

## **CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MISSION AND MINISTRY BOARD**

### **Facilities Stewardship Committee**

Report for Spring MMB Meeting

March 15, 2024

#### **Facilities Stewardship Committee:**

Joel Gibbel (convener), Karen Neff, Roger Schrock, Colin Scott (MMB chair)

#### **Church of the Brethren Staff:**

Shawn Flory Replogle, David Steele (as available)

The Facilities Stewardship Committee offers this report having been in existence for one year. We have met numerous times and received frequent detailed reports and updates from Shawn Flory Replogle concerning the properties and facilities owned by the Church of the Brethren, Inc. The summary that follows is not comprehensive information but an attempt at sharing the status of and current challenges with the facilities in our care.

The visionary work of considering and identifying the greatest needs of the denomination remains before us. It is important for us to see that our facilities help to serve our mission rather than allowing our mission to become focused on preserving facilities. With this in mind, we offer the following summaries:

#### **North Dakota Farm Property**

This property generates a small amount of income, and it consists of land used for farming and hunting. A local congregation maintains the right of first refusal should the Church of the Brethren decide to sell the property. The committee has given little attention toward this land, sensing that even discussion about change in use may not be worth the loss of goodwill with the local congregation. We have not discussed any future plans for it in our meetings to date.

#### **Lybrook Community Ministries, NM**

This property, which includes land and several building structures, is a mission site with a history of ups and downs. It is a beautiful place that has received little attention from the church with virtually no visits there since 2019. A ministry that serves clean water by free-will offerings is a highlight, while its buildings have fallen into disrepair. The board of LCM currently has few remaining members and little funds to support the work there. Shawn visited there in November 2023 and was able to visit with several people in leadership and caretaking roles. Our challenge remains to discern a *vision* for the future of this place and how our church might find opportunities for it. In light of the recent AC Statement regarding the Doctrine of Discovery, it is important work related to our strategic plan.

#### **Germantown Meetinghouse and Cemetery, PA**

The “mother church” of our beloved denomination in the new world, the Germantown property is overseen by the Germantown Trust, a group charged with maintenance and oversight of the facilities and historical interpretation there, which is connected to the Atlantic Northeast District.

A congregation remains active at Germantown, although portions of the facilities are in need of remodeling. A new Trust document may come before MMB in the coming year, but as of now Shawn has been unimpressed with support from sister denominations even as the Trust tentatively grants them a measure of control over the property.

Several 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration events were planned and hosted by the congregation during 2023, including a portion of the Brethren World Assembly in July 2023. Shawn attended and made some attempts to relate to representatives from other bodies of Schwarzenau Brethren. Some old-order groups still enjoy visiting Germantown out of historical interest, but financial assistance is minimal. The historical significance of this property makes it unique and adds “sentimental” value to our involvement there.

#### Brethren Service Center, New Windsor, MD

The property held in New Windsor is the warehouse which serves the work of Material Resources as well as several partner organizations and tenants including SERRV. The Material Resources program is moving toward closing in the coming years, but the warehouse building and land remain property of the Church of the Brethren.

We are aware of several repairs and forthcoming updates to the facility related to the area leased by SERRV. Long term operation of mechanical and electrical systems remains a concern, as an individual staff member, mostly retired, has been overseeing the building systems for many years. Such “institutional wisdom” will be difficult to replace.

#### Church of the Brethren General Offices, Elgin, IL

The general offices property plays a significant role in the ministries and staffing of the Church of the Brethren, hosting offices for many denomination staff and programs. The facility is now 65 years old, and its usage has shifted significantly since it was built. Building systems are an ongoing maintenance challenge, including boiler/heating system (air handler) maintenance and sprinkler systems. Full replacement of either system will be very expensive.

A recent development has been a new use of the warehouse space by a local auctioneer, which has resulted in some re-configuration and clearing of items stored there. This work is an ongoing, stage process involving several staff departments. Vacant office spaces remain within the building which could potentially be leased to new tenants. The 12-acre portion of land to the rear of the building has been for sale without movement for 4 years now.