Church of the Brethren
Mission and Ministry Board
Meeting by Zoom Videoconference
April 24, 2020

Minutes


Absent: John Mueller

General Secretary: David Steele

Recorder: Nancy Miner

Patrick Starkey called the meeting to order and opened with prayer.

He noted the various resources currently available to help congregations and communities affected by COVID-19, including:

- Going to the Garden grants
- Brethren Faith in Action grants
- Ministry Assistance Fund
- Church Workers Assistance Plan (BBT)
- COVID-19 Pandemic Response grants (EDF)

Brethren Faith in Action Fund grants
Patrick brought two recommendations from the Executive Committee, each of which originated with the Brethren Faith in Action (BFIA) Grant Oversight Committee.

BFIA recommendation #1
Executive Committee recommends to the Mission and Ministry Board that Brethren Faith in Action funds temporarily be made available to Church of the Brethren camps through December 2020. A grant to a Church of the Brethren camp will be limited to a one-time award of up to $5,000 with the requirement that the camp match 50% of the amount awarded. A camp may apply for a waiver of some or all of the matching fund requirement.

Patrick explained that the recommendation is being made because there are currently no resources available to Church of the Brethren camps.

Discussion:
Diane Mason, a member of the BFIA Grant Oversight Committee, explained that camps have ongoing needs usually funded by camp registration fees. They must maintain standards and meet code requirements and may not be able to do so if camps are cancelled. The committee sees the camps as outreach ministries, thus qualifying them for BFIA funds.

*Affirmation*

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and approved the proposal as written.

Q: How will camps be notified that funds are available?
A: Staff will work at communicating this and other actions taken at this meeting. Information will also be made available on the COVID-19 “landing page” on the Church of the Brethren website and through Newsline. Discipleship Ministries staff also keep in contact with Outdoor Ministries Association (OMA).

*BFIA recommendation #2*

Executive Committee further recommends to the Mission and Ministry Board that Church of the Brethren congregations, fellowships, and projects applying for Brethren Faith in Action grants may also apply for a waiver of some or all of the BFIA matching fund requirement through December 2020.

Discussion:
- Diane Mason shared that the BFIA Oversight Committee feels there is more need for the church to minister in communities, and quite likely less time to do fundraising for those ministries.
- Very appropriate because of the nature of what is happening; meeting needs of people is one of our responsibilities.
- Sharing from her congregation’s experience, Dava Hensley spoke in support of the recommendation.
- Diane noted that the BFIA money is limited and the need is great. Congregations will be encouraged to consider the need and ask for only what they are able to put to good use.

Q: What is the amount available for the year?
A: There is about $94,000 remaining in the fund for the year; enough for 19 full grants.

Q: Will it be first come, first served?
A: Diane responded that yes, the BFIA grants will likely be on a first come, first served basis. However, the committee waits until they have several applications before they review them. David reminded board members that EDF Pandemic Grant options for congregations might fit some needs better than the BFIA grants.

Q: Because outreach ministries may be limited during this time, will there be flexibility? Will the application process be the same?
A: The application will be the same. The Committee will keep in mind the criteria of keeping in the spirit of the Brethren Service Center.
Affirmation
The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and approved the proposal as written.

Health Education and Research grants for Fellowship of Brethren Homes
Patrick gave background on the Health Education and Research (HEAR) fund and the practice of spending earnings on the fund for nursing scholarships and continuing education grants. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, staff made a recommendation for a wider use of the funds. The Executive Committee approved the recommendation for consideration by the board.

HEAR Grant Recommendation
Executive Committee recommends to the Mission and Ministry Board that $500,000 be released from the Health Education and Research Fund to be distributed to the members of the Fellowship of Brethren Homes to support the increased costs of caring for older adults in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Distribution shall be in accordance with the dues-based formula presented in the exhibit.

Discussion:
Q: Is this an automatic grant, or would the homes have to apply?
A: Funds would be automatically distributed according to the formula. There would be no need to apply.

Q: Are annual dues pre-determined? Do homes have the option to pay more or less?
A: Dues are set based on size and do not reflect any homes paying more.

Q: Is there an assumption that all of the homes have been affected by the pandemic?
A: Yes, there is that assumption. All are facing challenges.

Q: Is this money we already have?
A: Yes. It is a restricted fund with over $2 million in it, designated for health education.

Q: Do the dues go into the HEAR fund?
A: The dues support the work and the executive director of the Fellowship of Brethren Homes (FBH). We bank the money and partner with FBH.

Patrick noted that the nursing scholarships and the grants given from the fund are not of an amount that requires board approval. This proposal is a size that does require approval. Staff and the Executive Committee felt the proposal to be in line with the original intent of the fund.

Affirmation
The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and approved the proposal as written.

Further discussion regarding BFIA grants
Diane asked for the board’s thoughts on an idea regarding possible disbursement of BFIA grants.

If the committee would decide to award a percentage (e.g. 80 percent) of the amount requested, then evaluate at the end of the year whether there are funds to award the remaining amount, the funds could be stretched further. She asked whether the process would require board approval.
Patrick responded that it would be within the purview of the committee. David added his support of the BFIA committee considering this, thus pacing ourselves.

David added that staff are evaluating funding streams and putting them to use as quickly as possible, recognizing the challenges that congregations, pastors, and camps are facing.

**Update from General Secretary**

David Steele reported on other responses and concerns:

- $35,000 EDF grant for Haiti
- Concern about famine related to COVID-19
- Deep concern about Nigeria
  - No attacks in recent days, but much concern about COVID-19
- Several affected by email hack
- Commended staff as they adapt to working from home
- Requested prayers for Service Master cleaning crew, both hospitalized with COVID-19
  - Suspended Service Master contract for the time being and Salvador is picking up the cleaning tasks