Mission and Ministry Board adopts resolution on weapons transfers

A resolution on weapons transfers was top of the agenda for the Mission and Ministry Board's spring meeting March 7-9. The resolution was presented by staff of the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy. It was adopted as a resolution of the board and recommended to the 2026 Annual Conference.

The document focuses on the international arms trade, the arms industry, and the part played by the United States as currently the world's largest exporter of weapons. It reviews the church's long history of opposition to war and militarization and reaffirms commitment to peace as God's will and the call of Christ. It includes a section of recommendations for the individual, congregational, district, and denominational levels. A concern was expressed to also address gun violence in the US, and conversation ensued about how to accommodate that concern.

Among other business, the board restructured its committees to, in part, continue the work of the Seeking God's Racial Justice task team; received reports including the general secretary's review of his trip to the Dominican Republic with Annual Conference moderator Dava Hensley; and received updates from staff on the situation of immigrants and refugees.

National Youth Cabinet meets

The National Youth Cabinet met March 21-23 to plan for National Youth Sunday 2025 and National Youth Conference 2026.

Youth members are Daniel Bowen from McPherson, Kan. (Western Plains District), Nissie Cadette from Coral Springs, Fla. (Atlantic Southeast District), Kayleigh Chapman from Hagerstown, Md. (Mid-Atlantic District), Zach Diamond from Eden, N.C. (Virlina District), Tyson Hall from Mount Sidney, Va. (Shenandoah District), and Katie Phipps from Bremen, Ind. (Northern Indiana District).

Adult advisors are Rod Matz of Asheville, Ohio (Northern Ohio District) and Emily Van Pelt of Rocky Mount, Va. (Virlina District).

NYC coordinators Anna Schweitzer and Rachel Johnson and Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, also met with the cabinet.

Bethany board hears about initiative with colleges

The Bethany Seminary board in its March 21-22 meeting heard about plans for an initiative with the Church of the Brethren-related colleges and universities.

President Jeff Carter shared about the new program, in which the seminary will formalize its partnership with the six Church of the Brethren-related colleges and universities. Bethany will soon offer students at those institutions the opportunity to take graduate courses while remaining as undergraduates at their home institutions.

All the undergraduate schools have expressed strong interest in this initiative, according to a Bethany release. The initiative will allow students to earn both a bachelor's degree from a church-related college or university and a graduate certificate or master's degree from Bethany during a four- to five-year timeframe. Manchester University in North Manchester, Ind., will pilot the new initiative this fall.

Among other business, the board took time to remember and celebrate former vice chair Michele Firebaugh, who died last year, and honored departing board members Chris Bowman and John Flora.

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Grants given

Emergency Disaster Fund

Two grants continue work with Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria):

- $185,000 supports the Nigeria Crisis Response program for 2025, focusing on home repairs and water projects to allow displaced families to return home.
- $25,000 goes to EYN's response to extreme flooding in Maiduguri.

Four grants aid those affected by the invasion of the city of Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC):

- $30,000 supports l'Eglise des Freres au Congo (Church of the Brethren in the DRC) in its Rapid Response to the invasion of Goma, providing food and water to church members and others.
- $20,000 went to l'Eglise des Freres au Congo to provide food and water to church members and others trapped in South Kivu Province by the fighting.
- $15,000 went to the Church of the Brethren in Burundi for an aid program for refugees fleeing the violence.
- $8,600 assisted the Rwanda Church of the Brethren to rebuild or repair 11 homes damaged in fighting between M23 rebels and the Congolese military.

Two grants were given to the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC):

- $30,000 for a humanitarian response to the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, specifically a program for children with disabilities living in the Al-Maghazi Refugee Camp.
- $70,000 to a Russia-Ukraine war response focused on women's programing in the Zakarpattia region.

Donna Parcell

South Sudan was the destination *for the first international trip made by Sharon Norton in her role as executive director of Global Mission. She joined a delegation in early February led by former mission staff Carolyn and Roger Schrock and hosted by South Sudan mission staff Athanasus Ungang. Shown here, the delegation worships with Khor English Church.*

- $5,000 covered the Children's Disaster Services response to the Los Angeles wildfires early this year.

Global Food Initiative

- $5,000 helped the Haiti Medical Project drill a well in an underserved community among congregations of l'Église des Frères d'Haïti (the Church of the Brethren in Haiti).
- $4,999.50 went to the Great Lakes Bible School in Rwanda for students' theological and biblical education to be combined with practical knowledge in sustainable farming.
- $4,906 went to the Church of the Brethren in Burundi for training on Farming God's Way techniques that use fewer resources, conserve water, and improve soils without chemical inputs.

Brethren Faith in Action Fund

Grants of $5,000 each went to

- Circle of Peace Church of the Brethren for an open house and mailer outreach.
- GraceWay International Community Church of the Brethren for community outreach to nearby housing complexes.
- Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren for its support to newcomers in need in the local community.
- Sebring Church of the Brethren to upgrade the sound system in support of outreach ministries.
- Shepherd's Heart Fellowship to support people in need in the area.
- Spirit of Peace Church of the Brethren for a Gun Buy Back Program.
- San Diego Church of the Brethren for its Welcoming Heart Ministry.

Grants of less than $5,000 went to

- Eden Church of the Brethren for a community meal called Brethren Bistro.
- Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren for the Shalom Summit held on Feb. 22.
- Ivester Church of the Brethren for a meal ministry combined with worship called "First Sundays," held at Camp Pine Lake.
- Onekama Church of the Brethren for a ministry to support homeless people in partnership with ECHO His Love.
- Roaring Spring Church of the Brethren for a Wednesday night Recharge Program.
- The Veritas congregation for five missional outreach opportunities.

Personnel

Darlene Johnson retires from the staff of On Earth Peace on May 2. She has served the agency for nearly 25 years as director of administration and interim co-executive director.

Lee Marsh retires May 30 as buildings and grounds assistant for the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. He has worked in the position since 2021.

Peg Moylan resigned March 7 as administrative assistant for Illinois and Wisconsin District.

Mary St. John on Feb. 28 concluded her role with Virlina District after six years as director of district conference, nurture and witness, and a total of more than 21 years with the district.

Shenandoah District has called an interim district executive team, as of April 1: **Paul Roth, Jan Orndorff,** and **Steve Spire** as the core interim team with **Wayne Pence** and **Glenn Bollinger** as consultants.