

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN ANNUAL REPORT OF 2014

PUBLISHED MAY 2015



carry  
the  
**light**



Church of the Brethren

## Report of the Church of the Brethren

### Carry the Light

*“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ... and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ... If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”*

1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 26

The events occurring on the global stage during 2014 have had a dramatic impact on the life of the Church of the Brethren. The violence seen in Israel and Palestine, Syria and Iraq, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are now also part of daily life in northeast Nigeria. Paul’s words to the church in Corinth have new meaning as we experience the suffering in the lives of sisters and brothers in Nigeria. Accounts of lost family members and invaded and destroyed homes and churches strike us at the heart. We, too, are experiencing their loss. And we feel helpless, knowing that we cannot intervene with an immediate solution.

Leaders of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) have consistently called the US church to enter into a season of prayer and fasting. We are asked to be steadfast in the faith that Christ’s light will overcome this darkness and Christ’s peace will come to the people of Nigeria. And we have not been alone in this spiritual discipline. The National Council of Churches of Christ, Christian World Communions, and the World Council of Churches have shared this story with their member churches.

Ecumenical partners joining us in prayers for peace include the African Methodist Episcopal Church, American Baptist Churches USA, Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ), Brethren Church, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Church USA, World Mennonite Conference, Lutheran World Federation, Global Christian Forum, Moravian Church, and the World Convention of Churches of Christ, some of whom also have passed resolutions or given significant gifts to our Nigeria Crisis Fund.

The WCC, upon hearing of the continuing devastation in Nigeria, called for its 350 member communions to pray and advocate for nonviolent intervention leading toward peace. Their action resulted in conversations with the president and consulate general of Nigeria and with United Nations officials, seeking interventions that would protect the innocent people of Nigeria. Each of these responses of the larger church has served as encouragement to EYN that they are not alone.

As shown throughout this report, this international crisis has been the concern, focus, and action of virtually every part of the organization. Employees and volunteers are giving energy and expertise, gifts, and talents, as together we address the suffering and pain in Nigeria—all the while continuing the varied ministries and services of the denomination. It is such a privilege and an honor to work with these faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

## 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. The ministries are Brethren Disaster Ministries, Brethren Volunteer Service, Material Resources, International Ministries, the Global Food Crisis Fund program, and Brethren Workcamps. GMS is under the leadership of Jay Wittmeyer, executive director, and Roy Winter, associate executive director, with office management from Kendra Harbeck.

### Brethren Disaster Ministries

“It was terrible. At one point I was like tired and couldn’t make it. I just told them to go and I would stay there, but I got helping hands and people carried me . . . over the mountains through the bushes to Cameroon.”

Vilica, a college student in Mubi, Nigeria, was one of hundreds of thousands fleeing for their lives as Mubi and the nearby headquarters of EYN were attacked by the Islamist militant group Boko Haram in late October. Just as Vilica was helped by her friends, Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) is called to be the hands and feet of Christ in a hurting world. BDM’s focus is on rebuilding homes, caring for children, and providing international relief in communities recovering from disaster.

#### Nigeria Crisis

EYN president Samuel Dali shared: “I keep wondering if we did not have the relationship with the Church of the Brethren . . . what could we have done with the present situation? Because our life support since this has happened has been the Church of the Brethren.”

Nigeria has a long history of religious-based violence, and the Church of the Brethren in the US has been supporting EYN through the Nigeria Compassion Fund for several years. A sum of \$253,071 was

raised through that fund in 2014. As the violence escalated in 2014 to horrific levels, the need grew for a much larger comprehensive response. After Rebecca Dali, Samuel Dali’s wife, shared passionately at Annual Conference, the whole church engaged in a special week of prayer and fasting in August. Brethren Disaster Ministries began providing emergency funds and supported the development of crisis response plans with EYN.

In October the Mission and Ministry Board boldly allocated an additional \$500,000 from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) and created the Nigeria Crisis Fund within EDF. The board stretched further and allocated another \$1 million for the crisis, with \$500,000 of these funds a matching challenge. The challenge was met by year-end through donations of \$506,100.

Even with this incredible support, the needs are far greater. As of early 2015, EYN estimates that about 8,000 members have died in the conflict and more than 170,000 members and hundreds of thousands more attending EYN churches are displaced. Nearly 70 percent of the church is displaced, including all of the national leadership and the seminary, Kulp Bible College. With 36 of 50 districts closed and 1,668 churches or

church branches burned or abandoned, the entire church is traumatized.

Joint planning meetings between the Church of the Brethren in the US and EYN led to a comprehensive response plan. The 2014-2015 part of the plan focuses on providing emergency food, water, and supplies; building long-term shelters for displaced families; supporting education for displaced children; and supporting trauma-healing workshops. The plan also provides support for EYN and its staff, so that they have the capacity to lead the church through this crisis.

The majority of the plan is implemented through the EYN crisis management team, with whom BDM is working closely. Four other partners are expanding this response to meet more need: the Center for Caring, Empowerment and Peace Initiatives; Lifeline Compassionate Global Initiatives; Women and Youth Empowerment for Advancement and Health Initiative; and Favored Sisters Christian Foundation.

Through these partners a significant response is under way—meeting human needs, providing temporary offices for EYN staff, and supporting EYN meetings and publications through grants of \$239,476 plus the \$195,196 from the Compassion Fund. This is a small start compared to the plans for \$2.8 million in activity in 2015 and the goal of \$11.2 million through 2019.

### **Children’s Disaster Services**

The small community of Oso, Wash., lost 43 residents and many homes after a massive mudslide in March 2014. CDS volunteers cared for children with intense feelings about the experience as they tried to make sense of why they survived. A mother of a young boy noted that she did not realize how important that play time away from the disaster was for him to begin to heal.

With only two large domestic disasters—resulting in 130 children cared

for by 14 volunteers—CDS was able to focus on leadership training. New associate director Kathy Fry-Miller supported seven workshops with 134 potential volunteers. Forty-one new and experienced project managers attended leadership training events. Fry-Miller also worked on the CDS Gulf Coast expansion project sponsored by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) agencies.

### **Home Rebuilding**

“People who did not come to worship regularly were starting to come to the fellowship dinners with their new brothers and sisters (BDM volunteers). We were learning a lot from the BDM volunteers, and falling in love with a new part of the body of Christ,” shared pastor Hillary Johnson Crute from Trinity United Methodist Church, the host church in Spotswood, N.J.

For a second year, BDM continued a major response to Hurricane Sandy. The recovery project in Toms River, N.J., is overseen by project leaders Tim Sheaffer and Kim Gingerich, as well as other volunteer project leaders. A second project was established in Spotswood in January 2014 with project leaders Steve Keim and Thom Deily. BDM was awarded a Red Cross Grant to underwrite up to \$280,100 of Sandy recovery expenses through March 2015. On a smaller scale, last summer BDM called upon volunteers from Illinois and Indiana to assist briefly with rebuilding several homes that were destroyed by a tornado in Gifford, Ill.

During 2014, 801 volunteers restored disaster-damaged homes at three sites in two states. They provided 57,704 hours of service valued at \$1.3 million on behalf of 83 families. Without a new major disaster to re-engage volunteers and perhaps because this work is focused in New Jersey, this represents the lowest number of volunteers in more than a decade.

BDM is developing partnerships with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ, which eventually may lead to joint disaster response project sites. The partnership was evident at the hands-on Disaster Project Leadership Training in Bayville, N.J., with 5 of the 13 participants coming from partner denominations.

### **International responses**

In a challenging year, Brethren responded to disasters and emergencies in 10 countries spanning Asia, Africa, Central America, Europe, and the Middle East. The multitude of conflicts in Africa and the Middle East are stretching the Brethren and all international relief agencies to meet a need much greater than our resources.

The year started with continuation of a large response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, carried out by partnering with Heifer International, Lutheran World Relief, and local organizations with \$175,000 in grants. Responding to flooding and landslides in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Honduras, and the Ebola outbreak in West Africa represent the natural disaster responses in 2014. The largest part of activities and financial support were in response to conflicts in Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Gaza.

### **Financial activity**

Donations to BDM, CDS, and the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) totaled \$1,790,054 in 2014, with the addition of \$172,091 from the Red Cross grant for Hurricane Sandy response, and \$38,000 from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for the CDS Gulf Coast work. This support provided for all BDM expenses, including staff, programs, and allocations for disaster response. The 2014 expenditures include \$594,187 for US responses, including Home Rebuilding and CDS, and \$784,097 for international responses.

### **Administration**

BDM is a collaboration of volunteers, districts, partners, and the office in New Windsor, Md. Roy Winter, associate executive director, provides overall direction and coordinates international responses. Kathy Fry-Miller is associate director for Children's Disaster Services. Jane Yount, coordinator, provides communications and volunteer coordination. Elizabeth Mullich, program assistant, handles office management with help from Darlene Hylton and BVS administrative volunteer Chris Luzynski. Jenn Dorsch, part-time temporary program assistant, came on board in October to support domestic projects and Nigeria Crisis communications.

## **Brethren Volunteer Service**

“Quiet. Still. Silent. Holy. These are all words that come to mind when I think of sacred space,” writes Ann Ziegler from her BVS location in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, where she is serving with Emanuel Children's Home.

“The Hogar de Niños is about as far from quiet and still as you can get. But holy . . . I do believe this place has the essence of

holy. This sacred space is not one of long periods of time for quiet meditation, but is a space that provides the holy healing power that is needed for these children. For me it has been a place of spiritual renewal, seeing the world through eyes of children. This sacred space screams of joy, laughter, and hope! And that same hope is what makes it holy.”

Ziegler was one of 67 active volunteers at year-end: 46 in the US, 13 in Europe, 5 in Latin America, and 3 in Japan. Volunteers were serving throughout the United States and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, El Salvador, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Japan, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland. There are over 100 active projects in the US and around the world. Fourteen members of the Church of the Brethren national staff are former BVSers.

At the Brethren Volunteer Service Luncheon at Annual Conference, BVS presented its annual Partners in Service Award to Walt Wiltschek, campus pastor and director of Religious Life and Church Relations at Manchester University, for his staunch support of BVS. He was leading senior high youth activities at Annual Conference and brought the whole group to the luncheon.

In a project called BVS Coast to Coast, Chelsea Goss and Rebekah Maldonado-Nofziger promoted BVS by riding their bikes across the country. They rode to Annual Conference and National Youth Conference, and visited churches, camps, BVS project locations, and many gracious hosts in between. Their trip, which covered 5,200 miles, started with feet in the Atlantic on May 1 and ended with feet in the Pacific on Aug. 18.

In January, Ben Bear rejoined BVS for a third year of service, this one as recruitment volunteer. He has started Connections Dinners, events that are co-sponsored by BVS and a local congregation where alumni,

friends, and others interested in BVS share stories of service.

In 2014, orientations were held at Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla. (winter unit), Camp Mardela in Denton, Md. (summer), and the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. (fall and Brethren Revival Fellowship units). These orientations and the mid-year retreats continued to be enriched through Volunteers Exploring Vocation, a program exploring vocation and God's calling. This program is facilitated by Dana Cassell and is made possible by a grant from the Fund for Theological Education and the Lilly Endowment.

Callie Surber resigned after seven years as orientation coordinator, the longest in this position since BVS shifted to three-week orientations in the early 1970s. She has led 23 orientations and oriented 372 volunteers, and co-led 14 BVS mid-term retreats, 4 end-of-service retreats, and 2 retreats in Central America. She was succeeded by Jocelyn Snyder, who served through BVS for two years in South Sudan.

Emily Tyler coordinates recruitment efforts, along with her role as workcamp coordinator. Kristin Flory and Todd Bauer are coordinators of the Europe and Latin America work, respectively. Chelsea Goss was the volunteer assisting orientation. Dan McFadden is director. The team received support in strategy and development from the BVS think tank, whose members are Jim Stokes-Buckles, Thomas Dowdy, Bonnie Kline Smeltzer, Jim Lehman, and Ben Walters.

### Brethren Workcamps

The theme "Teach with Your Life" encouraged participants to "get the word out"—not only through their words, but also through their demeanor, their love, their faith, and their integrity. A total of 140

youth and advisors, along with about 26 volunteer leaders, came together at eight locations across the country and in Haiti to study this theme, based on 1 Timothy 4:11-16.

The 2014 workcamp season—held only for junior highs and young adults because youth were attending National Youth Conference—was organized by Emily Tyler, coordinator, and Jenna Stacy, assistant

coordinator serving through BVS. In August, volunteers Theresa Ford and Hannah Shultz began organizing the 2015 workcamp season.

### Global Food Crisis Fund

In 2014, the Global Food Crisis Fund (GFCF) supported partners in Burundi, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nigeria, North Korea, the Philippines, Rwanda, and the United States. Total income to the fund was \$360,979, with the number of grants totaling \$186,456.

Grants supported several women's cooperatives, university researchers, registration and travel funds for GFCF partners to attend international agriculture conferences, clean water initiatives, work with displaced people, and church-based community gardens.

GFCF joined with other Bread for the World members in publishing the 2014 hunger report, *Ending Hunger in America*, and sent representatives to the Bread for the World 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in Washington, D.C.

The Going to the Garden initiative, a partnership with the Office of Public Witness, has grown to include church-based community gardens in 19 states plus the District of Columbia.

Beth Gunzel has stepped down as a member of the GFCF grant review panel and was replaced by Tara Mathur, who serves alongside Merle Crouse, Jeff Graybill, Jim Schmidt, and Jennifer Hosler.

### International Ministries

While all ministries are important, the Mission and Ministry Board has asked Global Mission and Service to prioritize its service ministries and focus on a specific area of human need or a selected geographical region for a prolonged period of time.

Since 2009, staff have sensed God's direction and timing to call the Church of the Brethren to embrace a large-scale, holistic outreach to Haiti. The Haiti mission involved all ministries of GMS and was successful because of the generous giving of the body and its willingness to volunteer and serve in various capacities. We can truly say that the homeless found shelter and the hungry found food. Moreover, the mission

resulted in an established Brethren presence in Haiti with trained leaders and a growing capacity for active service ministries in its own right in health, community development, and agriculture.

In 2014, GMS discerned the need to shift its focus from Haiti to Nigeria. While ministry in Haiti continues, the new mission focus on Nigeria was prompted by the escalation of violence and a complete breakdown of civil order in Lardin Gabas, the historic homeland of the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria.

Up until 2011, most attacks on the Nigerian Christian community came during riots and civil unrest. At the time, GMS responded with financial support to assist in

church reconstruction. In 2012, Islamic radicalism began to take a firm hold and assaults grew more strategic against the Christian community, as homes and businesses were intentionally attacked. In response, GMS created the Nigeria Compassion Fund to supplement EYN's efforts to provide support to families, especially clergy, who incurred personal loss. GMS also supported EYN's efforts to systematically build "higher walls" for security and proactively worked at multi-faceted interfaith peace initiatives.

By late 2013, the violence coalesced into a political insurgency as Boko Haram, designated a terrorist organization by the United States, began an all-out attempt to establish a new Islamic caliphate under strict sharia law in EYN areas. Beginning in the far northeast corner of Nigeria, community after community came under Boko Haram tyranny throughout 2014. EYN used its influence to plead with various government entities for protection and civil order. Even after hundreds of girls were brutally abducted from a school in Chibok and the international community called for action, government forces offered little in the way of reliable support.

EYN watched as places like Michika, Garkida, Lassa, Waka, Gavva, and Mubi fell one after another. On Oct. 29 Kwarhi itself was attacked and EYN had to abandon its headquarters and flee. By the end of the year some 80 percent of EYN districts were severely affected, thousands of its members killed, and tens of thousands were displaced, including all of senior EYN leadership.

After attending the EYN annual conference in April and hearing firsthand the stories of suffering and displacement, GMS staff determined that the situation was becoming a full-scale humanitarian crisis that was quickly deteriorating far beyond the capacity of EYN to manage. Adopting the

theme of "Displaced but Not Abandoned," GMS began to strategize on a long-term response that would not only mobilize the US church to fully embrace the vast need, but also would seek assistance from ecumenical partners and humanitarian organizations that could guide EYN in disaster risk management. By the close of the year, the relief effort began to take shape—as detailed in the Brethren Disaster Ministries report.

Like the outreach to Haiti, the Nigeria Crisis will require a multi-faceted response over a prolonged period of time from all ministries of GMS. Broad support from the church is needed if the Brethren voice for peace is to continue to speak in this context of intolerance and violence.

#### *Haiti*

L'Eglise des Frères Haitiens (Church of the Brethren in Haiti) held its second annual conference in August and elected Freny Elie general secretary. Ludovic St. Fleur of Miami, Fla., continued to provide spiritual direction to the nascent denomination of 20-plus churches and numerous preaching points, while Ilexene and Michaela Alphonse served as full-time mission staff managing the Brethren Ministry Center and coordinating theological education, respectively. Romy Telfort of the Gonaives congregation reported that 61 persons accepted Christ at their Christmas revival service.

The social service ministry of L'Eglise des Freres has grown its organization with the employment of three full-time staff to provide services of agriculture extension, community development, and community health in remote areas where the Brethren have a presence. The mobile medical clinics conducted 48 clinics in 2014. The endowment for the program has now reached \$305,484.

### *Spain*

In October, Iglesia de Los Hermanos España (Church of the Brethren Spain) also held its second annual conference. Santos Terrero of Una Luz en las Naciones church in Gijón continued as the president of the denomination. There are currently seven growing congregations, and other congregations are seeking to be part of the movement.

In order to provide organizational development guidance for the Spanish Brethren, GMS formed an advisory committee consisting of Fausto Carrasco, Carol Yeazell, Joel Peña, and Jaime Diaz.

### *India*

In May, Wittmeyer attended the First District Church of the Brethren gathered for its 99<sup>th</sup> annual conference, its first since the Supreme Court of India ruled Sept. 30, 2013, that the First District is the legal successor to the Church of the Brethren in India and owner of all the Brethren-built churches, church properties, and parsonages. The spirit of the assembly was not one of exuberance, but rather fatigued joy. Speaker after speaker recalled the great pain and sacrifice that First District members undertook in the midst of harsh opposition and isolation to keep the small community of churches going in the Brethren tradition. Trustee Magan Lal Gameti, age 99, shared the loneliness of sitting at a table as missionary after missionary tried to convince him that the vote for unification to form the Church of North India (CNI) was binding for all and he was being disobedient to not join CNI. The conference tasked the ministerial leadership committee with addressing the issue of clergy low remuneration, currently set at 5,000 rupees (\$100) per month.

In that same trip, Wittmeyer also met with Church of North India leadership in four separate meetings, including a special

trip to New Delhi to meet with the general secretary of CNI, Alwan Masihi, and the newly installed bishop of Gujarat, Sylvans Christian. The meetings were excellent, but deeply painful, as CNI shared of the difficulty church members were facing after being evicted from the church buildings in which they had worshiped for decades. A book was presented to the Church of the Brethren that contained the brief testimony of thousands of CNI members from 19 congregations that detailed how their families had been Brethren for decades, many for more than 100 years. A common question was asked: “If the Church of the Brethren USA did not recognize the First District until 2002 at its Annual Conference, whom did it regard as its legal successor before that?”

To work at relationship-building in the middle of this struggle, Stan Noffsinger and Jay Wittmeyer attended the 15<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the Synod of Church of North India, held Oct. 2 in Nainital, Uttarkhand. The journey included a trip to Gujarat to meet with hundreds of CNI congregants in Valsad, Vyara, and Ankleshwar, to worship together, hear their struggles, and see firsthand the challenges they faced in finding a location for worship.

### *Dominican Republic*

GMS joined the dedication of La Descubierta church on the border with Haiti on May 10. The diverse, bilingual congregation is a voice for peace in an environment of distrust and animosity. The membership of the Iglesia de Los Hermanos is evenly split between indigenous Dominicans and immigrant Haitians. While there are tensions in the country, the church demonstrates unity in leadership and participation. Board member Gilbert Romero joined the small delegation for the event.

The president of Iglesia de Los Hermanos, Onelis Rivas, verbally resigned his position in October. The executive committee, somewhat fatigued over his leadership, accepted that resignation and set a special meeting to appoint a new president. Rivas later qualified his action and refused to sign a written resignation. As the year closed, there continued to be conflict in the denomination.

### *Brazil*

Marcos and Suely Inhauser provided oversight to the eight Brethren fellowships and one main congregation in Brazil. Alexandre Gonçalves is a student at Bethany Theological Seminary with support from GMS.

Pastor Jose Tavares of the Rio Verde congregation continued to reach out to in prison ministries and into *favelas*. A significant change for the congregation was to begin a community garden project as a means for former inmates to learn new skills as they transition into civilian life.

### *South Sudan*

Every report on South Sudan, it seems, begins with the qualifier “Due to the ongoing conflict program activities were limited,” and such is this report. Civil war between the Nuer and Dinka, and others, restricted travel, and displaced significant parts of the population. It forced civilians to flee to safer regions, including to Eastern Equatorial State, where Global Mission staff Athanasus Ungang serves in partnership with the African Inland Church (AIC). Besides providing relief aid, Ungang focused on his main responsibilities as head pastor for the Torit AIC English Service and manager of the Brethren Peace Center. A highlight in the continued development of the facility was the drilling of a well, which will make it possible to host workcamp teams.

Outreach to the remote village of Lohilla progressed. Ungang was able to appoint two evangelists to start a congregation and began the construction of a school and church. At the close of the year, the school building was being framed in Kenya to be shipped by truck. The community made most of the blocks for the walls.

### *Developing relationships*

L’Eglise Des Frères-Congo is an unofficial partner in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In September, GMS staff attended its annual planning conference and led several workshops related to strategic planning. The small denomination seems to be moving forward and its relationship with the Church of the Brethren grows.

Representatives from all seven of the churches joined the two-day event, which included a community outreach event, child dedications, and five baptisms in Lake Tanganyika. Staff also visited three projects that received strong Brethren support in the year, each focused on Twa pygmy communities, in the DRC, then in Burundi and Rwanda. All expressed a desire for the Brethren to have a broader ministry in these countries.

### *Other activities*

The Global Mission witness in North Korea, where hunger and famine plague the country, continued as Robert and Linda Shank served in the spring and fall semesters at the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST). Linda is teaching English, and Robert is acting as dean of agriculture. Five years into their service, PUST now has graduates who are qualified to address food security issues through scientific research, such as DNA marker-assisted breeding to establish rice varieties that are tolerant to submergence, salt, and drought.

In Vietnam, Grace Mishler continued her position in the department of social work at the National Vietnam University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City, with a broad vision to enable the blind to take an active part in society. Mishler is legally blind and a strong witness for the disabled. As part of her ministry, she established the Eye Care Project to provide specialized medical services for those suffering from vision loss and without the economic means to address their issues.

#### *Significant partnerships*

As founder, the Church of the Brethren has a permanent seat on the board of directors of Heifer International, a position filled by Jay Wittmeyer. He also served on the executive committee and chaired its governance committee. In 2014, numerous celebrations were held to mark Heifer's 70<sup>th</sup> year, with special focus on the seagoing cowboys.

In 2014, 30-plus Brethren congregations were involved in Foods Resources Bank, an ecumenical partner that allows locally sponsored growing projects to pool their funds to bring about significant change in the agricultural sector in the developing world. Jay Wittmeyer replaced Jeff Boshart as the Church of the Brethren member on the board.

#### *Mission workers*

Because of the violence in Nigeria, Carl and Roxane Hill finished their term at Kulp

Bible College and did interpretation on behalf of GMS in many US churches through September. They were then called to serve in Elgin as directors of the Nigeria Crisis Response. Carol Smith's term of service in Nigeria also finished this quarter, as her placement as a Montessori teacher did not progress as hoped. Robert and Linda Shank continued to serve in North Korea, Grace Mishler in Vietnam, and Athanasus Ungang in South Sudan. Alan and Kay Bennett joined GMS as mission workers to serve in Honduras with Proyecto Aldea Global, working as a civil engineer and nurse instructor, respectively. Kayla and Ilexene Alphonse anchor the Haiti program. Dave and Linda Byers signed up to serve through GMS and build homes with the Bahamas Methodist Habitat Project.

#### *International visitors*

After a busy Annual Conference with international guests from Nigeria and from both communions from India, GMS continued to provide support for their visit and then welcomed more visitors for National Youth Conference. Nineteen visitors from six sister churches participated in NYC. GMS also sponsored a postcard-writing advocacy campaign at NYC that resulted in 2,000 postcards being sent to Secretary of State John Kerry, asking him to work on behalf of the kidnapped students from Chibok.

## **Material Resources**

Material Resources responded to needs in 28 states and 27 countries. The distribution center staff facilitated 3,575 shipments totaling 915 tons of medicine, medical supplies, quilts, health kits, school kits, baby kits, cleanup kits, and other supplies valued at \$9.7 million. Loretta Wolf directed the

program, while Scott Senseney and Terry Goodger coordinated warehouse and office operation with support from office assistant Glenna Thompson. Warehouse staff Cristian Villegas, Winni Wanionek, Brenda Giles, and driver Ken Bragg prepared the shipments. Ed Palsgrove began driving on a

regular basis in the late summer. Volunteer Marianna Burkholder offered assistance to volunteers as well as sorted and counted medical supplies for receipt into IMA World Health inventory.

Through Brethren Disaster Ministries, the Church of the Brethren shipped over 17,000 pounds of canned chicken, and 18,000 pounds of household kits, blankets, baby kits and hygiene kits to Proyecto Aldea Global in Honduras. Church World Service kits and blankets were shipped to Alabama,

Iowa, Michigan and Kentucky in response to storms, floods, and tornadoes and to 16 states for use by homeless or migrant workers. Cooperation between Lutheran World Relief, Church World Service, and International Orthodox Christian Charities allowed needed items to ship to Greece, Syria, Bosnia, Armenia, and Jordan. Lutheran World Relief also cooperated with International Relief and Development to send quilts and kits to Serbia and Yemen.

## CONGREGATIONAL LIFE MINISTRIES

What would inspire a busy college student to initiate a blog for other youth focused on living as radical followers of Jesus? Why National Youth Conference, of course! The Dunker Punk movement, born out of Jarrod McKenna's Spirit-led call at NYC and cultivated by a website curated by Emmet Eldred, is calling young people to a deeper commitment to being disciples of Christ in their daily lives.

In addition to McKenna, presenters at NYC included Rodger Nishioka, Kathy Escobar, Ted Swartz, Ken Medema, Samuel Sarpiya, Jennifer Quijano, Katie Shaw Thompson, Leah Hileman, Jeff Carter, and youth speakers Alison Helfrich, Katelyn Young, and Laura Ritchey. Under the theme "Called by Christ: Blessed for the Journey Together," based on Ephesians 4:1-7, NYC drew 2,386 participants, including 1,643 youth from 22 districts. Over 1,500 youth and advisors engaged in workshops during the afternoons—when they weren't hiking or participating in a service project. Becky Ullom Naugle, director of youth and young adult ministries; volunteer coordinators Katie Cummings, Sarah Neher, and Tim Heishman; and a national youth cabinet

planned and carried out the event with a host of additional volunteers.

Included among NYC's young people were international guests and Brethren youth from the many diverse congregations around the denomination. Their participation was representative of the increasing attention being given to the "Separate No More" statement from Annual Conference, calling the church to become more intercultural.

"The Next Step in Unity: The Love We Have for One Another" was the theme of a three-day gathering in March at Principe de Paz church in Santa Ana, Calif. Based on John 13:34-35 and a unity statement adopted in 2007 by Pacific Southwest District, this event was shaped around worship and deep conversation. Gimbiya Kettering, coordinator for intercultural ministries, organized the gathering. Hispanic leaders also came together at the General Offices in November to explore additional ways to nurture their ministries within the Church of the Brethren. Overall, in 2014 165 people attended four intercultural ministry events.

Nearly 100 people from 16 districts participated in "Plant Generously, Reap Bountifully: Toward an Intercultural Future," the biennial church planter training

event, held at Bethany Seminary. Keynote speakers Efrem Smith and Alejandro Mandes addressed the topics of mission, immigrants, and cultural diversity. Dan Ulrich offered a Bible study based on the conference text, Revelation 9:1-17. There were 27 workshops and eight “key idea” presentations. Worship and prayer infused the gathering, with Annual Conference moderator Nancy Heishman delivering the opening sermon.

The Vital Ministry Journey (VMJ) continued to influence 83 participating congregations. Two new Bible engagement resources were added to VMJ. One was written by members of Stone Church of the Brethren and focuses on the letter to the Philippians. The second was written by Stan Dueck, director for transforming practices, to engage the topic of evangelism. The Congregational Vitality Survey, a supplemental resource related to VMJ, provided feedback to four congregations on their areas of vitality and growth. A resource on spiritual gifts discernment, *Vital Passions, Holy Practices: A Bible Study and Discovery Process for Individuals and Congregations*, was completed and released for use. *Basin & Towel* published three issues of a four-part series focusing on vital congregations defined as communities engaged in a rhythm of gathering, calling, forming, and sending.

Nine college students were oriented to a summer of vocational exploration through Ministry Summer Service, a partnership between Youth and Young Adult Ministries and the Office of Ministry. Four of those students were also trained for their role as the Youth Peace Travel Team, which has additional sponsorship by the Office of Public Witness, On Earth Peace, the Outdoor Ministries Association, and Bethany Seminary.

Sixty-two young adults gathered May 23-25 at Camp Brethren Woods for a Young

Adult Conference with the theme “Coming Home: For I Know the Plans I Have for You,” based on Jeremiah 29:11-13. Worship, fellowship, and dialog featured leadership from Emily Shonk Edwards, Joel Gibbel, Kelsey Murray, Marcus Harden, Eric Landram, Bethany Clark, and Jessica Strawderman. Through Brethren Volunteer Service, Kristen Hoffman joined the Youth and Young Adult Ministries office to assist with the planning of National Junior High Conference and Christian Citizenship Seminar for 2015.

Fifteen members of the spiritual directors’ network gathered at Shepherd’s Spring Outdoor Ministry Center for their annual education and renewal retreat. Jane Vennard led the retreat based on her book *Fully Awake and Truly Alive: Spiritual Practices to Nurture Your Soul*. Josh Brockway, director of spiritual life and discipleship, coordinated the event.

CEOs and a few chaplains and board members attended the annual meeting of the Fellowship of Brethren Homes. This year the gathering was held on the campus of Brethren Village near Lititz, Pa. The forum is an opportunity for networking among Brethren retirement community leaders and staff from the Church of the Brethren and Brethren Benefit Trust.

The National Older Adult Conference (NOAC) planning committee gathered at Lake Junaluska to begin preparation for the Sept. 7-11, 2015, gathering. With the guidance of Kim Ebersole, director of older adult and family life ministries, they selected the theme “Then Jesus Told Them a Story . . .” based on Matthew 13:34-35. Laura Whitman entered Brethren Volunteer Service to provide assistance with NOAC.

Congregational Life Ministries (CLM) staff provided deacon training for 377 deacons and church leaders through nine different events, mostly coordinated and led by director of deacon ministries Donna

Kline before she retired in August. Additionally, staff led a host of workshops focusing on congregational vitality, with over 170 congregations represented. Congregational Life was a sponsoring partner and planning team contributor for “Church and Post-Christian Culture,” an event shaped around a conversation among Anabaptists and evangelicals.

With Dueck’s leadership a series of 18 webinars kicked off in partnership with Urban Expressions U.K., Bristol Baptist College, Mennonite Trust, and the Anabaptist Network. Six sessions each are focusing on Anabaptism, urban missions, and families and youth. The Youth and Young Adult Ministries office partnered with the Workcamp office, Bethany Seminary, and On Earth Peace for online sessions for youth leaders. Web-based learning was extended further through a partnership with the Plains to Pacific Roundtable and McPherson College. Brockway provided workshops on spiritual practices.

At Annual Conference CLM sponsored 11 insight sessions on topics including church planting; congregational vitality; child protection; discipleship formation; intercultural church; ministry with children,

youth and families; and worship. The Intercultural Luncheon attracted 115 guests, who were challenged and inspired by Chris Smith of Covenant Baptist Church Ministries, in Euclid, Ohio. A celebration of the Vital Ministry Journey at a dinner event welcomed nearly 100 people who heard a panel of VMJ participants share their stories, as well as a scripture telling by Robert Alley. Pre-conference training for deacons focused on the topics “Restoring Hope: Transforming Lives and Congregations” and “The Role of Congregations in Mental Health.” Mutual support groups were facilitated. A new church reception was sponsored so that conferencegoers could welcome three new fellowships.

A project to tell the story of urban congregations within the United States resulted in the first of six reports and articles by researcher and author Jennifer Hosler. These stories are appearing in a variety of places, including *Messenger*.

Jonathan Shively serves as executive director for Congregational Life Ministries, and Randi Rowan is program assistant. The staff of Congregational Life Ministries regularly preaches and teaches in local congregations, district events, and denominational venues.

## ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

The staff of Organizational Resources support all the programs and ministries of the board. The Brethren Historical Library and Archives and the areas of Buildings and Grounds, Finance, and Information Technology care for the critical systems and processes that help the church achieve its mission. Zigler Hospitality offers a welcoming space at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.

LeAnn Harnist, executive director of Organizational Resources and treasurer, led the unit until leaving her position mid-January 2015, after more than 10 years of employment. Ed Woolf, manager of gift operations and assistant treasurer, handles special gift instruments, coordinates insurance matters, and supports the other areas in the unit.

## Brethren Historical Library and Archives

BHLA, the official archival repository of the Church of the Brethren, keeps alive Brethren heritage by preserving and making available the church's historic materials. The archives provided the following reference services in 2014: 260 written requests, 134 telephone requests, 35 inquiries from Church of the Brethren agencies, 44 on-site researchers, and tours for a total of 755 people, which includes groups traveling to National Youth Conference. BHLA acquired 94 volumes and approximately 140 cubic feet of other materials.

Important new collections include the papers of William and Miriam Cable, diaries of Russell Mason, Garner family correspondence (letters of Kathy Garner, missionary to India, with her parents in Illinois), and sermons of Robert Mock. Records also were received from Southern Plains District.

William Kostlevy directs BHLA. Andrew Pankratz concluded a year-long internship in June at which time Kelley Brenneman took the intern position. Other volunteers during the year included Jonathan Keeney and Rosalita Leonard.

## Support Services

Marvin Greener and Gerald Karn provide oversight for the care and maintenance of the board's 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, Md. He oversaw several projects including a complete roof and gutter replacement on Windsor Hall. Other team members include Felix Hill, maintenance assistant, and Ron Anders, who provided part-time support. Tom Druck served as a full-time volunteer.

The Finance department provided budget support, financial reports, cash management, and staffing for the Annual Conference and National Youth Conference treasurer's offices. Nancy Watts, donation and accounts receivable specialist, provided input and support for the donor database conversion. Pat Marsh is accountant, Barb York serves

as the accounts payable and payroll specialist, and Barbara Watt is the financial operations specialist in New Windsor. Marsh also served as mentor for Ministry Summer Service intern Renee Neher.

A new fiber optic cable was installed at the General Offices during the year. Information Technology director Mark Hartwig oversaw the transition, which increases connectivity speeds for communications. Don Knieriem provides database and registration support. Francie Coale manages information technology at the Brethren Service Center.

Much work went into transitioning to a new donor database. The scale of the project required effort from many employees of the organization. Woolf, Knieriem, Harnist, and Hartwig played significant roles in managing and implementing the new software.

### Zigler Hospitality Center

The Zigler Hospitality Center provided meals, lodging, and meeting space at the Brethren Service Center. Around 10,890 meals were served to some 5,390 volunteers, guests, and employees during 2014. Overnight accommodations were made for 1,689 bed nights.

Cori Hahn, hospitality coordinator, provided direct oversight of the program, managing kitchen, lodging, and meeting facilities until her resignation in October. Mary Ann Grossnickle filled the position of hospitality coordinator after Hahn. Janet

Comings, lead cook, coordinated the kitchen along with assistant cooks Fay Reese, Charlotte Willis, and Elaina Cutsail, and kitchen assistant John Frisby.

Resident volunteers provided more than 6,280 hours of support. Gail Druck served as program assistant in the hospitality offices. Hosts and hostesses during the year included Phyllis Ingold, Carl and Evelyn Detwiler, Betty Runion, Becky Motley, and Paul and Meggie Jonas. Volunteer kitchen assistants included Maria Capusan and Ed Motley.

### Financial Results

The Church of the Brethren's ministries are dependent upon the generous support of congregations and individuals. The board spent \$12.6 million toward all ministries in 2014.

The denomination's Core Ministries include most of the ministries in Global Mission and Service, Congregational Life Ministries, Organizational Resources, and the Office of the General Secretary. Total giving from congregations and individuals to Core Ministries in 2014 was \$2.7 million, down from \$3 million in 2013. Core Ministries ended 2014 with \$441,000 expense over income and a \$2.1 million net asset balance.

Giving to the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) and the Global Food Crisis Fund was up significantly over 2013, totaling \$1.8 million and \$361,000, respectively. By year-end, \$506,300 had already been received for the Nigeria Crisis Fund, a new fund within EDF that was announced at the October 2014 board meeting.

The denomination's self-funding ministries receive income primarily through sales, fees, and registrations. Two ended the year with a negative balance and two with a positive one. Brethren Press ended the year with \$35,000 expense over income, and similarly Material Resources finished with \$38,000 expense over income. A first-time year-end appeal made it possible for *Messenger* magazine to end with \$14,000 income over expense, and the Conference Office closed the year with \$118,000 income over expense.

In 2014, the board's investments, including endowments and reserves, increased to \$29 million. Endowment gifts totaled \$343,000, with the Brethren Health Ministries endowment receiving \$176,000.

[The above amounts were provided prior to completion of the 2014 audit. Complete financial information is available in the Church of the Brethren, Inc., audit report, published June 2015.]

## OFFICE OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

### Leadership Team

Guidance and leadership for the denomination is provided by the Leadership Team, which is composed of the moderator, moderator-elect, secretary, and general secretary. The Leadership Team met in person five times and via telephone twice in 2014 to coordinate legal, corporate, and church polity matters of the Church of the Brethren. Specifically, the team:

- reviewed the actions of the 2014 Annual Conference, assigned responsibilities to committees and agencies, and replied to all who brought queries to the Standing Committee;
- tracked previous decisions of Annual Conference to verify implementation;
- met with the Council of District Executives to discuss the process for preparing queries for Annual Conference, listen to each other's concerns about the viability of districts, and receive counsel about engaging the church in conversation about the Brethren Service Center property;
- reviewed proposed business items for the 2014 and 2015 Annual Conferences;
- reviewed timelines for the Standing Committee vision committee and the Mission and Ministry Board's strategic planning committee's work so they will coincide with each other;
- received a dividend gift from Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company. Beneficiaries of this gift included the Brethren Mutual Aid Agency Share Fund, the EYN Compassion Fund, and the 23 districts of the Church of the Brethren;
- reviewed current circumstances where church polity on holding property "in trust" is being challenged;
- updated the church's *Manual of Organization and Polity*, including the addition of the new ministerial leadership polity to chapter 5;
- responded to inquiries and concerns from individuals and congregations regarding Annual Conference decisions, polity, and statements; and
- prayed together for the Mission and Ministry Board and its work, for the denomination and its vital mission in this world of chaos and confusion, and for our brothers and sisters in the global bodies of the Church of the Brethren.

### Annual Conference

The July 2-6 Annual Conference in Columbus, Ohio, brought together 2,518 Brethren (713 delegates and 1,805 non-delegates). The theme, chosen by moderator

Nancy Heishman, was "Living as Courageous Disciples." The conference included 63 insight sessions, 46 special meal events, six business sessions, five worship

services, and age-level activities for children and youth.

Conference director Chris Douglas, conference assistant Jon Kobel, and registration coordinator Debbie Noffsinger coordinated more than 300 volunteers, many of them from the host district of Southern Ohio. The district team was led by onsite coordinators Helen and Burt Wolf.

Non-delegates had the opportunity to spend a day touring German Village in Columbus. Historian Ken Kreider led the

tour, talking about German immigrants to America as the group saw shops, homes, and churches dating back to the 1800s. All participants were invited to a Saturday evening family festival that included two options—an intergenerational family event led by Linetta and Joel Ballew with assistance from the Outdoor Ministries Association, and a concert featuring Brethren musical groups Blue Bird Revival, Community of Song, and Mutual Kumquat.

### Brethren Press

The highlight of the year for Brethren Press was the launch of *Shine: Living in God's Light*, a new children's curriculum co-published with MennoMedia. Other denominations endorsing the curriculum are the American Baptist Churches, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Mennonite Brethren Church, Moravian Church, and United Church of Christ. Users also come from a range of other denominations, including various Baptist groups and the Episcopal Church. The centerpiece of Shine is a large story Bible called *Shine On*, available also in Spanish as *Resplandece*. For the youth audience, the two publishers updated their Generation Why elective series.

In other publications, Brethren Press published *Behind the Drama: The Old Testament You Missed*, by Eugene Roop;

*Real Rest*, a Lenten devotional by Duane Grady; *Awake*, an Advent devotional by Sandy Bosserman; the quarterly *A Guide for Biblical Studies*, and the 2014 Yearbook. Brethren Press also produced the Living Word Bulletin Series, Annual Conference Wrap-up and Sermons DVDs, and the *Seed Packet* newsletter.

Publishing house employees are James Deaton, managing editor; Jeff Lennard, director of marketing and sales; Jeanne Clements, Yearbook specialist; Karen Stocking, production and finance coordinator; warehouse-shipping specialist Steve Bickler, and customer service specialists Margaret Drafall and Diane Stroyeck. Stroyeck also serves part-time as *Messenger* subscription specialist. Both Brethren Press and Communications are overseen by publisher Wendy McFadden.

### Communications

The Nigeria Crisis Response was a major area of work across Communications, with development of a website, extensive coverage by News Services, and features in *Messenger* magazine. Press releases sent to a wide media audience, ecumenical partners,

and other Christian denominations and groups garnered good attention, including an article in the *Christian Century*, and helped in raising significant funds for the Nigeria Crisis Response.

Other large efforts by News Services were coverage of Annual Conference and National Youth Conference, through both photography and stories. The work is led by director Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, aided by many contributors from across the denomination, and a team of volunteer photographers and writers who serve at Annual Conference and other special events.

Under the leadership of editor Randy Miller, *Messenger* addressed topics such as women in ministry, peacemaking in the Middle East as well as in US schools, a radical openness to “the other,” and challenges and opportunities faced by urban churches. An issue with a special full-color section on National Youth Conference was sent to all NYC participants.

Faced with rising costs and declining income, *Messenger* invited subscribers to make financial contributions. The strong response brought the magazine into the black for 2014, and enabled staff to move ahead immediately with plans to print in full color.

The web team developed apps for Annual Conference and National Youth Conference, set up a blog for the BVS Coast to Coast project with a custom-designed map feature, supported an increasing number of webinars from Congregational Life Ministries, and contributed to integration of the new Raisers Edge database. The team facilitated e-mail messages for different offices, including

new monthly ones for Intercultural Ministries and Going to the Garden. The number of usable e-mail addresses increased 34 percent to just over 24,000.

On brethren.org, sessions were up 20 percent over the previous year, with page views up 16 percent to 1.4 million. Mobile users represent about one-third of the total. The Church of the Brethren blog is now used by BVS, the Office of Public Witness, and Nigeria Crisis Response in addition to Congregational Life Ministries, Youth Peace Travel Team, and others. Blog sessions were up 88 percent in 2014 as a result.

Website producer Jan Fischer Bachman and media support specialist Russ Otto work closely with database specialist Don Knieriem. Together they provided support for web pages, registrations, surveys, online forms, photos, digital *Messenger*, social media, and the Shine curriculum website, as well as less-visible projects such as the Ministry Profiles website and Human Resources portal.

The story of John Kline was the framework for the Church of the Brethren multimedia report for Annual Conference. This was timely, since 2014 was the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War martyr’s death and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the children’s book *The Middle Man*. Communication about the church’s ministries also was conveyed through a large exhibit at Annual Conference, a magazine-style report to church members, and social media.

## Donor Relations

The Office of Donor Relations’ mission is to undergird the church’s ministries through giving from congregations and individuals. Activities of the department 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.

During 2014 director John Hipps and departmental staff continued strengthening connections with both congregations and

individuals. Following Mandy Garcia's resignation as associate director of donor communications, Matthew DeBall was

promoted to the position of coordinator of donor communications.

### Human Resources

Major progress was made on updating the organization's procedure manual to bring it into compliance with requirements and to better reflect organizational policy. The medical plans for BVS volunteers were transitioned to a new ACA-compliant plan underwritten by Cigna. Mary Jo Flory-Steuery, associate general secretary, oversees the office, with Deborah Brehm serving as office manager.

New salaried staff in 2014 were Kathy Fry-Miller, associate director Children's Disaster Services; Mary Ann Grossnickle, interim coordinator of hospitality at the Brethren Service Center; Carl Hill and

Roxane Hill, co-directors of the Nigeria Crisis Response; Matt DeBall, coordinator of donor communications; Jocelyn Snyder, coordinator of BVS orientation; and Debbie Eisenbise, director of intergenerational ministries.

Total regular full-time and part-time employees and BVS volunteers serving Church of the Brethren programs: 75  
Ethnic/racial composition: Asian-1; Black-1; Hispanic-1; Caucasian-71; two or more races-1. Total contract, shared, and temporary employees, as well as program volunteers: 20

### Office of Ministry

"Holy WOW!" "This even could have gone a couple more days!" "My head is spinning!" These were some of the responses to the Ministers' Association Pre-Conference Continuing Education Event. "Preaching the Lively Word: Text and Context in Today's Pulpit" was led by Thomas G. Long, well-known author, preacher, and Bandy Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology at Emory University.

The heart of the work of the Office of Ministry is calling, forming, credentialing, placing, and sustaining ministerial leadership "to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11). The year kicked off with the January Clergy Women's Retreat, which drew together 45 women from across the denomination.

Plans were developed and implemented for the 2015 ordination review process in consultation with the Council of District Executives. Fifty-four Healthy Boundaries (ministerial ethics) training sessions were held for clergy, as required by the Ministerial Leadership Paper. The Office of Ministry purchased an ID card printer to provide quality ID cards for ministers. Numerous challenges and opportunities being faced by our clergy and our districts provided the opportunity for Mary Jo Flory-Steuery, associate general secretary, to build relationships, serve as consultant, and offer a listening ear.

Flory-Steuery provides leadership for the office and is assisted by Dana Cassell, staff for ministry formation; Margie Paris, program assistant; and Jean Clements. Flory-Steuery works closely with the

Ministry Advisory Council, the Ministers' Association Officers and the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee to provide a system that fosters living well, life-long learning, and peer support for clergy.

After nearly seven years of work, a new Ministerial Leadership Polity for the Church of the Brethren was approved at Annual Conference. Transition and implementation began immediately with orientation sessions held with all district ministry committees. The new polity took effect Jan. 1, 2015.

In 2014, 47 individuals (33 men and 14 women) were ordained, 60 (40 men and 20 women) were licensed to the ministry, and three individuals were received through transfer of ordination from other denominations.

Serving as consultant and assisting districts with calling district executive staff, Flory-Steury worked with Northern Indiana District, which called Torin Eikler, and Pacific Southwest District, which called Russell Matteson. Puerto Rico continued its transition to becoming the 24th district. Consultations and visits took place with Idaho, Pacific Northwest, South Central Indiana, Southern Ohio, Southern Pennsylvania, Atlantic Southeast, Michigan, and Shenandoah districts. Flory-Steury also began developing cohorts of district executives for orientation and peer networking.

### **Ministry Assistance Fund**

The Ministry Assistance Fund began the year with a balance of \$18,298.92, received donations of \$6,813.00, disbursed \$24,781.16 in 16 grants, and ended the year with \$330.76. This fund is totally dependent on generous donations from congregations, ministerial groups, and individuals and offers greatly needed assistance to ministers with short-term financial needs. Three grants were provided out of bequest funds

restricted to retirees in the amount of \$3,926.70.

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

At the Brethren Academy, women and men are equipped for leadership in the church through four training programs: Training in Ministry (TRIM), Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM), Seminario Biblico Anabautista Hispano (SeBAH-CoB), and district-based Academy Certified Training Systems. The Brethren Academy also offers continuing education opportunities through several venues to those who have completed seminary degrees or ministry training programs.

Fifty-seven students from 19 districts participated in the TRIM program. Eleven students and their supervising pastors from eight districts participated in EFSM. Nine TRIM students and one EFSM student completed programs. The Academy organized two residential classes at Bethany Seminary, one class hosted at McPherson College, and four online courses. A unit on preaching was offered in conjunction with the Ministers' Association Pre-Annual Conference Continuing Education Event. West Marva and Southeastern districts are working on re-certification processes for their ACTS programs.

Atlantic Northeast district had 12 students and Pacific Southwest district had 6 students participating in the SeBAH-CoB program. One student in Puerto Rico continued her program in a Mennonite-Church of the Brethren cohort.

Executive director Julie M. Hostetter assisted with the Healthy Boundaries training sessions across the denomination; 1,732 CEU certificates were issued to those participants. Ten pastors completed the Supervision in Ministry training. The annual on-campus and online Clergy Tax Seminar was provided by the Brethren Academy. For

the third year, a Women in Leadership series was offered at Annual Conference.

Fran Massie serves as administrative assistant. Carrie Eikler began as half-time coordinator of TRIM and EFSM ministry

training programs. Debbie Roberts, assistant professor of Reconciliation Studies at Bethany Seminary, coordinates the SeBAH-CoB program.

### Public Witness

The Office of Public Witness is “seeking to live the peace of Jesus publicly,” which has led to many endeavors to embody Christ’s peace in the world. In the past year efforts have been made to increase collaboration with congregations and to strengthen relationships with global partners.

In response to the crisis in Nigeria, staff have collaborated with other denominational staff, EYN members, and congregations to discern how to best support our Nigerian brothers and sisters. To keep the issue in the forefront with government officials, staff met with EYN member Zakaria Bulus and State Department officials in Washington, D.C., and facilitated meetings between Mission and Ministry Board members and their congressional representatives. Most recently, congregations were encouraged to send their representatives a petition regarding Nigeria, with Public Witness staff delivering the petitions to the various representatives’ Washington offices.

The Going to the Garden initiative is growing, and since 2012 has given grants to

27 congregations for creation or expansion of community gardens in an effort to address issues of food insecurity, poverty, and environmental degradation. BVSer Katie Furrow has joined the office to give more focused attention to this ministry. Her work includes issuing additional grants and connecting with previous recipients to monitor the diverse work being done in congregations across the denomination.

Director Nathan Hosler traveled to Haiti and the Dominican Republic with Jeff Boshart, Global Food Crisis Fund manager, to build relationships with Brethren in both countries who face pressing issues of statelessness, housing, and hunger.

Hosler and BVSer Bryan Hanger, advocacy assistant, have continued work on issues such as poverty, immigration, military spending, Israel-Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and drone warfare through congressional meetings in Washington. They helped plan an Interfaith Conference on Drone Warfare, held in January 2015 at Princeton Theological Seminary.

### 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 meets in March, October, and just prior to Annual Conference.

In 2014, significant time was devoted to board development work for the board as a whole and for individual members. The board:

- engaged in board development and governance sessions during the March and October meetings, led by

Rick Stiffney, president/CEO with MHS Alliance;

- sent four board members to the BoardSource Leadership Forum in Washington, D.C.;
- sent two members, along with staff from the Office of Public Witness, to meet with congressional representatives regarding the crisis in Nigeria;
- sponsored one board member's participation in a Sankofa Journey, a cross-racial experience offered by the Evangelical Covenant Church;
- approved a new process for calling the chair-elect of the board;
- affirmed position descriptions for the audit and investment, board development, and executive committees;
- affirmed a board member covenant;
- called Susan Liller to an additional five-year term of service on the board.

In response to the escalating crisis in northeastern Nigeria, the board issued "A Resolute Fast and Fervent Prayer: A Resolution Responding to Violence in Nigeria," which was forwarded to Standing Committee and approved by Annual Conference, and allocated \$100,000 from the Emergency Disaster Fund for a comprehensive joint response by the Church of the Brethren in the US and EYN (the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). In October the board approved a grant of up to \$500,000 from the Emergency Disaster Fund to the Nigeria Crisis Fund and allocated up to \$1 million for the Nigeria Crisis Fund, of which \$500,000 was made available as matching funds.

Addressing concerns about the future of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., the board hosted an Annual Conference hearing and led delegates in a

time of table talk in order to solicit feedback; approved a capital expenditure of up to \$80,000 for necessary repairs and renovations to Windsor Hall; and authorized the officers of the Church of the Brethren to move ahead with marketing the property.

The board celebrated receipt of the church's largest ever dividend gift from Brotherhood Mutual insurance, in the amount of \$174,984; dedication of the donation of the personal papers of Dale Brown and Warren Groff to the Brethren Historical Library and Archives; and recognition of general secretary Stan Noffsinger's 15 years of service to the Church of the Brethren.

The board also:

- received a recommendation from the Mission Advisory Committee and began a wider conversation on mission philosophy;
- studied the continued decline in congregational giving and strategized ways to change the trend;
- affirmed changes to the Church of the Brethren strategic plan and its extension through 2020 to coincide with the Annual Conference visioning time frame;
- invited staff to bring creative proposals for use of up to \$250,000 per year for five years to expand ministry in the areas of congregational vitality and church planting;
- approved Global Food Crisis Fund grants of \$86,000 (for agriculture development in Haiti) and \$30,000 (for the Going to the Garden initiative);
- approved Emergency Disaster Fund allocations of \$140,000 (for rebuilding and livelihoods work in the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan) and \$40,000 (for continuing

building project in Toms River, N.J., where Superstorm Sandy caused destruction in 2012).

In 2014-2015, the elected membership of the Mission and Ministry Board consists of 7 women and 10 men. One member is Hispanic, one is Jamaican American, and 15 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 is general secretary of the Church of the Brethren. Nancy Miner serves as manager of the Office of the General Secretary.

## Conclusion

In this sobering year, one might think the light would be hard to see. But in the midst of lament, the church in the US has been able to carry the light alongside the church in Nigeria. Individuals and congregations across the country have prayed and fasted and followed the news, and they have given generously. In strengthening one another, we are reminded that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:5).

For this support, and for your involvement in all the ministries of the Church of the Brethren, we are deeply grateful. Your participation is making a difference both far away and as close as your own congregation. On behalf of the members of the Mission and Ministry Board and the staff and volunteers of the Church of the Brethren, we thank you.

*Becky Ball-Miller, chair*

*Stanley J. Noffsinger, general secretary*