

Mission and Ministry Board addresses Ukraine

A statement on Ukraine topped the agenda of the Mission and Ministry Board, which met March 11-13 at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., and via Zoom. Carl Fike chaired the meeting, assisted by chair-elect Colin Scott and general secretary David Steele.

The board also heard updates on finances, addressed Brethren Faith in Action Fund guidelines, approved hiring a consultant for a survey related to the Strategic Plan, heard numerous reports, received training on “Active Listening” led by Jay Wittmeyer of the Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Peace Center, and appointed Ben Barlow of Montezuma Church of the Brethren to the Germantown Trust.

The statement on Ukraine called for a time of concerted prayer and action for peacebuilding, renewed commitment to Annual Conference opposition to conventional and nuclear war, committed to aid and advocate for refugees and migrants—regardless of national origin,

and committed to renew efforts to care for those in need in every country involved in the conflict and affected by the global financial disruption. The full statement is online at www.brethren.org.

In 2021 year-end financial reporting the board learned that, at \$48.5 million, the denomination’s total net assets increased \$6.2 million from 2020. The increase is due to investment gains, a large surplus in Core Ministries, an increase in restricted giving, and a significant increase in bequest giving. (All numbers are pre-audit.)

The Core Ministries received congregational giving totaling \$1.6 million, down \$87,000 from 2020 and \$168,000 behind budget. At \$709,000, individual giving to Core Ministries was up \$135,000 from 2020 and \$164,000 ahead of budget—the highest individual giving total since 2009. Expenses were under-spent by \$542,000, with many events either postponed or moved to virtual or hybrid. Core Ministries ended 2021 with

a net surplus of \$214,000, and \$200,000 was set aside for future budget shortfalls. For the first time since 2014, Core Ministries finished with a net asset balance over \$2 million.

Brethren Press received a \$100,000 distribution from the Gahagen Trust for expenses related to children’s curriculum, which along with the shifting of some staff costs to Core Ministries helped the publishing house close out 2021 with a \$118,000 surplus.

Material Resources suffered significant reductions in its primary sources of income, leading to a deficit of \$21,000 for the year and a net asset deficit of \$185,000. The board’s Stewardship of Properties task team is including assessment of the Material Resources program in its consideration of questions about property management.

The Conference Office had lower expenses in 2021 due to a virtual Annual Conference and finished the year with a \$46,000 surplus.



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Refugees from Ukraine on the Ukraine-Slovakia border.

Ukraine aid among first grants of 2022

Responding to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Brethren Disaster Ministries in March began working with ecumenical partners to determine best avenues for disaster relief. An Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) grant of \$10,000 was given to CORUS International—former long-time partners IMA World Health and Lutheran World Relief. A grant of \$25,000 to Church World Service was for an initial response through partner organizations working with refugees in Moldova, Romania, and other Balkan countries.

Haiti: An EDF grant of \$220,000 went to long-term programming and new house construction following the 2021 earthquake. This is a joint Brethren Disaster Ministries and Haitian Church of the Brethren response.

Tennessee: An EDF grant of \$30,000 finances the opening of a new Brethren Disaster Ministries rebuilding project for flood recovery in Waverly, Tenn., following catastrophic flash flooding in August 2021.

Maryland: An EDF grant of \$5,000 supports the Somerset County (Md.) Long Term Recovery Group following tidal flooding in the Chesapeake Bay area in October 2021.

Delaware: An EDF grant of \$5,000 supports Wilmington (Del.) Church of the Brethren in long-term recovery efforts following flooding caused by Tropical Storm Ida last August.

Venezuela church is made official

A **SIGLEH, the Church of the Brethren denomination in Venezuela,** is now official. The denomination was established by a decision of its first annual conference Feb. 21-28. The meeting was held in Colombia because of difficulties within Venezuela.

A large Venezuelan delegation included pastors, delegates, and representatives from seven indigenous groups (Piapoco, Jibi, Yekuana, Wayuu, Sanema, Yavinapi, and Carinna), along with pastors from the USA including Joel Peña of the Mission and Ministry Board, Jeff Boshart as director of the Global Food Initiative, and Eric Miller as co-executive director of Global Mission.

Thirty-three churches totaling some 1,548 members reaffirmed their commitment to ASIGLEH, among them 13 churches of the indigenous groups and 7 new affiliated churches.



Joel Peña



Zakariya Musa

Crago Bread and Stover Kulp Water—two new factories opened by Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria)—in the city of Mubi in Adamawa State, are named for former Church of the Brethren mission workers. Stover Kulp Water is named after one of the founders of the Church of the Brethren Mission in Nigeria in 1923. Crago Bread is named after Tom Crago and his wife, the late Janet Crago, who helped create the EYN Pension Office in 2006.



Winners of the speech contest for the 2022 National Youth Conference are (from left) **Hannah Smith** of Brownsville (Md.) Church of the Brethren, a freshman at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College; **Anna Schweitzer** of Cedar Grove Church of the Brethren (New Paris, Ohio), a high school junior living in Indiana; and **Kara Bidgood Enders** of Ridgeway Community Church of the Brethren (Harrisburg, Pa.), a junior in high school.

Personnel notes

David Shumate will retire as Virlina District executive minister on Dec. 31. He has led the district for almost 30 years, since Jan. 1, 1993. He is currently the longest-serving middle judicatory staff person in the Church of the Brethren as well as in Virginia. His service to the denomination has included a term as Annual Conference

moderator and service on numerous committees including three Conference study committees (World Mission Philosophy and Global Church Structure, Vision of Ecumenism for the 21st Century, and Review and Evaluation), the Ministry Advisory Council, Pastoral Compensation and Benefits

Advisory Committee, New Church Development Advisory Committee, and the Council of District Executives, where he has been chair and treasurer. His lifetime commitment to ecumenism has included two terms as president of the Virginia Council of Churches.

Connie Sandman retired from Brethren Benefit Trust

on April 30, after a 40-year career at BBT where she held the record for longest tenured employee. She began at BBT on April 26, 1982.

Joe Vecchio has announced his retirement as administrative assistant for Pacific Southwest District, as of the end of 2022. He has worked on the district staff for 29 years.