
Church of the Brethren Annual Report of 2019

Published in June 2020

Living Letters

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

—2 Corinthians 3:2-3



Church of the Brethren

Report of the Church of the Brethren

*And what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

—Micah 6:8

This well-known scripture from the prophet Micah is both gentle and bold, calling us to a humble way of living and also to forthright acts of justice. This call to ethical behavior is an apt theme for a church that walks alongside people in mission, grows disciples, speaks truth in the halls of power, serves those who suffer, strengthens communities of faith, and publishes peace.

GLOBAL MISSION AND SERVICE

The highlight of 2019 was the global gathering of Brethren, an outgrowth of the Annual Conference statement on “Vision for a Global Church.” Hosted by the Brethren in Nigeria, Brethren from around the globe gathered Dec. 2-5 in Kwarhi to discuss the vision of becoming a global church body. Representatives were from Haiti, Dominican Republic, US, Rwanda, Congo, Spain, and Nigeria.

Those at the gathering affirmed the idea of establishing a global body, saying they hoped such a structure might positively influence their communities and the broader witness of the Brethren. Many expressed the need to magnify the Brethren voice for peace. They expressed hope that such a structure might reaffirm Brethren beliefs and practices and give a deep sense of identity, as well as be a vehicle to develop shared mission programming.

Participants also discussed concerns and challenges. A lack of resources and the difficulty in procuring visas to travel were highlighted as major obstacles in moving forward, while fears of discrimination and prejudice were mentioned as concerns—would all be treated equally? The group also expressed concerns about whether the body

could identify and agree on shared biblical principles.

The group recommended that a temporary board be established to work toward a constitution, develop guiding principles, and define points for sharing resources and programming. The Nigerian Brethren suggested that “Global Brethren Communion” (GBC) be used temporarily until a permanent name can be agreed upon through a global structure.

Participants toured EYN buildings and programs, including Kulp Theological Seminary; met with EYN leadership and directors; and visited the EYN health clinic, Comprehensive Secondary School, and agriculture programs. The group traveled to Mubi for an introduction to the Theological Education by Extension program and spent an afternoon in Michika, where President Joel Billi and other church members described the day Boko Haram attacked the city and burned the church. The group worshiped at the Utako congregation in Abuja.

Many expressed deep appreciation for the gathering, the singing, the Bible study, and the privilege to be with EYN and its members, for whom there have been years of intense prayer and support. Participants

expressed gratitude to see the Brethren through the eyes of the Nigerian members. While visa procurement proved to be a huge encumbrance, the visit was a milestone for those who were able to make the conference.

The group of 18 men and 5 women included the EYN president, vice president, and general secretary. Jay Wittmeyer, Global Mission and Service executive director, and Jeff Boshart, director of the Global Food Initiative, joined from the US. Regrettably, several representatives were denied visas, including all representatives from Brazil and India and Carol Waggy from the US. The new Brethren mission in Venezuela was invited to attend but, because of the complexity of their political situation, decided it was too difficult and expensive to make the journey.

Another highlight of the year was the 75th anniversary of Heifer International.

A celebration Oct. 5 in Castañer, P.R., was hosted by Puerto Rico District, the Castañer congregation, and Castañer Hospital. Puerto Rico was the destination of the first shipment of animals made by the Church of the Brethren's Heifer Project, the brainchild of staff member Dan West.

Among the speeches at the event were messages from the Puerto Rican Senate and the mayor of Lares. Wittmeyer noted Puerto Rico's part in "giving birth to one of the most respected and efficient organizations in the world today. . . . Let us continue to work hard together until no child is sick or hungry or suffering, and we say this to the glory of God and our neighbor's good." David Steele, general secretary, presented the hospital with a gift of \$100,000 from the estate of Chester and Virginia Poister of Hemet, Calif.

International Mission

At EYN's *majalisa* (annual conference), Wittmeyer delivered four sermons on the theme "Looking Unto Jesus." EYN leaders participated in the US Annual Conference and then visited Washington, D.C., to speak with State Department officials in the Office of Religious Freedom to describe the plight of EYN Brethren still in refugee camps in Cameroon. GMS supports Kulp Theological Seminary, theological education, and church reconstruction. Judy Minnich Stout is teaching English at Hillcrest School in Jos, serving through Brethren Volunteer Service.

The mission in Rwanda has deepened its relationship with the Batwa Pygmy community, which in turn is reaching out to other Batwa communities. Many have joined the church. The Church of the Brethren is supporting the Rwandan mission in various ways, including food security programs for the Batwa and efforts to translate certain Brethren books. Josiah and Christine

Ludwick from Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren and their children returned from a year of service. Other mission work in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa takes place in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi.

Wittmeyer visited South Sudan in April, where he prayed with the African Inland Church bishop prior to the bishop's heading to Rome for a peace conference hosted by Pope Francis. The focus in this challenging environment is on mentoring and training young men to work as evangelists in rural communities, preaching and singing and leading weekly church gatherings. The church is also training agriculturalists to serve the needs of communities. Athanasus Ungang is the staff person.

In Spain, la Iglesia de los Hermanos has grown into Madrid, Ponferrada, Aviles, Leon, and Bilbao, as well as Lanzarote in the Canary Islands and London, England.

Some are already planting other churches in their provinces. The recent translation into Spanish of Dale Brown's Brethren Press book *Another Way of Believing* will help the Spanish Brethren and other Spanish-speaking groups.

In Haiti, l'Eglise des Freres d'Haiti is supporting communities through medical outreach, disaster relief, and agriculture, with a focus on clean water in each Brethren community. After the earthquake of 2010, many fled Port-au-Prince and traveled to a dry mountainside in a new slum area called Canaan, where there is one Brethren church. Recently, in partnership with the Canaan congregation, a well was drilled in the city.

Other challenging areas of mission are the Dominican Republic, where racial tensions prompted Wittmeyer to begin a mediation process, and Venezuela, where political turmoil made a fraternal visit impossible. The Church of the Brethren continues relationships in Brazil and India.

With total expenditures of \$1,391,183 through the office of the executive, GMS allocated \$440,074 for Haiti, mainly for a medical program, agriculture development and church construction; \$86,695 for the Dominican Republic; \$58,439 for South Sudan; \$212,189 for Nigeria, mainly for church construction (the bulk of Brethren funding is detailed under the Nigeria Crisis Response); \$43,565 for Brazil; \$77,704 for the Great Lakes region of Africa; \$18,665 for Vietnam; \$17,250.00 for India (most of this toward the Gujarat United School of Theology); \$21,811 for Venezuela; and \$26,841 for Spain.

At the beginning of 2020, Jay Wittmeyer stepped down as executive of Global Mission and Service, after 10 years of leadership. Norm and Carol Spicher Waggy were named to fill the position on an interim basis, and Roxane Hill was named interim office manager.

Brethren Disaster Ministries

With fewer headline disasters than in recent years, Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) continued responses to previous hurricanes, ongoing violence, and displaced families that appear forgotten or go unnoticed by most the world. Six staff members manage this ministry under the leadership of Roy Winter, with office management by Sharon Franzén and database support from Darlene Hylton.

Home Rebuilding

Partners in Lumberton/Robeson County in North Carolina say they continue to rely on the steadfastness and consistency of BDM volunteers because "we are nowhere close to being through" with recovery, more than a year after the last hurricane. Volunteers and leaders served in three states and two

territories, under director Jenn Dorsch-Messler, who was assisted by Terry Goodger.

In the Carolinas, BDM has been working on hurricane recovery since April 2018. Kim Gingerich and Steve Keim led the site in Lumberton, N.C., which served 46 families. Two grants totaling \$40,000 from the One SC Fund of the Central Carolina Community Foundation paid for materials for three homes in Nichols, S.C.

From September to December, BDM's site near Jacksonville, Fla, worked at recovery from Hurricane Irma. Leadership development volunteer Cristi "Sammy" Deacon and BVS volunteer Frieden Gresh assisted this project, where 238 volunteers worked on 8 houses.

In partnership with Puerto Rico District, BDM continued long-term recovery

programming and home repairs in Puerto Rico following damage from Hurricane Maria. Case management, under the direction of the district disaster committee and coordinated by district disaster coordinator José Acevedo, was completed by pastors and appointed church members. The volunteer rebuilding site, based at the church in Castañer, is led by project leader Carrie Miller and construction assistant Carmelo Rodriguez. A total of 255 volunteers served 23 families. Another 33 families received construction materials but provided their own labor.

One short-term response group of 15 volunteers repaired 2 homes on St. Thomas (US Virgin Islands) which were damaged by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

During 2019, 1,473 rebuilding volunteers, including 48 project leaders, provided 69,296 hours of service valued at \$1,762,197. Over 112 families received repair or rebuilding assistance. Partial financial help for volunteer travel to Puerto Rico and USVI was provided through the Emergency Disaster Fund and individual districts.

The Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI), a pilot program of the Church of the Brethren, United Church of Christ, and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), assisted communities in North Carolina, Nebraska, Georgia, and the USVI. In August, DRSI transitioned to Church World Service. BDM supports the program financially and serves on an advisory steering committee.

Children's Disaster Services

With associate director Lisa Crouch and program assistant Sherry Chastain, Children's Disaster Services (CDS) increased the number of certified volunteers and improved program processes in 2019.

Teams deployed to Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri to care for children affected by floods in the Midwest. After devastating Memorial Day tornadoes in southern Ohio,

CDS teams served 64 children in the hardest hit area of Dayton.

Two Critical Response Care teams deployed within days of each other because of gun violence incidents in El Paso, Texas, and Gilroy, Calif. These specially trained teams are activated to respond to children and families affected by violence, transportation crashes, and other complex crises.

Volunteers were activated for Hurricane Dorian in September. Local deployments rounded out the year. The largest response was in Beaumont, Texas, after Tropical Storm Imelda, the fifth wettest cyclone to ever hit the contiguous US, brought extreme flooding. Volunteers cared for 185 children there, many of whom had also experienced the trauma of Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

In total, 74 volunteers cared for 506 children in 11 responses. Trainings brought the volunteer base to 852.

International Responses

International responses focused mainly on Church of the Brethren mission points and sister churches in Africa, with the Nigeria Crisis Response being the largest. Grants totaling \$36,010 to South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) assisted families displaced by violence.

Grants totaling \$50,000 contributed to Church World Service (CWS) responses to Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas and Typhoon Hagibis in Japan. Hurricane Dorian relief was also aided through two \$10,000 grants to nonprofit partners. A grant of \$40,000 provided a second year of psychosocial assistance for Syrian refugee children in church-based educational programs through the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development. Cyclone Idai made landfall on Mozambique and Zimbabwe as one of the strongest cyclones to ever hit Africa. Responses to this event by IMA World Health and the ACT Alliance were supported through \$70,000 in grants. In the

DRC, a grant of \$10,000 helped families of Ebola victims.

Nigeria Crisis Response

The significant recovery of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN) and continued relief programming is contrasted by ongoing violence, including Boko Haram's capture and execution of the EYN district secretary of Michika town. In the more stable areas of Northeast Nigeria, EYN churches, families and communities are rebuilding. In other areas, killing of farmers, kidnappings, food shortages, and malnutrition are ongoing challenges for the displaced.

In partnership with EYN and the European organization Mission 21, BDM is helping lead a major response that involves four other nonprofit partners. This extensive program includes sponsoring four camps for internally displaced persons, food distributions, medical assistance, support for self-reliance through livelihood training centers for widows and orphans and seeds and fertilizer for farmers, new drinking water wells, education assistance for orphan children, trauma workshops, training of one-on-one

counselors, home repairs for the most vulnerable, and continued development of a long-term soybean program for farmers. There was also considerable training and capacity building for EYN disaster response leaders at the district level. With the violence still close to EYN headquarters in Kwarhi, a wall was built around the compound and Kulp Theological Seminary to improve security.

Part-time response coordinator Roxane Hill works closely with the EYN disaster response ministry and other partners.

Financial Details

Donations to BDM, CDS, the hurricane responses, the Nigeria Crisis Fund, and the Emergency Disaster Fund totaled \$2,002,935 in 2019. This giving provided for all BDM expenses, including staff, programs, and allocations for disaster response. Expenditures included \$236,004 for the Puerto Rico hurricane response; \$253,576 for other US responses, including the Rebuild Program and CDS; \$555,367 for the Nigeria Crisis Response; and \$193,510 for all other international responses.

Brethren Volunteer Service

Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) welcomed two new staff. Emily Tyler became director after previously coordinating the workcamp ministry and serving on the BVS team. Hannah Shultz began as coordinator of short-term service, a position that includes BVS recruitment and coordination of the workcamp ministry.

At the end of 2019, Kristin Flory retired as Europe coordinator, after nearly 33 years of service. At the same time, the Brethren Service Europe office in Geneva, Switzerland, was closed. Established in 1947, the office shifted its role many times. Most recently it centered on placement and supervision of BVS workers in Europe. Although

BVS no longer has an office in Europe, it will continue to offer project placements in Ireland and Northern Ireland, where it has had an important impact since 1972.

BVS orientations, coordinated by Jocelyn Siakula, were held at Inspiration Hills Camp in Burbank, Ohio; Newmanstown, Pa.; and Camp Emmaus in Mount Morris, Ill. A "fast track orientation" was developed in response to a need for volunteers sooner than the next scheduled orientation. This new format, which condenses the three-week format into one week, was piloted in Elgin, Ill., with three volunteers.

Thirty volunteers entered BVS in 2019, resulting in 79 volunteers serving in 6

countries, 15 states, and Puerto Rico. BVS added two new projects—Camp High Hopes in Sioux City, Iowa and L’Arche Syracuse in Syracuse, N.Y.—and welcomed the return of several former projects.

The annual Partners in Service Award was presented to Asian Rural Institute (ARI) in Tochigi-ken, Japan.

Brethren Workcamps

The 2019 Brethren Workcamp theme was “Grow,” inspired by 2 Peter 1: 5-8. During the summer, 256 youth, young adults, and advisors participated in 14 workcamps

around the US and one in China. Workcamps were encouraged to consider ways to cultivate their faith in order to grow as individuals, branch out in their communities, and bear fruit that will benefit others.

The workcamp season was coordinated by assistant coordinators Lauren Flora and Marissa Witkovsky-Eldred, serving through BVS, and by Emily Tyler and Steve Van Houten, former and interim coordinators (respectively) of the workcamp ministry. BVSers Kara Miller and Liana Smith arrived in the fall to work on the 2020 season.

Material Resources

Material Resources responded to needs in 27 states and 27 countries. The distribution center staff at the Brethren Service Center (BSC) in New Windsor, Md., facilitated 151 shipments totaling 801 tons of medicine, medical supplies, quilts, health kits, school kits, baby kits, cleanup kits, and others supplies valued at \$6.8 million.

Loretta Wolf directed the program, while Scott Senseney and Glenna Thompson coordinated warehouse and office operation, respectively. Warehouse staff Richard Best, Melissa Fritz, Brenda Giles, and Trent Turner prepared the shipments. Ed Palsgrove delivered and picked up shipments.

Partners in 2019 were Lutheran World Relief (LWR), Church World Service (CWS), Brothers Brother Foundation (BBF), International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), American Baptist Churches, Evangelical Covenant Church, and several small projects.

For BBF, which moved its inventory to New Windsor, Material Resources received 900 pallets of new donations of supplies and 213,229 pounds of medical equipment. Amy

Beacham, Jeffrey Brown, and Winni Wani-ioneck sorted and packaged the BBF supplies. Forty-two truck/container loads were shipped to 12 countries.

Throughout the year, CWS responded with blankets, kits and cleanup buckets to survivors of this year’s Hurricanes Barry and Dorian and Tropical Storm Imelda; 2018’s Hurricanes Florence and Michael; and survivors of floods and tornadoes in multiple states. Other shipments assisted homeless people, people affected by fires, refugees, and domestic violence shelters. More than 650 blankets were sent to people held in shelters along the southern border.

LWR shipments sailed for Djibouti, Dominica, Georgia, Iraq, Lebanon, Mali, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Rwanda, South Sudan, Ukraine, and Zambia. A combined effort by IOCC and LWR provided supplies to Armenia, Greece, and Syria.

In addition to reusing many of the packing supplies received with donations, Material Resources recycled over 57 tons of cardboard baled by volunteer Gerry Duple. A total of 1,253 volunteers assisted in the Material Resources ministry.

Office of Peacebuilding and Policy

At the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy Washington D.C., significant emphasis remains on Nigeria, with additional emphasis on the Middle East. This work is in close partnership with international Church of the Brethren bodies as well as many faith-based and nongovernmental organizations.

In August, Susu Lassa, a recent Manchester University graduate, joined OPP through Brethren Volunteer Service. In November OPP was joined part-time by Alexandra Toms, serving as part of her practicum with Bethany Theological Seminary. Her work has focused primarily on racial justice, partly in collaboration with Intercultural Ministries, and she has assisted with the Going to the Garden Initiative.

The Office of Peacebuilding and Policy organizes the Nigeria Working Group and has a significant voice addressing US policy towards Nigeria. Lassa coordinates the working group, which included a briefing in Congress and meetings with congressional offices. OPP director Nathan Hosler visited

Nigerian Brethren and participated in the inaugural Religious Freedom Roundtable in Abuja, facilitated a high-level roundtable for the working group at the State Department, and arranged the participation of Rebecca and Samuel Dali at the Ministerial for International Religious Freedom at the US State Department

In October, Hosler traveled to Iraqi Kurdistan as chair of the board for Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP). This trip helped CMEP expand its work on the sustainability of the Christian community in the Middle East. In Washington, Lassa expanded OPP's work with the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, preparing resources for congregations.

OPP joined the Alliance for Peacebuilding and participated in advocacy that contributed to the Global Fragility Act, presented at National Older Adult Conference, worked with the Brethren Creation Care Network, and provided leadership and attended a conference on addressing drone warfare.

Global Food Initiative

How can local churches make an impact to reduce hunger in their communities? The Global Food Initiative (GFI) Fund exists to address pressing global hunger needs and has developed partnerships with many ministries both in the US and abroad.

This year, GFI continued its focus on the Great Lakes region of Africa (Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo), and supported many church-based community gardening efforts in the US as well. In 2019, income to the fund was \$262,217.59. The GFI provided \$201,980 in grants—with domestic allocations totaling \$116,219 and international allocations totaling \$85,761.

In addition to the Great Lakes region, international grants supported agricultural

development work in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nigeria, and Spain. Projects included animal raising, tree planting, soil conservation, water harvesting, appropriate scaled mechanization, and crop production.

Domestic grants went to churches and organizations in Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and Virginia. Domestic grants are connected primarily to church-based community gardens.

The GFI supports advocacy work on food sovereignty through yearly contributions to Bread for the World and Growing Hope Globally.

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

As one decade ends and another begins, the vision of Discipleship Ministries is to empower the church—both new and renewed—to articulate and embody our faith in Jesus Christ. This work focuses on making disciples, forming leaders, and transforming communities through relationships, resources, and events.

Events

The theme for the 2019 National Older Adult Conference (NOAC) was “Reaching into Joy—Across Generations, Beyond Differences, Through Conflict.” Nearly 700 people, including volunteers, attended the event at Lake Junaluska.

The NOAC planning team, led by Christy Waltersdorff, arranged a conference that included presentations from Joan Chittister, Drew Hart, Ken Medema, and Ted Swartz. Attendees also heard challenging and uplifting messages from Church of the Brethren leaders Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, Jennifer Keeney Scarr, Jeanne Davies, Walt Wiltschek, Dennis Webb, and Paula Bowser. Volunteers led or assisted with the many activities at the conference center and at off-site attractions.

Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries (YYA) and BVSer Emmett Witkovsky-Eldred, oversaw four events. Christian Citizenship Seminar was an opportunity for high school students to explore the relationship between faith and the issue of creative solutions to violent conflict worldwide. The experience, held in New York City and Washington, D.C., drew 53 participants from 11 districts. Leaders were David Wildman, who works in human rights and racial justice with the United Methodist Church, and Lea Krivchenka, of Nonviolent Peaceforce.

At National Junior High Conference, held at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College, 279

people from 13 districts sang, laughed, worship, spent time with God, and made new friends. The youth heard from Kayla Alphonse, Eric Landram, Leah Hileman, and Chelsea and Tyler Goss, who led participants on the theme “Strong and Courageous,” drawn from Joshua 1:9.

At Young Adult Conference, held at Camp Blue Diamond in Pennsylvania, 46 people spent time in fellowship, worship, Bible study, and service projects. The conference theme, “Enflame Us with Your Love, Empower Us with Your Spirit!” drawn from Ephesians 3:16-20, was given life through the leadership of Richard Newton, Katie Smith, Logan Schrag, and Chelsea and Tyler Goss.

Through Ministry Summer Service, a partnership of Youth and Young Adult Ministries and the Office of Ministry, four interns—including the peace advocate—met at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., for a week of orientation before being sent to placements around the denomination—Columbia City Church of the Brethren, West Charleston Church of the Brethren, Stone Church of the Brethren, and various camps. The peace advocate is a joint effort of the Church of the Brethren, On Earth Peace, and the Outdoor Ministries Association.

Before Annual Conference, Josh Brockway, director of spiritual formation, and Monica McFadden, a BVSer at the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, provided leadership for the Dikaios and Discipleship event, a learning tour and faith journey that paid attention to the history of the land and the removal of indigenous peoples. Participants wrestled with the question of how descendants of settlers can acknowledge the historical atrocities and injustices.

The aim was to invite Brethren into a conversation during the scripture-inspired tour to the sacred homeland of the Cherokee

tribe in North Carolina. The session provided space for people to reflect on how our Brethren values and those of our ancestors have an impact on Native Americans.

Dikaios is a New Testament Greek word that can be translated as both “justice” and “righteousness.” The *Dikaios* experience equips participants to explore the racial and cultural divisions in their communities better so that they can embody Christ’s peace for all peoples.

Resources

The resources offered by Discipleship Ministries provide members with the vocabulary to express their faith in Christ and ask questions about the meaning of faith in these times. Youth and Young Adult Ministries offered worship resources for National Youth Sunday and Junior High Sunday that were created by youth and youth cabinet advisors.

Webinars have been an effective way for resources to reach pastors, volunteers, and congregations with tools to equip particular needs. Ullom Naugle facilitated two training webcasts for those who work with youth: creating community with disabled and typical youth, and signs of religious resilience in community transformation.

Stan Dueck, director of organizational leadership, hosted a webinar presented by Christiana Rice on competent conflict leadership and another one with David Fitch on the topic of how the first year of a church shapes it for decades. The webcasts align with the “New and Renew” strategy to extend conversations about church planting and congregational renewal around the denomination. As practitioners and visionary voices in the missional movement, Fitch and Rice shared insightful and practical resources with viewers to adapt and implement in local settings.

Brockway and Dueck facilitated workshops on deacon ministry, involving topics such as discipleship, caregiving skills,

spiritual gifts, congregational care structures, and fresh expressions of deacon ministries in North America. The intent is to encourage, resource, and equip deacons to best utilize their spiritual gifts for the wellbeing of God’s people.

Intercultural Ministries launched a venture called the Xenos Project. The word *xenos* is a Greek word meaning stranger or alien. The purpose of the project is to build a community of congregations feeling called to speak up, stand up, and take action supporting immigrants within the nation. The project affirms the longstanding position of the Church of the Brethren on immigration and the biblical theme of extending hospitality to immigrants and refugees. The project included a survey on immigrant and refugee concerns and resources posted at www.brethren.org/xenos. Xenos seeks to connect congregations that are passionate about justice and have an interest in brothers and sisters facing immigration, refugee, and asylum issues.

With Discipleship Ministries now an organizational member of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), several congregations and districts have joined. CCDA is a network of practitioners of Christian ministry in urban contexts that seek to grow the economic opportunities in their communities and do so as followers of Jesus.

Discipleship Ministries also supports four other organizations that expand the resources available to pastors and lay leaders. The Ecumenical Stewardship Center offers conferences and digital resources for stewardship formation. Together with the office of Mission Advancement, Discipleship Ministries provides *Giving* magazine to congregations to support annual stewardship emphases. Brockway is the denominational representative to the ESC advisory board.

Dueck is the representative to Evangelism Connections, which offers evangelism

resources and leadership through a network of denominations striving to proclaim the good news and invite others into a life of discipleship.

Discipleship Ministries is a partner with the Anabaptist Disabilities Network, ADNet, which offers consultation and resources for churches as they minister to those with differing abilities. Rebekah Flores, the Church of the Brethren disabilities advocate, serves on the ADNet board.

Discipleship Ministries became a community partner with the Parish Collective, which offers consultation and resources to churches and leaders who want to inhabit their neighborhoods as tangible expression of the love of Jesus. Susan Liller and Ryan Braught represented the Church of the Brethren at the Conspire Gathering in Cincinnati in September.

Relationships

Discipleship Ministries staff support the work of pastors, lay leaders, and district executives. Many of these relationships begin with a short conversation at an event or through an email or phone call. These

contacts often develop into coaching engagements and workshops at a district conference, congregational renewal weekend, or church leadership retreat.

Relationships developed during the work of volunteer committees also informs the broader work of Discipleship Ministries. These committees include the NOAC Steering Committee, National Youth Cabinet, National Junior High Conference Planning Committee, Young Adult Steering Committee, Spiritual Directors Advisory Committee, Outdoor Ministry Association, Intercultural Ministry Advisory Committee, and New Church Advisory Committee. Through these responsibilities, individuals extend their gifts, skills, and passions through meaningful ministries beyond the local church. The efforts of these and many other volunteers help the whole church thrive and sustain a pipeline of leaders.

Randi Rowan provides administrative support for the Discipleship Ministries team. Gimbiya Kettering resigned as director of Intercultural Ministries in May, and she was succeeded by LaDonna Sanders Nkosi in early January 2020.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

The staff of Organizational Resources support all the programs and ministries of the Church of the Brethren. This area includes the Brethren Historical Library and Archives, Buildings and Grounds departments in Illinois and Maryland, Finance, and Information Technology. Ed Woolf, manager of gift operations and assistant treasurer, is interim treasurer.

Brethren Historical Library and Archives

The Brethren Historical Library and Archives (BHLA) is the official repository of the Church of the Brethren for records documenting the ministry of the church.

In 2019 the archives provided the following services: 333 written requests, 111 phone requests, 84 onsite researchers, and

tours for 51 people. BHLA processed about 75 feet of archival material.

Besides aiding researchers from North America, BHLA received visits or requests from researchers from China and Nigeria. Among the important collections received and processed were the papers of former Bethany Seminary president Wayne Miller,

research files of Nigeria missionary Gerald Neher, and the papers of former BHLA director Kenneth Shaffer.

An important project was the selection and editing of a book of the writings of Dan West to be published by Brethren Press. BHLA director Bill Kostlevy presented papers requiring original research at Bluffton

University, the Midwest History Conference, and the National Older Adult Conference.

Zoe Vorndran, a recent graduate of Manchester University, has served as BHLA intern since June. Jessi Marsiglio provided part-time volunteer assistance.

Support Services

Salvador Campero and Francie Coale oversee the care and maintenance of the Church of the Brethren properties. Campero 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.

In Elgin, the 60-year-old heating system was renovated by installing a boiler and a wireless control system for temperature manipulation in different areas of the building. In New Windsor, the parking lot was expanded, and fluorescent lightbulbs were replaced with energy-efficient LED lights.

Ed Woolf oversees the Finance department. Other 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. In addition to day-to-day financial services for the organization, the department staffed the treasurer's office at Annual Conference and the National Older Adult Conference.

Under the leadership of Francie Coale, the Information Technology department provides computer, telephone, internet, and audiovisual support for all employees. In Elgin, Fabiola Fernandez is manager of information technology and Andie Garcia is system specialist.

Financial Results for 2019

Gifts to the Core Ministries Fund strengthen ministries vital to the church's mission and core values. In 2019, total giving to Core Ministries declined slightly from the prior year. Congregational giving decreased about \$128,000 to \$1,764,080, while individual giving increased about \$52,000 to \$545,193. Although overall giving was down, the fund ended 2019 with a net surplus of \$13,819, increasing its net asset balance to \$1,697,227.

Ministries known as self-funding rely predominantly on sales, fees, or registrations to support their work. They pay internal fees to Core Ministries for rent and other

services, or they pay a percentage of gross sales.

Net sales for Brethren Press decreased approximately \$30,000 from 2018, finishing the year at \$222,236. The publishing house ended the year with a deficit of \$63,436, increasing its net asset deficit balance to \$546,718. Material Resources had lower than expected service fee income and ended the year with a deficit of \$12,216, increasing its net asset deficit balance to \$43,031. The Conference Office finished 2019 with a surplus of \$14,124, increasing its net asset balance to \$506,535. Self-funding ministries strive to break even, but it has been difficult

for both Brethren Press and Material Resources in recent years.

Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) and the Global Food Initiative (GFI) rely mostly on donations to carry out their ministries. Donations to BDM declined by \$207,465 to \$2,002,935. Donations to GFI declined \$86,226 from an unusually high year in 2018 to \$263,418 in 2019.

Total investments, including endowments and reserves, increased over \$5 million to \$34.5 million, and total net assets increased to \$40.8 million in 2019. The

Church of the Brethren remains in a very healthy financial position when it comes to its net asset balance, liquidity, and total investments.

The Church of the Brethren is grateful for the generosity of donors and exercises careful stewardship of the resources entrusted to the board and staff.

[The above amounts were provided prior to completion of the 2019 audit. Complete financial information is available in the Church of the Brethren, Inc., audit report published in June 2020.]

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 and oversees the employees and ministries 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

The Leadership Team consists of the Annual Conference officers (moderator, moderator-elect, and secretary), the general secretary, and a representative from the Council of District Executives. The team continued work on the assignment from Annual Conference to propose polity for Annual Conference agencies, reviewed an update on the Standing Committee's judicial role, and provided interpretations of polity. *The Manual of Organization and Polity* was updated and published online in December. The team also responded to correspondence from individuals, congregations, and groups expressing a variety of perspectives.

The Leadership Team has appreciated opportunities to consult with the Council of

District Executives about concerns affecting the districts and the denomination. The team developed a document describing best practices in cases of congregational withdrawal and sent it to district executives in May 2019. In November, the team released a statement expressing concerns regarding the formation of a separation movement—the Covenant Brethren Church—and the participation of various church leaders in the movement's planning and recruitment efforts.

The Leadership Team approved disbursements from the distribution received as a result of the Church of the Brethren partnership with Brotherhood Mutual.

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.

Ten congregational outreach projects received Brethren Faith in Action grants in 2019. In an effort to ensure the fund's longevity, the board decided to limit the amount granted each year to a five-year average of investment earnings.

The board agreed to dissolve a working group that was focused on the Annual Conference assignment "Living Together as Christ Calls," and then appointed a new working group that reframed its mission: "To allow the Holy Spirit to move our church as we focus on a Christ-centered journey, together in celebration of overcoming the roots of tension that divide."

At the recommendation of the Stewardship of Property 2 committee, staff conducted a study to determine the best use of building and land space at the General Offices property in Elgin, Ill. With the board's authorization, staff entered into a listing agreement with a real estate agent for the sale of 12 acres of vacant land at the east end of the property.

Proposed changes to the denominational bylaws with the potential to increase the number of Annual Conference delegates for

some larger congregations and the number of Standing Committee delegates for some larger districts failed to gain the necessary support of the board and did not proceed for recommendation to Annual Conference.

In other work, the board continued a strong response to the crisis in Nigeria while responding to ongoing needs in the Carolinas, Puerto Rico, Burundi, and Lebanon, and new concerns in Zimbabwe and Mozambique; approved a capital expenditure related to replacement of the HVAC system at the General Offices; appointed a Strategic Design Team to begin work on the next strategic plan; updated financial policies; heard a report from the Plains to Pacific Roundtable, an independent thinktank that has concluded work begun in 2007 with the former General Board; and brainstormed dreams for the next "big idea" for the Church of the Brethren.

The elected membership of the Mission and Ministry Board consists of 7 women and 10 men. One member is Indo-American, one is Hispanic, two are African American, and 13 are white.

Annual Conference Office

The 233rd Annual Conference gathered Brethren together in Greensboro, N.C., July 3-7. Moderator Donita Keister chose the theme "Proclaim Christ; Reclaim Passion," which was the focus of each day's worship. The conference included 66 insight sessions, 37 meal events, and age-level activities for children and youth.

In a change from usual practice, considerable time was spent during business sessions to discern a compelling vision for the denomination. The table discussions were a continuation of conversations held during the previous year in each of the 24 districts.

A highlight of the week was love feast, held Saturday afternoon and led by

moderator Donita Keister, moderator-elect Paul Munday, and immediate past moderator Samuel Sarpiya. The simple meal consisted of homemade bread, peanut butter, and jam. Participants washed one another's feet using basins, with large towelettes in place of water. Congregations throughout the denomination baked the unleavened communion bread. While the logistics of providing love feast for that many people was challenging, many found it to be deeply meaningful.

Host Virlina District provided many volunteers, who were led by site coordinators Dewey and Melissa Williard. Among the responsibilities of these volunteers was programming for almost 250 children and youth.

Conference director Chris Douglas, conference assistant Jon Kobel, and registration coordinator Debbie Noffsinger provided staff leadership throughout the year. Hundreds of people volunteered in various ways to make the conference flow smoothly.

Armloads of donations were brought for Backpack Beginnings in Greensboro as a “Witness to the Host City.” This organization provides food each weekend for over 1,500 children from 63 schools. The Brethren gave over 3,600 items such as

backpacks, toiletries, and notebooks, as well as \$5,687 in cash. Conferencegoers also gave 165 pints of blood in the annual blood drive sponsored by Brethren Disaster Ministries.

This major gathering of Brethren from across the United States and guests from international partner churches was guided by the mission statement, “Annual Conference exists to unite, strengthen and equip the Church of the Brethren to follow Jesus.

Brethren Press

Brethren Press brought to completion a project to translate Dale Brown’s book *Another Way of Believing*, an effort begun some years ago by Congregational Life Ministries. Extra support from Global Mission and Service (GMS) helped finish the project. *Otra manera de creer: Una teología de la Iglesia de los Hermanos* will be used by Spanish-speaking Brethren in other countries and within the US.

In another collaboration with GMS, Brethren Press converted three classic books into e-book form. The publishing house is the exclusive seller and distributor of *Life Among the Chibok of Nigeria* and *Glimpses of Life in Northeast Nigeria: 1954–1968*, both by Gerald A. Neher and Lois R. Neher, and *Cultures Collide in My Nigeria*, by Gerald A. Neher. The Neheres were missionaries in Chibok, and the family hopes the new book format will aid scholars.

Responding to requests from church members, the publishing house produced a small book version of *The Not-So-Big Church* video from 2018. Both the video and the book are by Wendy McFadden, publisher of Brethren Press and Communications. Through financial support from the Communication department, copies were made available at low cost so that congregations could give them away to visitors. The

book was Brethren Press’s top seller in 2019.

New titles in the Covenant Bible Studies series are *Justice in the Hebrew Bible*, by David A. Leiter; *Galatians*, by David K. Shumate; and a revised edition of *James: Faith in Action*, by David S. Young.

The Shine curriculum project, headed by Joan Daggett, announced a forthcoming new cycle of materials, including a new vacation Bible school curriculum. Four quarters of *A Guide for Biblical Studies* were published in regular and large-print editions.

Seasonal devotionals were published in two print sizes and two digital editions: *New World Coming*, by Edward L. Poling, for Lent, and *Ready*, by Frank Ramirez, for Advent.

Brethren Press also published the 2019 Church of the Brethren Yearbook (published on a USB flash drive card and as a downloadable PDF), which is developed by Yearbook specialist Jim Miner; the Living Word Bulletin Series, and Annual Conference Wrap-up and Sermons DVDs. The publishing house distributed the ecumenically developed camp curriculum *Peace Works: Empowering the Next Generation of Peacemakers*, which is part of *Inside Out: Christian Resources for Outdoor Ministries*.

Speakers for the Brethren Press/Messenger Dinner were Carol Mason and Donna Parcell, creators of the forthcoming Brethren Press book *We Bear It in Tears*.

Other Brethren Press staff are James Deaton, managing editor; Jeff Lennard,

director of marketing and sales; Karen Stocking, production and finance assistant, and customer service team members Steve Bickler, Margaret Drafall, and Karen Warner.

Communications

A major feature in *Messenger* magazine gave a detailed account of how the Ekklesiyar Yan'uwaa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) is surviving and growing even in the midst of severe hardship. The eight-page collection of stories and sidebars, reported firsthand by associate editor Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, who is also director of News Services, took readers behind the headlines and showed a side of the church that can get overlooked.

Messenger also gave attention to the 75th anniversary of Heifer International, through features about Dan West's wife, Lucy, and the October celebration at Castañer, P.R. Other articles featured overseas ministries, congregational stories, churchwide events, and issues of the day. The magazine carried articles and letters by at least 139 people beyond staff editors and featured 44 congregations.

Messenger is edited by the three members of the Communication team and Walt Wiltschek, at-large editor. Diane Stroyeck is subscription specialist for the magazine.

News representing the breadth and depth of the denomination was distributed through

Newsline, an email news service sent free to individual and congregational subscribers; online news stories at Brethren.org; event coverage; publication of the Newsline Digest in each issue of *Messenger* magazine; and through social media. Volunteer news teams supplemented staff coverage of Annual Conference and National Older Adult Conference.

Jan Fischer Bachman, website producer, and Russ Otto, media support specialist, undergirded the Church of the Brethren's mission by producing and updating web pages, email messages, social media, and online forms, as well as assisting with photo processing and other digital resources at conferences. The web team created new online training for Standing Committee members and kept the compelling vision web presence updated. Staff used Facebook Live to share vigils and worship at Annual Conference and the National Older Adult Conference.

Interpretive resources for the denomination included a video report to delegates entitled *Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly*; a pictorial report in calendar form; and an exhibit at Annual Conference.

Human Resources

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

Employees hired in 2019 were Benjamin McCrickard, warehouse assistant; Dana

Cassell, Thriving in Ministry program manager; Jeffrey Brown, sorter/packer for Material Resources; Sara Wanionek, sorter/packer for Material Resources; Andie Garcia, Information Technology system specialist; Hannah Shultz, coordinator of Short-term Service; and Athanasus Ungang,

country director for South Sudan, who shifted from contract to salaried employment.

Departures were Jason and Nicole Hoover, church liaison officers in the Dominican Republic; Gimbiya Kettering, director of Intercultural Ministries; Brian Bultman, executive director of Organizational Resources and chief financial officer; Steven Van Houten, interim coordinator of Workcamps; and Kendra Harbeck, office manager, Global Mission and Service.

These are the staff changes that took

place within 2019. A few changes in early 2020 are noted in certain sections.

Total regular full-time and part-time employees and Brethren Volunteer Service workers serving Church of the Brethren programs: 68. As requested by Annual Conference, the report of ethnic/racial composition of these employees is the following: Asian—2; black—4; Hispanic—4; white—57; two or more races—1.

In addition to these employees, there are 21 contract, shared, and temporary employees, as well as program volunteers.

Ministry

“We have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). This verse guided a retreat attended by 56 Brethren clergywomen in Scottsdale, Ariz., in January 2020. Church planter and pastor Mandy Smith challenged the group to affirm God’s power amid weakness and vulnerability.

Led by director Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, the Office of Ministry strives to provide opportunities such as these to fulfill its mandate to support ministers at all points of their journey. To that end, calling, training, credentialing, and sustaining are the four key aspects of this office’s work.

Calling was uniquely supported this year through the Calling the Called emphasis, funded by an offering of Annual Conference. Representatives from five districts prepared materials to guide districts in holding events that encourage people in discerning a call to ministry. The materials were sent to all districts and ministry commissions. In Virlina and Shenandoah districts, such an event has contributed to an increase in their numbers of set-apart ministers at a time of shortage denomination-wide.

The Council of District Executives approved a review of the Readiness for

Ministry document that guides districts in calling and preparing persons for ministry.

As part of the five-year review of credentialed ministers, the Office of Ministry commissioned a new curriculum called “Ethics for the Set-Apart Minister,” written by James Benedict. The material was used in all districts for advanced level training sessions events led by a team of regional trainers. The Brethren Academy continues to offer basic level ethics training.

A grant-funded program, Part-Time Minister; Full-Time Church, entered its second year staffed by Dana Cassell, program manager, and guided by an advisory committee. A survey of all multi-vocational pastors, conducted by Crane MetaMarketing, Inc., yielded valuable information to guide the program. Circuit riders were called and equipped to begin visiting interested pastors in early 2020.

The Ministers’ Association pre-Annual Conference event featured author and family therapist David C. Olsen speaking on “Saying No to Say Yes: Everyday Boundaries and Pastoral Excellence.”

District executive ministers Elsie Koehn, Southern Plains, and Colleen Michael, Pacific Northwest, retired. Interim leadership

is serving in both districts, as well as in West Marva and Michigan.

Office manager Mishael Nouveau provides administrative support for calling and credentialing: 37 people were licensed (13 women and 24 men), 55 were ordained (18 women and 37 men), and 6 commissioned (1 woman and 5 men) [3 were from other denominations]. With contributions from the Ministers' Association, the Ministry Assistance Fund granted a total of \$23,151 to ministers in need in 7 districts. The fund began the year with a balance of \$2,666, to which donations of \$9,534 were added.

Scholarship funds managed by the office helped 14 ministers pursue ministry programs and continuing education opportunities with the support of \$12,153.

The Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee worked closely with the Office of Ministry, Brethren Benefit Trust, and the Council of District Executives to review the salary scale and benefits resources provided for ministers.

Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership

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.

Training in Ministry (TRIM) graduated seven students. The congregationally based training program, Education for a Shared Ministry in English and Spanish (EFSM/EPMC), involved eight congregations, two of which joined the program this year. Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano (SeBAH-CoB), supported 15 students, 4 of whom completed the program. Academy Certified Training Systems (ACTS) offers regionally based, onsite courses involving 11 districts.

Through the academy, 87 people took courses or seminars to earn continuing education credits. The academy also reviews and certifies programs of other agencies for continuing education credit. In 2019, these certificates totaled 350 in addition to 1,018 certificates for ministerial ethics.

Roxanne Aguirre resigned as coordinator for Spanish-Language Ministry Training Programs. Other staff are Carrie Eikler, English-Language Ministry Training coordinator, and Fran Massie, administrative assistant.

Mission Advancement

The Office of Mission Advancement cultivates relationships and passion to advance the mission of the Church of the Brethren. The team focuses on relationship building through visits with congregations and individuals, interprets the missions and ministries of the church, and provides ways for “people of passion” to give gifts in support of those ministries as “a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God” (Philippians 4:18).

Shannon McNeil began in March as Mission Advancement advocate, joining Mission Advancement advocate Nancy

McCrickard in traveling across the denomination to visit with donors and Faith Forward Circle members. They built relationships and increased donor awareness about the work implemented on behalf of the church through letters, emails, phone calls, and personal visits.

Mathew DeBall, coordinator of Mission Advancement communications, and Traci Rabenstein, director of Mission Advancement, reviewed giving trends to strengthen the team's communication plan. The goal was to better educate and equip donors and congregations concerning the impact

financial gifts have on those we help and the places we serve.

DeBall represented the denomination on the One Great Hour of Sharing committee and coordinated distribution of materials for that offering. He oversaw all congregational offering emphases, and wrote some of the resources. He also coordinated writers for biweekly eBrethren articles and monthly mailings to donors.

In addition to managing the work of Mission Advancement, Rabenstein visited congregations and talked with pastors, providing insight into the work the church does together. Through Sunday school conversations, fellowship meals, Mission Sunday offerings, board meetings, and guest speaking, she provided congregations with insight into how their allocations are used to continue the work of Jesus.

CONCLUSION

The ministries highlighted here represent both new and old. We see the new in a first-time Global Brethren Gathering, and we see the old in ministries of service that are decades old. We see the new in young people gathered in Jesus' name at a conference to plant seeds of discipleship, and we see the old in faithful folk who have harvested the fruit of many gatherings. Whether new in 2019 or a years-long continuation of the work of Jesus, all these ministries grow out of the hearts of Brethren seeking to do what the Lord requires.

They are your ministries. Privileged to be stewards of this work, the board and staff of the Church of the Brethren are grateful for your time and treasure, your prayers and passion.

Patrick Starkey, chair

David Steele, general secretary