

Church of the Brethren
Mission and Ministry Board
Zoom Video
March 12-14, 2021

Mission and Ministry Board – Minutes

Saturday, March 13

Members present: Patrick Starkey (chair), Carl Fike (chair-elect), Marty Barlow, Lauren Seganos Cohen, Thomas Dowdy, Lois Grove, Heather Gentry Hartwell, Dava Hensley, John Hoffman, Paul Liepelt, Diane Mason, Meghan Horne Mauldin, Joel Peña, J. Roger Schrock, Paul Schrock, Colin Scott, and Christina Singh

Ex Officio Paul Munday (moderator), David Sollenberger (moderator-elect), James M. Beckwith (Annual Conference secretary), Jeff Carter (Bethany president), Nevin Dulabaum (BBT president), Bill Scheurer (OEP executive director), Cindy Sanders (Council of District Executives representative)

General Secretary: David Steele

Recorder: Nancy Miner

On Friday, March 12, the Mission and Ministry Board voting and ex officio members met in closed session via Zoom for a time of community building and to receive updates from the General Secretary.

Closed session

On Saturday, March 13, Patrick Starkey, chair, called the meeting to order and invited board members to virtually share a gesture reflecting the peace of Christ to one another.

Welcome and Introductions

He welcomed board members Marty Barlow and Meghan Mauldin to their first regular meeting of the board.

David Steele, general secretary, introduced new co-executive directors of Global Mission, Eric Miller and Ruoxia Li, who joined the meeting from their home in China. Eric, Ruoxia, and their daughter anticipate transitioning to the U.S. in May.

Patrick welcomed staff and guests viewing the meeting via the virtual gallery, then invited board members to introduce themselves and tell their role on the board, vocation, congregation, and district. Staff members present in the meeting room introduced themselves and shared their role on staff.

Patrick Starkey gave instructions on the consensus decision-making process, then introduced the consent agenda:

Consent Agenda

Approve meeting agenda

Approve MMB minutes

- Oct. 17-18, 2020 meeting
- Oct 27, 2020 EDF allocation – U.S. churches COVID response
- Dec. 8, 2020 engagement in Strategic Plan background vision
- Dec. 29, 2020 Wieand Trust email action
- Feb. 15, 2021 EDF allocation – N.C. hurricane response
- Feb. 24, 2021 Capital minute – BDM truck

He noted one change to the meeting agenda – the deletion of the Housing Equity Fund recommendation, which is not yet ready for the board.

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and approved the consent agenda as presented.

Affirmation

Lauren Seganos Cohen led the opening worship.

Opening Worship

She reflected on the liturgical season of Lent, a time that mimics the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness, and which is sometimes seen as a wilderness season.

Lauren read Matthew 4:1-11, the story of the temptation of Jesus.

The gospel lesson tells us that Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness. He didn't stumble into it, he didn't get lost, nor was he led there by the devil. It was God's spirit that led him there – the same spirit that called him beloved called him into the wilderness.

In the same way, the spirit that calls us beloved calls us into wilderness places. The pandemic is a wilderness season. The Church of the Brethren is in a wilderness time as it walks through conflict, disagreements, and severing of ties.

The Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness, and Jesus struggles. The wilderness makes Jesus weak, exposed, and vulnerable. But not just for lack of food.

Lauren read a quote from spiritual writer Debie Thomas, who asserts that we can be beloved and uncomfortable at the same time; beloved and unsafe at the same time.

What can we as leaders in the Church of the Brethren learn from Jesus' experience in the wilderness?

- We might be tempted to meet our immediate, basic needs first, pursuing easy answers and quick fixes rather than being patient and discerning God's will.
- We might be tempted to put God to the test, making thoughtless and unnecessary gambles that are more about proving our faith than about trusting in God's protection.
- We might be tempted with influence or recognition within our communities, placing our values and trust in the wrong things.

As our church continues in this wilderness time, God is calling us to remember Jesus' experience in the wilderness and his response to temptation, remembering that at the end of his trials in the wilderness, Jesus was tended to by angels. The wilderness tests our faith, but the angels are in the wilderness, too.

Lauren shared a recording of a song based on Matthew 4:1-11, lyrics by Stephen Fearing and performed by a member of Lauren's congregation. She closed with prayer.

General Secretary David Steele provided a prerecorded report for board members to view in advance of the meeting. Highlights of his report included:

**General Secretary's
report**

Pandemic

- Both General Offices and Brethren Service Center remain closed to all but essential staff
- Despite pandemic-related challenges, staff have been resilient and professional
- As vaccines become more readily available, anticipate reopening both sites in the near future
- All of our programming events this spring and into summer are virtual or localized; staff have been creative in their planning
 - Encourage board support and participation in these events

Personnel

- New executive directors of Global Mission, Eric Miller and Ruoxia Li
- Interim directors of Global Mission, Norm and Carol Waggy, will continue to offer leadership in the coming weeks
 - Will provide orientation and transitional support for Eric and Ruoxia
 - Grateful for their leadership over the past year, including development of country advisory teams, facilitation of global leaders gatherings by Zoom, and continuing the important work of living into our Global Mission philosophy
- Resignation of Hannah Schulz, coordinator of Short-Term Service with BVS
- Debbie Noffsinger transitioned into a newly restructured part-time

- position as Annual Conference assistant
- Bill Kostlevy to retire as director of Brethren Historical Library and Archives (BHLA) on April 17
 - BHLA staff have responded to more than 3,000 requests for information, hosted more than 500 researchers and more than 1,000 visitors, and processed more than 33 significant collections during Bill's tenure
 - Bill has mentored 9 archival interns
- Chris Douglas will retire as director of Annual Conference on October 1

Other areas of significant focus

- Working with Executive Committee on Foreground Vision Initiative #4, Looking for Lamps Full of Oil
- Initial work with Brethren Press Reimagining Team
- Ongoing work alongside the Leadership Team

Living into the new Strategic Plan

- Excited about the possibilities
- Hopeful that the Holy Spirit will renew and convict us in new ways to Pursue Christ's Call to Discipleship, Embody the Biblical Command to Love our Neighbors, Seek God's Racial Justice, and Reclaim New Testament Models of Giving as we provide resourcing and support to our congregations and leaders

Compelling Vision reflected in the Strategic Plan

- Hope that the church will affirm the Jesus in the Neighborhood vision
- Felt it essential that the Compelling Vision be reflected in the board's new Strategic Plan
- Cancellation of 2020 Annual Conference threw off the timing of the Strategic Plan being affirmed alongside the Compelling Vision
- David's greatest hope is that the delegate body will affirm the Compelling Vision this summer, and that each district and congregation would then live it out in their respective contexts. In the board's context, the background vision strategies within the Strategic Plan will guide the board and staff in shaping our ministries to live into and out of Jesus in the Neighborhood.

David responded to questions and comments from board members.

Q: Are you getting questions about the Strategic Plan's connection to the Compelling Vision? Are people wondering about it?

A: Some concerns have been raised about the Strategic Plan and how it might color the Compelling Vision. I try to help people understand that the Compelling Vision stands on its own. The Strategic Plan represents what the board will do but does not dictate how a congregation will live out the Compelling Vision.

- Appreciate the affirmation that the board is responding to what the

grass roots have said (i.e., the data that was gathered).

- Important that board members be ambassadors beyond this meeting and share what David has articulated well. Reinforce the message to counter the false narratives.

Patrick Starkey brought the report of the previous day's Executive Committee virtual meeting.

**Executive Committee
report**

Members of the Executive Committee are Patrick Starkey (chair), Carl Fike (chair-elect), Lois Grove, Colin Scott, and Thomas Dowdy. David Steele and Paul Munday serve as ex officio members, and Nancy Miner serves as recorder.

Colin Scott led the opening devotions. The Executive Committee:

- Approved minutes of actions taken since the October meeting
- Reviewed updates of the Strategic Plan's Foreground Vision Initiative (FVI) task teams
 - Reviewed recommendations brought by FVI#3 (Casting Away Stones)
- Received update on the work of the Brethren Press Reimagining Team
- Reviewed recommendation from the Brethren Faith in Action Grant Oversight Committee
- Conducted annual performance review of the General Secretary
 - Included input from Executive Committee members and four randomly chosen staff members

Treasurer Ed Woolf provided a financial update in the form of a prerecorded report for board members to view in advance of the meeting. Highlights included:

**2020 Year-end
Financial update
(Exhibits 1, 2, & 3
and dashboard
handout)**

Dashboard handout (December 31, 2020)

Net Assets

Net assets are split into two categories –without donor restriction and with donor restriction.

Assets without donor restriction include:

- Core Ministries
- Land, Buildings, & Equipment funds
- Self-Funding Ministries
- Designated Funds

Assets with donor restriction include:

- Split-Interest Agreements
- Special Purpose Funds
 - Emergency Disaster Fund
 - Global Food Initiative
 - Emerging Global Mission Fund
- Others (including Haiti Medical & Ministry Assistance, our

endowments, and some perpetual trusts)

Net assets represent the Church of the Brethren's total value and express the difference between what is owned and what is owed – a key indicator of financial health.

Net assets as of December 31, 2020:

- At \$42.3 million, our total net assets increased \$1.6 million from the beginning of the year.
- At \$23.1 million, assets without donor restriction increased \$1.4 million from 2019.
 - Primarily due to investment gains and the large surplus that was split between Core Ministries and Designated Funds.
- At \$19.2 million, assets with donor restriction increased \$200,000 from last year.
 - Primarily due to investment gains. The market gains were offset some by a decrease in donations received for EDF – primarily due to the loss of disaster auction donations because of the pandemic.
- Balance sheet remains liquid.
 - 55% of net assets are without restriction.
- As of the 2019 audit, we had approximately 30 months (or 2.5 years) of expendable reserves.
 - We could go 30 months without relying on additional revenue; the benchmark is 5-6 months.
- We continue to be in a very healthy position, despite the volatility and uncertainty surrounding 2020.

Note: Approximately \$1 million in grants from the Ministry Assistance Fund, Emergency Disaster Fund, Global Food Initiative Fund, Brethren Faith-in-Action Fund, and designated funds to support the Brethren Homes were given in 2020 to provide much needed mutual support for the larger church.

Investment balance

- At \$36.2 million, our investments increased \$1.7 million since the beginning of the year.
- Despite the uncertainty and volatility surrounding the pandemic, including drastic selloffs in February and March of 2020, the S&P 500 finished the year with a gain of approximately 16%.
- Our investment strategy focuses on long-term goals, risk tolerances, timelines, and purposes of funds, which has helped us navigate the continued market volatility that we've seen throughout this pandemic.
- Appreciation to Brethren Foundation staff for their investment management services and for their reporting to the Audit and Investment Committee.

Cash balance

- At \$741,000, our cash balance has decreased approximately \$478,000 since the beginning of the year.
 - Cash balances tend to be low during the summer months and tend to increase as year-end giving picks up. The increase in cash at year end allows us to transfer excess cash from our operating account to long-term savings for higher return.
 - In December, we transferred \$300,000 to savings.
 - We saw a larger number of 2020 donations received after December 31. The donations were counted as 2020, but were not deposited until January.
- We continue to maintain healthy cash balances at both Elgin and New Windsor banks.
 - Healthy cash balances are important as they cover expenses for program supplies, ministry resources, staff, and other vital operating expenses.
- With good liquidity, the auditors have no concerns regarding our cash balances.

Donors (all giving categories)

- 634 donor congregations in 2020
 - Lowest number over the last 5 years
 - Well below the 779 average over the last 5 years
 - Congregations are still struggling to meet due to health concerns, and are shifting their giving to local community.
 - Many of the congregations that have withdrawn from the denomination were not giving in recent years; we do not feel this accounts for the entire decrease in donors in 2020.
 - As the effects and needs of the pandemic lessen in 2021, we have hope that some congregations will be able to continue their support of denominational ministries as they have in previous years.
 - Mission Advancement staff are closely tracking the 2021 self-allocation reports for projected giving estimates.
- Over 2,500 individual donors in 2020
 - Second highest number of donors over the last five years and right on pace with the 5-year average of 2,588.
- Over 3,100 total donors in 2020
 - Well above the totals from the last 2 years and just short of the 5-year average of 3,300 donors.

Note: We experienced a couple significantly high donor number years with the Hurricane Response and with years for Nigeria Crisis Fund giving, which throw off the averages a bit.

In the midst of declining membership numbers and difficult circumstances facing our donors, the Church of the Brethren saw a significant increase in donor participation. We are grateful for these donors who faithfully and

generously contributed to all our ministries during this very challenging pandemic season.

Core Ministries Giving

- Giving from congregations totaled \$1.68 million in 2020.
 - Down \$81,000 from 2019.
 - Lowest giving total in the last 5 years
 - \$278,000 below the 5-year average of \$1.96 million
- Giving from individuals totaled \$574,000 in 2020.
 - Up \$29,000 from 2019.
 - Highest giving total in the last 5 years
 - \$48,000 above the 5-year average of \$526,000
- Total Core Ministries giving was \$2.26 million.
 - Down only \$52,000 from total giving in 2019
 - Lowest in 5 years and \$230,000 below the 5-year average of \$2.49 million
 - Despite the increase in individual giving, a decline of approx. 14% (\$356,000) over the last 5 years

Giving Summary (December 31, 2020)

Congregational Giving

- At \$1.68 million, congregational giving to Core Ministries was down over \$81,000 from 2019, but almost \$107,000 ahead of the revised budget.
 - 528 congregations gave over 1,900 gifts to Core Ministries.
 - 45 fewer congregations and over 320 fewer gifts compared to 2019
 - The 2021 congregational giving budget is based on 2019 actual giving, so we will need to make up the \$81,000 difference to meet this year's budget.
- Congregational giving to Restricted Funds totaled \$1.19 million.
 - Down \$214,000 from 2019
- District disaster auctions for Brethren Disaster Ministries were all cancelled in 2020
 - A major loss of income for the Emergency Disaster Fund as fundraisers averaged \$512,000 over the last 3 years.
 - Staff held a "Rise Up" fundraising campaign in the fall of 2020 to try to offset some of the loss.
- 308 gifts totaling \$106,000 in response to this year's offerings
 - Down over \$60,000 from 2019.
 - Decrease in offerings due to the majority of congregations not meeting in person. In response, Mission Advancement staff provided personal reminders directly to homes of individuals with standing orders, along with an online method of direct giving. Without this effort, the numbers may have been lower.
- At \$2.87 million, total congregational giving was down \$760,000 (21%) from 2019.

Individual Giving

- At \$574,000, individual giving to Core Ministries was up almost \$29,000 from 2019 and \$37,000 ahead of the revised budget.
 - Highest giving total since 2013
 - The 2021 individual giving budget is based on 2019 actual giving of \$545,000.
 - Includes \$12,000 from Annual Conference giving
 - If giving trends from the prior two years continue, we should be able to meet this year's budget.
- Over 1,500 donors gave over 3,200 gifts to Core Ministries.
 - 183 more donors and 545 more gifts than last year
- Individual giving to Restricted Funds totaled \$681,000
 - Down over \$512,000 from 2019
- Web giving totaled over \$239,000 and over 1,450 gifts
 - An increase of over \$95,000 and more than 580 gifts from 2019.
- Monthly recurring donors have increased from 31 in 2019 to 44 in 2020.
- At \$1.72 million, total individual giving was down \$1.02 million (or 37%) from 2019
 - Due to a significant decrease in restricted giving and bequest income

Mission Advancement staff are working to centralize the online giving experience. Staff are also working to add a second method of giving through an ACH option for donors to give through direct deposit.

Staff were not able to personally visit with donors in 2020 due to the pandemic, instead focusing their efforts on making phone calls, sending emails, and mailing letters, appreciation packets, and birthday. Despite the various challenges of last year, we saw a significant increase in giving to Core Ministries and overall donor participation.

Combined Giving

- At just over \$2.25 million, total combined giving to Core Ministries was down only \$52,000 from 2019
 - \$143,000 ahead of the revised budget
- Combined giving to Restricted Funds totaled \$1.87 million
 - Down almost \$1.2 million from last year).
 - A significant decrease in restricted giving negatively impacts the Ministry Enablement Contribution in support of Core Ministries.
- Bequests received in 2020 totaled over \$464,000
 - Includes \$44,000 in restricted bequests
 - Includes \$419,000 in unrestricted bequests
 - Includes \$72,000 in unrestricted perpetual trusts
 - Unrestricted bequests fund the Bequest Quasi-Endowment fund which supports Core Ministries

with a 17% draw.

- The Bequest Quasi-Endowment Fund has been able to sustain its balance over the last eleven years; our average bequest of \$679,000 plus the average market fluctuation of \$418,000 outpaces our average draw of \$980,000
 - Current balance in the Bequest Quasi-Endowment fund is \$4.7 million.
- In 2020, we received over \$47,000 in endowment additions.
 - All to support work in Haiti through the Brethren Health Ministries endowment

Total Combined Giving to All Ministries

- Total combined giving was \$4.6 million.
 - \$1.78 million (28%) behind 2019 and well below the \$6 million average typically received

Income and Expense reports (December 31,2020)

Note: The 2020 Budget was revised in anticipation of lower giving and reduced expenses due to the pandemic – lowering the Core Ministries income by \$447,000 and lowering the expenses by \$340,000, from \$4.97 million to \$4.63 million.

Core Ministries Income

- Congregational and individual giving finished the year close to \$144,000 ahead of budget.
- The Ministry Enablement Contribution finished \$56,000 behind budget, due to the decrease in restricted giving previously noted.
- Service Fees & Other Income finished \$79,000 ahead of budget.
 - Received higher service fee rebate income from the Brethren Foundation
 - Had lower than expected annuity deficit funding
 - Budget for this line item was on the conservative side; annuity deficit funding difficult to predict
- Bequest Quasi-Endowment transfer was almost \$55,000 ahead of budget.
 - Draw finished well above budget because of large bequest received late in the 4th quarter of 2019, after 2020 budget calculations were done
- Did not have to use any of the budgeted \$121,000 transfer from designated funds.
 - These funds will be available for future budget shortfalls, should we need them.
- Core overhead income ended the year more than \$144,000 ahead of budget.

Core Ministries Expense

- Director level expenses were significantly underspent due to suspension of travel, postponed events, and the cancellation of Annual Conference.

- General Secretary's area finished the year \$145,000 under budget.
 - Travel expenses for both General Secretary and Mission Advancement staff were significantly underspent (by a combined \$60,000).
 - Mission Advancement was underspent due to timing of expenses such as printing.
- Discipleship Ministries was underspent by almost \$50,000.
 - Travel and independent contractors were under budget by a combined \$44,000, due to no live events.
- Global Mission was under budget by almost \$42,000.
 - Mostly due to salary and benefits savings related to open positions for part of the year.
- Brethren Volunteer Service was overspent by \$17,000.
 - Because of loss of volunteer placement and workcamp registration fees.
- Organizational Resources was under budget by \$120,000.
 - Buildings and Grounds in Elgin was underspent in independent contractors, electricity, equipment maintenance, and postage by a combined \$95,000.
- In total, director level expenses were under budget by over \$340,000.

All Ministries Income and Expense

Core Ministries ended the year with a net surplus of \$127,487.

- Able to set aside \$200,000 for future budget shortfalls and \$50,000 for costs associated with implementing the new Strategic Plan.

Brethren Press net deficit of (\$4,648).

- Sales drastically impacted by the pandemic upheaval in congregations.
- 2020 gross sales fell by more than \$150,000 from 2019.
 - Areas of growth include devotional sales and sales of face masks with Brethren messages.
- Brethren Press received over \$117,000 in donations last year.
- The 2021 picture looks about the same, at least through the summer.
- One-time special distribution of \$100,000 from the Gahagen Trust will be used for expenses related to children's curriculum for 2021.

Brethren Disaster Ministries net deficit of (\$6,738)

- Represents usage of the remaining grant funds for the South Carolina Hurricane Response.

Material Resources net deficit of (\$121,958)

- Due to the pandemic, the warehouse was closed from March through May, resulting in a significant decrease in service fees and processing income. Trucking services were also reduced with some of our partners.
- Staff are working on developing a new business plan, with the hope of establishing new and creative ways to bring in additional income

and reduce expenses.

Annual Conference deficit of over (\$116,000)

- Over \$70,000 in donations helped to offset some of the loss of registration income with the cancellation of the 2020 Annual Conference.

Global Food Initiative operates on a break-even budget

- Supported by the Global Food Initiative Fund
- Ended the year with no expense over budget

Net Asset Balance – All Ministry Areas (as of December 31, 2020)

Core Ministries

- Net asset balance of \$1.82 million
 - Well above the \$1.5 million threshold required by our financial policies and auditors.

Brethren Press

- Net asset deficit of over (\$551,000)
 - Represents an accumulation of losses since 1999 when the prior deficit was forgiven.
- The board discontinued interest charges in 2012, changing to a 9% contribution on gross sales in 2019.
- Intervention plan was initiated in 2020 to help reduce Brethren Press' deficit.
 - Temporarily moved some Brethren Press personnel to the Communications budget within Core Ministries for the last quarter of 2020. These personnel moves will be re-evaluated in 2021, when some personnel are moved back to the Brethren Press budget.
 - Created a Brethren Press Reimagining Team to address some of the challenges facing our publishing house.

Brethren Disaster Ministries

- Net asset balance of \$17,000
 - Represents grant money for the Dayton, Ohio, tornado response.

Material Resources

- Net asset deficit balance of nearly (\$165,000)

Annual Conference

- Net asset balance of over \$390,000
- Built up surpluses from prior Annual Conferences helped absorb the significant losses caused by cancellation of 2020 Annual Conference.

Total Operations Net Assets: \$1.5 million

- Down approximately \$122,000 from the beginning of the year

Special Purpose Funds

Emergency Disaster Fund

- Net asset balance of \$1.76 million
- Donations totaled \$1.13 million
 - Down approximately \$866,000 from 2019.
 - Cancellation of district fundraisers due to the pandemic was a major loss of income; the fundraisers averaged \$512,000 over the last 3 years

Global Food Initiative Fund

- Net asset balance of \$98,000
 - Giving totaled almost \$206,000, a decline of over \$57,000 from 2019.

Emerging Global Mission Fund

- Net asset balance of over \$109,000
 - Increase of \$4,500 from 2019

Designated Funds

These funds are unrestricted and can be repurposed.

- \$50,000 transfer from the Core Ministries surplus to the General Secretary Contingency Fund
 - Transfer made because of anticipated unbudgeted expenses related to the implementation of the new Strategic Plan
- \$200,000 transfer from the Core Ministries surplus to Redirected Funds/Budget Shortfalls (in the Net Add/Use column).
 - Transfer made because of frequent need to rely on designated fund transfers to balance operating budget
 - Did not use the budgeted \$121,000 designated transfer in 2020, but needed to earmark \$140,000 in designated fund transfers to balance the 2021 budget.
 - Total of \$1.175 million in designated funds used over the last 12 years to balance our annual budget.
 - Most recent uses of designated fund transfers occurred in 2019 (\$35,000) and 2017 (\$366,000).

Restricted Funds and Miscellaneous Special Projects

These funds are restricted by the donor and cannot be repurposed.

- Funding for these projects is outside the normal scope of any Church of the Brethren ministry budget.
- Includes former temporarily restricted assets like Endowment earnings, split-interest agreements, special purpose funds, and perpetual trusts, along with miscellaneous restricted funds.

Summary

- Despite the volatility and uncertainty surrounding 2020, total investments and net assets are the highest in 5 years.
- Approximately \$1 million in grants were given to provide support

for the larger church in response to the domestic and global needs of those communities most impacted by the COVID pandemic.

- Encouraged by the increase in individual giving to Core Ministries but troubled by the continued decline in congregational support.
- A significant reduction in program expenses due to the pandemic, coupled with giving above our revised budget, helped the Core Ministries Fund end the year with a significant net surplus.
 - Because of this surplus, the Church of the Brethren was able to set aside \$250,000 for future budget shortfalls and for costs associated with implementing the new Strategic Plan.
- Self-Funding Ministries and special purpose funds were drastically impacted by the pandemic. Lower sales of curriculum and bulletins, a decrease in giving to Disaster and Global Food, lower service fees and processing income at our warehouse, and the loss of event and conference registration income all contributed to the significant losses in 2020.

Updates and discussion

Ed reported briefly on the February financials and responded to board members' questions.

Giving (as of February 28, 2021)

- Congregational giving to Core Ministries totaled \$87,000 for the month.
 - Down \$33,000 from January and over \$32,000 behind budget
- Individual giving to Core totaled \$34,000 for the month
 - Up \$13,000 from January and \$11,000 ahead of budget
- Total giving to Core is \$21,000 behind budget and \$36,000 behind last year's giving at this point.

Investments (as of February 28, 2021)

- Investment total was approximately \$35.8 million*
 - Down \$384,000 from the beginning of the year

**Note: As of March 12, current balance at the Foundation is back up to \$36.2 million*

Income and expense reports (as of February 28, 2021)

- Core Ministries has a surplus of over \$16,000
- Brethren Press has a surplus of over \$32,000
- Material Resources has a deficit of over (\$28,000)
- Conference Office has a surplus of just over \$6,000

Q: Is there any idea when the money donated to Nigeria, Kulp Bible School, and South Sudan will be passed along?

A: Global Mission staff will determine when a transfer of that money is needed. The funds are available to be distributed when needed.

Q: Do you anticipate that giving will get back to levels that we saw before the pandemic? Will it take a while for it to rebound?

A: Yes, we anticipate it will take time to rebound. In the meantime, Mission Advancement staff are working to resource and help congregations.

Reports were given by the board's standing committees:

Board Committee reports

Audit and Investment Committee

Diane Mason brought the report from the previous day's Audit and Investment Committee meeting. The committee:

- Welcomed new member Marty Barlow
- Welcomed new Foundation staff member, Daniel Radcliff
- Received an update from Nevin Dulabaum, BBT president, on Brethren Values Investing
- Heard about BBT's Community Development Investment Fund and requested additional information
- Heard a report from Steve Mason on the Church of the Brethren's account performance.
- Renewed agreement with BKD auditors
 - 3-year contract with no increase in fees

Diane reported that the auditors have completed their on-site work on the 2020 audit; the committee will meet with them in mid-May via Zoom to review results.

As noted in Ed Woolf's report, staff set aside money from the 2020 Core ministries surplus per current financial policies.

- \$50,000 for General Secretary's Contingency Fund for use toward implementation of new Strategic Plan, and \$200,000 for future budget shortfalls

The committee was asked to review the financial policies related to setting aside funds and designated funds, and determined that the current policies are adequate, hold staff accountable, and allow for the needed reserves.

Sustainability Committee

Colin Scott brought a report from the previous day's Sustainability Committee meeting.

Members of the committee are Dava Hensley, Joel Peña, and Colin Scott (chair). They were joined by staff members Traci Rabenstein and Nancy McCrickard.

The Sustainability Committee is tasked with assuring that the Mission and Ministry Board is a sustainable organization that calls forth committed support from congregations and individuals.

The committee is aware of current trends in congregational giving. They

wish to project forward and set goals, while understanding where congregations are financially as they come out of the pandemic. They discussed the importance of board communication within the congregations and districts and considered whether there is a communication component to connecting the Strategic Plan with financial support.

Colin reported on the committee's four main functions.

1. ***Monitor the overall outreach to congregations and individuals, providing counsel to staff on activities and strategies to connect with potential donors.***
 - Staff were unable to meet in person with donors, but worked to develop relationships in other ways
 - 5,400 touchpoints in 2020 (phone calls, emails, letters)
 - 655 individual donors gave to Core ministries in December alone
 - Traci updated the committee on what will be included in the 2021 narrative budget
 - Will be available on the website and shared with all donors and congregations
 - A new centralized "Give" page on the web site will premiere in April
 - 2021 projected giving estimates (congregations)
 - Self-allocation numbers indicate \$914,000
 - Staff are assessing the self-allocation process to see how it can be strengthened.
2. ***Equip and encourage board members to serve as ambassadors for the work of the board.***
 - Casting Away Stones report reaffirmed committee's hope of having a short Board Development training at Oct. 2021 meeting to help board members be better liaisons
3. ***Identify and celebrate current touch points (event participation, etc.) between board programs and individuals and congregations and seek ways to build upon those relationships.***
 - Appreciate staff's flexibility and adaptability in transforming events to a virtual format
 - Discussed information and data that might be gathered from congregations to aid the committee's work
4. ***Review and provide input to staff related to the status and progress of proposed or current financial campaigns.***
 - Waiting to live into the new Strategic Plan. Therefore, not ready to make any recommendations regarding a financial campaign
 - Grateful for the work of Mission Advancement staff, as individual giving has increased

Hope to see board members continue to give in support of Church of the Brethren ministries.

Colin expressed appreciation to staff for adapting to the uncertain landscape and to the board for its work to implement the new Strategic Plan.

Board Development Committee

Carl Fike brought a report from the previous day's Board Development Committee meeting.

Committee members are Paul Liepelt, Christina Singh, Meghan Mauldin, and Carl Fike (chair). Jim Beckwith joined the meeting and Nancy Miner provided staff support.

The committee:

- Approved the previous meeting's minutes
- Reviewed the committee's position description
- Discussed the process of conducting exit interviews for those leaving service on the board
 - Developed a framework to do the interviews virtually
- Discussed new member orientation
 - More than 50% of the board in October will not have been through an orientation.
 - Mentors attend orientation with their mentees.
 - All board members should plan to attend this year's fall orientation. (Thursday afternoon through Friday)
- Board growth opportunities
 - This meeting's session on Healing Racism, led by LaDonna Sanders Nkosi and Drew Hart, is the second session supporting the "Seek God's Racial Justice" background vision strategy.
 - October session will focus on "Reclaiming New Testament Models of Giving."
- Individual member growth opportunities
 - Committee realizes it is premature to plan travel, but emphasizes opportunities within the denomination. (e.g., Discipleship Ministries and Moderator events)
 - A future travel opportunity is the possibility of a celebration of EYN's 100th anniversary in 2023.
- Board matrix
 - Goal of having a well-balanced board, demographically and geographically
- Discussed appointment of at-large board members
- Discussed appointment of new governance monitor
 - Colin Scott's term will end in July; Dava Hensley will continue

Joel Peña offered a prayer for the mid-day meal.

Prayer for meal

Patrick Starkey welcomed LaDonna Sanders Nkosi, director of Intercultural Ministries, and guest Dr. Drew Hart to the afternoon session

Board Development training

to lead the group in a board development training session.

LaDonna read from Psalm 46, sang a simple song, and offered a prayer for the work of the board and for the larger church.

LaDonna gave a brief update on the work being done by the Church of the Brethren in the area of racial justice, including:

- Congregations are excited to be engaged in racial justice issues.
 - In the last month, 10 congregations have applied for Healing Racism mini grants.
 - From book studies to educational studies, the local church has an amazing impact on healing racism in our nation.
- A Healing Racism Congregations and Communities series started in February, in cooperation with Drew Hart
- Monthly Congregations Together training

LaDonna introduced Drew Hart, assistant professor of Theology at Messiah University. He is the author of “Trouble I’ve Seen” and “Who Will Be a Witness?” and was Elizabethtown College’s 2019 Peace Fellow.

Drew’s presentation focused on:

1. Thinking well about what we mean when we talk about racism.
2. Thinking theologically about what is meant by white supremacy and whiteness.
3. Thinking about how systems and structures, policies and practice are implemented.

Following Drew’s presentation, LaDonna invited board members to take a few moments to reflect on what they heard. She and Drew then engaged the board in dialogue about what had been shared.

Drew concluded the session by sharing his belief that if we were to grasp not only the harm of the past but what is still happening in our world today, and if we were really committed to following the way of Jesus, we would begin to realize that the only faithful way forward is to be intentionally anti-racist and intentionally de-colonizing in our faith and our walk.

LaDonna invited Dava Hensley to lead the group in prayer.

A video report from Moderator Paul Munday was provided for board members to view in advance of the meeting.

**Annual Conference
Moderator’s report**

Highlights as moderator

- Resourced and attended a variety of national district, and congregational events
- Prepared a video sermon for the Virginia District Conference
- Brought greetings to the second denominational virtual worship
- Attends a wide array of denominational Zoom meetings

- Maintains an active social media presence
- Organized and resourced 24 Moderator's Q&As in 14 districts
 - Recurring themes include breakdown of communication across the church and discontent related to accountability regarding compliance with polity/policy and Annual Conference statements
- Convened four Moderator's Town Halls, with another scheduled in March
- Issuing quarterly pastoral letters, titled Trail Thoughts

Annual Conference 2021

- Theme continues to be "God's Adventurous Future"
- Plans for a robust online Conference
- Business items include the proposed compelling vision, elections, and reports
- Events include a concert by Fernando Ortega, biblical teaching by Michael Gorman, and a plenary on the missional church by Tod Bolsinger.

Compelling Vision Process

- Compelling Vision statement was released last year and will be the central business item for the delegates of Annual Conference 2021
- 13-week Bible study recently released
- Approach will be one of creative, prayerful engagement through continued conversation, rather than a process of motions and amendments

Difficult Terrain

- Ongoing pandemic
- Continuing divide/schism within our communion, fueled largely by tribalism and growing extremism and neo-fundamentalism, on both the left and the right
- Living in a season of liminality within both church and culture
- Difficult "hills" of Authority, Accountability, Attentiveness, Animosity, Adaptability, and Anxiety

Paul described adventure in scriptural terms as a journey through exile and wilderness. It is one of lament, but also hope. Deuteronomy 1:31 reminds us "...in the wilderness...you saw [God carry] you along like a man carries his son. This he did everywhere you went until you came to [a place of refuge]."

Paul responded to questions and comments about the moderator's report.

Q: How should we do registration if there are multiple people in a room watching Annual Conference?

A: Chris Douglas is open to holding further conversation about this. We are aware that some districts are subsidizing registrations.

- “Active listening” was mentioned several times in Paul’s report. We could all use a course in active listening.
 - Paul responded that several other narratives have taken over. The dominant learning in the 24 district sessions is the break-down in communication. People are hearing the alternate narrative.

Patrick Starkey noted that his congregation would use Paul’s pre-recorded sermon for pulpit supply the next morning. Noting that this will be Paul’s last meeting with the full board, Patrick thanked Paul for his report and for his service on the board and the Executive Committee.

A video report from Council of District Executives representative Cindy Sanders was provided for board members to view in advance of the meeting. Highlights included:

Council of District Executives report

- Winter meeting was held in January via Zoom
 - Conversations around the future of district ministry, purpose and composition of the Council, and governance of mutuality and accountability
 - Heard reports from the Agencies, the Office of Ministry, Brethren Academy, Compelling Vision Team, and Leadership Team
 - David Steele and Patrick Starkey reported on the new Strategic Plan, which was well received by the district executives
 - Met with the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee (PCBAC) on new startup and renewal agreements and a new basis for suggested salary for pastors
 - Appointed Gene Hagenberger to complete Terry Grove’s term on PCBAC
 - Spent time with the Inter-Agency Forum
- The Council will meet again in the spring for a half day, with the next full meeting to take place prior to Annual Conference.

Cindy reported that her term as representative to the Mission and Ministry Board and Leadership Team ends with the summer meeting. She shared that it has been a joy and pleasure to work with these groups on behalf of the denomination.

Adding to her recorded report, Cindy noted:

- Terry Grove’s death was a devastating loss to the Council.
- Annual Conference Office encouraged districts to help enable participation in Conference, particularly for those needing technological support.

Patrick expressed appreciation for the hard work of the district executives, and to Cindy for her report and for her service on the board.

Heather Gentry Hartwell brought the report of the Brethren Faith in Action (BFIA) grant oversight committee.

**Brethren Faith in
Action report
(Exhibit 4)**

Serving on the committee with Heather are Stan Dueck (staff representative) and David Shumate (representing district executives).

Heather reported:

- \$138,935 available for grants in 2021
 - \$15,000 already awarded (3 congregations)
 - 3 additional applications currently in process
 - Maximum grant is \$5,000
- Committee meets every 3-4 weeks.
- Examples of projects that have been funded include:
 - Instruments for youth groups
 - Optimizing space to meet program needs
 - Accessibility projects
 - Food pantries

Recognizing that many congregations continue to struggle financially because of COVID and the uncertainty of the timeline for availability of vaccinations, the committee recommended that the waiver of the matching fund requirement be extended through 2021. In addition, the committee recommended that camp eligibility also be extended through 2021.

Heather responded to questions:

Q: What percentage of congregations have applied for a waiver?

A: During Heather's time on the committee, the vast majority have applied for the waiver.

The BFIA committee recommends to the Mission and Ministry Board that both the waiver and the eligibility of BFIA to Church of the Brethren camps be extended into 2021.

Recommendation

Discussion:

Q: Does the committee have a sense that this will go through all of 2021 and then be reevaluated?

A: The recommendation is that it would extend through 2021 only, then revert to previous practice.

- Support of camp eligibility
- Not convinced about the waivers; should we instead support those who have worked to raise money for the project?

Stan Dueck spoke to the recommendation, noting that congregations with better stability are in a position where they do not need the waiver.

However, several applications in the pipeline do not have the capacity to come up with the match or fund the project.

Many camps tried to do creative resourcing in 2020, but with diminished

resources, found themselves in a difficult position as they scrambled to come up with alternate programming.

Q: If passed, will the camps be notified of this opportunity?

A: It will be reported in Newline. In addition, Discipleship Ministries has a relationship with Outdoor Ministries Association and will communicate to camps through that avenue.

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

Affirmation

Carl Fike offered a prayer of thanks and a blessing for mealtime.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:54 p.m. (Central).

The Mission and Ministry Board and select staff met in closed session after dinner for a conversation on Seeking God's Racial Justice, Faithful First Steps, including how to develop shared language for discussion in the wider church.

Mission and Ministry Board closed session with select staff

Church of the Brethren
Mission and Ministry Board
Zoom Videoconference
March 12-14, 2021

Mission and Ministry Board – Minutes

Sunday, March 14

Members present: Patrick Starkey (chair), Carl Fike (chair-elect), Marty Barlow, Lauren Seganos Cohen, Thomas Dowdy, Lois Grove, Heather Gentry Hartwell, Dava Hensley, John Hoffman, Diane Mason, Meghan Horne Mauldin, Joel Peña, J. Roger Schrock, Paul Schrock, Colin Scott, and Christina Singh

Ex Officio Paul Munday (moderator), David Sollenberger (moderator-elect), James M. Beckwith (Annual Conference secretary), Jeff Carter (Bethany president), Nevin Dulabaum (BBT president), Bill Scheurer (OEP executive director), Cindy Sanders (Council of District Executives representative)

Members absent: Paul Liepelt

General Secretary: David Steele

Recorder: Nancy Miner

Patrick Starkey welcomed the board members and those observing the meeting.

Welcome

Heather Gentry Hartwell opened the session with prayer.

Prayer

Patrick reported from Friday’s closed session of the full board. The board:

**Closed Session
reporting**

- Shared community building time
- Received updates from General Secretary David Steele
- Held a discussion about the frequency of in-person meetings and possibilities of virtual meetings going forward
- Had preliminary discussion about the format of the summer meeting

Video reports from each of the Annual Conference agencies were provided for board members to view in advance of the meeting.

Agency Q&A

On Earth Peace

The On Earth Peace (OEP) report was provided by Matt Guynn, director of Organizing for Church and Community Groups for OEP.

Five core values guide the work of On Earth Peace:

1. Jesus-centered spirituality
2. Positive peace
3. Anti-racism/anti-oppression

4. Intergenerational leadership
5. Beloved community

Strategic Priorities (2020-2022)

1. Develop individuals as leaders with spirituality and skills in Kingian Nonviolence
2. Walk with leaders in our communities, as they take action for justice and peace, using the Kingian Nonviolence approach
3. Embolden the Church of the Brethren to become a living peace and justice denomination
4. Institutionalize anti-racism and anti-oppression in On Earth Peace practices and structures

News and highlights

- Internship program
 - 20 interns or fellows who are second-year interns
 - Encouraged promotion of the internship program to young adults and recent students in the Church of the Brethren
- Learning action communities
 - Build community, capacity, and commitment
- Community engagement grants
 - First grants have been given
 - OEP organizes the initiative and provides three webinars
- Read Aloud Project
 - More than 80 videos on OEP's YouTube channel
- Community meetups
 - Time for OEP community to come together and build relationships with each other, share about their lives, and engage a topic
- Racial justice accountability meetings
 - Conversations about what churches, meetings, and community groups can do about policies and practices that keep racial injustice in place
- Song and Story Fest monthly Zoomfire
 - Every month on the first Friday
- Training for community-based responses to asylum issues
 - Six bi-weekly training sessions for individuals and faith groups
- 10-week book study and action group
 - Reading "Always with Us? What Jesus Really Said about the Poor."
- Prison pen pals outreach
 - Features Rachel Gross of the Death Row Support Project
- Stop Recruiting Kids campaign
 - Messages about militarism and the recruitment of children
- Just Peace Outfitters online store
- Just Peace Leaders Campaign
 - Stories about people impacted and helped by On Earth Peace in their work for justice and peace in each generation

The report concluded with OEP's vision statement: A world in Beloved Community, liberated from oppression, violence, and war.

Bill Scheurer, OEP executive director, responded to questions and comments.

- OEP is so much more than I ever knew

Q: What kind of push-back are you getting for stances you are called to that might go against Annual Conference statements. And how are you dealing with those as an organization?

A: We don't view it as prophetic, but as pastorally standing with people to show support. OEP recently joined the Supportive Communities Network. For those who bring concerns, our response is to listen and walk with them wherever they choose to take it.

Bethany Theological Seminary

Bethany Theological Seminary president Jeff Carter provided the seminary's pre-recorded report. Highlights of the report included:

- Canoeing the Mountains
 - Author Tod Bolsinger asserts that church leaders are often trained to be "canoers," only to find that there is no water route.
 - Like others, Bethany is discovering new ways to navigate changing circumstances.
- Seminary Health and Vitality
 - 10-year comparison of student population by degree/certificate
 - Total student body Spring 2021

Bethany Theological Seminary's mission: Empowering every student to lead ... so that the world flourishes.

Jeff Carter added to his report by highlighting:

- Books by faculty members
 - Eyes of the Heart: Seeing God in an Age of Science, by Russell Haitch
 - Preaching the Fear of God in a Fear-Filled World, by Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm
- Peace essay contest for high school, college, and graduate students
- Teaching a leadership class using Tod Bolsinger's book "Canoeing the Mountains."
 - Presentation used a picture that included Lewis and Clark, but not Sacajawea. Did not find an acceptable picture of Sacajawea because of poor stereotypes.
 - Tells students that historical stories are flawed. Appreciates the conversation around the metaphor of the story.

Jeff responded to comments.

- Bethany does incredible job with marketing; shared the ad for the Peace Essay contest with grandchildren

Brethren Benefit Trust

Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) president Nevin Dulabaum shared the following through his pre-recorded report:

Business sustainability

- COVID response
 - Church Workers' Assistance Plan COVID-19 grants
 - No COVID deductibles with medical insurance through March 31, 2021 (and probably beyond)
- Medical insurance open enrollment
 - Wellness program
 - Low premium increases over the past 4 years
 - Less than 17 percent over the past 4 years compared with trend of 31 percent
- Assets under management – all-time high
 - BBT total - >\$630 million
 - Brethren Pension Plan - \$431 million
 - Brethren Foundation Funds - \$200 million

Organizational/staff development and goals

- Strategic goals approved by BBT Board in November
 - Organizational name
 - Location of staff
 - Marketing materials
 - Growth model
 - Personnel needs
- Denominational meetings attended include:
 - District Executives (DEs)
 - Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee
 - DEs and Inter-Agency Forum
 - So. Ohio/Kentucky pastors group
- Professional designations
 - Lynnae Rodeffer – Trustees Institute, Level II certificate
 - Two CPAs
 - Three CRPCs
 - One CIMA
 - Two insurance brokers
 - Four with masters; two with doctorates

Future growth/long-term viability

- Strategic direction
 - Feels like building a bridge while walking on it
 - Facing issues as they come
- Hired a coach to work with:

- Senior management team and two other BBT staff
- BBT Board
- Church Benefits Association counterparts
 - Reviewing their best practices to be sure BBT is on the right track

Operations

- Fired tactical investment manager
- Changed manager of the Community Development Investment Fund
- New staff
 - Daniel Radcliff – Brethren Foundation
 - Victoria Crouter – finance team
- Changed name of Client Relations department to Relationships and Growth
 - With this change, Ed Shannon moved from Client Relations to Benefits

What you can do?

- Support and advocate for BBT

Personal sharing/reflecting

- Will work intentionally with staff to help them see, own, and implement BBT's new vision
- Pandemic has taught us that we can make unprecedented changes, undertake new direction, and model new ways

Adding to his prerecorded report, Nevin noted that a number of camps have approached BBT about the Church Workers Assistance Funds grants because of loss of income during the pandemic. He knows firsthand that the need is real and expressed his gratitude to the Church of the Brethren for their decision to also help the camps during this time.

He responded to board members' questions and comments:

- Encouraging to hear multiple references to a growth model rather than a maintenance model
- Words of appreciation for all BBT does
- Appreciation for communication about working in person or virtually and discernment about office space
 - Nevin responded that BBT is viewing it as an opportunity to consider changes for the organization.

Patrick Starkey thanked each of the agency executives for their reports and follow-up time with the board.

Video reports from the following ministry areas were provided for board members to view in advance of the meeting. During the meeting, staff responded to questions from board members.

Staff Reporting Q&A

Material Resources

Roy Winter, executive director for Service Ministries, provided some history of Material Resources.

- Started with the beginning of the Brethren Service Center as part of organization for World War II relief
- Continues to facilitate and coordinate materials for the Church of the Brethren and many partners
- A history of ups and downs in finances; recent years have shown a steady decline

Loretta Wolf, director of Material Resources, described the makeup of the department:

- Kit and donation processing
 - Includes partners Lutheran World Relief (LWR) and Church World Service (CWS)
- Medical supplies
 - Includes Brothers Brother Foundation, International Orthodox Christian Charities, Feed the Nations, American Baptist, Evangelical Covenant Church, Mission and Relief Logistics
- Trucking operations
 - Supports all programs

She explained what is involved in the preparation of materials for shipment, most of which is done on an individualized basis:

- Receive inventory and remove hazardous, outdated, and unacceptable items
- Sort items, pack them, and prepare paperwork
- Provide storage for items
- Prep shipments per partners' request
- Load shipments onto trailer or container

There are currently only nine Material Resources staff – a small staff for the amount of work that is done. A critical part of the work is done by volunteers.

- An average of about 1,200 volunteers annually
 - Only 156 in 2020, due to COVID
- Volunteers motivate staff with their creative energy and enthusiasm

10-year financial history

- Steady decline over the past decade
- IMA started reducing operations in 2015, then left in 2018
- 2020 brought 10 months with no volunteers, 2 months with no employees, and significant reduction in donations
- Overhead costs remained the same, with less program to cover costs

- Efforts to improve financial picture include:
 - Bringing in Brothers Brother in 2018-2019 made up for some of the loss from IMA's departure
 - Evaluated cost of business per partner
 - Considered ways to reduce expenses, including:
 - Reduction in staffing
 - Reducing number of trucks, but determined that the trucks are an asset for several reasons
 - Drew up new agreements with CWS and LWR, which will increase income
 - Have learned that Brothers Brother that they are trying to increase the volume of their donations

Ongoing challenges

- Pandemic limits volunteer participation
- Need donations to increase before we can bring volunteers back
 - Anticipating that 2021 will still result in reduced donations
- General trend of decrease in material aid programs
 - Partners believe Material Resources will be needed for the near future
- Age of trucks

Points of encouragement

- Partners reaffirmed the importance of the relationship and work
- Partners plan to continue programs and working to rebuild kit donations
- Volunteers are eager to return
- Material Resources is still able to fill the needs and requests

Roy Winter responded to board members' questions and comments.

Q: Where do your volunteers come from? Are they Brethren traveling from some distances?

A: Most come from local churches in Maryland and Pennsylvania. People come from a lot of local churches of all denominations. Some youth groups come as special projects.

Q: As you consider the struggle to replace partners, are you considering the economic effects of shipping items from the developed world to the developing world?

A: The Church of the Brethren has a good understanding of that, which is why we don't do a lot of international shipping for ourselves. CWS has decided not to ship kits internationally anymore, but to do local sourcing. LWR continues to feel like it is an important connection for them. It is a balance of best practice and connecting with our congregations to become long-term supporters.

Office of Peacebuilding and Policy

Nathan Hosler, director, gave an overview of the work of the Office of

Peacebuilding and Policy, located in Washington, D.C.

In addition to Nathan, the office is made up of BVS volunteer Naomi Yilma and an occasional intern. The office also includes the work of The Death Row Support Project, led by Rachel Gross; and Doris Abdullah, Church of the Brethren representative to the United Nations. Former BVSers Tori Bateman and Susu Lassa continue to represent the office with the Christian Peacemaker Team steering committee and Creation Justice Ministries, respectively.

Work is guided by Annual Conference policy on a range of areas and priorities, including places where there are gaps or areas to address in the work of the Church of the Brethren and gaps in advocacy in D.C.

Ongoing and long-term partnerships include:

- National Council of Churches
- Heifer International
- Churches for Middle East Peace
- National Farmworker Ministries
- Creation Justice Ministries
- Christian Peacemaker Teams

Ecumenical and interfaith collaboration helps us expand our work and capacity around:

- Issues of racial justice
- Humanitarian access
- Ecumenical/interfaith relationships as an act of peacebuilding

Angelo Olayvar, intern studying at Eastern Mennonite University, reported on his research related to the use of arms sales or weapons transfers in U.S. foreign policy, a topic Nathan will speak on for the Durnbaugh Lecture at Elizabethtown College.

Naomi Yilma, BVS volunteer and recent Manchester College graduate, reported on her work with the Nigeria Working Group, the COVID-19 Working Group, and the Jubilee USA Network. A series of blog posts written by Naomi, Nathan, and Susu affirm and explore simple living, stewardship, just dealings, and mutuality in relationship to economic justice and economic peacemaking. She encouraged board members to join the action alert list and follow the blog posts.

Nathan made a few additional comments beyond the prerecorded report and responded to board members' questions. He noted:

- Some of the working relationships are more formal than others
- Try to be "both ways facing," resourcing congregations while also helping them to engage

Q: Are there areas where you urgently need to have statements that we don't currently have?

A: We are working on a statement on Economic Peacemaking. Reaffirmation of past statements in present situations (e.g., immigration/refugee as it relates to child separation) would be helpful for the present context.

Discipleship Ministries events

Discipleship Ministries staff reported on the ways they have adapted to develop events, resources, and relationships using web-based tools.

Stan Dueck, director of Spiritual Formation and Co-Coordinator of Discipleship, reported on virtual events being planned in collaboration with Brethren Disaster Ministries and the Office of Ministry:

- Webinar conversation with a panel of pastors planning for the return of in-person worship (March 26)
- Leadership Summit on Wellbeing (April 19-22)
 - Addresses church leaders' care during a prolonged crisis
 - Keynote address by Dr. Jessica Young-Brown
 - Prerecorded videos and live interactive sessions with various leaders
 - CEUs available

Other upcoming events:

- New and Renew virtual conference (May 13-15)
 - Theme: The Reward of Risk
 - Keynote speakers are Christiana Rice and José Humphries
 - Workshop presenters include Church of the Brethren leaders and other Christian leaders
 - Translation services available
 - CEUs available

Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, shared about upcoming virtual events for youth and young adults.

- Christian Citizenship Seminar - CCS (April 24-28)
 - Theme: Economic Justice
 - Session leaders include José Humphries, Aldo Caliari, Tralonne Shorter, and Jerry O'Donnell
- Compelling Vision Bible Studies (March)
- Living Letters webinars
 - Led by Jessie Houff
 - Sessions planned for March, April, and August
- Advisor Enrichment opportunity
 - Webinar – Play, on Purpose led by Dr. Lakisha Lockhart
- National Young Adult Conference (May 28-31)
 - Theme: Unfolding Grace
 - Speakers include: LaDonna Nkosi, Madalyn Metzger, Eric Landram, and Greg Davidson-Laszakovits
 - Worship, workshops, recreation, and fellowship
- Youth Fellowship Exchange
 - Helps youth groups connect with other youth groups

- Fellowship and fun
- 12 congregations participating

LaDonna Sanders Nkosi, director of Intercultural Ministries, reported on virtual events planned by her office:

- Healing Racism webinar series
 - Follow-up conversations with congregations, to share ideas, resources, and training
- Retreat with Sheila Wise Rowe, author of “Healing Racial Trauma”

NOAC coordinator Christy Waltersdorff reported on plans for the virtual National Older Adult Conference (Sept. 6-10):

- Theme: Overflowing with Hope
- Uplifting worship services, outstanding preachers, challenging keynote speakers, and interesting workshops
- Fellowship events like college ice cream socials and camp reunions
- NOAC News Team
- Registration opens May 1

Becky Ullom Naugle and Stan Dueck responded to board members’ questions and comments.

Q: How are the Compelling Vision Bible Studies being promoted?

A: Facebook and Instagram, denominational website, emails to youth advisors

Q: With Zoom fatigue, have you been able to gather interest? Or has the virtual format created more interest?

A: YYA events are having similar participation, but not overwhelmingly larger participation. Some congregations are participating in CCS who do not usually participate.

Other Discipleship Ministries workshops and webinars have had large numbers participating – overall an increased number.

Patrick Starkey thanked staff for their reports and for their adaptability as they have faced new challenges.

Conveners of the Strategic Plan Foreground Vision Initiative task teams brought updates on their work.

**Strategic Plan
Foreground Vision
Initiatives**

Prioritizing Communications (FVI#2)

Lauren Seganos Cohen provided a handout to supplement the Foreground Vision Initiative #2 verbal report.

Task team members are Lauren Seganos Cohen (chair), Dava Hensley, Joel Peña, Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, and Wendy McFadden.

Their task was to develop a comprehensive communications plan and accompanying interpretive resources to share the Strategic Plan with district executives, district boards, and pastors, inviting participation in the plan.

Lauren reported on the following tasks that have been accomplished:

- Added scriptural references from the Compelling Vision document to the Strategic Plan summary document
- Developed a presentation (slides and a script) for presenting to district boards and pastors
- Passed on the scheduling of presentations to district boards and pastors to the Strategic Planning Committee
- Translated supportive documents (FAQ and Strategic Plan interpretive document) into Spanish and Haitian Creole with financial support from the General Secretary's budget
- New page on the brethren.org website with all documents; website communicated through Newline article
- Passed on the process for updating website (changes to Foreground and Midground visions) to the Strategic Planning Committee

Lauren responded to board members' questions and comments.

Q: The Sustainability Committee has asked whether there is a plan included in the presentation to communicate the need for financial support to move the Strategic Plan forward.

A: It is not currently included. Lauren will discuss adding language with Dava and Joel.

Lauren explained that board members who will be making presentations can access the presentation document through the web portal or by contacting the General Secretary's Office.

Colin noted the connection of these presentations to one of the recommendations of the Foreground Vision Initiative #3 regarding board members serving as liaisons to districts.

Patrick expressed appreciation to the task team for their work.

Evaluating Systems and Processes (FVI #3)

Patrick Starkey called attention to a revised Exhibit 5, which includes the Executive Committee's suggested disposition of the recommendations of Foreground Vision Initiative #3 task team.

Patrick thanked task team members Roger Schrock (convener), Colin Scott, Heather Gentry Hartwell, Diane Mason, and Shawn Flory Replogle for their work and presented the recommendations individually on behalf of the Executive Committee.

Recommendations and Actions

Recommendations and Actions (Exhibit 5)

Mission and Ministry Board Member Manual

Recommendation #1

The Executive Committee recommends that the General Secretary work with appropriate staff to address these two recommendations related to the Social Media Guidelines.

Action:

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

Recommendation #2

The Executive Committee recommends that the Sustainability Committee work in conjunction with the Office of Mission Advancement to define further the liaison role and to develop a methodology and training for Mission and Ministry Board members ensuring that all geographical areas of the denomination have contact with the board.

Action:

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

Recommendation #3

The Executive Committee will discern the information gathered from the board's March 12, 2021, conversation regarding the frequency of in person vs. virtual meetings. In addition, the Office of General Secretary will review the placement of the travel logistics within the Manual.

Action:

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

Recommendation #4

The Executive Committee will review the board committee position descriptions to assure consistency and clarity of role and function and will make the recommended change to the meeting participation checklist.

Action:

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

Recommendation #5

The Executive Committee recommends that the Strategic Planning Committee be tasked to prepare and include a preamble and prayer in the Strategic Plan. (The Board Member Manual has already been updated with the new Strategic Plan.)

Action:

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

Church of the Brethren Bylaws

Patrick noted that any revisions to the bylaws must be approved by Annual

Conference. Because the business agenda for Annual Conference 2021 is already set, the earliest that Annual Conference could consider bylaw revisions would be 2022.

The Executive Committee's recommendation encompasses all three of the recommendations brought by the Foreground Vision #3 task team.

Recommendation

The Executive Committee will further review the COBi Bylaw recommendations and bring bylaw change suggestions to the October 2021 Mission and Ministry Board meeting.

Affirmation:

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

Church of the Brethren Financial Policies

Patrick reported that as the Executive Committee continues its work as the Foreground Vision Initiative #4 task team, it is discussing the items named in the two bulleted items.

Recommendation #1

The Sustainability Committee in consultation with the Office of Mission Advancement will discern how to approach "self-allocation" going forward and bring their recommendations to a future Mission and Ministry Board meeting.

Affirmation:

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

Recommendation #2

The Executive Committee will review the board committee position descriptions to assure consistency of committee membership.

Affirmation:

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

Communication Policy

Patrick reported that the Communication Policy document reviewed by the FVI#3 task team was one adopted by the former General Board. He explained that if the recommendation is approved, it is possible that what is brought back to the board may not be simply a revision of the existing document, but may be an entirely new document.

Recommendation

The Executive Committee will further review the Communication Policy and bring back recommended changes for the Board's consideration.

Affirmation:

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

Employee Handbook

Recommendation

The General Secretary and Manager of Human Resources will address the recommendations related to the Employee Handbook.

Affirmation:

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

Appendices

Patrick clarified that many of the concerns of the various appendices were addressed in the substantive actions taken above. For instance:

- Concerns related to the CoBi Bylaws are lodged with the Executive Committee
- Concerns related to the Communication Policy are lodged with the Executive Committee
- The questions in the Employee Handbook will be addressed by the General Secretary and Manager of Human Resources
- The Executive Committee will address concerns related to the Board Member Manual

Patrick explained that the recommendation regarding the Financial Policies requires separate action. Any proposed revisions to the policy would be brought to the board by the Audit and Investment Committee.

Recommendation

The Foreground Vision Initiative #3 task team recommends that the Audit and Investment Committee collaborate with the Office of Finance to discuss the concerns related to the Financial Policies.

Affirmation:

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

Questions and comments:

Q: What is the mechanism whereby these recommendations will be followed up on to make sure they are done?

A: Minutes of the board meeting, record of the task team's report and recommendations, and the General Secretary's close watch.

Q: Is that sufficient?

A: The General Secretary is tasked with staying on top of it and the board has a responsibility to follow up with questions about the progress. These will also become a part of the General Secretary's ongoing reporting to the board and Executive Committee.

- Concern about passing the wand to a new chair, with the huge load the Executive Committee has.
 - The General Secretary, chair, and chair-elect meet regularly to address tasks. The Executive Committee is committed to

checking in with David to advise and support him and monitor his self-care.

- Concern about the amount of turnover on the board at the summer meeting. New members will just be getting their feet wet when taking on these tasks.

Patrick thanked the task team for their work and report.

Organizing Structure (FVI #4)

Patrick Starkey reported that the work of the Foreground Vision Initiative #4 task team continues. In this work, the General Secretary is consulting with the Executive Committee to review how current program and resources do or do not align with the emphases of the Strategic Plan. The task team's work will conclude this spring.

Patrick anticipates calling the board together for a special Zoom meeting prior to the summer meeting for a first read and discussion of a declaration of priorities coming from this task team. This will give the board time to live with the recommendations prior to taking action.

Paul Schrock brought the report of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Members of the committee are Paul Schrock (chair), Lois Grove, Thomas Dowdy, Lauren Seganos Cohen, Roger Schrock, and Heather Gentry Hartwell, with David Steele representing staff. The size of the committee was increased for this year due to the amount of work to be done.

Paul noted that the work of Foreground Vision Initiative #3 task team (Evaluating Systems and Processes) has been completed. He brought the following recommendation:

Recommendation

The Strategic Planning Committee recommends that Foreground Vision Initiative #3 task team be dismissed with appreciation.

Affirmation

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed the recommendation as presented.

In addition, the work of the Foreground Vision Initiative #2 task team (Prioritizing Communication) is nearing completion and that task team will be dismissed at the next board meeting.

At the October meeting, the board approved the following:

The Strategic Planning Committee will coordinate/manage the process of reviewing and recommending revisions/replacements of Foreground Initiatives and Mid-ground Vision statements for the Strategic Plan (adopted by MMB in July 2020) subject to the approval of the full Mission and Ministry Board.

The committee proposed four new Foreground Vision Initiatives,

**Strategic Plan
Foreground Vision
Initiatives
(Continued)**

**Strategic Planning
Committee report
and
recommendations
(Handout)**

generated from the board's December discussion. Paul presented them in the committee's order of priority.

Foreground Vision (Proposed 2nd-Generation Short-term Initiatives)

A. On the Road to Jericho (Plan for Defining Neighborhoods)

By the July 2021 board meeting, a task team composed of board members (appointed by the Executive Committee) and Staff (appointed by the General Secretary) will have developed a road map / game plan (sequence of steps, resource requirements, and key specifications) for creating a resource (guide book? computer-aided tool?) for use by congregations in discovering and defining their "neighborhood" for missional focus.

B. Each in Our Own Language (Plan for Recognizing Injustice)

By the July 2021 board meeting, a task team composed of board members (appointed by the Executive Committee) and Staff (appointed by the General Secretary) will have developed a road map / game plan (sequence of steps, resource requirements, and key specifications) for creating a curriculum resource (print? video?) to help congregations identify aspects of racial injustice that may be present in their contextual settings.

C. By This All People Will Know (Plan for Understanding Discipleship)

By the July 2021 board meeting, a task team composed of board members (appointed by the Executive Committee and Staff (appointed by the General Secretary) will have developed a road map / game plan (sequence of steps, resource requirements, and key specifications) for creating a curriculum resource (print? video?) for use at the congregational level to help members gain a new understanding of Discipleship in a 21st century context.

D. Voices in the Night (Plan for Leadership Development)

By the July 2021 board meeting, a task team composed of board members (appointed by the Executive Committee) and Staff (appointed by the General Secretary) will have developed a road map / game plan (sequence of steps, resource requirements, and key specifications) for creating program for leadership development (member database? career pathing? job/role rotations?) that will ensure a ready supply of well-rounded (innovative, adaptable, and fearless) talent to draw upon as needed.

Discussion

Q: What is meant by a road map/game plan?

A: It means to put together a game plan and define what the requirements are. For example, the Strategic Design Team designed the process, not the actual Strategic Plan.

Q: Has there been any consideration given to invite outside persons in addition to board and staff to serve on task teams?

A: When the game plan turns into the actual game, it is inevitable that they will want outside persons involved. It's also conceivable that a subject matter expert be brought in to consult prior to that.

David reminded the board that each of these has budgetary and staff implications.

- The completion of the work of the FVI#4 task team work and the declaration of priorities intermingles with this.
- Do we let presumed budgetary limitations limit our work or do we do what we feel is best for the church, trusting that we will be able to deal with budgetary limitations?

Q: We are working at a lot of different things. Do we need to tie up a few loose ends and not overextend ourselves? Some of this will be helped by completion of the work of FVI#4.

- We need to keep our foot to the pedal and not lose momentum or we may never put our foot back to the pedal.
- If we have the board capacity, I'd like to see us continue to move forward.
- We could choose to move forward on only one or two at this time, keeping the others in the hopper for the future.

Patrick asked the board to consider the adoption of just two of the proposed Foreground Vision Initiatives.

Affirmation:

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed adopting only two new Foreground vision Initiatives at this time.

The board considered the proposed Foreground Vision Initiatives in the order in which the Strategic Planning Committee had prioritized them.

Recommendation A (On the Road to Jericho):

Affirmation

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed A as one of the new Foreground Vision Initiatives.

Recommendation B (Each in Our Own Language):

Affirmation

The Mission and Ministry Board had consensus and affirmed B as one of the new Foreground Vision Initiatives.

Patrick Starkey informed board members that they would receive a link to an online meeting evaluation form and encouraged them to complete the form while the meeting is still fresh in their minds.

Meeting evaluation

Colin Scott and Dava Hensley brought the Governance Monitors' report.

**Governance
Monitors' report**

Colin noted:

- We had a lot of good discussion
- People were engaged and were not shy about speaking up
- Good diversity of voices
- Balance between voting and ex officio members was good

- Board chair allowed time to think and respond
- No concerns about staff or board encroaching on one another's territory
- All committees were engaged
- Liked reminder that we need to hold ourselves accountable
- Nice to see such an active board, stepping in and being adaptable and available in these difficult times
- Meaningful conversations the board is having can have an impact on the wider church

Dava noted:

- Excited to see the board come together and talk about the work of the denomination
- Appreciate the pre-recorded reports of staff
- Appreciated the worship and the board development training
 - Level of training was excellent; it's heavy stuff
- Appreciate the consensus model and feeling heard
- Business moved along well
- It's an honor and privilege to serve on the board

Patrick Starkey thanked Moderator Paul Munday for being a willing, last-minute substitute to lead closing worship.

Closing worship

Paul read 2 Chronicles 20:12 as words of hope as board members leave the meeting and re-enter the challenges discussed during the meeting.

He focused on the words, "We are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

As we face our multitude (polarization, pandemic, and fracture/schism), there are three companion realities:

1. The battle is ultimately not ours, but God's.
2. We can't sugarcoat the multitude, nor can we surrender to the fear and hopelessness.
3. We need confront the multitude, but with another way of living. We need to heal and show empathy, even to our enemies. We need to come back and keep our eyes on God.

Paul read lyrics from Shawn Kirchner's composition, Holy World, which was written shortly after the tragic death of Shawn's mother. The anthem's lyrics show hope in the midst of lament.

He challenged the group to leave the meeting with honesty and lament, but with the conviction that surely there will be life beyond the great multitude.

Paul closed in prayer.

The open session adjourned at 5:33 p.m. Central and the board continued in closed session to receive the resignation of Paul Liepelt from the board for personal reasons.

Adjournment

Recorded by Nancy Miner
Approved and respectfully submitted by:

James M. Beckwith
Secretary

Date

DRAFT