



Church of the Brethren

District Conference 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Greetings to you in the name our Lord, Jesus Christ! It is an honor and privilege to write to you on behalf of the employees, volunteers, and Mission and Ministry Board of the Church of the Brethren.

As we turned the calendar to 2020 and its promise of a compelling vision that would guide us into the future, we could not have foreseen the disruptions that our congregations, districts, retirement communities, and camps would encounter within just a few weeks as COVID-19 spread at an alarming rate.

As the initial effects of the pandemic on our life together became clear, Church of the Brethren staff quickly assessed needs and considered ways we might resource districts, congregations, and pastors during this time. Following that assessment, available financial resources were identified and decisions made to provide the following assistance:

COVID-19 Pandemic grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund

Grants up to \$5,000 from Emergency Disaster Funds to support congregations in providing humanitarian relief for vulnerable people in their congregations and communities.

Brethren Faith in Action grants

Grants up to \$5,000 to fund outreach ministry projects that serve communities, strengthen congregations, and expand the reign of God. This program was expanded to include Church of the Brethren camps through December 2020. Congregations and camps may apply for a waiver of part or all of the matching funds requirement through December 2020.

Going to the Garden grants

Micro-grants up to \$1,000 to create or supplement a community garden.

Ministry Assistance Fund

A special fund created to assist credentialed ministers and licensed ministers serving as pastors.

Additional information on each of these resources and related application forms can be found at <https://covid19.brethren.org/>.

Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.

Grants to Church of the Brethren retirement communities

Recognizing the increased costs incurred by retirement communities as they care for their residents during this time, the Mission and Ministry Board approved the distribution of \$500,000 from the Health Education and Research Fund among the 21 communities holding membership in the Fellowship of Brethren Homes.

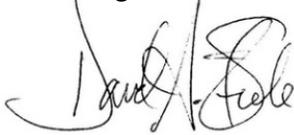
Emergency Disaster Fund grants for international COVID-19 response

Brethren Disaster Ministries staff are responding to the pandemic around the world with grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund. As of this writing, grants have funded responses in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Spain.

In my 2019 letter to your District Conference, I wrote, “I can still hear a voice of hope – hope that as we discern a compelling vision for the Church of the Brethren, we continue to be called together to acts of justice, kindness, and humility toward those within our own denomination and throughout the world.” Those words ring even more true as we respond to the challenges of 2020. We *are* called together to acts of justice, kindness, and humility at home and abroad and in ways we could not have imagined.

Whether your district is meeting in person, virtually, or has postponed its business for a later time, please know that the staff of the Church of the Brethren are holding you in prayer. We are deeply grateful for the many ways your district and each congregation have stepped outside your comfort zones and found new and creative ways to faithfully live out the Gospel.

With gratitude and hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Steele". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "S".

David Steele
General Secretary