



Dear District Delegates,

Since 1974, OEP has developed programs serving youth and young adults, congregations, and community groups, as we walk in partnership with Church of the Brethren congregations, camps, districts, and Annual Conference.

**In 2024, we are celebrating our 50th anniversary as a ministry in the Church of the Brethren.** As we reflect, we consider **legacy and hope**, which empower us to resist war, make peace, and pursue justice with faith and courage. Lamentations 3:21-23 says “But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” We go with hope into the next fifty years, eager for the time when peace endures and justice prevails.

Our purpose as an agency of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference is to help the Church of the Brethren become a relevant, vital, “living” peace and justice church equipped to create vital relationships and initiatives on contemporary issues of violence and injustice. Let us disarm ourselves of violence and re-equip ourselves with the tools of active nonviolence and conflict reconciliation. Let us prepare ourselves to become vibrant bearers of God’s love, vital, relevant, and ready to respond to the needs of our times.

**GUN VIOLENCE.** In 2023, **On Earth Peace launched the Church of the Brethren Gun Violence Prevention Action Team**, a group of more than ten leaders from across the country, working to galvanize the Church of the Brethren to be faithful as an effective force for reducing gun violence wherever it occurs. The Action Team planned a major public vigil and witness at Cincinnati City Hall as part of the 2023 Annual Conference, and spent the fall connecting with concerned Brethren yearning to reduce gun violence in their own communities and our country. In 2024, the committee began inviting individuals to volunteer as **Congregational Ambassadors for Gun Violence Prevention**. For more information, email [COB-GVP@OnEarthPeace.org](mailto:COB-GVP@OnEarthPeace.org) or visit <https://www.OnEarthPeace.org/gvp-cob>.

**YOUTH GROUP SUPPORT.** OEP supports youth groups and their efforts by offering **up to \$500 in grant funding to support a youth-initiated project for peace and justice in their community**. We accompany youth through webinars, coaching, and accompaniment as they connect with their neighborhoods. In 2023-2024, OEP offered grants to youth in Ohio and Nigeria.

**AGAPE MAGAZINE: What is War, and How Do We Resist it?** At On Earth Peace, we have a dream of a world with no oppression, no violence, and no war. The new Agape magazine series will introduce children to how they can resist war, make peace, and pursue justice. We look forward to exploring these ideas together as we work toward our dream. The paragraphs below are drawn from the first issue. From the first issue:

*War is so big and happens in so many places. Simply put, war hurts people like you and me and separates families like yours and mine. It takes away important resources like having enough food, clean water, or a safe shelter. It also robs people of valuable opportunities like going to school, seeing/making friends, and playing outside. It can be hard to know how to respond and what can be done to stop war.*

*As long as there has been war, there have been people who resist war, who fight against the idea that violence is needed to solve conflicts, and who work to stop the things that lead to war. Saying no to war and actively working to stop the things that lead to war is courageous. People who refuse to participate in war are called conscientious objectors (COs). Many COs say no to war because of their faith, which reminds them that all people are created by God and that we need to care for our neighbors. This is true across different religious traditions. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. taught that "Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people." Read more here: <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/e9308caa69.html#page/1>*

**STANDING WITH PEOPLE OF COLOR.** In 2022, On Earth Peace was delegated by the Annual Conference to join with the Southern Ohio and Kentucky District to lead a denominational study/action process, "Standing with People of Color." OEP staff continues providing leadership and support for that committee, along with staff from the Church of the Brethren, Inc. Through 2023, that committee launched the "7 Prompts" for Crucial Christian Conversation which is being used at many levels throughout the denomination. In summer 2024, the committee will introduce a new volunteer role, **Church of the Brethren Racial Justice Advocates.** More information available by writing [SWPOC@OnEarthPeace.org](mailto:SWPOC@OnEarthPeace.org) and also online at [www.OnEarthPeace.org/swpoc](http://www.OnEarthPeace.org/swpoc)

### 2023 Highlights

- 40 web events hosted with 683 attendees.
- 97 people or families made three-year financial pledges to support On Earth Peace.
- 100+ people participated in the Gun Violence Prevention vigil in Cincinnati during the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference.
- 227 Brethren have been trained in Kingian Nonviolence as part of our 1000 Brethren Kingian Nonviolence Training Project goal.

Your individual and family financial support, and your congregation's financial support, make this work possible. We only exist today because of the vision and foresight of supporters and participants in the last fifty years, and we need your support to make the next fifty years possible. If you are moved by what you read on these pages, please join our faithful donors.

Sincerely,



Matt Gynn, Marie Benner-Rhoades, and Darlene Johnson, co-executive directors



If you would like to receive mailings directly from On Earth Peace, please use this code to sign up or visit [www.OnEarthPeace.org/join](http://www.OnEarthPeace.org/join).