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Reports of the Annual Conference Agencies

1. Report of Bethany Theological Seminary

In a time of considerable uncertainty and strife, Bethany Theological Seminary remains focused on its distinctive mission to foster an innovative learning community that is accessible and affordable to students from all backgrounds. We remain rooted in an Anabaptist and Radical Pietist witness and our goal is to empower every student to lead through faith-filled thought and transformative action. As we look around our denomination, we see the fruits of our labors everywhere.

Many of our alumni nurture and lead congregations across the U.S. and internationally. Others provide leadership at the district level, helping the Church of the Brethren to thrive. Some graduates choose careers outside the traditional church, bringing faithful leadership to a variety of non-profit organizations. We also have alumni who pursue careers as scholars and authors, helping others to gain knowledge and better understand context. We are humbled to see how Bethany graduates are sharing their gifts and following their calls — so that the world flourishes.

The hallmarks of a Bethany education are:

- An interdisciplinary approach to learning
- The integration of theory and practice
- Increasingly diverse programs of study

Bethany remains anchored in academic freedom and is a center for the study and practice of emerging areas of religious interest across faith traditions. We blend academics with spiritual formation, and we celebrate diversity by engaging with people from various religious, geographic, and social backgrounds.

LEADERSHIP

Board of Trustees

On July 1, 2020, Eric Bishop (Pomona, Calif.) began a term as chair of the Bethany Board of Trustees, while Audrey Hollenburg-Duffey (Vienna, Va.) began her service as vice chair. Cathy Huffman (Rocky Mount, Va.) is secretary of the board. The newest trustee is Dr. Richard Rose (LaVerne, Calif.), a professor of religion at the University of La Verne.

Campus Leadership

Jeff Carter is in his eighth year as president of Bethany. He has visited a number of congregations virtually this year, delivering invited sermons and presentations

either live via Zoom, or video recorded in advance. Locally, he has provided leadership by serving on the boards of the United Way and Richmond Symphony Orchestra. He is also a board member of the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce and he contributed to their initiatives related to Covid-19, combating racism, and community engagement. A leadership team works closely with the president to guide decision-making and ensure proactive pursuit of the Seminary's mission.

MAJOR INITIATIVES

Access and Affordability

Bethany has made a singular commitment to keeping its exceptional biblical and theological education accessible and affordable for all qualified students. This commitment is made manifest in the Seminary's **Pillars and Pathways** program, which helps students complete Bethany degrees while limiting their need to take on additional educational and consumer debt. The program includes coursework related to "conscious consumption" and personal finance, scholarships, work opportunities, and subsidized housing for residential students.

A key component of Pillars and Pathways is the Residency Scholarship, which currently provides funding for 15 students who live and study in Richmond. Students are encouraged to work part-time during the academic year (including some federal work-study employment) and full-time during the summer, while also living simply, in community with other Seminary students. By encouraging students to follow these practices, Bethany has dramatically reduced levels of student borrowing. In future years, the Seminary hopes to expand the Residency Scholarship program to include more students.

In addition, the Seminary decided to freeze the tuition rate for the 2021-22 academic year as a direct response to the financial hardship caused by the pandemic. With a base rate of \$1,100 per semester for full-time students who qualify for scholarships and other financial aid, Bethany remains a remarkable value for students. This tuition freeze is integral to the Seminary's response to the pandemic, and enrollment has remained strong despite the public health crisis.

Bethany has also launched a new effort to recruit international students from Brethren colleges and universities. Under a newly approved policy, the Seminary is actively recruiting students with homes outside the United States who are attending — or have graduated from — Bridgewater College, Elizabethtown College, Manchester University, McPherson College, Juniata College, or the University of Laverne.

These efforts are all focused on helping students to complete their studies without undo financial burdens. We have many successes to celebrate. The retention rate from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020 was 100 percent, and from Spring 2020 to Spring 2021 was 96 percent. At the same time, borrowing by the entire student body was reduced by \$20,000 for Spring Semester 2021 compared to Fall 2020.

1 **Our Nigeria Connection**

2 As of this writing, we anticipate our first Nigerian students will graduate this
3 year with the Certificate in Biblical Peacemaking, based on courses taken online
4 via the Technology Centre in Jos. Since January 2018, when Bethany offered its
5 first course via synchronized video to students in Nigeria, task teams both at
6 Bethany and with EYN in Nigeria have continued to refine the program.

7
8 The Certificate in Biblical Peacemaking was developed in response to the inter-
9 ests of EYN members. In addition, Bethany has removed the residency require-
10 ment for the M.A., which may benefit Nigerian students eligible for this degree.
11 With a reduction in credit hours for the M.Div., students qualified to enter the
12 program can fulfill their residency requirement by attending classes on campus
13 for one semester. Some current students in Nigeria are interested in pursuing
14 these degrees.

15
16 President Jeff Carter, Academic Dean Steve Schweitzer, and Executive Director
17 of Admissions and Student Services Lori Current visited Nigeria in January 2020
18 to learn more about student needs and to strengthen relationships with EYN
19 leaders. As a result of that visit, Bethany was able to secure borrowing privileges
20 for its students at two theological libraries at Theological College of Northern
21 Nigeria and Jos Evangelical Theological Seminary.

22
23 Sharon Flaten — an M.Div. student from the United States who lives and studies
24 in Jos, Nigeria — is also employed as a liaison between Bethany and our Nigerian
25 students. She helps recruit students for the program and helps make sure the
26 Seminary is aware of emerging student interests and needs. Sharon meets regu-
27 larly with Bethany administrators about the needs of the program in Nigeria.

28 29 **Anti-Racism Work**

30 In the past several years, Bethany faculty and staff have been engaged in initia-
31 tives to counter racism and to make the Seminary more diverse and welcoming.
32 These efforts encompass reviews of the curriculum, budget, policies, and hiring
33 practices to ensure that our practices are equitable. The Seminary is also provid-
34 ing training opportunities for employees to help advance this work.

35
36 As one step, the Seminary issued a statement last summer denouncing racism
37 in all its forms. Bethany has also partnered with other seminaries to offer its stu-
38 dents more opportunities for intercultural education. Examples include a course
39 on African American Interpretation of Luke (taught by Dr. Mitzi Smith of Co-
40 lumbia Theological Seminary) and a ministry formation session with students
41 from Bethany and New Brunswick Theological Seminary (which enrolls a high
42 percentage of Black students) focusing on ministry during times of political po-
43 larization.

Our Anniversary in Richmond

With the beginning of the 2019-20 academic year, Bethany marked its twenty-fifth year as part of the Richmond community. Coinciding with the completion of interior renovations, this milestone was celebrated with an open house for the public during the September board of trustees meeting. The Wayne County Chamber of Commerce conducted a ribbon cutting, and the president of Earlham and the mayor of Richmond offered remarks. These speakers noted that Bethany stands as a strong educational and community partner. The event was an occasion to celebrate our productive collaboration with the Earlham School of Religion, and our rising profile in the Richmond community. President emeritus Gene Roop was the guest speaker at the Bethany trustee and employee dinner, offering a reflection on the people who made the relocation of the Seminary possible.

Pandemic Response

Bethany has responded to the coronavirus pandemic with resilience and creativity. The Seminary continues to pursue its educational mission, foster community, and continue administrative functions while doing everything possible to maintain a safe classroom and office environment. In mid-March 2020, all courses switched to a virtual learning format and employees began working from home. Students, faculty, and staff adapted to new patterns of behavior and the Seminary has made it through the year with very few cases of Covid-19 in our community and no known transmission in our building. The Seminary benefited from the investments in technology made long before the pandemic which made it relatively easy for us continue our educational mission while also safeguarding the health of students, faculty, and staff. We also made an intentional effort to make sure our students were well-cared-for during a period of significant stress and isolation.

We also adjusted our approach to community engagement in response to the pandemic. Our common meals, for instance, were replaced by boxed lunches provided by the same local caterer, and we increased our support of local charities at Christmastime. In addition, we instituted new gatherings on Zoom for worship, fellowship, and information sharing.

Academic Community

Bethany continues to foster a robust academic community, including residential students, distance learners who connect with us from across the United States and internationally. As the numbers below demonstrate, the Seminary continues to prepare many graduates to answer a call to pastoral ministry while also providing strong preparation for those who serve and lead in other contexts. The statistics below include all students enrolled for credit during the 2020-21 academic year.

1 Bethany Enrollment Report

2		New Students	New Students	Total Students
3		Fall 2020	Spring 2021	2020-21
4	MDiv Local	4		11
5	MDiv Connections	3	1	24
6	MA Local	3		7
7	MA Connections	3		6
8	MATW Local	0		1
9	MATW Connections	2		10
10	Certificates			
11	Achievement in Theological Studies	2	1	4
12	Biblical Peacemaking (all Nigerian)	5		14
13	Intercultural Biblical Interpretation	1		1
14	Just Peace and Conflict Transformation	2	1	3
15	Theology and Science		2	2
16	Theopoetics and Theological Imagination	5	1	8
17	Occasional students	1		1
18	Totals	31	6	92
19				
20	Local Students	24%		
21	Nigerian and Connections Students	76%		
22				
23	MDiv Degree	38%		
24	MA Degree	14%		
25	MATW Degree	12%		
26	Certificate Programs	36%		
27				

28 Selected Faculty Activities

29 **Dr. Russell Haitch** has recently completed a book manuscript titled, *Eyes of the*
30 *Heart: Seeing God in an Age of Science*, which has been submitted for publica-
31 tion. Haitch continues to present academic papers in the area of youth ministry
32 and science.

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34 **Dr. Joelle Hathaway** has joined Bethany as an assistant professor of theological
35 studies. Hathaway earned both her master's degree and doctorate from Duke
36 University, where she previously taught. She is a member of the Evangelical
37 Lutheran Church of America. She is introducing new courses that make connec-
38 tions between spirituality, ecology, theology, and the arts. Hathaway received a
39 Doctor of Theology degree in 2018 with a focus on theology and the arts and
40 with emphases in ecotheology and liturgical studies. Since 2013 she has taught
41 courses annually at Duke as an instructor and has presented papers at meetings
42 of the American Academy of Religion and regional associations of religious stud-
43 ies. Over the past ten years, she has held leadership roles for multiple events
44 through Duke Initiatives in Theology and the Arts. Hathaway has had several
45 book reviews published and is awaiting publication of an article in the *Encyclo-*
46 *pedia of the Bible and its Reception* and two essays for online symposia.

Dr. Scott Holland, Slabaugh professor of theology and culture, has contributed a chapter on public theology to a new book entitled *Political and Public Theologies*, forthcoming from University Press of Leuven, in Belgium. He also delivered theopoetic sermons via Zoom to congregations in Ohio and Pennsylvania and was invited to lead a Zoom presentation for the Church of the Brethren Southern Ohio District entitled "What is Theopoetics?" Holland's article entitled, "Moncure D. Conway's Baltimore Exit, 1862" was published in the *Unitarian Universalist Journal of History*.

Holland and **Dr. Denise Kettering-Lane** published essays in the book, *Brethren Intersections: History, Identity and Crosscurrents*. The volume is the proceedings of the sixth Brethren World Assembly, hosted by Grace College in Winona, Indiana in 2018, and is published by the Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc.

Dr. Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, Brightbill professor of preaching and worship, has been appointed senior editor of *Homiletic*, the leading journal of the Academy of Homiletics. In addition to chairing the editorial board, moderating the jurying of articles, and overseeing the journal's finances, Ottoni-Wilhelm says that she hopes to broaden the diversity of scholars whose work appears in its pages. She also published *Preaching the Fear of God in a Fear-Filled World: Proceedings from the conference of Societas Homiletica*, Durham 2018. (Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2020). She edited the volume and contributed the Presidential Address entitled: "Fearing God in a Fear-Filled World? Homiletical Expressions" (pages 1-16).

Dr. Dan Poole collaborated with colleagues at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey to offer a shared Zoom gathering for students enrolled in ministry formation courses at each institution. The session, held days after the 2020 presidential election, focused on ministry during a time of extreme political division. He also helped coordinate Zoom sessions focused on ministering during Covid-19.

Dr. Ken Rogers has published a recent sermon in *Brethren Life and Thought* and continues his research into the historical, social, and theological contexts for the origins of the early Brethren.

Dr. Dan Ulrich, Wieand professor of New Testament, has published a hymn text entitled, "Young Mary's Boy Filled Her Heart with Joy," set to the tune of Coventry Carol. The text is available from the Bethany website. Ulrich also collaborated with Dr. Mitzi Smith of Columbia Theological Seminary as she taught a course on African American interpretation of the Gospel of Luke, which was open to students from Bethany, Columbia, and the Earlham School of Religion. Ulrich and Smith also received a grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion that allowed them time to reflect on the course, publish blog posts about the process and participate in a webinar for peers who might be considering similar collaborations.

1 **Scholars in Residence**

2 Bethany’s Scholar-in-Residence program has been on hiatus due to the pan-
3 demic, but we are planning for visits by two scholars during the 2021-22 aca-
4 demic year. **Dr. David Niyonzima**, vice chancellor and professor at International
5 Leadership University, Burundi will visit in the fall. An expert in mental health
6 and trauma healing, Niyonzima is working to plant the Church of the Brethren
7 in Burundi. At Bethany, he intends to deepen his understanding about Brethren
8 theology and practices while writing a theological piece on the church and his
9 personal spiritual journey. In Spring 2022, Bethany will welcome **Rev. Dr.**
10 **Dauda Gava**, provost and associate professor of New Testament at Kulp Theo-
11 logical Seminary, Kwarhi, Nigeria. He teaches in the areas of New Testament and
12 Greek, especially the Pauline Writings and is an ordained minister with EYN. At
13 Bethany, he will be doing research and writing related to a forthcoming com-
14 mentary on the Epistle to Titus; he will also be teaching an on-campus graduate
15 seminar with a synchronous video option on Philippians.

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17 **New professional Master of Arts degree planned**

18 As of this writing, Bethany is in the final phases of planning a new professional
19 master’s degree that will intentionally link spiritual formation with social
20 change. The degree will help prepare students for careers in non-profit leader-
21 ship, social services, or spiritual direction. We believe this program will help stu-
22 dents to deepen their faith and enrich their present and future ministries. The
23 Seminary plans to collaborate with other institutions in order to offer students
24 a robust selection of educational experiences.

25
26 **Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership**

27 Under the direction of Jane Ober Lambert, the Academy is a training partnership
28 between Bethany Theological Seminary and the denomination. Please see a de-
29 tailed report of the Academy’s activities under the Report from the Church of
30 the Brethren elsewhere in this Conference booklet.

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32 **FISCAL STEWARDSHIP**

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34 We are pleased to report that, despite a tumultuous year for the world economy,
35 the Seminary remains financially strong.

	FY 20	FY19	Difference	Change
Total Net Assets	\$53,168,141.00	\$53,376,880.00	(\$208,739.00)	-0.39%
Endowment (FMV)	\$38,691,993.00	\$39,220,735.00	(\$528,742.00)	-1.35%
Surplus/Deficit	\$126,915.00	\$85,534.00	\$41,381.00	48.38%
Budget	\$3,056,065.00	\$3,019,063.00	\$7,002.00	1.23%

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42 **Fundraising**

43 As the tables below illustrate, Fiscal Year 2020 was a year of mixed results for
44 Bethany fundraising. We are humbled by the generosity of our alumni, who in-
45 creased their giving by 48 percent (or \$80,500). By contrast, giving from con-
46 gregations fell by 8 percent (or \$20,456). We need the support of congregations

across the Church of the Brethren as we continue to make an excellent education accessible and affordable to those who are answering a call to ministry and service in the church.

Bethany Fund

	FY20	FY19	Change
Total donations	\$596,991	\$608,251	(\$11,260)
Total donors	839	821	18

Total Seminary Giving

	FY20	FY19	Change
Total donations	\$1,320,860	\$1,629,214	(\$308,354)
Total donors	919	911	8

All of us at Bethany Theological Seminary are grateful to congregations and individuals in the Church of the Brethren who keep in touch with us, reaching out to ask questions, and express interest in our mission. We are ever thankful for your financial support, and for your continuing prayers.

Blessings,

Jeff Carter	Eric Bishop
President	Chair of the Board of Trustees