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BVS History

1. Proper Noun _____

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At the 1948 Church of the Brethren Annual _____Proper Noun_____ in Colorado Springs, Colorado, a group of young people offered an unorthodox proposal: to create a volunteer service program for young adults. Youth and young adults in the Church had been volunteering in various ways for decades, giving up a year of their lives to serve in denominational work camps and Civilian Public Service (an alternative to required military service for conscientious objectors). What they wanted was an organized, denominational program that would allow young people to volunteer for year-long service positions that would promote peace, prevent war, and be about justice in the world.

The young people didn't have an official space on the agenda for the Annual Conference, but they managed to persuade the moderator to let the delegates hear their proposal. Ted Chambers, a 22 year-old man from Grand Rapids, Michigan, was selected to make the speech from the floor. Ted was a short guy, so when it was his turn to speak, he carried an orange crate down the aisle, climbed up on top of it, and after the crowd finished giggling at the sight, made the proposal. No one spoke in opposition, and when the body voted they were unanimous in their support. Brethren Volunteer Service was born.

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