Standing Committee adopts covenants for 3 agencies

The Standing Committee of district delegates to Annual Conference met via Zoom on Sept. 30 to act on covenants with the three agencies of Annual Conference—Bethany Theological Seminary, Eder Financial, and On Earth Peace. Also acted on was a recommendation to Annual Conference to renew their agency status.

The president or an executive of each agency was present: Jeff Carter, president of Bethany Seminary; Nevin Dulabaum, president of Eder Financial; and Matt Guynn, co-executive director of On Earth Peace.

Each agency covenant is specific to that agency but there are commonalities and consistency between the three. Each agency's board has had a chance to review and approve their respective covenant as part of a process that dates back to a decision by the 2022 Conference that directed to Standing Committee the work of preparing the covenants.

The meeting reviewed each covenant. Concerns and requests for clarification mostly had to do with the relationship of agency board appointments to the denomination's nominations process and Annual Conference ballot, and the make-up of agency boards with regard to required numbers of Church of the Brethren members. Guynn also fielded questions from one Standing Committee member asking if On Earth Peace affirms the 1983 paper "Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective."

Standing Committee approved the three covenants and voted to recommend to Annual Conference that the agency status of all three be renewed. These actions will be presented to the 2025 Annual Conference.

CWS board announces covenant membership

Church World Service (CWS) has announced that 14 leading US churches and faith-based organizations—including the Church of the Brethren—have renewed their commitment to joint work and mission by becoming "Covenant Members." The announcement followed a meeting of the CWS board. These Covenant Members represent more than nine million people across the US and Canada.

Covenant membership represents a new way for organizations that have been historical members of CWS to engage with each other and with CWS. As Covenant Members, they will work together with CWS to find practical ways to engage in transforming communities through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster. They also will participate in gatherings throughout the year to reflect and organize around key issues affecting shared work and priorities.

CDS responds to hurricanes. *Children's Disaster Services began responding to Hurricane Milton in Florida after posting three teams of volunteers to Asheville, N.C., following Hurricane Helene. Two CDS teams began working in Red Cross shelters in Tampa and Clearwater on Oct. 27. As of early November, they had served more than 300 children. Here, CDS volunteer Kathie Shaffer works at a shelter in Tampa.*

Personnel

John Fillmore began Oct. 12 as quarter-time district executive for Idaho/Western Montana District. He has pastored Nampa (Idaho) Church of the Brethren since 2011 and has been a "circuit rider" for the Part-time Pastor; Full-time Church program since 2019. He holds a master of divinity from Bethany Seminary and a doctor of ministry

Shannon McNeil Smith began Oct. 7 as executive administrative assistant in the General Secretary's Office at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. She had been a Mission Advancement advocate for the denomination for more than five years, working at relationship-building with donors to support Church of the Brethren programs and ministries. The work entailed much travel, attendance at many district conferences, making personal visits with donors, and interpreting the work of the church. Previously, she was manager of human resources and constituent affairs in the Office of the Governor in Chicago, Ill. She is a member of Neighborhood Church of the Brethren in Montgomery, Ill.