WrapUp

ROMANS 16:2 (CEB)
WELCOME+ WORTHY
2024 CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Elections and appointments

Annual Conference moderator-elect: **Don Fitzkee** of Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren

Program and Arrangements Committee: **Laura Sellers,** Happy Corner Church of the Brethren, Clayton, Ohio

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, affirmed: **Andrew Hamilton,** Southeastern District executive

Mission and Ministry Board – Area 4: **Colby Patton,** Wichita (Kan.) First Church of the Brethren; *Area 5:* **Erik Brummett,** Live Oak (Calif.) Church of the Brethren; *affirmed:* **Daniel Landon Butler,** Ivester Church of the Brethren, Grundy Center, Iowa; **Edward Cesar-Fincher,** San Diego (Calif.) First Church of the Brethren; **Pete Kontra**, Atlantic Northeast District executive (ex-officio)

Bethany Seminary trustees – representing colleges: **David McFadden,** Manchester Church of the Brethren, North Manchester, Ind.; *affirmed:* **Patrick Chapman Starkey,** Cloverdale (Va.) Church of the Brethren

Eder Financial Board, affirmed: **Jerry Patterson,** Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren; **Wayne Scott,** Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; **Donna Rhodes,** Stone Church of the Brethren, Huntingdon, Pa.

On Earth Peace Board: **Jennie L Waering,** Roanoke (Va.) Central Church of the Brethren; *affirmed:* **Priscilla A. Weddle**, Chesapeake, Va.; **Laura L. Hay,** Modesto (Calif.) Church of the Brethren; **Carol Young Lundquist,** Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Moderator Madalyn Metzger (center) at the head table of the 2024 Annual Conference, with moderator-elect Dava Hensley and secretary David Shumate. Shown here, the historic moment at the close of the business when, for the first time, a woman passed the moderator's gavel to another woman. Photo: Glenn Riegel

Delegates handle numerous business items

The delegate body handled numerous business items during the 2024 Annual Conference. Moderator Madalyn Metzger presided over the Conference, assisted by moderator-elect Dava Hensley and secretary David Shumate.

Review and Evaluation Committee: A mandate and an extension of term of service were approved for the next Review and Evaluation Committee. A new Review and Evaluation Committee is called in the fifth year of each decade to evaluate the organizational structure and procedures of the Church of the Brethren. The committee's term was extended from two years to up to four years at the recommendation of the Standing Committee of district delegates, which foresees that in this time in the life of the denomination such evaluation may require more time. The five-member committee, chosen from at-large members of the church, will be elected by Annual Conference in 2025 and will have until 2029 to bring back a report and recommendations.

Query: A New Model of Denominational Structure: The concern of this query, brought by Miami (Fla.) Haitian Church of the Brethren and Atlantic Southeast District, was referred to the Review and Evaluation Committee. Among other things, it notes "serious conflict and division around issues of human sexuality and biblical authority" and asks how a new model of denominational structure may give hope to those who are contemplating separation from the Church of the Brethren. The query was characterized as speaking on behalf of the multicultural sector of the church. It sparked much discussion at the microphones including appreciation for the focus on "how" and for the Haitian Brethren bringing the query, and anticipation of an opportunity to work in a more structural way toward becoming a truly multicultural denomination. Questions about it included its assumption that inclusiveness with regard to sexuality and ability to be a multicultural church are opposing values. In pre-Conference meetings of Standing Committee, the moderator explained that potential outcomes of the query include districts shifting from being geographically based to being theologically aligned.

Breaking Down Barriers—Increasing Access to Denominational Events: This study committee was granted another year to complete its work, including a feasibility study.

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For more: www.brethren.org/news/coverage/ac2024. *Order the video* Wrap-Up *and* Sermons *at www.brethrenpress.com. The Annual Conference Press Team included Jan Fischer Bachman, Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford, Russ Otto, Donna Parcell, Frank Ramirez, Virginia Rendler, Glenn Riegel, Laura Sellers, Frances Townsend, Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford (editor).*

Photos by Glenn Riegel

Preachers *(from left): Moderator Madalyn Metzger, Greg Broyles, Brandon Grady, Leonard Dow, and Cindy Laprade Lattimer.*

Photos by Glenn Riegel and Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford

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Memorandum of Understanding with Bethany Seminary: This interim measure was approved, updating the seminary's polity regarding its board of trustees pending approval of a new agency covenant that is being developed.

Polity of On Earth Peace: Approval was given to a temporary revision of the agency's internal polity as an interim measure until a new agency covenant is finalized. The revision updates bylaws to meet diversity commitments.

Standing with People of Color: This committee is two thirds of the way through its three-year mandate to collaborate and develop materials for congregational, district, and denominational use. It was formed in response to a 2022 query from Southern Ohio and Kentucky District. Annual Conference directed the response to be a collaboration of the district with On Earth Peace and staff of the Church of the Brethren including the director of Intercultural Ministries.

Calling Denominational Leadership: This study committee presented an interim report, shared some of its findings, and received comments and input during the Conference. Issues around the calling of leadership are many and it has become increasingly difficult to get enough nominees for the Conference ballot.

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee recommendations: Two recommendations were approved by the delegates including the annual cost of living adjustment to the minimum cash salary table for pastors, which was set at 3.3 percent for 2025, and revisions to the pastor's Housing Equity Fund. The latter shifts the fund from a mutual fund account to a qualified church retirement account held by Eder Financial. The savings fund enables pastors living in parsonages to purchase their own homes after leaving the parsonage.

Special Response Process: The Standing Committee, which is tasked with reviewing the Special Response Process intended to help the denomination work through strongly controversial issues, asked the Conference officers to bring names for a task team to carry out the review.

Anniversaries: Anniversary celebrations included the 300th anniversary of Germantown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren as the oldest Brethren congregation in the Americas; the 80th anniversary of Heifer International, which got its start as the Church of the Brethren's Heifer Project; and the 45th anniversary of the Death Row Support Project.

Receiving the Revelation 7:9 Award from Intercultural Ministries *(from right): Michaela Alphonse, Joshua Brockway, Duane Grady, Matt Guynn, Gilbert Romero, Joe Vecchio (in absentia). with Intercultural Ministries director Founa Augustin Badet.*

Photo: Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford

By the numbers

7 churches were welcomed:

- **1 congregation**—*Southern Ohio/Kentucky District:* **East Dayton (Ohio) Fellowship**
- **1 fellowship**—*Atlantic Southeast District:* **Jesus Lounge Ministry,** Delray Beach, Fla.
- **5 projects**—*Atlantic Northeast District:* **Arbor Park Church of the Brethren,** Lancaster, Pa.; *Pacific Southwest District:* **Iglesia del Salvador Viviente,** McFarland, Calif.; *Virlina District:* **Monte De Dios,** Eden, N.C., **Monte de Hermon,** Bassett, Va., **The Way,** Roanoke, Va.

1,450 people registered including 410 delegates and 1,040 nondelegates (45 virtual).

$47,065.36 total received in offerings: $16,994.42 for Core Ministries of the Church of the Brethren with a focus on Global Mission and Discipleship and Leadership Formation, $8,134.35 for the Conference operating budget and $6,681.35 for programing for children and youth, $15,255.24 for the Witness to the Host City to Kids' Food Basket and Sleep in Heavenly Peace—and volunteers also built **30 beds.**

$10,375 in a Silent Auction for Conference translation and interpretation expenses and operating budget.

$8,328 in donations: $1,198 for Conference operations, $7,130 for Core Ministries.

$8,200 raised by the Quilt Auction for hunger relief. AACB announced this was their last quilt auction at Annual Conference.

121 units collected by the Blood Drive.

200 or so people were at the vigil sponsored by the Gun Violence Prevention Action Team.

Right: *Senior high service project at Camp Brethren Heights.*

Photo: Frank Ramirez

Left: *Third to fifth grade tied 103 blankets for the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital.*

Photo: Laura Sellers

Photos above by Donna Parcell