



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

BRETHREN VOLUNTEER SERVICE

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF BVS!

BVS BY THE NUMBERS

Volunteers currently serving:

27

(18 in the US, 3 in Europe, 1 in Latin America, 4 in Asia, 1 in Africa)

Currently active BVS project sites:

About 50

Number of US states home to BVS project sites:

16 (plus D.C.)

Current BVS monthly stipend:

\$250

Total volunteers serving in BVS since 1948:

7,000+

A diamond jubilee of service around the world

In 1948, young adults encouraged by Brethren leader Dan West brought a surprise motion to the floor of Annual Conference that left an indelible mark on the denomination.

While service had long been part of the Church of the Brethren, delegates embraced that proposal to formally start Brethren Volunteer Service, enabling young Brethren and others to respond energetically to the devastation of World War II in Europe, to hunger in Puerto Rico, and to a variety of needs around the US.

Seventy-five years later, BVS continues to be one of the great touchstones of Brethren faith: a source of leadership development, faith formation, relationship building, identity, mutual service, and more.



The anniversary is being celebrated with a new book from author Jim Lehman, *A Year of Living Differently*, published by Brethren Press, as well as special commemorations at Annual Conference, National Older Adult Conference, and elsewhere, plus some local and regional celebrations. A 75th anniversary Facebook group drew about 500 members who shared stories, and photos, while a monthly e-newsletter delivered other highlights.

We are grateful to everyone who has been part of that story, one that is still being written around the world.

BVS welcomes a new director

Chelsea Goss Skillen began as the new director of BVS in October 2022.

Emily Tyler resigned in February 2022 after three years in the position, and former director **Dan McFadden** provided interim leadership for eight months.

Originally from the Richmond, Va., area, Chelsea did an undergraduate degree at Bridgewater (Va.) College and has a master's in Organizational Leadership from Regis University. She spent two years as a BVSer previously.



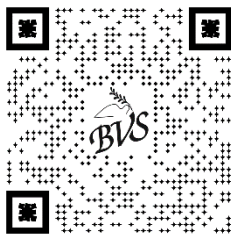
NEWS & NOTES

Other new staff welcomed this past year included **Marissa Witkovsky-Eldred** as interim coordinator of short-term service; **Walt Wiltschek** as part-time office coordinator; and **Virginia Rendler**, who is starting as interim volunteer coordinator in July 2023. **Pauline Liu** completed her service as volunteer coordinator in February.

Mid-year retreats

Each year, current BVSers in the US gather for a mid-year retreat to take a break, talk about their experiences, re-connect with one another, and prepare for the remainder of their service time. In March 2023, a group of 20 volunteers (including two German volunteers serving with other placement organizations) met at Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla., for several days together that included discussion, a service project, games and relaxation, and a trip to the beach.

Volunteers serving in Europe planned to gather in late June in Galway, Ireland for a similar retreat. BVS marked 50 years of working in Northern Ireland in 2022.



UPCOMING ORIENTATIONS

BVS will be welcoming new volunteers at two orientation units in the summer and fall of 2023. The summer unit will take place **Aug. 1-9 at Inspiration Hills Camp in Burbank, Ohio**, while the fall unit will be held **Sept. 26-Oct. 4 at Camp Koinonia in Cle Elum, Wash.** About 25-30 volunteers are expected again this year. A strong partnership with EIRENE in Germany continues to benefit BVS' overall recruitment.

Faith X: Another way of serving

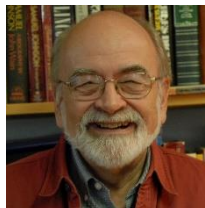


Short-term service opportunities through FaithX (formerly the workcamp program) in 2023 included 11 total trips with about 170 youth and advisors participating. Experiences were available in nine states plus Washington, D.C., and Spain.

FaithX introduced a new pricing model this year based on participants' ability to pay, with subsidized, standard, and supporter (extra donation) options available. The 2023 FaithX theme was "Voices for Peace," drawn from Romans 15:1-6.

PARTNERS IN SERVICE

This year's BVS Partners in Service Award was given to Jim Lehman, a member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill., who has been a long-time supporter of BVS.



Most recently, Jim curated and wrote the 75th anniversary book, *A Year of Living Differently*. Jim has also written other BVS publications in the past and has connected with many volunteers over the years, chronicling BVS' history.

The award is presented each summer at the BVS luncheon held during Annual Conference.