

## General secretary issues statement after El Paso, Dayton shootings

**C**hurch of the Brethren general secretary **David Steele** issued the following statement after shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, in early August:

*“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more” (Matthew 2:18).*

Today, like far too many days before, we are grieving with our country at the news of two horrific mass shootings, one in El Paso, Texas, and the other in Dayton, Ohio. At a time when it is hard to find words to soothe, we turn to the balm that heals us in the scriptures and our commitment to Christ’s peace. In the words of Romans 14:19, *“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”*

We reaffirm the words that Mission and Ministry Board said in last year’s statement, “Lukewarm no more: A call for repentance and action on gun violence”:

“The work of the church is pastoral and public. We must preach the Gospel in word and deed. . . . We have fallen short of discipleship in the way of Jesus, lost sight of Christ’s reconciling work, grown weary in doing good, become numb to shootings, and tolerant of widespread violence in our nation. We call ourselves into greater and more energetic care for all people through direct service, bold peacemaking, and the work of challenging policies that do not lead to well-being and God’s shalom.”

We are in the midst of a crisis, one caused by violent white supremacy fueled by prominent hateful rhetoric. It is such a time as this that requires the bold peacemaking to which our historic pacifist stance calls us. Our 1991 Statement on Peacemaking says, “Just as peace is broken when injustice and unrighteousness reign, so peace is threatened when fear and hostility exercise control.” Fear and hostility provided the foundation for these domestic terror incidents to occur, and it is an act of hope and trust in God to call for peace in the wake of violence.



The statement goes on to say that “in the tradition of Moses to Malachi, prophetic proclamation and action has been a distinctive part of our heritage. The prophetic, whether a word of judgment, a cry of anguish, a symbolic act of resistance or defiance, a confession, or a vision of hope and promise, always presupposes that Yahweh is active in our time.”

If we seek to bring God’s peace to earth as it is in Heaven, we must proclaim the prophetic, this act of resistance to the violence we see around us every day. We believe that Yahweh is active in our time, which calls us to lament and grieve for all those who feel the sting of violence and to seek true justice and peace for a hurting world.



## CDS Critical Response Care serves following shootings

**Children’s Disaster Services (CDS) deployed Critical Response Care teams** at the request of the Red Cross in response to shootings in Gilroy, Calif., and El Paso. The teams are specially trained to work with children after a mass casualty event.

The first team was deployed to Gilroy for 6 days, serving 39 children in the Family Assistance Center. The Gilroy Garlic Festival shooting resulted in 12 wounded and 3 people killed. The second team deployed to El Paso for 7 days, providing care for 35 children affected by the shooting in a Walmart store that resulted in 24 wounded and 22 people killed. A third team was standing by to respond to the shooting in Dayton, Ohio, but was not deployed.

## Pleasant Hill Village declares bankruptcy

Pleasant Hill Village, a Church of the Brethren retirement community in Girard, Ill., has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. The filing is due to unprecedented and sustained non-payment from Illinois Medicaid, reports Illinois and Wisconsin District.

“After closing its nursing home in August 2018 under the burden of \$2 million of non-compensated care, Pleasant Hill Village now seeks bankruptcy protection in the interest of its ongoing Girard ministries of senior independent living and senior assisted living,” said the district newsletter. Pleasant Hill Residence, the senior independent and assisted living facility constructed in 2002, continues to operate 48 apartments.



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Glenn Riegel

## Compelling Vision Process Team issues post-Conference report

**T**he Compelling Vision Process Team has written an initial report on the conversations at Annual Conference in Greensboro, N.C., in July. This report is being shared at district conferences or through district communication channels. It is available online at <https://new.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2019/08/AC-2019-District-Conference-Report.pdf>.

## Personnel notes

**Lauren Flora** and **Marissa Witkovsky-Eldred** completed their service as assistant coordinators in the Workcamp Ministry in August, working through Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS). They organized and led workcamp experiences for 256 youth and advisors. Assistant workcamp coordinators for the 2020 season began in August: **Kara Miller** of Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and **Liana Smith** of Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. In mid-August, **Steve Van Houten** concluded some five months as interim coordinator of the Workcamp Ministry.

**Roxanne Gaxiola Aguirre** resigned Aug. 30 as coordinator of Spanish-language ministry training for the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership. Aguirre began in January 2018 working with students and liaisons from districts involved in certificate-level ministry training programs for Spanish speakers, Educación para un Ministerio Compartido (EPMC) and Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano de la Iglesia de los Hermanos (SeBAH COB). At this year's Annual Conference she recognized the first EPMC graduate.

**Nathanael Inglis** resigned Aug. 20 as assistant professor of theological studies at Bethany Seminary. He began at the seminary in fall 2015, coming to Bethany after completing a doctorate at Fordham University and spending two years of BVS

in a Guatemalan indigenous community. His interest in Anabaptist and ecological themes influenced the courses he developed. During his tenure, he was selected to participate in a Science for Seminaries faculty retreat through the American Association for the Advancement of Science and assisted in securing a \$75,000 grant from AAAS to help Bethany incorporate scientific topics and themes into its curriculum. Inglis begins this fall as assistant dean of students at Columbia University in New York City.

**Elsie Koehn** retired in August as district executive minister for Southern Plains District where she had served for more than 10 years, since 2009. Previously she pastored Pleasant Plains Church of the Brethren in Aline, Okla., for some 16 years. She served as moderator for Southern Plains District in 2007-08 and also represented the district on the Standing Committee of Annual Conference.

**Donna March** will retire Dec. 31 as Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) director of Human Resources and Administrative Services. She has worked in Church of the Brethren-related positions for 35 years. In May 1984 she began working for the former General Board as support staff in the ministry department and then the General Secretary's Office. She began with BBT on July 31, 1989, and served in

several managerial positions including 18 years in the insurance and pension programs and, since March 2007, in the administrative department where she has been secretary, one of the officers of the four corporations under the BBT umbrella, and support for the president's office, board of directors, and staff. For many years she took the lead in coordinating the 5K Fitness Challenge at Annual Conference.

**J. Colleen Michael** retired July 31 as Pacific Northwest District executive, a position she held since Jan. 1, 2012. During her tenure she oversaw a name change from Oregon Washington District to Pacific Northwest District; helped the district deal with wildfires; served on the Compelling Vision Working Group; and chaired the Council of District Executives. While on the CODE executive committee she worked with the denomination's Leadership Team to respond to the 2016 Annual Conference "Query: Same Sex Weddings," out of which work emerged the compelling vision conversations. **An interim team** has been appointed by the district: **Debbie Roberts**, pastor of Ellisforde Church of the Brethren and adjunct professor of Reconciliation Studies at Bethany Seminary; **Glenn Brumbaugh**, pastor of Olympic View Church of the Brethren in Seattle, Wash.; and **Carol Mason**, an area minister.