

Plan to visit the BBT booth at Annual Conference in Boise, Idaho and attend any of the BBT-sponsored events, including —

Sunday, July 6: Denominational Live Report, "Journey of Hope." Featuring BBT's Community Development Investment Fund. (1:55 p.m.)

Sunday, July 6: BBT agency report. Video report featuring BBT's ministries. (7:00 p.m.)

Sunday, July 6: Insight Session. Nevin Dulabaum will convene this session presented by Mutual Aid Association, titled "Our Church is Liable for What??" (9:00 p.m.)

Monday, July 7: Fitness Challenge. A 5K race for runners and walkers of all ages. Contact Susan Brandenbusch at sbrandenbusch_bbt@brethren.org or 800-746-1505, or visit the BBT booth. (Challenge begins at 7 a.m.)



Monday, July 7: Insight Session. Don Fecher will present "Personal Financial Planning." (12:30 p.m.)

Tuesday, July 8: Insight Session. Jeff Garber will present "Health Care Reimbursement Accounts." (12:30 p.m.)

Wednesday, July 9: Insight Session. Don Fecher will present "ABC's of Financial Planning." (7:30 a.m.)

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Pension Plan

Brethren Pension Plan celebrates 60 years in 2003
Foresight of 19th-century Brethren benefits Plan members today

Sixty years ago, Annual Conference delegates had remarkable foresight when they established a retirement plan for the church's ministers and missionaries. As a result, today over 1,100 retired ministers and lay employees of the Church of the Brethren and its related agencies enjoy the benefit of a monthly annuity while over 2,500 active employees anticipate their own retirement with a sense of security.

The retirement needs of ministers were not always viewed as the responsibility of the church. With the free ministry tradition of the early church, ministers earned their income through farming or other trades and provided for their own retirement. As churches moved to salaried ministry, a movement began in

1896 to assist missionaries and ministers with no other sufficient means of retirement income. In 1904, Annual Conference established the Ministerial and Missionary Relief Fund.

For several decades this fund helped provide for ministers and missionaries at retirement. However, a study in the early 1940s showed that the fund was not adequate in meeting their needs. As a result, a contributory pension plan was presented to the 1942 Annual Conference, was studied for one year, and was approved at the 1943 Annual Conference. The Ministerial and Missionary Pension Plan was inaugurated on Sept. 1, 1943.

The Plan employed only one full-time staff member for the first 31 years, with other significant staff members dividing their time between the Plan and other denominational ministries.

In the beginning, members contributed four percent of their salaries, plus a 15-percent addition where free rent of a home was furnished. The congregation or other salary-paying organization also contributed four percent of the salary of the member.

Members of the General Mission
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The 1943 Annual Conference delegates, meeting in McPherson, Kan., approved the formation of a denominational pension plan, which is now celebrating 60 years of ministry.

60 years of ministry to church employees.
Inside: Brethren Pension Plan celebrates

Insurance Plans

New Medical Plan arrangement well received

Nearly half a year is completed with a new medical insurance arrangement in place, and insurance staff report that the Congregational Employee Plan (CEP), has been well received by Plan members.

The new arrangement was put in place for congregations, districts, and agencies that use the Brethren Medical Plan, effective Jan. 1, 2003. Bethany Theological Seminary was the first Church of the Brethren organization to participate, beginning July 1, 2002.

According to Jeff Garber, director of Insurance Plans, enrollment remained steady at 866 members from 2002 to 2003. Although some areas of the country did not have strong Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) networks, 83% of plan members not covered by Medicare have enrolled in a PPO

arrangement. CEP staff have been working to augment the current networks, and it is hoped that at least one new network will be available in 2004.

In CEP, the Church of the Brethren participates along with several other Anabaptist and Friends denominations in a plan that is self-funded. Each participating communion is responsible for the first \$10,000 in claims expenses for each of its participants. Claims above that amount are pooled among all the denominations and paid by a reinsurer.

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Address corrections and editorial suggestions: Send to *Benefit News*, Brethren Benefit Trust, 1505 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Call 800-746-1505, ext. 374. Or send e-mail to newsletters_bbt@brethren.org.

Brethren Benefit Trust's investments work for change

As a leader in socially responsible investing, Brethren Benefit Trust uses its status as a shareholder in more than 400 corporations to promote the concerns and values of the Church of the Brethren through social advocacy. Below is a sampling of shareholder initiatives under way in 2003 —

Procter & Gamble, a major coffee roaster and marketer

With 25 million coffee farmers in developing countries being forced to sell their beans for much less than their production costs, and with the shift from shade-grown coffee to sun-grown coffee resulting in deforestation, thus affecting critical plant and animal species, shareholders are asking Procter & Gamble to enter into dialog to find solutions to the crisis.

Caterpillar, Inc.'s Sub-Saharan African operations

With Caterpillar's presence in Africa through its dealerships and through its subsidiaries in Nigeria and South Africa, and with Sub-Saharan Africa being the region of the world most severely affected by AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, shareholders asked Caterpillar to provide data on the company's response to these or related illnesses.

Caterpillar requested that the resolution be withdrawn. BBT's Will Thomas responded by asking Caterpillar decision-makers to share information and enter into dialog. Because Caterpillar has been forthcoming with information and has begun the dialog, the resolution has been withdrawn. Nonetheless, Thomas addressed the issue with shareholders at Caterpillar's annual meeting in April.

YUM! Brands Inc. (Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, KFC, A&W All American, and Long John Silver's)

With BBT as lead filer, shareholders presented a resolution for YUM! to adopt a policy making all company-owned restaurants smoke free by Jan. 1, 2004, and to consider including the same policy in future franchise agreements.

In 2002, BBT's shareholder resolution received nearly 12-percent support in favor of banning smoking in YUM!'s corporately owned restaurants. Will Thomas returned to YUM! in May with a follow-up resolution, which was once again defeated. To date, YUM! has shown little willingness to discuss this matter.



Xcel Energy, a utility company

With scientific studies showing the negative health effects of air pollution from U.S. power plants, shareholders are calling for Xcel's board of directors to report on the economic risks associated with the company's emissions and the company's stance regarding efforts to reduce these emissions, and the economic benefits of committing to a substantial reduction of those emissions.

General information about shareholder advocacy is available from the Web site of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, www.iccr.org. — Karla Hignite

Brethren Pension Plan

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In 1980, the work of the Pension Board grew to include insurance coverage. Due to steady increase in volume and complexity of the Board's work, Annual Conference in 1986 authorized the formation of a separately elected board to be composed of members with expertise in areas such as benefits, insurance, accounting, law, and investments. In 1987 Annual Conference approved the organ-

Board – currently the General Board – also served as members of the Pension Board for the first 45 years.

ization of the Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT). The new Board met for the first time in 1988 and will observe its 15th anniversary on July 2 of this year.

Today the Pension Plan serves pastors and employees of congregations and districts, the Annual Conference agencies, retirement homes, and other eligible Brethren employers. Members contribute up to 7.5 percent of their salaries, while employers generally contribute up to 12 percent. Additional voluntary contributions are accepted as tax laws allow. The Pension Plan has three full-time employees, with further support given by additional BBT employees.

In 1986, investments were moved from book value to market value accounting, which gave members a choice of three funds in which to invest. With the recent addition of a Community Development Investment Fund, current members have five investment funds from which to choose.

Sixty years of history have shaped the Plan as it strives to anticipate and meet the needs of its members. As Brethren Benefit Trust celebrates the past, it continues to look to the future with the Board and staff hoping to share the foresight of their predecessors in providing for the future of church employees. — N.M.

Pension Plan members invest in communities

A number of Brethren Pension Plan members are choosing to invest a portion of their Pension account balances to impact the lives of others.

Over \$100,000 of Pension Plan monies have been invested in the Community Development Investment Fund (CDIF) since it was opened in March. Combined with the \$100,000 of BBT reserve monies previously invested, a total of \$212,000 has been put to work so far to help underwrite community development projects in areas of need. This fund is available to all Pension Plan members maintaining active accounts and to Brethren Foundation asset management clients.

Investments in the CDIF are through the Calvert Foundation, which in turn makes these funds available to development banks, credit unions, or social service organizations. These investments help to provide loans for the construction or rehabilitation of low-income housing; to assist low-income people in starting or expanding small businesses; and to support nonprofit organizations in aiding disadvantaged people or communities.

One community development bank that utilizes Calvert funds is ShoreBank, located in the South Shore neighborhood of Chicago. A national model in community development banking, ShoreBank provides commercial, consumer, and real estate loans; retail banking services for neighborhood residents; and environmental education. In one facet of ShoreBank's services, providing quality affordable housing, homes scheduled for demolition and half-vacant apartment buildings have been renovated, not only providing affordable housing but also improving neighborhoods, providing jobs, and increasing neighboring property values.

Community investing is one component of BBT's socially responsible investing (SRI) strategy, which works to uphold the values of the Church of the Brethren. While the expected three-percent rate of return on community investing may not be as high as that of traditional investing, the potential rate of return in terms of people and communities can be attractive to investors looking to effect change through their investments.

Questions related to the CDIF can be directed to Don Fecher (Pension) or Will Thomas (Foundation) at **800-746-1505**. — N.M.



Ayman Khalil (right), a ShoreBank borrower, explains to BBT's Will Thomas (left) and ShoreBank's Timothy Spilker how renovations to properties such as this 47-unit apartment building can positively impact deteriorating communities.

Nevin Dulabaum

Insurance Plans

Insurance plans to offer open enrollment

An open enrollment period for active employees wishing to enroll in the Brethren Insurance Plans will take place beginning in November, for coverage effective Jan. 1, 2004. Insurance products being offered for open enrollment are medical, dental, vision, and flexible spending accounts. Enrollment in life and long-term disability insurance may require proof of insurability.

Employers wishing to enroll in the medical plan need to obtain a premium rate quote. Those congregations and other employers **not** currently participating in the medical plan may request a quote beginning in September. Quote request forms are available by calling the insurance office at **800-746-1505** or by visiting the BBT Web site at www.brethrenbenefittrust.org. Click on "Insurance Services" then scroll down and click on "Request for Insurance Quote."

Congregations and other employers currently enrolled in the medical plan **do not** need to request a quote. Rates will be calculated and mailed in late October.

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"CEP staff have been very helpful to us as we have encountered various challenges with the start-up," said Garber. "And Plan members have shared stories of case managers taking personal interest in their cases out of love and caring."

Premium rates for CEP are developed on an employer-by-employer basis and take into account several factors, including age, gender, and geographic location. Each congregation is treated as a separate employer, making CEP more cost-competitive than charging one average rate throughout the denomination. Each congregation or other employer can select from a variety of benefit plan designs with varying costs.

Once census data for an employer is known, rates can be developed for each of the benefit plan designs. If more than one person is to be covered, the rates are averaged based on the ages of all employees of the congregation or other employer.

The plan offers an open enrollment period for congregations and other employers each fall. Any church or other agency that is eligible, but not participating in CEP, is encouraged to request a rate quote for comparison with their current plan. — N.M.