

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN ANNUAL REPORT OF 2017

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Another way of living



Church of the Brethren

Report of the Church of the Brethren

Another Way of Living

Be transformed.

—Romans 12:2

How do we live into our commitment to another way of living?

We can see it in the growth of new mission projects built on simple, one-on-one relationships. In a board carefully discerning the best way to close one chapter of the church's work and use the funds to open a new chapter.

We see another way of living in church gatherings that blend mission and service. In Bible study that takes place among children on Sunday morning, young adults in a weekend conference, and older adults at the lake shore.

We see the possibility of another way of living whenever people come together to struggle to hear God's voice so that they can follow Jesus more clearly.

GLOBAL MISSION AND SERVICE

Global Mission and Service (GMS) focuses specifically on the Mission and Ministry Board's goals related to International Mission, Service, and some aspects of Brethren Voice. Leadership is provided by Jay Wittmeyer, executive director; Roy Winter, associate executive director; and Kendra Harbeck, office manager. Wittmeyer serves on the boards of Heifer International and Foods Resource Bank.

Brethren Disaster Ministries

The late summer and fall challenged Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) and Children's Disaster Services with one of the most demanding disaster seasons in the history of the program. Never has BDM responded to so many disasters at one time.

Six staff members manage this ministry under the leadership of Roy Winter, with administrative support from office manager Sharon Franzén and database support from Darlene Hylton.

Puerto Rico

Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico Sept. 20, causing widespread damage just weeks after Hurricane Irma brushed the island. At

year-end, fewer than half the residents had electricity, 25 percent were still without water, many roads remained closed or damaged, and hundreds of thousands of homes were still damaged or destroyed.

The storm damaged the volunteer housing in Castañer and Caimito, and at least 35 Brethren families had major damage to their homes. The Castañer Hospital, started by the Church of the Brethren in 1943, had flooding in lower floors, but quickly recovered and functioned on generator power after the storm.

BDM worked closely with the district to develop and implement a long-term recovery program. Emergency supplies—

hand-carried or shipped by container— included solar chargers, generators, canned chicken, tools, tarps, and other supplies. Emergency grants provided basic services in Brethren communities, including feeding programs, cash assistance, food distributions, and volunteer support. Two weeks of volunteer groups helped with repairs to the Caimito church and volunteer house.

Nigeria Crisis Response

The Nigeria Crisis Response, a partnership of the Church of the Brethren in the US and Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), now includes four Nigerian nonprofit partners and Switzerland-based Mission 21. The situation is slowly improving, but areas in the northeast remain vulnerable to suicide bombings and smaller attacks on villages. EYN leadership faces many challenges, but the church continues to grow, with four new districts and numerous new churches announced this year.

The Nigeria crisis displaced three million people, with many remaining in Nigeria as internally displaced people (IDPs). An estimated 1.7 million remain displaced in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states, with about 10 percent living in camps and the rest in communities that are themselves struggling.

Relief and recovery programs include peace-building and trauma workshops for adults and children; support for four IDP relocation centers; home repair; agricultural support; educational support, including scholarships for orphans; business and skills training for widows; food, medical and household distributions; safe water provision; shipment of a container of books for schools, including Kulp Bible College; and advocacy and peace-building work by the Church of the Brethren Office of Public Witness.

Roxane Hill is part-time coordinator of the Nigeria Crisis Response.

International responses

Around the world, the greatest need has been for families forcibly displaced or affected by violence. This represented 52 percent of BDM's project expenses in 2017. In South Sudan, funds supported food distribution and repairs to the Brethren Peace Center, which was ransacked by government forces during the civil war. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a local partner assisted villagers who were forced to flee their homes because of political corruption, local warlords, and hungry fighters.

In Haiti, Hurricane Matthew recovery continued with \$50,000 in funds supporting the Church of the Brethren response. An initial \$10,000 grant to Church World Service (CWS) aided 2017 hurricane recovery in Caribbean nations. A \$25,000 grant to CWS supported programs in a drought-stricken area in Kenya.

Home Rebuilding

When asked about BDM's rebuilding work on her home in Columbia, S.C., 88-year-old Dorothy Brown joyfully pulled out the many photos and notes she received from volunteers. They not only repaired her home, they became a part of her life—and an answer to her prayers.

Under the leadership of director Jenn Dorsch-Messler, volunteers and leaders engaged in community-based disaster recovery through home repair and reconstruction for families in four communities across three states in 2017. The Columbia project, led by Kim Gingerich and Steve Keim, finished in August after repairing and rebuilding homes damaged in 2015 storms and floods. A grant from the United Way of the Midlands provided \$88,801 for building materials. The project

then moved to Marion County, S.C., to repair homes damaged by Hurricane Matthew in 2016.

A six-week project in March and April in Clay County, W.Va., responded to homes damaged in July 2016 floods. A long-term home rebuilding site opened in July in Eureka, Mo., in response to two floods. Erv and Joan Huston, Brethren Volunteer Service workers, joined BDM in July, serving on both the Eureka and Marion County projects. Program assistants Robin De Young (through March) and Terry Goodger (from June) provided administrative support.

In 2017, 976 volunteers served 77 families to repair or rebuild homes. This included leadership by 29 disaster project leaders, serving on sites for multiple weeks in a row. Volunteers also served on short-term projects in Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Texas, and Florida. In total, volunteers provided 82,062 hours of service valued at \$1,980,977.

In February, the Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI), a partnership of the disaster ministries of the Church of the Brethren, United Church of Christ, and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), hired its first staff (Rachel Larratt and Tim Sheaffer) to pilot a program that, soon after a disaster, helps local communities develop long-term recovery plans. The DRSI team aided communities in La Salle County, Ill., and Wisconsin, and explored opportunities in Texas and the US Virgin Islands after Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, resulting in a request to provide long-term recovery planning in the Virgin Islands in 2018.

Children's Disaster Services

Children's Disaster Services responded to a record number of 16 domestic disasters—

three at the same time. A total of 169 volunteers cared for 2,527 children in the aftermath of tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires, flash floods, and a dam breach, as well as a train disaster in Washington state and the mass shooting in Las Vegas. The latter two required the help of CDS's Critical Response Childcare Team, the only national response program called to mass casualty crises to care for children.

Prior to Hurricane Irma in September, in response to a Red Cross request, volunteers were positioned in evacuation centers to care for children waiting for the storm to pass. Associate director Kathy Fry-Miller, and her husband, Paul, served overnight in an elementary school with 500 people, including families with children. One father remarked, "When you came in and started playing with our children, all the parents in this whole place just calmed right down. We knew we were going to be all right."

Program assistants Kristen Hoffman (through April) and Sherry Chastain (from May) provided administrative support for volunteers and trainings. CDS held 11 trainings, with 269 participants in total, including one seminar each for new project managers and for trainers at Camp Ithiel in Florida, funded through a grant from the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

Financial activity

Donations to BDM, CDS, the Nigeria Crisis Fund, and the Emergency Disaster Fund totaled \$2,315,759 in 2017. This giving provided for all BDM expenses, including staff, programs, and allocations for disaster response. Expenditures included \$460,013 for US responses, including the Rebuild Program and CDS; \$529,091 for the Nigeria Crisis Response; and \$101,714 for all other international responses.

Material Resources

Material Resources responded to needs in 21 states and 15 countries. Staff handled 587 shipments totaling 603 tons of medicine, medical supplies, quilts, health kits, school kits, baby kits, cleanup kits, and other supplies valued at \$8.1 million. Loretta Wolf directed the program, and Scott Senseney and Glenna Thompson coordinated the warehouse and office. Warehouse staff Richard Best, Melissa Fritz, Trent Turner, and Brenda Giles prepared the shipments. Truck driver Ed Palsgrove delivered and picked up shipments. Volunteer Marianna Burkholder assisted warehouse volunteers.

Domestically, shipments of blankets and/or kits were sent for homeless ministries, victims of home fires in Illinois, flood recovery in Missouri, Arkansas, and

Illinois, and a massive response to the fall hurricanes on behalf of Church World Service. Large-scale responses to these hurricanes required special runs to pick up CWS donations from Maine to Virginia. Shipments for Hurricane Marie included a container of supplies sent by BDM to Puerto Rico District.

Internationally, CWS shipped supplies to Syria and Armenia. Combined responses with CWS and International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) shipped to Georgia and Jordan. Shipments for Lutheran World Relief (LWR) and IOCC went to Serbia, Iraq, Jordan, and Bosnia. Other LWR responses were to El Salvador, Georgia, Peru, India, Honduras, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Uganda, and Pakistan.

Brethren Volunteer Service

Heifer International was a partner in new ways for both Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) and the Workcamp Ministry in 2017. Heifer Ranch in Perryville, Ark., was reopened as a BVS placement site, where two volunteers and two groups of workcampers served. Heifer International Nepal was the hosting partner for a young adult workcamp, where 14 participants helped with relief efforts following the 2015 earthquake in Nepal. The connection to this historically Church of the Brethren program was a joy, as Brethren visionary Dan West is credited with being a founder of both BVS and Heifer.

Orientations, coordinated by Jocelyn Snyder, were held at Camp Colorado and at a site new to BVS, Camp Pine Lake in Iowa. In 2017, 34 volunteers entered BVS and 89 volunteers were serving in seven countries and 16 states.

BVS continued a partnership with Mennonite Voluntary Service, with one volunteer serving with MVS in Tucson, at a new setting called CHIRPA, Community Home Repair Projects of Arizona. A new project this year is Creation Justice Ministries, in Washington, D.C.

In her role as staff for recruitment, Emily Tyler helped the team connect with the church through involvement in congregations, regional youth conferences, Annual Conference, colleges, and Bethany Seminary. The BVS team led the Mid-Atlantic winter youth retreat with the theme of connecting with God.

Dan McFadden is director of BVS. Kristin Flory and Todd Bauer provide regional coordination in Europe and Latin America respectively. Flory, who has served the longest of any staff person with BVS, was recognized for 30 years of employment.

At the BVS Luncheon at Annual Conference, the Partners in Service Award was presented to Bethany Seminary. Bethany president Jeff Carter, who was the keynote speaker, served in BVS in the Church of the Brethren Washington Office in the 1990s.

Brethren Workcamps

The workcamp theme, “Say Hello,” focused on communication—with God, each other, one’s self, the world. The theme scripture, 3 John 13-14, gave a glimpse of what this means, through desiring face-to-face conversation and greeting each other by

name. In 19 workcamps around the US and in Nepal, 302 youth, young adults, and adults grew in faith and worked alongside community members, building life-long relationships and creating memories.

The 2017 workcamp season was organized by assistant coordinators Deanna Beckner and Shelley Weachter, serving through BVS, and Emily Tyler, coordinator of the workcamp ministry.

In August, BVSer Grey Robinson joined the workcamp office and began work on the 2018 workcamp season, which will have fewer sites because youth will be attending National Youth Conference.

Global Food Initiative

The Global Food Initiative (GFI), managed by Jeff Boshart, provides grants to address pressing global hunger needs. US volunteers showed increased interest in becoming directly involved with overseas GFI-funded projects, traveling to Nigeria, Haiti, Spain, Mexico, and Kenya. The GFI Fund provided \$113,169 in grants. Total income to the fund was \$198,245.

The GFI completed a five-year, post-earthquake agricultural partnership with Eglise des Freres d’Haiti (Church of the Brethren in Haiti), and entered the second

year of a relationship with Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN) to support its Soybean Value Chain project. In the Great Lakes Region of Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi), GFI partners promoted sustainable farming practices among the Twa people.

New projects are underway in China, Ecuador, India, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic. In the United States, grants went to church-based community gardens in Maryland, Ohio, Illinois, New Mexico, and Alaska.

International Ministries

New mission projects

In a major development for the Church of the Brethren, two mission projects were formally approved to become sister churches. They are the Great Lakes Region of Africa and Venezuela.

The relationship with the Great Lakes Region has developed over a decade. The region, which includes Rwanda, Burundi, and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

(DRC), has been plagued by ethnic cleansing, sexual and gender-based violence, and extreme poverty, and seems ready for a holistic gospel of peace and reconciliation. In addition, the region is home to the Batwa-Pygmy, a hunter-gatherer people group that is being forced into permanent settlements and agrarian lifestyles.

The first official visit was in January 2010 by Jay Wittmeyer, who has now

visited the region numerous times. Other American Brethren who have contributed to the mission include Cliff Kindy, Gary Benesh, Galen Hackman, John Braun, Marla Abe, and Christian Elliott. Two individuals representing Burundi (Dr. David Nyonzima) and Rwanda (Etienne Nsanzimana) attended Annual Conference in Tampa, Fla.

The Church of the Brethren has supported various outreach ministries in the region including agricultural projects, disaster relief efforts for displaced persons, theological education, scholarships, trauma healing workshops, and church construction in the region. The Brethren also sponsored a tri-nation Batwa Pygmy conference.

The work in Venezuela originated from the mission efforts of the Dominican Brethren, led by Ariel Rosario Abreu, pastor of Los Guaricanos Church of the Brethren in Santo Domingo. Meetings in March and November 2017 focused on moving the nascent movement toward legal registration, leadership selection, and administrative design.

Venezuela is a promising country for a Brethren presence. Many interested in the movement come from independent charismatic and evangelical backgrounds and are hungry for a more holistic understanding of the gospel, inspired by Anabaptist-Pietist theology. In addition, since Venezuela's economy is a shambles, the movement is inspired by the Brethren to be engaged in churches that reach out to suffering neighbors with whatever support they can provide.

With the addition of Venezuela and the Great Lakes Region of Africa, the Church of the Brethren now engages 10 mission efforts. Each is unique. India, China, and Nigeria are historical. Spain, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Brazil are emerging with mature Brethren leaders, but still rely on the US church for significant support. The mission effort in South Sudan continues

in partnership with the African Inland Church and is not actively developing Brethren churches at this time.

Not counting grants from EDF and GFI, financial support to larger mission projects was as follows: Haiti, \$336,000; Nigeria, \$322,000; Dominican Republic, \$130,000; South Sudan, \$71,000; Brazil, \$47,000; Latin America, \$44,000; Great Lakes; \$35,000; Spain, \$25,000; Vietnam, \$21,000; and India, \$21,000. This financial support provides for mission workers, leadership development, theological training, and outreach projects.

Vision for a global church

A new statement on global mission was adopted by the Mission and Ministry Board in October 2017. Written by an ad hoc committee of the board and reviewed by the Mission Advisory Committee, the new statement was developed to address an inconsistency between polity and practice. Current statements on mission set forth a vision of new Brethren forming international districts and joining the US Annual Conference like a US district. In reality, new Brethren are forming national, independent legal entities with their own annual conferences. The new statement also calls on Global Mission and Service to actively work toward hosting a consultation to discuss the global Church of the Brethren—a gathering of autonomous Brethren bodies seeking mutual encouragement, sharing resources, and supporting each other's efforts.

Workcamps

The Brethren Evangelical Support Trust (BEST) contacted GMS and EYN in 2016 with a passion to address the issue of burned-out churches. Believing that small groups from the US could inspire EYN churches to send volunteers to workcamp sites, BEST set forth plans for a series of six workcamps that began in November 2016,

building a church for the displaced from Chibok, and ran through January 2018 in Michika.

The workcamps included Dominican-Americans, Haitian-Americans, and several youth. Most importantly, many EYN churches sent members to each workcamp, and EYN leaders, pastors, and district secretaries joined in. EYN members expressed deep appreciation for the solidarity and support they felt by working side by side with Americans.

In addition to Nigeria, Haiti hosted four workcamps last year and the Dominican Republic hosted two.

Church rebuilding

GMS sent \$200,000 to Nigeria to support church rebuilding. EYN leadership

identified 40 churches to receive a grant of \$5,000 each. The Nigeria church reports that many local church members received the grants with much appreciation and even tears for this support.

Personnel

Ilexene and Michaela Alphonse completed terms of service in Haiti. Alan and Kay Bennet finished service in Honduras with Proyecto Aldea Global. Nicole and Jason Hoover continue to serve in the Dominican Republic, Grace Mishler in Vietnam, and Athanasus Ungang in South Sudan. Eric Miller and Ruoxia Li joined GMS as mission workers in China. BVSer Pat Krabacher works on special projects, particularly related to Nigeria.

Office of Public Witness

The Office of Public Witness (OPW) seeks to live the peace of Jesus publicly, speaking up for peace and Brethren values in public life. In April, BVS volunteer Emerson Goering helped coordinate the 2017 Christian Citizenship Seminar, which focused on land rights and food access for indigenous people. Lybrook Community Ministry in New Mexico participated in sharing and advocacy visits in DC.

Over the summer, the office welcomed its first Ministry Summer Service intern, Monica McFadden, who worked on the Going to the Garden initiative, environmental justice, and North Korea.

OPW coordinates a working group on Nigeria, which has grown to include many of the main humanitarian and peacebuilding organizations that focus on northeast Nigeria. Following Annual Conference, OPW hosted EYN leaders from Nigeria for meetings with the State Department and others. Director Nathan Hosler traveled

to Nigeria in the fall to reconnect with EYN partners, including the growing Christian and Muslim Peace Initiative program.

The office continues work against the use of drone warfare, including congregational education initiatives with the Interfaith Network on Drone Warfare. BVSer Tori Bateman traveled to the Conference Against the Use of Drone Warfare at Duke Divinity School to share faith-based documentaries on drone warfare with conference attendees. Hosler represented the Peace Church in these documentaries, and Bateman works with partners to meet the goal of showing the documentaries in 200 congregations.

The office has re-engaged with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), with Hosler taking an active role on the CPT steering committee. Hosler also chairs the board of Churches for Middle East Peace, and traveled with the organization to Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon in the fall.

To contribute in the areas of civilian protection and atrocity prevention, OPW worked with the Protection and Prevention Working Group. The office initiated several conversations with USAID and the State Department to highlight the successful use of Unarmed Civilian Protection in conflict situations.

The office works with partners such as Creation Justice Ministries, the Pentagon Spending Working Group, Center on Conscience and War, Interfaith Immigration Coalition, Ecumenical Advocacy Days, National Religious Campaign Against Torture, and National Farm Worker Ministry.

Death Row Support Project

In 2017, 1,250 new pen pal assignments were made through the Death Row Support Project, which has been assigning pen pals to prisoners on death row for 40 years. Altogether, more than 8,000 individuals have signed up to participate, about one-third of them from outside the US.

The program is directed by volunteer Rachel Gross, who is encouraged by the increased interest in writing to prisoners.

More than 4,000 death row prisoners have been written to by DRSP correspondents. (Over 1,000 of those have eventually been executed.)

DRSP increased its social media presence by adding Twitter and Tumblr accounts with a focus on advocacy, and also increased the frequency of its newsletter, which is sent to over 3,000 people each month.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE MINISTRIES

The vision that compels Congregational Life Ministries is to create a vital people of God who embody and articulate their faith. Staff work toward this vision by developing relationships with ministerial and district leaders, providing resources and coaching, and planning denominational events. In 2017 staff worked directly with over 20 congregations and 10 districts through strategic visioning, deacon workshops, and envisioning possibilities for new church plants. Coordination of the team is carried out by Joshua Brockway and Stan Dueck. Randi Rowan is program assistant.

As director for Transforming Practices, Dueck provided coaching services for over 30 individuals and led retreats for congregations and pastors. He oversees the Vital Ministry Journey process for congregations seeking to discern their vision

and practices. In addition, Dueck facilitated the placement process for two district executive ministers and the evaluation process for two other district leaders.

The annual Christian Citizenship Seminar, coordinated by Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, focused on Native American rights, particularly issues of food security. The event, held in New York City and Washington, D.C., with leadership also from the Office of Public Witness, brought together 43 participants from 10 districts. BV Ser Paige Butzlaff, who completed a term of service in 2017, assisted with CCS.

The annual Young Adult Conference, with leadership from the Young Adult Steering Committee, was held at Camp Harmony in Western Pennsylvania District. This year 43 young adults from eight

districts met for worship, learning, and play as they explored what it means to love their neighbors. Through Ministry Summer Service, six young adults served as interns in congregational, camp, and denominational settings. The MSS orientation was organized by Ullom Naugle and Dana Cassell.

By early in the year, preparation was already underway for the quadrennial National Youth Conference that will take place in July 2018. Coordinator Kelsey Murray, serving through Brethren Volunteer Service, is working closely with the National Youth Cabinet.

Gimbiya Kettering, director of Intercultural Ministries, cultivates the intercultural community within the denomination. She coordinated the translation services for Annual Conference, a process that also serves to support Hispanic leaders around the church and involve them in the shared life of denominational work. Kettering also organized a conference call for women in ministry, called Sisters in Ministry. This meeting provided a key space for more than 45 women leaders to share together and celebrate their hopes for ministry. Kettering and Debbie Eisenbise led an intercultural training event at the Southern Ohio district conference.

Following the US presidential election in late 2016, Kettering reached out to congregations who have embraced the Revelation 7:9 vision, in order to support their work and gather their stories related to welcome and ministry. She prepared an article for the January 2017 issue of *Messenger* that highlighted brothers and sisters who are members of groups that are targeted based on their race, ethnicity, or immigration status. She has been a key voice calling attention to the issues of race and white supremacy in the country and in the church.

Kettering recruited and provided financial support for three denominational leaders to participate in the Sankofa Journey, a program of “racial righteousness” of the Evangelical Covenant Church. Joshua Brockway traveled with Drew Hart of Messiah College in July; Belita Mitchell and Nancy Sollenberger Heishman took part in the fall of 2017. Accounts of these trips were published in the January/February 2018 issue of *Messenger*.

Joshua Brockway, director of Spiritual Life and Discipleship, led deacon workshops that focused on gifts discernment, conflict transformation, and pastoral care. He also organized a course on urban ministry through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership. The course was designed in conjunction with Bethany Theological Seminary as an immersion class in Atlanta. This partnership connected seminary training with the resourcing work of Congregational Life so that students and current church leaders could imagine together what urban ministry looks like with a Brethren accent.

Debbie Eisenbise cultivated the fruitful and important relationship with the Anabaptist Disabilities Network. She called together a working group on disabilities ministries in the Church of the Brethren and named a disabilities ombudsman for Annual Conference. Eisenbise transitioned the Open Roof award to a fellowship of congregations that have made significant strides towards including individuals of all abilities into congregational life.

The annual Spiritual Directors retreat, organized by Eisenbise, brought together 12 directors from eight districts. They explored the topic of embodied spirituality with internationally known spiritual director Betsy Beckman.

Eisenbise coordinated Inspiration 2017, the 14th National Older Adult Conference. The 855 participants gathered at Lake

Junaluska, N.C., for worship, fellowship, and laughter. They assembled 734 Gifts of the Heart kits for Church World Service, donated over 1,200 books to Junaluska Elementary School, and raised over \$5,000 for Church of the Brethren ministries in South Sudan.

Eisenbise completed her work as director of Intergenerational Ministries in September. Chasity Gunn resigned as conference and event assistant in August.

Each event coordinated by Congregational Life Ministries staff involves hours of volunteer support from around the denomination. Pastors and lay leaders help to plan these events through groups such as the NOAC planning team, National Youth Cabinet, Young Adult

Steering Committee, New Church Development Committee, Disabilities Advocacy Team, and Intercultural Ministries Advisory Committee.

The work of Congregational Life Ministries is enhanced by ecumenical and denominational partners. CLM supports the work of the Ecumenical Stewardship Center, Evangelism Connections, and the Anabaptist Disabilities Network. In addition, CLM has key partnerships with Church of the Brethren organizations such as the Fellowship of Brethren Homes and the Outdoor Ministries Association. These relationships amplify the vision for a vital denomination that encourages disciples of Jesus in the community we call the Church of the Brethren.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

The staff of Organizational Resources support all the programs and ministries of the Church of the Brethren. Brian Bultman, chief financial officer, leads the team. Ed Woolf, manager of gift operations and assistant treasurer, handles special gift instruments, coordinates insurance matters, and provides administrative support for the other areas in the department.

Brethren Historical Library and Archives

The Brethren Historical Library and Archives (BHLA), the official repository of the Church of the Brethren, holds the records documenting the ministry of Church of the Brethren. In 2017 the archives provided the following services: 327 written requests, 102 phone requests, 68 onsite researchers, and tours for about 50 people. BHLA processed about 147 feet of archival material. Besides aiding researchers from North America, the archives received researchers from Nigeria, India, and China.

Among the important collections received and processed were papers from S. Loren Bowman, Brethren Service

Committee's World War II ministry to servicemen, Dale Aukerman, Mary Jo Flory-Steuery, and Paul Hoffman.

BHLA was a sponsor of the Muted Voices Conference hosted by the World War I Museum in Kansas City, where several Church of the Brethren scholars joined representatives of other peace churches in discussing and commemorating the World War I experience of religious and secular opponents of the "Great War."

Bill Kostlevy is director and Haley Steinhilber, a recent graduate of Manchester University, has served as BHLA intern since June 2017.

Support Services

Marvin Greener and Francie Coale oversee the care and maintenance of the Church of the Brethren properties. Greener directs the Buildings and Grounds department at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., assisted part-time by Steve Bickler. Coale directs the department at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., assisted full-time by Felix Hill, maintenance assistant.

With the sale of the upper campus of the Brethren Service Center, Gerald Karn and Ron Anders concluded their employment with the Church of the Brethren June 2. Many volunteers assisted with the move of selected furniture and equipment from the upper campus to the current Brethren Service Center location in the warehouse annex building.

The Finance department provides regular budget support, financial reports, and cash management, and staffs the treasurer's office

at Annual Conference and the National Older Adult Conference. Members of the team are Pat Marsh, staff accountant; Nancy Watts, donation and accounts receivable specialist; Barb Watt, financial operations specialist; and Lynn Phelan, accounts payable specialist.

The Information Technology department accomplished a migration of internet and voice services to First Communications in Elgin and to Quantum at the new data center at the Brethren Service Center. Both locations now share the same Mitel voice over internet protocol (VOIP) phone system. Director Mark Hartwig retired in December. Other members of the team are Francie Coale, director in New Windsor, and Fabiola Fernandez, system specialist in Elgin. Perry Hudkins provides part-time support and works on special projects.

Zigler Hospitality Center

On April 30, the Brethren Service Center held a prayer service to remember the many years and many ministries that took place at the upper campus of the center. That day was also the final day of operations for the Zigler Hospitality Center. Meal events and overnight guests were accommodated up until the day of closing.

With the closing, the following concluded employment with the Church of the Brethren: Mary Ann Grossnickle,

Connie Bohn, Janet Comings, Charlotte Willis, Elena Cutsail, Fay Reese, John Frisby, Helen Eyler, Katherine Blizzard, and Robyn Jackson. In addition, long-term volunteers Maria Capusan, Mathea Iglich, and Judy Waters concluded their service.

The Church of the Brethren is grateful for all those who have worked as employees and volunteers over the years at the Zigler Hospitality Center, and throughout the Brethren Service Center.

2017 Financial Results

The Church of the Brethren carried out ministries totaling more than \$10.5 million in 2017. That total includes the church's Core Ministries, gross expenses for self-

funding ministries, and responses to disasters and other areas of need.

Giving to Core Ministries was up slightly from 2016, with congregations giving

\$2,025,864 and individuals giving \$522,014. The Core Ministries Fund ended the year with a net surplus of \$181,821, boosting the accumulated net asset balance to \$1,546,517.

Giving to the Emergency Disaster Fund increased significantly from 2016. The \$2,315,759 donated in 2017 was 31 percent higher than the \$1,767,084 donated in 2016. The Global Food Initiative Fund received \$198,245 in 2017, down slightly from the \$207,379 donated the year before. These funds are assessed a ministry enablement contribution that reimburses Core Ministries for administrative costs.

The self-funding ministries receive income primarily through sales, fees, and registrations. They pay internal fees to the Core Ministries Fund for rent and other services. Brethren Press achieved gross sales of \$567,823. The cost of sales was \$341,811, yielding net sales of \$226,013. Brethren Press ended the year with a deficit of \$70,769, bringing net assets down to an accumulated deficit balance of \$420,845.

The Conference Office finished 2017 with a surplus of \$25,334, increasing its accumulated net asset balance to \$523,146. Material Resources ended the year with a deficit of \$18,196, decreasing its accumulated net asset balance to \$10,644.

Total investments, including endowments and reserves, increased to \$32.6 million at the end of 2017, up by 26 percent over the previous balance of \$25.9 million at the end of 2016. The investment increase was attributable to market value gains, donations from bequests and endowments, and increased balances due to the investment of proceeds from the sale of the upper campus of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.

Proceeds from the New Windsor sale totaled \$5,382,697. The book value of all assets sold totaled \$844,679, and the corresponding gain on the sale of the property netted \$4,538,018.

[The above amounts were provided prior to completion of the 2017 audit. Complete financial information is available in the Church of the Brethren, Inc., audit report published in June 2018.]

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, is a member of the denomination's Leadership Team, and oversees the employees of the Church of the Brethren. He also represents the church in its various ecumenical commitments. Nancy Miner is manager of the Office of the General Secretary.

Leadership Team

Guidance and leadership for the denomination is provided by the Leadership Team. Early in the year, the Leadership Team approved the addition of a district executive representing the Council of District Executives to the team, so that the members now include the Annual Conference officers (moderator, moderator-elect, and secretary), the general secretary,

and a district executive. The Conference director provides staff assistance.

The team's primary tasks are to ensure that Annual Conference decisions are carried out, interpret Annual Conference decisions and denominational polity, review recommended changes in the Annual Conference guidelines and polices, serve as executive committee for Annual Conference, and provide oversight for

Annual Conference in consultation with the Conference director, Program and Arrangements Committee, and the treasurer.

This was an exceptionally busy year, with eight scheduled meetings—two of them with groups that requested a consultation. Considerable time was given to working with the Council of District Executives and its leadership in responding to the assignment from Annual Conference “to bring clarity and guidance concerning the authority of Annual Conference and districts regarding the accountability of ministers, congregations, and districts.”

To address questions and concerns raised in response to the report, the Leadership Team prepared a separate document about authority and accountability and presented it to the 2017 Annual Conference as a statement of clarification, reaffirming current polity of the church and standard practices established by the council. Its recommendation “that the church turn its attention to the framing of a compelling vision for how we will continue the work of Jesus together” received strong affirmation from the delegate body.

In the latter half of the year, the

Leadership Team devoted much of its time to responding to concerns raised about the introduction of a new fellowship at the Annual Conference and providing polity interpretations to seven churches seeking to form their own district within the geographical boundaries of their current district. The team also worked with the Council of District Executives to frame the compelling vision process and call a process team. Funds received from the annual distribution from Brotherhood Mutual Insurance will be applied to expenses of this process.

In addition, the Leadership Team established guidelines for the Program and Arrangements Committee to follow when it designates the use of Annual Conference offerings; approved simple updates to the *Manual of Organization and Polity*; worked on its assignment from the 2017 Conference to propose polity for agencies that will define what it means to be an Annual Conference agency and what process is to be used to resolve conflicts or disputes between an agency and the Conference; and designated the Annual Conference financial reserves as self-insurance.

Mission and Ministry Board

The Mission and Ministry Board serves as the board of directors of the Church of the Brethren, carrying out the direction set by Annual Conference.

Global mission was a major focus of the board’s work in 2017. At its spring meeting, the board formally approved new mission projects for Venezuela and for the Great Lakes Region of Africa. A new mission philosophy paper, a “Vision for a Global Church of the Brethren,” was adopted by the board in October and recommended to Annual Conference. The paper, which stands on previous Annual Conference statements, works at clarifying a global

structure of “autonomous Brethren groups in different areas of the world.”

The sale of the upper campus of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., was completed in the spring. From the proceeds of the sale, the board allocated up to \$100,000 for repairs and preservation of the historic Germantown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren property; designated 30 percent to establish a Brethren Faith in Action Fund that will provide grants to congregational outreach projects; and invested the remainder to promote the long-term sustainability of denominational ministries.

The Brethren Service Center continues to

operate in New Windsor, in what was known as the lower campus. Brethren Disaster Ministries, Material Resources, and Organizational Resources staff are housed in offices connected to the warehouse.

In other work, the board spent significant time strategizing for “Living Together as Christ Calls,” a task assigned by Annual Conference; acted on recommendations from the Review and Evaluation Committee;

and continued a strong response to the crisis in Nigeria. The board also supported staff plans for a major fundraising campaign to move the organization toward improved financial sustainability.

The elected membership of the board consists of 7 women and 10 men. One member is Jamaican American, one is Indo-American, three are African American, and 12 are Caucasian.

Brethren Press

Brethren Press’s premier release of 2017 was *Speak Peace: A Daily Reader*, a substantial compilation of 365 readings on peace, edited by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford. While many of the entries are rooted in the Church of the Brethren, the book’s appeal extends beyond the church—which became clear when it was chosen by Sojourners as a gift for their donors.

Shine: Living in God’s Light, the children’s curriculum co-published by Brethren Press and MennoMedia, established distribution agreements with Ingram, Cokesbury, and Parasource. Those new markets, while currently small, are broadening the customer base.

Because of a special offering taken at Annual Conference, Brethren Press was able to send 425 complimentary copies of *Shine On: A Story Bible* (and 5 copies of the Spanish version, *Resplandece*) to Brethren congregations that are potential users of the curriculum. This large mailing was a tangible sign of the church’s commitment to the faith formation of children.

For adults, new Bible study resources were *Women of the Hebrew Bible*, by Paula Bowser, and *Prayers of Jesus* by Galen Hackman—both part of the Covenant Bible Studies Series—and four quarters of *A Guide for Biblical Studies*. Devotionals for Lent and Advent were *Medicine of Mercy*,

by Theresa Eshbach, and *The Magnificent Story*, by James H. Lehman.

Many Brethren writers and photographers contributed to the Living Word Bulletin Series, which is used widely across the denomination. MennoMedia collaborates with Brethren Press to make the series available to Mennonite congregations in the US and Canada.

Because many computers no longer have a disk drive, the 2017 Church of the Brethren Yearbook was published on a USB flash drive card, replacing the CD format that had been used for some years. Jim Miner is the Yearbook specialist.

At Annual Conference, the Brethren Press/*Messenger* Dinner featured writer and rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, who spoke on “Lot’s Wife and the Necessity of Turning Back.” Brethren Press published DVDs of the Annual Conference Wrap-up and Sermons, and ran bookstores at both Annual Conference and the National Older Adult Conference.

Publisher Wendy McFadden led preparation of a major study that examined the broad context of denominational publishing and the specific challenges of operating Brethren Press as a self-funding unit in the Church of the Brethren. Annual deficits are slightly less than the fees the publishing house pays to the Core Ministries

Fund, meaning that overall Brethren Press creates a positive gross profit to the organization.

James Deaton is managing editor and Jeff Lennard is director of marketing and sales.

Karen Stocking is finance and production assistant, and customer service is provided by Steve Bickler, Margaret Drafall, and Karen Warner.

Communications

Messenger magazine garnered two awards from the Associated Church Press—an award of excellence for publisher Wendy McFadden’s online essay “A Playlist of Mercy and Hope” and an honorable mention for redesign of the *Messenger* website, executed by Russ Otto, media support specialist, and Jan Fischer Bachman, website producer.

The *Messenger* editorial team—McFadden, Fischer Bachman, and Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford—has increased dramatically the number of writers contributing to the magazine. Diane Stroyeck handles subscriptions.

In 2017, the Church of the Brethren News Services kept the denomination informed and engaged in the ministries of the church through Newline, a free email news service, as well as news stories posted online, coverage of major events, the Newline Digest in *Messenger*, Facebook and other social media, and more.

News Services is staffed by director Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford. Coverage of Annual Conference and Inspiration 2017: National Older Adult Conference was made possible by teams of volunteer writers and photographers. Throughout the year, Brethren from across the country and around

the world contributed to the church’s news coverage. Church of the Brethren news was shared beyond the denomination through press releases and other communications.

The website, www.brethren.org, provided an essential layer of communication for all ministries of the church. It also is a destination for those seeking information about the Church of the Brethren, with visitors making frequent use of the “About” section and the Find-a-Church search feature.

The web team coordinated the regular email campaigns for about 16 interest groups, the largest being Newline and eBrethren. The team regularly researches and tests a variety of online tools (which change frequently) that save time for staff and volunteers across the organization, reduce expenses, and offer a better, mobile-friendly experience for users. The work of online registrations for the organization’s many events has shifted to the web team.

The communication team makes significant use of Facebook, and is also present on Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Vimeo. A first-ever Snapchat filter was created for the Grand Rapids Annual Conference.

Conference Office

The mission statement “Annual Conference exists to unite, strengthen and equip the Church of the Brethren to follow Jesus” guided the planning of the 231st Annual Conference. Moderator Carol Scheppard

chose the theme “Risk Hope” and provided monthly online Bible studies on that theme in the 10 months leading up to Annual Conference.

The DeVos Convention Center was the venue for the 2,435 Brethren gathered in Grand Rapids, Mich. In addition to daily worship services and business sessions, the Conference offered 66 insight sessions, 42 meal events, and activities for children and youth.

Host Michigan District supplied many volunteers, led by onsite coordinators Joanna Willoughby and Randy Short. Conference director Chris Douglas, assistant Jon Kobel, and registration coordinator Debbie Noffsinger gave staff leadership, and hundreds of volunteers made the Conference flow smoothly.

Program and Arrangements Committee planned Friday as a Jubilee Afternoon with no business session. Conferencegoers chose from a variety of options, including tours at Meijer Gardens, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, and Grand Rapids Art Museum; service projects; equipping

workshops; ice cream social and musical performances in the exhibit area; an organ recital; and a concert by Ken Medema.

Throughout the week, participants were invited to visit the exhibit area and get their “conference passport” stamped by various exhibitors. A completed passport could be presented for complimentary treats during the ice cream social. Conference participants spent time in the exhibit area enjoying music concerts, shopping at Brethren Press, and learning about the many Church of the Brethren programs represented by the exhibitors.

As a Witness to the Host City, Brethren were invited to bring material donations for Bethany Christian Service and Refugee Education Center in Grand Rapids. These two organizations were surprised and delighted by the generosity of the Brethren. Additionally, more than 190 pints of blood were donated to Michigan Blood.

Human Resources

Shamek Cardona succeeded Deborah Brehm as manager of Human Resources, overseeing the organization’s employment policy and services and ensuring compliance with legal requirements.

Employees hired in 2017 were Trent Turner, warehouse assistant at the Brethren Service Center; Shamek Cardona, manager of Human Resources; Lynn Phelan, accounts payable specialist; Sherry Chastain, program assistant for Children’s Disaster Services; Terry Goodger, program assistant for

Disaster Rebuild; Melissa Fritz, packer in Material Resources; and Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, director of Ministry.

Total regular full-time and part-time employees and Brethren Volunteer Service workers serving Church of the Brethren programs: 68. Ethnic/racial composition: Asian–1; black–2; Hispanic –2; white–63; two or more races–1. Total contract, shared, and temporary employees, as well as program volunteers: 31.

Ministry

The Office of Ministry values the commitments of many partners in accomplishing the work of calling, equipping, credentialing, and sustaining ministerial leadership. These partners include districts and congregations, the

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, Ministers’ Association, Ministry Advisory Council, and Bethany Seminary.

In November, Nancy Sollenberger Heishman succeeded interim director Joe

Detrick. Dana Cassell served as staff for ministry formation until September. Program assistant Margie Paris supported the placement work of districts and congregations until her retirement in February 2018, following 28 years of employment with the Church of the Brethren.

It is a cause for celebration that 29 individuals were licensed (10 women and 19 men), 35 were ordained (12 women and 23 men), and 5 men commissioned in 2017 (three from other denominations). However, much progress remains to be made within congregations and districts to achieve the goals of Annual Conference statements affirming God's enthusiastic call of women and people of all cultural backgrounds to the set-apart ministry.

The Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee streamlined the pastoral start-up and renewal contracts, monitored governmental decisions that affect pastoral benefits, and made subsequent recommendations regarding benefits.

The Ministers' Association pre-Annual Conference continuing education event featured author and pastor Lillian Daniel, who focused on reaching unchurched people in the contemporary American cultural context.

The Ministry Assistance Fund granted \$17,621 to ministers in six districts. The fund began the year with a balance of \$5,899, to which donations of \$5,878 were added, ending the year with a balance of \$0. A gift from Brotherhood Mutual contributed to the fund's capacity for helping ministers in need.

The Office of Ministry worked with the Council of District Executives (CODE) as it carried out a review of the congregational and pastoral profile forms and updated the executive staff manual. District executive positions were filled in Atlantic Northeast,

Western Pennsylvania, Northern Ohio, and Middle Pennsylvania, with an interim also called to serve Michigan District. CODE collaborated with the denomination's Leadership Team to prepare a statement of clarification about current polity and standard practice, which was approved by delegates at Annual Conference.

Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership

The Office of Ministry joins with Bethany Seminary to run the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, directed by Janet Ober Lambert.

Thirty-three students are active in the Training in Ministry (TRIM) program, with three new students entering in 2017. Ten TRIM courses were offered during the year. Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM) includes three congregations (two in English, one in Spanish). Manuals in both languages were revised. Sie Brock and the Stonelick congregation in Southern Ohio District completed the EFSM program this year. TRIM and EFSM are coordinated by Carrie Eikler.

Nineteen students from four districts participate in Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano (SeBAH). Two Brethren, Rebecca Baile Crouse and Marcos Inhauser, joined the Brethren SeBAH faculty, partnering with Mennonite Education Agency teachers to provide program instruction. A new coordinator for Spanish language ministry training programs, Roxanne Gaxiola Aguirre from Reedley, Calif., began in January 2018, succeeding Nancy Sollenberger Heishman.

Various districts carry out Academy Certified Training Systems (ACTS) programs that are certified by the Brethren Academy. The number of ACTS programs expanded to include the Buckeye Brethren Institute in Northern Ohio District and the Brethren Leadership Institute in South/Central Indiana District.

The Academy also coordinates and certifies continuing education opportunities for ministers. These opportunities include the Sustaining Ministerial Excellence Advanced Seminar, which saw the conclusion of a camp cohort begun in 2015.

The Office of Ministry echoes the apostle Paul’s gratitude for the beauty and blessing of its partners, “thanking God every time [we] remember you...because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now” (Philippians 1:3, 5).

Mission Advancement

The Office of Mission Advancement promotes and fosters support to advance the mission of the Church of the Brethren. Formerly named Donor Relations, the team cultivates relationships with congregations and individuals through visits, education about the church’s ministries, and providing ways for the giving of gifts sent as “a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God” (Philippians 4:18) to support those ministries.

Traci Rabenstein was promoted to director of Mission Advancement following the resignation of John Hipps. She and Mark Flory Steury, donor relations representative, visited and connected with congregations and individuals throughout 2017. The purpose of these visits was to extend greetings to members, inform them about

the ministries of the Church of the Brethren, and express gratitude for their support.

Matthew DeBall, coordinator of donor communications, and Cherise Glunz, program assistant, crafted communications such as congregational offering materials for One Great Hour of Sharing, Mission, and Advent offerings and the online newsletter eBrethren. DeBall represented the Church of the Brethren on the interdenominational One Great Hour of Sharing committee.

The Mission Advancement team worked with the general secretary to explore the prospect of a campaign to address short- and long-term sustainability needs of our ministries. Staff worked alongside the general secretary as he held listening sessions in each district; what was heard from those many voices is guiding the team’s planning.

CONCLUSION

Though many names appear in this report, there isn’t room to name many other people—those who pray for the ministries of the church, serve on planning committees, write articles, leave home to volunteer, are elected to boards, accompany young people as advisors, and in countless other ways continue the work of Jesus. We are grateful for your prayerful support, your financial gifts, and your involvement in these ministries. Together we are offering the world another way of living.

Connie Burk Davis, chair
David Steele, general secretary