



## Greetings from Brethren Benefit Trust!

Throughout 2008 the Church of the Brethren will be celebrating the denomination's 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary. While it is important to look back and honor the past and those Brethren who walked before us, it is arguably more important to turn our eyes forward to prepare for and anticipate the future. In November 2007, the BBT Board approved a new strategic plan and the following mission statement, vision statement, and list of core values, which are intended to guide the organization's work through the next few years of change –

**Mission Statement** – Brethren Benefit Trust, a financial and stewardship ministry of the Church of the Brethren, serves individuals and organizations affiliated with or sharing the values of the Church.

**Vision Statement** - Brethren Benefit Trust will be seen as the financial service partner of choice by those it exists to serve.

**Core Values** – Trustworthiness, Fiduciary Responsibility, Social Responsibility, High Business Standards, High Ethical Standards, Responsible Stewardship, Mutual Support, Compassionate Service, Partnering, and Competitive Services.

It is the intent of BBT's Board and staff to weave the preceding values throughout all aspects of our work as we serve individuals and organizations throughout the denomination so that all may bring honor and glory to God.

This past year has been a year of change for Brethren Benefit Trust - changes that will reshape and refocus BBT's ministries. These ministries include the Brethren Pension Plan, Brethren Insurance Services, Brethren Foundation, and Church of the Brethren Credit Union.

Some changes and highlights to especially note –

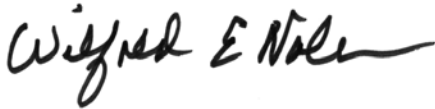
- ❖ A new annuity rate was approved for the Brethren Pension Plan to reflect long-time earnings by the Retirement Benefits Fund, which will keep the fund competitive while helping to safeguard it long term. A new director began leading the ministry on Jan. 1, 2008; his leadership is expected to strengthen the daily management of the Plan and to provide more personal financial education opportunities to Plan members.
- ❖ Annual Conference delegates in 2007 to voted terminate the Ministers' Group component of the Brethren Medical Plan, effective Jan. 1, 2008. This action was taken upon recommendation of a two-year Annual Conference study committee, which determined that the current Plan was no longer viable. However, delegates also agreed that BBT would continue offering Medicare Supplement Insurance to retirees or to those who are disabled, the other ancillary insurances of the Brethren Insurance Services to pastors and church staff members, and medical insurance to agencies (which had more than 75 percent participation by eligible staff members) while seeking out new ways to assist pastors and church employees in obtaining and maintaining health insurance. The department was also bolstered by the fact that the interim director became the permanent director, effective Jan. 1, 2008.

- ❖ The Brethren Foundation added a second full-time staff person devoted to customer service and daily operations. This addition should increase the responsiveness and effectiveness of the team dedicated to assisting Church of the Brethren congregations and organizations with asset management and to help individuals who want to leave at least part of their estates to one or more church of the Brethren entities through deferred gifts.
- ❖ The Church of the Brethren Credit Union continued to develop new services for its national membership and slowly grew to more than \$5,000,000 in assets in early 2008 with the help of highly competitive Certificate of Deposit rates.
- ❖ 2007 was a year where BBT's equity investments for both the Brethren Pension plan and the Brethren Foundation substantially beat their industry benchmarks, but where economic signals at the end of the year pointed to a possible recession beginning in 2008.
- ❖ In November 2007, the BBT Board approved funding for a major initiative that, when completed, will result in a new organizational Web site with online access to account information for Pension, Brethren Foundation, and Church of the Brethren Credit Union members and clients.

Amidst all the changes to BBT that were started in 2007 or were prepared to start in 2008, two stood out above all others for the impact they will have on BBT Board and staff. The first, which will alter the face of the organization, was the announcement by President Wil Nolen that he will retire in 2008. The second was the approval of a new strategic plan, which, as it is implemented, is expected to reshape and refocus BBT's ministries.

These numerous changes to BBT are substantial in scope as they will directly or indirectly impact the service the organization provides those BBT exists to serve for years to come.

As always, we welcome the input and counsel from our participants and the church at large as we work faithfully to uphold your trust.



Wilfred E. Nolen, President



Harry S. Rhodes, Board Chair