**Third International Training Consultation**

**Theme: “Hermeneutics for heart and mind”**

**“A Contextualised Gospel that is True to the Faith”**

**Dubuque 27 – 31 May 2014 (DV)**

**General objectives**

This Consultation has the same general objectives as the previous two. These are:-

* To facilitate fellowship, networking and mutual encouragement between leaders of Brethren training systems across the world
* To identify more precisely the educational and training needs of the Brethren movement
* To encourage exchange of information about curricula, methods, content and institutional structure, management and economics, with a view to enabling local, national or regional systems to make their own improvements.
* To review the range of distance learning resources (including virtual resources) and identify possible future developments.

**Developing the Theme**

"Facilitating systems for training godly, missions-minded, theologically aware leaders in Brethren churches across the world"

This statement, with the following key-term definitions, will help us maintain focus in our consultations:-

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| Facilitating | * initiating development; enabling networking |
| Systems | * church-based models; other centres of training; production of training resources |
| Godly | * spiritual transformation; genuine character development |
| Missions-minded | * developing a culturally relevant Gospel-outreach mind-set in individuals and churches |
| Theological | * Biblically informed; not driven by culture or pragmatism |
| Leaders | * people who can influence others locally, nationally and generationally |
| Brethren | * Churches with common roots (historically) or a common future (Biblically) |
| World | * recognition that issues are global; forming world partnerships |

**Consultation Context and Pre-suppositions**

1. We will be primarily focused on the training needs within the historic Open Christian Brethren and any independent evangelical groups that are comfortable to be associated with such, whether or not historically linked to it.
2. While recognising the valuable role of training institutions such as schools and colleges we affirm our belief in the potential of the local church as both a training ground and place of ministry for a plurality of leadership having a wide-range of spiritual gifts
3. We will take a global perspective, genuinely international and not biased to any specific or regional mind-set.
4. We recognize the need to be contemporary to the 21st century, looking at current situations and future needs within the Brethren movement.
5. We recognize the value of training offered by other evangelical and non-denominational training initiatives, yet see a specific niche for Brethren training systems world-wide and will seek to strengthen these systems.
6. We will seek to build on already existing training resources that are available within the Brethren movement world-wide.
7. We recognize the existence and equal status of bi-vocational (secular/church) and full time church/missionary workers. The concern of the Consultation is with the training (initial and in-service) of all types of leader in and for the Brethren movement.

**Specific Outcomes for the 2014 Consultation**

Our goal is that participants will be able to leave the conference having:-

1. A clearer understanding of three major challenges to the Gospel in our 21st century world, and what our response should be as trainers of church planters, leaders, evangelist, shepherds and Bible teachers.
2. Grown together in understanding the doctrine of Scripture and principles of relevant Biblical hermeneutics.
3. A better knowledge of how to train for the types of churches that contextualise the Gospel effectively and that make Christ known in ways that are clearly relevant to the specific cultural contexts in which they are planted.
4. Learned key lessons from a range of valuable training work going on in different parts of the world.
5. A greater passion to train new generations of leaders who will take the strengths of the historical Brethren movement into new phases of growth and missionary expansion.
6. A greater clarity in how to train students to think Biblically, take Holy-Spirit inspired leadership decisions and handle differing viewpoints without compromising truth

**Context**

There is widespread debate today on how the Bible should be read and understood. All of us to some extent approach the Bible from our own historical and cultural background. We need to be aware of our own biases and that we do not approach the Bible with total objectivity. We may, for example, approach the Bible from a historical – critical, dispensational, feminist, liberationist, charismatic, etc. perspective.

The problem is compounded by the fact that there has been much debate about the correct way to "read" the Bible. Should it be taken literally or are we to be governed by how it impacts us personally. In addition, a number of controversial issues, e.g., the role and gifts of the Holy Spirit, sexuality, the role of women in the church, our understanding of creation force us back to the Bible for answers. The problem is that when we go back to the Bible we arrive at different conclusions depending on our attitude to biblical authority and the nature of biblical hermeneutics.

The main plenary sessions in this Consultation will look at the contextualisation of the gospel in different cultural settings exploring and modelling exegetical and hermeneutical approaches to enable us to arrive at a true understanding of what the Bible teaches. On the basis of understanding the nature of the Gospel, we will look at some of the key theological and training challenges to its correct understanding and application across the world.

In the afternoon sessions, participants will be able to choose from a range of workshops covering some of the current training issues we face in the Brethren Movement. In some of these workshops we will continue with our exegetical and hermeneutical evaluation of some difficult issues, not with the view of stating the position we should adopt on these issues, but rather to use the tools and principles to provide us with a more solid biblical foundation.

The evenings will have opportunities to share best practice with one another, inspire one another through being informed of significant developments, and sharpen our perspectives with some of the major training challenges we face.