



Traci Rabenstein

## Southern Ohio/Kentucky District hosts Mission and Ministry Board

**T**he spring meeting of the Mission and Ministry Board on March 13-16 was hosted by Oakland Church of the Brethren in Bradford, Ohio, and Southern Ohio/Kentucky District.

Originally to take place at the Brethren Retirement Community in Greenville, Ohio, the meeting moved to the Oakland church after the retirement community was closed to visitors because of COVID-19. Months in advance, board members had been invited to preach for Sunday morning worship at 11 congregations in the area. Most canceled, but three of the preachers were able to bring their messages as planned. The board was to attend a district-sponsored performance by Ted Swartz and Ken Medema, but it was canceled. A visit to Bethany Seminary, just over the border in Indiana, went ahead.

The meeting agenda was marked by numerous reports and a board development training led by Annual Conference secretary James Beckwith.

John Mueller was welcomed as a new board member filling the uncompleted term of Marcus Harden, who has resigned.

After receiving an extensive report on

the Nigeria Crisis Response, the board approved an Emergency Disaster Fund grant of \$300,000 to cover remaining 2020 expenses and to carry the response through March 2021.

Two recommendations from the Strategic Design Team were approved, to hire a consultant and name an expanded committee. The new Strategic Plan Formation Team is convened by Carl Fike, board chair-elect, and includes board members Lauren Seganos Cohen, Paul Schrock, and Colin Scott; Russ Matteson, Pacific Southwest District executive; Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, who has led the compelling vision process; and Josh Brockway as staff.

A short-term committee was formed to bring a recommendation for use of the Brethren Service Center Quasi-endowment, including board members Roger Schrock, convenor, Paul Liepelt, Diane Mason, and a staff member to be named.

Denise Kettering-Lane, assistant professor of Brethren Studies at Bethany Seminary, was appointed to the Brethren Historical Committee.

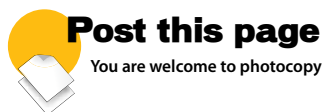
## Church called to prayer and fasting

**G**eneral secretary David Steele issued a call for Brethren to join in prayer and fasting on the Fridays in April, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. “I recognize that this is a time of anxiety and even fear. Yet, as persons of faith in Jesus Christ we know that death no longer holds us captive, for we are people of Christ’s resurrection,” said the general secretary’s announcement, in part. Quoting from Psalm 46, he invited the church to “gather together spiritually before our ever-present God . . . to center our hearts in the refuge of God’s peace.”



EYN

**An innovative hand-washing station** allows Nigerian Brethren to sanitize their hands to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, even in an area without access to running water. Photo courtesy of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria).



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## EDF grants go for COVID-19 relief, hurricane recovery

**T**he denomination's Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) has made grants to international partners for relief aid during the COVID-19 emergency and to continue hurricane recovery work in the Carolinas and the Caribbean.

A grant of \$150,000 continued funding for the Puerto Rico hurricane recovery program of Brethren Disaster Ministries and Puerto Rico District. An additional \$5,000 was given for the January earthquakes.

A grant of \$40,500 financed remaining work at the Brethren Disaster Ministries rebuilding site in the Carolinas, supporting recovery from Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and Hurricane Florence in 2018. COVID-19 affected volunteerism and the ability to travel beginning in March, and the site was on suspension.

A grant of \$25,000 supported the Church World Service response to Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas. CWS, working with the ACT Alliance, developed a long-term recovery program for migrants.



*Food distribution through the Rwanda Church of the Brethren.*

A grant of \$20,000 was given to Proyecto Aldea Global to support pharmacies in central and western Honduras. Also in Honduras, \$4,000 supported distribution of food to vulnerable families in the Flor del Campo area of Tegucigalpa by Iglesia Cristiana Viviendo en Amor y Fe.

A grant of \$15,000 supported IMA World Health to establish a COVID-19 isolation and treatment center in the Democratic Republic of Congo, at the non-profit HEAL Africa Hospital in Goma.

In central Africa, a grant of \$8,000 to the Rwanda Church of the Brethren provided emergency food to 225 at-risk families selected from the four congregations and surrounding communities. A grant of \$12,000 to the Church of the Brethren in Democratic Republic of Congo provided emergency food to 550 households from five congregations and surrounding communities.

A grant of \$4,000 provided seed funds for a COVID-19 response in South Sudan, to be carried out by mission staff.

### Material Resources ships face masks

The Material Resources program has made shipments of face shields and masks to Italy including 540 cartons of face shields for B'nai Brith and shipments to two health organizations made on behalf of Brother's Brother Foundation. Also on behalf of Brother's Brother Foundation, two pallets of masks were shipped to Boston, and 21 cartons of exam gloves and two cases of tie face masks were donated to the community of New Windsor.

## Pandemic forces closures, cancellations, postponements

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of denominational facilities and the cancellation or postponement of numerous Church of the Brethren events:

The General Offices in Elgin, Ill., and the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., were closed to visitors and non-essential personnel, and most denominational staff began working from home.

Brethren Disaster Ministries announced an extended suspension of its rebuilding sites.

Children's Disaster Services canceled spring training workshops.

The Material Resources program was detrimentally affected by the Church World Service closure of all kit depots in congregations across the country.

Brethren Volunteer Service worked with project sites to continue support for its volunteers, encouraging caution and safety. EIRENE, a partner organization for more than 40 years, pulled all of its volunteers back to Germany.

The Christian Citizenship Seminar for 2020 was canceled.

The Workcamp Ministry postponed the Rwanda workcamp until May 2021.

The New and Renew Conference was rescheduled for May 12-14, 2021. Speakers Christiana Rice and José Humphreys agreed to be available at that time.

The Annual Conference Moderator's Forum was postponed until the fall.

Bethany Seminary and the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership moved class sessions online, as did all of the Church of the Brethren-related colleges and universities.