

Response to: "The Leading Ministry in a Covenant Community"  
By Vern Heidebrecht



The purpose of this paper is to suggest current issues of "leading and following" that have implications for Mennonite Brethren and their future solidarity as a covenant brotherhood.

Ediger suggests that there are two major elements which bond us into a covenant community, namely, "leadership and a common confession." This is even more significant as we have moved from a common heritage, experiences, language and geography. Let me raise several concerns and questions in the areas of leadership and a common ~~confession~~ *confession*.

1. Leadership.

- Ediger summarizes well some major New Testament principles of leadership (pgs. 46-48).
- A rather revealing statement is made: "The structures of boards and conferences forward from this line have little to do with New Testament leadership principles of shepherding, care, teaching, and discipline." (pgs. 57, lines 49-51)

Question: Increasingly we are finding our churches struggling with structures of leadership to develop effective "shepherding, care, teaching, and discipline" leadership models. There is a movement from the administrative model toward a ministry focus. For many of our churches an eldership model pulls the church in this direction. Could it be that this same thrust is now needed in our conference leadership structures?

*m* Need: To develop a stronger unity as a conference of churches, attention will need to be focused on the central role of M.B.B.S., interning of new leadership alongside of established pastors, and greater integrity in credentialling leaders.

A growing understanding of "followership" is well stated (pg. 47, lines 35, 36). "Followers in such a brotherhood must remember that the servant is not greater than the master, nor the pupil greater than the teacher."

2. A Common Confession of Faith.

- Is our confession of faith a true reflection of what the beliefs are in the churches?
- Would it not be in biblical tradition to find our unity in lifting up Christ and being filled with the Holy Spirit?
- Is it not time to reexamine our confession of faith and distinguish between the "core doctrines" and the areas which require growth, study, and allow for some diversity?

Observation: one reason for the "unity" problem may well be that we don't find it in our present confession. I am not advocating that we go to the lowest common denominator, rather, that we are in touch with the essentials.

Response to the Two Suggestions:

1. Name Change: I believe the name change idea has limited value. We are functioning as a conference of churches. It seems to me we need to work harder at the leadership and confessional issues.
2. The eldership idea for the North American conference has merit if we first reexamine the need for the rest of the structures.