

Denomination's board adopts 2023 budget

A 2023 budget for the ministries of the Church of the Brethren topped actions taken by the Mission and Ministry Board at its fall meeting. Carl Fike chaired the meeting, with chair-elect Colin Scott.

A “grand total” budget of \$8,538,570 in income and \$8,529,600 in expense was approved. This includes budgets for Core Ministries, Brethren Disaster Ministries, Annual Conference Office, Global Food Initiative, and Material Resources.

The action included a Core Ministries balanced budget of \$5,336,000, representing a \$119,000 increase of the parameter previously set. Considerations included, among others, the inflationary economy, a 3 percent cost-of-living increase in employee pay, anticipation of higher travel costs and expenses as staff return to pre-pandemic operations, and a new executive director position to oversee Discipleship Ministries and the Office of Ministry.

A year-to-date financial report showed congregational giving to the denomination has remained relatively stable as compared to last year, and individual giving has increased over 2021.

In other business

Kathy Mack of Northern Plains District was named the next chair-elect, to start



The Mission and Ministry Board with general secretary David Steele: (from left) Steele, Rosanna Eller McFadden, Paul Schrock, Lauren Seganos Cohen, Heather Gentry Hartwell, Josiah Ludwick, Joel Peña, chair-elect Colin Scott, Meghan Horne Mauldin, chair Carl Fike, Karen Shively Neff, John Hoffman, Joanna Wave Willoughby, Michaela Alphonse, Joel Gibbel, Kathy Mack, J. Roger Schrock, Barbara Daté. Not pictured: ex officio members.

mid-year 2023. Her two-year term as chair starts at the close of the 2025 Annual Conference.

Revisions of the guidelines for the Brethren Faith in Action Fund, which gives grants to congregations and camps, included a new sliding scale for matching funds.

Strategic Plan progress reports focused on initiatives related to racism and discipleship. The board discussed

Kingian nonviolence training for board and staff.

“Decommissioning” of the self-allocation process for congregations was announced. Mission Advancement staff will work on alternative means to engage congregations.

A board development session on “Peacemaking in a Polarized Church” was led by Samuel Sarpiya, a past moderator of Annual Conference.



A newly formed Standing with People of Color Committee

met via Zoom in September to begin work on a two-year study/action process that will run through the 2025 Annual Conference. The committee includes (top row, from left) Bruce Rosenberger of the Southern Ohio and Kentucky District's Racial Justice Team; LaDonna Sanders Nkosi, director of Intercultural Ministries; Annual Conference director Rhonda Pittman Gingrich; (center row) Matt Guynn of On Earth Peace; Christy Schaub and Lucas Keller of the district team; (bottom row) Jennifer Quijano West of Standing Committee. Not pictured: Robert Jackson of the district team. Email the committee at standingwithpeopleofcolor@brethren.org.



(Left) Flooding in northeast Nigeria.

(Below) Nearly six weeks after Hurricane Fiona, small areas in Puerto Rico were still without water or electricity. Members of Puerto Rico District helped clear roads to allow distributions of food and drinking water. Several church members formed a “mini recovery team” to clear roads of trees and boulders and free power lines from branches.

Zaherha Mousa / EVN

Disaster efforts respond to Hurricanes Ian and Fiona

Church of the Brethren disaster relief programs have responded to Hurricane Ian in Florida and Hurricane Fiona in Puerto Rico.

Brethren Disaster Ministries partnered with Puerto Rico District to respond to Hurricane Fiona. In Florida, the program worked with Atlantic Southeast District following Hurricane Ian.

Congregations in Florida reported relatively minor damage to churches including North Fort Myers church, Lehigh Acres Gospel Assembly, Arcadia church, and Sebring church. Some church members were affected by flooding.

Puerto Rico District reconvened its Recovery Committee and disaster coordinator José Acevedo and district executive José Calleja Otero were in communication with the churches to assess and respond to needs. No major damage to structures and no major injuries were reported in the district.

The biggest impact in Puerto Rico was on agriculture, in addition to power and water outages. Discussions have begun between the district, Brethren Disaster Ministries, the Global Food Initiative, and Heifer International on how to support small farmers.

A \$5,000 Emergency Disaster Fund grant enabled the district to deliver food and drinking water in several areas.

Children’s Disaster Services deployed volunteer teams to the Fort Myers and Orlando areas, and coordinated with partner organization Child Life Disaster Response. Child Life’s local team gave care to about 30 children per day at the Hertz Arena shelter in Estero, Fla., starting in early October. During that time, CDS worked

with the Red Cross to find housing and rental cars for its teams to deploy.

CDS teams later completed two weeks in a shelter in Fort Myers and nine days in a shelter in Orlando. In North Fort Myers, CDS volunteers worked at the Del Tura Shelter, which housed some 560 people after the Hertz Arena and Estero Recreation Center shelters were combined into one. That team saw 25 to 30 children per day, in a deployment that ended in early November.

Material Resources sent several shipments of aid to cities in Florida on behalf of Church World Service: blankets, school kits, and baby kits to Arcadia; hygiene kits, toothpaste, and cleanup buckets to Englewood; blankets and school kits to Orlando; cleanup buckets to Cape Coral; blankets, hygiene kits, toothpaste, and cleanup buckets to Naples. Blankets, baby kits, school kits, hygiene kits, and toothpaste were shipped to Puerto Rico.

Grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund: \$50,000 to the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development for food vouchers and medical support for vulnerable Lebanese families, education for Syrian child refugees, and food assistance for migrant workers.

\$11,000 to the South Sudan mission for distributions of food, water, and medicines to people displaced by violence.

\$10,000 to the Church of the Brethren in Uganda for a flood relief program helping 300 households.

\$10,000 to the Center for Caring Empowerment and Peace Initiatives (CCEPI) in Nigeria for programing and fees to register land for a new administrative building.

\$10,000 to l’Eglise des Freres au Congo (Church of the Brethren in the Democratic Republic of Congo) for a feeding program at the Munigi camp for displaced people.

\$5,000 to the Disaster Relief Management of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) for a response to flooding in Borno and Adamawa states.

\$5,000 to l’Eglise des Freres au Congo to meet basic needs of 1,200 people including 500 displaced people, 200 elderly people, 200 orphans, and 300 church leaders and members.

\$5,000 to Rwanda Church of the Brethren to feed and provide soap for 100 vulnerable children and their families in the Gisenyi area.

Grants from the Global Food Initiative: \$15,100 to the Church of the Brethren in Rwanda to purchase a grain mill.

\$12,000 to Asociación Iglesia de Los Hermanos Venezuela (ASIGLEH, the Church of the Brethren in Venezuela) for agricultural micro-projects.

\$7,500 to l’Eglise des Freres du Congo for Seed Projects that resulted from Transformation Tree trainings provided by World Relief.



Jason Martinez