

BIC U.S. Leadership Summary Fall 2018

During the month of September 2018, Leadership Council and General Conference Board met for their leadership meetings. The Commission on Ministry and Doctrine met in October 2018. The following is a summary of conversations and decisions from these meetings.

Leadership Council (LC)

“Leadership Council shall provide leadership of BIC U.S., subject to General Conference Board” (2018 *Manual of Doctrine and Government*, Bylaw Article 4.1).

1. Leadership Council shared with one another summaries of their work across the Church and spent time praying for one another.
2. LC approved the minutes of their previous meetings.
3. LC approved the adoption of two congregations: Heart of Worship, Albuquerque, New Mexico, led by Pastor Yaciel Toledo; Karis Church, Chino, California, led by Pastor Peter Song. There was also a report of a new congregation in New Jersey.
4. LC reviewed General Assembly 2018 and discussed plans for General Assembly 2020.
5. LC spent considerable time in prayerful reflection on how best to facilitate a churchwide conversation on vision priorities for the years 2020-2028. It was agreed that each congregation and conference should be encouraged to participate in this conversation. Goals for this process will be to have clarity on denominational and regional conference strategic priorities that will guide our efforts and use of resources. We also desire that every congregation should develop strategic priorities for their particular context and ministry.
6. LC reviewed the recent BIC Leadership Orientation and talked about ways to improve it.
7. LC discussed a number of theological and practical issues. A concern that continues to be raised in parts of the Church is how can we best preserve our theological identity and heritage and also work to protect the theological integrity of the Church within doctrinal statements found in the *Manual of Doctrine and Government* (the Articles of Faith and Doctrine, Core Values, and Statements of Christian Life and Practice).
8. LC approved a recommendation to be brought to General Conference Board and the Commission on Ministry and Doctrine at their upcoming meetings for the development of a statement that affirms the commitment of the Church to the Scriptures and Articles of Faith and Doctrine, with particular emphasis on the statements about God’s nature.
9. LC discussed the challenges that are being created in a society that is becoming increasingly polarized and where people, including Christians, resort to attacking one another on social media and through other electronic communications rather than talking directly to one another with grace and truth. Sadly, the Church is becoming more and more like unredeemed and sinful society in this regard.
10. LC approved Pastor Rob Douglass, Dillsburg BIC, Dillsburg, Pa., as a reader for doctrinal questionnaires for those in the ministerial credentialing process. Approval is also needed from CMD for this role.
11. LC reviewed a number of financial reports.

General Conference Board (GCB)

“General Conference Board (the "Board" composed of "Board Members") is the board of directors of BIC U.S. The Board shall oversee the mission and ministry of the BIC U.S. and shall have full power to establish and direct the policies concerning the affairs of the BIC U.S.” (*2018 Manual of Doctrine and Government*, Bylaw Article 3.1).

1. General Conference Board commenced with a time of worship and prayer.
2. The board approved the minutes of previous meetings.
3. The board welcomed a number of new members.
4. The board reviewed the evaluations of General Assembly 2018 and discussed plans for General Assembly 2020.
5. The board received and discussed reports from the regional conference bishops, the director of BIC U.S. World Missions (World Missions), the director of finance and shared services, and the national director. In these reports, there was encouraging information about how God is at work among us. For example:
 - a. Bishop Aner Morejon reported on 47 congregations/missions that are located outside of the U.S. for which he has some level of oversight and responsibility. This is in addition to the 54 congregations in the Southeast Conference.
 - b. Jonathan Lloyd, director of World Missions, reported on 17 individuals who have been in some level of communication with World Missions concerning a desire to consider vocational missions ministry.
 - c. Bishop Perry Engle reported on a number of new congregations in his two regional conferences.
 - d. Other Leadership Council members reported on exciting happenings in their areas of ministry. In addition to the areas of growth and encouragement, LC members also shared about challenges and difficulties.
6. The board approved the recommendation of Leadership Council for the development of a statement that affirms the commitment of the Church to the Scriptures and Articles of Faith and Doctrine, with particular emphasis on the statements about God’s nature.
7. The board received reports from the executive committee, the governance committee, and the finance committee.
8. The board received reports on recent conversations between Leadership Council of BIC U.S. and the Leadership Team of BIC Canada.
9. The board members convened as the trustees of the Pension Fund, the fund providing all retirement plans to Church employees and missionaries. BIC U.S. provides two retirement plans through the Pension Fund — (1) defined benefit plan (BIC Pension Fund), which is now frozen to new applicants; and (2) defined contribution plan (BIC 403(b) Plan), which is open to eligible employees. For many years, the defined benefit plan (BIC Pension Fund) was underfunded. The trustees celebrated the fact that the defined benefit plan is now fully funded (according to the assumptions of expected investment performance and the actuarial life-expectancy projections of the plan’s participants). The whole Church is grateful to everyone who contributed to the Honor the Past: Build the Future ministry campaign so that the BIC

Pension Fund would have sufficient resources to meet the commitments that have been made to missionaries and pastors.

10. The board, acting as Pension Fund trustees, also approved using PenServ as the volume submitter for the 403(b)(9) retirement plan so that it will meet all IRS requirements and regulations. The Brethren in Christ Foundation will handle the implementation of any necessary changes.

Commission on Ministry and Doctrine (CMD)

“The Commission on Ministry and Doctrine shall serve under the authority of and on behalf of Leadership Council by overseeing the equipping and credentialing of ministers of the BIC U.S. and by seeking to preserve the doctrinal integrity of the Church” (2018 *Manual of Doctrine and Government*, Bylaw Article 5.2.1).

1. The Commission on Ministry and Doctrine welcomed Peter Guinther to the meeting in his role as CMD associate. Peter is also the human resources administrator for the BIC U.S.
2. CMD approved the minutes of their May 2018 meeting.
3. CMD approved Pastor Rob Douglass, Dillsburg BIC, Dillsburg, Pa., as a reader for doctrinal questionnaires.
4. CMD received a report from Eduardo Llanes on the progress of credentialing among Spanish-language pastors.
5. CMD reviewed seminary aid disbursements and discussed how best we can continue to preserve the theological identity and heritage of the Brethren in Christ.
6. CMD approved the following additional question for the doctrinal questionnaire: *The Brethren in Christ U.S. fully affirms men and women in ministry leadership at all levels of Church life. Women and men are ordained, licensed, and commissioned as pastors, bishops, deacons, denominational leaders, and members of local, regional, and national BIC U.S. governing boards. Briefly state your understanding from the Scriptures of women in ministry and leadership.*
7. CMD approved a question to be added to the doctrinal questionnaire regarding God’s nature. The final wording is to be approved, but the question will quote the MDG statements on God’s nature and that God transcends space and time and ask the person to state their understanding of these statements from the Scriptures.
8. CMD discussed the educational levels and understandings of persons in the educational programs of the Church and in ministry assignments. It is our desire to help everyone grow in their ability to understand and teach the Scriptures in addition to living godly lives according to the teaching of Scripture.
9. CMD approved the ordinations of Paul Dauenbaugh, Dustin Sider, Drew Strayer, James Yutzy, and Matthew Hahn.
10. CMD approved a recommendation from LC for the development of a statement that affirms the commitment of the Church to the Scriptures and Articles of Faith and Doctrine, with particular emphasis on the statements about God’s nature.
11. A BIC U.S. position paper on racial justice is to be released in the coming months.