

## EYN elects new leaders

**T**he 77th Majalisa (annual conference) of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria was held April 16-19 at EYN headquarters in Kwarhi, Adamawa State. Highlights included a speech by president Joel S. Billi, who is concluding his term of service, as well as musical performances, presentations of awards, and the welcoming of 13 congregations.

On the agenda were elections and appointment of a new leadership team:

- Daniel Y. C. Mbaya was elected president. He formerly was general secretary.
- Nuhu Mutah Abba was elected vice president. He formerly was administrative secretary.
- James K. Musa was appointed general secretary.
- Luka M. Timta was appointed administrative secretary.
- Bitrus Y. Duwara was appointed director of Disaster Relief Management.



**ASIGLEH (the Church of the Brethren in Venezuela) held its annual conference in Cúcuta, Colombia, March 12-16 with about 120 church leaders and family members in attendance. Representatives from three Colombian churches were also there. The conference was led by Roger Moreno, president of ASIGLEH, and included teaching on Brethren beliefs and practices, sermons, challenges for mission, and business sessions. International guests were Marcos Inhauser from Igreja da Irmandade (the Church of the Brethren in Brazil) and Joel Peña, Leonor Ochoa, and Bob Kettering from the United States. Video greetings were shared from Eric Miller, executive director of Global Mission, and Joel Billi, president of EYN. The conference concluded with love feast, anointing, commissioning of church leaders, and licensing and ordaining of pastors. ASIGLEH presently has about 51 congregations and preaching points.**

## Annual Conference officers return query

**T**he Annual Conference officers have returned the query “Regarding Greater Congregational Latitude on Matters of Sexuality” to Illinois and Wisconsin District for revision and potential resubmission in 2025.

The decision to return was necessary due to language that could be construed

as answering the query itself, rather than asking a question for discussion and discernment by the church, said moderator Madalyn Metzger, moderator-elect Dava Hensley, and secretary David Shumate.

“This may feel like a technicality to some,” said Shumate. “But this requirement is important in its intention to invite shared spiritual discernment and

outcomes from the Annual Conference delegate body.”

The query asked whether decisions related to sexuality should be made at the congregational level rather than by the denomination or districts, given the personal nature, wide range of viewpoints, ongoing disagreements, and inconsistent enforcement of policy.



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## Board responds to intercultural leaders, international churches

**A**t its March meeting, the denomination's Mission and Ministry Board spent time in a closed session to discuss questions from a group of intercultural ministers who presented to the board last fall. The board also discussed letters received from four international Church of the Brethren bodies.

The letters from the Dominican Republic, Rwanda, Spain, and Venezuela communicated concerns about the conversation on human sexuality occurring in the US church. The response formulated by the board's Executive Committee affirmed the partnership of Church of the Brethren bodies around the world, explained the board's role in the church and in the US and in relationship to Annual Conference, cited the 2008 Conference resolution on "Urging Forbearance," and committed to seek the mind of Christ together.

An envisioning session led by the board's strategic planning committee sought to identify common themes for the work of board and staff.

The board named Steve Longenecker to a second term on the Brethren Historical Committee.

In an end-of-year financial report to the board, treasurer Ed Woolf reported that giving to the denomina-

tion declined in 2023 but total net assets grew. He reported on the main Core Ministries budget, self-funding units, and special-purpose funds.

Congregational giving to Core Ministries totaled \$1.5 million in 2023, down \$46,000 from the previous year and \$23,000 behind budget. At \$652,000, individual giving to Core Ministries was down \$58,000 and \$84,000 behind budget. Total giving to Core Ministries was \$2.15 million, down \$105,000 from the previous year and \$108,000 behind budget.

Total income to Core Ministries, including giving, ended the year \$221,000 behind budget. Despite the loss, Core Ministries maintained a net asset balance of \$2.15 million.

At \$42.6 million, the denomination's total net assets increased \$2.9 million from the beginning of 2023 primarily due to market gains, helping to offset some previous losses. Net assets recorded the second-highest total over the last five years.

Investments totaled \$36 million, an increase of \$2.7 million. Despite surging inflation and interest rate hikes, Church of the Brethren accounts experienced an 8.7 percent return in 2023, compared to the 16 percent loss of the year before.

## Clarification issued about On Earth Peace

**T**he denomination's Leadership Team issued on March 18 what it called a "clarification" of a May 2020 statement related to On Earth Peace joining the Supportive Communities Network.

The statement four years ago reasoned that On Earth Peace's decision to join the Supportive Communities Network placed the agency in opposition to Annual Conference.

"To clear the way for the nurturing of renewed relationships being shaped by the development of new denominational agency covenants, the Leadership Team wishes to clarify that On Earth Peace did not violate the previous agency polity," said general secretary David Steele.

"We regret the pain and distress experienced over the past years, as well as the additional time and energy required to work through the confusion. We pray that this time and energy may become a strong foundation for those who choose to partner with On Earth Peace."

The Leadership Team communication noted uncertainty about the polity governing Annual Conference agencies and what constraints polity places on agency actions. It acknowledged "the ongoing challenges in interpreting and implementing the 1983 Statement on Human Sexuality—but articulates that On Earth Peace is not in violation of polity, as the agency is carrying out its specialized ministry that is within the scope of Annual Conference directives and congruent with articulated values of the Church of the Brethren."



Kevin Dubeaux

*At the spring meeting, board members completed the final hours of lengthy Kingian Nonviolence training, led by Sherri Bevel and Matt Guynn.*