

3. Report of On Earth Peace

INTRODUCTION

“The aim of ‘On Earth Peace...’ is to clarify the issues that a Christian church must face now regarding violence... This movement does not intend to solve all problems in this area of present-day human living. It can, however, do something in the name of Christ by endeavoring to implement the message that came when Christ was born, ‘On Earth Peace and Good Will among [All People].’” - M.R. Zigler, December 1974

On Earth Peace’s work as a ministry within the Church of the Brethren dates to 1974, when the organization was founded by 20th-century Church of the Brethren peace leader M.R. Zigler. Since 1974, OEP has developed programs serving youth and young adults, congregations, and community groups, as we walk in partnership with Church of the Brethren congregations, camps, districts, and Annual Conference.

Our purpose as an agency of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference is to help the Church of the Brethren become a relevant, vital, “living” peace and justice church equipped to create vital relationships and initiatives on contemporary issues of violence and injustice. Let us disarm ourselves of violence and re-equip ourselves with the tools of active nonviolence and conflict reconciliation. Let us prepare ourselves to become vibrant bearers of God’s love, vital, relevant, and ready to respond to the needs of our times.

In 2024, we are celebrating our 50th anniversary as an organization. As we reflect, we consider **legacy and hope**, which empower us to resist war, make peace, and pursue justice with faith and courage. Lamentations 3:21-23 says “But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” We go with hope into the next fifty years, eager for the time when peace endures and justice prevails.

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT ON EARTH PEACE

OEP is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit which has been an agency of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference since 1998. While OEP is an agency of the denomination, there is no centralized denominational funding to support our work. All resources for our ministry come from individual and congregational donations or income from programs.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Beginning in 1974, near the end of the Vietnam War, On Earth Peace’s early work focused on preparing young people to resist any future draft as conscien-

1 tious objectors to war. Youth gathered to reflect on their faith and the Church
2 of the Brethren belief that “all war is sin,” to learn about the selective service
3 process and to prepare to make a case in front of a draft board, and do some-
4 thing to resist the things that lead to war. In the 1980s, Peace Academies were
5 held in New Windsor, MD, to continue to develop leaders for peace in each gen-
6 eration and in each profession. Peace Assemblies gathered adults together to
7 consider the Christian response to current issues of violence and war. Many
8 Brethren reflect on their attendance at these academies, assemblies, and retreats
9 as formative parts of their faith journey.

10

11 In the 1990s, On Earth Peace became an agency of the Church of the Brethren
12 Annual Conference and became home to the Ministry of Reconciliation (MoR)
13 conflict transformation services. Part of OEP for more than two decades, MoR
14 equipped congregations, districts, and the denomination to build healthy com-
15 munication and address conflict constructively. In the 2000s, On Earth Peace
16 renewed its peace witness program in response to the wars in Iraq and
17 Afghanistan, including in counter-recruitment and through congregational or-
18 ganizing as part of Decade to Overcome Violence. Congregational organizing
19 around September 21, the International Day of Prayer for Peace, became an an-
20 nual rhythm. During this decade, OEP began to see the ways institutional racism
21 was limiting our ministry. We also began to learn, teach, and support commu-
22 nities and leaders using the Kingian Nonviolence approach.

23

24 In recent decades 2010-present, On Earth Peace has recognized how systemic
25 oppression leads to violence and war and has committed to actively work for
26 justice within the organization, denomination, and local and national commu-
27 nities. This work includes pursuing racial justice, LGBTQ+ inclusion, gun vio-
28 lence prevention, and calling for a ceasefire and end to the occupation of
29 Palestine. Our internship program was reimaged in 2016 and blossomed dur-
30 ing the pandemic. Our Kingian Nonviolence organizing and leadership pro-
31 grams deepened.

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ON EARTH PEACE VALUES

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35 Our shared values guide our work as the On Earth Peace community. These val-
36 ues guide our work and direct our decision-making.

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- Jesus-Centered Spirituality -

39 We follow Jesus into the work of justice and peace. We share in spiritual practices
40 and develop faith resources to help undergird our programs.

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- Positive Peace -

43 We learn, teach, and practice dynamic forms of peacemaking which see conflict
44 as an important tool to meet needs, address injustice, correct imbalances of
45 power, and seek healing and reconciliation.

46

- *Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression* - 1
We commit to name and undo barriers to participation in our programs based 2
on identity and to work for full inclusion and equity for all who wish to join in 3
our work. We commit to the long-term transformation of On Earth Peace, the 4
church, and society. 5

- *Intergenerational Leadership* - 6
We nurture peacemakers and leaders and honor the wisdom, skill, and experi- 7
ence of all generations. 8
9

- *Beloved Community* - 10
We commit to raising the levels of relationships until justice and peace prevail, 11
and all people attain their full human potential. 12
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Vision Statement: The World We Work For 14
"We see a world in Beloved Community, free from oppression, violence, and war." 15
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Mission Statement: Our Portion of the Work 18
"We develop and walk with leaders and communities who work for justice and 19
peace." 20
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Since our formation in 1974, when we equipped Brethren youth as conscien- 22
tious objectors and adults as peace promoters, OEP has supported leadership 23
for peace in each generation. Our work today centers on developing both leaders 24
and their communities for more effective work for justice and peace. 25
26

2023 UPDATES 27

2023 Highlights: 28

- 40 web events hosted with 683 attendees. 29
- 97 people made three-year financial pledges to support On Earth Peace. 30
- 100+ people participated in the Gun Violence Prevention vigil in Cincinnati during the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. 31
32
- 200 Brethren have been trained in Kingian Nonviolence as part of our 33
1000 Brethren goal. 34
- 8 youth received Community Engagement Grants for projects based in 35
Findlay, Ohio and Gaza, Palestine. 36
- 100+ interns have served with On Earth Peace since the beginning of the 37
program in 2016. 38
39

1000 Brethren Kingian Nonviolence Training Project 40

We are working to help the Church of the Brethren grow its capacity to speak with 41
power to the needs of our time. We have set a long-term goal of training 1000 42
Brethren in Kingian Nonviolence Conflict Reconciliation. This is intended as a 43
long-term project to transform the denomination's approach to questions of justice 44
and peace. We hope to help establish a new baseline for faithful engagement in 45
the world around us. By the end of 2023, we reached 200 of our 1000-person goal. 46

1 We have powerful Annual Conference statements on violence, war, poverty,
2 racism, hunger, and environmental destruction. But are we yet equipped to speak,
3 act, and lead on these issues? We believe that the Church of the Brethren can be
4 strengthened by developing a common framework for nonviolent leadership.

5
6 On Earth Peace proposes that a key part of that shared framework can be an ap-
7 proach called Kingian Nonviolence Conflict Reconciliation. Kingian Nonvio-
8 lence is based on the theology, philosophy, and methodology of the Rev. Dr.
9 Martin Luther King, Jr., and the leadership of the Civil Rights movement. Former
10 OEP board member David Jehnsen (Living Peace Church of the Brethren,
11 Columbus, OH) connected OEP with the Kingian Nonviolence Conflict Recon-
12 ciliation approach in about 2007. Jehnsen, who was raised in the Michigan Dis-
13 trict of the Church of the Brethren, joined Brethren Volunteer Service in 1962
14 and became part of the Chicago Freedom Movement, serving on Dr. King's
15 Chicago staff. After Dr. King's assassination, Jehnsen worked with the Rev. Dr.
16 Bernard LaFayette, Jr., a close associate of Dr. King, to codify what they learned
17 into an approach and curriculum.

18
19 Kingian Nonviolence shares the "will" and the "skill" of nonviolence - values
20 and practices we can use for interpersonal conflict and community leadership.
21 Seeing this as a path to implement the values and teachings of Jesus, OEP has
22 moved to institutionalize this approach in our work and ministry and it has be-
23 come a primary form of engagement with the Church of the Brethren.

24
25 In 2023, On Earth Peace sponsored or facilitated Kingian Nonviolence trainings
26 for Bridgewater Church of the Brethren, the Mid-Atlantic District, the
27 Missouri/Arkansas District, and the South/Central Indiana District, as well a 16-
28 hour online workshop specifically for Brethren. In South/Central Indiana, a
29 local team called Brethren Building Beloved Community worked over a six-
30 month period to organize their weekend-length training and to plan followup
31 with groups in the district to continue applying what they learned.

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33 In 2023 we began a pilot project creating affinity groups, providing a pathway
34 for local communities to develop the capacity to use nonviolence to address is-
35 sues they face, with skilled support from the On Earth Peace community.

36
37 Contact OEP@OnEarthPeace.org to explore how this training might help your
38 district or congregation build capacity for active engagement with Jesus in the
39 neighborhood.

40 41 **Organizing Against Gun Violence**

42 In 2023, On Earth Peace launched the Church of the Brethren Gun Violence
43 Prevention Action Team, a group of more than ten leaders from across the coun-
44 try, working to galvanize the Church of the Brethren to be faithful as an effective
45 force for reducing gun violence wherever it occurs. The Action Team planned a
46 major public vigil and witness at Cincinnati City Hall as part of the 2023 Annual

Conference, and spent the fall connecting with concerned Brethren yearning to reduce gun violence in their own communities and our country.	1 2 3
Internship Program	4
Through our paid internship program, On Earth Peace connects with 18 to 24-year-olds, college and graduate students of any age, and recent graduates. OEP has hosted over 100 young adults in its internship program since 2016. In 2023, 25 interns and fellows worked as part of our team. All interns and fellows are trained in the 16-hour KNV Core Training in Kingian Nonviolence. Our interns and fellows support all the work of the organization including leading our organizing work, hosting trainings, mentoring youth, analyzing brand and communication, and supporting fundraising efforts. In each of these areas, interns bring their Kingian Nonviolence training to their projects and put learning into action.	5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14
Community Engagement Mini-Grants for Youth Groups	15
OEP is supporting youth groups and their efforts by offering up to \$500 in grant funding to support a youth-initiated project for peace and justice in their community. We accompany youth through webinars and consultation as they connect with their neighborhoods. In 2023, OEP offered grants to youth in Findlay, OH, and Gaza, Palestine.	16 17 18 19 20 21
Children as Peacemakers	22
In the summer of 2023, OEP launched Kingian Nonviolence Family Packs on the Six Principles of Kingian Nonviolence. These intergenerational activities are designed to invite table conversation and activities for families. This resource is available by contacting OEP.	23 24 25 26 27
Standing with People of Color Study/Action Process	28
In 2022, On Earth Peace was delegated by the Annual Conference to join with the Southern Ohio and Kentucky District to lead a two-year denominational study/action process, "Standing with People of Color." The 2023 Annual Conference extended the process until 2025. OEP staff continue providing leadership and support for that committee, along with staff from the Church of the Brethren, Inc. Through 2023, that committee launched the "7 Prompts" for Crucial Christian Conversation which are being used at many levels throughout the denomination. (See full report from that committee elsewhere in this booklet.)	29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37
Partnerships	38
We deepened connections with partners in mutual support and shared work, including the Supportive Communities Network, the Church of the Brethren Standing Committee and Agencies, Dunker Punks Podcast, the Church of the Brethren Women's Caucus, Kingian Nonviolence Coordinating Committee, the Institute for Human Rights and Responsibilities, Inc., the Addie Wyatt Center for Nonviolence Training, Community Peacemaker Teams (formerly known as Christian Peacemaker Teams), the Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA, and the Western Washington Fellowship of Reconciliation.	39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46

OEP STAFF

On Earth Peace has a three-person staff that is functioning in an extended interim capacity, sharing executive roles in addition to program and administrative responsibilities.

Co-Interim Executives: Marie Benner-Rhoades, Matt Guynn, Darlene Johnson
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Matt Guynn, Director, Church and Community Group Organizing
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Darlene Johnson, Director, Administration
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In addition to our full-time staff, On Earth Peace has an average of 15 paid interns working as part-time contract staff on a wide range of programs and projects, and relies on a leadership network of volunteers and contractors.

OEP FINANCES

Financial Report for January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023 (*unaudited*)
Our audited financial report is available on request.

Income \$420,041

Individuals (507 Donors) \$250,969

Congregations (130 Congregations) \$63,719

Program \$34,972

Endowment Income \$17,321

Planned Giving \$50,938

Other Income \$2,122

Expenses \$399,599

Net Operating Revenue \$20,442

Unrealized Gain \$80,491

Net Revenue \$100,933

On Earth Peace gives thanks for the support and abundant generosity of the many individuals and churches who faithfully donate and even increase their financial support for OEP. Support this ministry by becoming an individual donor, by asking your congregation to support On Earth Peace, or by including us in your long-term planned giving (annuities, bequests, and other planned giving options). Give now at www.OnEarthPeace.org/donate.

To learn more about our Dove Club monthly donors program and the Legacy Society through which you can make deferred gifts to help secure our work for the next generations, contact us at OEP@OnEarthPeace.org or (410) 635-8704.