker: “We had unity, not uniformity, by listening closely to one another, taking time to pray individually, and continuing the conversation at a later time. Pastors and elders can build up trust and confidence with the congregation over time.”
- During a church merger, how did you maintain unity through the stress of a church merger? Williams, who pastored a period of transition as Fleetwood BFC merged with Trinity BFC, Blandon, said, he learned “patience with brothers and sisters when they had not arrived at where we think they should. It takes time, patience, and willingness to walk together” – According to Amos 3:3, which states, “Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?”
- Asked for biblical texts that have helped these pastors understand what unity should look like in a church, Ephesians 5 (seeing the church as the Bride of Christ), Philippians 2:1-11, and the story of Joseph in the Book of Genesis were noted. Reed: “Marriage is an

example of the relationship of Christ and the church. There needs to be a real commitment to know God – that can heal and restore relationships, just like in a marriage.”

- Schlonecker suggested that a pastor earns respect with his congregation by shepherding them in love and being authentic with them.
- What advice do you have for a pastor or elder going through a time of disunity? Williams said it’s important for pastors and elders to know they are not alone. He advised pastors to reach out to brothers in other BFC churches. “Talk to the Lord and talk to your brothers in Christ,” he stressed.
- What are some practical ways to build unity in your church? Schlonecker: “One way to cultivate unity is by getting people involved. As each one does his or her part, the body is built up to unity. Equipping and involving your people can help bring unity as they serve each other.”
- What are some of the biggest threats to unity in the church? Several of the panelists addressed this matter. Reed said that oftentimes pastors are a threat to their own church’s unity. He said, “We must guard our own hearts and be humble.” Another threat, Williams said, is compromising on essential doctrines. Not while at the same time recognizing and maintaining the right priorities. “What are important matters but not ones that are worth breaking fellowship over?” he said.
- Asked how to navigate the “sacred cows” that many churches hold dear, Sloan urged patience. “Never surprise your elders or even your people,” he said. “Explain to people when you are considering a change and then do it slowly when dealing with ‘sacred cows.’”
- Another question involved political differences of opinion that exist in every congregation. Schlonecker said he considers social media “a huge threat to unity, especially in the world of politics. I would never put a bumper sticker on my car or a sign in my yard because those things can instantly shut down conversation with a whole group of individuals. It is possible to talk about a particular [political] issue, but we should never be a church of one party or candidate.”
- “You don’t have to swing at every pitch,” Williams said of our response when people in our congregation ask us to take political stands. “You can listen without taking action at times.” We need to go back to Scripture and remind ourselves that ultimately we are citizens of heaven and exiles in this current life.

Consideration of Legislation at First Reading

The following proposed pieces of legislation were considered for adoption at First Reading:

Article 511-1.7 (3), Youth and Young Adult Committee, Purpose

Whereas, the Youth and Young Adults Committee does not feel the current purpose statement is specific enough in supporting the local church ministries, and

Whereas, the Youth and Young Adults Committee desires to serve the local church ministries more effectively and practically, therefore be it

Resolved, that we adopt the following resolution, replacing current purpose statement 511-1.7 (3):

Purpose: The Youth and Young Adults Committee exists to glorify and honor God primarily by equipping churches to effectively reach and disciple students and young adults for Christ. This includes (1) training leaders, (2) providing relevant insights and trends in culture, (3) hosting discipleship and outreach events, and (4) promoting unity among the churches.

[FIRST READING]

Yes - 148; No - 0.

Article 511-1.7 (6), Prayer Committee, Composition and Election

Whereas, the composition of the BFC Prayer Committee as specified in the Principles of Order currently states, “(1) The BFC Prayer Committee shall be composed of four ministers and three laypersons. Laypersons must be members in good standing at a BFC church,” and

Whereas, it also states that, “(3) No member of the committee may serve more than two consecutive terms. A member may be elected to a new term after a minimum of one year’s time following two consecutive terms,” and

Whereas, the Committee has found it difficult to find laypersons who are both passionate about prayer and are able/willing to serve on the committee, and

Whereas, the current composition of the committee consists of six ministers and two laypersons, and

Whereas, the Committee is seeking to undertake two separate Days of Prayer (North and South) and needs more members in order to facilitate the Days of Prayer effectively, therefore be it

Resolved, that 511-1.7 (6), under “Composition and Election” be changed to the following:

- (1) The BFC Prayer Committee shall be composed of members in good standing of a BFC church.
- (2) The committee shall elect its own members, subject to the ratification of the BFC Executive Board.
- (3) No member of the committee may serve more than two consecutive terms. A member may be elected to a new term after a minimum of one year’s time following two consecutive terms.
- (4) The members of the committee shall be elected for a term of three years.

(5) The committee shall organize itself at the call of the chairman of the previous year, at which time new officers shall be elected.

[FIRST READING]

Yes - 157; No - 1.

Prayer Committee finances/treasurer

Whereas, the BFC Office has adequate personnel to effectively administrate the finances of the Prayer Committee, and the BFC Executive Board prefers to have the BFC Office administrate such funds of the BFC Committees; and

Whereas, the duties of the Prayer Committee's treasurer have been absorbed by the BFC office for the past few years, therefore be it

Resolved, that the BFC Prayer Committee no longer be required to have a member serve in the role of treasurer, and that the Committee will have sufficient communication with the BFC office in regards to the administration of funds.

[FIRST READING]

Yes - 157; No - 0.

Resolved, that David T. Allen be ratified to a three-year term as Executive Director of the Bible Fellowship Church.

Report of the Board of Church Health: (see page)

Resolved, that the report be accepted.

Robert A. Sloan, Jr., Interim Director of the Board of Church Health, reminded Conference that he is the interim director. He offered an explanation of the role of Church Health. "Our purpose is to come alongside and help" churches that are struggling, he said. The means by which they do so is, in part, to look for "flags" that indicate a church is encountering difficulties: attendance trends, number of elders, etc." The goal, he said, is to see a resurgence of the church. Sometimes, Sloan said, an outside consultant can be helpful in restoring a church to health. "Sometimes it's just helpful to have someone come along to give you a fresh glimpse of what you're doing," he noted.

"We're here to help. We're not here to threaten," Sloan said.

The following were elected to boards and committees:

Ministerial Credentials Committee (ministers):

Keith A. Strunk (3 years)

Keith M. Long (3 years)

Ministerial Candidate Committee (ministers):

Andrew W. Barnes (3 years)

Wesley H. Bunting (3 years)

Ministerial Relations Committee (elders):

Ronald W. Reed (3 years)

Conference Judicatory (elders):

Donald McKinney (3 years)

Officers of the 143rd BFC Conference

Moderator

Randall A. Grossman (1 year)

Following the afternoon break, Mark E. Kessler, an elder-delegate from Grace BFC, Wallingford, PA, prayed for the discussions to follow.

Report from Study Committees

Study Committee to Examine Articles 24-27: (see page)

Resolved, that the report be accepted.

Timothy J. Bertolet noted that the committee examined several possible options in terms of legislation that the committee could present to BFC Conference. He added, “No one on the committee came with an agenda. Let’s determine what’s best for the denomination.”

This committee seeks to gauge Conference’s pulse on the direction it is hoping to take, leading to proposals it would recommend for prospective changes to the Articles of Faith at the 143rd BFC Conference in 2026.

Resolved, that Conference instructs the Study Committee on the Millennium to continue its work. And be it further

Resolved, that Conference encourages the committee to bring to the 2026 BFC Conference proposed changes to the Articles of Faith consistent with the sentiments of the committee’s 2025 report.

Conference, by a hand vote, affirmed the committee’s resolutions

The committee hopes to host a one-day mini-conference of some kind later in 2025 and asks pastors to invite interested elders and other laypersons to hear their research and engage in discussion with the issues at hand.

Study Committee on Abortion: (see page)

Resolved, that the report be accepted. The committee, reconstituted in the past year, hopes to present a full report at the 143rd BFC Conference.

Resolved, that Philip E. Morrison and Gregory Tuke be ratified as new members of the committee.

Committee to Review BPLs: (see page)

The committee presented resolutions to form two new study committees as part of its mandate, as given by the 136th BFC Conference, to review our current Biblical Principles for Living (BPLs) and offer any appropriate adjustments.

Resolved, that the BFC Conference appoint a committee to examine Article 104-3 – Civil Government, and prepare a statement on the issue of Christ's church and national politics by considering the following questions:

1. How does nationalism/patriotism function in view of Christ's love for the world and His present/coming kingdom?
2. How can leaders in Christ's church address and promote biblical conduct regarding political issues without polarizing the body of Christ?

By hand vote, the motion passed.

Resolved, that the BFC Conference appoint a committee to re-examine its statement on Stewardship (104-1) by considering the following questions:

1. What should be the church's position with regard to climate change, its causes, and cures?
2. Are current environmental concerns consistent with the biblical concept of human stewardship of the earth and its resources?
3. Should the church express environmental concerns? If so, to what extent?

The motion passed by hand vote by a 79-50 count.

Whereas, the Study Committee to Examine the BPLs has completed its assignment as given by the 136th BFC Conference, therefore be it

Resolved, that we thank the members of the committee for their service and declare the committee to be dissolved.

Consideration of Petitions from churches and Requests from Boards of Elders

Petition from Ebenezer BFC, Bethlehem: (see page)

Resolved, that the petition be received.

Be it **Resolved**, that Article 701-4 be modified to require all churches to provide a vote either for or against the resolution, and as such, the 2/3 count is from the churches that provide the vote.

[FIRST READING]

Yes – 116; No - 43.

Board of Missions report: (see page)

Resolved, that the report be accepted.

James D. MacArthur, Director of the BFC Board of Missions, provided a thumbnail sketches of the BFC's history with respect to missions. "I would say that missions has been at the center of the Bible Fellowship Church throughout its history," MacArthur said.

MacArthur also pointed to the Great Commission in Matthew 28. "I'm not a rocket scientist...but I think the King wants us to carry out His mission to all nations." He then pointed to a Global Status of Evangelical Christianity map that highlights where the unreached people groups are located.

The following missionaries were present to greet BFC Conference as evidences of the BFC's ongoing commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission:

Lisa Barnshaw, Christar; Bill Early, Trans World Radio; Walt Johnston, Coalition of Christian Outreach (CCO), working with grad students and international students at Penn State University; Gary Shogren, World Venture, professor at ESEPA Bible college & seminary in Costa Rica; John & Laura Studenroth, collegiate outreach ministry, primarily at Kutztown University.

Craig Miller and John Hoover, two longtime BFC missionaries, were promoted to glory in the past year; MacArthur asked for prayers of comfort for their widows.

Sean P. McNamara, an elder-delegate at Faith BFC, Spring City, PA and Chairman of the Board of Missions, closed the afternoon session with prayer at 5 p.m.

Prior to Conference breaking for dinner, pastors attended a meeting of the BFC Beneficiary Society.

