Pacific Northwest District
Church of the Brethren

District Conference 2024

"Where peace and justice meet"

October 4th-6th

District Conference 2024 schedule

Friday, October 4th through Sunday, October 6th

all times in PDT

DAY/TIME	SCHEDULE BLOCK
FRIDAY	
4:00pm-6:00pm	**Arrival and settling in**
6:00pm-7:00pm	**Dinner**
7:15pm-9:00pm (105 min)	**Program Session 1** • Welcome and introductions • Exploring our conference theme ○ MLK Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" • Hymn sing
SATURDAY	
8:30am-9:30am	**Breakfast**

9:30am-12:00pm (150 min)	**Program Session 2**
	We will have a 15-minute break at about 10:45am
	• Exploring our conference theme
	  ○ "Jesus turns the tables"
	  ○ "Abigail and David"
	  ○ "A widow insists on justice"

12:00pm-12:30pm	**Break**
12:30pm-1:30pm	**Lunch**

1:30pm-2:00pm	**Break**

2:00pm-5:30pm
(210 min)
	Business session
	• Consensus decision-making model
	• Minutes
	• Reports
	  ○ District reports
	  ○ Denominational reports
	• Discussing district investment and financial policies
	• Proposed revision to Constitution & By-laws
	• Leadership slate
	• Proposed 2025 budget
	• Recognition
	• Remembrances

5:30pm-6:00pm	**Break**
6:00pm-7:00pm	**Dinner**
7:15pm-9:00pm (105 min)	**Program Session 3** • Reflections and takeaways • Ice cream social (*sponsored by Eder Financial*)
SUNDAY	
8:30am-9:30am	**Breakfast**
10:00am-11:00am (60 min)	**Worship service**
11:00am	**Departures**

Pacific Northwest District
Church of the Brethren

Our District comprises the Church of the Brethren congregations throughout Washington and Oregon, as well as the online congregation, Living Stream Church of the Brethren. All who are members of any of these congregations form the body of our District—the District is not separate from us, but rather we are the District in our collective body.

The District serves to administer and coordinate the religious and business activities of the Church of the Brethren within the bounds of the District. As enumerated in our District constitution, there are four directives that further guide our District activity:

1. Facilitate connection among member congregations and camps within the district.

2. Support member congregations and camps in building denominational connections.

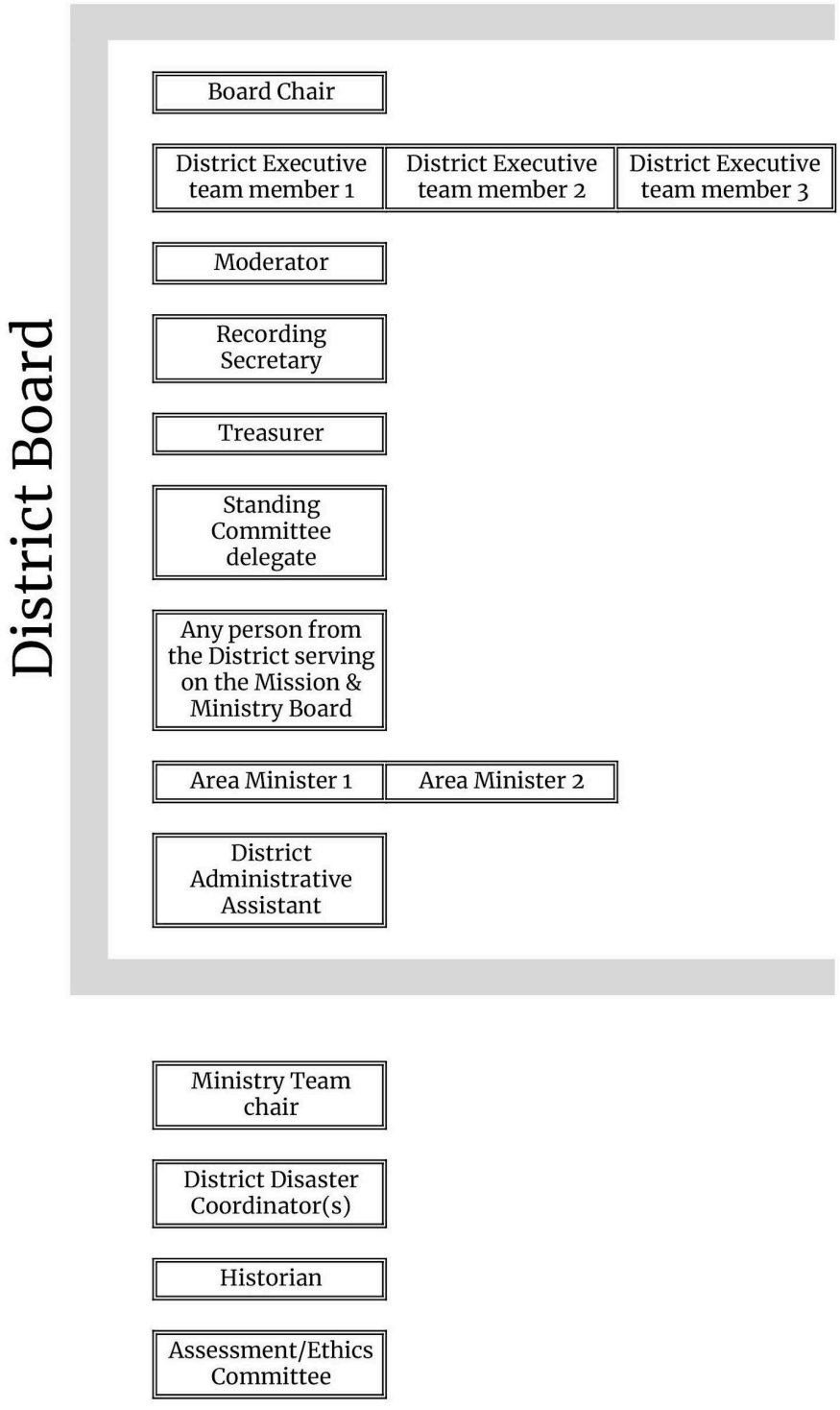
3. Organize district-wide materials and program options for spiritual and community edification.

4. Support member congregations and camps in their individual ministries and operations.

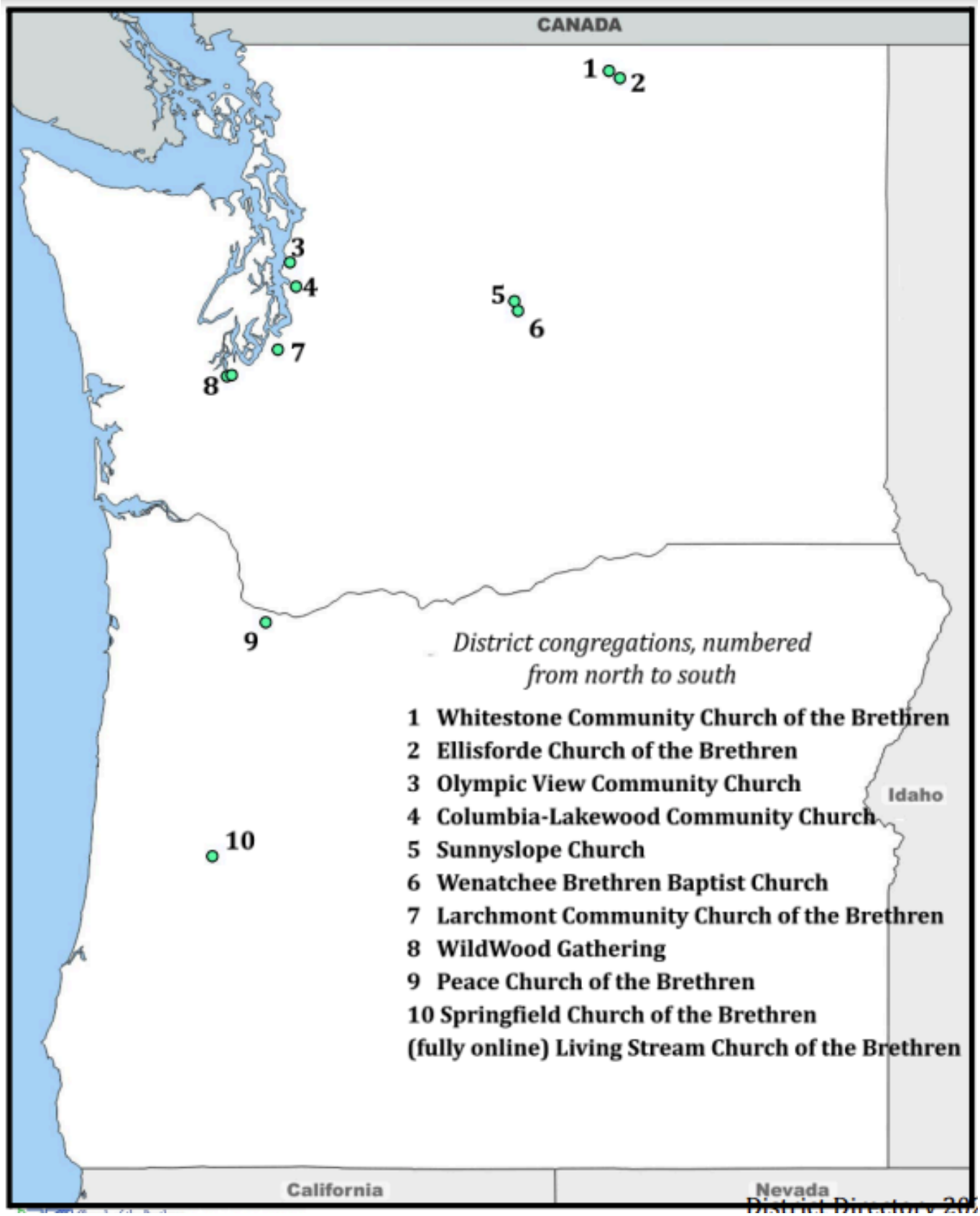
Our annual District Conference is a meeting to which attending members from the District congregations come in order to give implementation to District purposes. District Conference is the final authority of the District on polity, program, and procedure. Additionally, our District Conference offers an opportunity for us to gather together in fellowship, worship, and discussion.

Our District Board serves to manage and administer the work of the District throughout the year. The Board is the legal agent of the District and is empowered to act on behalf of the District Conference between annual gatherings, except for those actions specifically reserved for the District Conference. This work is also supported by additional positions working to further specific purposes and functions of the District.

Pacific Northwest District
Church of the Brethren
Leadership Structure



Map of our District Congregations



“Where peace and justice meet”

"This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right.
Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed.
Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow,
and do not shed innocent blood in this place." Jeremiah 22:3

How does Jeremiah 22:3 reflect the intersection of justice and peace?

What would it look like to give up peace for the sake of pursuing justice?

What would it look like to give up justice for the sake of pursuing peace?

"Where peace and justice meet"

A selection from Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

"I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; **who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice**; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection."

How does King describe the distinction between "negative peace" and "positive peace"?

Where in our world and communities today do we see a greater desire for "negative peace" than a commitment to "positive peace"? What might pull people in that direction?

King's letter was written to religious leaders who claimed to support his cause, but who also cautioned moderation and criticized King's actions. If King wrote this letter to us today—to the Church of the Brethren, to our gathering right here at District Conference—what might he have to say to us? What might he critique, or encourage?

Jesus turns the tables

Adapted from the "Seeking Justice Together" *Shine* curriculum from Brethren Press

Mark 11:15-18

15 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, **16** and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. **17** And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

From the "Seeking Justice Together" Shine curriculum from Brethren Press



Jesus Turns the Tables

Mark 11:15–18

by Carrie Martens

Not everyone is comfortable with public displays of confrontation, anger, protest, or judgment. But Jesus certainly was. Though his turning over tables in the temple in Mark 11 is perhaps one of the more dramatic displays, it does not stand alone. Almost everything Jesus did was bold and public. Only one day before his actions in the temple, Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey before throngs of people, who cried out "Hosanna!" And he did so in full view of the religious leaders who wanted him dead. It was a demonstration—a public display of who Jesus was and what he was about. Jesus' actions in the temple function likewise.

The temple was a site of pilgrimage. People came from all around to worship and bring animals to offer as a sacrifice. However, those animals needed to be certified as "clean" by the temple authorities. The authorities could reject any animal, forcing the pilgrims to buy animals on site for exorbitant prices. Mark specifically mentions those who were selling doves, likely because doves were sold to the poor who could not afford lambs. In order to buy the animals, and to pay the required temple tax, foreigners had to change their money to the acceptable currency with the money changers. Those money changers could set exchange rates unfairly.[1]

The temple had also become a thoroughfare. It was shorter for merchants and travelers just to take a shortcut through the temple, rather than go around. With money changers, buyers and sellers, and those taking shortcuts, the space for worshipers, particularly in the courtyard that was available to both Jews and Gentiles, was very limited. So Jesus enacts a demonstration. He halts the trading, blocks people from carrying their goods through, and turns over the tables.

And then Jesus calls his people to self-examination. He references Isaiah 56:7, which says that God's house "shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Isaiah describes a place where outcasts and foreigners find a home. Jesus further declares that they have made the temple into a den of robbers. This isn't just about people cheating each other in the courtyard, but about temple leaders who support injustice and then hide in the temple to escape justice, like a robber evading the law.[2]

Jesus' actions are bold. They are a public demonstration intended to shake people from their stupor and unquestioning behaviors. They are a reminder that God is angered by corruption and injustice, particularly in the temple. And they are a call to self-examination both then and now.

Imagine yourself in the temple, hearing Jesus speak of the temple as a house of worship for all people. Consider your own place of worship and fellowship. In what ways does it feel like a house of prayer for all people? In what ways does it not?

God, who gathers in the outcast and makes space for the sinner, speak boldly into our hearts today. Show us how we might embody your call to be a house of prayer for all, not just for insiders. Give us courage to act boldly in your name and according to your will. Amen.

1. Timothy J. Geddert, *Mark*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), 266.
2. Geddert, *Mark*, 267.

Jesus turns the tables

From the "Seeking Justice Together" Shine curriculum from Brethren Press

Imagine Jesus' dramatic action against the abuses in the temple. What are your thoughts and reactions? Jesus is often depicted as kind and loving. How does this story challenge your perceptions of who Jesus was?

During the Passover Festival, all adult men were to go to the temple and offer a lamb or a dove. These were often bought in Jerusalem instead of pilgrims bringing them from home. A record from 66 CE shows that over 250,000 lambs were sacrificed during Passover that year. Sounds like a lot of business for those selling lambs and doves! What do you think made Jesus so angry about this trade?

Jesus was clearly angry at the abuses he witnessed in the temple. What are some things we, as followers of Jesus, should be angry about today?

Jesus turns the tables

From the "Seeking Justice Together" Shine curriculum from Brethren Press

"Upstream Solution" video
What truths are revealed in this video? What systems needed to be changed in the story of Mark 11:15-18? What systems need to be changed in our community, country, or world?

Sometimes, people try to avoid anger as if it is a bad thing to feel. But Jesus' anger fuels him to take a bold stand against injustice. How can anger be helpful? How can it be harmful? What makes the difference?

As Jesus cleared the temple court area, he quoted Isaiah, who said that God's house "shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Think about the people who attend your church—or our wider district or denomination. Are "all people" represented and welcome? Who is missing? What barriers might keep some people from worshiping there?

Abigail and David

Adapted from the "Seeking Peace Together" *Shine* curriculum from Brethren Press

1 Samuel 25:1–35

1 Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Paran.

2 A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel. **3** His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite.

4 While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. **5** So he sent ten young men and said to them, "Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name. **6** Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!

7 "'Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing. **8** Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them.'"

9 When David's men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited.

10 Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. **11** Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?"

12 David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word. **13** David said to his men, "Each of you strap on your sword!" So they did, and David strapped his on as well. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.

14 One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers from the
wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. **15** Yet these men
were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields
near them nothing was missing. **16** Night and day they were a wall around us the whole
time we were herding our sheep near them. **17** Now think it over and see what you can do,
because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked
man that no one can talk to him."

18 Abigail acted quickly. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five
dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred
cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. **19** Then she told her servants, "Go on
ahead; I'll follow you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

20 As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men
descending toward her, and she met them. **21** David had just said, "It's been useless—all
my watching over this fellow's property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was
missing. He has paid me back evil for good. **22** May God deal with David, be it ever so
severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!"

23 When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David
with her face to the ground. **24** She fell at his feet and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord,
and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. **25** Please pay no attention, my
lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly
goes with him. And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my lord sent. **26** And now,
my lord, as surely as the Lord your God lives and as you live, since the Lord has kept you
from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and
all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal. **27** And let this gift, which your servant
has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you.

28 "Please forgive your servant's presumption. The Lord your God will certainly make a
lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the Lord's battles, and no wrongdoing will
be found in you as long as you live. **29** Even though someone is pursuing you to take your
life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your
God, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. **30** When
the Lord has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has
appointed him ruler over Israel, **31** my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering
burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the Lord your God
has brought my lord success, remember your servant."

32 David said to Abigail, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to
meet me. **33** May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from
bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. **34** Otherwise, as surely
as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not
come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by
daybreak.”

35 Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, “Go home in
peace. I have heard your words and granted your request.”

From the "Seeking Peace Together" Shine curriculum from Brethren Press



Abigail and David

1 Samuel 25:1–35

by Joanna Harader

David has fled to the wilderness because King Saul keeps trying to kill him. Several hundred of his supporters have gone with him, and they seem to spend their time wandering the Judean hillsides protecting people and then seeking favors. Such is the case with Nabal, a wealthy landowner whose property is near to David's encampment. It is difficult to know the motivation behind Nabal's refusal of David's request for food. We are told that Nabal was "surly and mean," but we also know that biblical writers tend to favor David's perspective.

While we can't be sure of the exact nature of interaction between Nabal and David, the clashing of these two men threatens to erupt into extreme violence, and only Abigail's humble intervention keeps the peace. We do not know whether Abigail believes that David and his men *deserve* the provisions they have asked for, but she clearly understands how dire the results will be if Nabal's insult in refusing the request is allowed to stand. Abigail acts quickly, packing up a large amount of food and taking it out to David and his men before they have a chance to attack her household.

Interestingly, in her conversation with David, Abigail emphasizes protecting David from committing violence rather than saving herself from being a victim of violence. She tells him that he "shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience, for having shed blood without cause" (verse 31 NRSV). As we seek to make peace, it is good to remember that we are helping not just those who are potential victims, but also the potential perpetrators.

In the verses immediately following today's reading, Nabal dies, and David sends for Abigail to be his wife. Unfortunately, Abigail's peacemaking influence does not continue throughout their marriage. As David gains power and eventually becomes king, he is responsible for a great deal of violence and death. David wants to build a house for God but must pass that task on to his son, Solomon, because God tells David: "You shall not build a house to my name because you have shed so much blood in my sight on the earth." (1 Chronicles 22:8)

While we do not know much more about Abigail than what we learn here in 1 Samuel 25, we can be grateful that somehow this remarkable story of a woman's wisdom and courage is preserved for us to learn from today.

In what ways do you think those who do violence are harmed by their actions? Have you ever been caught in the middle of a conflict where both sides were behaving badly? What did you do? What do you wish you had done?

God, when tense situations emerge and the threat of violence looms, give me the wisdom to know how I can act peacefully. And give me the courage to take those actions. Amen.

Abigail and David

From the "Seeking Peace Together" Shine curriculum from Brethren Press

We do not really know the motives behind the actions of the characters. Why do you think David asked for food from Nabal, and why did he get so mad when he wasn't given it? Why might Nabal have refused to help David and his men? How would this story be different if it was told from Nabal's point of view?

Abigail was a non-anxious presence amid a difficult situation. Her servant felt safe coming to her . She acted decisively to defuse the situation . She used her words to deescalate the tension, allowing David to rethink his position and choose a different course. Describe someone you know who has served as a non-anxious presence in a tense situation . What do you think empowers them to act in this way?

"The Big Picture: God's Word on Work" video
Will Messenger challenges his listeners to hold their leaders accountable as Abigail did—with respect and a firm commitment to truth and peace . In what situations might God be calling you to exercise your influence to hold leaders accountable? What courage do you need from God to help you speak up rather than remain silent?

A widow insists on justice

Adapted from the "Seeking Justice Together" *Shine* curriculum from Brethren Press

Luke 18:1-8

1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not
give up. **2** He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared
what people thought. **3** And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with
the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God
or care what people think, **5** yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she
gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. **7** And will not God bring about
justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them
off? **8** I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of
Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

From the "Seeking Justice Together" Shine curriculum from Brethren Press



A Widow Insists on Justice

Luke 18:1–8

by Carrie Martens

In a world that seems rife with injustice, it can be easy to lose heart. Do my prayers and my actions matter? The Gospel of Luke says, yes. Jesus ministered to the poor and oppressed every day. He must have keenly felt the divide between earthly reality and God's love and justice. The parable he tells his disciples draws us into an exploration of that divide.

The genre of parable makes its hearers think, often turning assumptions on their heads. The parable about the widow and the judge seems quite straightforward. There is a widow who is demanding justice. There is a judge who will not give it to her. Yet our assumption about widows plays a significant role in how we read this parable. If we assume that widows are poor and voiceless, then we are likely to see the widow in this way and assume that she is a victim, and her claim is just. Indeed, Luke seems to lead us in this direction. But we do not know this for sure. What we do know is that this widow is a woman who will take action on her own behalf, a woman with agency, a persistent woman.[1]

The second central character in the parable is the judge. We are told that he neither fears God nor respects people (verse 2). Frustrated by the widow's persistence, the judge eventually grants her justice so that she will not "wear me out by continually coming" (verse 5). A more direct translation would be "so she will not in the end come and give me a black eye" or "come and strike me in the face."[2] This judge is not God, but is compared with God. With persistence, even an unjust judge can be convinced to do the right thing, even if for the wrong reason. How much more so will God hear the cries of God's children?

Jesus is not telling his disciples that if they just pray hard enough and long enough, they will get anything they want. God is not a divine vending machine that simply requires the correct number of coins. Through this parable, they, and we, are invited to consider how God responds to the cries of those who seek justice. Luke is clear that their cries do not fall on deaf ears, for justice is God's desire for all people. Thus, we should pray always and not lose heart. Through persistent prayer God's people are shaped and molded into a just people. And in prayer, we are guided to act in ways that bring about God's kingdom of love and justice on earth.

What role does prayer have in your life? If you were to cry out to God for justice, what would you ask for? What do you think might happen if you prayed persistently for justice in that circumstance?

God of justice, sometimes it is hard to be persistent. Seeking justice in the face of staunchly unjust systems can be exhausting. Move me to bring my cries to you so that I might be held, shaped, and renewed to live into your kingdom each day. Amen.

1. Amy-Jill Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* (New York: Harper One, 2014), 222.
2. Text in Context; "The Persistent Widow," blog entry by Jen McNeel, October 15, 2019.

A widow insists on justice

From the "Seeking Justice Together" Shine curriculum from Brethren Press

The judge did not "fear God." This term can refer to a fear of God's judg- ment, but "fear of God" can also mean reverence, honor, worship, adora- tion, or actual fear. Which do you think was true for the judge?

How would you describe the judge? What might have led him to no longer respect people? Roman judges were known for taking bribes, but this woman of limited means used her voice and her persistence instead. Why do you think that worked in this instance?

Have you known people in authority who lack empathy and respect for the people they serve? What impact does their callousness have on peo- ple who seek justice for themselves or others? What gives people like the widow strength to keep seeking justice?

A widow insists on justice

From the "Seeking Justice Together" Shine curriculum from Brethren Press

Have you had the experience of praying for something for a long time with nothing changing? How did you feel? If our prayers don't seem to be answered, what does that mean?

Many injustices today have been going on for hundreds of years. Yet, this para- ble says that God will quickly grant justice to those who cry to God day and night. How do you make sense of that? What is getting in the way of the justice that God desires?

Business Session Agenda

I. Review consensus decision-making model

II. Review minutes of the 2023 District Conference

III. Reports
- A. Standing Committee
- B. Treasurer
- C. Board
- D. Ministry Team
- E. Mission & Ministry Board
- F. Camp Koinonia
- G. Camp Myrtlewood
- H. District Disaster Response
- I. Denominational reports discussion

IV. District investment and financial policies

V. Proposed revision to Constitution & By-Laws

VI. Leadership slate

VII. Proposed 2025 budget

VIII. Recognition and celebrations

IX. Remembrances

Consensus Decision-making
for the Pacific Northwest District

Consensus decision-making is the official rule of order of the Pacific Northwest District and will be used in deciding the business before District Conference and District Board. While the consensus model was adopted as the rule of order many years ago, we are all still learning. This writing attempts to offer reminders and insights into the process as practiced by the District. The model in use is grounded in the work of C.T. Butler and Amy Rothstein as presented in their booklet, *On Conflict and Consensus: a Handbook on Formal Consensus Decisionmaking.*

Our practice of making decisions by consensus is fueled by a deep desire to make decisions that offer the best results for the whole body. Therefore, in our practice, consensus decision-making is a group process; it is a collaborative exercise that thrives in a climate of trust and respect. As stated by Butler and Rothstein, "It requires a commitment to active cooperation, disciplined speaking and listening, and respect for the contributions of every member. Likewise, every member has the responsibility to actively participate as a creative individual within the structure." By its nature, the consensus model resists the notion of choosing one option over another or pitting one idea against another; it seeks the best path forward for the entire body. This communal effort is what makes consensus decision-making meaningful and effective.

Part of what we, as people of the Pacific Northwest District, have learned and continue to develop is the process of consensus decision-making. In District context, the process has evolved in its own way and flows in a prescribed order. Undergirding the process are the guiding principles and values of the District; decisions and processes used are measured by their consistency in relation to those statements.

With that in mind, the process begins with the introduction of a **proposal or issue**. This is a written plan or action presented as business to the whole body for their discussion and acceptance. The introduction is followed by a time for asking **questions of clarity** about the proposal as stated. With clarity, the process moves to a period of **broad, open discussion**. This discussion looks at the proposal in its broadest scope inviting statements expressing why it is a good idea, or there seem to be problems that need attention. This is a time for statements only; addressing comments or finding resolution to concerns comes later in the process.

At this point, it is possible for consensus to be present. At its simplest, **consensus** is reached and decisions are made when all members present consent to a proposal. Butler and Rothstein put it this way, "Decisions are adopted when all participants consent to the result of discussion about the original proposal. People who do not agree with a proposal are responsible for expressing their concerns. No decision is adopted until there is resolution of every concern. When concerns remain after discussion, individuals can agree to disagree by acknowledging that they have unresolved concerns, but consent to the proposal anyway and allow it to be adopted (this is called standing aside). Therefore, reaching consensus does not assume everyone must be in complete agreement."

Pattern for the Pacific Northwest District
Consensus Decision-making Process

Step 1: Presentation of Proposal or Issue
- Questions of Clarity about the Proposal

Step 2: Broad, Open Discussion
- Test for Consensus; if present, proposal is adopted.

Step 3: Identify Concerns
- Group any Related Concerns

Step 4: Resolve Concerns
- Discussion to Resolve Grouped Concerns
- Discussion to Resolve Remaining Concerns, one at a time
- Test for Consensus; if present, proposal is adopted.

Step 5: Closing Options: Stand Aside, Send to Committee, Declare Impasse

Pacific Northwest District
Stated Principles and Values

We as a District: Hold the New Testament as our guide in faith and practice. We value the interpretation and inspiration which springs from its study and shared experiences as guided by the living Christ.

In that spirit, we: Conduct our business by discerning the "sense of the meeting."

Seek the mind of Christ through formal consensus decision-making.

Empower and respect congregations and foster our inter-relatedness.

Support each other, respecting and embracing diversity, while seeking unity.

Nurture a sense of wholeness and possibility in everyone we meet.

Continue the struggle of growth and change.

Affirm the Brethren genius of holding in tension community and obedience with individual conscience and Spiritual discernment.

Celebrate!

Strive to be God's stewards in the world, continuing Jesus' work; Peacefully, Simply, Together.

At the end of each step of the decision-making process, the facilitator, in PNWD work the moderator or board chair, will ask, “Are there any unresolved concerns?” or “Are there any concerns remaining?” After a period of silence, if no additional concerns are raised, the facilitator declares that consensus is reached and the proposal is adopted.

If any concerns are expressed in the broad, open discussion, the process moves to **identifying concerns**. This is a brainstorming type exercise in which concerns are expressed and publicly recorded. Here, stating concerns is the goal, whether they come as reasonable or unreasonable, well thought out or vague feelings. This phase, like before, is just an expression of statements; there is no discussion, comment, or attempt for resolution. After concerns are recorded, there is time to reflect on them and look for patterns and relationships between them.

The next step is to, as a group, address and try to **resolve the concerns**. If some concerns seem related, they may be resolved as a group. If, after discussion, the concerns, grouped or otherwise, are resolved, the facilitator may check for consensus as described before. If concerns remain unresolved, they are to be discussed individually in an effort to creatively bring resolution. It is important to note that once a concern is expressed, it becomes an issue for the body to address; attention for addressing the concern is focused on the concern not the individual who offered it. If, after reasonable effort, a concern cannot be resolved, the facilitator may ask those persons holding the concern if they are willing to **“stand aside”** recognizing that if they do, the concern will be recorded in the minutes along with the adoption of the action taken. If a concern remains unresolved and standing aside is not offered, the facilitator must declare an **impasse** and the proposal is not adopted. In this case, with the agreement of the body, the proposal can be **referred to a committee** to study the concerns further seeking possible new resolutions that can be brought to the next meeting of the body. If an impasse is declared, the meeting moves on to the next agenda item.

Some basic rules that apply throughout the process are important to practice: 1. Once a decision has been adopted by consensus, it cannot be changed without reaching a new consensus. 2. In general, only one person has permission to speak at any moment. 3. A concern must be based upon the principles and values of the group.

Minutes of the 2023 District Conference

Minutes of District Conference
Pacific Northwest District, Church of the Brethren
October 14, 2023

Peggy Liley called us to order at 1:51 p.m.

The minutes of the 2022 were revised to name Peggy Liley and John Jones on the Envisioning Committee, and with that addition were adopted.

Treasurer's Report. Debbie Roberts introduced Debbie Franklin as the District bookkeeper, and the reports included in the District meeting packet. One of the major events of the year was the sale of the Salkum building. Debbie Franklin encouraged people to contact her by e-mail with any questions (ddfbookkeeping@gmail.com). Kent had a question about the line item for Camp Koinonia of ~$1,700 being held in the Eder Fund, and the Board will check into what that represents, with an eye to repurposing that money.

Administrative Team. Glenn Brumbaugh continues to represent the District with the Council of District Executives until his replacement is named. There has been some conversation about reorganizing the Districts and coordinating with the Mission and Ministry Board toward that end. The Pacific Northwest District office has been officially moved from Olympic View to Ellisforde, and the denomination has been notified of the new address. Lani Wright mentioned that she has custody of ministerial documentation (such as continuing education credits). Carol Mason shepherded the sale of the Salkum church to a Mennonite group, which appears to be a great fit, and a worthy continuation of the ministry that building has historically hosted.

District Board. Peggy read the report from the District Board. Highlights of the year included the sale of the Salkum church building facilitated by Carol Mason; the hiring of Debbie Franklin as the District bookkeeper to assist Treasurer Debbie Roberts; new pastors Dane Breslin at Sunnyslope and Mike Rumley-Wells at Wenatchee Brethren Baptist; the resignation of Micheal O'Cain as moderator for the District; the transfer of the District office to Ellisforde; and the imminent ordination of Liz Ullery Swenson at WildWood Gathering on October 15, 2023.

Consensus. Carol Mason introduced the consensus model of decision-making, as adopted and practiced by the District. In addition to our own practice, the District has been working to persuade the larger denomination to investigate the consensus model and possibly adopt it.

Ministry Commission. Glenn Brumbaugh said that Colleen Michael's licensing has been renewed. Sam Brackett was ordained this year, and the status of his ordination will be a

subject for the Board in the coming year as Sam moves back to Belize. Liz Ullery Swenson has been approved for ordination. The Commission is in conversation with the new pastors at the Wenatchee congregations about their credentialing.

Bethany Seminary. Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership joined us to report on Bethany Academy and its work with the Seminary. She works with Bethany from her home in Virginia, and Audrey detailed the areas of study offered by the seminary. Bethany is committed to providing affordable education to all seminarians, and has been expanding its offerings to scholars. This year, Bethany conferred 14 Masters degrees and 12 ministry certificates. She also reported on the Strength for the Journey program, which encourages pastors to meet together to provide mutual support and discuss various topics. Debbie Eisenbise has been working with a Strength for the Journey cohort this year for interim ministers. Audrey's written report was included in the conference packet.

Standing Committee. Debbie Eisenbise had a written report, included in the conference packet. She reported that the Standing Committee had a good year at Annual Conference, and received plaudits from attendees at Annual Conference for the participation of our District.

Camp Koinonia. Kevin Eichhorn reported that the Camp has been in contact with the national office in Elgin. They hosted a FaithX work group, which carried out several projects at the camp this summer, and will be back next year. Koinonia also hosted a Brethren Volunteer Service Unit. They hosted more than 18,000 campers this year and 77 distinct groups. For the first time in Kevin's six year tenure, the camp operated in the black. There is a sense of renewed optimism and energy at the camp, and they are making plans to host a new program Mountainside Day Camp, of summer day camps for local children. The Camp has been aggressive in scheduling this year under the leadership of a dynamic board including Melissa Hinton. The Camp has to replace the bridge into camp in the next three years, which will cost somewhere between $150,000 to $200,000, and they are raising funds for that. We recognized the Camp Board members in attendance from the District: Frosty Wilkinson, Merry Roy, Kent Verbeck and Peggy Liley.

Camp Myrtlewood. Daniel will share out the written Myrtlewood report in a supplemental e-mail to attendees.

Disaster Relief. Frosty Wilkinson recapped the written report of Disaster Relief Ministries. Disaster Relief continues to respond to the 2020 wildfires in Okanogan County. There are several projects ongoing across the country, and those are detailed on the Ministry's website, https://www.brethren.org/bdm/. Children's Disaster Services were active in Lahaina during the wildfire damage there, and held a training service in Portland. Terrilynn Griffith suggested that based on her experience with her son, it may be worthwhile to put the bug in the ear of a young person about volunteering with BDM.

Church of the Brethren. Stan Dueck brought greetings from the denominational headquarters and went over their written report. He highlighted the Church of the Brethren's work in Africa and South America; its continuing program to identify and recruit ministerial leadership; church planting and renewal; the denominational vision statement;

service ministries including disaster ministries and disaster child care; and Brethren Volunteer Service, celebrating its 75th anniversary. Further information on all these areas and more is online at https://www.brethren.org/. Stan mentioned the denomination's Faith in Action Fund, which congregations can access for one time or ongoing events or projects. He also cited the Christian Community Development Association, which congregations and individuals can plug into. More information on CCDA is at https://ccda.org/.

Eder Financial. Lynnae Rodeffer, Vice President of Products and Services, presented a slideshow on behalf of Eder Financial (formerly Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust), detailing the work and the products of Eder, their ministry through socially-conscious investing, as well as their diverse personnel and their positions in the agency.

Breaking Down Barriers Study Committee. Brandon Grady joined us from Pennsylvania to give a report on the study committee that was formed in response to the query the District sent to Annual Conference in 2022. Brandon reported the committee sent out surveys and had a 45% response rate. They convened focus groups to explore how to break down the barriers that separate persons or prevent them from participating in the life of the denomination. The committee also received table reports from 2023 Annual Conference in Cincinnati.

One example of a change Brandon would like is provision made for people who are visually or hearing impaired or who can't easily read a computer screen for remote attendance. Brandon would like to have a team available to answer phone calls from people having challenges.

The Committee has seriously considered the information they've gathered, discussed the issues involved, and is formulating options to present to the delegate body to give everyone ownership of the decisions that are made, rather than the committee dictating solutions.

New Lease with Camp Koinonia. Kent Verbeck said the current lease with Camp Koinonia is up in 2027, and the Camp board is working on drafting a new lease in advance of that date. Kent said the current lease is a bit simple, and the Camp would like the new lease to be more comprehensive to account for various scenarios and obligations. The Camp has some people working on a new lease, and is asking the Board for help and input in drafting the new lease.

Glenn said that the Board has already been discussing this issue, and proposed that the District authorize the Board to continue its work with the Camp on the new lease. Howard had a recollection that the Board or the District may have begun considering the new lease at Koinonia, and Kent said he could review the Camp's records as well. Doug Eller also mentioned that Camp Myrtlewood's lease with the District is up sometime in the next 20 years.

It was the sense of the meeting to authorize the Board to continue negotiations for new leases for Camp Koinonia and Camp Myrtlewood and report back to the District meeting.

Budget. Debbie Roberts presented the budget for 2024, crediting Debbie Franklin for her work on the budget. After some review and discussion, the budget was adopted as presented.

The delegates recommended that District volunteers and officials submit their expenses (e.g., mileage) so that we have a true picture of the District's expenses even if the person turns a check back to the District. The delegates also instructed the Board to review the District's investments and gauge if changes should be recommended. Lynnae Rodeffer said that Eder Financial personnel could help the District identify its financial goals and how those objectives square with the various products Eder has.

Leadership Slate. Peggy presented the Board's recommendation that Debbie Eisenbise serve another term as the District's Standing Committee delegate. Howard Ullery was nominated to replace Glenn Brumbaugh at CODE. The delegates affirmed those nominations.

The Board is still looking to name a District Moderator to replace Mike O'Cain, and a Ministry Team chair, and Peggy opened the floor to solicit names or volunteers for those positions. Kent Verbeck volunteered to cover the Moderator position if he can be assisted with remote access. The Board will continue to try to recruit a Ministry Team chair.

Remembrances and Recognition. Liz Ullery Swenson was recognized for her work in becoming ordained. The District also recognized Sam Brackett for his hard work for the District and the denomination, his ordination, and his return to Belize. Recognition was also extended to Dane Breslin and Mike Rumley Wells as new pastors in Wenatchee. We wished Glenn Brumbaugh good luck on his move back to Pennsylvania, with great appreciation for his service. We mourned the death this year of Cecilia Alonzo, mother of pastor David Ortega at Larchmont. We remembered Owen Wright as well and his service to the District.

Peggy offered a closing prayer and adjourned the meeting at 5:57 p.m.

Standing Committee Delegate Report

Debbie Eisenbise

This was my fourth year as district Standing Committee representative. This year, along with the typical annual turnover of members, there were also resignations of members whose congregations or districts (in the case of Puerto Rico) have left the denomination. While the theological, social, and geographical diversity of the denomination continues to be represented on the Standing Committee, there has been a subtle change in culture. While in past years there have been members who were present at Standing Committee to do little more than throw sand in the gears (either by their own volition or due to the contentious relationship their congregation or district has had with the denomination), this year the desire was to come together, hear each other and move on. Honestly, there is little else to do, and with fewer folks to put their shoulders to the wheel (given that some districts (due to loss of congregations) now have fewer Standing Committee members), we seem to realize that we need each other. All hands on deck!

Our agenda this year included the continuation of work already begun:

- Real progress was made on a process for dealing with conflicts and concerns arising from relationships between our denomination and agencies (OEP, Eder Financial, and Bethany Seminary). Work on the covenants with said agencies has been slow, and frustrations from the three were clearly heard by Standing Committee and the subcommittee working on these. We will meet at the end of September to take these up again.

- A recommendation brought last year was passed by the 2024 Annual Conference asking for the next Review and Evaluation Committee (to be elected in 2025) to have a longer tenure (4 years as opposed to 2) to look at structural and organizational issues and suggest changes. A subcommittee on which I serve brought this recommendation and is writing a white paper to provide the Review and Evaluation Committee with a starting point for their work. I will continue to serve on that subcommittee.

- Reports were heard from two committees whose work it is to bring broader inclusion and representation to denominational events and into elected leadership. The one brought from our district, "Breaking Down Barriers–Increasing Access to Denominational Events, asked for a year extension to complete a feasibility study to enact their recommendations. The other committee is concerned with calling leadership to national positions. Their report led to extensive conversation about how ineffective the nominating process is in yielding a diverse ballot, and how it discourages people from smaller districts, like ours, to stay in the pool for potential leadership.

New business:

- With much grief and concern, we agreed to the formal dissolution of Puerto Rico as a district. By our polity, this is an action that had to be taken by Standing Committee. This came to us from the Leadership Team along with a report of what precipitated this. Much frustration was expressed toward our General Secretary and MMB leadership that no visit was made to Puerto Rico. (Indeed, there had not been a visit to that district by our General Secretary during his tenure.) Also, it took MMB months to write a response to the delegation

of leaders from Hispanic and multi-cultural churches that came to their fall meeting. (Our district board wrote a response as soon as we heard about the concerns raised last year.) The Standing Committee wrote a letter to our Puerto Rican brothers and sisters during Annual Conference to express our grief and regret which was sent out in Spanish and English at the end of July. In September, it was published for the entire denomination: https://www.brethren.org/news/2024/letter-of-lament-and-blessing/

- Given our heightened awareness about inequities and injustices in our denomination, especially with regard to LGBTQIA individuals in our church and how we minister to and with them, members of the Council of District Executives met with the Standing Committee for an informal discussion. This was quite informative and moving as we discussed how districts have dealt with ordination regarding those performing weddings for same-sex couples. This last year Dana Cassell's ordination was revoked in Virlina, and others have face similar punishment in some districts. This remains a difference between districts in their interpretation of polity, which in and of itself, is not clear about actions to be taken. Howard Ullery and I were able to represent our district well having a written statement from the board about our approach. There is a link to this document on the District website page www.cobpacificnorthwest.org/lgbtq

- A query brought from the Atlantic Southeast District, "A New Model of Denominational Structure," was discussed at length because the issues embedded in the question brought about structure have to do with biblical interpretation and authority. The underlying issue is that of the diversity of understandings in our congregations and districts with regard to LGBTQIA inclusion. The query articulates this as a barrier to becoming a truly multicultural church. The discussion critiqued that assumption and many spoke of intersectionality and the importance of a church that creates a wide welcome in the various communities we serve. Our congregational polity was discussed in light of this, and ultimately, since the query's concerns were couched as structural, the matter has been referred to the upcoming Review and Evaluation Committee. This was passed by the delegates.

Many were disappointed that although the query from the Atlantic Southeast District was brought to Annual Conference delegates, that the query from Illinois/Wisconsin (that more directly asked questions about issues of inclusion and our outdated paper on human sexuality) was sent back to that district by the Leadership Team. A similar query from Ohio did not make it past a split vote at that district conference last year, and one concerning this is still in process in the Mid-Atlantic District. Please be in prayer about these ongoing concerns.

2024 Moderator Madalyn Metzger did an excellent job of running our meetings with professionalism, humor, and compassion. She spoke continually throughout Annual Conference about the importance of the way we as Brethren come together to do business. She encouraged us to respect and honor the diversity of the body. She provided strong gentle leadership. As we move into 2025, we will make history with Dava Hensley being our first female to follow another in this position. Her theme for this next year is based on Galatians 5:6: "Faith Working Through Love": https://www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2024/08/2025-Theme-Interpretive-Statement.pdf

I commend our district for continuing to provide leadership for and to engage in the work of "Standing with People of Color" and On Earth Peace's gun violence prevention initiative and

Kingian Nonviolence training sessions. I have once again been appointed to the Nominating Committee and so encourage our continued participation in that process, too. Action was taken at this year's Annual Conference to reduce the number of nominations needed on the ballot each year, as the denominational agencies are moving to appoint more of their own board members rather than going through Annual Conference.

Thank you, again for the opportunity to serve PNWD and be about the work of the wider church on our behalf. More about the work of the 2024 Standing Committee can be found at: https://www.brethren.org/news/2024/standing-committee-concludes-meetings/ Please let me know if you have any specific questions about any of the business that we conducted at Annual Conference. Also, if you'd like more details or explanations about any particular items, please let me know and I can address that in my report to district conference.

Having concluded the first year of my second (and final) term, I am aware of the need to start looking for a successor for me in this role. I would love to hear from anyone who has interest in this role or curiosity about it, so that we can smoothly and successfully pass the baton come 2027.

As a final note: it is always wonderful to gather with folks from throughout our district through the Living Stream in-person lunch and through hybrid meetings during the week. This year, it was also a special treat to have eight folks from PNWD as leaders and participants at Song and Story Fest which took place at Camp Brethren Heights just after Annual Conference. A great time was had by all!

Respectfully submitted,
Yours in Christ,
Debbie Eisenbise

Pacific Northwest District of the Church of the Brethren

Profit and Loss

January - August, 2024

	TOTAL
Income	
41000 Income	
41010 Donations	775.00
41020 Congregational Giving	5,329.17
Total 41000 Income	**6,104.17**
Total Income	**$6,104.17**
GROSS PROFIT	**$6,104.17**
Expenses	
61000 Office/General Administrative Expenses	1,628.32
61020 Printing and Copying	116.10
61050 Miscellaneous Expense	0.00
61080 Insurance	303.00
61090 Legal & Professional Services	2,000.00
61100 Office Supplies & Software	221.01
61120 Payroll Expenses	14,594.96
61121 Federal Withholding	-1,700.00
61123 Social Security Employee	-670.88
61125 Medicare Employee	-156.88
Total 61120 Payroll Expenses	**12,067.20**
Total 61000 Office/General Administrative Expenses	**16,335.63**
62000 District Expenses	
62030 District Conferences	873.00
62032 District Events	4,864.88
62040 District Publications	180.00
62045 District Compassion Outreach/Giving	1,500.00
62050 Annual Conference Fees	1,679.96
62090 CoDE Expenses	1,177.02
Total 62000 District Expenses	**10,274.86**
64000 Disaster Preparedness	120.00
Bank Charges & Fees	50.00
Total Expenses	**$26,780.49**
NET OPERATING INCOME	**$ -20,676.32**
Other Income	
70000 Other Miscellaneous Income	3,000.00
71000 Miscellaneous Income	
71100 Event Income	1,670.01
71500 Other Miscellaneous Income - Eder Financial	30,128.26
Total 71000 Miscellaneous Income	**31,798.27**

Pacific Northwest District of the Church of the Brethren

Profit and Loss

January - August, 2024

	TOTAL
73000 Sale of Properties	
73040 Sale of Salkum	50,000.00
73050 Sale of Olympic View Community Church	200,000.00
Total 73000 Sale of Properties	**250,000.00**
Total 70000 Other Miscellaneous Income	**284,798.27**
Total Other Income	**$284,798.27**
Other Expenses	
63000 Other Miscellaneous Expense	5.13
63040 Training Expenses	122.50
63300 Wildwood Expense	34,992.00
Total 63000 Other Miscellaneous Expense	**35,119.63**
Total Other Expenses	**$35,119.63**
NET OTHER INCOME	**$249,678.64**
NET INCOME	**$229,002.32**

Pacific Northwest District of the Church of the Brethren

Balance Sheet

As of August 31, 2024

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
11100 Checking and Savings	223,122.54
11120 Cashmere Valley	
11131 Checking	0.00
Total 11120 Cashmere Valley	**0.00**
Total 11100 Checking and Savings	**223,122.54**
11200 Brethren Foundation	
11300 BF Endowment 1	
11310 Church Development	258,281.97
11320 Endowment	88,277.24
11330 OR Cemetary Maintenance	2,816.65
Total 11300 BF Endowment 1	**349,375.86**
11400 BF Endowment 2	
11410 Camp Koinonia	1,988.63
11420 Disaster Relief Fund	18,560.74
11430 Endowment	171,283.01
Total 11400 BF Endowment 2	**191,832.38**
Total 11200 Brethren Foundation	**541,208.24**
Total Bank Accounts	**$764,330.78**
Accounts Receivable	
12000 Accounts Receivable (A/R)	
12100 Larchmont Receivable	300.00
Total 12000 Accounts Receivable (A/R)	**300.00**
Total Accounts Receivable	**$300.00**
Total Current Assets	**$764,630.78**
Fixed Assets	
16000 Church Properties	
16110 Mossy Rock	0.00
16120 Salkum	0.00
Total 16000 Church Properties	**0.00**
Total Fixed Assets	**$0.00**
TOTAL ASSETS	**$764,630.78**
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Total Liabilities	

Pacific Northwest District of the Church of the Brethren

Balance Sheet

As of August 31, 2024

	TOTAL
Equity	
31000 Opening Balance Equity	301,705.69
36000 Retained Earnings	233,922.77
Net Income	229,002.32
Total Equity	**$764,630.78**
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	**$764,630.78**

Ministry Team Report

Enten Eller

Thank you for this opportunity to report on the work of the District Ministry Team. The Ministry Team is coordinated by the chair (currently Enten Eller, of the Living Stream COB), and includes the Area Ministers (Debbie Roberts *[--and we miss Carol Mason]*), and the District Executive with responsibilities for ministers and credentialing (Lani Wright).

By way of review, the PNWD Constitution and Bylaws state the core District Ministry Team functions as (a) identification and credentialing of ministers; (b) conflict mediation; and (c) support of area ministers. The Team is tasked with guiding all ministerial matters in the district, including strengthening relationships, providing training, encouraging pastors, and helping those called to ministry. Area Ministers report to the District Ministry Team as they support and encourage the pastors across the district.

This past year, the Ministry Team has sought to meet those responsibilities by the following:

- Encourage our licensed ministers to continue on their journey towards ordination
- Conduct credentialing interview with ministers seeking ordination or commissioning
- Begin the Church of the Brethren 5-Year Ordination/Commissioning Review Process
  - This is a denomination-wide credential review required by Church of the Brethren polity, in which any active minister wishing to review their ministry credentials must
    - complete a six-hour ministerial ethics training
    - meet continuing education standards of an average of ten hours per qualified instruction per year (pro-rated per percentage of full-time ministerial service)
    - submit a report indicating their desire to continue as a credentialed minister in the Church of the Brethren, and indicating their current area of service
      - Exemptions to some requirements are available for retired ministers
  - We celebrate holding a very successful Ethics Training for Ministers that was held on Saturday, September 14. We were able to get an exemption from holding the training face-to-face in order to do the training by Zoom, and the vast majority of our credentialed ministers were able to participate.
  - The remaining steps of the 5-Year Review are to be completed by next fall.
- Respond to requests from congregations and/or ministers about ministerial matters, from pulpit fill and seeking new ministers to ministerial support and encouragement
- Meeting as needed in order to accomplish all of the above

We also wish to celebrate the milestones in ministry that a number of our pastors have achieved, whether through years of service in their current congregation, or years of service across their entire ministry journey. We are blessed by those who give of their time, talents and skills as ministers here in our district, whether those ministers serve as volunteers or in paid positions, and we are grateful for all their contributions to our churches and our district.

In Christ's service,

Enten Eller
District Ministry Team chair
On behalf of the District Ministry Team (Debbie Roberts, Lani Wright, Enten Eller)

THANK YOU

JUNE 2024

A message from the Camp Managers, Shauna and Joshua Danielson

Dear Camp Myrtlewood Friends and Families,

Our first year at Camp Myrtlewood has been an incredible journey, filled with new friendships and unforgettable experiences. From the moment we arrived on July 1st, 2023 we were embraced by the warm and welcoming community, fondly known as "The Myrtle Nuts." This report highlights our journey over the last year, emphasizing our core focuses on Volunteerism, Community, and Programming, keeping hospitality at the heart of our mission. It showcases our accomplishments and the exciting future we are building together with the community, and the immediate need for your support.

As we transitioned to camp life, we were supported by the camp staff; Nathan, Reid, and Morgan. While settling in and learning our new roles, we also took hikes and beach trips with our team. A major milestone of the summer was opening the new Hemlock cabin equipped with an ADA accessible deck and ramp, built with community donations and a grant from OSU Extension. This addition, along with completing a covered porch over the dining hall and repairing the dining hall's back deck, enhanced our capacity for hosting larger groups and improving accessibility of outdoor learning spaces.

Our educational programs expanded significantly, thanks to a partnership with Rogue Environmental Ed, introducing fifteen new weeks of Outdoor School. This collaboration not only increased our camper count by over 850 students but also extended our reach to more Title I and local schools in Southern Oregon. Some outdoor school sessions brought up to 117 campers and we adapted to their need for accommodations by creating temporary sleeping spaces in Forest Dell and the Dining Hall.

During the winter months, our team continued making necessary maintenance improvements to camp including new water heaters, septic service, upkeep of the water system, and tuning up the camp vehicles. To give back to our local community, we hosted a Christmas lights show along the road. “Camp Myrtlewood’s Quarter Mile of Lights" featuring over 100,000 lights, brought joy to the local community including buses of elders from the local retirement home.



Our family is incredibly grateful for the loving community. Being at Camp Myrtlewood, working and learning together, is a dream come true for us.



The beautiful new ADA creekside Hemlock cabin has top energy efficiencies, including heated floors.



Outdoor school students connect with nature by finding and observing creek critters, including the adorable Rough-Skinned Newts.



Cots were packed into Forest Dell, which became a sleeping cabin during some Outdoor School sessions.



The camp entrance sign marked the end of the Quarter Mile of Lights show which included 20 holiday themed inflatables.



Camp's spirit of service was a focus during our piloted outdoor school program. Students filled the garden beds and planted seeds for future campers to enjoy.



Memorial Work Weekend was a wonderfully productive time. While making new friends, even the kids were engaged with service projects.



The Dogwood foundation is finished! We need your help to continue the building process to complete this beautiful cabin. Your donations are appreciated and will bring a wonderful new community space to camp.

The Spring season brought more Outdoor School students to enjoy the wonders of nature at Camp Myrtlewood. Our team also piloted our own first educational program for Maple Corner Montessori School. Students engaged in hands-on nature activities like exploring the creek creatures and planting seeds in the new garden, fostering new friendships and connections to the land.

The camp community gathered for the annual Memorial Work Weekend. This was an uplifting time of service and connection. With over 30 people in attendance, we accomplished many tasks and projects around camp that allowed us to open up the basketball court, refinish the memorial brick patio, and expand our parking lot.

With our core focuses of Volunteerism, Community, and Programming as our guide to expand staff housing, camper accommodations, and engaging community spaces, we broke ground on the Dogwood Revitalization Project. Dogwood will be a multipurpose cabin where campers can gather for meetings and workshops in an open living area, have comfortable sleeping quarters for 18 people, and even access to an ADA bathroom and wrap-around deck overlooking the stunning Myrtle Creek. In addition, we hope to include an outdoor gathering space with an enclosed fireplace as well as much needed updating of the Dogwood bathrooms. The renovation of the bathhouse will also include the refinishing of the upstairs, to address the critical need for expanded volunteer and staff housing. This project is close to our hearts, and we are excited about its potential to transform the camp experience for our retreat, camp, and outdoor school groups.

The growth we've experienced underlines the need to continue our momentum and enhance our capacity to welcome more students and retreat groups. Your support will enable us to meet these challenges, ensuring that Camp Myrtlewood can continue to be a beacon of learning, community, and environmental stewardship. Your donations will make a significant impact, helping us realize this vision and continue our mission of providing an outdoor setting for spiritual renewal, education, and recreation.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the mission of Camp Myrtlewood. Together, we look forward to building a bright and prosperous future for the Camp Myrtlewood community.

With Gratitude and Love,
Shauna, Joshua, and Spencer Danielson

District Disaster Response Report

Frosty Wilkinson

This year I concentrated on recruiting volunteers to help in the recovery from the devastating wildfires in the Spokane Region. I made contacts with Spokane Region Long Term Recovery Group (SRLRTG) . We communicated back and forth about possible work our volunteers could do and whether there was housing available, such is in a church. We had a small team of 4 of who committed to volunteer the week of October 28 to November 1. We recently learned there was a change in personnel in the SRLTRG and my communications during the last month or so were going to an empty email box and phone. It appears that the present leadership is not ready to work with us at this time. I notified the team our plans for that week are cancelled.

Also this year I have continued to represent the COB in meetings of Washington Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (WAVOAD). I attended in person the annual conference of the Mountain West Region of VOAD, held in Kent in April.

Frosty Wilkinson

Dear District Delegates,

Since 1974, OEP has developed programs serving youth and young adults, congregations, and community groups, as we walk in partnership with Church of the Brethren congregations, camps, districts, and Annual Conference.

In 2024, we are celebrating our 50th anniversary as a ministry in the Church of the Brethren. As we reflect, we consider **legacy and hope,** which empower us to resist war, make peace, and pursue justice with faith and courage. Lamentations 3:21-23 says "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." We go with hope into the next fifty years, eager for the time when peace endures and justice prevails.

Our purpose as an agency of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference is to help the Church of the Brethren become a relevant, vital, "living" peace and justice church equipped to create vital relationships and initiatives on contemporary issues of violence and injustice. Let us disarm ourselves of violence and re-equip ourselves with the tools of active nonviolence and conflict reconciliation. Let us prepare ourselves to become vibrant bearers of God's love, vital, relevant, and ready to respond to the needs of our times.

GUN VIOLENCE. In 2023, On Earth Peace launched the Church of the Brethren Gun Violence Prevention Action Team, a group of more than ten leaders from across the country, working to galvanize the Church of the Brethren to be faithful as an effective force for reducing gun violence wherever it occurs. The Action Team planned a major public vigil and witness at Cincinnati City Hall as part of the 2023 Annual Conference, and spent the fall connecting with concerned Brethren yearning to reduce gun violence in their own communities and our country. In 2024, the committee began inviting individuals to volunteer as **Congregational Ambassadors for Gun Violence Prevention.** For more information, email COB-GVP@OnEarthPeace.org or visit https://www.OnEarthPeace.org/gvp-cob.

YOUTH GROUP SUPPORT. OEP supports youth groups and their efforts by offering **up to $500 in grant funding to support a youth-initiated project for peace and justice in their community**. We accompany youth through webinars, coaching, and accompaniment as they connect with their neighborhoods. In 2023-2024, OEP offered grants to youth in Ohio and Nigeria.

AGAPE MAGAZINE: What is War, and How Do We Resist it? At On Earth Peace, we have a dream of a world with no oppression, no violence, and no war. The new Agape magazine series will introduce children to how they can resist war, make peace, and pursue justice. We look forward to exploring these ideas together as we work toward our dream. The paragraphs below are drawn from the first issue. From the first issue:

> *War is so big and happens in so many places. Simply put, war hurts people like you and me and separates families like yours and mine. It takes away important resources like having enough food, clean water, or a safe shelter. It also robs people of valuable opportunities like going to school, seeing/making friends, and playing outside. It can be hard to know how to respond and what can be done to stop war.*

As long as there has been war, there have been people who resist war, who fight against the idea that violence is needed to solve conflicts, and who work to stop the things that lead to war. Saying no to war and actively working to stop the things that lead to war is courageous. People who refuse to participate in war are called conscientious objectors (COs). Many COs say no to war because of their faith, which reminds them that all people are created by God and that we need to care for our neighbors. This is true across different religious traditions. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. taught that "Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people." Read more here: https://heyzine.com/flip-book/e9308caa69.html#page/1

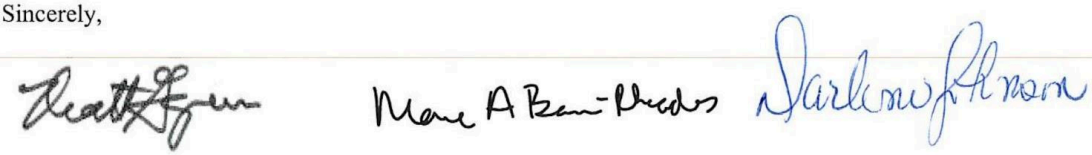
STANDING WITH PEOPLE OF COLOR. In 2022, On Earth Peace was delegated by the Annual Conference to join with the Southern Ohio and Kentucky District to lead a denominational study/action process, "Standing with People of Color." OEP staff continues providing leadership and support for that committee, along with staff from the Church of the Brethren, Inc. Through 2023, that committee launched the "7 Prompts" for Crucial Christian Conversation which is being used at many levels throughout the denomination. In summer 2024, the committee will introduce a new volunteer role, **Church of the Brethren Racial Justice Advocates**. More information available by writing SWPOC@OnEarthPeace.org and also online at www.OnEarthPeace.org/swpoc

2023 Highlights

- 40 web events hosted with 683 attendees.
- 97 people or families made three-year financial pledges to support On Earth Peace.
- 100+ people participated in the Gun Violence Prevention vigil in Cincinnati during the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference.
- 227 Brethren have been trained in Kingian Nonviolence as part of our 1000 Brethren Kingian Nonviolence Training Project goal.

Your individual and family financial support, and your congregation's financial support, make this work possible. We only exist today because of the vision and foresight of supporters and participants in the last fifty years, and we need your support to make the next fifty years possible. If you are moved by what you read on these pages, please join our faithful donors.

Sincerely,



Matt Guynn, Marie Benner-Rhoades, and Darlene Johnson, co-executive directors

If you would like to receive mailings directly from On Earth Peace, please use this code to sign up or visit www.OnEarthPeace.org/join.

McPherson College

2024 McPherson College District Conference Report

May 2024

Following a memorable year in which **McPherson College** secured a $1 billion ***future*** gift for its endowment from an anonymous donor, there were many significant accomplishments during the 2023-24 academic year.

One of the **largest graduating classes** in McPherson College history received their degrees at the 136th commencement ceremony on May 18. McPherson College continues to be blessed with growth and success. Projections for the fall 2024 semester forecast an incoming class of almost 350 students. McPherson College's total enrollment is expected to be around 825.

The **Automotive Restoration program**—the only one of its kind in the U.S.—made headlines by competing and placing second in class at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in August. Restoration students, with faculty oversight, spent seven years restoring a 1953 Mercedes Benz 300 S Cabriolet. It was the first time in the history of the storied Pebble Beach car exhibition that a vehicle completely restored by students earned honors.

One of the most impactful initiatives sponsored by McPherson College is **Ventures in Christian Discipleship**. During the 2023-24 series, Ventures hosted six content-rich webinars on a wide variety of topics with an average of 30 registrants per session representing 17 Church of the Brethren districts. A total of 360 individuals have either participated in live presentations or accessed recordings since the program's inception.

Programming ideas and strategic planning is developed through the help of an advisory committee whose members come from districts across the denomination and beyond. McPherson College does not require a registration fee for webinars but gratefully accepts free-will donations. The sessions are subsidized by our supporting districts and churches, McPherson College, and individual donors. We are glad to coordinate with the Brethren Academy to offer Continuing Education Units (requiring an extra charge) for all presentations attended in real time.

Information on the upcoming 2024-25 Ventures series can be found here: www.mcpherson.edu/ventures.

McPherson College maintains a close relationship with the **McPherson First Church of Brethren**, located right next to the campus. College staff with dedicated time to constituent relations, including relations with the church, are alumnus Billy Jamison '88, director of alumni and constituent relations, who was hired in July 2023; alumna Kendra Flory, advancement assistant; Erik Vogel, vice president of advancement; and Dr. Michael Schneider, president.

McPherson College staff take part in **Annual Conference** by hosting a luncheon for alumni and friends. Along with other Brethren Higher Education Association colleges, MC provides an exhibit booth for our alumni and friends, and sponsors events for COB youth attending and alumni socials.

Like last season, the college will have representation at several regional **District Conferences**, including Western Plains (held on the campus of McPherson College), Northern Plains in Waterloo, Iowa, and Missouri and Arkansas in Warrensburg, Missouri.

We invite any of our constituents to join in the celebration of **Homecoming 2024**, October 18-20, on the campus of McPherson College. And please encourage those students looking at their college options to consider McPherson College. As we say often: it's a great day to be a Bulldog!

Respectfully submitted by: Erik Vogel, vice president of advancement



PART-TIME PASTOR FULL-TIME CHURCH

Part Time Pastor Full Time Church exists as a ministry of the Church of the Brethren to engage and empower Multi-Vocational Pastors (MVPs) throughout our denomination, including in

Pacific Northwest!

Reflections from a pastor, after their PTPFTC sponsored sabbatical:

"Being constantly, what the Jesuits call, 'a person for others' takes a lot out of a person, especially when it's hard to find time to just quietly be with God... Thank you for supporting this rich and fruitful, revivifying time."

THE THREE P'S:

PEERS
Peer relationships are vital to healthy ministries. We seek to build strong peer realtionships.

PRACTICE
Healthy spiritual, emotional, and physical practices are crucial. We help Multi-vocational pastors (MVPS) engage in these practices.

PURPOSE
Through strong peer relationships and healthy practices, MVPS will find God's purpose for their ministry.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

Here are some quick numbers that show the impact that PTPFTC has made so far and we can't wait to see those numbers grow!

17 — TOTAL NUMBER OF COHORTS
This includes 121 pastoral individuals from 93 congregations.

53 — TOTAL NUMBER OF EVENTS
This includes 620 pastoral individuals from 316 congregations.

Richard Wehrle | Program Director
rwehrle@brethren.org |847-429-4365
Tabitha Hartman Rudy |Administrative Assistant adminptpftc@brethren.org

Peers, Practice, Purpose; adapted from McNeil, J. D., Kate R. Davis, and Andrea Sielaff. "Resilience." Center for Transforming Engagement. https://transformingengagement.org/resources/the-resilience-report/

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024
BRETHREN VOLUNTEER SERVICE

THREE-QUARTERS OF A CENTURY AND COUNTING

Marking a milestone: Events commemorate BVS' 75th anniversary

The past year was a year of celebration, as communities around the country held events to mark a milestone: The 75th anniversary of Brethren Volunteer Service.

Gatherings took place in California, Kansas, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere during the year, bringing BVS alumni and friends together to share stories, enjoy fellowship, and lift up the ministry of BVS.

In addition, the 2023 Annual Conference included a special recognition of BVS' diamond jubilee during business, and a sellout BVS luncheon during the Conference added to the festivities. A new book from author Jim Lehman and Brethren Press, *A Year of Living Differently,* also helped mark the occasion.



BVS director Chelsea Goss Skillen said it was a chance to "honor the legacy of those who have dedicated their time, skills, and hearts to be the hands and feet of Jesus."

BVS BY THE NUMBERS

Volunteers currently serving:
26
(19 in the US, 2 in Europe, 4 in Asia, 1 in Africa)

Active BVS project sites:
About 55

Number of US states home to BVS project sites:
16 (plus Washington D.C.)

Current BVS monthly stipend:
$250

BVS goes remote

It was announced this spring that Brethren Volunteer Service would be going remote for the first time in its history, as director Chelsea Goss Skillen relocated to her home in Richmond, Va.

All other full-time staff in the department were already working remotely. BVS will continue to maintain a small office presence in Elgin, Ill., with some part-time work and occasional volunteers located there.

STAFF UPDATES



Virginia Rendler began in July 2023 as interim volunteer coordinator for BVS. Working remotely from N. Manchester, Ind., she connects regularly with volunteers through the year and plays a key role in making orientation plans.

Marissa Witkovsky-Eldred had the "interim" removed from her title last fall as she continues to serve as coordinator for FaithX.

Units 333 and 334 join the chorus with orientations in 2023

Twenty-two volunteers completed orientation this past year, with Unit 333 taking place at Inspiration Hills in northern Ohio in late July and early August, and Unit 334 meeting at Camp Koinonia in Cle Elum, Wash., in the fall.

Members of those groups who were serving in the US gathered for a mid-year retreat at Camp Ithiel near Orlando, Fla., in March, and all volunteers do regular check-ins with BVS staff members.

The orientations typically include a variety of training sessions, sharing and conversations, games, a service project, worship, and cooking meals together.



Explore the BVS Facebook group and e-news!

ON THE SCHEDULE: UNITS 335 & 336

This year's **summer unit (Unit 335)** will hold orientation July 28-Aug. 5 at Camp Colorado, located near Sedalia, Colo., southwest of Denver. The **fall unit (Unit 336)** will gather Sept. 17-25 at Camp Brethren Heights in Rodney, Mich., north of Grand Rapids. Online pre-orientation meetings also take place before each group gathers.

FaithX: A 'beloved' message of service

A new older adult service trip highlighted the FaithX short-term service opportunities in 2024, with 15 people taking part in a February event at Camp Ithiel in Florida.

Another dozen trips were offered over the summer including experiences for youth and young adults, an adult trip to Ecuador, and the We Are Able trip for those with developmental disabilities. Domestic trips spanned nine states, from North Carolina to Indiana to Washington. More than 190 people registered.

The 2024 FaithX theme is "Beloved," drawn from 1 John 4:7. That also served as the theme for the denomination's Service Sunday in February.

DID YOU KNOW?

- BVS welcomed several new projects in the past year, including Lydia's House in Cincinnati, Christ House in Washington D.C., the San Diego Peace Campus, and the China Potato Project. Others are in the pipeline.
- BVS has recently done enhancements to its website, created a new purple promotional brochure, and developed an online project resource guide for volunteers. It also puts out a monthly e-newsletter with updates.
- The message of BVS hit the road frequently in recent months, with staff sharing at regional youth conferences, Young Adult Conference, college visits, and Annual Conference.

Brethren Disaster Ministries Report

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13 (NIV)

Responding through volunteers and partners in the US and globally, Brethren Disaster Ministries relies on the power, strength, joy, and peace of God to bring hope and healing to brothers and sisters caught up in the chaos of both natural and human-caused disasters. In 2023, BDM supported relief and recovery from tornadoes, floods, wildfires, and a typhoon in the United States and its territories, and to natural disasters, war, and other humanitarian crises around the world, by walking side by side with survivors as they rebuilt their lives.

And yet, it is not only disaster survivors who are blessed when BDM responds to a need. Those who serve are also blessed—indeed, some are changed forever. One volunteer who served on a rebuilding site in Kentucky commented that "an unexpected experience was the overwhelming presence of the Spirit of God. I expected the experience to be faith based, but it was an amazing week for me." Another declared, "I came home with my cup running over, what an experience, I am ready to go again."

In 2023, Children's Disaster Services (CDS) faced back to back challenges responding to disasters in the Pacific, both at the invitation of partner Red Cross. Typhoon Mawar caused destruction and displacement of people when it hit the US Territory of Guam in May. A team of six volunteers traveled to Guam, serving in shelters for three weeks and caring for 563 children. In August, when a devastating wildfire destroyed much of the town of Lahaina on Hawaii's island of Maui, CDS volunteers were called there to care for children in assistance centers. Over a six-week period, three teams of volunteers made 457 child contacts. While the typical CDS volunteer serves for two weeks at a time, these two groups of volunteers served for three weeks each, due to the distance and other logistical concerns.

CDS responded to seven other disasters in 2023, including an apartment fire, a home explosion, and tornadoes. They also cared for children of asylum seekers. In October, a team of CDS Critical Response Childcare (CRC) volunteers, who are specially trained to support traumatized children and families after mass casualty events, traveled to Lewiston, Maine, following a mass shooting there. The need for peace and hope in all of these situations was great and CDS volunteers brought their calm and reassuring presence as a beacon to the children and their families. A total of 44 CDS volunteers engaged with 1,185 child contacts during the year.

The BDM Rebuilding Program project sites in 2023 were located in two areas of Kentucky. BDM partnered with Habitat for Humanity of the Pennyrile Region for the entire year to support the rebuilding of the town of Dawson Springs, which had suffered through deadly and destructive tornadoes in December 2021. As groups of BDM volunteers helped to build houses for first-time homeowners who had lost so much when their rental properties were destroyed, they wrote Bible verses and messages of support and hope on the lumber framing the structures and prayed for the families who would eventually live there. This project site is scheduled to continue until at least June 2024.

In partnership with the Eastern Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church Disaster Response, BDM volunteers spent a total of 12 weeks during 2023 in Eastern Kentucky rebuilding and repairing homes damaged during massive flooding that occurred in July and August of 2022. A total of 708 volunteers and project leaders served 52 families in 2023 on these two Kentucky sites.

The BDM Global Response supports relief and recovery for vulnerable people around the world facing war, violence, floods, earthquakes, and other disasters and humanitarian crises. In partnership with the Global Churches of the Brethren (CoB) and other international agencies, the challenge to respond is matched by the knowledge that Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) grants bring hope and joy where both may be hard to find. In 2023, these EDF grants equaled $695,700. The majority of these grants were in response to conflicts in the countries and communities of the Global Church of the Brethren family. This includes the Democratic Republic of Congo ($94,500), Haiti ($60,200), South Sudan ($40,000), and Nigeria (Nigeria Crisis Response, $220,000). An additional $220,000 was granted to three partners serving populations displaced by the Russia-Ukraine war.

The Nigeria Crisis Response continues as a partnership with Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2023 and remains strong amidst continued violence in the country. The response program includes continued support for internally displaced people, food distributions, medical assistance, livelihood training centers for widows and orphans, distribution of seeds and fertilizer, new wells for drinking water, education assistance for orphan children, trauma workshops, and home repairs for the most vulnerable.

The total BDM programmatic expenses in 2023 were $1,103,235. This includes the expenses from EDF allocations that support specific programs such as $184,064 for U.S. responses (Rebuilding, CDS, etc.); $237,447 for the Nigeria Crisis Response; $305,424 for other Global CoB partners; and $376,300 for all other global responses, including the Russia-Ukraine war and the Turkey-Syria Earthquake Response.

Brethren Disaster Ministries and all whom we serve are forever grateful for the steadfast and faithful support to these ministries, as well as the tireless and persistent work of the many volunteers without whom the event could not happen. Our ministry supporting hope and healing is but an extension of the compassion and love that comes from God and is demonstrated by each person who serves in God's name. It is the result of the body of Christ coming together to share God's blessings with survivors of disasters and with each other. We thank you for your part in this work!

It is our prayer that through our ministry, with your support, God's glory will be known.



Roy Winter, Executive Director for Service Ministries

On behalf of BDM staff: Jenn Dorsch-Messler, Sharon Franzén, Kim Gingerich, Carolyn Neher, and Michael Scalzi

Church of the Brethren

Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings to you in the name of Christ our Savior!

I am filled with gratitude for the remarkable ministries and transformative work being carried out by the Church of the Brethren in your local congregations and through the work and ministries of denominational staff on your behalf. Your unwavering commitment to serving God and our communities has been an inspiration and a testament to the enduring power of faith and compassion.

You will find much about our denominational mission and ministries reflected in two printed resources available to you at your district conference and on the Church of the Brethren website (www.brethren.org). The *Church of the Brethren Annual Report* offers a glimpse of the ministries over the last year, and the *Advocating Generosity* booklet invites you to partner with us in our current ministries. You will also find these resources, together with our recent Church of the Brethren video report, at www.brethren.org/annualreport.

The Jesus in the Neighborhood vision calls us to *"develop a culture of calling and equipping disciples who are innovative, adaptable, and fearless."* As we live into that vision, we are currently evaluating much of what we do, wanting to make certain that we are supporting the needs of our congregations and leaders as best we can. To that end, if you have questions or needs, please let us know.

The challenges that we face as a Church can be daunting at times, especially if we get distracted by all the noise around us. I continue to be drawn to the vibrant church reflected in Acts 4:32-35. That vibrancy was centered in Christ and in caring for one another and their community. It reflected a radical generosity that ensured that all the needs were met within the community. In the same way, our own communities need the grace and love that we have to offer. While the needs of each of our communities may look different, they need the same radical generosity that we have to offer as followers of Jesus. Let's not overthink it, but simply do what Jesus did. God's grace is and will be transformational for the community through our witness of Jesus' love.

Again, I am grateful for the many ways your district and local congregations faithfully strive to live out the Gospel – to simply try to do what Jesus did. The vibrant ministries of our Church of the Brethren congregations – small to large – are at the heart of our Church. We should never diminish the essential role that each unique part of the body plays in our common ministry together.

Your servant in Christ,

David Steele
General Secretary

Church of the Brethren

Dear Siblings in Christ in the Pacific Northwest District,

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. My prayers are lifted for you as you prepare your hearts and minds for District Conference. As the community of God, may these special meetings and worship times honor our Lord and celebrate the many ways each of you and your congregations are carrying forth the message of the Good News of Jesus. Sharing Christ's love and the gospel is still our call and mission. May we together move forward with God's Spirit and guidance to share love with God and all our neighbors.

I am looking forward to our 238th recorded Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, scheduled for July 2-6, 2025, in Greensboro, North Carolina. There will be business sessions, bible studies, equipping session, worship, and many opportunities for fellowship and celebration as the Body of Christ gathers. Annual Conference exists to unite, strengthen, and equip the Church of the Brethren to follow Jesus.

One of the core values of the Annual Conference is to continue building loving relationships with one another, despite any differences we may have. Love seems to be having a hard time in our world and in the church. We are called to love and respect each other in the divisive times we find ourselves. At times, agape love, a love embodied by God's love for all humankind in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ seems impossible. Rabbi Harold S. Kushner theologian shares, " If we are brave enough to love, strong enough to forgive, generous enough to rejoice in another's happiness, and wise enough to know there is enough love to go around for us all, then we can achieve a fulfillment that no other living creature will ever know." I pray we embrace the words of 1 Corinthians 13 as our focus to love as Christ loves us. May we be able to say, "And now, faith, hope, and love abide, these three, and the greatest of these is love." 1 Corinthians 13: 13.

I look forward to seeing each of you in Greensboro as we gather as the wider church to continue the love and work of Jesus, peacefully, simply, together.

Blessings and love to you all,
Dava Hensley
2025 Annual Conference Moderator

Eder Financial
BOLD. BALANCED. TRUSTED.

Eder Financial District Conference Report 2024

Greetings!

Did you know Eder Financial can make a positive impact on your life, directly or indirectly, whether you qualify to use our services or not?

That's because we serve congregations and their staff so they can better perform their ministries for their members.

Eder provides a fantastic retirement plan and employee-based insurances for pastors, congregational, district, and camp employees. We can also manage special funds, like ministry funds, memorial funds, cemetery funds, and building funds for congregations and other church-related organizations.

We also provide several free workshops that help congregations learn how to grow their endowments, encourage people to include the congregation in their end-of-life financial decision-making, how to run the church as a business with good governance, and more. Ask the Eder representative attending your conference how we can bring a workshop to your congregation.

Can we serve you and your congregation if we aren't already? Give us a chance. You'll be glad you did. Ask us if your congregation, district, and camp are using our services. We welcome the conversation.

Eder Financial is now in its third year with its new name, having changed from Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust in May 2022. The transition has been well received in the denomination because of our core business model –

- We seek to serve congregations and organizations as partners, making choices and decisions surrounding participation in a retirement plan as easy as possible. It is important that we make it easy for all who can enroll to enroll, as many Americans are on track to have insufficient savings in retirement. We work to help ensure that our members are not faced with that problem, by helping them enroll early in their careers, saving to the plan consistently, and using an asset allocation model to help grow their funds. Not sure how to do that? We can help.
- We provide a concierge service model with our insurance products, answering questions and addressing all concerns proactively and satisfactorily. Our ancillary insurances of life, vision, dental, short- and long-term disability have held premium rate increases virtually flat over the past five years, which means eligible employees can protect themselves with various insurances while not suffering high premium rate increases year after year.
- Part-time employees can participate in both the Eder Retirement and Insurance plans. Ask us if you or someone you know qualifies.
- We manage funds of organizations in a manner that allows easy access, several tools for managing investments, and reports and resources that assist in the management of the funds. We would be glad to set up a demonstration for you and your organization of our fantastic customer web portal.
- And we provide education to give people information and to help them know what questions they should be asking so that they can be successful, whether helping to grow their congregations' financial base or to manage their own retirement plan or insurance offerings.

Eder Financial
BOLD. BALANCED. TRUSTED.

We also help tenured pastors and congregational, district, and camp staff who have extraordinary financial needs, if they meet certain guidelines. In 2023, the Church Workers' Assistance Plan that Eder manages granted $282,865 to 40 people who found themselves in financial distress with nowhere else to turn.

Most of the funds under our management conform to Eder Values Investing, which means you can utilize our services and know that your resources are being managed in accordance with the values in the Church of the Brethren tradition.

Serving others who have common bonds and convictions

Committed to serving as a Church of the Brethren Annual Conference agency, Eder also serves people and organizations of faith that profess a like-mindedness with Eder Financials' values as an organization grounded in Christian faith. Program strength, product options, and lower costs come from a strong volume of business. Therefore, Eder will grow stronger in the long term by offering its ministries to others who seek competitive products backed by concierge service. If you know of a congregation, nonprofit, or other faith-based organization that would benefit from Eder's services, please let us know.

EDER FINANCIAL BOARD and staff

The 12-person Eder Financial Board consists of people who have knowledge and experience in accounting, finance, investments, law, employee benefits, human resources, actuarial science, or represent pastors, district executives, and organizations that are Brethren or have common bonds and convictions with our organization. If you or someone you know would like to serve on the Eder Financial Board, let us know. We are always looking for people who are dedicated to service, want to do meaningful volunteer work, and are committed to being an active member of a board.

We also have 30 people on our staff working in retirement, employee insurance, organizational investing, finance, investments, client relations, marketing, public relations, IT, data, special projects, and business development. We are a family friendly, faith-based organization that strives to provide concierge level service to our members and clients while also providing a fulfilling work environment in a permanent work-from-home setting. If you or someone you know is interested in an Eder Financial job, let us know.

CONCLUSION

Despite the expansion of its charter to bring in other members and clients of like mind from beyond the Church of the Brethren, Eder Financial remains committed to the denomination. Our organization was created by Annual Conference to serve pastors, employees, churches, and organizations. That commitment to service has not wavered. We are here to help our members and clients achieve their financial goals. If you and/or your congregation have not walked with us in the past, let us do so in the future. In other words, those who have not given Eder Financial a look for a few years, or ever, should do so. Together, Eder will help you reach your financial goals, which will help strengthen your ministry to the church.

Jan Fahs
Board Chair

Nevin Dulabaum
President

Church of the Brethren

July 31, 2024

Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

Greetings, beloved fellow disciples of Jesus. I rejoice in our common calling in ministry as we respond to the 2025 Annual Conference Moderator's invitation to celebrate and explore the theme of "faith working through love." Indeed, this theme challenges us to live out our faith through authentic lives full of the healing power of Christ's love embodied in ministry with the world.

As we engage in ministries together, the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, in cooperation with the Ministry Office and the Council of District Executives, provides materials related to ministerial compensation that have been approved by the Annual Conference. The *Integrated Annual Ministry Agreement* (IAMA) serves as one document for both the start-up and renewal needs for pastors. In addition, this Agreement contains a helpful document entitled "*Shared Ministry Priorities*," which can aid in developing a strong and transparent partnership between pastor and congregation. We urge congregations to utilize both documents and to renew them each year. The documents (in fillable form) are now also posted separately on the Office of Ministry compensation page.

The *Guidelines for Pastors' Salary and Benefits* contain basic background information and explanations regarding compensation and benefits. The *Minimum Cash Salary Table and Guidelines* seeks to encourage congregations to be fair and generous employers of pastoral leadership. All these materials can be utilized in conjunction with the *Pastoral Compensation Calculator* developed with Eder Financial and found here:
https://www.brethren.org/ministryoffice/compensation/

It is important to note that the Pastoral Compensation Calculator starts with what the congregation can afford to pay, includes the cost of housing, pension, and benefits, and then calculates how many hours (based on the Minimum Cash Salary Table) of average weekly pastoral time the congregation should expect to receive from their pastor. In summary, the calculator clarifies the congregation's ability to determine appropriate levels of compensation for pastors. Updates to the calculator that incorporate the 2025 figures are in process by Eder Financial staff.

Please NOTE: THE NECESSARY FORMS ARE AVAILABLE IN FILLABLE FORMAT AT
https://www.brethren.org/ministryoffice/compensation/
(This is the source to find all documents and resources related to pastoral compensation.)

Church of the Brethren

The following resources are provided for congregations and pastors as they work at these conversations:

1. **Integrated Annual Ministry Agreement (IAMA)** –
   As mentioned above, the Integrated Annual Ministry Agreement (replacing start-up and renewal agreements) is available online (see link above). This agreement is to be completed each year. Please secure the appropriate signatures and place a copy in the ministerial file. A signed copy should be returned to the ***district office*** from each pastor and placed in the minister's file. ***Please highlight the critical importance of this document being signed and returned annually to the district office.***
2. **Minimum Cash Salary Table and Guidelines*** (the Table as posted reflects a cost-of-living adjustment of 3.3% approved by Annual Conference delegates and effective January 1, 2025.) Link: https://www.brethren.org/ministryoffice/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2024/07/2025-Cash-Salary-Guidelines.pdf
3. **Compensation Calculator** available at this link: https://pccalc.azurewebsites.net/
4. **Shared Ministry Priorities**, fillable – This document included in the IAMA is also posted separately for convenient access.
5. **Guidelines to Pastors' Salaries and Benefits** document serves as a resource for compensation conversations and can be found here: https://www.brethren.org/ministryoffice/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2022/08/2023-Guidelines-for-Pastors-Salary-and-Benefits.pdf

*The recommended cost-of-living increase approved by delegates at the 2024 Annual Conference constitutes a 3.3% increase across the salary table taking into consideration economic factors and careful projections of experts in the field. The committee encourages congregations to be equitable in seeking to be supportive to ministers in this midst of a climate of rising inflation and increased social challenges. While financial remuneration is not the only means of expressing support, it is a fitting way to communicate gratitude during these challenging days of ministry together.

The Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee is available as a resource during this process of resourcing pastors and congregations.
The recording of the original introductory workshop to the new compensation tools is still posted on the compensation website here: https://www.brethren.org/ministryoffice/compensation/

The Office of Ministry welcomes your input, and we desire to work closely with you in endeavoring to serve our ministers and congregations well. We recognize that the conversations you guide as leaders provide a prime opportunity for you to be in conversation with congregations about their vision for mission and ministry as a people of faith including a vision for leadership/staffing needs.

Under special, limited circumstances, licensed ministers are utilized as pastors. Two important notes/reminders about licensed ministers:

1. Please remember to use the **Approval for Employment** form in the Ministerial Leadership Manual (page OM340 and attached to this mailing in both PDF and Word

Church of the Brethren

format) for licensed ministers serving as pastors. Remember that a licensed minister is to serve as a pastor only when she/he is engaged in an approved ministerial training program and under the direct supervision of an ordained minister (MLP 2014).

2. Please remember to use the **Student Placement Guidelines** in the Ministerial Leadership Manual (page OM320 and attached to this mailing) for a licensed minister who is serving as a pastor in a district beyond where she/he is licensed while in seminary or academy level training programs.

Please be in touch with me if you have questions. Thank you for your ongoing assistance with interpreting items regarding pastoral salaries and benefits. May God bless you in your ministry and give us all wisdom and courage for the journey.

Yours in Christ,

Nancy S. Heishman

Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, Director, Office of Ministry

c: David Steele
Members of Pastoral Compensation & Benefits Advisory Committee: Robert (Bob) S. McMinn, chair, Angela Finet, Arthur Fourman, Lori Hurt, and Andy Hamilton, representative from the Council of District Executives

* While the title pastor is used, these materials are to be used with other types of ministerial leaders as well – Associate Pastors, Assistant Pastors, Youth Ministers/Pastors, Interim Pastors, etc. They are designed for most persons serving in "pastoral" roles.

TAKE HEART



CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN ANNUAL REPORT OF 2023

PUBLISHED IN JUNE 2024

Church of the Brethren

Report of the Church of the Brethren

"Take heart." — Matthew 14:27

This past year was filled with celebration: 100 years in Nigeria. 300 years in America. Spirited gatherings in Ohio and North Carolina and Illinois and many other places. Even in the more routine parts of the work described here, there was much that was encouraging.

There were also moments that were not so celebrative, when people felt discouraged or diminished. Whether our spirits are joyful or anxious, though, we can *take heart*. When Jesus was about to heal someone, he said, "Take heart." When the disciples were frightened during the storm, he said, "Take heart." When he walks beside us, we will find our hearts burning within us.

May this account of the many ministries of the church point us to the Christ whom we follow. With the eyes of our hearts enlightened, may we perceive what is the hope to which he has called us (Ephesians 1:18).

GLOBAL MISSION

The highlight of 2023 was the centennial of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), which attracted thousands of church members and guests attending more than a dozen events in 13 zones across the country. Attending every celebration were EYN's top leadership, including president Joel S. Billi, vice president Anthony A. Ndamsai, and general secretary Daniel Y. C. Mbaya.

The theme was "Great Is God's Faithfulness," inspired by Deuteronomy 7:9. The date commemorated by EYN as its founding by Church of the Brethren mission workers H. Stover Kulp and Albert Helser is March 17, 1923.

A delegation of US Brethren traveled to Nigeria in March to join the celebration. In the group were Annual Conference moderator Tim McElwee, Global Mission executive director Eric Miller, Service Ministries executive director Roy Winter, and Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, director of news services and associate editor of *Messenger* magazine. They and six others with Nigeria connections participated in three of the worship celebrations.

Later in the year, Miller hosted guests from EYN who attended Annual Conference, toured the US, and attended the Brethren World Assembly and a celebration of 300 years of the church in America at Germantown Church of the Brethren. The Global Mission office also hosted guests from Brazil at Annual Conference.

Miller traveled to Burundi to attend a revival celebration of 315 years of the Church of the Brethren and visited Rwanda and South Sudan. The office co-sponsored a FaithX trip to visit the church in Spain.

Global Mission seeks to carry out the great commission for the Church of the Brethren around the world. Unlike many mission organizations that send US missionaries overseas, the Church of the Brethren works primarily with local Brethren in other countries to share the good news of Jesus Christ. The Church of the Brethren in the US learns from their faithful witness while sharing our heritage and blessings with them.

Each in their own way, these churches around the world are striving to follow the Bible and the example of Jesus. They see the Brethren as having been given a special gift and are drawn to the idea of "Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together."

In countries filled with Pentecostals, Catholics, mainline Protestants, and independent evangelical churches, these churches find that doing church together in simple ways with humble leadership is

Benefits Advisory Committee. This committee partnered with Eder Financial and Mission and Ministry Board leadership to revise the Housing Equity Fund for pastors. Given the unfavorable tax consequences built into the fund's creation, changes proposed to Conference delegates promise a more beneficial housing fund. The committee saw Annual Conference delegates approve the revision of the Guidelines for Continuing Education paper.

Over 100 attended a Ministers' Association pre-conference continuing education event led by Sheila Wise Rowe on the topic "Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience and Beloved Community."

The number of ministers added to the ministerial body in 2023 were 25 ordained (15 male, 10 female), 3 commissioned (3 male), and 28 licensed (18 male, 10 female).

Office manager Mishael Nouveau facilitated the disbursement of several funds: scholarships for continuing education ($4,770), leadership development and training grants ($4,074), the Ministry Assistance Fund ($10,077), and the annual scholarship grant to Bethany Seminary ($5,000). The Robert C. Wenger Charitable Trust donated $3,750 toward the Ministry Assistance Fund.

The Part-Time Pastor; Full-Time Church program, a grant-funded Thriving in Ministry initiative, offers opportunities for pastors to connect with peers; deepen spiritual practices that tend to their spiritual, emotional, and physical needs; and stay intimately connected to God's purpose for their ministry.

Jen Jensen resigned as the program manager for the initiative in July, a role she began in 2021. Her leadership increased the presence of the program throughout the denomination. Funding was secured for a Reflective Practices retreat for leadership and advisors of the program, and Jensen began exploring long-term sustainability practices. Circuit riders Aida Sanchez and Keith Funk also concluded their work with the program. Richard Wehrle assumed the role of program manager in September; he also serves as pastor of Midland Church of the Brethren in Mid-Atlantic District. Founa Badet and Mayra Calix joined the program as circuit riders. Tabitha Hartman Rudy was hired as administrative assistant early in the year.

Program leaders were visible at Annual Conference helping with leadership for the Ministers' Association event, leading an equipping session, and connecting with pastors and other leaders in the exhibit hall. Representatives for the program attended nearly all of the district conferences, providing equipping sessions, reporting on the program, and connecting with leaders.

In 2023, Part-Time Pastor; Full-Time Church provided individuals and groups with grants totaling $43,066, helping to fund sabbaticals, retreats, and continuing education events for ministers. Circuit riders hosted four distinct book studies with 67 registrants, prioritizing peer relationships and group learning on vital topics in ministry. Sixteen participants engaged in spiritual practices hosted online during the Lenten season.

The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, directed by Janet Ober Lambert, is a ministry training partnership of the Church of the Brethren and Bethany Theological Seminary that equips leaders through four training programs as well as continuing education.

In 2023, Training in Ministry (TRIM) engaged 22 students. The congregationally based training program, Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM) and its Spanish-language counterpart, EPMC, involved six congregations, with a combination of eight ministry students. Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano de la Iglesia de los Hermanos (SeBAH-COB) supported 15 students. Six of the SeBAH-COB students were members of the Global Brethren, representing Honduras and Venezuela.

Program coordinators Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey, Aida Sanchez, and, most recently, Arlyn Morales, oversaw these programs, with support from administrative assistant Fran Massie. In addition, the academy provided guidance for six Academy Certified Training Systems (ACTS), which offer regionally based ministry training.

Revisions of the TRIM program were completed in 2023. Key changes include a greater number of required subjects, more subjects required from a Brethren perspective, but fewer courses required overall. The TRIM program no longer requires 10 college credits.

The continuing education program, Strength for the Journey, completed five cohorts in 2023, one in person and four online. New cohorts form each year.

Through the Brethren Academy, 51 continuing education certificates were provided for engagement in academy courses, seminars, and programs. The academy also provided 266 CEU certificates for events or courses offered by other agencies. Three people took a course for personal enrichment.

livelihood training centers for widows and orphans, distribution of seeds and fertilizer, new wells for drinking water, education assistance for orphan children, trauma workshops, and home repairs for the most vulnerable. Through grants of $220,000 in 2023, this ministry has provided significant recovery and relief in areas where EYN churches, families, and communities are rebuilding.

In the last few years lawlessness has spread beyond northeast Nigeria, making recovery difficult and causing the displacement of some families for a second or third time. Working together, and with faith in God, EYN continues to persevere and lead recovery and relief efforts while also planting new churches.

Financial details

Donations to BDM, CDS, the Nigeria Crisis Fund, and the Emergency Disaster Fund totaled $1,884,770 in 2023. This giving provided for all BDM expenses, including staff, programs, and allocations for disaster response. Expenditures included a total of $145,314 for US responses (including Home Rebuilding and CDS) and $919,171 for international responses, with $542,871 of these responses accomplished in partnership with Global Church of the Brethren groups.

Brethren Volunteer Service

Brethren Volunteer Service continued its widespread ministry of "sharing God's love through acts of service" with volunteers who use their talents at projects that serve human need, advocate justice, work for peace, and care for creation. This past year marked the 75th anniversary of that work, an occasion marked by a variety of celebrations and special events. These included a book by author and historian James H. Lehman, *A Year of Living Differently*, published by Brethren Press, as well as commemorations at Annual Conference, several special workshops and district gatherings, and an online Facebook group for sharing memories.

BVS welcomed 22 volunteers to two orientations in 2023, one held in the summer at Inspiration Hills in Ohio and the other in the fall at Camp Koinonia in Washington. Various guest leaders led training sessions, mostly via virtual presentations. In all, 50 volunteers served over the course of the year, in the US, Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Several new project sites were added. Recruitment and communication enhancements included a regular email newsletter, new electronic project files, development of a new brochure, and a wider social media outreach.

New staff included Walt Wiltschek, who began as part-time office coordinator in March, and Virginia Rendler, who joined the staff as volunteer coordinator in July after completing a term of BVS service in Northern Ireland. Rendler is working remotely from North Manchester, Ind. Chelsea Goss Skillen completed her first full year as BVS director, while Sara Cook continues as part-time Europe coordinator to facilitate placements and support for volunteers in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Faith Outreach Expeditions (FaithX)

FaithX's theme of "Voices for Peace," based on Romans 15:1-6, encouraged participants to consider how God calls them to use their distinct voices and skills in service and advocacy to their communities. The summer schedule marked the first full lineup of FaithX service trips for junior high, senior high, and adults since pre-pandemic years. Twelve week-long trips were scheduled in the United States and in Spain, with 172 youth and adult participants.

In the United States, FaithX participants volunteered with more than 15 organizations, including Church of the Brethren camps, assistance programs for the unhoused and under-resourced, and peace and justice advocacy groups. Youth reflections on what they learned include:

- "You shouldn't judge a person, especially before hearing their story."
- "There are people in the world who go through so much, yet receive so little."
- "There are a lot more things that we can do to help than we think."

In Spain, FaithX participants focused on relationship-building and intercultural education with members of Iglesia Evangélica Una Luz en las Naciones (Light to the Nations Church of the Brethren), the mother church of Spain's five official Brethren congregations. Marianne Fitzkee, co-leader and interpreter for the trip, shared, "It was beautiful to see relationships grow at tables during late-night dinners and raucous rounds of the game Spoons and in the church sanctuary."

The 2023 FaithX program was organized by Marissa

Witkovsky-Eldred, who was promoted from an interim role to coordinator of short-term service in September.

Material Resources

Material Resources staff facilitated 148 shipments totaling 774 tons of hospital supplies, quilts, kits (health, school, baby, and cleanup), and other supplies valued at $8.9 million, reaching 23 states and 21 countries. Material Resources also baled 34.8 tons of cardboard for recycling.

Loretta Wolf directed the program, while Scott Senseney and Glenna Thompson coordinated warehouse and office operations. Warehouse staff Richard Best, Melissa Fritz, and Brenda Giles packed items for shipping. Ed Palsgrove drove 23,798 miles delivering shipments and picking up donations. Medical supplies were sorted and prepared for shipment by Winni Wanionek, Jeffrey Brown, and Sam Carter.

Staff welcomed 130 volunteers during the fall to assist with quality control and packing of hygiene kits. Due to continued low levels of kit donations, this was significantly fewer volunteers than before the pandemic. Donations received for Lutheran World Relief and Church World Service in 2023 were down 280,000 pounds from 2022.

On behalf of Church World Service, Material Resources sent kits and/or blankets in response to Hurricane Idalia and continued needs from 2022's Hurricane Ian. CWS and International Orthodox Christian Charities cooperated to ship supplies to Armenia, Moldova, the Republic of Georgia, and Romania. Lutheran World Relief and IOCC jointly sent aid to Jordan.

LWR shipments sailed to Ecuador, Liberia, Republic of Congo, Ukraine, and Zambia, and 10 40-foot shipping containers went to Turkey. For Brothers Brother Foundation, donations of hospitals supplies shipped to Dominican Republic, Ghana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kenya, Malawi, Philippines, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. The Church of the Brethren sent one 20-foot container to Honduras, which included BBF medical items and CWS blankets and hygiene kits.

DISCIPLESHIP AND LEADERSHIP FORMATION

Discipleship and Leadership Formation focuses on equipping the whole people of God (both clergy and laity) to make disciples of Jesus, form leaders, and transform communities. The unit was formed in 2023 by bringing together the former Discipleship Ministries and the Office of Ministry.

New and Renew, a church planting and revitalization conference, was offered for the first time as a hybrid event and for the first time at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. The keynote speaker was Jessi Cruikshank. Held in May with the theme "Disciples: Called, Equipped, and in the Neighborhood," the conference brought together 101 people, 52 in person and 49 online.

Of the 23 workshops, three were in Spanish. Two of the worship services were in Spanish, and translation at all five services was offered in both languages. Gilbert Romero and Rich Brode led a diverse worship band. The conference was organized by Stan Dueck, director of organizational leadership, with help from an advisory committee and administrative support from program assistant Randi Rowan.

National Older Adult Conference brought hundreds of Brethren to Lake Junaluska, N.C., for worship, study, fellowship, and service under the theme "God is Doing a New Thing." Registration was 581, with 551 in person and 30 signed up to attend virtually. In addition, nine of the Church of the Brethren-related retirement communities streamed the main sessions for their residents. A fundraising walk raised more than $5,000 for a NOAC scholarship fund to help more people attend future conferences. The event was organized by Christy Waltersdorff and the NOAC planning team.

The Youth and Young Adult office, led by director Becky Ullom Naugle, hosted several events. Christian Citizenship Seminar gathered under the theme "Hot and Hungry" to learn about issues related to food insecurity caused by climate change. Guided by 1 Kings 17:7-16, the 21 students and advisors from four districts met with activists and legislators in Washington, D.C.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

Organizational Resources provides support for denominational staff and ministries through the Brethren Historical Library and Archives, Buildings and Grounds, Finance, and Information Technology. Shawn Flory Replogle is the executive director.

Brethren Historical Library and Archives

The Brethren Historical Library and Archives is the official repository for Church of the Brethren records documenting the ministries of the church, including committee and staff agendas and minutes, congregational records, print materials, and historical literature and items. Staff are available to districts, congregations, and individuals for research and historical study.

Jen Houser served as director through September, and Ashley Scarr as intern through August. Since that time, Allison Snyder has been interim manager.

In 2023, BHLA staff answered over 332 research questions, acquired over 499 linear feet of archival materials, and added 22 books to the collection. The archives received materials detailing the centennial of EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria. Acquisitions were received from David Shumate and the Virlina District office, Estella Horning, Kenneth Guy, and John Long, as well as church files and photos from Church of the Brethren congregations that have closed.

Buildings and Grounds

Buildings and Grounds staff maintain the physical spaces where employees carry out many of the ministries of the church. Salvador Campero directs the work at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., assisted by Lee Marsh. Francie Coale directs the work at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., assisted by Felix Hill.

The General Offices provide office space for staff of the Church of the Brethren and Eder Financial and a warehouse used by Brethren Press for inventory and shipping. The warehouse is also a drop-off location for Church World Service and Lutheran World Relief donations. In addition, the Living Gospel Church of God in Christ congregation has rented space in the building for over 25 years.

At the Brethren Service Center, a large warehouse contains sorting areas for Material Resources and storage for disaster relief materials, and SERRV uses part of the warehouse as its main distribution center. The center has offices for several denominational ministries.

The Church of the Brethren also owns two other properties. One is Germantown Church of the Brethren, where the Germantown Trust maintains the property and helps interpret the history of the "mother church" of the Schwarzenau Brethren groups. In Lybrook, N.M., the Church of the Brethren works with Lybrook Community Ministries to maintain the facilities of a ministry that has existed there since 1955. Community outreach includes distribution of clean water and burials in the Lybrook cemetery.

Finance

The Finance team oversees the Church of the Brethren's financial health and liability concerns. The team provides tracking and reporting for financial records, maintains insurance, receives donations and gifts, pays expenses, provides nonprofit tax-exempt status documentation for districts and congregations, administers grants, and ensures the Church of the Brethren receives the highest ratings our independent auditors can provide regarding organizational financial health.

Ed Woolf, director of finance and treasurer, manages estate giving, split-interest gifts, pastors housing fund accounts, corporate credit card accounts, and corporate insurance policies, and he provides financial, budget, and accounting services. Pat Marsh, accountant and assistant treasurer, oversees the annual audit and is responsible for budget support, financial reports, and cash management services. Other members of the team are Lynn Phelan, accounts payable specialist; Barb Watt, financial operations specialist and payroll manager; and Nancy Watts, donation and accounts receivable specialist.

Information Technology

The Information Technology team provides computer, telephone, internet, and audiovisual support to

At these two sites, 647 weekly volunteers and 61 project leaders gave 39,144 hours of service. This enabled savings of $1,244,779 to the community and the 52 families who received assistance.

With support from the BDM office, district-level responses included volunteers that served Camp Fire survivors in Paradise, Calif.; families affected by tidal flooding in Somerset County, Md.; members of the Point-aux-Chein Tribe hit by Hurricane Ida in Louisiana; and residents around Detroit, Mich., who needed their basements cleaned and repaired.

In May, BDM hosted 38 disaster project leaders and district disaster coordinators at Camp Blue Diamond in Middle Pennsylvania District for fellowship, training, and program development discussions. Following these conversations, two older vehicles were replaced with 2021 hybrid trucks to be used daily on the project sites.

Children's Disaster Services

Two major disasters in the Pacific islands created challenging responses for Children's Disaster Services soon after new associate director Carolyn Neher started on June 1. After Typhoon Mawar passed over Guam on May 24, a team of six volunteers served on the island for three weeks, receiving 563 children into their care center. In August and September three teams, totaling 13 volunteers, responded to the devastating wildfire in Lahaina on the Hawaiian island of Maui where nearly 100 people lost their lives. The teams made 457 child contacts while serving families over this six-week response.

These are just two of nine CDS responses during a year that also included an apartment fire, a home explosion, tornadoes, and support for asylum seekers. CDS also sent a team of five Critical Response Childcare (CRC) volunteers in October to Lewiston, Maine, after a mass shooting there. CRC volunteers receive additional specialized training for supporting traumatized families and children. A total of 44 CDS volunteers served 1,185 child contacts in 2023.

Six entry-level volunteer training workshops were held in 2023, resulting in 71 newly trained potential volunteers. Nine people participated in an online course to train trainers. The CDS program was led by associate director Lisa Crouch until her resignation in March. Carolyn Neher began in June. Michael Scalzi is program assistant.

International Response

Effective response to war, conflict, civil unrest, and terrorist violence is an incredible challenge. These were the most pressing issues of the year, resulting in support of relief and recovery programing totaling $659,700 in Emergency Disaster Fund grants. While $220,000 supported Ukrainian people displaced by the war, the majority of this support was for conflicts in the countries and communities of the Global Church of the Brethren family. This includes the Democratic Republic of Congo ($94,500), Haiti ($60,200), South Sudan ($40,000), and the Nigeria Crisis Response ($220,000).

In Haiti, a dual program continued the 2021 earthquake response, with $109,824 in funds, while also addressing the acute overlapping humanitarian crisis caused by the total collapse of the Haitian government. These programs were accomplished in partnership with L'Eglise des Freres d'Haiti (the Church of the Brethren in Haiti).

A massive earthquake on Feb. 6, near the southern border of Turkey and the northwestern border of Syria, caused extensive damage, affecting the lives of over 15 million and killing 59,259 people. Donor support has been limited, but $100,000 in EDF grants supported partners in Turkey and churches and their communities in Syria.

Smaller grants supported flood recovery and a feeding program in Rwanda ($34,100), storm recovery in Mexico ($6,300), and continued hurricane and flood recovery in Honduras.

Nigeria Crisis Response

The ongoing violence in Nigeria did not prevent Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) from celebrating the 100th anniversary of the church's founding. Regional celebrations provided encouragement to a church still rebuilding from years of violence as well as enduring new attacks occurring almost weekly.

Since 2014, the Church of the Brethren has partnered with and supported EYN through the Nigeria Crisis Response, a program responding to the violence by the terrorist group Boko Haram and, more recently, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). BDM is helping lead an extensive program that includes sponsorship of four camps for internally displaced persons, food distributions, medical assistance,

compelling. They all share the gospel in both word and deed, finding ways to lift up communities from poverty into self-sufficiency. Many promote peace in the face of great violence.

The Church of the Brethren maintains a mission in South Sudan and pays a US-based missionary, Athanasus Ungang, as well as local staff and programs that work to provide hope in the world's newest country and speak peace in a nation torn by war. In 2023, the first two Churches of the Brethren were planted in South Sudan.

Carole Davenport began as office manager in early 2023. In addition to handling administrative functions of the office, she plays an important role in communicating the work of Global Mission to the church through an emailed prayer list and social media.

The budget supports the building of relationships with churches around the world through travel and face-to-face meetings, and provides annual financial support to many of the national churches. The office also supports BVS volunteer Grace Elliot and mission worker Chris Elliot in Rwanda.

Global Mission works with churches around the world to identify areas of need. Staff collect and transfer funds to pay for some of the most pressing needs and ensure that funded projects are carried out. This funding supports evangelistic meetings, annual conferences, church building, theological training, and other projects. Global Mission also handles funds for the Haiti Medical Project, a development project of the Haiti Church of the Brethren. In 2023, grants totaled $618,696.

Global Church of the Brethren Communion

The Global Church of the Brethren Communion is a partnership of equals. In 2023, participating countries approved bylaws and in December formally met online for the first constitutive assembly to launch the group. At that meeting, the Honduras Church of the Brethren was welcomed as a founding member, bringing the number of member churches to 12. The countries represented are Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, India, Nigeria, Rwanda, Spain, Uganda, the US, and Venezuela.

The communion elected Joel S. Billi of the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria as moderator, Darryl Sankey of First District Church of the Brethren in India as vice moderator, Eric Miller of the Church of the Brethren in the US as treasurer, and Alexandre Gonçalves of the Church of the Brethren in Brazil as secretary. Board members elected were Oswaldo Lezama of the Church of the Brethren in Venezuela and Etienne Nsanzimana of the Church of the Brethren in Rwanda.

Global Food Initiative

In 1983, Church of the Brethren leaders came together to form what is now the Global Food Initiative. That fund was established to provide congregations and individuals an avenue to give toward famine relief in Africa. Forty years later, the focus of the fund has shifted away from supporting relief efforts and toward encouraging agricultural development projects, but Brethren members have not changed in their desire to make a dent in hunger and poverty both near and far.

Total income to the Global Food Initiative Fund in 2023 was $262,381. The sum of all funds given as grants to both international and domestic partners was $137,578.

International grants supported agricultural development work in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Nigeria, Spain, South Sudan, Uganda, and Venezuela. Projects included animal raising, tree planting, soil conservation, drip-irrigation workshops, and training on vegetable and staple crop production. International allocations totaled $114,703.

In the US, grants were given to churches and partner organizations in Alaska, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. These grants are connected primarily to church-based community gardens. Total allocations of domestic grants equaled $22,875.

The Global Food Initiative supports advocacy work on food sovereignty through yearly contributions to Bread for the World, Growing Hope Globally, and the National Farm Worker Ministry, with contributions tallying $7,500.

GFI manager Jeff Boshart left the position at the end of the year, after serving more than 11 years.

At Young Adult Conference, hosted at Camp Alexander Mack, 21 participants met in May to explore the theme "I'm Not Done with You Yet," based on Jeremiah 18:1-6. The next month, 164 people from 11 districts traveled to Juniata College for National Junior High Conference, which focused on Micah 6:8 and the theme "What Does God Want From Me?"

The Youth and Young Adult office produced social media posts for youth and young adults, oversaw web pages for advisors and events, prepared worship resources for National Junior High Sunday and National Youth Sunday, published *The Bridge* newsletter for young adults, and led sessions for junior high youth at Annual Conference.

Joshua Brockway, director of spiritual formation, co-taught a Brethren Academy class in Atlanta on urban ministry. He presented a paper at a theological conference at the University of Dayton entitled "Destabilizing Imaginaries: Parables in Discipleship Formation." He led or facilitated several webinars and livestreamed events, including a webinar on "Discipling our Imagination" and Drew Hart's "From Statement to Action" hybrid seminar.

Nathan Polzin joined the team as executive director of Discipleship and Leadership Formation. In addition to the administrative work involved in merging two departments, he led evangelism training for congregations and conducted a search for a new director of intercultural ministries, who began in early 2024. He was grateful to Don Mitchell and Cesia Salcedo for serving on the interview team. In the absence of a director, Polzin brought a committee together to provide leadership for the multicultural luncheon and Spanish speaking leaders' luncheon at Annual Conference.

Polzin attended four district conferences, preaching at three of them and leading pastor training sessions and other insight sessions.

Staff from Discipleship and Leadership Formation provided webinars, deacon training, coaching, and consulting for congregations and districts, as well as a variety of equipping sessions at Annual Conference. Staff provided additional resources to pastors and congregations through collaboration with the Anabaptist Disabilities Network, Christian Community Development Association, and We Rise International, which works with mental health, trauma, and addictions.

Brethren Faith in Action grants were awarded to congregations and camps to help them bring ministry vision to reality. In 2023, $67,448 was granted to 17 applicants.

Ministry Office

In its role of supporting the calling, training, credentialing, and sustaining of ministers throughout the denomination, the Ministry Office navigates the changing face of the ministerial landscape through strong partnerships with district and institutional entities.

A key function of the office is overseeing the placement, orientation, and review of district executive ministers. Full-time executives were placed in Virlina (Daniel Rudy) and South/Central Indiana districts (Laura Stone). Executives William Waugh (Southern Pennsylvania), Bruce Holderreed (Idaho/Western Montana), Jose Calleja Otero (Puerto Rico), and Randy Yoder (interim, Western Plains) completed terms of service. Four districts continued active search processes for new leadership.

Statistics from the past year reveal the fluid reality of district leadership. Of the 24 districts, 54 percent are led by "permanently called" solo executives, whether full-time or part-time. Only 29 percent of districts are currently served by full-time executive ministers, while 71 percent are led by part-time executives. The variety of part-time leaders includes solo interims, volunteer executives, and volunteers serving as representatives to the Council of District Executives.

A few districts are successfully using a team model of executive leadership. In the same way that the shortage of candidates for congregations in a pastoral search has dramatically increased, so too have the needs increased on the district level. The Ministry Office has encouraged districts to embrace the priesthood of all believers and the discernment of spiritual gifts within congregations and districts, with the intention of renewing a more robust practice of calling.

Director Nancy Sollenberger Heishman provided orientation sessions for various districts' assessment teams and ethics committees as they maintain readiness to assist with ministerial ethics processes. She also offered the annual presentation on ministerial ethics in conjunction with the retirement readiness seminar of Eder Financial.

The Ministry Office serves as liaison to several committees, including the Pastoral Compensation and

SERVICE MINISTRIES

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!" (Isaiah 6:8).

Martie Hummer and 894 other volunteers heard God's call to serve in 2023. Hummer fulfilled a lifelong goal when she joined Brethren Volunteer Service and served as a long-term Rebuilding Program volunteer with Brethren Disaster Ministries. "BVS is an experience I will always treasure," she reflected, "and I would recommend it to both the young and the more mature alike. You are never too old to serve."

For the first time since 2019, all the volunteer programs provided regular programing without significant COVID-19 modifications. The number of volunteers continues to be significantly lower than pre-pandemic, however, resulting in a focus on calling more volunteers to serve.

The programs of Service Ministries equip and send volunteers, resources, and material aid to demonstrate God's love and hope for people around the globe. Roy Winter is executive director.

Brethren Disaster Ministries

Brethren Disaster Ministries facilitates and leads the Church of the Brethren response to disasters and crises around the globe by working with volunteers, congregations, districts, the global church, and partners. Tornadoes and floods in the US, a devastating typhoon and a wildfire in the Pacific islands, an earthquake on the border of Turkey and Syria, and continued violence in Ukraine, Africa, and Haiti challenged BDM to walk with families through very difficult times.

When responding to the call to serve, BDM volunteers sometime experience unforeseen insights during experience. Volunteers from the Kentucky rebuilding sites said:

"An unexpected experience was the overwhelming presence of the Spirit of God. I expected the experience to be faith based, but it was an amazing week for me."

"I came home with my cup running over. What an experience. I am ready to go again."

Calling out new volunteer leadership has been less successful and continues to limit the program's scope.

Brethren Disaster Ministries is coordinated by Roy Winter, with administrative support from office manager Sharon Franzén. Darlene Hylton provides part-time database support.

Rebuilding Program

Volunteers from the Rebuilding Program spent most of their time serving in multiple areas of Kentucky, supporting 2021 tornado rebuilding and 2022 flood recovery. BDM director Jenn Dorsch-Messler and program assistant Kim Gingerich provided staff support and coordination.

Partner Habitat for Humanity of Habitat's Pennyrile Region identified work and provided a location for volunteer housing. The housing site in Madisonville, Ky., was the base for BDM volunteers to support the rebuilding of nearby Dawson Springs, where 75 percent of the buildings in the town were destroyed by tornadoes in December 2021. Volunteers supported the construction of new Habitat houses for qualified first-time homeowners whose previous rental properties were lost in the storm. Leadership was provided by long-term volunteers Lynn Evans and Steve Keim.

For two weeks in April and 10 weeks in the fall, volunteers repaired flood-damaged homes in Breathitt County of eastern Kentucky. Some homes belonged to families who have owned their properties for generations, dating back to the late 1700s. This ministry was accomplished by partnering with the Eastern Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church Disaster Response.

Brethren Volunteer Service volunteers Martie Hummer and Benjamin Hoffmann engaged in service with BDM. Hummer supported the household leadership on the Dawson Springs project and Hoffmann spent several weeks in the fall gathering photo and video content on both Kentucky sites.

material aid and in consultation with staff and partner organizations. Other ministries housed at the Brethren Service Center are not affected by the decision.

Also in October, a small group of intercultural guests joined the meeting via Zoom to share concerns from their experiences as intercultural leaders in the Church of the Brethren. Topics of concern included racist incidents within the church, inadequate or inaccurate translation and interpretation, turnover of Intercultural Ministries staff, denominational leadership's lack of intentional engagement with the intercultural community, and fears that the Church of the Brethren is becoming "open and affirming." As part of the Board's commitment to be in dialogue, the Executive Committee responded with a letter inviting the guests to meet with the General Secretary and the Board Chair.

The Board issued three statements in 2023:

- A resolution lamenting the Doctrine of Discovery called on the Church of the Brethren to "commit to ongoing advocacy, dialogue, education, and relationship-building regarding rights of Indigenous peoples," along with specific action steps. It was sent to Annual Conference, where it was amended and approved.
- A statement was issued in response to learning of reported sexual abuse by a former employee several decades ago.
- A statement on "Seeking Peace in Israel and Palestine" called on church members to engage in advocacy for political and humanitarian solutions to end the violence in Israel and Palestine and reiterated the denomination's 1970 Annual Conference statement that all war is sin.

The Board's Strategic Plan, adopted in 2020, supports the denominational vision to be "Jesus in the Neighborhood." Mid-term and short-term goals guide continued progress toward that vision, including the work of recognizing racial injustice in the church and the first in a series of Kingian Nonviolence training sessions for Board members.

Other Board actions included formation of a new Facilities Stewardship Committee to oversee the management of and forecast the needs for Church of the Brethren properties; approval of a 2024 Core Ministries deficit budget of $5,507,000 of income and $5,546,120 expense; changes to the Pastors Housing Fund; and affirmation of the Global Church of the Brethren Communion bylaws.

The Board approved $766,500 in Emergency Disaster Fund grants for emerging needs and ongoing projects, including $195,000 for humanitarian response following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and $240,000 for the Nigeria Crisis Response. The Executive Committee approved an additional $102,400 in grants for international and domestic responses. The Board approved the purchase of two trucks for use at disaster response construction projects.

The Executive Committee approved a sabbatical leave for David Steele from April 1 through June 9, 2023. During that time, Shawn Flory Replogle, executive director of Organizational Resources, served as acting General Secretary.

The elected membership of the Mission and Ministry Board consists of 10 women and 7 men. One member is Japanese American, four are African American, and 12 are white.

Office of Peacebuilding and Policy

The Office of Peacebuilding and Policy based in Washington, D.C., represents the denomination in coalitions and working groups and at events that address areas of concern for the Church of the Brethren based on denominational policy.

Clara Grabenhorst, a Brethren Volunteer Service volunteer at Creation Justice Ministries, helped organize the Christian Citizenship Seminar, the annual policy education seminar for Brethren youth that is co-sponsored by Youth and Young Adult Ministries and the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy. The focus was the Farm Bill and food insecurity caused by climate change.

Cornelius Raff joined the office in August as a volunteer through BVS focusing primarily on US immigration and asylum policy and on climate policy issues on behalf of the Brethren Creation Care Network. Research and advocacy fellow Chidinma Chidoka coordinated the Nigeria Working Group art exhibition at Washington City Church of the Brethren.

Doris Abdullah, serving on a volunteer basis as the Church of the Brethren representative to the United Nations, tracked UN work on several international policy issues. In November, Mary Abraham joined the office as a policy and strategy associate volunteer and has started providing support on several writing and coalition

keep denominational staff connected and communicating effectively. Their work includes internet access and security, network management, computer hardware and software, database maintenance, phone system, keycard system at the General Offices, registration support for events, and technological support for meetings.

Francie Coale is the director, Joshua Rowan is information technology specialist, and Lauren Bukszar is database specialist.

Financial results for 2023

Total giving to Core Ministries finished $108,000 below budget and $105,000 behind 2022 giving. Congregational giving totaled $1.5 million, a decrease of $47,000, while individual giving totaled $653,000, a decrease of $58,000 from the prior year. With the decrease in total giving, including a $186,000 transfer in designated funds, income to Core Ministries finished the year $223,000 behind budget.

Despite the surging costs and high inflationary economy last year, total director-level expenses finished the year at $5.2 million and $171,000 under budget. However, because of the income shortfall, Core Ministries ended the year with a net deficit of $52,000. This deficit lowered the Core Ministries' net asset balance to $2.1 million.

Several areas are outside Core Ministries and considered Self-Funding Ministries. Material Resources finished the year with a deficit of $69,000, as donations remained below pre-pandemic levels and supply expenses continued to increase. This loss increased Material Resources' net asset deficit balance to $257,000.

The Annual Conference Office budget benefited from a distribution of $129,000 from Brotherhood Mutual Partnership Funds, an action taken by the Leadership Team. Otherwise the Conference Office would have sustained a $63,000 deficit due to decreased registration income and rising expenses. Because of this distribution, the Conference Office finished the year with a $66,000 surplus, increasing its net asset balance to $434,000.

Donations to both the Emergency Disaster Fund and the Global Food Initiative Fund decreased this past year. Donations to Brethren Disaster Ministries totaled $1.9 million, a decrease of $300,000. Giving to the Global Food Initiative Fund totaled $262,000, a decrease of $60,000.

Investments totaled approximately $36 million at the end of 2023. This is up $2.7 million from the 2022 year-end balance of $33.3 million. The Church of the Brethren's investment strategy focuses on long-term goals, risk tolerances, timelines, and purposes of funds. Staying disciplined to this strategy makes it possible for the church to navigate market volatility and uncertainties from year to year. The investment gain in 2023 helped total net assets increase $2.6 million, resulting in a year-end balance of $42.3 million.

[The above amounts were provided prior to completion of the 2023 audit. Complete financial information is available in the Church of the Brethren, Inc., audit report published in June 2024.]

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

The General Secretary of the Church of the Brethren, David Steele, serves as staff for the Mission and Ministry Board, overseeing the employees and ministries of the Church of the Brethren and representing the church in its various ecumenical commitments. Nancy Miner is manager of the Office of the General Secretary.

Mission and Ministry Board

The Mission and Ministry Board is the board of directors of the Church of the Brethren, carrying out the direction set by Annual Conference. The Board met at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., for its spring and fall meetings and in Cincinnati prior to Annual Conference. Meetings included reports on finances, ministry areas, committees, and denominational agencies, along with time spent in worship, prayer, training, and fellowship.

In October the Board made the difficult decision to close the Material Resources program, a legacy program based at the Brethren Service Center. The decision to wind down the program over a period of up to 30 months came following an extensive review of best practices in

strategy processes.

The Death Row Support Project transitioned to a dispersed leadership structure following the retirement of longtime volunteer director Rachel Gross. This year the project met its goal of 75 pen pals for people in the general prison population.

Director Nathan Hosler convened the Nigeria Working Group and the Interfaith Working Group on Drone Warfare. Along with many partner organizations, the drones working group helped to get a bill introduced in Congress to increase accountability and transparency of lethal drone strikes conducted by the CIA.

Hosler was part of a broad coalition that worked for a ceasefire in Gaza, the release of hostages, and humanitarian aid. Recognizing little focus on China and East Asia Policy inside the Washington, D.C., interfaith community, Hosler invested effort in building a network structure and talking to experts in this field. He represented the denomination on numerous boards, including National Farm Worker Ministry, Heifer International, Churches for Middle East Peace, and Creation Justice Ministries.

Annual Conference Office

We are called "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13). Echoing this call, Annual Conference strives "to unite, strength, and equip the Church of the Brethren to follow Jesus."

Moderator Tim McElwee led the 236th recorded Annual Conference around the theme "Living God's Love." Gathering in Cincinnati, the Brethren built and renewed relationships, handled a heavy business agenda, raised voices in song, joined hearts in prayer, and worshiped God together. Worship included a diverse set of preachers, a range of musical styles, and a bread-and-cup communion service.

A plenary address by Chad Brennan focused on racial justice. Other educational opportunities were a variety of equipping sessions and trips to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and the Nancy and David Wolf Holocaust and Humanity Center.

The 1,463 registrants consisted of 441 delegates, 952 in-person non-delegates, and 70 non-delegates participating virtually.

Conferencegoers donated 120 units of blood to the local blood bank and more than $12,423 and material goods that filled several pallets to overflowing in support of Found House, this year's Witness to the Host City project. Found House provides services and support to those experiencing housing insecurity in the Cincinnati area.

Participants gave $29,355 through offerings to support Annual Conference and core denominational ministries. A silent auction raised an additional $12,895 for Annual Conference and Brethren Disaster Ministries. The silent auction, along with a game night, a small performance stage, and live podcast recordings throughout the week were part of an initiative to make the exhibit hall a vital gathering place.

After a successful virtual conference in 2021 and opportunities for virtual participation in 2022, this year virtual registrants were able to observe business sessions, the Walking Roots Band concert, and selected equipping sessions. Worship was livestreamed at no charge.

Annual Conference is possible because many people volunteer time and energy in support of Christ and the church. The onsite coordinator was Nan Hottle, from Southern Ohio and Kentucky District. Other volunteers assisted in tasks as varied as registration, age-group activities, first aid, Spanish translation, and Bible study leadership.

Financially, 2023 was another challenging year. Attendance was lower than expected because of the financial struggles of many smaller congregations, as well as conflict and division in the church. Despite conservative budgeting, the year ended with a deficit of about $63,000.

The deficit was absorbed by the Annual Conference contingency fund, and that fund was replenished by a disbursement of $129,000 from Brotherhood Mutual dividends. This made it possible to end the year in the black. Staff continue to work toward a more sustainable model that will work for the long term.

In addition to planning the annual meeting itself, Annual Conference director Rhonda Pittman Gingrich and Conference assistant Debbie Noffsinger provided administrative support for the work of various groups related to Annual Conference: Annual Conference Officers, Program and Arrangements Committee and Worship Committee, Standing Committee and its subcommittees, Nominating Committee, Leadership Team, and the committees on Calling Denominational Leadership, Breaking Down Barriers, and Standing with People of Color.

Brethren Press

The Shine curriculum project, jointly published by Brethren Press and MennoMedia, was awarded a grant of $1.25 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. As part of Lilly's Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative, the grant will help parents and caregivers share their faith and values with their children. Shine is using the grant for a new five-year project called Shine Everywhere, which will accompany congregations and households in developing spiritual practice materials that inspire families to embody the story of God in everyday life.

A major new publication from Shine was *The Peace Table: A Storybook Bible,* a collection of 140 Bible stories with a wide array of artwork from 30 illustrators. The book is the centerpiece of the latest round of Shine curriculum for children. Also from Shine was *Changemakers Lab,* the 2023 vacation Bible school material.

To mark the 75th anniversary of Brethren Volunteer Service, Brethren Press published *A Year of Living Differently,* by James H. Lehman. The book includes first-person accounts from BVSers and an extensive appendix listing the more than 7,000 volunteers who have served. Also published in 2023 was *Luke and Acts: Turning the World Upside Down,* by Christina Bucher and Robert W. Neff. The book gives special attention to what Luke and Acts have to say to Anabaptists and radical Pietists.

Liz Bidgood Enders wrote the Lenten devotional, *My Soul, My Life, My All,* and Kevin Kessler wrote the Advent devotional, *All Things New*. Writers for the quarterly *A Guide for Biblical Studies* were Frank Ramirez, David Shumate, Bobbi Dykema, and David Leiter. The 2023 Church of the Brethren Yearbook, created by Jim Miner, was published in digital form. Photos in the Living Word Bulletin Series are now almost all by Brethren photographers, a positive result of the series shifting to being produced completely in-house.

At the Brethren Press/Messenger Dinner at Annual Conference, Jennifer Keeney Scarr presented on the topic of biblical storytelling.

Heidi Gross became managing editor of Brethren Press in 2023. Jeff Lennard is director of marketing and sales, Karen Warner is part-time customer service specialist, and Dan McFadden works part-time in shipping. The publisher is Wendy McFadden, who is also executive director of Communications. Karen Stocking is finance and production assistant for both areas.

Communications

***Messenger* magazine highlighted in words and photos a number of milestones** and major events in 2023—the centennial of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria, the Brethren World Assembly, and the 300th anniversary of the first Brethren baptism in the Americas and Germantown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, director of News Services and associate editor of *Messenger,* traveled to these historic events for significant coverage in both *Messenger* and Newsline.

News Services provides information and promotes engagement and knowledge of the breadth and depth of denominational and church-related ministries. Sharing the Brethren voice with the wider world is a key task. The work is carried out by staff and volunteers through Newsline, a free email news service; the Newsline Digest pages in *Messenger* magazine; the news pages at www.brethren.org; and social media.

Messenger received four awards from the Associated Church Press: the award of excellence in a special category, the James Solheim Award for Editorial Courage, for "If Only That Were True," by Gimbiya Kettering; award of excellence in national reporting for "Take Me Home, Brethren Roads," by Walt Wiltschek; award of merit for "From the publisher" column, by Wendy McFadden; and award of merit for the design of "Unspoken and Unsung Mystery: Stained Glass Speaks of God," designed by Paul Stocksdale.

Diane Stroyeck, subscription specialist, is *Messenger*'s only full-time employee.

The web team, made up of Jan Fischer Bachman and Russ Otto, supported all offices and ministries through creating and updating web pages on www.brethren.org, as well as the ministry profiles site and the blog. Behind the scenes, the team kept website platforms current and problem-free. In 2023 they processed and uploaded thousands of photos at Annual Conference and National Older Adult Conference, using new photo storage software after the prior system became overwhelmed and stopped working.

The team handled bulk email for many offices and assisted with the creation and updating of online forms and surveys, connecting them to the email system, when needed, for greater efficiency. They posted videos, from short promotional pieces to lengthy worship services

and webinars. As part of her involvement with social media, Fischer Bachman developed a resource on social media for the Ministry Office's ministerial ethics training materials.

Human Resources

The Human Resources office, staffed by manager Shamek Cardona, oversees the organization's employment policies and services, ensuring compliance with legal requirements.

Employees hired in 2023 were Walt Wiltschek, office coordinator for Brethren Volunteer Service; Nathan Polzin, executive director of Discipleship and Leadership Formation; Carole Davenport, office manager for Global Mission; Carolyn Neher, associate director of Children's Disaster Services; Heidi Gross, managing editor of Brethren Press; Virginia Rendler, interim volunteer coordinator for BVS; Samuel Carter, sorter/packer medical supplies in Material Resources; and Richard Wehrle, program manager for the Office of Ministry.

Departures in 2023 were Pauline Liu, interim volunteer coordinator for BVS; Lisa Crouch, associate director of Children's Disaster Services; Jennifer Jensen, program manager for the Office of Ministry; Jennifer Houser, director of the Brethren Historical Library and Archives; and Jeff Boshart, manager of the Global Food Initiative.

Total regular full-time and part-time employees and Brethren Volunteer Service workers serving Church of the Brethren programs is 60. As requested by Annual Conference, the report of ethnic/racial composition of these employees is the following: Asian–1; Black or African American–3; Hispanic or Latino–2; white–54.

In addition to these employees, the Church of the Brethren has contract, shared, casual, and temporary employees, as well as program volunteers.

Mission Advancement

Mission Advancement staff educate and equip individual donors and congregations about the financial needs of the organization and how their financial gifts are used to carry out the ministries of the church. The team builds relationships through visits, interpretation, and education and provides ways for donors and congregations to give financially to support those ministries.

Mission Advancement advocates Nancy McCrickard and Shannon McNeil Smith communicated regularly with donors, focusing on "stewarding relationships" as a means of keeping donors educated and informed about the work of the denomination in the United States and internationally.

Matt DeBall, Mission Advancement communication coordinator, managed quarterly congregational offerings, eBrethren email communication, and monthly direct letters. He served as the denomination's representative on the ecumenical One Great Hour of Sharing committee, where he was convener.

Traci Rabenstein, executive director, visited with congregation, pastors, and lay leaders to provide insight into the work of the denomination. She worked with data management for the organization.

The team hosted the annual Faith Forward Donor Circle dinner at Annual Conference to thank donors who have planned to leave a sustaining contribution in their will or estate plans or contributed planned distributions from various trusts or IRA accounts. The team produced a narrative report to explain how contributions are used.

CONCLUSION

The words here are many, but still they convey only a summary of the work of the Church of the Brethren. For ways to learn more, visit the website at www.brethren.org. Visitors there can find information to read, ways to get involved, and contact details for staff.

We offer this report in a spirit of deep gratitude—gratitude for the God whose love has been poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5) and gratitude for all who join in sharing that good news with the world. Thank you for generous hearts and willing hands.

Colin Scott, Chair
David Steele, General Secretary

Proposed revision to Constitution and By-Laws

ARTICLE VI. DISTRICT BOARD

1. Purpose of the Board

The District Board, hereafter referred to as the Board, shall manage and administer the work of the District as authorized by the District Conference. The Board is the legal agent of the District and shall be empowered to act on behalf of the District Conference ad interim, except for those actions specifically reserved for the District Conference as set forth in this Constitution and By-Laws.

2. Board Members

There shall be a Board consisting of the officers of the District Conference, the standing committee delegate for the District, any persons from the District who are serving on the Mission and Ministry Board, the District Executive Team members, the District Administrative Assistant, **the District Ministry Team chair,** and District Area Ministers.

Those members of the incoming District Board shall be presented to the District Conference either in person or by name and there shall be, as part of the conference program, an installation service for the incoming Board to denote acceptance by the Board of their respective offices and responsibilities and the acceptance of the District Conference of the Board as the agent of the District Conference to perform the duties given the Board in the Constitution and By-Laws.

3. Board Officers and Organization

The Board shall be organized annually immediately following District Conference. The officers of the District Conference shall also serve as the officers of the Board.

4. Board Responsibilities

The Board shall recommend to the District Conference a District Executive Team and shall counsel with team members regarding their individual responsibilities and record of agreement.

It shall be the duty of the Board to appoint an auditor annually to audit the financial records of the District and submit a report to the Board and District Conference. The Board shall be responsible for appointing members to any ad hoc committee or team as required.

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