

## **BIC U.S. Leadership Summary, September 2019**

Leadership Council (LC) and General Conference Board (GCB) of BIC U.S. meet several times a year. The following is a summary of a number of items discussed at their meetings throughout the second week of September 2019.

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

“General Conference Board (the "Board" composed of "Board Members") is the board of directors of the 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. BIC U.S. Leadership Orientation**

During the week of fall meetings, we welcomed 50 leaders and spouses from across the United States to the BIC U.S. Leadership Orientation, held at Messiah College, Mechanicsburg, Pa. This annual event provides a time for individuals to learn more about the Church, see various ministry centers of the denomination, and connect with others who are serving in ministry with BIC U.S. This day-and-a-half event also provides an opportunity for LC members to share how we as a denomination can serve and partner with individuals and congregations throughout the country in ministry.

### **2. General Assembly 2020**

As we gear up for General Assembly 2020 in Salina, Kans., LC is at work on various planning details while GCB is diligently working on various business items that will be brought to our denominational gathering.

### **3. Project 250**

In 2028, we will celebrate the 250th birthday of the Brethren in Christ. In preparation for this milestone, we have been working over the last 12 months to listen to pastors and leaders in every regional conference and to our missionaries serving around the world as we imagine what God may be calling us to be and to do in the years between 2020 and 2028. This process has been called Project 250.

Leadership Council discussed the many pages of feedback received from across the entire denomination, and together we identified a number of areas of commonality. The following is a summary of the areas of commonality and some of the questions that have been raised across the BIC U.S.:

1. Identity – How should we strengthen our identity as Jesus-followers? How should we strengthen our commitment to and emphasis of the historic theological streams that gave birth to the Brethren in Christ, especially Anabaptism. What are we calling people to be and to do?
2. Multiplication – How should we modify and/or increase our work to multiply congregations, sites, services, leaders, disciples, etc.? What metrics are helpful for us to use in our measurements and assessments?

3. Disciple-making – Making disciples is the commission Jesus gave to his followers. It is the central purpose of the Church. How should we define, nurture, and increase our disciple-making work?
4. Diversity and/or culturally contextual ministry – How should we minister in our increasingly culturally diverse communities? How can we help the Church become as diverse as our communities?
5. Global – How should we develop global awareness and live as citizens of a global world? What will this mean for our cross-cultural and cross-border missional ministry? What role can and should BIC U.S. play in the global BIC community?

In addition to these five key areas of commonality in the feedback that we have received, LC also discussed the critical issues of leadership development, resources generation and allocation, and organizational structure.

Leadership Council will continue its work on this critically important project with the goal of a final report submitted to the 2020 General Assembly.

#### **4. Statement on Open Theism**

Leadership Council discussed the draft statement being prepared by a task force consisting of Ron Bowell (Midwest Conference pastor, Commission on Ministry and Doctrine member), Jonathan Lloyd (director of BIC U.S. World Missions), Rob Patterson (Allegheny Conference bishop), Zach Spidel (Great Lakes Conference pastor, Commission on Ministry and Doctrine member), Alan Robinson (BIC U.S. national director) in preparation for the 2020 General Assembly. LC affirmed the work that has been done and gave suggestions for revisions to the statement. The plan is for the statement to be approved by Leadership Council and General Conference Board at their February 2020 meetings and shared at the 2020 regional conference annual meetings for feedback. A final report will then be brought to the 2020 General Assembly.

#### **5. Finances to support the common ministry of BIC U.S.**

Leadership Council and General Conference Board discussed the financial needs and long-term financial stability of BIC U.S. The present primary model of fundraising is to ask every BIC U.S. congregation to contribute 10% of their undesignated congregational income to support the ministry that we all do together — termed common ministry. The largest percentage of expenses from congregational contributions to our common ministry is the oversight and support of those congregations through the regional conferences — the provision of bishop oversight and administrative support, grants to regions for general ministry expenses, as well as grants for church planting and leadership development.

BIC U.S. World Missions' global workers are expected to raise 70% of their field expenses. The remaining 30% of field expenses, plus all administrative expenses, are provided by BIC U.S. The majority of the support for missionaries comes from individuals, and many individuals also support the common ministry of BIC U.S.

While the current model has experienced significant pressure in recent years, the consensus of leadership is that we should continue with this model at the present time and make every effort to ensure all pastors and congregational leaders understand the model and the expectation of the Church. Various strategies were discussed to help congregations move toward the 10% contribution that is expected.

#### **6. Honor the Past: Build the Future**

In 2016, BIC U.S. launched Honor the Past: Build the Future, a five-year campaign to raise funds to meet the unfunded liability of the defined benefit plan (BIC Pension Fund), which was part of the retirement plan for Church leaders and missionaries. It was also created to raise funds for the future multiplication efforts of the Church. The campaign has been greatly helped with a pledge from donors to double all gifts up to a total of \$1.4 million.

At General Assembly 2018 (Messiah College, Mechanicsburg, Pa.), we celebrated meeting the needs of the defined benefit plan through the combined generosity of individuals, churches, and conferences. As of September 2019, approximately \$220,000 remains in the \$1.4 million pledged matching gift. We hope to receive donations that will finish this matching pledge by General Assembly 2020.

#### **7. Leadership Council member end-of-term reviews**

Four members of Leadership Council have terms ending on July 31, 2020: Perry Engle, end of third term for Midwest and Pacific Conferences; Bryan Hoke, end of first term for Atlantic Conference; Aner Morejon, end of second term for Southeast Conference; and Rob Patterson, end of third term for Allegheny Conference. The end-of-term review processes for two of the LC members have been completed, and GCB has approved the individuals for the following renewed terms:

- Aner Morejon, new six-year term beginning August 1, 2020, Southeast Conference
- Rob Patterson, new six-year term beginning August 1, 2020, Allegheny Conference

The end-of-term review processes are ongoing for the Atlantic Conference and the Pacific Conference. These will be concluded before the next GCB meeting in February 2020.

The Midwest Conference board of directors has worked in a process to provide a nomination for the role of Midwest Conference bishop. Ron Bowell has been nominated, and GCB approved this nomination. The next step in the approval process is a ballot of the voting members of the 2019 annual business meeting of the Midwest Conference. If approved by the voting members, Ron will commence a six-year term as bishop (half-time position) on August 1, 2020.