

Giving to denominational ministries falls behind

As of the end of April, giving to Church of the Brethren denominational ministries had fallen short of giving during the same months in 2019. The shortfall was significant, amounting to more than \$320,000.

Congregational giving for the first four months of 2020 totaled \$816,761, falling short of last year by \$220,031. Individual giving totaled \$306,961, behind by \$103,568.

The **core ministries fund**, which supports many fundamental areas of work and is considered crucial to denominational program, saw giving fall \$113,000 behind last year at the same time. Congregational giving totaled \$520,096, behind by \$93,036, and individual giving fell behind by \$20,087.

The **Emergency Disaster Fund** also

received less in donations as of April, totaling \$259,747 but down \$111,071 from 2019.

Donations to the **Global Food Initiative** totaled \$36,690 as of April, down \$12,663 from 2019.

The denomination's self-funding ministries also lost income because of the pandemic. As of April, **Brethren Press's** curriculum sales were down and gross sales were under budget by almost \$40,000. The **Annual Conference Office**, following the cancellation of the 2020 Conference, was in process of refunding registration fees and anticipated a significant deficit. **Material Resources** stopped operating for a time at the start of the pandemic and saw a significant decline in income, resulting in a net deficit of \$72,161 as of April.

EDF directs grants to congregations for COVID-19 work

Brethren Disaster Ministries has directed a first round of grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund to congregations doing pandemic-related humanitarian work, among other grants.

The COVID-19 Pandemic Grants program began in late April. Fourteen grants totaling \$58,100 were given to congregations across the US. An allocation of \$75,000 has been made for a second round.

Other grants:

- \$65,000 finances Brethren Disaster Ministries tornado rebuilding in the area of Dayton, Ohio.
- \$20,000 supports the coronavirus response of Church World Service.
- \$10,000 has been given to Bittersweet Ministries for feeding programs in Mexico.
- \$8,000 supports the Rwandan Church of the Brethren aid for vulnerable families.

On Earth Peace joins SCN, Leadership Team responds

During the On Earth Peace board meetings held April 2-4 via Zoom, it announced a decision to join the Supportive Communities Network (SCN) of the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests. The April meetings also included conversation about strategic directions and the On Earth Peace commitment to anti-racism.

The Church of the Brethren Leadership Team responded May 18 with a statement noting the decision to join SCN raised polity questions. "Although On Earth Peace is a separately incorporated agency and can therefore make decisions apart from the discernment of Annual Conference, On Earth Peace's decision to join the Supportive Communities Network conflicts with On Earth Peace's official agreement to serve as an Annual Conference agency," the statement said, in part.

"When an Annual Conference agency

joins a special interest group that promotes and acts outside the agreements discerned by Annual Conference . . . it places itself over and against the decisions of the Annual Conference and no longer represents the whole of the church. . . . The Leadership Team believes that On Earth Peace's decision is of sufficient consequence to require On Earth Peace to enter into intentional, serious, prayerful engagement with the Standing Committee and the delegate body of Annual Conference. The Leadership Team believes an outcome of that engagement should be a determination of On Earth Peace's Annual Conference agency status."

The Leadership Team includes general secretary David A. Steele; Annual Conference moderator Paul Munday, moderator-elect David Sollenberger, secretary James M. Beckwith; and Cynthia S. Sanders representing the Council of District Executives.



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Seminary and academy celebrate graduates

Thirteen graduates of Bethany Seminary received diplomas this year. Bethany canceled in-person commencement but each graduate received a box with their diploma and celebratory gifts. Graduates also received a video greeting and personalized blessing from president Jeff Carter and dean Steve Schweitzer.



The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership announced that 10 students completed their ministry training program. The six receiving certificates from Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano de la Iglesia de Los Hermanos represent the first graduating class from SeBAH-COB. All academy graduates will receive certificates during celebrations in their districts.

Bethany's graduates:

Master of Divinity: John Andrew Fillmore, Caldwell, Idaho, with honors in Biblical Studies, Ministry Studies, and Theological Studies; Susan K. Liller, New Carlisle, Ohio, with honors in Ministry Studies; Thomas Michael McMullin, Minburn, Iowa; Katherine Lynn Polzin, Defiance, Ohio, with honors in Ministry Studies; Raul Gregorio Rivera Arroyo, Vega Baja, P.R., and Kettering, Ohio; Jack Richard Roegner, Richmond, Ind.; M. Elizabeth Ullery Swenson, Olympia, Wash.

Master of Arts: Duane Edwin Crumrine, Martinsburg, Pa.; Paul Bala Samura, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination: Eric William Bader, Columbia, Mo.; Amy Beth Lutes, Nashville, Tenn.; Joanna Davidson Smith, McPherson, Kan.; Rachel Elizabeth Ulrich, Richmond, Ind.

The academy graduates:

Training in Ministry: Robert Eugene Hollenberg, Northern Indiana District; Kristie D. Prejean, Southern Plains District; Ernest B. Shoemaker, Virgina District; Mike Trott, Mid-Atlantic District

SeBAH-COB: Mayra Calix, Atlantic Northeast District; Nertha Castro, Atlantic Northeast District; Egda Franco, Atlantic Northeast District; Arlyn Morales, Atlantic Northeast District; Aida Sanchez, Atlantic Southeast District; Rebeca Zapata, Pacific Southwest District

Personnel notes

Jeanne Davies started June 1 as executive director of the Anabaptist Disabilities Network, following Eldon Stoltzfus' resignation for health reasons. Davies had been the ADN program director. An ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, she has been pastor of Parables Community, West Dundee, Ill.

Pauline Liu began May 18 as orientation assistant for Brethren Volunteer Service, working for three months to help with summer orientation. She is a former BVS volunteer and a master's degree student at Northern Arizona University.

BVS orientation goes virtual

Brethren Volunteer Service has transitioned summer orientation to a virtual event on July 26–Aug. 7. Instead of the usual three-week, in-person orientation, Unit 325 will have a two-week virtual orientation while volunteers are quarantined after arriving at their projects. BVS staff will work ahead of orientation to help volunteers discern their project placements.

Retirement communities suffer COVID-19 outbreaks

At least three Church of the Brethren-related retirement communities have suffered COVID-19 outbreaks as of mid-June:

Brethren Village in Lititz, Pa., had an outbreak among residents and staff in April and early May. On May 7, the community reported the final death in the outbreak that claimed seven lives among residents in skilled nursing memory support. A total of 13 residents and 11 staff contracted the disease. In online statements the community expressed

sympathy to families who lost loved ones, and to the staff who cared for residents "as they would their own family."

Peter Becker Community in Harleysville, Pa., dealt with an outbreak that started April 21, when a first case was diagnosed in a staff member in skilled nursing. The outbreak affected 39 residents and 10 staff, and several residents died. The last death was reported May 26. Expressing sympathy to the families of those who died, the community reported stringent protocols including

placing affected staff in quarantine at home, notifying public health officials, following procedures recommended by the CDC, establishing an isolation wing for residents with COVID-19, and twice testing all residents in skilled nursing.

Cross Keys Village in New Oxford, Pa., started testing all residents and staff in its Health Care Center on May 18. As of May 22, three residents and six staff tested positive but none showed symptoms. The community announced it would continue testing as needed.