



Brethren Training Network

encouraging training and leadership development

Fourth International Training Consultation
Theme: "Biblical Training for growing Healthy Churches"
Emmaus Bible College, Dubuque, Iowa, USA
29 May – 2 June 2018 (DV)

31 October 2017

Dear colleagues,

Earlier in the year, we published the dates and place of the next International Training Consultation. We are now in a position to give more details.

Programme

We are writing to people involved in teaching and training in the worldwide Open/Christian Brethren movement which did so much to rediscover the power and simplicity of "church:" as the one body of Christ and its multiple local expressions. In some countries, these local churches are vibrant, strong and growing; in others they have been seriously weakened, are low in confidence and, in many cases, struggling with terminal decline. Many recognize that the development of new generations of well-prepared spiritual leaders will be a key factor in future renewal.

"Biblical Training for growing Healthy churches" then should be a conference theme that is relevant to all of us. So the main plenary sessions and associated discussions in this Consultation will look at both the theology of church and the practicalities of developing healthy churches. We trust from this to derive principles that will inform and guide developments in our teaching courses and training initiatives.

- **"Essence, Expression and Evaluation of Healthy Churches"**. David Smith (Principal Perth Bible College, Australia, elder at Duncraig Christian Fellowship, and Chairman in Christian Community Churches of Australia) will be dealing with the specific ecclesiological considerations and challenges that face the Brethren movement. His own work has included the development of an evaluation process to help churches assess their understanding of the essence of what it means to be church, to build connected expressions of that in a local context, and to ensure the church is directed toward its goal—becoming all that God intends.
- **"Growth with depth, honour and integrity"**. Jonathan Lamb (CEO Keswick Ministries, former teaching elder Belmont Chapel, Exeter, UK, and former Director of Langham Preaching) will tackle three key challenges in growing and maintaining healthy churches. The first is the problem of 'growth without depth', which has been one of the challenges in recent high growth areas of the majority world, but which challenges western churches too. The second is the problem of inconsistency—the lack of integrity in leaders and the lack of godliness in churches. The third is our struggles with division, or sometimes our inability to develop a doctrine of allowing difference in church thought and practice.

Beyond the main sessions, we are still working on the programme, especially with respect to relevant workshop topics and facilitators, who we would like to be drawn from booked participants. The current draft programme can be found on the website at www.brethrentraining.org which we will update as things develop. Our time together is fully intended to be a "consultation", so the final version of the programme will be evolved from this. Please, therefore, feel free to comment and make suggestions on any aspects of the programme, so that we can try to meet the needs of all who may be present. We hope to have a series of papers and discussions that everyone will find helpful in our ongoing work in training worldwide.



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Dates, Venue and Fees

Arrival and registration is to be on Tuesday afternoon 29 May 2018 and departure on Saturday afternoon 2 June 2018. We are very grateful to the Board of Emmaus Bible College for again providing accommodation (dormitory) and food at a generously subsidized rate. We are asking that each delegate should make a US\$100 contribution towards the conference costs for the four days. In the spirit of the faith-basis that most of us serve on, if finance is an issue that may prevent your coming, please let us know so that we can share the burden between us of trusting God will provide all that will be needed to allow you to take part in this consultation.

Travel Information

Dubuque, Iowa is three hours by car west of Chicago, Illinois. It is on the Mississippi River at the intersection of the states of Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa. American Airlines fly direct to Dubuque (DBQ) and this is probably the most convenient way to get there but, unless it can be an "add-on" to an airline ticket, it can be quite expensive compared with access by road from Chicago. As a way of saving cost, we are looking at organizing shared cars/minibuses from Chicago, provided we get travel information from participants in good time. Flights to Chicago are cheaper than to Dubuque, so the saving will offset the cost of road transport. Inexpensive hotel/motel accommodation is available near Chicago airport. We can look into various possibilities as soon as we have firm applications from delegates.

Monday 28 May is a national holiday, so it would be unfair to ask staff at Emmaus to be on duty on that day. Accordingly, we would ask participants not to arrive at the college in Dubuque until the afternoon of Tuesday 29 May. Also, the final session on the Saturday will be of great importance, so we encourage everyone to stay till [at least] lunch time on 2 June. Many will travel back to Chicago where some will stay overnight and perhaps be able to visit local churches. If you are able to do this, and are willing to speak at an assembly if required on the Sunday morning, please so indicate on the Application Form.

Applications and visas

If you wish to attend the Consultation an Application Form is attached to the e-mail containing this letter. It would be helpful if you would complete the Form and return it to mdavies@glo-europe.org by 31 December 2017 if possible to allow us to consider your thoughts in finalizing the programme. We have issued these a little earlier than in previous Consultations, in order to give additional time for visa applications and to take advantage of any airline promotions which are often available in January each year. Due to such practical matter, we would be grateful if applications could be received by 15th February at latest.

Delegates should be aware that visas are required for entry to the United States for non-US citizens. The USA has visa waiver arrangements in place for some countries; in those cases, permission to enter is granted at immigration on arrival (though you will still need to get electronic permission to travel, in advance, under the ESTA scheme). Others, however, will need to apply to obtain a visa in advance from the US Embassy in their country of residence. Details regarding visas can be found at <http://travel.state.gov/visa/> and http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/esta/.

When Application Forms are received, we will send out Letters of Acceptance at which point applicants can begin to organise visas as required. We will be able to offer advice and help with the Visa application process at that time.



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Finance

We recognize that cost will be a significant factor in this Consultation and that financial constraints could prevent some from coming, particularly since flights are much more expensive than for previous Consultations. A very limited amount of funding is available to us, but we will try to help where we can. If you have difficulty with meeting the costs, please indicate when you submit the Application Form. In view of the limited funds which we shall have, please also seek support from other sources that may be available to you in your own country and elsewhere

Some delegates or associated groups may be in a position to assist participants from developing countries with some of their travel costs. If you are able to help, please indicate on the Application Form.

Finally, we would greatly appreciate your prayers for this consultation. There is no doubt that this is a potentially significant event and our prayer is that the Lord will use it to enable all of us to be better equipped to train men and women for Christian service.

Consultation organisation

The Consultation is being organized by the Brethren Training Network Steering Group which comprises Russell Thorp (New Zealand)(chairman), Philip Boom (USA), Mark Davies (UK), Simeon Havyarimana (Burundi), Joel Hernandez (USA), Sunny Philip (India), Christian Ramirez (Colombia), David Smith (Australia), Len Smith (Australia), Neil Summerton (UK)

Yours in His service

Russell Thorp
Missions Director, GCIM, New Zealand
On behalf of the organizing committee