

Church of the Brethren
Mission and Ministry Board
Annual Conference Meeting
Fort Wayne, Indiana
June 27-July 2, 2026

Mission and Ministry Board – Minutes

Sunday, June 28

Members present: Kathy Mack (chair), Josiah Ludwick (chair-elect), Michaela Alphonse, Daniel Butler, Edward Cesar-Fincher, Barbara Daté, Joel Gibbel, Tina Hunt, Robert Jackson, Sarah Mason, Rosanna Eller McFadden, Deirdre Moyer, Karen Shively Neff, Colby Patton, Eric Ramirez, and Janice Shaw-Morgan

Members present

Online: Joanna Wave Willoughby

General Secretary: David Steele

Recorders: Shannon McNeil Smith

Kathy Mack, Chair, welcomed the Mission and Ministry Board and guests. Asked everyone to share their first Annual Conference memory/experience.

**Welcome and
Introductions**

Edward Cesar-Fincher shared an opening devotional, and he started by sharing details about himself.

Opening worship

Jesus mandate to go to the corners of the earth and spread the Gospel and love our neighbors – requires us to go out where people are and meet them on their own terms.

Made a connection to the internet and how it has become a language of culture around us. How do we use the internet and the digital world to expand the Gospel? How do we adapt to support the mission?

Kathy introduced the consent agenda

Consent Agenda

- Approve meeting agenda
- Approve MMB minutes
 - March 13-15, 2026, open session meeting
 - March 13-15, 2026, closed session meeting
 - April 13, 2026, EDF allocation (IOCC – Israel-Hamas War Response)
 - April 14, 2026, EDF allocation (IOCC – Russia-Ukraine War Response)
 - April 30, 2026, EDF allocation (Hurricane Helene Response)
 - April 6, 2026, Capital expenditure (Disaster response van)
 - April 9, 2026, Capital expenditure (BSC restrooms)

- May 12, 2026, Capital expenditure (Disaster response van)

The Mission and Ministry Board by consensus approved the agenda as amended and minutes as presented.

Action Taken

David Steele brought the General Secretary's report.

**General Secretary's
report**

He expressed his appreciation for the Church of the Brethren staff. He gave an update on the staff who have started since the March 2026 meeting.

Michelle Martinez

Adam Lane

Jeff Thomson

Those who have retired/resigned since March

Traci Rabenstein

Pat Marsh

There will be two individuals who retire post Annual Conference

Nancy Heishman

Wendy McFadden

Staff medical and ancillary insurance will change this year, and open enrollment will be in August.

Spending time with the Eder/Everence transition as each look towards their future and how each will interact with the Church of the Brethren.

Kathy presented the Executive Committee report. The committee has met three times since March, virtually on May 4th and June 9th and the latest was June 27th in Fort Wayne. The two virtual meetings mostly revolved around the statement of intent that was announced on June 19, 2026. Additionally, the committee received reports from the General Secretary at each meeting. The June 27th meeting included: the bank resolution for NYC, Modesto review of cost and experience – the takeaway is that rather than only going out every 5 years it would be better to do so more frequently. In addition, reviewed items of business for the meeting.

**Executive Committee
report**

Ed Woolf, Treasurer, provided a financial update and a 2025 audit report update. We received a clean opinion with no adjustments, which is the highest level of assurance from the audit.

**Financial update
Exhibit 1&2
Handout - Dashboard**

Highlights of 2025 Audit

Contributions increased by \$1 million mostly from large estate gifts.

Total revenue increased by \$1.6 million, driven by investment gains and contributions.

Total expenses increased by \$400,000. \$230,000 of the expense increase due to grants that went out.

Liabilities increased by \$400,000 mainly due to post-retirement benefits.

Net assets grew by \$1.5 million.

Mentioned Pat Marsh's work and how crucial she was to the work of the finance team.

Highlights of the 2026 Financial Update

Total Net Assets \$46.3 million.

Giving from congregations to Core Ministries is down but giving from individuals to Core Ministries up from last year partially due to the matching gift campaign. Combined giving to Core Ministries is up \$43,000 from the same time last year and \$40,000 ahead of budget.

Combined giving to Restricted funds up \$712,000 from last year mostly due to large estate gifts to Emergency Disaster Fund and Global Food Initiative.

Core Ministries has a net surplus of \$323,000.

Rosanna McFadden provided the report of the Finance and Sustainability Committee and explained that the 2025 Audit has already been approved by the committee but that the Mission and Ministry Board just needs to formally receive the 2025 Audit.

**2025 Audit Report
and Finance and
Sustainability
Committee update**

She provided an update on the previous meeting and Forvis 2025 audit. This year the committee will receive quotes from auditors for the future, but the committee may not choose to go with a new auditor.

The Mission and Ministry Board exclaimed appreciation for the staff who consistently provide work which allows for clean audit ratings.

The Mission and Ministry Board by consensus received the 2025 Audit Report.

Action Taken

Kathy provided background on the discussion for an increased Ministry Enablement Contribution.

**Ministry Enablement
Contribution**

Currently a Ministry Enablement Contribution (MEC) of 9 percent is applied to restricted donations to support the work of Core Ministries staff who ensure each gift fulfills the donor's intended purpose. It also helps cover the travel expenses for volunteers, visas, travelers' insurance, and other administrative costs.

Staff researched other nonprofit organizations designated giving fees and administrative overhead. They found that several charge no fee on restricted gifts, while others charge between 10% and 18%. Reported administrative overhead rates ranged from 15% to 26%. Based on this review, staff concluded that a 12% rate would fall near the middle of the range.

Twelve percent (12%) was used in the proposed budget parameter.

The Executive Committee by consensus recommends that the Mission and Ministry Board approve an increase to the Ministry Enablement Contribution to 12% applied to restricted gifts. This increase will begin in 2027.

The Mission and Ministry Board by consensus approved the increase to Ministry Enablement Contribution applied to restricted gifts. This increase will be from 9% to 12% and will begin in 2027.

Action Taken

Ed Woolf presented the proposed 2027 budget parameter for Core Ministries.

**2027 Budget
Parameter Q&A
(Exhibit 3)**

Key highlights include:

Congregational Giving \$1.29 million (\$125,000 decrease from the 2026 budget) – based on 10-year actual giving trends and the organization is experiencing a decline of 4.6% in congregational giving each year.

Individual Giving \$709,000 (\$22,000 increase from the 2026 budget) – based on 10-year actual giving trends and the organization is experiencing an increase of 4.7% in individual giving each year.

Recommend a decrease of 1% of the Bequest Quasi-Endowment – bringing it back to 19% versus the larger percentage that has been typical the last few years. Total transfers would be \$2.5 million (decrease of \$136,000 from the 2026 budget).

The Ministry Enablement Contribution increase would add \$104,000 – while budgeting \$322,000 the total amount received would be based on giving to restricted funds.

The 2027 budget parameter does not include a draw from designated funds (\$150,000 decrease from the 2026 budget).

Net expense shows a \$165,000 reduction; this is a combination of an increase of rental income from the Brethren Service Center and the loss of rental income at the General Offices.

The line of salary and benefits shows a 2% COLA increase for staff and a reduction in cost for changing medical and ancillary insurance for staff.

Recommending a deficit budget of \$44,000

Discussion:

Members asked for clarification that 50% of income is coming from internal transfers.

Concern was shared for staff trying to cut the budgets further to make up the deficit and asked to remove responsibility by using net assets to cover the cost.

Kathy asked for additional questions related to the 2027 budget parameter.

**2027 Budget
Parameter for Core
Ministries
(Exhibit 3)**

The Executive Committee recommends that the Mission and Ministry Board approve the 2027 income budget parameter for Core Ministries:

2027 Budget Parameter

Income \$5,167,000

Expense \$5,211,000

Net Income/(Expense) \$ (\$44,000)

The Mission and Ministry Board by consensus approved the 2027 budget parameter for Core Ministries as recommended by the Executive Committee

Action Taken

The Mission and Ministry Board called the following members to a one-year term on the Board's Executive Committee:

**Call of Executive
Committee**

- Mikayla Alphonse
- Joel Gibbel
- Colby Patton

These members will serve on the Executive Committee along with Chair Kathy Mack and Chair-elect Josiah Ludwick, effective immediately.

David provided brief reasoning for the change. This change comes as a recommendation from the Executive Committee.

**Registered Agent
Resolution**

The Executive Committee by consensus recommends the adoption of the resolution for the Illinois Registered Agent.

The Mission and Ministry Board by consensus adopted the updated Illinois Registered Agent Resolution.

Action Taken

Rosanna presented the committee's report and provided background on its assignment from Annual Conference. She clarified that the committee is not addressing organizational structure, which falls under the Review and Evaluation Committee's mandate.

**Future of Annual
Conference/Breaking
Down Barriers
Committee Report**

The committee has met five times and will provide only an interim report for the Annual Conference body, with no recommendation at this time. It gathered and analyzed responses from the March 2026 Mission and Ministry Board meeting. The committee concluded that it could not recommend how Annual Conference should be conducted without first clarifying why it needs to meet. It therefore began by reviewing Annual Conference's mission and how the gathering will be used, summarized by the acronym USE: Unite, Strengthen, and Equip.

Kathy presented the proposed statement related to voting rights protections. The Executive Committee made edits. If approved this will become a statement of the Mission and Ministry Board.

Statement of Concern on Voting Rights Protections

Madalyn Metzger, Nate Hosler, and Founa Badet worked on the statement.

The Executive Committee by consensus recommends that the Mission and Ministry Board adopt the edited statement “Concern on Voting Rights Protections” as presented.

Discussion:

There were comments regarding the statement not going far enough.

Members felt that even though there are concerns about future voting rights issues it is appropriate to address the current decisions.

The Mission and Ministry Board by consensus adopted “Concern on Voting Rights Protections” as presented.

Action Taken

Kathy presented the statement. The Executive Committee made edits. If approved this will become a statement of the Mission and Ministry Board.

Statement - Our Faith Calls Us to Stand Beside those that Suffer

Founa Badet drafted this statement related to the Supreme Court’s decision on June 25, 2026, removing temporary protected status (TPS), and commented on how the statement is reflective of what is happening in the community right now.

Discussion:

A member asked whether the statements would be shared during Annual Conference. The response was yes; they would be included in the report to the Annual Conference body.

Which other countries were included in the Supreme Court’s decision, particularly since the statement focuses primarily on Haiti?

- Haitians and Syrians impacted by the June 25, 2026, decision.
- The Executive Committee added the number of affected groups to acknowledge those that had previously experienced the same loss of TPS.

The Executive Committee by consensus recommends that the Mission and Ministry Board adopt the edited statement “Our Faith Calls Us to Stand Beside those that Suffer” as presented.

The Mission and Ministry Board by consensus adopted “Our Faith Calls us to Stand Beside those who Suffer” as presented.

Action Taken

Sharon Norton introduced the following international guests and invited each to share a bit about the churches in their respective countries.

Introductions of International Guests

Daniel Mbaya, president, Ekkliseyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN), in Nigeria, and delegate to the Global Church of the Brethren Communion.

Markus Gamache, EYN Liaison Officer

Than Doan, Vietnam (involved with vision project)

Nhi Tran, Vietnam (involved with vision project)

Other international guests:

Ariel and Santa Elena Rosario, Dominican Republic

Athanasus Ungang, Church of the Brethren mission worker in South Sudan.

The guests joined the Mission and Ministry Board and Church of the Brethren Admin Team members for lunch.

Following lunch, Tina led the group in a gathering song.

Gathering Song

Founa Badet introduced the Revelation 7:9 awards, which recognizes church members and congregations for their contributions to a vision of intercultural ministries in their communities, within the denomination, and in the world at large.

**Revelation 7:9
recognition**

She read citations for the 2026 recipients: Wendy McFadden and Nancy Sollenberger Heishman.

Roy Winter presented the Emergency Disaster Fund allocation request which requires full Mission and Ministry Board approval. This is the fourth grant for Shepherd Society of Bethlehem Bible College for this project.

**EDF Allocation -
Nigeria
Crisis Response,
Project 2273-N**

A grant of \$20,000 is requested to support ongoing programming of the Shepherd Society of Bethlehem Bible College to provide food and medical assistance to vulnerable families in Gaza and the West Bank, respectively, with an emphasis on children who are often disproportionately affected by the current situation. This will partially support the request from the Shepherd Society for \$35,000. The \$20,000 request is based on balancing other grants for Gaza and needs elsewhere.

The Mission and Ministry Board by consensus approved the allocation of funding to Bethlehem Bible College Shepherd Society

Action Taken

Joanna Willoughby provided the Strategic Planning committee report and recommendation for the next midground vision.

**Strategic Planning
Committee
Recommendations**

Recommendation

The Strategic Planning Committee proposes the following revised Midground Vision:

Midground Vision

By July 2027, Board members, Board committees, and denominational staff will be able to make direct links between ongoing core ministry programs/initiatives and one or more key pillars of the Strategic Plan. Internal communications (committee reports, etc.) and external communications (Newsline articles) from the board will be infused with the language of the Strategic Plan.

The Mission and Ministry Board by consensus adopted the Midground Vision.

Action Taken

David reminded the Mission and Ministry Board of the business items related to the Board and to be attentive of their attendance.

**Annual Conference
business overview**

Joanna Willoughby provided the Brethren Faith in Action report.

**Brethren Faith in
Action Report**

The committee asked whether the annual allocation could be recalculated to make more funding available for grants. As of the meeting, only \$7,928.63 remained for the year. The committee will also need to notify the larger church that grant funds may be exhausted before year-end.

Discussion:

What happens if the grant request is higher than the amount left? They would have to wait or receive the lesser amount. This has only been an issue in the last two years.

Rosanna McFadden brought the Governance Monitor's report.

**Governance Monitor
report**

Appreciation for the leadership of Kathy Mack.

Appreciation for the Board in sharing their concern for staff finding cost savings without impeding on staff decisions or the governance responsibilities of the Board.

Suggestion to put a longer time on the agenda for introductions.

The following Mission and Ministry Board members were recognized for the completion of their terms of service at the conclusion of Annual Conference:

**Board member
recognition and
farewell**

- Barbara Daté
- Karen Shively Neff
- Joanna Wave Willoughby

The Mission and Ministry Board meeting adjourned around 2:15 p.m. (Eastern Time).

Adjournment