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2 **2. Report of Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust**  
3

4 Surprise, adaptability, and pain are three words with which we all learned to  
5 cope (with various degrees of success) in 2020, as the worst pandemic in the  
6 past 100 years spread across the globe, forcing us to take cover, altering how we  
7 live life each day, and leading some of us into financial difficulty.

8  
9 What started in March 2020 in the United States and continues at the time this  
10 is being written, uprooted life as we knew it, which of course along with every-  
11 one and everything else in the world impacted many Church of the Brethren  
12 members and organizations nationwide.

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14 Financial giving to congregations, districts, and national agencies declined.  
15 Churches had to adapt to online worship services. Brethren-affiliated retirement  
16 communities had to address the COVID-19 virus with residents who are the  
17 most vulnerable to the virus. Travel halted, conferences were cancelled or were  
18 moved online, and our lives changed in so many profound ways that were  
19 unimaginable just a short year ago.

20  
21 In the midst of that, Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust and its affiliates  
22 (Brethren Benefit Trust Inc., Brethren Foundation Funds Inc., and Brethren  
23 Foundation Inc.) adapted to continue providing strong customer service to our  
24 members and clients. We were prepared for the entire staff to work from home  
25 before the edict was given, and so the transition was virtually seamless. Phone  
26 calls from members and clients were answered, emails were responded to, and  
27 meetings continued as scheduled, albeit through Zoom or by phone.

28  
29 Moreover, we took proactive steps to help out those who have needs that inter-  
30 sect with the work we do. By late March, BBT created COVID-19 grants, an emer-  
31 gency offshoot of our long-time Church Workers' Assistance Plan, to help  
32 pastors and church workers who were experiencing severe financial challenges  
33 as a result of COVID-19. We also removed any COVID-19-related medical in-  
34 surance deductibles from Brethren Medical Plan, which serves agencies and or-  
35 ganizations. This, we hope, meant that finances would not be an impediment  
36 to people seeking testing or treatment for this contagious, deadly virus.

37  
38 As we have assessed the nearby landscape of the present and the further-out  
39 horizon of the future, we're examining changes that need to happen so that BBT  
40 can be nimble and creative in what surely is a changed world, as we strive to be  
41 the employee benefits and organizational asset management provider for the  
42 denomination for years to come. Those possible changes will be outlined at the  
43 conclusion of this review of the ministries of Church of the Brethren Benefit  
44 Trust in 2020.

## BRETHREN PENSION PLAN

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With more than 30 investment options from which Brethren Pension Plan members may choose, what is the right investment strategy for each member?

That question has been asked of staff for a number of years since the investment options were greatly expanded, and in 2020, BBT followed up the first part of its two-part answer, which was launched several years ago, to roll out the second part of that answer — investment advice from a top-notch, world-class partner.

In January 2020, BBT launched an investment advising service through Edelman Financial Engines. Members who log in to the online Brethren Pension Plan portal can select the “Get Advice” tab, and can choose from three levels of service — one is free and two are fee-based. Studies have shown that investment accounts grow more successfully when they are managed professionally, which is why BBT entered into this partner relationship. The basic level of online advice service, which is free, asks the user to fill out a questionnaire that outlines the person’s goals and risk tolerance, and then produces a proposed asset allocation for the member to initiate with their own account. The next level of service provides professional management of a member’s Brethren Pension Plan account for a nominal fee. The third tier provides a personal adviser for the professional management of a member’s total retirement investments; this level has a slightly higher fee.

Edelman Financial Engines is a leader in the investment advice industry, and Brethren Pension Plan was pleased to launch this partnership. How can Brethren Pension Plan members participate in this service besides going on the web portal? Each spring, members receive an offer for their Pension Plan account to be analyzed and rated using a “stoplight” assessment — a green light for those who are well on their way toward a meaningful retirement; a yellow light to indicate there may be some hurdles in achieving the account amount needed to fund a meaningful retirement; and a red light to indicate attention is needed to review one of three areas. These areas are asset allocation, salary information, or the amount being saved. A yellow or red light means that the members’ retirement account may be unlikely to produce enough income in retirement.

This opportunity is a significant development for Brethren Pension Plan members, but the announcement of this service was overshadowed soon after its launch, by the pandemic. Thus, BBT continues to work to introduce this service to Brethren Pension Plan members.

Complementing the investment advising service is the first part of the answer to the question, “In what should a Brethren Pension Plan member be invested?” The answer is target date funds. These five funds were launched several years ago. What makes target date funds special is that someone else takes the responsibility for the investment strategy of the fund. Target date funds employ an asset

1 allocation model that is designed for growth when a member is years away from  
2 retirement, and as retirement draws near, the target date fund begins de-risking  
3 the portfolio, moving to more of an asset retention model, to minimize the fluc-  
4 tuation of the account balance. With most Brethren Pension Plan investment  
5 options, each member must select the options they think will best meet their  
6 long-term needs, trying to manage the risk/reward dynamics of the investment  
7 marketplace. However, most people are novice investors at best, and do not have  
8 the knowledge to construct their own glide path to de-risk their portfolio as they  
9 near retirement. Between the target date funds and the Edelman Financial En-  
10 gines offerings, Brethren Pension Plan members can receive the help they need  
11 with their personal asset allocations.

12  
13 On Dec. 31, 2020, Brethren Pension Plan had 2,683 active and inactive mem-  
14 bers, with account balances totaling \$257,163,209. The Plan had 1,737 mem-  
15 bers who received a monthly annuity check; the balance of the Retirement  
16 Benefits Fund, from which annuities are paid, was \$174,097,681. These asset  
17 levels are all-time highs for the Plan.

18  
19 Throughout the year, the team worked with Client Relations staff to hold busi-  
20 ness reviews with Plan-sponsor employer groups. Those meetings are routine  
21 gatherings to discuss Plan design, contribution, and membership issues, and to  
22 receive a comprehensive snapshot of data of that organizations' overall staff par-  
23 ticipation in the Plan.

## 24 **BRETHREN INSURANCE SERVICES**

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27 With uncertainty of the future of medical insurance and healthcare in the United  
28 States, Brethren Insurance Services in late 2020 took a major step at working to  
29 determine whether Church of the Brethren pastors, church workers, and district  
30 and camp staff would like BBT to provide medical insurance to them.

31  
32 From the 1950s through 2007, the Brethren Medical Plan offered insurance to  
33 this group; it was discontinued by an Annual Conference vote in 2007 after a  
34 failed attempt for the denomination to re-dedicate its support to the Medical  
35 Plan. While medical insurance was dropped for those who are in the "ministers'  
36 group," BBT has continued to offer this insurance coverage to denominational  
37 agencies and organizations. The reason they can do this is that the latter group  
38 can maintain a participation rate of 75 percent or more of their eligible employ-  
39 ees in the Plan, which helps the Plan mitigate undue risk, thus keeping it  
40 healthy. The ministers' group enrollment in the Plan did not achieve this per-  
41 centage rate, and was discontinued due to its unsustainable model.

42  
43 Since that time BBT has committed itself to looking to re-introduce a medical  
44 plan for the ministers' group, if it could be desirable, sustainable, and scalable  
45 in size. In November, the BBT Board approved the hiring of an insurance actu-  
46 arial firm that will provide age and geographic premium setting to anyone in

the ministers' group who is interested in Brethren Medical Plan insurance. The Board also approved the launching of an online insurance portal, which will allow people to sign up and administer their medical and ancillary insurance choices and personal and beneficiary information. With the strategy set, the Insurance team in 2021 is working to be able to address this issue with members of the ministers' group, hopefully in time for 2022 Open Enrollment. Will pastors and employees of the churches, districts, and camps want such a medical insurance product? We hope so, but won't know until we are able to see who is interested and provide a quote. No one will be forced to use this product, but it hopefully will be available to those for whom the cost and the benefits provided make sense. This action finally fulfills a second action taken by the 2007 Annual Conference delegates, which is for BBT to continue trying to find new ways to provide medical insurance to the members of the ministers' group. We are hopeful we finally have a solution.

Because of the contagiousness and severity of the COVID-19 virus, Brethren Medical Plan in May 2020 waived insurance deductible payments for members who were tested and/or treated for the virus through the end of the year. The BBT team did not want medical deductible insurance payments to prevent members from seeking help as the virus spread throughout the country, killing more than 450,000 people.

In addition to Brethren Medical Plan, Brethren Insurance Services provides a number of insurance products to the members of the ministers' group and employees of agencies and other Brethren-related organizations. These include dental, vision, life (basic and supplemental), accidental death and dismemberment (basic and supplemental), disability (short- and long-term), accident, Medicare supplement, and long-term care. BBT offers medical reimbursement and dependent care accounts for members who use one or more of its insurances. We also provide pet insurance. As of Dec. 31, 2020, Brethren Insurance Services had 2,359 insurance contracts with its members.

### **CHURCH WORKERS' ASSISTANCE PLAN**

This benevolent program established several decades ago by the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference is intended to help members of the ministers' group who find themselves with extraordinary financial needs. The Plan is for employees who meet minimum tenure requirements, as well as several other requirements related to annual income and overall net worth. There are many people within the denomination for whom this Plan is a needed lifeline. Grants are available to active and retired ministers' group employees, as well as to help offset qualified members' payments for Medicare Supplement insurance issued through BBT.

In 2020, the Church Workers' Assistance Plan distributed regular grants to individuals, totaling \$290,304.

1 No matter what the guidelines allow in terms of who qualifies for a Church  
2 Workers' Assistance Plan grant, there is always someone just on the other side  
3 of the qualification line. Because this is a benevolent fund designed to help peo-  
4 ple in need, the Plan's guidelines allow the Exception Committee a lot of lati-  
5 tude in trying to help people who truly have significant needs. The Exception  
6 Committee is comprised of the BBT president and director of Employee Benefits.  
7 Significant exceptions are reported to the BBT Board, the Council of District Ex-  
8 ecutives, and the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee after  
9 the fact, to ensure that all who have vested interest in seeing assistance given to  
10 people who have need understand the type of exceptions that are being made.  
11 All applications that are initially declined are automatically sent to the Exception  
12 Committee for additional review.

13  
14 Because of the latitude given by the Church Workers' Assistance Plan guidelines,  
15 staff quickly established a new set of grants in late March 2020 as it immediately  
16 became obvious that members of the ministers' group within the Church of the  
17 Brethren were being adversely impacted by the pandemic. The application  
18 process for the COVID-19 grants was streamlined, some of the requirements of  
19 the normal Plan were relaxed, and funds were issued to successful applicants  
20 with the affirmation of the respective district executive. The initial program was  
21 planned for a span of four months; it was extended for a second four-month  
22 period and then a third, and was due to expire in March 2021. At a meeting of  
23 the Council of District Executives in late January 2021, it was made clear to BBT  
24 that the district executives would like the COVID-19 grants to be extended well  
25 into the year. BBT was expected as of this writing to extend the program for yet  
26 another four months.

27  
28 Through Dec. 31, 2020, 50 members of the ministers' group received COVID-  
29 19 Church Workers' Assistance Fund grants, totaling \$218,435.

### 30 **ASSET MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

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32  
33 Brethren Foundation Funds manages organizational assets. Despite distributions  
34 exceeding contributions by \$10,461,955 in 2020, assets under management at  
35 the end of 2020 for nearly 200 organizational clients were \$197,809,398, an in-  
36 crease of \$13,738,484 (7.5 percent) over the total under management on Dec.  
37 31, 2019, of \$184,070,914.

38  
39 During 2020, four new organizational clients invested a total of \$582,000 with  
40 BFFI. One organizational client closed its BFFI account, and removed \$21,748  
41 from BFFI management.

42  
43 For the five-year period ending Dec. 31, 2020, all of BFFI's strategic investment  
44 funds had positive performance in absolute terms and more than one-third had  
45 a five-year performance history that equaled or outperformed their benchmarks.  
46 During the same five-year period, all of BFFI's tactical investment funds had pos-

itive performance in absolute terms and equaled or outperformed their benchmarks. Go to [cobbt.org/asset-management-performance-report](http://cobbt.org/asset-management-performance-report) for the most recent information.

Many BFFI clients have learned that valuable data and customer service tools are only a click away. Online account management, which was first offered in the third quarter of 2011, was being used by more than 85 percent of BFFI’s clients at the end of 2020. Clients using the online client portal are able to generate custom reports, and typically have access to monthly statements by the third business day of the next month. Printed statements are in the mail by the eighth day of the following month for those who still receive statements in this manner.

The strong use of the online portal came in handy in 2020, as people who found themselves in new work environments were able to access their BFFI accounts to conduct needed business. Like many businesses nationwide, Brethren congregations and organizations closed their doors to outside visitors, which meant client visits were either held virtually or were postponed. By the end of the year, BFFI’s client base had remained solid, and assets under management were near all-time highs.

### DEFERRED GIFTS

Brethren Foundation manages its own assets, which include the assets of charitable gift annuities it has issued and charitable gift funds it has established for donors, as well as the assets of charitable trusts and pooled income funds, for which it serves as trustee.

Assets under management at the end of 2020 were \$4,688,724, a decrease of \$103,348 (2.2 percent) from the \$4,792,073 in total assets under management on Dec. 31, 2019.

At the end of 2020, BFI was managing assets for nearly 120 deferred gift donors. During 2020, one \$10,000 charitable gift annuity was established with BFI. Also during 2020, 18 individuals closed a total of 22 accounts, including two charitable remainder trusts, six pass-through gifts, and 14 charitable gift annuities, resulting in a total of more than \$610,000 being distributed to Church of the Brethren organizations.

BFI also manages the operations and client service for Brethren Foundation Funds Inc., an affiliated organization that manages assets primarily of churches, organizations, and agencies of the Church of the Brethren.

## INVESTMENT OVERSIGHT

The key component to asset management strategy is the manner in which financial assets are invested for the short- and/or long-term needs of individuals and organizations. Identifying the correct mix of investments (stocks, bonds, alternatives, cash, etc.) to meet a specific risk tolerance, time horizon, tax situation, and cash-flow need is part of the discernment process. The asset allocation chosen by investors determines what percentage of the funds are invested in what type of investments, both current and future. At BBT, two subsections of asset management are strategic and tactical.

Strategic investing is fundamentally passive. At its most basic level, a passive strategy determines the appropriate asset allocation, invests in that strategy, and holds it until a time at which the investor decides to change the strategy or withdraw the funds. It is considered a long-term investment strategy based on the long-term performance of the markets.

A tactical strategy is a dynamic investment approach in which a person or organization is directed to change the allocation for the investor as situations in the investment markets change (prices, inflation, interest rates, growing or declining investment sectors, etc.). Changes in asset allocation are driven by predictions concerning potential returns. As expected returns for certain asset classes adjust over time, their weighting in the portfolio is adjusted as well. Tactical allocation is an approach based on market timing, and is intended to increase or decrease exposure to the particular markets that are expected to have the highest or lowest returns at that point in time.

BBT's investment platform provides strategic and tactical investment options for both churches and organizations through Brethren Foundation Funds Inc., as well as for members who have a retirement account through Brethren Pension Plan. Members and clients may choose funds through these strategic investment options. If they want investment decisions made for them, with the hope of increasing performance, they can select from BFFI's nine tactical funds, which include the following —

1. Aggressive Growth
2. Conservative
3. Growth
4. Income
5. Income & Growth
6. BVI Aggressive Growth
7. BVI Growth
8. BVI Income
9. BVI Income & Growth



As of Dec. 31, 2020, there was \$62.5 million in assets under management in the BFFI Tactical Funds. Each of these funds are invested in the same palette of BFFI's separately managed accounts and mutual funds. Thus, the Tactical Funds are referred to as a fund of funds, as they use BFFI's strategic investment options to create a tactical fund which is composed of the strategic funds. For example, the Aggressive Growth Tactical Fund has allocation from the strategic Bond Core Fund, Domestic Growth Fund, International Core Fund, and more. The Tactical Funds are designed to allow the client to choose from a range of risk and return profiles.

Brethren Pension Plan's Target Date Funds are also tactically managed. The Target Date Funds are currently offered in 10-year vintages ranging from 2015 to 2055. The funds consist of BBT's underlying separately managed funds and mutual funds. As of Dec. 31, 2020, there were \$28.3 million in assets under management in the Target Date Funds.

These funds are administered by the staff investment team, which consists of the BBT president, chief financial officer, director of Employee Benefits, director of Brethren Foundation Funds, and two consultants from Marquette Associates. This team works with the BBT Board's Investment Committee, which has been given responsibility and authority to manage the investment platform on behalf of the Board.

Investment oversight is one of BBT's greatest responsibilities, as it must try to maintain a stable of investment options that exceed relevant industry benchmarks over five-year periods, thereby ensuring that our members and clients are given strong investment platforms. When investment managers underperform for a prolonged period of time, the staff investment team interviews prospective new investment managers of that particular strategy, and makes a recommendation to the Investment Committee for a change. At the end of 2020, BBT's tactical investment manager was changed due to sub-par performance in relation to established benchmarks. Several other investment managers were on notice at the end of the year, either due to performance issues or because of changes to the firms' ownership or leadership.

## BRETHREN VALUES INVESTING

In 2020, the Board and staff of BBT continued its work in a manner consistent with Brethren Values Investing guidelines.

### Screening

Whenever possible, assets managed for members, clients, and donors are invested according to Brethren Values Investing guidelines that are consistent with Church of the Brethren Annual Conference statements. This means that the 25 publicly traded companies that receive the most U.S. Department of Defense contracts (in terms of dollars), and companies that generate 10 percent or more



1 of their gross earnings from U.S. Department of Defense contracts, firearms and  
2 military weapons systems, weapons of mass destruction, abortion, alcohol, gam-  
3 bling, pornography, or tobacco, are screened from BBT investment portfolios.  
4 Companies that are egregious violators of environmental or human rights reg-  
5 ulations are also screened from BBT portfolios.

## 7 **Advocacy**

8 The second of BBT's three-pronged BVI strategy is advocacy, based on Annual  
9 Conference positions on social issues, with companies in which BBT owns  
10 stocks, and with other initiatives that affect how companies interact with share-  
11 holders and others in the global community. In 2020, BBT engaged in a variety  
12 of shareholder initiatives related to environmental, social, and governance is-  
13 sues, having twice the voice because both BBTI and BFFI engage in initiatives  
14 under their own incorporated names even though they are BBT affiliates. These  
15 initiatives included —

### 17 *ConocoPhillips*

18 BBTI and BFFI continue as the lead organizations in an effort to secure the  
19 rights of indigenous peoples to free prior and informed consent regarding  
20 ConocoPhillips' activities in their region. On May 12, staff attended Cono-  
21 coPhillips' virtual annual meeting and encouraged the board to enrich its  
22 Human Rights Position by publicly embracing the United Nations Guiding  
23 Principles on Business and Human Rights (released in 2011), the United Na-  
24 tions Guiding Principles Reporting Framework (2015), and the United Na-  
25 tions Guiding Principles Assurance Guidance (2017).

### 27 *Department of Labor Rulemaking Regarding Considering ESG in ERISA Plan 28 Portfolio Construction*

29 In July, BBTI and BFFI signed a shareholder letter sent by Interfaith Center  
30 for Corporate Responsibility in opposition to the Department of Labor's  
31 proposed rule, "Financial Factors in Selecting Plan Investments." The letter  
32 expressed concern that the rule would deter consideration of ESG factors by  
33 ERISA fiduciaries and possibly others, despite evidence that integrating such  
34 factors can improve performance. The letter also expressed concern that the  
35 proposed rule, "broadly calls into question, with no factual basis, not only  
36 'ESG-themed' investment products but also ESG ratings and the use of ESG  
37 factors in traditional investment analysis." Comments were due by July 30,  
38 presumably to afford the Department of Labor time to address comments  
39 and publish a final rule prior to any change in administration in early 2021.

### 41 *SEC Rulemaking Regarding Shareholder Rights*

42 On Sept. 24, the SEC announced the final rule changes to Rule 14a-8. BBTI  
43 and BFFI signed a shareholder letter sent by US SIF to the Securities and Ex-  
44 change Commission on Sept. 18, 2019, expressing concern about SEC's  
45 stated intent to initiate a change to Rule 14a-8 that will likely weaken share-  
46 holder's rights. This matter emerged a couple of years earlier as part of the

*Financial CHOICE Act of 2017*, which passed the House but not the Senate, and had been on hold for much of the time since. The final changes, although less friendly to shareholders, reflect the impact of shareholder feedback during the process. Following are the key changes proposed in the original legislation and the changes included in the final rule:

- 1) The proposed change would have increased the ownership requirement for filing shareholder resolutions from \$2,000 worth of stock for at least a year to one percent of market capitalization for at least three years. Under the new rule, new purchasers of stock must hold \$25,000 in shares for at least a year, \$15,000 in shares for two years, or \$2,000 in shares for at least three years.
- 2) The proposed change would have increased the vote thresholds required for refiling a shareholder proposal from 3 percent to 6 percent in year one, from 6 percent to 15 percent in year two, and from 10 percent to 30 percent in year three. Under the new rule, resubmission will require 5 percent on the first vote, 15 percent on the second vote, and 25 percent on the third vote.

These changes will likely affect the small shareholder or the activist shareholder. They should not affect BBTI and BFFI shareholder opportunities.

*Workplace Equality*

In June, BBTI and BFFI signed onto a workplace equality initiative led by Boston Common Asset Management. In this initiative, letters were sent to nine companies in the retail, consumer goods, and pharmaceutical sectors that are in the BBTI and BFFI portfolios, encouraging them to provide a better understanding of their approach to building an inclusive workforce. The nine companies are:

Retail	Consumer Goods	Pharmaceutical
Kroger	Colgate-Palmolive	GlaxoSmithKline
Target	Estee Lauder	Novartis
TJX	Proctor & Gamble	Roche

The companies were asked to respond by mid-October. All have responded in some fashion, but a final report on this aspect of the initiative is still pending.

**Positive Investing**

The third component of BBTI’s and BFFI’s Brethren Values Investing activities is positive impact investing, which means investing funds in higher-than-normal risk areas or economically depressed communities to help stimulate economic growth and redevelopment. At the conclusion of 2020, Pension Plan members and asset management clients had more than \$925,000 of their assets under management invested in the Community Development Investment Fund.

1 BBTI and BFFI assets in the Community Development Investment Fund help  
2 build or rehabilitate affordable housing units, support new enterprises through  
3 small and microcredit loans, finance community facilities, support Fair Trade  
4 farmers, and support creation of new jobs.

### 6 **Affiliation**

7 BBTI and BFFI are full members of ICCR, an organization that “pioneered the  
8 use of shareholder advocacy to press companies on environmental, social, and  
9 governance issues.” ICCR is a coalition of more than 300 members, including  
10 faith communities, socially responsible asset managers, unions, pensions, non-  
11 governmental organizations, and other socially responsible investors with com-  
12 bined invested assets of more than \$500 billion.

## 14 **CLIENT RELATIONS**

15  
16 The Client Relations department is charged with focusing on three primary goals  
17 — developing and strengthening relationships with new and existing customers;  
18 developing new resources and enhancing existing resources used to serve our  
19 customers; and identifying new products and services that BBT might make  
20 available to existing and new customers.

21  
22 As mentioned in this report’s introduction, BBT staff travel was restricted for the  
23 majority of 2020 due to COVID-19. Instead, phone calls and Zoom meetings  
24 were the order of the day, leveraging technology to maintain and strengthen our  
25 stakeholder connections. We continue to adapt our communication and promo-  
26 tional outreach in this challenging environment, and we look forward to the day  
27 when we are able to deliver presentations, workshops, videos (such as our Me-  
28 morial Tribute), and our Retirement Readiness Seminar in person again. Monthly  
29 outreach to all District Executives continues, keeping us connected to significant  
30 developments including pastoral transitions and leadership development.

31  
32 Client Relations is focused on instilling trust in those BBT serves by ensuring  
33 they receive a concierge-type of customer service experience, which proactively  
34 assists members and clients to receive the information and solutions they are  
35 seeking, including answers to questions. The team works with Brethren Pension  
36 Plan members in an effort to help them grow strong retirement account bal-  
37 ances, with Brethren Insurance members to receive financial security through  
38 employer-sponsored insurance benefits, and with all members to increase their  
39 employee satisfaction, which translates to higher productivity and lower  
40 turnover for Brethren congregations and organizations. Client Relations played  
41 a key role in planning, promoting, and conducting Brethren Insurance Service’s  
42 2020 Open Enrollment campaign by producing the marketing materials, and  
43 supporting participant enrollment.

44  
45 Benefit performance review meetings, an opportunity to report significant plan  
46 developments and statistics to Brethren Pension Plan organizational sponsors,

were conducted for the first time in 2020. Collaborating with our BBT colleagues in the Employee Benefits department, Client Relations staff met with each non-Qualified Church Controlled Organization sponsor to discuss how our benefit programs are serving the interests and needs of plan sponsors and members. These meetings were conducted virtually and were well received. This interaction also served as an important touch point that would normally have been provided through an onsite visit. In addition to these meetings, Client Relations rolled out new Brethren Pension Plan Adoption Agreements to our non-QCCO sponsors.

The team’s Retirement Planning Consultant remains focused on the strengthening relationships with Brethren Pension Plan participants, through regular and frequent messages that target specific participant demographics via print, email, and text media, as well as personal phone calls and Zoom meetings. We are also developing metrics for tracking and evaluating the success of these efforts.

As we look to the future, the role of Client Relations is being redefined. A vision has been cast that requires focused effort on developing new relationships and clients — increasing revenue through top-line growth — both within as well as outside of the denomination. Client Relations, which on Jan. 1, 2021, was renamed the Relationships and Growth department, is currently developing an interaction plan to identify new prospects and cultivate them into new sponsors of BBT’s financial services. The team will also be responsible for engaging current clients/sponsors, with the goal of enhancing levels of satisfaction, and supporting the efforts of our pension, insurance, and asset management ministries with regard to member and client retention.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications staff is responsible for articulating BBT’s value propositions to those we serve, and for distributing the organization’s messages to our members and clients, as well as to the general membership of the Church of the Brethren. This department produces many newsletters and updates throughout the year, maintains and posts information on the [www.cobbt.org](http://www.cobbt.org) website, and facilitates the organization’s presence at various denominational conferences and events. The team are the writers, designers, and media producers that create many of BBT’s resources.

Although the end result of the team’s messaging and mailings over the past year may not have appeared to be that much different than before, obviously the gathering of information once the pandemic began was carried out exclusively via virtual platforms. BBT’s staff normally embraces the personal side of their work, often having the opportunity to interact with many of our members and clients. However, in 2020 the research for stories shared about the impact of our ministries was all virtual. Our team looks forward to returning to personal interaction throughout the denomination once wide scale travel commences following the pandemic, so that we can once again hear our members’ and clients’ stories and take their photos and videos in person.

1 **Newsletters**

2 Our newsletters offer information on a wide array of relevant topics such as  
3 sound investing, health and well-being, and current financial news, both do-  
4 mestic and global. In addition to being distributed to BBT plan members and  
5 clients, our newsletters are available online for all to read.

6

7 *Benefit News* is our quarterly flagship newsletter, filled with information suitable  
8 for everyone BBT serves as well as a general audience.

9

10 *Pension Perspective*, our Pension Plan newsletter, was reintroduced in 2020 as a  
11 monthly issue, giving members up-to-date data on fund performance, and giving  
12 the team the ability to tailor articles to the most current news and investment  
13 trends. Four of the issues are distributed via the Pension Plan recordkeeper, ac-  
14 companying quarterly statements. These issues focus on financial performance  
15 topics, which helps give members a framework for what they see in their state-  
16 ments.

17

18 *WellNow* is our monthly electronic newsletter for Brethren Insurance Services  
19 members. In March 2020, we quickly turned our focus in this publication to all  
20 the necessary news on COVID-19 and the pandemic. Just as quickly as things  
21 seemed to be re-opening in some parts of the country, we were learning of large  
22 spikes in other regions, so we kept a monthly focus on the COVID crisis through  
23 the end of the year. Our nearly 40 percent open rate in the second half of 2020  
24 would indicate that readers were interested in being informed regularly on  
25 COVID-related news.

26

27 *Investment Perspective*, the newsletter that is emailed and mailed monthly to  
28 asset management clients, contains a performance report for the previous month  
29 and articles on global economy as well as helpful client-centered information.

30

31 All newsletters are distributed to their target audiences and are also available to  
32 the general public on the BBT website, with easy access to current and past issues.

33

34 **Special Projects**

35 In 2020, the Communications Department produced the 92-page *Information*  
36 *Statement* for Brethren Foundation Funds; *Retiree News*, our 56-page collection  
37 of personal updates provided by Pension Plan retirees; and 14 custom *Benefits*  
38 *Guides* for use by Insurance staff at Open Enrollment events with stakeholders.  
39 Some of our annual projects were taken off the schedule in 2020, as the corre-  
40 sponding gatherings (such as the Retirement Readiness Seminar, BBT Workshops,  
41 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, and many district conferences, to  
42 name a few) did not take place due to the pandemic. The annual Memorial Trib-  
43 ute video was produced in 2020, despite the fact that Annual Conference was  
44 cancelled. It will be aired at the 2021 Conference along with the 2021 tribute. As  
45 of the end of 2020, we did not know which events would be back on for 2021,  
46 so we planned to adapt the production schedule as information unfolds.

**Moving and Changing**

The Communications department continued to meet regularly with the Client Relations department throughout 2020 in order to develop tasks and goals, and messaging relatable to key target audiences. That will change going forward as the strategic plan redefines roles and realigns departments. We understand that a big part of Communications in the future may be our use of social media as a tool to reach customers, especially in light of how COVID-19 has redefined our ability to *physically* reach customers. The Communications department is dedicated to the idea that we must be open to a “new normal” in everything we do, how information is presented, and how it makes its way to our audiences. We are excited about all the new processes that took place in 2020, but look forward to continuing with positive change — whatever form that takes — going forward.

**BBT BOARD**

Jerry Patterson was appointed by the Board to serve a four-year term. Wayne Scott was elected to the Board by Brethren Pension Plan and Brethren Insurance Services members; he represents the denominational retirement communities.

The 2020-21 BBT Board consists of 12 members and two ex officio members. Serving as Board members are Donna Rhodes, chair; Kevin Kessler, vice chair; Sara Brenneman; Eunice Culp; Ron Gebhardtshauer; Dennis Kingery; Shelley Kontra, Russ Matteson; Audrey Myer; Jerry Patterson; Wayne Scott; and David Shissler. David Steele, Church of the Brethren General Secretary, serves as an ex officio member. President Nevin Dulabaum also serves as an ex officio member.

As of January 2021, the BBT Board consisted of five Caucasian females, six Caucasian males, one African American male, and two ex officio Caucasian males.

**BBT STAFF**

**Staff hires**

BBT added two new faces to its team in 2020. Tracy Repmann was hired on Sept. 28 as assistant director of Financial Operations. Dan Radcliff was hired Oct. 26 as client manager for Brethren Foundation.

**The BBT Team**

BBT staff (as of Jan. 1, 2021) — Nevin Dulabaum, president; Jean Bednar; Loyce Swartz Borgmann; Debbie Butcher; Joven Castillo; Tammy Chudy; Sherri Crowe; Lori Domich; Scott Douglas; German Gongora; Fatima Kurth; Michelle Kilbourne; Steve Mason; John McGough; Diane Parrott; Dan Radcliff; Huma Rana; Tracy Repmann; Lynnae Rodeffer; Connie Sandman; Ed Shannon; Veronica Treadwell; Jeremiah Thompson; and Rick Villalobos.

## CONCLUSION

Change is difficult in general, but it is even more of a challenge in the governance structure of the not-for-profit church setting, where volunteer boards can sometimes become comfortable in the context of maintaining the status quo because “we’ve always done it that way,” even if “that way” is now leading to difficulties like stagnation, a lack of giving, dwindling membership, and the absence of excitement and enthusiasm.

A year ago, the BBT Board and staff would not have thought it possible to have each of our staff work from their respective homes, to have every Board and committee meeting held electronically, and for us to serve our members and clients exclusively via some form of virtual means. And yet, here we are, successful for right now, with our membership strong and the assets we manage for members and clients at an all-time high, despite spending a year dealing with the challenges of COVID-19. We recognize that tomorrow may not resemble yesterday. For example, in October we learned that the national population of the Church of the Brethren has dipped below 100,000 members. And, those we serve in the future may not want us to visit them in person, especially retirement communities, which have been severely impacted by the pandemic and will no doubt move ahead with visitation protocols to limit those who can enter their facilities.

At one point in 2020, our president was told that the organization should not make changes just because of the pandemic. On the contrary, BBT needs to change because of the pandemic, both in being able to address future needs and also to be able to escape from the “we’ve always done it that way” mentality. No, if we slip back into who we were as an organization prior to the pandemic, we are giving up on our chance, and forfeiting our ability, to make needed changes to address the future. While BBT is in great organizational shape in 2021, proactively addressing challenges that we see on the horizon is the recipe for staying that way.

In November 2020, the Board affirmed the direction sought by the president — to strengthen the foundation of BBT’s operations; to seek business beyond those we currently serve; to ensure that the right staff are in the right positions; to move permanently into a more nimble office situation for our staff; and to look at our identity to ensure that it reflects the ideals and beliefs that we hold and in which we operate, as we strive to serve people and organizations through the management of their financial resources. The future of this organization remains strong, and its service to the Church of the Brethren is unwavering.

Building financial security.  
Bettering the world.  
Together.

That’s today’s, and tomorrow’s, BBT.

Donna Rhodes	Nevin Dulabaum
Board Chair	BBT President