The Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board adopted a budget for ministries in 2019, received news of a large grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.’s Thriving in Ministry, and participated in a Compelling Vision Process session, among other agenda items at its fall meeting Oct. 19-22. The meeting was held at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., led by board chair Connie Burk Davis and assisted by chair-elect Patrick Starkey and general secretary David Steele.

News that the Church of the Brethren has received a grant of $994,683 to help establish a “Part-Time Pastor; Full-Time Church” program was shared by Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, director of the Ministry Office. It is part of Lilly Endowment Inc.’s Thriving in Ministry initiative, which supports a variety of religious organizations across the nation as they create or strengthen programs that help pastors build relationships with experienced clergy who can serve as mentors and guide them through key leadership challenges in congregational ministry.

A Core Ministries budget of $5,167,000 in anticipated income and $5,148,690 in anticipated expense, with a proposed net income of $18,310, was approved for 2019. The board approved a total budget for all Church of the Brethren denominational ministries of $9,129,220 in anticipated income and $9,101,260 in anticipated expense, with a proposed net income of $27,960. The total budget includes Core Ministries, Brethren Disaster Ministries, Brethren Press, Global Food Initiative, Material Resources, and the Conference Office.

The board called Carl Fike of Oakland, Md., as its next chair-elect, beginning at the 2019 Annual Conference when Davis concludes her term and current chair-elect Patrick Starkey begins as chair. Fike will serve two years as chair-elect, and then two years as chair.

The board heard a presentation by a delegation from the Supportive Communities Network (SCN) of the Brethren Mennonite Council on LGBT Interests (BMC). Board members worshiped on Sunday morning with area Church of the Brethren congregations: the Highland Avenue congregation in Elgin, Neighborhood congregation in Montgomery, York Center in Lombard, and Naperville.

Disaster Ministries responds in Pittsburgh and Florida

Brethren Disaster Ministries’ (BDM) response to Hurricane Michael continued through the fall in Florida. A total of 24 Children’s Disaster Services volunteers served 338 children through October. BDM work also continued in North and South Carolina, where teams have been helping with clean-up and debris removal from Hurricane Florence and repairing homes damaged by Hurricane Matthew in 2016.

In response to a request from the Red Cross, a team of four experienced CDS volunteers with advanced training traveled to Pittsburgh after the Oct. 27 shootings at the Tree of Life Synagogue. The team set up in a Family Assistance Center to support grieving families but ended up not being needed by them.

“The team was able to minister to the other responders and community in other ways and reported it was a privilege to serve and support the grieving community,” BDM executive director Roy Winter said.
Districts consider policies on same-sex marriage

A proposed “Policy on Same-Sex Marriage” in Atlantic Northeast District did not receive the two-thirds majority necessary to pass as delegates met at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College Oct. 5-6. The policy would have established penalties, including termination of ministry credentials, for a pastor who officiated at a same-sex marriage ceremony.

Before the final vote on the item, delegates accepted an amendment from the Chiques Church of the Brethren (Manheim, Pa.) board to strengthen the language of the proposed policy by recommending sanctions for any minister who “promotes and accepts the practice of homosexuality as a lifestyle that is approved by God.” The amendment required only a simple majority vote, but the overall policy—as a change in polity with significant implications for the district—required the higher threshold, and it fell short.

“There is no policy that we have now in the district since that (proposed policy) failed,” Atlantic Northeast District executive Pete Kontra said. “We sent an email to all district ministers to clarify that now that the district body has said ‘No,’ we’re not going to terminate credentials.” He added, however, that it’s not “a green light now for pastors” to officiate same-sex weddings, citing past district and denominational statements that “speak against promoting homosexuality.”

The Elizabethtown (Pa.) and Ambler (Pa.) congregations had requested in advance of the conference that the district withdraw the item from consideration, citing concerns over its implications for church life and its lack of a spirit of forbearance.

A similar policy did pass in Western Pennsylvania District, however, where delegates gave overwhelming support to a “Resolution on Biblical Marriage” while meeting Oct. 20 at Camp Harmony (Hooversville, Pa.). Northern Ohio District also adopted such a policy earlier this year.

Manchester’s new Intercultural Center offers unique space

Manchester University (North Manchester, Ind.), which is the home of the world’s first undergraduate peace studies program and the last campus to host a speech by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., has created a unique new space for discussions about diversity and inclusion, civic engagement, and civil discourse.

Civil rights legend Andrew Young was on hand Sept. 29 to dedicate the Jean Childs Young Intercultural Center and its domed Toyota Round section. The building is named for his late wife, a 1954 Manchester graduate who was known nationally and internationally as an educator and advocate for children’s rights.

Jean’s experience at Manchester, he said, helped shape her views, which in turn had a profound effect on him, their family and the many lives she touched. “Jean pushed me to understand the implication of nonviolence in everything that we do,” he said. “And I never forgot those lessons.”

In the short time since the center has opened, the Manchester University Office of Multicultural Affairs has hosted discussions about stereotyping, discrimination against people with disabilities, pressures on masculinity, and the NFL and freedom of speech.—Anne Gregory

Personnel notes

Linetta Alley Ballew has been named assistant director at Brethren Woods (Keeseville, Va.), effective Jan. 1. Ballew, who had previously worked at Brethren Woods from 2003 to 2013, has most recently been co-administrator of Camp Swatara (Bethel, Pa.) with her husband, Joel. Brethren Woods also announced the hiring of Andy Myers as maintenance director effective Nov. 1.

Gail Connerley began Nov. 12 as executive director of institutional advancement at Bethany Theological Seminary. She has worked 16 years in advancement at neighboring Earlham College.

Elena Jones joined the Bethany staff as accounting assistant Oct. 15. She previously working for the City of Richmond Employee Credit Union as an assistant manager and teller.

Karen Schroeder began Oct. 1 as executive assistant to the president at Bethany Seminary. She had served as administrative assistant to the academic dean at Earlham College.

Sara Brann, accounting specialist, retired Oct. 31 after nearly 17 years in business services at Bethany Seminary.

Cherise Glunz resigned Sept. 14 as program assistant for the office of Mission Advancement at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. She began her employment in 2015.

Marvin Greener, director of building and grounds at the Church of the Brethren General Offices since February 2009 concluded his employment Sept. 27.