



Church of the Brethren Annual Report of 2021

Published in June 2022



Church of the Brethren

Report of the Church of the Brethren

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

—2 Corinthians 5:7

The Church of the Brethren phrase “Continuing the work of Jesus” speaks to the steadiness of our witness over many years. Today, as disruption seems to have taken up permanent residence in our lives, that idea can feel like an aspiration as much as a description. How does the church persevere when so much is unclear? We walk by faith.

It is in the nature of most people to make plans—in fact, it’s an essential part of the work of church staff and board members. But these times remind us to hold those plans lightly. This report of the ministries of 2021 is filled with details that, like the previous year, are characterized by twists and turns that couldn’t always be seen ahead of time. But what is sure is the steadfastness of our convictions and the faithfulness of God, who walks with us.

GLOBAL MISSION

The Global Mission ministries of the Church of the Brethren foster relationships between the US church and Brethren and others around the world in order to serve God’s children and share the good news that God loves all. Globally, the Church of the Brethren is growing rapidly, and people are excited about the ways the Brethren seek to understand and apply the teachings of the Bible.

New co-executive directors were hired in 2021, following the work of interim directors Norman and Carol Spicher Waggy and interim office manager Roxane Hill. Eric Miller began in March, working remotely from China, and his wife, Ruoxia Li, joined in May after they moved to the US. They combine the roles of executive director and office manager.

While Miller and Li represent the US church to the denominations worldwide, important work is done by numerous volunteers who work with and pray for Brethren globally. Country advisory teams consisting of US and international members are key to growing relationships between our churches. Many across the denomination receive prayer requests from around the world once or twice a month. Mission advocates engage districts and congregations with the work around the world.

Many churches hold fundraisers for Global Mission work, responding to needs around the world for building churches, training church leaders, holding

evangelism meetings, improving health care, and developing agriculture and other sources of income for churches. Individuals also support this work financially. In 2021, grants totaling \$724,554 were made from the Global Mission budget. While most travel has been curtailed because of the pandemic, the Global Mission office has supported individuals’ short-term and long-term visits.

In 2021, Miller and Li attended meetings of Brethren World Mission, a group that raises funds to support the international work of the church. They also preached, led worship, and shared in Sunday school about Global Mission work, as did other long-term volunteers familiar with the global Brethren.

Miller joined a Brethren Disaster Ministries trip to Haiti following the August 2021 earthquake, witnessing the value of working with local church partners to rebuild a devastated community. He also traveled with staff colleague Jeff Boshart and volunteers to the Dominican Republic for a meeting to address a division in the church there.

Global Church of the Brethren Communion

The Global Church of the Brethren Communion is a partnership of churches with equal voice, with meetings currently hosted online by the US church. In 2021, these meetings mostly addressed Brethren identity, and what brings the global churches together. The group developed and distributed a survey on Brethren identity to Brethren around the world.

Members of the communion affirmed the importance of Brethren values and highlighted the importance of service and meeting people's needs in connection with sharing the gospel. Many global Brethren also value the limited hierarchy in their churches. The group discussed other issues, such as the need for theological training and scholarships.

Desiring to expand relationships worldwide, Li convened a global women's group. It is hoped that a formal structure can be established and that an in-person meeting can be held in 2022. A fellowship in Honduras that has had association with the Church of the Brethren for 30 years has expressed a desire to join the Church of the Brethren and was added as a provisional member of the Global Communion.

Around the world, the church is growing despite numerous challenges. Haiti has struggled through a very difficult year with an earthquake, hurricane, assassination of a president, and gang activity. Yet the church perseveres and grows despite the great challenges. In the Dominican Republic, the church is divided, largely along ethnic lines, but each group has continued to serve in their communities and to plant churches. The groups both have expressed the desire to reconcile and have met together and continue to work toward reunion and improving church governance.

The church in Venezuela saw the illness of its founding leader, who resigned in December, and new leaders are working to rewrite the bylaws to strengthen the young denomination. The church in Brazil provides leadership for the Global Communion. A long unused property was sold in hopes of using funds to develop a new property in a different part of the country where there are still Brethren congregations. Brazilian Brethren see a great need in their country for a church different from others in their country.

The church in Spain emphasizes theological education and held successful open-air revivals with the approval of authorities. The church is establishing fellowships in Spain and elsewhere in Europe, most recently the Netherlands.

In Africa, Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) experiences violence and kidnappings. The Global Mission office continues to collect funds to rebuild churches destroyed by violence. EYN president Joel Billi visited churches in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

The church in Rwanda has been especially active developing outreach, education, and building an official church headquarters. The growing churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda engage in agricultural and community projects along with church planting. Rwandan and Congolese churches both responded to a volcanic eruption on the border between the two nations. Contact has been made with a group in Burundi that registered as a Church of the Brethren there in 2016 but is not affiliated with other Brethren-related fellowships in the country.

Global Mission staff maintain relationships with two groups in India, the Church of North India and the Second District Church of the Brethren. The Brethren there attend the Global Communion but are unable to receive financial support from the US due to Indian regulations. The churches in India suffered greatly from COVID in 2021.

Relationships

The Global Mission office also relates to a number of ministries that are not churches.

In South Sudan, the Church of the Brethren supports a major project that includes a Peace Center. The tribe hosting the center demanded that the land be returned to them, and the center was also ransacked. Global Missions staff Athanasus Ungang was cleared of charges after being arrested along with others following a murder. After a difficult year, the work in South Sudan will be reevaluated to determine how to best go forward.

When Miller and Li began in their role as co-executives, they left a post in China where they had established a hospice program at You'ai Hospital, where Brethren established missions in 1908. The hospice program is now managed by local staff. A Christian from Hong Kong has moved into their former home to start a new program working with special needs children.

Global Mission provides insurance for the Chet Thomas family in Honduras, and collects donations for the vision project in Vietnam where Grace Mishler previously worked.

Global Food Initiative

Farmers throughout the world rely on advice and support from a network of people to improve their practices, and to access the seeds, tools, veterinary and agronomic services to feed their families. The Global Food Initiative (GFI) is privileged to be part of that network—a network made of and enhanced by churches, volunteers, and donors. The program is managed by Jeff Boshart.

Volunteers from the US serve on the committee that determines where funds will go, while others offer agricultural expertise and travel overseas as consultants. Brethren leaders in other countries also volunteer their time and talents in support of the farmers in their congregations and communities. The impact of a grant is multiplied when everyone in the network shares their financial and intellectual resources.

In 2021, the activities of the GFI Fund included grants to international partners dealing with supply chain issues caused by public health restrictions, increased fuel prices, natural disasters, and violence due to civil unrest in some cases.

Total income to the fund was \$214,958. The sum of all funds given to both international and domestic partners was \$121,855.

International grants supported agricultural development work in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Honduras, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda. Projects included animal raising, tree planting, soil conservation, water harvesting, appropriate scaled mechanization, and crop production. International allocations totaled \$97,032.

In the US, grants were given to churches and partner organizations in Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. These domestic grants are connected primarily to church-based community gardens or food pantry ministries. Total allocations of domestic grants equaled \$10,500.

The GFI supports advocacy work on food sovereignty through yearly contributions to Bread for the World, Growing Hope Globally, and the National Farm Worker Ministry, with contributions tallying \$14,143.

SERVICE MINISTRIES

The pandemic brought heightened human need across the globe, while also making it more difficult to safely send volunteers and provide programing. However, the Service Ministries programs focused on God's admonition to be strong and courageous while setting aside fear and dismay (Joshua 1:9) and ended up sending more volunteers and meeting more needs than in 2020.

Service Ministries programs equip and send volunteers, resources, and material aid to demonstrate God's love and hope for the people around the globe. These programs are carried out under the leadership of executive director Roy Winter, who also leads Brethren Disaster Ministries.

Brethren Disaster Ministries

Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) brings hope, healing, and God's love to those affected by disasters. An unusual combination of the pandemic, the volcano eruption in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Haiti earthquake responses, along with a major Afghan resettlement effort and the typical responses to hurricanes and tornadoes, made for a challenging year.

The pandemic grant programs, funded through the Emergency Disaster Fund, had significantly less activity than the year before, providing two grants to

US congregations and global grants to Brethren in Venezuela, Nigeria, and Mexico. Grants were also made to partners IMA World Health (for India) and Church World Service. In total, \$84,800 assisted community-based ministries serving people who were made vulnerable by the pandemic.

BDM office manager Sharon Franzén facilitated the pandemic grant program and supported churches interested in resettling Afghan evacuees, with Darlene Hylton providing database support.

Home Rebuilding

Despite the pandemic and the constraint of opening only one rebuilding site at a time, 829 volunteers, including 39 project leaders, contributed 4,345 hours of service to survivors in four states. This resulted in over \$992,050 in cost savings for labor in these communities.

Jenn Dorsch-Messler, BDM director, oversees the Home Rebuilding program. In May, Kim Gingerich moved from her role as a long-term project leader to the program assistant staff position. Evan Ulrich worked on the BDM rebuilding sites, serving through Brethren Volunteer Service.

“This year will be one of the most life-changing, growth-filled, richest times of my life,” said Ulrich on the DunkerPunks podcast. “I don’t think I will gain more wealth . . . with any job that pays any more money.”

Rebuilding from Hurricane Florence continued on the Coastal North Carolina project in Pamlico County, N.C. Long-term project leaders Steve Keim and Kim Gingerich supported the site during the January through April term, and Lynn Evans joined Keim as a new long-term leader when the site reopened for November and December. In 2021, 255 volunteers assisted 28 families on this project.

From May to October, volunteers returned to the Dayton, Ohio, area to complete recovery from tornadoes in 2019. Sammy Deacon and Rex Miller were long-term leaders for this site, where 528 weekly volunteers repaired six homes for families and completed work on five other homes that will be offered for purchase by renters displaced by the tornadoes. A portion of this project was funded by grants from the Greater Dayton Disaster Relief Fund of the Dayton Foundation and the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD).

Kandace Stephens, whose Trotwood, Ohio, home had been destroyed, told the *Dayton Daily News*: “More work has been accomplished on the house in [the] past three weeks by Brethren Disaster Ministries volunteers and the recovery group’s paid contractors than during the entire time since the tornado.”

Near Omaha, Neb., a two-week response in October aided people whose homes were damaged by flooding in 2019. Seven families were served by 23 weekly volunteers and three project leaders.

A four-day local response was led by Northern Plains district disaster coordinator Matt Kuecker to complete repairs on seven homes in Iowa affected by the August 2020 derecho. Twenty-three daily volun-

teers contributed 456 hours. BDM received a grant from NVOAD and Lowes to fund the majority of the construction materials and volunteer expenses.

Children’s Disaster Services

Despite the challenges and risks brought by the pandemic, 2021 was a big year with big impact for Children’s Disaster Services. A large focus was refugee and migrant crises, associated with both the southern US border and the evacuation of Afghanistan. Additional teams deployed because of natural disasters, with the major response being to Hurricane Ida in Louisiana.

Overall, CDS deployed 75 volunteers for 134 days. A total of 13,728 children were served, representing significantly larger numbers than in the past 10 years, and a record number for associate director Lisa Crouch to manage simultaneously.

Two fall volunteer trainings were held with an unusually low number of 22 participants. A hybrid Critical Response Childcare (CRC) course was offered to 11 current volunteers following a brief CRC team response to the Surfside, Fla., building collapse in June. CRC teams are some of the only national crisis response teams to deploy to mass casualty disasters to assist children.

CDS ended the year with 737 certified volunteers. Program assistant Sherry Chastain provided administrative support until her resignation in December.

International response

Early in 2021, international ministries focused on home and water system rebuilding in Honduras, which had been devastated in 2020 by hurricanes Eta and Iota. Grants totaling \$125,000 to Church World Service and Proyecto Aldea Global (Project Global Village) assisted this recovery as well as a chicken-raising program facilitated by BDM with funds donated by the Southern Pennsylvania and Mid-Atlantic district meat canning project.

A response to the May eruption of Mount Nyiragongo near Goma, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Gisenyi, in Rwanda, included food distributions in both countries and a home rebuilding program in the DR Congo, funded by grants totaling \$55,000.

The powerful August earthquake in southwestern Haiti destroyed many communities, including most houses in Saut Mathurine, home of the newest Church

of the Brethren congregation in Haiti. Notably, the houses BDM built there after Hurricane Matthew in 2016 were undamaged. A major relief and rebuilding program is being carried out in partnership with L'Eglise des Freres d'Haiti (the Church of the Brethren in Haiti) and Church World Service, through grants totaling \$129,726.

Agricultural development was the focus of a \$24,500 grant to the Global Mission project in war-torn South Sudan. Smaller grants assisted relief and recovery programming of partners and sister churches in Burundi, Ecuador, Indonesia, Lebanon, Myanmar, Syria, and Yemen, totaling \$172,500.

Nigeria Crisis Response

The Nigeria Crisis Response continues to aid those affected by the violence from Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria, which began in 2009 and resulted in the displacement of 70 percent of members of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria).

Working in partnership with EYN and the European organization Mission 21, BDM is helping lead an extensive program that includes sponsorship of four camps for internally displaced persons, food distributions, medical assistance, livelihood training centers for widows and orphans, seeds and fertilizer, new wells for drinking water, education assistance for orphan children, trauma workshops, training of one-on-one counselors, and home repairs for the most vulnerable. Through grants of \$146,460 in 2021, this

ministry has provided significant recovery in more stable regions of Nigeria where EYN churches, families, and communities are rebuilding.

Unfortunately, lawlessness has spread beyond northeast Nigeria, making continuing recovery difficult and causing the displacement of some families for a second or third time. The Islamic State West Africa Province is now larger and more violent than Boko Haram. Attacks are causing more burning of churches and homes, killing, kidnapping, and banditry. Food shortages and malnutrition are regular challenges.

The kidnapping of EYN pastors and headquarters staff for ransom has escalated alarmingly. The pandemic has exacerbated the situation, with the lawless population becoming bolder and more ruthless. In the midst of this crisis, EYN has remained faithful to its spiritual roots and continues to grow, starting new churches and whole new districts, mostly where displaced families resettle.

Financial details

Donations to BDM, CDS, the Nigeria Crisis Fund, and the Emergency Disaster Fund totaled \$1,719,361 in 2021. This giving provided for all BDM expenses, including staff, programs, and allocations for disaster response, totaling \$1,451,819. Expenditures included \$651,186 for international responses, \$173,110 for US responses (including Home Rebuilding and CDS), and a \$52,000 grant to Church World Service for the special Afghan resettlement program.

Brethren Volunteer Service

Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) welcomed new staff person Zechariah Houser after the resignation of Hannah Shultz. As coordinator of short-term service, he is responsible for BVS recruitment and coordination of the FaithX ministry (formerly Workcamps). Director Emily Tyler oversaw BVS, including FaithX, throughout 2021, but resigned in February 2022.

BVS accompanied nine new volunteers through orientation, resulting in 32 volunteers serving in four countries and 13 states. Orientations run by Pauline Liu, coordinator of long-term volunteers, with BVSe assistants Kara Miller and Michael Brewer-Berres, were held virtually in the winter and in person at Inspiration Hills Camp in Burbank, Ohio, in the summer. Staff adapted procedures to accommodate the ever-changing virtual format and maintained some of those changes when returning to in-person orientation.

The annual Partners in Service Award was given to Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren and bcmPEACE in Harrisburg, Pa.

Faith Outreach Expeditions (FaithX)

The theme "Step Out: Seeking New Paths," based on Isaiah 43:19, encouraged FaithX participants to seek new paths in their faith and step out into their own faith journey. Eighty-six youth and adults participated in seven workcamps around the country. As they studied this theme, they had fun, made friendships and memories, and served their communities in meaningful ways.

Due to COVID, participants served in areas close to their homes. FaithX trips were organized by assistant coordinators Chad Whitzel and Alton Hipps, serving through BVS.

Material Resources

Material Resources staff prepared 105 shipments totaling 528 tons of hospital supplies, quilts, health kits, school kits, baby kits, cleanup kits, and other supplies. Valued at \$6.3 million, these supplies reached 21 states and 21 countries. Volunteer Jerry Duble baled 44 tons of cardboard for recycling.

Loretta Wolf directed the program, while Scott Senseney and Glenna Thompson coordinated warehouse and office operations. Warehouse staff Richard Best, Melissa Fritz, Brenda Giles, and Trent Turner packed items for shipping. Ed Palsgrove drove 18,161 miles, delivering shipments and picking up donations. Medical supplies were sorted and prepared for shipment by Winni Wanionek and Jeffrey Brown.

The pandemic significantly decreased the volume of donations, requiring a staff reduction of one person, Trent Turner, and a temporary pause in accepting volunteers to process relief kits.

On behalf of Church World Service (CWS), kits and/or blankets were sent in response to hurricanes Delta, Elsa, Florence, and Ida; tornadoes in Kentucky and Texas; and floods in Kentucky, Louisiana, New York, and North Carolina. CWS and International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) jointly shipped supplies to Armenia, Georgia, and Romania.

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) shipments sailed to Angola, Burkina Faso, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Iraq, Jordan, and Mali. LWR and IOCC jointly sent kits to Armenia, Jordan, Serbia, and Syria. Hospitals supplies were shipped to Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, and Sierra Leone on behalf of Brothers Brother Foundation. One container filled with supplies was shipped to the American Baptists in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

Ministry in a pandemic can hardly be called normal. However, Discipleship Ministries staff adapted historical programs while also responding with creativity to the questions of our day.

For Discipleship Ministries, much of the year is shaped by national and regional events. In 2021, those events were transformed into vibrant virtual experiences. In April, co-coordinators Stan Dueck and Joshua Brockway worked with staff colleagues Nancy Soltenberger Heishman and Roy Winter to create an online Leadership Summit on Wellbeing. Participants received prerecorded presentations on topics such as mental, relational, emotional, financial, and spiritual health. They then gathered in the evenings for a live question-and-answer session with each presenter.

Also in April, Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, hosted an online Christian Citizenship Seminar. Thirty participants from seven districts met by Zoom for two hours in the evening for conversations about faith, scripture, and public policy. Ullom Naugle worked with the Young Adult Steering Committee to lead a virtual Young Adult Conference. Forty-six participants from 11 districts met to consider the many ways God's grace continues to unfold, even in troubling times.

LaDonna Sanders Nkosi, director of Intercultural Ministries, hosted conversations on healing racism. In the first quarter she welcomed 185 people in #ConversationsTogether with Drew Hart. She also

held a Healing Racial Trauma retreat with author Sheila Wise Rowe.

The September National Older Adult Conference was held online, with over 600 people registered. NOAC welcomed Lisa Sharon Harper, Karen Gonzalez, Ken Medema, and Ted Swartz to the virtual stage along with Church of the Brethren pastors Christy Dowdy, Paula Bowser, Andrew Wright, Eric Landram, and Don Fitzkee. Participants still joined in workshops, field trips, ice cream socials, and even camp reunions. NOAC is a labor of love for scores of volunteers, especially the planning committee, which provided invaluable leadership in the shift from an onsite to a virtual gathering.

Brockway facilitated a continuing education workshop with a Chicago-based group called Diversity 2 Inclusion. The Discipling Our Imagination participants engaged the material through recorded and live sessions over three weeks. This was an extension of the foundation of webinars that staff have organized for years, and allowed for expanded content and more group-building.

Discipleship Ministries supports the ministries of local churches in a variety of ways. Dueck, Brockway,

and Nkosi preached at several congregations, joining through Zoom or recorded sermons. Staff provided consultation and coaching for congregational leaders, exploring leadership competencies and opportunities for community outreach, and leading faith formation retreats.

Discipleship Ministries awarded several grants and scholarships, including a new program on racism. The state of Illinois established a grant program in 2021 for organizations within the state to address the issue of racism, and one of the grants was awarded to the office of Intercultural Ministries. While funds from the state were disbursed to congregations in Illinois, Discipleship Ministries awarded additional grants from its annual budget to Church of the Brethren congregations outside the state. Overall, 13 Healing Racism grants were awarded to congregations around the country.

Program assistant Randi Rowan worked with the nursing scholarship committee to award three scholarships in 2021. Continuing education grants totaling over \$4,000 were awarded to four Brethren-related retirement communities.

The work of Discipleship Ministries supports the denomination in making disciples, forming leaders, and transforming communities. This work is expanded through important partnerships within the Church of Brethren and with organizations such as the Anabaptist Disabilities Network, Christian Community Development Association, and Parish Collective. All these events and resources are made possible by generous Church of the Brethren members who share from their financial resources and contribute countless hours of volunteer time.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

The mission of Organizational Resources is to support all staff and ministries of the Church of the Brethren. Shawn Flory Replogle is executive director, and Ed Woolf is director of finance and treasurer. Organizational Resources includes the Brethren Historical Library and Archives, Buildings and Grounds, Finance, and Information Technology.

Brethren Historical Library and Archives

The Brethren Historical Library and Archives (BHLA) is the official repository for Church of the Brethren records documenting the ministry of the church. Director Jennifer Houser began in August, succeeding William Kostlevy after his retirement. Allison Snyder, who served a second year as BHLA intern, was instrumental in planning several virtual library tours on social media, highlighting historical artifacts and documents within the collection.

Even with pandemic restrictions, the Archives provided the following services: 320 written requests, 87 phone requests, and 14 requests through social media. BHLA received many collections yet to be processed. Among the collections received and processed were the papers of Samuel Harley, Church of the Brethren pastor, and materials from Harl Russel that document mission work in Ecuador.

Buildings and Grounds

Salvador Campero and Francie Coale oversee the care and maintenance of the Church of the Brethren properties in Elgin and New Windsor, respectively. Lee Marsh is maintenance assistant in Elgin, and Felix Hill is maintenance assistant in New Windsor.

At the beginning of 2021, both locations continued to experience prolonged closures, and most staff worked from home. Eventually, staff were able to return to buildings at their discretion, while following guidelines for face coverings and social distancing.

The General Offices in Elgin hosted those leading the virtual Annual Conference. Nearly 2,200 donation boxes were received on behalf of Church World Service and transferred by semi-trailer to New Windsor. A failure in the cooling system extended the building shutdown until a new system could be installed.

In New Windsor, general upkeep projects included replacement of external drains, removal of several trees, and replacement of a sidewalk railing. Mechanical and security systems received regular and required upgrades.

Finance

The Finance Team was one of the departments that continued to work in the building even as most staff were working from home. This provided useful stability to the rest of the organization.

Ed Woolf, director of finance and treasurer, manages estate giving, split-interest gifts, pastors housing fund accounts, corporate credit card accounts, and corporate insurance policies, and he provides financial, budget, and accounting services. Pat Marsh, accountant and assistant treasurer, oversees

the annual audit and provides budget support, financial reports, and cash management services.

Lynn Phelan, accounts payable specialist, processes and reports payments and funds transfers. Barb Watt, financial operations specialist and payroll manager, provides accounts receivable, accounts payable, and financial reporting services to staff in New Windsor. And Nancy Watts, donation and accounts receivable specialist, manages invoicing and the receiving of donations and gifts.

Information Technology

The Information Technology team provides computer, telephone, internet, and audiovisual support for staff. Francie Coale oversees information technology at the Elgin and New Windsor facilities. Joshua Rowan was hired as Information Technology specialist, based in Elgin, in August. The team ensures that staff have access to a secure computer network,

ample server storage space, and the hardware to carry out their work whether from home or office.

The team provided background support for the virtual Annual Conference, which was led from the General Offices.

Financial results for 2021

Total giving to Core Ministries was up \$37,441 from 2020. Congregational giving totaled \$1,594,423, a decrease of \$88,469 from the prior year, while individual giving totaled \$699,960, an increase of \$125,910. Despite the increase in giving, total income to Core Ministries finished the year \$132,787 below budget.

Due to program limitations and travel restrictions caused by the pandemic, the Church of the Brethren saw a significant reduction in program expenses this past year and finished the year \$542,392 below budget. As a result, Core Ministries ended the year with a net surplus of \$209,605. Some funds were able to be set aside for potential budget shortfalls in the future.

A \$100,000 special distribution from the Gahagen Trust to be used for expenses related to children's curriculum, along with some staff costs shifted temporarily to Core Ministries, helped Brethren Press close the year with a surplus of \$118,580. In Material Resources, a significant drop in processing and service fees led to a deficit of \$20,583 despite additional income in 2021. With the move to a virtual Annual Conference in 2021, the Conference

Office had lower expenses and finished the year with a surplus of \$45,974.

Both the Emergency Disaster Fund and the Global Food Initiative Fund saw an increase in donations this past year. With the return of disaster auctions, donations to Brethren Disaster Ministries totaled \$1,719,361, an increase of \$582,374. Giving to the Global Food Initiative Fund totaled \$214,958, an increase of \$9,081.

Despite the continued volatility and uncertainty surrounding 2021, total investments increased over \$5.4 million to finish the year at \$41.6 million. Total net assets were \$48.2 million, an increase of \$5.9 million from the start of the year. Providing mutual support for the larger church, the Church of the Brethren issued grants from the Ministry Assistance Fund, Emergency Disaster Fund, Global Food Initiative Fund, Brethren Faith in Action Fund, and other designated funds.

[These amounts were provided prior to the 2021 audit. Complete financial information is available in the Church of the Brethren, Inc., audit report published in June 2022.]

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

The general secretary of the Church of the Brethren, David Steele, serves as staff for the Mission and Ministry Board, overseeing the employees and ministries of the Church of the Brethren and representing the church in its various ecumenical commitments. Nancy Miner is manager of the Office of the General Secretary.

Mission and Ministry Board

The Mission and Ministry Board is the board of directors of the Church of the Brethren, carrying out the direction set by Annual Conference. After a year of conducting business primarily online via Zoom, the board met in person at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., for its summer meeting and again in October, with an option for members to participate virtually. Business sessions included reports on finances, ministry areas, committees, and denominational agencies. The meetings also included worship, prayer, and fellowship.

The board's work was guided by a new Strategic Plan, adopted in July 2020. A major focus early in the year was an assessment of the organization's skills, resources, and programs, which resulted in a declaration of priorities to align denominational ministries with the plan. In response to financial concerns about Brethren Press, the board approved moving the publishing house into the denomination's Core Ministries beginning in 2022, ending many decades of self-funding status.

Other work guided by the Strategic Plan included a review of organizational policies and procedures; approval of a new communications policy; appointment of a new Stewardship of Properties task team to consider questions about property management at the General Offices and the Brethren Service Center, including further assessment of Material Resources; and affirmation of new initiatives toward recognizing racial injustice and understanding discipleship.

The board engaged in two development sessions on topics related to the Strategic Plan: Church of the Brethren member and theology professor Drew Hart and staff member LaDonna Sanders Nkosi led a session on healing racism. Bethany Seminary faculty member Dan Ulrich led a session on New Testament models of giving.

Next steps in responding to the "Living Together as Christ Calls" query were approved, centered on the board's recently approved priority to develop a program on healing and reconciling relationships within the church.

The board approved \$177,000 in Emergency Disaster Fund grants for emerging needs and another \$470,717 for ongoing projects, including \$210,000 for the Nigeria Crisis Response. The Executive Committee approved an additional \$47,500 in grants for domestic and international COVID-19 response and \$26,270 in Global Food Initiative grants. Board-approved capital expenditures were \$55,000 for a truck for Brethren Disaster Ministries and \$270,000 for replacement of the chiller at the General Offices.

The eligibility of camps for Brethren Faith in Action grants was extended through 2021, as was the option for camps and congregations to request a waiver of a matching funds requirement. Grants awarded to congregations and camps in 2021 from this board-designated fund totaled \$90,871.

The board saw an unusual amount of turnover this year as the terms of five members ended following Annual Conference and six new members were welcomed. The large turnover was due in part to the postponement of the 2020 Annual Conference elections until 2021.

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

Office of Peacebuilding and Policy

The Office of Peacebuilding and Policy maintained a strong Brethren voice for peace and justice in Washington, D.C., during a critical year for peacebuilding.

In July, Naomi Yilma completed a year of Brethren Volunteer Service, wrapping up work on economic peacemaking, US-Africa policy, and global vaccine access, among other things. She passed the baton to a number of new arrivals who picked up where she left off and also explored new areas in need of peacebuilding.

Intern Angelo Olayvar, who joined the office in the spring, dedicated his time to researching and expanding work related to weapons sales and transfers as a part of present-day war and military engagement. He carried on the historical Brethren peace witness in the modern era of militarism. Fall intern Rachelle Swe provided new capacity for addressing US-China policy and organized educational resources for the denomination in the form of webinars available on the office's Facebook page.

Long-term projects, including the Death Row Support Project (DRSP) and Brethren representation to the United Nations, surged on in 2021, spearheaded by volunteers Rachel Gross and Doris Abdullah, respectively. Gross worked with Northwestern

University students to make new pen pal assignments, forge relationships with state abolition groups, and increase DRSP's social media presence. It was encouraging to see Virginia abolish the use of the death penalty and executions across the country decrease.

Abdullah provided updates on UN efforts to combat COVID-19 and the climate crisis, and challenged the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy to speak out against the denial of human rights to Muslim minority groups around the globe.

Susu Lassa, former BVSer, served as the Church of the Brethren representative to the board of Creation Justice Ministries and wrote on racial justice from this role. BVSer Galen Fitzkee, who joined the office in the fall, has dug into work on Latin America and immigration policy, and also updated resources on conscientious objection.

Director Nathan Hosler sat on numerous boards—such as Heifer International, National Farm Worker Ministry, and the National Council of Churches—and has deepened ecumenical and interfaith relationships in these roles. He has spoken and written on weapons sales and transfers.

Annual Conference Office

The year was characterized by challenge and change: The church held its first-ever virtual Annual Conference. Chris Douglas retired at the end of September after more than 35 years on the denominational staff, including 12 years as director of the Annual Conference office. Rhonda Pittman Gingrich was hired as the new director, beginning in August. And longtime registration assistant Debbie Noffsinger took on expanded responsibilities as the Annual Conference assistant.

The difficult decision to shift to a virtual conference was made in January 2021 following guidance from the CDC, epidemiologists, and the event planning industry. The Sheraton Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, N.C., allowed the Church of the Brethren to cancel without paying the \$415,086 in penalties stipulated by the contract. As part of the negotiations, the church signed a new contract for 2025.

Once the decision was made, staff and the Program and Arrangements Committee pivoted to plan for the virtual event, contracting with Covision, Inc., to

provide the virtual event platform. This company facilitated compelling vision conversations with iPad technology in 2019.

While there were a few technical difficulties and it certainly wasn't the same as gathering in person, the Covision platform—in conjunction with videography by David Sollenberger and his crew and webcasting by Enten and Mary Eller—made it possible to conduct business, offer insight sessions and networking groups, enjoy concerts, and share in worship. A plenary presentation by Tod Bolsinger and Bible studies by Michael Gorman, originally scheduled for the canceled 2020 Annual Conference, enhanced the experience. Registration totaled 519 delegates and 705 nondelegates.

In an effort to keep the denomination connected during challenging times and to empower the denomination to “venture forth boldly as a family of faith,” the Program and Arrangements Committee also planned and hosted a virtual denominational worship service in February 2021.

While staff were concerned that the year would end with another deficit, there was instead a surplus of almost \$46,000. This helped offset the 2020 deficit and replenish the contingency fund. Three factors played a role in shaping a positive financial picture: the convention center was generous in negotiations; expenses for a fully virtual conference were considerably less than those for an in-person or hybrid conference; and a number of meetings usually hosted by the Annual Conference office took place online rather than in person.

Nevertheless, it is hard to measure the less tangible costs of not being able to greet and talk with one

another face-to-face, engage in more meaningful ways around business, and lift voices together in praise and worship.

Immediately following Annual Conference, planning began for 2022. The Program and Arrangements Committee was guided by both a thoughtful approach to planning an in-person event in the midst of the pandemic and the mission statement, “Annual Conference exists to unite, strengthen, and equip the Church of the Brethren to follow Jesus.”

Brethren Press

Two new publications from Brethren Press highlighted values essential to the Church of the Brethren. *Hoosier Prophet: Selected Writings of Dan West*, edited by William Kostlevy and Jay Wittmeyer, conveys West’s commitment to peace education, service, and simple living. *Maria’s Kit of Comfort*, written by Kathy Fry-Miller and David Doudt, with illustrations by Kate Cosgrove, tells the story of a child experiencing the care of Children’s Disaster Services.

Books and other resources are edited and shepherded through the publishing process by managing editor James Deaton. The devotionals for Lent and Advent, which set sales records this year, were *The Wild Way of Jesus*, by Anna Lisa Gross, and *Do Not Be Afraid*, by Angela Finet. The Covenant Bible Studies Series added *Life of Moses*, by Herb Smith, and *The Circle of Paul*, by Mary Jessup.

Marketing and sales director Jeff Lennard was key in Brethren Press involvement in denominational conferences. The publishing house participated in the online Annual Conference by setting up a virtual bookstore, including the latest in a long run of Conference mugs, and leading an equipping session on children’s faith formation. The Annual Conference Wrap-up and Sermons videos were offered as both DVDs and downloads. Brethren Press also arranged a virtual bookstore for National Older Adult Conference, featuring a Lake Junaluska jigsaw puzzle and a whimsical “NOAC News” mug.

Led by project director Joan Daggett, the staff of *Shine: Living in God’s Light*, the children’s curriculum co-published with MennoMedia, reworked the materials constantly to meet the needs of congregations and families during the pandemic. By fall, the quarterly curriculum was offered in both digital and print formats. New in 2021 were *All Together: God’s Story for You and Me*, a Bible story resource; *Current*, a downloadable intergenerational resource for the whole church; and *Come to the Table*, a vacation Bible school curriculum.

The Living Word Bulletin Series once again featured a host of Brethren photographers and writers. *A Guide for Biblical Studies* was published in regular and large-print editions. The 2021 Yearbook, developed by Jim Miner, was published in two formats, a USB flash drive card and downloadable PDF. The ecumenical curriculum for camps this year was *Creation Speaks*.

Brethren Press received a generous distribution of \$100,000 from the Gahagen Trust to bolster its children’s curriculum, which had been seriously affected by pandemic restrictions on in-person Sunday school.

The publishing ministry is overseen by Wendy McFadden, publisher of Brethren Press and Communications. Karen Stocking handles finance and production for both teams, as well as advertising for *Messenger* magazine. Karen Warner is customer service representative.

Communications

Messenger magazine addressed a wide range of topics in 2021, including the pandemic, hunger, race, spiritual wellness, church growth, disability, church statistics, ecology, the opioid crisis, and peacemaking—as well as highlighting people, congregations, and events. *Messenger* is produced by communication staff Wendy McFadden, Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, and Jan Fischer Bachman, along with at-large editor Walt Wiltschek. Diane Stroyeck is subscriptions specialist.

The Associated Church Press honored *Messenger* with three awards for articles published the prior year: award of excellence for biblical interpretation (“Compassion,” by Bobbi Dykema), award of excellence for a department (“The Exchange,” by Wiltschek), and award of merit for theological reflection (“The Wounds of War and a Place for Peace,” by McFadden).

Messenger debuted a complete online archive of every issue of the magazine. The digital edition switched to a new, less expensive platform with better usability. New episodes of Messenger Radio were added.

News Services director Brumbaugh-Cayford regularly reported news to the Church of the Brethren and beyond through Newline, which is distributed by email; articles posted on the denominational website; news pages in *Messenger* magazine; and social media. She was the primary administrator of the Church of the Brethren Facebook page. With help from volunteer writers and photographers, she provided coverage of a number of online events, including the first virtual Annual Conference and National Older Adult Conference, among others.

Website producer Fischer Bachman and media support specialist Russ Otto undergirded the denomination’s online worship services and conferences by creating event pages, posting resources, uploading videos, editing and auto-translating subtitles, and providing tech support.

In addition to giving the Brethren Volunteer Service home page a fresh look, the web team added a website for National Youth Conference 2022, a compelling vision Bible study series in two languages, Strategic Plan information in three languages, and newsletters and materials for Annual Conference moderators.

The web team added “Jesus in the Neighborhood” stories on the Congregations page and created pages for a number of programs. The team also kept ministry profiles updated, produced and scheduled bulk email, created online forms such as ballots, surveys, and grant applications, updated and streamlined web pages, provided statistics, and more.

Staff assisted with social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube) and helped BVS get started with LinkedIn. They successfully applied for a free Canva Pro account, shared with other offices, as well as an upgraded Vimeo account to facilitate livestreaming.

The Communication Team produced *Dear Church: Living Letters of Christ*, a video reporting on the previous year’s ministries, and a companion printed report.

Human Resources

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

Employees hired in 2021 were Ruoxia Li and Eric Miller, co-executive directors of Global Mission; Kevin Rice, donation pickup assistant for Material Resources; Lee Marsh, Buildings and Grounds assistant (Elgin); Kim Gingerich, program assistant for Brethren Disaster Ministries; Jennifer Houser, director of the Brethren Historical Library and Archives; Zechariah Houser, coordinator of short-term service for Brethren Volunteer Service; Joshua Rowan, Information Technology specialist;

Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, director of Annual Conference; and Jennifer Jensen, program manager for the Office of Ministry.

Departures in 2021 were Hannah Schultz, coordinator of short-term service for BVS; Walter Schneeman, warehouse assistant for Material Resources; William Kostlevy, director of BHLA; Terry Goodger, program assistant for BDM; Fabiola Fernandez, manager of Information Technology; Trent Turner, warehouse assistant; Dana Cassell, program manager for the Office of Ministry; M. Christine Douglas, director of Annual Conference; and Sherry Chastain, program assistant for BDM and Children’s Disaster Services.

Regular full-time and part-time employees and BVS workers serving Church of the Brethren programs totaled 60. As requested by Annual Conference, the report of ethnic/racial composition of these employees is the following: Asian-3; Black-4; Hispanic-2; white-51.

Assisting these employees in carrying out their work are numerous contract, shared, casual, and temporary employees, as well as program volunteers.

Office of Ministry

Transitions on multiple levels characterized the work of the Office of Ministry and its many partner entities.

A significant role for director Nancy Sollenberger Heishman is serving as placement officer for district executive minister positions. Within the 24 districts, one new executive minister was hired (Illinois/Wisconsin), four completed their terms of service for reasons including retirement (Western Plains, Western Pennsylvania, Southern Ohio/Kentucky, South/Central Indiana), and four interims were named (Atlantic Southeast, Western Plains, Southern Ohio/Kentucky, and a Pacific Northwest team member).

Several other districts continued interim team arrangements. Conversations regarding district viability and staffing needs are ongoing within the Council of District Executives and their districts.

Varying factors resulted in transitions affecting ministerial statistics as well. The effect of congregational withdrawals combined with some deaths due to COVID-19-related illnesses were factors reflected in the statistical data compiled each March by office manager Mishael Nouveau. The number of ministers added were 30 ordained (18 male, 12 female), 3 commissioned (3 male), and 32 licensed (22 male, 10 female). Most events to promote calling persons to the set-apart ministry were postponed due to the pandemic, though a few were held virtually.

Responding to pastoral transitions and the ongoing challenges of ministry, the Part-time Pastor; Full-time Church grant-funded program offered significant opportunities for support for multivocational pastors (MVPs). Six circuit riders in different geographical areas maintained connections virtually with pastors in the program and began limited in-person visits in the fall. One circuit rider concentrated on supporting clergywomen with groups offered throughout the year. Another circuit rider led multiple book study groups to foster connections and enrichment during a time of isolation.

After noticing a trend of young, early-career MVPs resigning from their congregational roles, often without other employment or ministry work secured, the program convened a focus group, both to provide

space to process and to learn how to better support and resource these young pastors. A professional clergy coach met with the short-term cohort, offering a resource that is available to all interested program participants.

The Part-time Pastor; Full-time Church program had a presence at the New and Renew church-planting conference and at Annual Conference. In partnership with Discipleship Ministries and Service Ministries, the program sponsored the Leadership Wellness Summit's keynote speaker, Jessica Young-Brown of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University.

At year's end, Jen Jensen, of McPherson, Kan., was hired as program manager, following Dana Cassell, who resigned in September. Jensen began her orientation with preparation for a major re-launch of the initiative in the coming year. With permission from the grantors, resources of the program may now be offered to all multivocational pastors rather than only program participants.

In addition to the grant program, numerous opportunities for continuing education were offered for set-apart ministers. For the last four years, clergywomen have benefitted from the leadership of spiritual director Amy Gall Ritchie who, at the invitation of the Office of Ministry, has hosted two monthly conversation groups, one for young clergywomen and one for clergywomen over age 40. In July, the Annual Conference clergywomen's event featured a virtual presentation on "Poetry and the Spiritual Imagination," by Joelle Hathaway, Bethany Theological Seminary's assistant professor of theological studies.

Among other events hosted by the Office of Ministry was an April virtual conversation to promote solidarity, build understanding, and raise awareness on the theme "Listening and Learning from Brethren Leaders of Asian-American Heritage."

The Church of the Brethren Ministers' Association pre-Annual Conference continuing education event featured Michael Gorman's virtual presentation on "The Church in 1 Corinthians: Challenges for Today."

The office supported the work of the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee of Annual Conference in developing a new integrated annual ministry agreement. The committee worked closely with the Council of District Executives to develop proposed materials that will better equip congregations and pastors to arrive at a fair, effective, and mutually satisfying understanding of their shared ministry.

The Ministry Advisory Council revised the 2002 continuing education document, offering additional focus areas for pastors seeking continuing education units. The document includes a new policy granting clergy credits for viewing prerecorded events.

Funds were disbursed through scholarships for continuing education (\$6,850), leadership development and training grants (\$1,213), the Ministry Assistance Fund (\$6,932), and the annual scholarship grant to Bethany Seminary (\$6,500).

Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership

The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, directed by Janet Ober Lambert, is a ministry train-

ing partnership of the Church of the Brethren and Bethany Theological Seminary that equips leaders through four training programs.

Training in Ministry (TRIM) engaged 30 students, four of whom completed the program. Education for a Shared Ministry, a congregationally based training program in English and Spanish (EFSM/EPMC), involved seven congregations and a total of 10 ministry students. Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano de la Iglesia de los Hermanos (SeBAH-CoB) supported 14 students, one of whom completed the program. Academy Certified Training Systems (ACTS) offers regionally based, onsite courses involving 11 districts.

Through the Brethren Academy, 25 people took courses or seminars to earn continuing education credits, and CEUs were awarded for 26 archived events. The academy also reviewed and certified programs of other agencies for continuing education credit, which totaled 557 certificates.

Aida Lymaris Sánchez and Carrie Eikler are program coordinators for the Academy's training programs, and Fran Massie is administrative assistant.

Mission Advancement

The Office of Mission Advancement cultivates relationships and passion to advance the missions and ministries of the Church of the Brethren. The team builds relationships through visits, interpretation, and education, and provides ways for individuals and congregations to support the church's ministries as "a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18).

Matthew DeBall, coordinator of Mission Advancement communications, recruited writers for monthly donor letters and solicitations, developed congregational offering resources, published eBrethren articles, and represented the denomination on the One Great Hour of Sharing committee. He consolidated online giving pages to streamline the gift acknowledgment process.

Though travel was still limited in 2021, Mission Advancement advocates Nancy McCrickard and Shannon McNeil took the opportunity to increase communication with donors through letters, cards, emails, text messages, and phone calls. They focused on "stewarding relationships" as a way to keep

donors up to date about the work denominational staff does nationally and internationally.

Director Traci Rabenstein met virtually and in person with congregations, pastors, and lay leaders to provide insight into the work of the denomination. She continued to work at improving data management within the organization. She and her staff developed a narrative budget to explain how contributions are used. In November, the team hosted a virtual event with the general secretary for key donors and the Faith Forward Donor Circle.

"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:15-16, NKJV).

On behalf of those who are blessed because of the generosity of individuals and congregations, team members "offer the sacrifice of praise to God." Faithful people of passion provide the means for the church to be Jesus in the neighborhood.

CONCLUSION

In the same letter to the Corinthians that opened this report, there are these words: “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). While there are challenges on this walk of faith, there are also signs of newness and abundance.

The members of the Mission and Ministry Board and the staff are deeply grateful for all those who join in the ministries of the Church of the Brethren—ministries that have found a way, by faith, and also are made new. While we cannot always see the path ahead, we know that this is true:

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

—Lamentations 3:22-23

Carl Fike, chair

David Steele, general secretary