

*carry the light*



Church of the Brethren

## Report of the Church of the Brethren

### Carry the Light

*You are the light of the world.  
A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.*  
Matthew 5:14

The Brethren experienced a sense of deep joy this past year when a large delegation from Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) made an extended visit to the US. The group included the Women’s Fellowship Choir, which traveled through 14 districts before ending up at Annual Conference in Tampa, Fla. The music and fellowship bore witness to the bond between US and Nigerian Brethren, made particularly profound through EYN’s suffering at the hand of

Boko Haram and the heartfelt response of the Church of the Brethren in the US.

When the darkness is so deep, we must carry the light.

We also carry the light in everyday ways—strengthening congregations, supporting pastors, providing ways for all ages to grow in faith, feeding neighbors, working for justice, planting churches. In ways both large and small, the Brethren seek to hold the light high.

### GLOBAL MISSION AND SERVICE

The ministries of Global Mission and Service (GMS) seek to integrate faith and service as they challenge and equip Brethren to respond to human need and grow the church of Jesus Christ throughout the world. GMS is under the leadership of Jay Wittmeyer, executive director, and Roy Winter, associate executive director, with office management from Kendra Harbeck.

While the wide-ranging ministries of GMS are financed through various special funds, a high priority is placed on encouraging undesignated gifts to the Core Ministries Fund, which undergirds all of Global Mission and Service.

### Brethren Disaster Ministries

In response to the plight of hundreds of thousands of displaced Nigerian sisters and brothers, US Brethren gave unprecedented support in 2015. At a time when the international community is challenged with 59.5 million people in need around the world, the Church of the Brethren’s historical and spiritual relationship with the Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) calls for us to respond where few other international aid agencies are present.

### **Nigeria Crisis**

It is amazing what a difference a year makes. Early in 2015, violence continued to escalate and many more Nigerians were displaced. By the end of the year, the long road home had begun. The crisis is far from over and Boko Haram is still a threat, but increased security has allowed Kulp Bible College and the Comprehensive Secondary School to reopen near the EYN headquarters in Kwarhi. At the end of 2015, EYN national leadership remained in the temporary “annex” headquarters at the Boulder Hill compound in Jos.

Even so, the situation is incredibly difficult and tense. Hundreds of women and children are still missing. Over 10,000 EYN members have been killed, and hundreds of thousands are still displaced. Property losses include 1,668 churches burned or abandoned, and extensive damage to the homes, farms, and businesses of several million people. With such need, the Church of the Brethren has joined with EYN and other partners in creating a large comprehensive response program.

#### **Highlights of the Nigeria Crisis Response:**

- food, blankets, and household supplies for several hundred thousand people
- hundreds of homes built at five relocation camps with clean water and sanitation
- dozens of trauma healing and spiritual care workshops
- medical care for thousands
- training and equipment to create small businesses for over 1,000 households
- education for more than 1,000 children
- advocacy with the US State Department and the US embassy in Nigeria

A major effort was made to support EYN’s structure and leaders while helping to build the church’s capacity to be an effective response organization. This included housing for displaced national EYN leadership, new housing on the Jos compound, furniture for the temporary offices, and funding of meetings and key EYN publications. This critical strengthening of EYN has helped the church stay together and function even in this devastating crisis.

Building the capacity of EYN has included the appointing and training of the EYN crisis management team, with whom Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) has focused 68 percent of response funds. The response was expanded to reach more people in need by working with five other partners: the Center for Caring, Empowerment and Peace Initiatives; Education Must Continue; Lifeline Compassionate Global Initiatives; Women and Youth Empowerment for Advancement and Health Initiative; and Favored Sisters Christian Foundation.

### **Children’s Disaster Services**

“All the families are talking about the children’s center and how happy the kids are,” said a father from Middletown, Calif., whose family was evacuated when a wildfire roared through their town in September. In 2015, 58 Children’s Disaster Services (CDS) volunteers cared for 518 children in response to five events, including an apartment collapse, flooding, tornado, wildfire, and landslide.

It was a full year of training, with 282 potential volunteers, 10 workshops, and a seminar to train trainers. Major grants from the United Methodist Committee on Relief and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have made it possible for CDS to

expand work at local and state levels. This work is carried out through program consultants Tina Christian, Gulf Coast coordinator, and Katie Nees, Child Life Disaster Relief.

### **Home rebuilding**

“You are wonderful and I so appreciate your help. It’s difficult work and we really need people who have experience to come alongside us,” said pastor Andy Sidden of the Garden of Grace United Church of Christ in Columbia, S.C.

He was referring to the Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI), a new effort between BDM, the United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) designed to support the development of local long-term recovery groups. BDM project leader Tim Sheaffer traveled to Kentucky, Southern Virginia, and South Carolina to help support local leaders as they established recovery efforts.

Hurricane Sandy response continued in Spotswood, N.J., under the long-term leadership of Thom Deily and BVS volunteer Alice Kegley. BDM celebrated completion of the second Hurricane Sandy response site in Toms River, N.J., at the end of April with the help of long-term leaders Steve Keim, Kim Gingerich, and Tim Sheaffer. In early May a BDM caravan journeyed to northern Colorado, opening a new project in response to wild fires and flooding in 2013.

A total of 1,270 volunteers worked to repair or rebuild homes on behalf of 44 families who were able to return home. They provided 66,816 hours of service valued at over \$1.5 million on behalf of 65 families. BDM gathered with 36 disaster project leaders at a seminar in New Jersey at the end of August and trained 11 new project leaders in Colorado in October.

### **International responses**

The global refugee crisis and violence, including the Nigeria Crisis, represented nearly 85 percent of BDM activity in 2015. This included work in Africa (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo), Europe (Serbia, Greece, Hungary), and the Middle East (Syria, Iraq), offering hope to some of the nearly 60 million people displaced by violence.

The Nepal earthquake was the largest natural disaster response in 2015, and Brethren partnered with Heifer International, Church World Service, and Lutheran World Relief. Other key responses were for cyclones in Vanuatu and Myanmar, flooding in Democratic Republic of Congo and Honduras, and support for ethnic Haitians threatened with deportation from the Dominican Republic.

### **Financial activity**

Donations totaled \$2,737,663 in 2015. The Nigeria response was further supported by \$280,000 in grants from Christian Aid Ministries and \$1 million in seed funds from Church of the Brethren reserves. Grants of \$38,000 from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and \$50,000 from the United Methodist Committee on Relief are helping expand the ministry of CDS.

This financial support provided for all BDM expenses, including staff, programs, and allocations for disaster response. The 2015 expenditures included \$291,819 for US responses, including Home Rebuilding and CDS; \$2,573,270 for the Nigeria Crisis Response; and \$266,500 for all other international responses.

### **Administration**

BDM is a collaboration of volunteers, districts, partners, and the office in New Windsor, Md. Roy Winter provides overall direction and coordinates international

responses. Jenn Dorsch transitioned from a temporary position to become the new director of BDM with responsibility for the home reconstruction program. Kathy Fry-Miller is associate director for Children's Disaster Services. Three new staff started

in September: office manager Sharon Franzén, BDM program assistant Robin DeYoung, and CDS program assistant Kristen Hoffman. The years of service of Jane Yount and Elizabeth Mullich were celebrated before their departure.

### Material Resources

Material Resources responded to needs in 42 states and 18 countries. The distribution center staff facilitated 3,019 shipments totaling 965 tons of medicine, medical supplies, quilts, health kits, school kits, baby kits, cleanup kits and others supplies valued at \$13 million.

Loretta Wolf directed the program, while Scott Senseney and Terry Goodger coordinated warehouse and office operations with support from office assistant Glenna Thompson. Warehouse staff Richard Best, Winni Wanionek, and Brenda Giles prepared shipments. Ed Palsgrove delivered and picked up shipments. Volunteer Marianna Burkholder offered assistance to volunteers.

Brethren Disaster Ministries shipped over 7,000 pounds of canned chicken for use in Mexico.

Church World Service kits and blankets were shipped to help homeless people, migrants, victims of floods and tornados, refugees, and domestic violence victims.

Cooperation between Lutheran World Relief, Church World Service, and International Orthodox Christian Charities sent needed items to Sierra Leone, Lebanon/Syria and Serbia. Lutheran World Relief shipped quilts and kits to Angola, India, Nicaragua, Djibouti, Mali, Haiti, Dubai, Tanzania, Ukraine, Honduras, and Georgia.

### Office of Public Witness

As staff in Washington, D.C., Nathan Hosler and Brethren Volunteer Service workers Bryan Hanger, Katie Furrow, and Jesse Winter represent the denomination in collaborative work which "seeks to live the peace of Jesus publicly." Hanger completed nearly three years of work in August. Staff participated in visits to congressional offices regarding issues such as criminal justice reform, the reauthorization of child nutrition programs, the Nigerian conflict, and Syrian refugee resettlement. Advocacy for criminal justice reform supplements the office's help in planning Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) and Christian Citizenship Seminar.

Furrow also led a workshop on equitable eating for EAD 2015.

The Going to the Garden initiative, done in partnership with the Global Food Crisis Fund, continued to give grants to congregations to start or expand community garden ministries. Furrow visited gardens in Champaign, Ill., and New Orleans, La. A delegation from the Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren visited Washington to volunteer at the Brethren Nutrition Program soup kitchen and meet with senators to ask for support for upcoming child nutrition legislation.

In October, the office hosted a briefing for Capitol Hill staff on the crisis in Nigeria to complement its other advocacy efforts on Nigeria. The office's focus on the Middle East included advocacy for the Iran nuclear agreement and for Syrian refugee resettlement. Hosler traveled to Israel and Palestine as a part of Churches for Middle East Peace and participated in a Peace Day

march with L'Eglise des Frères Haitiens (the Church of the Brethren in Haiti).

The office represented the Church of the Brethren in organizations such as the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, Churches for Middle East Peace, Center on Conscience and War, Shoulder to Shoulder, Creation Justice Ministries, National Farm Worker Ministry, and Jubilee USA.

### Brethren Volunteer Service

“All to Jesus, I surrender; All to him I freely give.’ Little did I know that my life would change as I sang that familiar song,” reflected Penny Radcliff, the only senior in the fall orientation unit. “That was three years ago, the year I turned 65. Since then, God has led me to several new beginnings, but none have been as challenging or rewarding as BVS.”

At its luncheon at Annual Conference, Brethren Volunteer Service presented the annual Partners in Service Award to three congregations that have partnered with BVS to host intentional community houses: Cincinnati (Ohio) Church of the Brethren, Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren, Elgin, Ill., and Peace Church of the Brethren, Portland, Ore.

BVS has 100 active projects in the US and around the world, and volunteers are serving in the US, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany, Honduras, Japan, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland. At year-end, there were 56 active volunteers in BVS—41 serving in the US, 11 in Europe, 1 in Latin America, and 3 in Japan. This number reflects a steady decline in recent years, a trend that is being reported

by virtually all of the other volunteer organizations with whom BVS meets.

In 2015 orientations were held in Gotha, Fla. (winter unit), Camp Mardela in Denton, Md. (summer), and at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor (fall and Brethren Revival Fellowship units). These orientations and the mid-year retreats are enriched through Volunteers Exploring Vocation, a program that guides participants in exploring God's calling. This program, made possible by a grant from the Fund for Theological Education and the Lilly Endowment, is facilitated by Dana Cassell.

Jocelyn Snyder began in January 2015 as orientation coordinator. Earlier she served two years in BVS in South Sudan. Emily Tyler coordinates recruitment efforts in addition to her role as workcamp coordinator. Kristin Flory and Todd Bauer are coordinators of the Europe and Latin America work, respectively. Dan McFadden serves as director. In November, Elizabeth Batten succeeded Ben Bear as the recruitment volunteer. Staff assistant Jessie Houff works primarily with the orientations and also provides support to volunteers in the field.

### Global Food Crisis Fund

Tomatoes growing in the Arctic, bees making honey in the city, corn producing in the desert—what do these things all have in common? Brethren community gardeners hard at work!

The Church of the Brethren has always had a keen awareness of people who are hungry, and its members continue to find new ways to feed people. In the past decade, new food-based ministries began growing in New Orleans, La.; Circle, Alaska; Boise, Idaho; and Richmond, Va., to name just a

few. International projects were in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Honduras, North Korea, Rwanda, and Spain. This past year the GFCF provided \$208,554 in grants. Total income was \$223,701.

The fund continues to provide support for Bread for the World and Foods Resource Bank. A Brethren Volunteer Service worker provides coordination with these and other agencies through the Office of Public Witness in Washington, D.C., and the Going to the Garden initiative.

### Brethren Workcamps

The 2015 workcamp theme, “Side by Side: Imitating Christ’s Humility,” encouraged participants to reflect on how they could imitate Christ’s humility not only side by side, but also with faithfulness, in prayer, within community, through service, for renewal, and as light. The 341 youth and advisors, along with nearly 40 volunteer leaders, came together at 19 locations across the country and in the Dominican Republic to study this theme, based on Philippians 2:1-8, and to work alongside members of the

community, build life-long relationships, and create memories.

Reflected one participant: “Coming from a small town, I don’t see the struggling and hopeless very often. Humans aren’t things to fix, but people to love.”

The 2015 workcamps were organized by Emily Tyler, coordinator, and assistant coordinators Hannah Shultz and Theresa Ford, who served through Brethren Volunteer Service. In August, volunteers Amanda McLearn-Montz and Deanna Beckner began work on the 2016 season.

### International Ministries

Global Mission staff envision development of a global Church of the Brethren consisting of autonomous groups that witness to their broader communities while mutually encouraging one another as branches from the denominational vine. They seek to deepen faith and relationships with established mission points, promoting outreach ministries and developing leadership. With emerging mission points, staff seek to promote core Brethren beliefs

and practices while building organizational capacity and deepening faith.

Activities conducted in Global Mission are done in the context of responding to human need around the world, while witnessing to God’s love. The programming falls into six broad categories: church development (\$378,969), health and well-being (\$183,274), education (\$131,744), peacebuilding (\$50,436), economic empowerment (\$76,846), and agriculture

development (\$25,129.) Total expenditures were \$1,046,881 for 2015.

Three endowments help support the work of Global Missions: Brethren Health Ministries, with a balance of \$359,210; African Leadership, \$180,200; and Established Missions, \$195,612.

### **Haiti**

L’Eglise des Frères Haitiens (the Church of the Brethren in Haiti) held its third annual conference and continued to build capacity as a denomination under the leadership of Freny Elie, general secretary, and spiritual advisor Ludovic St. Fleur of Miami, Fla. Mission workers Ilexene and Michaela Alphonse manage the Brethren Ministry Center, coordinate theological education, host workcamp teams, and give administrative support to the emerging denomination.

The social service ministry of L’Eglise des Frères continued its outreach to the rural poor. The mobile clinic held 48 visits, expanded its maternal health care, and began to support community-based dispensaries. Three agronomists promoted improved agricultural practices to increase the income of small-holder farmers and oversaw several community water projects. A consultation was held in November to highlight the service ministries of the church and to strengthen partnership with the American church. Moderator Andy Murray attended the four-day event.

### **Spain**

La Iglesia de Los Hermanos España (the Church of the Brethren Spain) held its third annual conference. Pastor Santos Terrero of Una Luz en las Naciones church in Gijón continued as president of the denomination with advisory support from an ad hoc committee consisting of Fausto Carrasco, Carol Yeazell, Joel Peña, and Jaime Diaz. In order to serve the immigrant community,

which is largely unemployed and struggling, the church has started a community garden, along with its food pantry. The denomination is working to establish a theological program in partnership with other Anabaptist groups in Spain.

### **India**

In May, then-moderator David Steele joined Wittmeyer to attend the First District Church of the Brethren 100<sup>th</sup> annual conference. The festivities included worship services, communal meals, a large parade with a horse-drawn carriage, dancing, and fireworks. The visitors traveled to Ahwa and saw evidence of tremendous church growth in the Dang region; they also saw the pain of the ongoing conflict with the Church of North India.

On Dec. 29, Mankanlal Mangaldas Gameti, the foremost elder of the First District, passed away at the age of 100. Baptized by Brethren missionaries in 1929, Gameti was active in his local congregation in Vyara and a leading force to ensure that the Church of the Brethren in India continued as an independent entity. Named as a respondent in a court case that reached the supreme court of India, Gameti maintained that the First District was always an independent entity and never dissolved at the formation of the unified Church of North India. He was highly loved and respected.

### **Dominican Republic**

La Iglesia de Los Hermanos held its 25<sup>th</sup> annual conference in 2015 with a growing desire to move forward in ministry, though some individuals boycotted the conference over the resignation of the former president. The Buffalo Valley Church of the Brethren attended the asamblea and participated in a workcamp to construct a new church building. Pastor Ariel Rosario Rosario Abreu, a revival preacher, was invited to Venezuela to preach.

The D. R. church is a mixed church. Half of its members are of Haitian descent, speaking Kreyol in its services, and half are Spanish-speaking Dominican. While nationwide there are strong prejudices against the Haitian community, the Brethren are largely unified and share leadership and resources equally. As the government initiated a process of offering citizenship to Haitians that could document their residency and deporting others, the Brethren began to help their members gain citizenship. The church is also ministering to Haitians who are stranded on the border and regarded as stateless.

### **Brazil**

Marcos and Suely Inhauser provided oversight to the eight Brethren fellowships and one main congregation in Brazil. The church in Rio Verde suffered setbacks in its ministries. Alexandre Gonçalves is a student at Bethany Theological Seminary with financial support from GMS.

### **South Sudan**

In great celebration, the community of Lohilla—through support and partnership between the Church of the Brethren and the Africa Inland Church—erected a church and a school for the first time in its 500-year history. The I-beam framed building structure was shipped from Kenya, erected, and roofed, while the community made blocks to fill in the walls.

Global Mission worker Athanasus Ungang oversees the project. He also leads the English service at the AIC Torit church and manages the Brethren Peace Center. A group led by Roger and Carolyn Schrock traveled to South Sudan on a learning tour and strengthened relationships.

### **Developing relationships**

Global Mission continues to reach out to communities in the Great Lakes region of

Africa in an attempt to establish an Anabaptist witness and a Brethren church community. While violence in Burundi greatly affected these efforts, the Brethren are seeking to establish churches in the region: two in Rwanda, six in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and one in Burundi. In a time of learning and growing, representatives from Rwanda and Burundi attended Annual Conference to learn more about the Brethren and to share their stories. Regrettably, members of L’Eglise des Frères-Congo, an unofficial partner in the DRC, were refused visas. A church building was constructed in Ngovi, South Kivu, as the first Church of the Brethren in the region.

Global Mission has begun partnering with Iglesia Viviendo en Amor y Fe (VAF), a congregation in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, with the hope of fully welcoming the church into the Brethren family.

Chinese Christians in Ping Ting, Shan Xi, are working with Global Mission to prove ownership and procure the church building that the Brethren built in 1915.

### **Other activities**

The Global Mission witness in North Korea continued through the service of Robert and Linda Shank at the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology. However, their visas were denied in December.

In Vietnam, Grace Mishler advanced her work with the eye care project through her position in the department of social work at the National Vietnam University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City. Students at the university learn care management as they handle the cases of individuals who receive eye surgery through the American Eye Clinic. The project assists in identifying patients, secures funding for surgery, and then places students to manage the case.

Dave and Linda Byers served in the Bahamas in home reconstruction. In Honduras, Alan and Kay Bennett served in Belén Gualcho through PAG, and Ann Ziegler and Stephanie Breen served at Emanuel Children's Home.

### **Significant partnerships**

Jay Wittmeyer serves on the boards of Heifer International (which maintains a permanent seat for the Church of the Brethren) and Foods Resource Bank.

The relationship of the Church of the Brethren with Mission 21 (Basel Mission,) began in Nigeria 50 years ago and continues to this day. Mission 21 president Claudia Bandixen visited the Brethren offices in April, and Stan Noffsinger and Jay Wittmeyer attended Mission 21's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Basel, Switzerland. Every three to five years the two organizations, along with EYN, meet to establish a

tripartite agreement on shared ministry in Nigeria. That consultation was held in Jos in November.

Global Mission was approved as a private volunteer organization (PVO) with the US Agency for International Development in efforts to procure more funding and support for the Nigerian Brethren and others suffering violence.

### **International visitors**

A highlight for the year was the tour of the Nigerian women's choir and its presence in many churches and districts and at Annual Conference. In support of its tour, Global Mission printed 17 large banners with the names of 10,000 Nigerians who died in Boko Haram violence. These were displayed during the choir's singing at Annual Conference. The Brethren Evangelism Support Trust (BEST) traveled with the choir.

## **CONGREGATIONAL LIFE MINISTRIES**

*"Come. listen to the stories of Jesus. . . . Discern what truths are being revealed for our lives. Explore the echoes of Christ's parables in our own life stories. Discover the unfinished chapters in God's story of our lives. Then go. Share the stories of Jesus and your own stories with others. . . . Go back and weave those stories into the lives of your grandchildren and great-grandchildren."*

These words of invitation and sending, spoken two years earlier by Phyllis Tickle, served as the inspiration for the theme of the 2015 National Older Adult Conference, "And Jesus told them a story," based on Matthew 13:34-35. The 13<sup>th</sup> NOAC, held at Lake Junaluska, N.C., Sept. 7-11, welcomed 906 participants. Speakers were Deanna Brown, Bob Bowman, Alex Ghee, and Brian

McClaren, and there was a special presentation by Ken Medema.

The week of worship, workshops, fellowship, recreation, and relaxation was also a week of generosity, with over \$23,000 given to support Church of the Brethren ministries and just under \$10,000 to support the Nigeria Crisis Response. In a first-time outreach to the local community, 403 new books were donated to Junaluska Elementary School. Church World Service received 416 school kits, 287 hygiene kits, and over \$1,200 in donations.

The conference was planned by Kim Ebersole, director of older adult and family life ministries. She was assisted by Brethren Volunteer Service worker Laura Whitman and a volunteer advisory committee. Ebersole retired in October after eight years of service to the denomination. Debbie

Eisenbise, newly appointed director of intergenerational ministries, worked closely with Ebersole in preparation for future NOAC planning.

Junior high youth, their advisors, and staff gathered in their own spirited conference on the theme “Living the Change: Our Offering to God,” based on Romans 12:1-2. Coordinated by Becky Ullom Naugle, director for youth and young adult ministries, the conference at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College featured worship with sermons by Lauren Seganos, Steve Schweitzer, Amy Gall Ritchie, and Eric Bishop. Bishop also led a conversation on racial tension in the wake of the shooting at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, S.C. Brethren Volunteer Service worker Kristen Hoffman helped plan the event, which included recreation, workshops, and entertainment by a Christian juggler.

“All God’s People Say Amen” was the rousing theme for an inspiring weekend intercultural retreat hosted by the Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren. Almost 150 people from nine districts of the Church of the Brethren gathered May 1-3 for the event co-sponsored with Atlantic Northeast District and coordinated by Gimbiya Kettering, director for intercultural ministries. Speakers included Drew Hart, Joel Peña, LaDonna Nkosi, and Congregational Life Ministries executive director Jonathan Shively. A Praise Explosion worship concert on Saturday night typified the spirit and energy of the event.

In collaboration with Anabaptist Network, Bristol Baptist College, Urban Expression, and Mennonite Trust, 17 webinars were conducted in the areas of family matters, urban ministry, and contemporary Anabaptist practice. Over 225 people participated and over 100 continuing education credits were earned. Participants came from around the globe and 17 districts

of the Church of the Brethren. Stan Dueck, director for transforming practices, spearheaded these efforts.

The Vital Ministry Journey (VMJ) process and resources continued to support congregations. Mid-Atlantic, Middle Pennsylvania, Southern Ohio, and Western Plains districts all participated in VMJ coaches’ training and support. Individual congregations from six other districts also entered the process. Additionally, a dozen congregations used the newly available Congregational Vitality Survey to gain insight into their ministries. Over 190 hours of direct coaching support was provided for district executives, church planters, pastors, Ministry Summer Service participants, and congregational and district leadership.

Disabilities ministries support was strengthened through a partnership with the Anabaptist Disabilities Network (AdNet) and the calling of Rebekah Flores as an AdNet field associate for the Church of the Brethren. The Open Roof Award recognized the Cedar Lake congregation in Auburn, Ind., and the Staunton (Va.) congregation.

The issue of US immigration was explored by 63 youth and 18 adults during the Christian Citizenship Seminar (CCS), held April 18-23, 2015. Gathering from seven districts and including three Moravian guests, CCS divided time between New York and Washington, D.C., exploring questions of immigration from the perspectives of faith, politics, and culture, and culminating with advocacy visits to congressional leaders.

Young adults met May 22-24 at Camp Swatara to consider the theme “You Shall Go Out with Joy: Transforming the World’s Thorns with Joyful Action,” based on Isaiah 55:12-13. Seventy participants from 11 districts were joined by one ecumenical guest.

Eight collegiate interns joined Ministry Summer Service May 29–June 3, including

the three members of the Youth Peace Travel Team (YPTT), who shared their gifts at a variety of camps and denominational events throughout the summer. YPTT is a partnership of youth and young adult ministries, Brethren Volunteer Service, On Earth Peace, Bethany Theological Seminary, and the Outdoor Ministries Association.

Congregational Life Ministries staff provided intensive leadership at Annual Conference through 12 insight sessions, a dinner event with speaker Thomas Dowdy, mutual support groups, a pre-conference training event focused on grief and care, a reception for the newly recognized fellowship Ministerio Rios de Agua Viva (Rivers of Living Water), and a networking event for Hispanic pastors. Similarly, staff provided 16 workshops and registration support for a May 14-16 leadership training event sponsored by the Council of District Executives.

Partnership relationships were strengthened with the Fellowship of Brethren Homes and new executive director Ralph McFadden. Thirteen spiritual directors met May 18-20 at Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Ministry Center to learn from Phileena Heuertz, at an event coordinated by Josh Brockway, director for spiritual life and discipleship. Staff attended and provided seminar leadership for the Outdoor Ministries retreat Nov. 15-19. Participation in the ecumenical partnership Evangelism Connections produced a series

of videos on evangelism for use in local churches.

Brockway also guided the adoption of a revised Congregational Ethics polity and began steps for implementation in partnership with districts. The Anabaptist Worship Exchange (AWE), a website designed on an "open source" model to promote the sharing of original worship resources, launched at [www.anabaptistworshipexchange.org](http://www.anabaptistworshipexchange.org).

Congregational Life Ministries staff preached in congregations and served as guest speakers at a variety of events throughout the denomination. Staff wrote for publications, including *Messenger* and *Basin & Towel*. Educational leadership included deacon training, youth retreats, youth leader training, Christian education workshops, teaching in the Christian Growth Institute, intercultural skills development, new church development training, congregational vitality seminars, and discipleship formation activities.

Staff continued to strengthen expertise through a variety of educational opportunities. Brockway completed a Ph.D. in Patristics at Catholic University.

*Basin and Towel*, the magazine publication of Congregational Life Ministries produced its final issue (Volume 6: Issue 2) and was discontinued.

Coordination and support for the work of Congregational Life Ministries was provided by program assistant Randi Rowan.

## ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

The staff of Organizational Resources provide the undergirding for 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 supports the other areas in the unit.

## Support Services

Marvin Greener and Gerald Karn provide oversight for 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., and Steve Bickler provides part-time assistance.

Karn directs the department at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor. He oversaw several projects including a concrete loading dock replacement at the warehouse annex and the hospitality laundry room renovation. Other team members include Felix Hill, maintenance assistant, and Ron Anders, who provided part-time support. Tom Druck, Donald Meyers, and Wayne Hylton contributed significant hours as volunteers. Heating, plumbing, and air conditioning repairs and upgrades were performed at both locations.

The finance department provides regular budget support, financial reports, and cash

management, and also staffed the treasurer's office at Annual Conference. Pat Marsh is accountant. Nancy Watts, donation and accounts receivable specialist, provides input and support for donation processing; Barb York is accounts payable and payroll specialist; and Barb Watt is the financial operations specialist in New Windsor.

In the information technology department, a new fiber optic broadband service was installed at the Brethren Service Center. Much work went into completing the conversion to the Raiser's Edge database. Staff completed the conversion to the Raiser's Edge database, with significant work by Don Knieriem, database administrator; Francie Coale, who manages information technology at the Brethren Service Center; and director Mark Hartwig. Much assistance was provided by Ed Woolf and other departments.

## Zigler Hospitality Center

About 9,250 meals were served to more than 6,500 volunteers, guests, and employees during the year. Taking advantage of a new service, 161 "walk-ins" from the community purchased lunches from the hospitality center. Overnight accommodations were made for 2,195 bed nights.

The center hosted 16 banquets, serving meals to another 792 guests. Eight one-day conferences were held, with lunches served to 174 guests. Volunteers from the community, as well as other staff from the campus, worked about 400 volunteer hours to help with these banquets.

Rentals of conference rooms, the dining room, and the multi-purpose room totaled 46

events in 2015. Tours of the campus were given to over 350 people.

Part-time program assistant Connie Bohn joined the team in June. In addition to head cook Janet Comings, hospitality staff included assistant cooks Charlotte Willis and Elena Cutsail and kitchen assistants Fay Reese, John Frisby and Helen Eyler. More than 7,900 hours were given by resident volunteers Gail Druck, Rachel and Glenn Wadel, Phyllis Ingold, Sue Overman, Terrance Green, Jane Gray, and Ed and June Switzer. Volunteer kitchen assistants included Maria Capusan, Mathea Iglich, and Judy Waters.

## Financial Results

The denomination spent more than \$10.4 million toward all ministries in 2015.

Congregations gave \$2,055,862 to Core Ministries, and individuals gave \$557,373. The Core Ministries Fund ended the year with a net deficit \$547,701. The fund's net assets were \$1,495,421 at year-end.

Giving to the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) increased significantly over 2014 because of the Nigeria Crisis Fund. The \$2,737,663 donated in 2015 was 53 percent increase over 2014. An additional \$1,000,000 was transferred from the Church of the Brethren's bequest quasi-endowment fund to support Nigeria relief efforts. The Global Food Crisis Fund received \$223,702, down from the \$360,979 donated in 2014.

The denomination's self-funding ministries receive income primarily through

sales, fees, and registrations. Brethren Press ended the year with a net deficit of \$85,975, and *Messenger* magazine ended the year with a net deficit of \$13,124. The Annual Conference Office ended the year with a net surplus of \$17,067. Material Resources ended the year with a slight net surplus of \$1,032.

Total investments, including endowments and reserves, decreased to \$26.8 million. Endowment gifts totaled \$56,759, with the Brethren Health Ministries endowment receiving \$53,726.

[The above amounts were provided prior to completion of the 2015 audit. Complete financial information is available in the Church of the Brethren, Inc., audit report published in June 2016.]

## Office of the General Secretary

### Leadership Team

The denomination's Leadership Team, composed of the general secretary and the three Annual Conference officers—moderator, moderator-elect, secretary—completed an extensive review of the Manual of Organization and Polity, and updated it to incorporate polity decisions adopted by Annual Conference since the manual's last revision.

Meeting three times in 2015, the Leadership Team followed up the actions of Annual Conference; reviewed the

involvement of the Ministry of Reconciliation in Annual Conference activities and agreed to review this involvement annually; distributed the Brotherhood Mutual dividend; and reviewed the process for Standing Committee members to participate in ethics training. The team also planned a January 2016 session in which leaders of the church's agencies and district executives could discuss the difficult issues facing the church.

## Brethren Historical Library and Archives

The Brethren Historical Library and Archives provided the following services: responding to 204 written requests and 109

phone requests, providing access to 93 on-site researchers, and leading tours for about 75 people. BHLA processed about 150 feet

of archival material. William Kostlevy is director. Aaron Neff is the 2015-2016 intern.

The most important project has been processing the Bethany Theological Seminary collection. Far more than documenting the history of the seminary, this valuable collection provides important resources for every phase of Church of the Brethren history over the last century. The processing has been paid for by Bethany and carried out by Kelley Brenneman, who served as BHLA intern in 2014-2015.

Other important collections received include the papers of Rosemary Blocker Rose documenting her work as a Brethren Service worker in Austria 1950-1953; family correspondence of E. L. Eikenberry, missionary to China; and the papers of the International Christian Youth Exchange (ICYE). Similar to other Church of the Brethren-founded programs such as Heifer International, ICYE became a self-supporting ecumenical agency.

### Brethren Press

Brethren Press produced a set of resources to help the church's response to the crisis in Nigeria. *Children of the Same Mother: A Nigeria Activity Book*, written by Jan Fischer Bachman and designed by Paul Stocksdale, teaches children about Nigeria in general and Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria in particular. It includes a foreword by Kathleen Fry-Miller of Children's Disaster Services with advice on how to talk with children about the crisis. Two other products were prints of *#BringBackOurGirls*, an art piece by Sandra Jean Ceas, and "One Body in Christ" T-shirts.

*Shine: Living in God's Light*, the children's curriculum co-published by Brethren Press and MennoMedia, was exhibited at Faith Forward and the Justice Conference, as well as several church conferences. Jeff Lennard, director of marketing and sales for Brethren Press, has become marketer for the project.

Managing editor James Deaton oversaw creation of books and a number of other resources. New Covenant Bible Studies were *1 & 2 Kings: Kings and Their Prophets*, by Chris Bowman and Bob Bowman, and *1 & 2 Peter and Jude: Letters*

*of Encouragement*, by Galen Hackman. A *Guide for Biblical Studies* was published in regular and large-print editions. Lenten and Advent devotionals were published in two print editions and two electronic editions. The publications were *Searching for the Kingdom of Heaven*, by Craig Smith, and *In the Fullness of Time*, by Anita Hooley Yoder. The annual Yearbook was prepared by Jean Clements.

Brethren Press also produced the Living Word Bulletin Series and Annual Conference Wrap-up and Sermon DVDs. The publishing house was a partner in the *Power Up! Living in the Spirit* camp curriculum. The annual Brethren Press/Messenger Dinner at Annual Conference featured Peggy Reiff Miller, author of the children's book *The Seagoing Cowboy*.

The church's publishing ministry is directed by Wendy McFadden, publisher of Brethren Press and Communications, who is assisted by Karen Stocking, finance and production assistant. Other support is provided by customer service specialists Margaret Drafall and Diane Stroyeck, and warehouse and shipping specialist Steve Bickler.

## Communications

The communication team extended the ministries of the organization through the website, news services, *Messenger* magazine's print and digital editions, social media, e-mail campaigns, and reporting through audiovisuals, exhibits, and print media.

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, director of news services, produced weekly issues of Newsline that were posted online and distributed by e-mail. She coordinated news teams at Annual Conference and the National Older Adult Conference. She also prepared news releases for congregations hosting the Nigerian women's choir so that they could enhance their own communication.

Under the leadership of Randy Miller, whose contract as editor concluded in early 2016, *Messenger* magazine provided in-depth coverage of the crisis in Nigeria and published extended series on urban congregations and on climate change. In a cluster of short essays, black Brethren offered reflections in the wake of the shooting of an unarmed black man in Ferguson, Mo.

Web producer Jan Fischer Bachman and media support specialist Russ Otto provided website updates, the posting of worship resources, e-mail campaigns, event registrations, and surveys and forms. They launched a mobile-friendly Annual Conference site and a Church of the Brethren podcast, and added hundreds of photos to online albums. The find-a-church feature on the website was used more than 55,000 times in 2015.

Connections were strengthened through a number of social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, the Church of the Brethren blog, Instagram, and Pinterest. The Church of the Brethren Facebook page has about 6,500 followers, and many individual departments have their own Facebook pages. Traffic to the blog increased over 200 percent, thanks to frequent updates about Nigeria. The number of Twitter followers reached one thousand. Viewers watched over 955 hours of video on the Church of the Brethren YouTube channel.

## Conference Office

A highlight of the 2015 Annual Conference was the visit of more than 50 sisters and brothers from Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). Members of the Women's Fellowship Choir shared music in a number of the worship services and inspired the Conference with their contagious joy and faith in the midst of tremendous persecution and trial.

This 229<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference met July 11-15 in Tampa, Fla. The 2,075 Brethren gathered under the theme "Abide in my Love and Bear Fruit." Moderator David

Steele led the business sessions, which included the election of a Review and Evaluation Study Committee and a committee to study church vitality and viability. The Conference included 64 insight sessions, 39 meal events, 5 worship services, and activities for children and youth.

Monday featured a farewell and reception for outgoing general secretary Stan Noffsinger. A special program on Sunday featured Ken Medema and Ted & Company.

Atlantic Southeast District was the host district and provided many volunteers, who were led by site coordinator Victoria Ehret. Staffing was provided by Conference

director Chris Douglas, assistant Jon Kobel, and registration coordinator Debbie Noffsinger. Hundreds of volunteers made the conference flow smoothly.

### Donor Relations

The Office of Donor Relations' undergirded the church's ministries through giving from congregations and individuals. Activities included written and electronic communications, personal visits, offering emphases, attention to planned giving, stewardship formation support, and collaboration with other denominations through the Ecumenical Stewardship Center and the One Great Hour of Sharing steering

committee. Donor relations staff members also served to connect church members and pastors seeking information or services with appropriate denominational staff members.

During 2015 director John Higgs and departmental staff continued strengthening connections with both congregations and individuals. Matthew DeBall is coordinator of donor communications. Cherise Glunz began as program assistant.

### Human Resources

The office of human resources oversees the organization's employment policy and services, ensuring compliance with legal requirements. Deborah Brehm is office manager.

New salaried staff in 2015 were Debbie Eisenbise, director of Intergenerational Ministries; Brian Bultman, CFO and executive director of Organizational Resources; and Sharon Franzén, manager of Brethren Disaster Ministries.

Total regular full-time and part-time employees and Brethren Volunteer Service

workers serving Church of the Brethren programs: 76.

Ethnic/racial composition: Asian-1; Black-2; Hispanic-0; Caucasian-72; two or more races-1.

Total contract, shared, and temporary employees and program volunteers: 33.

The church mourned Mary Jo Flory-Steury's unexpected death on March 4, 2016. As associate general secretary, she directed human resources and the Office of Ministry, and she oversaw the Brethren Historical Library and Archives.

### Office of Ministry

"Delving Deeply into Compassion" was the topic of the Ministers' Association Pre-Conference Continuing Education Event, held in Tampa, Fla. The Brethren Academy offered an on-site course, giving students the opportunity to earn credit for attending class and participating in the event.

In 2015, 39 individuals (27 men and 12 women) were ordained, 2 men were commissioned, 7 men were commissioned, with ordination in another denomination recognized for term of service, 51 individuals (34 men and 17 women) were licensed to the ministry, and three

individuals were received through transfer of ordination from other denominations.

Mary Jo Flory-Steury worked with Puerto Rico as it made the transition to becoming the church's 24th district, which was celebrated at Annual Conference. Several districts began searches for new leadership: Missouri-Arkansas, Atlantic Southeast, Southeastern, and Northern Ohio. Flory-Steury met with cohorts of district executives for orientation and peer networking, and worked closely with the Ministry Advisory Council, the Ministers' Association officers, and the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee.

Others working in the Office of Ministry are Dana Cassell, staff for ministry formation; program assistant Margie Paris; and Jean Clements.

### **Ministry Assistance Fund**

The Ministry Assistance Fund began 2015 with a balance of \$7,142, received donations totaling \$14,707, disbursed \$23,414 in 14 grants, and ended the year with a balance of \$4,149. This fund is dependent on donations from congregations, ministerial groups, and individuals and offers greatly needed assistance to ministers with short-term financial needs. The Ministry Assistance Fund gratefully received a portion of the Brotherhood Mutual Insurance gift totaling \$59,631.50. The balance of those dollars at the end of 2015 was \$57,372.

### **Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership**

Sixty-five students from 18 districts participated in the Training in Ministry program, with 5 completing their programs and 11 participating in an orientation. Eight students and their supervising pastors from 6 districts participated in Education for a Shared Ministry, with 3 students completing their programs.

The academy organized a class at Bethany Seminary, two classes at McPherson College, and four online courses. Bethany faculty providing leadership for the Brethren Academy included Tara Hornbacker, Scott Holland, Debbie Roberts, Ken Rogers, and Dan Ulrich, who met with Seminario Biblico Anabautista Hispano students via Skype and is preparing the first Church of the Brethren Spanish language course for this ministry training program.

Seminario Biblico Anabautista Hispano (SeBAH-CoB) is a denomination-wide certificate level program that parallels the Academy Certified Training System programs available to English-speaking students. Atlantic Northeast District had 12 students and Pacific Southwest District had 6 students participating in SeBAH-CoB. One student in Puerto Rico continued her program in a Mennonite-Church of the Brethren cohort.

In order to offer specialized training for the commissioned ministry circle, three new tracks have been added to EFSM: ministry team, specialized ministry, and Spanish-language.

The academy provided an annual clergy tax seminar and, for the fourth year, a Women in Leadership insight session series at Annual Conference. Five pastors completed a class in supervision in ministry. Six leaders from five camps participated in a camp leaders cohort of the Sustaining Ministerial Excellence Advanced Seminar.

Julie M. Hostetter is executive director of the Brethren Academy, Fran Massie is administrative assistant, and Carrie Eikler is coordinator of the TRIM and EFSM ministry training programs. Debbie Roberts finished as coordinator of SeBAH-CoB, and Nancy Sollenberger Heishman began as coordinator of Spanish-Language Ministry Training Programs.

## Mission and Ministry Board

In addition to carrying out the direction set by Annual Conference, the Mission and Ministry Board serves the larger church in a unique role as the board of directors of the Church of the Brethren. The board devoted considerable attention and resources to a transition in leadership after choosing not to extend general secretary Stanley J. Noffsinger's service beyond his current contract, which ends July 1, 2016. A search committee began work in July 2015.

The board studied mission philosophy at its March meeting, held in Lancaster, Pa., and called for an ad hoc committee to review current statements and bring recommended changes to the board. That committee is working on a new statement that uses the 1998 Annual Conference statement as a foundation.

From its reserves the board approved allocations totaling \$1 million for the Nigeria Crisis Fund, and it approved two

Emergency Disaster Fund grants totaling \$1,180,000 for the Nigeria Crisis Response. The board also approved a resolution on Christian minority communities, which was subsequently adopted by Annual Conference.

In 2015-2016, the elected membership of the Mission and Ministry Board consists of 5 women and 12 men. One member is Jamaican American and 16 are white. Also serving on the board are eight ex officio members, including members of the Leadership Team and executive officers of Bethany Theological Seminary, Brethren Benefit Trust, On Earth Peace, and the Council of District Executives.

Stanley J. Noffsinger served as general secretary of the Church of the Brethren throughout 2015, and Dale E. Minnich began as interim general secretary. Nancy Miner is manager of the Office of the General Secretary.

## CONCLUSION

The remarkable giving to the Nigeria Crisis Fund this past year is a reminder of the church's generosity. We recall this text from Isaiah 58:10: "If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday."

The Mission and Ministry Board and the employees of the Church of the Brethren are deeply grateful for the many gifts of time, talent, and treasure, and for the church's commitment to the work of Jesus Christ.

*Donald R. Fitzkee, chair*

*Dale E. Minnich, interim general secretary*