

# Wrap Up



Church of the Brethren Annual Conference ■ Greensboro ■ June 29-July 3, 2016



Photo by Regina Holmes

Moderator Andy Murray presides over business sessions, with moderator-elect Carol Scheppard.

## Elections and appointments

*Moderator-elect:* Samuel Kefas Sarpiya

*Program and Arrangements Committee:*  
John Shafer

*Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee:* Raymond Flagg

*Mission and Ministry Board, Area 3:* Marcus Harden; *Area 4:* Luci Landes; *Area 5:* Thomas Dowdy; *affirmed:* Diane Mason

*Bethany Theological Seminary board, representing the laity:* Miller Davis; *representing the colleges:* Mark A. Clapper; *affirmed:* Cathy Simmons Huffman, Louis Harrell Jr., Karen O. Crim, David McFadden

*Brethren Benefit Trust board:* David L. Shissler; *reported:* Eunice Culp, Eric P. Kabler, Thomas B. McCracken

*On Earth Peace board:* Beverly Sayers Eikenberry; *affirmed:* Irvin R. Heishman; Barbara Ann Rohrer

Photo by Glenn Riegel



Photo by Glenn Riegel

"Light of the world,  
into our darkness come...  
Let heaven's will  
on earth be done."

—Song by music coordinator Shawn Kirchner, sung during a procession of lights at the start of each worship service

## Delegates consider five queries, refer controversial items to leadership groups

Delegates to the 2016 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren addressed five queries, including some items of considerable controversy. Presiding over the business sessions was moderator Andy Murray, assisted by moderator-elect Carol Scheppard and Conference secretary James Beckwith.

The five queries were "Same Sex Weddings" from West Marva District, "On Earth Peace Reportability/Accountability to Annual Conference" also from West Marva, "Viability of On Earth Peace as an Agency of the Church of the Brethren" from Southeastern District, "Continuing the Study of Our Christian Responsibility to Care for God's Creation" from Illinois and Wisconsin District, and "Living Together as Christ Calls" from Pacific Southwest District.

'Same Sex Weddings' The query asked, "How shall districts respond when credentialed ministers and/or congregations conduct or participate in same sex weddings?" The Conference referred the concerns of the query to the Church of the Brethren Leadership Team in consultation with the Council of District Executives (CODE).

Deliberation went on for several days, starting in pre-Conference meetings of the Standing Committee of district delegates, and continuing with a spirited and—for the most part—thoughtful discussion with the whole delegate body.

Before delegates could address the query, however, they had to vote to open the floor to a query related to human sexuality because the 2011 Conference had decided "to continue deeper conversations concerning human sexuality outside of the query process."

The motion to refer finally gained the support of the Conference after delegates voted down a recommendation from Standing Committee that, because of its controversial nature, required a two-thirds majority vote. The Standing Committee recommendation that failed would have instructed districts to "respond with discipline, not with allowances based on personal conscience" and would have made termination of ministry credentials an automatic consequence for officiating or providing leadership at a same sex wedding, for a period of one year pending review by the district.

The Leadership Team made up of the Annual Conference moderator, moderator-elect, and secretary, and the general secretary, in consultation with the district executives, will consider the query over the coming year. The motion to refer asks these groups "to bring clarity and guidance concerning the authority of Annual Conference and districts regarding the accountability of ministers, congregations, and districts, bringing recommendations to the 2017 Annual Conference."

(continued on p. 2)

More information is available on the news index page for the 2016 Annual Conference, go to [www.brethren.org/ac2016](http://www.brethren.org/ac2016). Order the Annual Conference 2016 Wrap-Up DVD for \$29.95 and the Sermons DVD for \$24.95 from Brethren Press, call 800-441-3712. This Wrap Up was produced by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, director of News Services for the Church of the Brethren, with the Annual Conference News Team: Jan Fischer Bachman, Laura Brown, Eddie Edmonds, Karen Garrett, Keith Hollenberg, Regina Holmes, Monica McFadden, Russ Otto, Donna Parcell, Frank Ramirez, Glenn Riegel, Tyler Roebuck, Frances Townsend.

Church of the Brethren News Services, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120; 800-323-8039 ext. 326; [cobnews@brethren.org](mailto:cobnews@brethren.org)



Photo by Regina Holmes

The Quilt Auction sponsored by the Association for the Arts in the Church of the Brethren this year included a silent auction of Nigerian dresses.

## By the numbers

**2,439 registered**, including 704 delegates

**\$68,516 received in offerings**, including \$23,043.59 for the Nigeria Crisis Fund, close to \$26,000 for Church of the Brethren Core Ministries, and about \$19,500 for Annual Conference

**8,753 total in-person worship attendance** at the 5 Annual Conference services, with more worshippers joining the "virtual" congregation via webcasts

**161 people participated in the on-site blood drive**, donating an estimated 160 usable pints, which aid about 480 people

**\$2,793.24 in cash donations to Backpack Beginnings** aiding children in need in Greensboro, and **\$815 in cash donations to Encore Boutique** aiding people in job training (the total amount of goods donated to these programs as part of the "Witness to the Host City" is yet to be announced)

**\$10,050 raised by the AACB Quilt Auction** sponsored by the Association for the Arts in the Church of the Brethren, along with \$877 raised in a silent auction of Nigerian dresses, and \$2,000 "Gifts of the Heart"

**\$7,300-plus raised for Heifer International** during the Ted & Co. production of *12 Baskets and a Goat*

**6 new congregations and fellowships:** New Beginnings Church of the Brethren and Veritas, both in Atlantic Northeast District; Jonah's People, N. Ohio District; Betel International and Ministerio Uncion Apostolica, both in Southeastern District; Gospel Assembly, Atlantic Southeast District

(continued from p. 1)

**Queries concerning On Earth Peace** The two queries were combined in one response from Standing Committee, and both were referred to the Review and Evaluation Committee. The recommendation was made "recognizing that the Review and Evaluation Committee has the responsibility to consider the balance and unity of denominational agencies."

Every decade, a Review and Evaluation Committee is elected to review and evaluate Church of the Brethren organization, structure, and function. Members are Tim Harvey, chair, from Virlina District; Ben S. Barlow, Shenandoah District; Leah J. Hileman, Atlantic Northeast District; Robert D. Kettering, Atlantic Northeast District; and David Shumate, Virlina District. The group brought an interim report this year and will complete its work in 2017.

**Query on care for creation** The Conference voted to form a three-member study committee to be named by the Standing Committee of district delegates. The study committee will work in consultation with Brethren Benefit Trust and other relevant agencies to develop educational resources and strategies to help Brethren make financial and investment decisions and get involved in community projects to reduce greenhouse gas and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. In 2014, Annual Conference did not adopt a study committee's recommendations on "Guidance for Responding to the Changing of Earth's Climate," but Standing Committee deemed this query's focus on financial investments to be sufficiently different from the previous query to be worthy of study.

**'Living Together as Christ Calls'** This query was referred to Mission and Ministry Board, which is the board of the Church of the Brethren denomination and directs the work of the denominational staff. Conversation in the Standing Committee of district delegates expressed strong support for the query's call for work on the tensions being expressed across the church at this time, and for developing strategies to aid the church in "treating one another in a truly Christ-like manner."

**In other business** Receiving the report of the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, the Conference approved a one percent increase to the 2017 Recommended Minimum Cash Salary Table for pastors.

General secretary-elect David Steele was formally introduced to the Conference by Mission and Ministry Board chair Don Fitzkee. The Conference also applauded the work of interim general secretary Dale Minnich.

Church World Service president and CEO John McCullough presented the CWS "Founder's Award for 70 Years of Help and Hope" to the Church of the Brethren.



Photo by Regina Holmes



Snapshots from a "Jubilee Afternoon" that included tours of Greensboro's Civil Rights Museum, Ted & Co.'s 12 Baskets and a Goat benefiting Heifer International, intergenerational activities, concerts, equipping workshops on Bible study, spiritual practices, and music, an ice cream social, and more.



Photos by (clockwise from top left) Laura Brown, Glenn Riegel, Keith Hollenberg, Glenn Riegel, Keith Hollenberg, Laura Brown, Regina Holmes

