

African Conference

The second African Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church convened at Matopo Mission, Aug. 16, 17, 23, 24, 1920. Those present included the workers from Matopo and Mtshabezi Missions, Bro. and Sr. Lehman from Johannesburg, and Bro. Taylor and Sr. Davidson from Macha. Moderator, H.P. Steigerwald, Secretary, H.J. Frey, Reading Clerk, A.C. Winger. After devotional exercises, the following questions were considered and passed upon:

Art. I

Whereas, questions have arisen in the minds of some of our native Christians in regard to the keeping of the first day of the week instead of the seventh,

Resolved (a) that a committee of three be elected to prepare and publish two tracts on the Sabbath question, one to be a short, general treatise on the subject, and the other to be a series of questions and answers on the same question.

Resolved (b) that the same committee prepare and publish a tract on the question of the "Beast".

Resolved (c) that the cost of publishing above tracts be taken out of the Emergency Fund, and the tracts be distributed free of charge.

Comm. elected, H. Taylor, H.J. Frey, J.L. Myers.

Decided later that the names of H.P. Steigerwald and A.C. Winger be added to those of the elected members thereby increasing the number composing the committee to five.

Art. II

Question regarding colored girls (half-caste) at mission schools.

Resolved, (a) that colored girls be accepted at Mission Schools.

Resolved (b) that the conditions of acceptance of colored girls in mission schools be left in the hands of the workers of the mission concerned, but that no girl shall be bound by the magistrate without consultation with the Executive Board.

Art. III

Whereas, there are widows with children who become applicants for admission to Mtshabezi Girls' School,

Resolved that they may be accepted at the discretion of the workers in charge, with the restriction that such widows pay or give labor to the extent of 10/- per each child per annum.

Art. IV

Shall we continue to allow natives who drink beer, follow other sins, and refuse to allow their children to attend school to live on the mission farm?

Resolved that any native who will not send his children to school a certain number of days per year shall be removed from the Mission Farm, and that the missionary in charge together with his collaborators shall use his own discretion in regard to other undesirable characters.

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Art. V

Whereas, much of the land of the country is being bought by Europeans, thereby causing the natives to be driven from place to place, is it not advisable for the Church to buy the remaining half of Zwemala Block, thus securing the entire block (of which Mtshabezi Mission is half) whereon native Christians might settle?

Resolved that this question be tabled until our next Conference (local) and in the meantime the bishop in conjunction with the overseer of Mtshabezi Mission investigate as to the conditions under which the aforesaid block can be bought.

Art. VI

Whereas, in times past, our missionaries coming to the field have not been given sufficient time for language study,

Resolved (a) that all new recruits be given at least two hours per day during their first year, for the study of the vernacular, (b) that a course of study be provided, and (c) that examinations be provided, and where possible a teacher be arranged for.

Resolved also that a committee of three be elected to arrange a course of study and provide for examinations; this committee to report at our next annual Conference. Comm. H.F. Davidson, I.O. Lehman, H.J. Frey. This committee to have power of suggestion in regard to forming of classes, etc.

Art. VII

Whereas, many of our members from the various districts (mission stations) find work in Bulawayo, and are in a measure without spiritual oversight,

Resolved, that our bishop be authorized to investigate as to the possibility of securing a site for a mission station in Bulawayo, and the advisability of opening up work there.

Art. VIII

Are our present arrangements for living and support at the various stations (mission) satisfactory?

Resolved that our present arrangements are not satisfactory, and that we recommend that wherever convenient married couples, and especially those with families should live alone. At least to the extent of having separate tables.

Resolved also, that because of the increased cost of living we request the F.M. Board to increase the personal individual allowances of workers to a hundred and twenty-five dollars per annum, and the allowances of the superintendent and his wife to a hundred and fifty dollars per annum.

Resolved also that we thank the F.M. Board for the increased allowances for children of school age; but request that provision be also made for children under school age.

Art. IX

Whereas, missionaries on furlough, and especially those with families, have undergone embarrassing experiences during their stay in America,

Resolved, that we request the F.M.B. to make suitable arrangements for missionaries who may be returning to America for a rest.

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Art. X

The Board of Managers of the Matopo Training School, having met a number of times during the Conference, presented the following resolutions, which were accepted:

(1) That we do not see a plan for re-opening the Training School at present, but recommend that the school be re-opened as soon as satisfactory arrangements can be made.

(2) That the lower school be re-opened Jan. 1, 1921, with a responsible native as teacher.

(3) That Conference elect a substitute to act instead of Bro. W.O.Winger on the Board of Managers during the time of his absence on furlough.

Art. XI

Resolved that a committee of five be elected to consider the placing of workers, and present recommendations to Conference. Comm. elected, H.P.Steigerwald, M.Taylor, W.O.Winger, H.J.Frey, Sr. H.F. Davidson.

The above committee presented the following recommendations which were accepted:

Bro. and Sr. W.O.Winger with their family and Bro. A.C.Winger granted leave of furlough to America.

Bro. Steckley to have general charge of Mtshabezi Mission, with Sr. Doner as matron, and Bro. J.L.Myers in charge of the spiritual part. Sr. Baker also to labor at Mtshabezi; with the understanding that part of her time be spent among the people of the kraals.

Bro. and Sr. Steigerwald to have charge of Matopo Mission.

Bro. and Sr. Frey to have charge of the outschools.

Sr. Musser to go to Macha for the present, and later to Sik-alongo should that mission re-open.

Art. XII

Whereas, it does not seem that Matopo Mission is satisfactorily located to be the home of the missionary in charge of the outschools,

Decided, that H.P.Steigerwald, H.J.Frey, and W.O.Winger be a committee of three to investigate as soon as convenient regarding the advisability of locating a mission in Insiza district, and also as to whether a house might be rented in that district that would be a suitable temporary home for the missionary in charge of the ~~outschools~~ outschools.

Art. XIII

Resolved that Conference elect a committee of five who shall be known as the Executive Board of the Church on the field, whose duties shall be to place and replace workers, settle disputes, arrange programs for our annual conferences, together with time and place of each meeting, and perform any other duties not specifically provided for elsewhere; the members of this board to serve for a period of five years, and shall be eligible for re-election.

In order to inaugurate the working of this plan, the one receiving the highest number of votes shall serve for five years, the second highest for four years, the third highest for three years, the fourth for two years, and the fifth for one. Board elected as follows:

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Art. XIII Continued

H.P. Steigerwald, five years, M. Taylor, four years, I.C. Lehman, three years, H.J. Frey, two years, J.L. Myers, one year.

Art. XIV

Whereas, a request has come from the native church for a recognized head among themselves,

Resolved, that we recognize the reasonableness of their request, and favor the appointment of three natives who shall be regarded as the official representatives of the native church in S. Rhodesia, and that the Executive Board be given power to appoint the same whenever they may deem it advisable to do so.

Art. XV

The Board of "Trustees and Finance", having met at Matopo Mission Aug. 18, 1920, presented the following recommendations to Conference, which were accepted.

(1) Whereas, a treasurer of the Board has never been chosen, Decided that the secretary hold the double office of Secretary-treasurer; the organization now being as follows:--Chairman, H.P. Steigerwald, Secretary-treasurer, H.J. Frey.

(2) Decided that all deeds and legal papers be held by the secretary-treasurer.

(3) Decided that the payment of all moneys from this fund be authorized by vouchers issued by the Secretary and countersigned by the Chairman.

(4) Recommended that fares of boards and committees, especially called, be paid in full out of the Emergency fund; and that half the fares of missionaries coming to our annual conferences be paid out of the same fund.

(5) Recommended that a second-hand safe be bought in which to keep all deeds and other valuable papers: the Chairman to look out for one in Bulawayo, and Bro. Lehman in Johannesburg, the expenses of same to be paid from the Emergency fund.

Art. XVI

Resolved, that our African Conference be convened annually, and that whenever possible, a Bible Conference be held in connection with the same.

H.J. Frey, Secretary.