



Brethren in Christ U.S.

Formed to Follow

General Assembly 2024

..... **AGENDA**

Formed to Follow

General Assembly 2024

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Welcome

Brothers and sisters,

Welcome to Sharonville, Ohio for the 128th General Assembly (formerly General Conference) of the Brethren in Christ U.S. It is wonderful to be in Ohio as it has been 57 years since General Assembly was held here. I am deeply grateful to Bishop Lynn Thrush and a great team of others from the Great Lakes Conference who have worked so hard to prepare for our arrival.

It is my prayer that each of us will experience a renewing and refreshing presence of God so that we can return to our places of ministry prepared for continued service. Thank you for investing the time and effort to be with us.

General Assembly is the highest authority in the Church. This biannual gathering is an important time for us to:

- Share and celebrate the work of God through the BIC U.S.
- Dialogue about issues related to the ministry of the BIC U.S.
- Amend, repeal, or suspend any part of the MDG
- Appoint members of General Conference Board

As ought always to be the case, we want to engage with one another as family members who are committed to one another and bound to one another in love. While *Robert's Rules of Order* is a helpful guide for our business, the scriptural exhortations to love, care for, and honor one another always take precedence.

Please remain prayerful for our time together. Pray that God will be honored and glorified in all that occurs. Pray that we will be refreshed, renewed, and inspired through all that happens.

Your fellow servant,

Alan Robinson
National Director

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Business Overview

1. Welcome, Overview, and Instructions
2. Recognition of Representatives from Related Organizations and Honorary Members
3. Confirmation of General Assembly 2022 Minutes
4. Remembering Those Who Have Served in Leadership
5. BIC U.S. Reports
 - i. General Conference Board Report
 - ii. National Director's Report
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 - iv. Commission for BIC U.S. World Missions Report
 - v. Commission on Ministry and Doctrine Report
 - vi. BIC U.S. Financial Reports
 - vii. BIC Pension Fund - Defined Benefit Plan Report
 - viii. Brethren in Christ Foundation Report
 - ix. Awaken: BIC Network for Women in Ministry Report
 - x. Special Motion
 - xi. Leadership Council's Response to the Recommendations of the Women in Ministry Task Force
6. BIC U.S. Recommendations to Be Adopted
 - i. Approval of the Minutes of the 2022 General Assembly
 - ii. Proposed Amendment to Article V: The Holy Spirit and the Church in the Articles of Faith and Doctrine of BIC U.S.
 - iii. Proposed Amendment to Article II: God and Creation in the Articles of Faith and Doctrine of BIC U.S.
 - iv. Proposed new Article 7.8 in the Bylaws of BIC U.S.
 - v. Amending Article 11.3.1.3 in the Bylaws of BIC U.S.
 - vi. Appointment of General Conference Board Members
 - vii. Confirmation of Board Members for the Brethren in Christ Foundation
7. Receive Covenant, MOU, and Related Reports

**Please note that, following the printing of the agenda, three small mistakes were discovered. First, the report listed as "Special Motion" and the Leadership Council response to the recommendations of the Women in Ministry Task Force were listed as "recommendations" rather than "reports." Also, the relationship of BIC U.S. with the Brethren in Christ Historical Society was not listed as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This Business Overview corrects those errors.*

Business Overview

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2. Recognition of Representatives from Related Organizations and Honorary Members
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 - vii. Confirmation of Board Members for the Brethren in Christ Foundation
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All dollar amounts listed in this Agenda are assumed to be in U.S. dollars unless otherwise noted. Unless otherwise noted, all financial statements presented in this Agenda reflect audited results and are presented with years ending December 31.

Part 1:

Brethren in Christ U.S.

Reports

The ministry of the Brethren in Christ U.S. (BIC U.S.) is multifaceted. The most fundamental and critical facets of BIC U.S. are the ministries of local congregations across the United States and the ministries of missionaries and mission locations around the world. BIC U.S., sometimes called “the denomination,” exists as a support to congregations, pastors, and missionaries. We believe that life and ministry are better together than carried out in isolation. Together, we are a better reflection of the community of faith. Together, we find support and accountability. Together, we can accomplish more than any one of us can accomplish alone.

The following reports focus on the denominational activity of the BIC U.S. during 2022 and 2023. Each of these reports focuses on part or parts of our multifaceted oneness. They are presented separately for the purposes of clarity and focus, but they must be understood as a holistic unity that, together, provides a picture of our ministry.

A. General Conference Board Report

The General Conference Board (GCB) of the Brethren in Christ U.S. (BIC U.S.) consists of church members from all seven conferences of the Church. These individuals from various backgrounds are chosen and asked to serve the denomination due, in part, to their personal working disciplines and gifts as well as their experience within the BIC U.S. The GCB closely follows the directives of the Manual of Doctrine and Government (MDG) and meets together physically twice per year in February and September. We also exchange information and counsel with each other at other times throughout the year by means of Zoom meetings and e-mail communications.

Three committees, each comprised of at least 3-4 GCB members, have facilitated the work of the Board during the last biennium. These are the Finance Committee, chaired by Julie Stout, the Governance Committee, chaired by Pastor Adam Forry and the Executive Committee comprised of the four GCB officers. The first two committees have additional non-GCB members whose expertise helps GCB with analysis and recommendations. (We are especially indebted to our Director of Finance, Mitch Martin, as well as the other non-GCB members who provide us with information and recommendations as we do our work.) In addition, several task forces with three or four GCB members each, have been temporarily formed and utilized over the last two years in order to dialogue with similar task forces from other related BIC U.S. organizations regarding particular projects or organizational relationships. Information and recommendations from each of these committees or task forces is eventually shared with and discussed by all GCB members before any motions are made and voted on, and before specific recommendations are brought forward to General Assembly (GA) for further discussion and/or approval.

Over the last biennium, since GA met in Kansas in 2022, GCB has done the following work consistent with our MDG responsibilities:

1. Performed performance reviews of our National Director, Alan Robinson, and worked together to set goals for the immediate future, many of these involving Project 250. We appreciate and affirm all of the work Alan does on behalf of BIC U.S., and are pleased that he has accepted the invitation to serve another four-year term as National Director, ending at the 2028 General Assembly and the BIC U.S. 250th anniversary celebration. We have also done introspective performance reviews of each GCB member.
2. Overseen and approved property transactions in conjunction with the recommendations of bishops and the individual regional board of directors.
3. Served as members of the BIC Foundation and as the BIC Pension Fund Trustees during our bi-annual meetings.
4. Nominated two new GCB members for approval at the 2024 General Assembly. The search for, and evaluation of, potential new members for GCB is extensive,

tasked to the Governance Committee, and involves a large number of reviewed individuals, many of whom are brought to our attention by Leadership Council members.

5. Continued to consider and discuss, along with the Leadership Council, questions or motions raised at previous General Assemblies as well as continued working with the language and emphasis of the MDG so that we can bring additional possible recommendations for the General Assembly to process and vote on.
6. Continued to evaluate and discuss reports from our important BIC U.S. related organizations such as Messiah Lifeways, Messiah University, Navajo BIC Mission and Lifeline Ministries Women's Shelter Inc.

The GCB members who have served part or full terms over the last two years have been: Nicole Airth, Denise Conway, Rachel Diaz (secretary), Sherri Flohr, Adam Forry, Bonnie Hershberger, Abby Kean, Jonah Langenderfer, Jacob Lougheed, Brian Mbuu (vice chair), Kevin Noll, Jose Rodriguez, Naomi Smith, Julie Stout (treasurer) and myself. It has been both a blessing and honor to serve with this group of leaders from the BIC family.

Tom Law

Chair, General Conference Board

BIC@BICUS.ORG

B. National Director's Report

For almost 250 years the Brethren in Christ have earnestly sought to honor God and to live and serve so that God's kingdom would come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It is a blessing and honor for me to be part of this wonderful family and to serve in this role.

BIC U.S. is us, all of us, in over two hundred congregations across the country. Each year there are so many things that happen in our congregations that should be celebrated. Jesus stated that there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7). We celebrate the over 600 people who began or renewed a relationship with Jesus in 2023 across the congregations of BIC U.S. We celebrate the over six hundred people who declared their faith and commitment to Christ through believer's baptism. We celebrate the lives and homes that have been transformed by the grace of God and the power of the gospel. We celebrate that Jesus-followers lived out their faith among their neighbors and in their communities. We celebrate that millions of dollars were generously and sacrificially given to support the work of congregations and the Common Ministry that we all share together.

In addition to all that has been done by God's grace and help in our U.S. congregations, we celebrate the ministry of our world missions department. We celebrate the witness and work of missionaries who are willing to endure the sacrifices of leaving home, family, and familiar culture to serve in cross-cultural settings. We celebrate the partnership with many international church plants. We celebrate the invaluable help given to hundreds of families and children through the SPICE program. We celebrate the many special projects supported through the partnership handbook.

As we celebrate all that has been done across the U.S. and around the world, we give thanks to God for his grace in our lives and the calling we have to be his witnesses in this world. Thank you for your partnership in this great work.

General Assembly 2024

We are pleased that General Assembly 2024 will be held in the Great Lakes Conference at Sharonville Convention Center. General Assembly is a time for the Church family to come together for worship, equipping, conversation, and decision-making. It is a time when we share and celebrate what God has done and continues to do in and through the Church. General Assembly is the highest authority in the Church and it is therefore important that every pastor attends and that each congregation is represented by a full complement of delegates.

In addition to the reports that are ordinarily brought to each General Assembly, the following are additional business items are on the agenda for the 2024 Assembly:

1. A report on the motion from the floor approved at the 2022 General Assembly "to investigate how to broaden the exercise of authority in the Brethren in Christ Church."

2. A report outlining Leadership Council's response to the recommendations from the Task Force on Women in Ministry Leadership that was introduced at the 2022 General Assembly.
3. A vote on the second reading of the amendments to the Articles of Faith and Doctrine that were approved at the 2022 General Assembly.
4. A vote on proposed new articles in the Bylaws of BIC U.S.

To facilitate broad, grassroots, participation in the decision-making processes of the Church we provided detailed information on each of these business items to each regional Conference for their 2024 Annual Business Meeting. This enabled open conversation to occur in advance of the General Assembly.

Project 250

Project 250 (bicus.org/project-250/) is an eight-year (2020 – 2028) initiative leading to the 250th birthday celebration of the Brethren in Christ Church. Project 250 helps us to focus efforts and energies on important ministry and missions objectives. We are called to be a community of Christ-followers that is making disciples of Jesus. We are called to multiply missional congregations, movements, and leaders. We are called to increase global awareness and impact. We are called to reach our communities so that we reflect the demographic realities of those communities.

We are grateful for the way in which regions and many congregations have been prayerfully reflecting on how they can work on these objectives. We are grateful for the many congregations that participated in the demographic analysis of their community so that they can be better equipped and prepared to reach that community. We are grateful for the many congregations that have engaged in focused prayerful conversation on being and making disciples of Jesus.

One of the specific objectives of Project 250 was to provide an updated book on the ten core values of the Brethren in Christ. This book will be released at General Assembly. The title of the book is *Compelling Convictions* and contains contributions from over thirty authors representing multiple countries. This book will help us reflect on what it means to live out the core values in our world today.

Multiplication and/or church planting continues to be an emphasis. There continues to be new models of multiplication/church planting. Whatever the model or method, planting new congregations continues to be one of the most effective ways to reach new people with the good news of Jesus. If BIC U.S. is to have a healthy future, we will need to be constantly planting new congregations. Additional funds are available to regions for this work. These funds are from donor-designated donations given under the *Honor the Past, Build the Future* campaign.

Lilly Grant

We were delighted that our grant application to the Lilly Endowment under their *Thriving*

Congregations Initiative was successful. The Lilly Endowment wants to help congregations thrive and it established a number of goals and parameters for the initiative. They received over 800 applications and selected 105 for funding. The \$1.25 million that has been received will enable us to help and support up to seventy-five congregations. More information can be found at: bicus.org/thriving-congregations/

Human Sexuality

We are all aware that culture continues to redefine multiple aspects related to human sexuality and that our congregations continue to experience the challenge of ministry in a quickly changing cultural landscape. BIC U.S. recognizes that this is a very personal and painful conversation for many people. We also recognize that matters of human sexuality have become very difficult and divisive for society as a whole, and for other denominations. We remain committed to our biblical and theological understandings as presented in the Doctrine section of the *Manual of Doctrine and Government*.

Our desire is to love all people well and to help congregations as they wrestle with the realities of being salt and light in our world. We want to be like Jesus, full of grace and truth, and we admit this is not easy. In December 2023, we became aware of a recent statement from The Wesleyan Church on the topic of homosexuality. Leadership Council reviewed the statement and found that it very much represented our perspectives on this important topic. At its meeting in February 2024, Leadership Council endorsed the statement from the Wesleyan Church (www.wesleyan.org/the-wesleyan-church-and-homosexuality) as a helpful resource. We continue to look for other resources that may be helpful.

Common Ministry

Common Ministry is not money. It is the ministry that all of us do together—the ministry we have in common. While each member, each congregation, and each region follows the direction of God in different ways and ministries, Common Ministry is what we do together across the whole of BIC U.S. It includes global ministry (including sending and supporting missionaries, supporting international church planting and leadership training, SPICE, and other projects), regional ministry (including bishop leadership, congregational support, church planting, leadership development and support), and national ministry (including ministerial credentialing and training, finance, communications, human resources, and relationships with other agencies).

Common Ministry is supported by donations from congregations and individuals. The request and expectation is that each congregation will contribute 10% of its undesignated revenue to help support Common Ministry. We are grateful for the many congregations that have made a commitment to this important communal support of the ministry we do together. We continue to be concerned that some congregations do not support Common Ministry. It may be that the congregation is experiencing a challenging time with their own ministry and financial health. However, it appears that others may be reducing or withholding Common Ministry support for other reasons. We desire that all congregations make the decision to be in full partnership in the work that we do together through Common Ministry.

2028 and Beyond

We continue to prayerfully plan for the 250th birthday celebration of the Brethren in Christ Church that will occur in 2028. As we reflect on the almost 250 years of our existence, there is so much for which we are thankful. God has been graciously present and we are thankful for all that has been accomplished through the faithful and sacrificial ministry of all who have gone before.

One of the important conversations that we must prayerfully consider is how God might be leading and calling BIC U.S. for future global ministry. The Brethren in Christ in the U.S. must be attentive to what God is doing in the world and be open and available for God's direction.

In the words of the great missional hymn:

We bear the torch that flaming
Fell from the hands of those
Who gave their lives proclaiming
That Jesus died and rose
Ours is the same commission
The same glad message ours
Fired by the same ambition
To Thee we yield our powers

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Robinson

National Director, BIC U.S.

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C. Allegheny Conference

1. General Report

As I reflect on the past biennium, I am very grateful for the mighty ways in which God has acted in our midst. Our conference is in a season of stability, strength, and fruitfulness. Simultaneously, though, much of what God is doing requires flexibility and innovation.

By the numbers, the fruit looks like this: For the year 2021, the congregations of the Allegheny Conference reported a collective average worship attendance of 4,011, with a total of 177 conversions, and 114 baptisms. At the conclusion of 2022, they reported 4,258 worshipers, 230 conversions and 100 baptisms. In 2023, attendance averaged 4,342, with a total of 253 conversions, and 178 baptisms.

Bucking the common perception that the “entire church” demographic is aging and growing colder, reports suggest otherwise. Recently, congregations have made statements such as, “We’re praising God for a growing young adults ministry.” Others have said, “We’ve discerned a clear call to corporate prayer.” In many ways these things are clear for all to see, and I am very encouraged by the trend.

Another trend that is at times exciting, but simultaneously challenging and sometimes sad from a “big picture” vantage point, is the blending of faith communities. During these past few years, we have found ourselves forming a variety of synergistic alliances. In a couple instances, the mix is multiple congregations, with separate administrations, who meet and fellowship as one body. In other cases, there are distinct congregations, with different languages and cultures, who meet separately using the same facility, with a blended administration. When these configurations arise from grassroots church plants that spring from minority cultures, or to strengthen congregations that no longer have the strength to survive alone, it is encouraging. When the shifts include an element of fragmentation due to splits in the wider church, they are accompanied by an element of sadness.

Looking toward the future, our season of stability comes with an unavoidable challenge. Just as a young adult group cannot last long without a continual replenishment of young adults, an organization cannot last indefinitely without fresh leaders. Right now, many pastors have been in their role for decades. On the one hand, that’s great; we’re apparently bucking another reported trend that pastors do not last long in ministry. But, on the other hand, we’re entering a season of turnover.

By the numbers, the average age of an Allegheny Conference pastor is currently 58. Out of a total of 35 senior/solo pastors, 28 are over 50, and of those 28, 17 are 59 or older, and we have no pastors under 40. Therefore, the anticipated increased pace of transitions due to retirements is now upon us. Please pray with us, asking God to supply wisdom, discernment, and a replenishment of healthy and productive leaders for His bride.

For all that God has done; for all that He will do going forward; for who He is; we praise Him!

In Christ,

Rob Patterson

Bishop

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2. Financial and Statistical Report

Sites	2023	2022
Total number of sites	38	38
Under 25	6	6
25–50	6	8
51–75	8	6
76–100	4	5
101–150	7	5
151–200	3	2
201–300	1	3
301–500	2	2
501–750	1	1
751–1,000	-	-
1,001–2,000	-	-
Congregations started	-	-
Congregations closed	-	-
Congregations adopted	-	-
Pastors	2023	2022
Full-time lead pastors	29	28
Bivocational lead pastors	7	7
Profile	2023	2022
Membership	3,633	3,757
Attendance	4,342	4,258
Baptisms	178	100
Percentage of unrestricted congregational income given to Common Ministry (CM)	2023	2022
Percentage given to CM from congregations that reported	7.7%	9.5%
Estimated percentage given to CM from congregations that did not report*	-	-
Aggregate total	7.7%	9.5%

Compiled from 2023 and 2022 end-of-year reports. Discrepancies in figures from year to year may be due to lack of congregational reporting. Contact regional conference office if you have questions.

*For congregations that didn't report in a given year, income numbers from other years were used to calculate these percentages. Congregations that failed to complete the BIC U.S. end-of-year survey for the past three years were excluded.

D. Atlantic Conference

1. General Report

In these last two years, the pastors, congregations, and people of the Atlantic Conference focused on Following Jesus on Mission, Multiplying Missional Sites and Developing Leaders. This focus fits nicely within the five strategic priorities of Project 250 as we endeavor to see those priorities become reality among us. The experience of this last biennium has presented numerous joys and challenges.

In Romans 12, Paul shares the image of a body as representative of what we together are like in Jesus; though many parts, we are one together. A few verses later he encourages us to be devoted to one another in love. Then in verse 15, he writes, “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.” We experience this in relationships with one another and on an individual level. This feels like an appropriate description of serving across the conference as a whole through this last biennium. At any given time, multiple congregations are rejoicing and mourning. Within a particular day, I might talk to one pastor who is wondering where to put everyone who is coming, and the next pastor is wondering how to keep the lights on. This is not a reflection of faithfulness, but of the realities of the seasons we all experience, both personally and communally. We love each other deeply and express that by walking in joy and sorrow with one another and being the body of Jesus together. We do so for the glory of God and the increase of his Kingdom in each place where he has planted us. I endeavor to serve, lead, and facilitate in that effort through this role. It is a joy to walk alongside the people of this region as we follow Jesus together and focus on the communities and areas in which we are planted.

One way I resource local congregations for mission involves pastoral placements. The health and fit of local pastors is one of the greatest indicators of ongoing mission and strength for the church. In 2022, I facilitated lead pastor searches at three congregations and in 2023, I was involved in two more. Interim pastoral assignments at some of those congregations greatly increased their ability to be ready for the next lead pastor and what Jesus desired to do next in and through them. I also engaged with multiple church boards and pastors in areas of new opportunity or concerns, including both midterm and end of term evaluations.

Multiplication continues to be a point of emphasis for the conference. I am really excited about what the last two years have held in this strategic focus. While much work has been done by many individuals, we give God the credit for his wonderful increase in this way. In this biennium, five new congregational sites have been started. One of those five is predominantly a Spanish-language congregation. We have continued our partnership with FORGE AMERICA to be a church planting hub and have received coaching and additional resourcing for church planting. We have also hosted a Church Planting and Multiplication Retreat with leaders of FORGE as the main resource for that time.

While new life and ministry is exciting, it is always held in tension with death and the conclusion of ministry for some other congregations through various circumstances. Hold-

ing this ongoing tension is another example of rejoicing and mourning for me, personally, and many others. One congregation closed over this time period. While that was sad, there was a silver lining. The closing was due to the fact that the congregation combined with two other congregations in their area who shared the same mission and values. That new congregation was then adopted by the conference and is dually affiliated with the BIC and the Church of the Brethren.

We also have experienced five congregations dissociating from the BIC U.S., based on their sense of what following Jesus means in their context, specifically how they desired to believe and function regarding same sex, sexual relationships. Due to the clarity of our understanding of human sexuality, credentialed pastors in each case voluntarily turned in his or her credentials with the BIC U.S. as a part of that process, although that was not their desire at the time. While the process and circumstances were not the same in every case, the outcome was and each of the congregations has disassociated from the BIC U.S.

NextGen Ministries, a ministry of the conference, continues to develop leaders in multiple congregations across the conference primarily through internships. Over the past two years we had 20 internships across a number of congregations. Young adults are receiving practical experience in church settings, which helps to shape their path forward and discern what God may be asking of them in the future.

I serve with a great team and board in the Atlantic Conference. I am so grateful for the wonderful partnership with gifted and passionate Jesus followers in the office and across all levels of the conference structure. That is a gift and a joy; I am so grateful I do not need to do this alone. I enjoy the same dynamic at home in partnership with my spouse, Kerry, and our children. In it all, Kerry and I continue to lean on Jesus and each other in each new stage of life, believing we are where we are to be for now and we desire to be faithful to him in those places.

Bryan Hoke
Bishop

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2. Financial and Statistical Report

Sites	2023	2022
Total number of sites	42	41
Under 25	7	7
25–50	6	7
51–75	8	8
76–100	-	1
101–150	6	6
151–200	1	1
201–300	4	2
301–500	3	1
501–750	1	5
751–1,000	2	-
1,001–2,000	-	-
Congregations started	1	-
Congregations closed or disassociated	2	1
Congregations adopted	1	-
Pastors	2023	2022
Full-time lead pastors	30	32
Bivocational lead pastors	11	11
Profile	2023	2022
Membership	3,470	3,528
Attendance	6,333	5,671
Baptisms	142	133
Percentage of unrestricted congregational income given to Common Ministry (CM)	2023	2022
Percentage given to CM from congregations that reported	7.2%	8.3%
Estimated percentage given to CM from congregations that did not report*	13.4%	-
Aggregate total	7.5%	8.3%

Compiled from 2023 and 2022 end-of-year reports. Discrepancies in figures from year to year may be due to lack of congregational reporting. Contact regional conference office if you have questions.

*For congregations that didn't report in a given year, income numbers from other years were used to calculate these percentages. Congregations that failed to complete the BIC U.S. end-of-year survey for the past three years were excluded.

E. Great Lakes Conference

1. General Report

Here are identifying markers of our Brethren in Christ life together, illustrated as it works out in the life of the Great Lakes Conference. While we report and give thanks, the cry of our hearts is, “Even more, Lord Jesus, even more.”

- A. Brethren in Christ theology emerges out of serious and expansive reading of the scriptures. Such reading opens the way for every generation to whole-heartedly follow Jesus. The Great Lakes Conference gives special attention to Brethren in Christ theological teaching through the ministry of Theologian in Residence, Matthew Peterson, much of whose work is housed on The Seed (theseed.online).
- B. Brethren in Christ Core Values simultaneously identify the Brethren in Christ, and also embrace many persons who hear of the Brethren in Christ and find common cause in following Jesus carefully. It is a frequent testimony to hear in GLC common gatherings, “I love the BIC Core Values!”
- C. Brethren in Christ familial life together encompasses congregational particularities while experiencing the safety of ecclesial oversight and the stability of a long history together. Hope Community Church, under the leadership of Pastor Michael Thomas, Sheboygan, Wis., sings bracing songs, many from contemporary black artists and choirs, while the Millerfield congregation, Columbia, Ky., under the pastoral leadership of Troy Grider (who sometimes plays the piano), sings from a gospel songbook with songs that I remember from Roxbury Holiness Camp near Shippensburg, Pa. And as Pomeroy Chapel, in Smithville, Tenn., is going through a pastoral change, I experience the appreciation of both outgoing pastor and the church board that the Brethren in Christ Church provides for a bishop to shepherd such transitions.
- D. The Brethren in Christ are open to, and tell stories of, the fire of the reviving work of the Holy Spirit, while also doing hard thinking about, and working to establish structures and patterns that accommodate the righteousness of the kingdom of God. I see the former in frequent tears and raised hands to God in our gatherings, and I see the latter in the outworkings of Project 250 priorities and the commitment of a dozen GLC congregations to the Thriving Congregations training over the next three years, issuing forth in outward-focused community ministries established by each congregation.
- E. While the reach of empire claws at the doorstep of our TVs, phones, earbuds, and our calendars through empire’s pageantry of endless election cycles, the footprint of non-conformity causes Brethren in Christ to resist giving in to the mudslide (perhaps a California-specific image of mud flowing out of the hills after a heavy rain) of empire’s insistence that its agenda is ultimate. Housed in the online GLC ministry, www.theseed.online, “The New Heavens and Earth Society!” is

an interest group that provides storytelling, teaching, and research resources in gospel expansion efforts for current and future church expressions. It promotes the full-orbed gospel of Jesus Christ that comprises both being freed from our sins by Jesus' blood and also being made a kingdom and priests to serve God. (Revelation 1:5-6)

Every generation of pastoral leaders in the Brethren in Christ Church comes to their assignment with deep convictions to follow Jesus faithfully, and lead others to that same end. It is the privilege of the bishop, and fellow committed leaders to impress, in love and in intentional catechism, especially upon leaders, the above: Brethren in Christ theology, Core Values, familial life together, revival and kingdom stories, and nonconformity to empire.

Lynn Thrush
Bishop

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2. Financial and Statistical Report

Sites	2023	2022
Total number of sites	38	39
Under 25	15	17
25–50	14	13
51–75	5	4
76–100	2	3
101–150	1	1
151–200	-	-
201–300	-	-
301–500	-	-
501–750	-	-
751–1,000	-	-
1,001–2,000	-	-
Congregations started	1	-
Congregations closed	2	1
Congregations adopted	-	-
Pastors	2023	2022
Full-time lead pastors	16	21
Bivocational lead pastors	16	21
Profile	2023	2022
Membership	1,062	1,178
Attendance	1,305	1,357
Baptisms	71	57
Percentage of unrestricted congregational income given to Common Ministry (CM)	2023	2022
Percentage given to CM from congregations that reported	6.2%	6.1%
Estimated percentage given to CM from congregations that did not report*	6.2%	7.0%
Aggregate total	6.2%	7.0%

Compiled from 2023 and 2022 end-of-year reports. Discrepancies in figures from year to year may be due to lack of congregational reporting. Contact regional conference office if you have questions.

*For congregations that didn't report in a given year, income numbers from other years were used to calculate these percentages. Congregations that failed to complete the BIC U.S. end-of-year survey for the past three years were excluded.

F. Midwest Conference

1. General Report

(Luke 19:10 NIV) “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

(1 Timothy 1:15 NIV) “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.”

(John 16:33 NIV) “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

This past biennium has been a reminder of our Lord’s most unclaimed promise: “In this world you will have trouble.” The world we inhabit continues to become more dangerous, divided, and desperate. Even as the chaos grows, we must remember the absolute necessity of trusting in God for our salvation, peace, and assurance. Even though darkness seems to gain strength daily, we must remind ourselves as followers of Jesus that darkness only triumphs where light does not shine. And we have that light! Our assignment is to shine, to share the life changing gospel, to win souls, and to make disciples. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. This is our mission and calling!

The Midwest Region is made up of 20 churches, working to live out their faith in various ways in their differing communities. Each church is unique, but we share the same purpose: “Souls Saved, Lives Changed, Christ Glorified.” One important part of our Conference vision is “25 by 25” (a region of 25 churches by 2025). With God’s help, we believe this is doable because of our pattern of persistent growth in this century. In 1999, the Midwest was a conference of 10 churches with an average attendance of 550. Today the Midwest is home to 20 churches with an average attendance of almost 1,500.

This growth has been fueled by the belief that starting new churches is one of the best ways to bring new people into the Kingdom. So, we are planting and adopting as the opportunities arise. We are also encouraging existing churches to be creative in reaching out into their communities with the gospel message. Things must grow or they die.

In recent years, two areas of growth seem to have arisen as opportunities in the Midwest. The first is in the area of “Cowboy Churches.” This is a growing movement on the plains and taps into the Western heritage culture that marks a large portion of the region’s mindset. The Midwest Conference is now home to three of these churches, with another one planned for 2025. One way to describe these works would be: “Same Gospel, Different Package.”

A second growth point in the Midwest comes in the form of Hispanic ministry. Our current Spanish-speaking churches have grown considerably in this biennium, and three additional works look very promising for 2024-2025. One of the reasons for this is that the Core Values and doctrinal positions of the BIC are attractive to those who are looking for a church that values worship and evangelism, along with genuine acceptance and a spirit of family. God is growing His Kingdom in new ways and new places.

Of course, the Midwest Conference has also faced some challenges in the past biennium. New believers and new churches bring new issues. The enemy has many tools to divide us, to discourage us, and to sidetrack both pastors and congregants. But we are stronger together than apart, so the call to persevere, to save souls, and to grow the Kingdom overrides the discomfort that comes with the challenges. Joy comes to those who persevere and, with God's help, that is our intention. Jesus is the Answer!

Ron Howell

Bishop

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2. Financial and Statistical Report

Sites	2023	2022
Total number of sites	20	19
Under 25	6	7
25–50	7	4
51–75	1	1
76–100	2	2
101–150	2	2
151–200	1	-
201–300	-	1
301–500	1	1
501–750	-	-
751–1,000	-	-
1,001–2,000	-	-
Congregations started	-	-
Congregations closed	-	-
Congregations adopted	1	-
Pastors	2023	2022
Full-time lead pastors	5	5
Bivocational lead pastors	15	15
Profile	2023	2022
Membership	451	776
Attendance	1,423	1,358
Baptisms	101	77
Percentage of unrestricted congregational income given to Common Ministry (CM)	2023	2022
Percentage given to CM from congregations that reported	9.1%	10.1%
Estimated percentage given to CM from congregations that did not report*	4.5%	1.9%
Aggregate total	7.9%	9.1%

Compiled from 2023 and 2022 end-of-year reports. Discrepancies in figures from year to year may be due to lack of congregational reporting. Contact regional conference office if you have questions.

*For congregations that didn't report in a given year, income numbers from other years were used to calculate these percentages. Congregations that failed to complete the BIC U.S. end-of-year survey for the past three years were excluded.

G. Pacific Conference

1. General Report

Perry Engle finished 20 years of fruitful and faithful service as our bishop in 2022. Warren Hoffman responded graciously to the call to return to the Pacific to stand in as interim Bishop for one year. Bringing fresh eyes to the conference with the goal of paving the way for a new bishop was a significant help for me as I began my term here in July 2023.

With a changing of leadership, there has been change in structure as well. We have gathered our pastors into three cohorts. We are reinvesting around our core values and reconnecting pastors and congregations that had drifted during the COVID years. We are investing in core discipleship principles with our leaders with a goal of developing churches as communities that are prepared to address a new harvest of men and women into the Kingdom of God.

Happenings in the BIC Pacific

Camps: Our Hispanic churches enjoyed a family camp the past fall that saw more than 100 come together from three churches to consider friendship evangelism. The sessions were led by Kara and Chris Kacmar returning from Spain, which brought new perspective to church life. Our Mile High Ministries Alpine Camp hosted two BIC winter camps, and we had more than 50 come for salvation or rededication among the youth. This year we hope to reestablish a women's retreat. This past year summer camp attendance tripled. The Alpine camp has been gifted funds to build a welcome center that will create a ground-floor, welcome center for guests. Gabe Valencia, our Mile High Ministries Director was recognized by the Inland Empire Barnabas Group as leading the Ministry of the Year. Congratulations!

Upland Manor: Connect Senior Services is our parent corporation for the Manor, and the board has been hoping to expand their reach in senior housing for many years. In December, Connect completed the purchase of 1.4 acres of Pacific Christian Center in Upland including apartments there. This move has been a double blessing: Connect has a building to renovate and use, and PCC has been relieved of managing apartments that were not within the vision of a Community Center. Renovation of these "Summerland" apartments is underway now. This will upgrade some 17 three-bedroom suites into one-room senior apartments. Plans are in place to build a second phase of new construction on the site that will result in a total of 105 apartments in 2-3 years, more than doubling the 50 in service before this sale.

Pacific Community Center (PCC): This campus is a hub of worship and community outreach. In 2023 and 2024, the Easter Celebration saw more than 600 Easter baskets given to community kids. More than 450 backpacks were handed out to school-age kids at the Back-To-School Giveaway event. Along with Trunk-or-Treat, monthly food distribution, and hosting sports leagues and special events, the Center has become a valuable fountain of Christ's love to the area. With the sale of the Summerland apartments to Connect Senior Services, PCC has the freedom to explore renovations and development of the campus for the years to come.

Pacific Lifeline (PLL): PLL resides with us in the Pacific Conference, and we have been blessed to see the recent building of two new 3-D printed homes for homeless women and their families. This will expand their long-term work of redemption in the lives of many. God is at work!

Congregations

Gateway-Karis: Our historic church in Chino has had an aging campus on 11 acres of land at their current site for nearly 100 years. As development has happened, they have found themselves no longer on farmland, but in an industrial zone. The congregation was able to negotiate a land swap that will include a new building on a parcel about 1/3 mile south of the current location. The new campus will be inside a new housing development and across the street from a Chaffey College campus. Gateway-Karis anticipates ground-breaking for construction to occur in the Fall of 2024.

Querith: This is a daughter church of our El Monte Calvario congregation in Salem, Oregon. Querith has been praying for new facilities, and was able to secure space at the civic center. It has been a wonderful upgrade as they grow in numerical and financial strength.

Leadership Training and Development: In the past two years we have been able to multiply our pastoral training in a significant way. Several years ago, we established Growing Healthy Churches (GHC) as an “all-in” assessment and equipping ministry for leaders. Because of the distance, language barriers, and the needs of bi-vocational pastors, GHC effectively provided these things for less than 1/3 of our churches. Last year, with Project 250 in mind, we began BIC Perspectives to help with both credentialing and fellowship for bi-vocational pastors. This year we have initiated *Perspectivos*, a Spanish-language gathering for our seven churches. This cohort is being led by Pastora Rebeka Pedroza.

Ryan Showalter has taken on the role of Director of Training for the Pacific Conference. I am thankful for Ryan’s leadership in planning and executing our pastoral development this year.

Retirement: I want to mention Pastor Mike Shipman, who was scheduled to retire May of 2024. Mike and Lyn have led the New Community Church faithfully for 12 years. We all pray continued health and ongoing fruitful ministry for this couple in retirement.

Personal

“...only one wins the prize, run that you may obtain it.” 1 Corinthians 9:24

I became bishop this past year after stewarding my wife through a 20-year battle with a brain tumor. She went to be with the Lord with our family gathered around at our home celebrating Christmas 2021. The final three years with Janet were largely spent at home with her on hospice care. Looking back, I see that God used this to call me to look deeper, and to love his people. Even when we are broken, his image is invaluable. I enter into this ministry with a new compassion for God’s people.

But it was not only in my family that there was difficulty - the COVID years had slowed our work as in the churches and throughout society. Perseverance was the watchword. In the Conference, Bishop Perry Engle had faithfully led as Bishop for 20 years. And if years were miles, this run had the feel of a marathon. But in quick succession Perry moved over and the baton was given to Warren Hoffman for a short sprint; he placed it in my hand for the next leg of the race. It suddenly felt like this marathon had given way to a relay, and the pace was quick.

This mirrors the changes in our times. “Quick” is the only way to describe the ongoing shifts in our culture, politics, and demographics. God is using this tumult to open the hearts of many to a life under the Lordship of Jesus, because the fruit of godless living is being revealed; it is bankrupt, the desolation everything dear. While corrupting our institutions and our families, destruction is now clawing into our sacred identities as men and women.

From a Kingdom perspective, all of this is the opening we must exploit. Disinterested people are seeking again. They will listen to a gospel that offers deliverance from bondage. These seekers will pay the price of death to self in order to find freedom from shame and to know the love of him who gave all to redeem us. It is not time to woo recalcitrant sinners by diluting the gospel. It is time to love the broken and to apply the power of the Holy Spirit to release the demonized captives, to break the power of shame, and to restore the broken. Only Jesus offers the needed power. Only we can offer Jesus to the people of our time. We are all privileged to be running the race at this time.

Bill Donner
Bishop

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2. Financial and Statistical Report

Sites	2023	2022
Total number of sites	19	19
Under 25	7	8
25–50	5	3
51–75	2	3
76–100	-	1
101–150	1	2
151–200	3	1
201–300	-	1
301–500	-	-
501–750	-	-
751–1,000	-	-
1,001–2,000	-	-
Congregations started	-	-
Congregations closed	1	-
Congregations adopted	-	-
Pastors	2023	2022
Full-time lead pastors	9	9
Bivocational lead pastors	8	8
Profile	2023	2022
Membership	743	760
Attendance	1,038	1,126
Baptisms	41	41
Percentage of unrestricted congregational income given to Common Ministry (CM)	2023	2022
Percentage given to CM from congregations that reported	5.6%	6.6%
Estimated percentage given to CM from congregations that did not report*	4.8%	7.8%
Aggregate total	5.6%	6.7%

Compiled from 2023 and 2022 end-of-year reports. Discrepancies in figures from year to year may be due to lack of congregational reporting. Contact regional conference office if you have questions.

*For congregations that didn't report in a given year, income numbers from other years were used to calculate these percentages. Congregations that failed to complete the BIC U.S. end-of-year survey for the past three years were excluded.

H. Southeast Conference

1. General Report

As I begin this report, the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:22 come to mind: “*And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short.*” Therefore, it feels like I was writing the report for the previous General Assembly just a short while ago.

The Church of Jesus Christ continues to face significant challenges amidst these changing times. It’s wonderful to see that He keeps us safe and calms every storm that arises to frighten and destroy us.

One major challenge our region currently faces is with insurance companies. Most insurers have left Florida for various reasons, leaving us with only two companies, essentially creating a monopoly. This has caused insurance premiums for our congregations with properties to rise by over \$30,000 in less than a year, making it nearly impossible to afford. We continue to pray for miracles and seek solutions. Additionally, there is increasing opposition from the government in Florida regarding permits for rentals or church constructions. Unfortunately, this has hindered our vision of turning the Rescue Retreat Center into a refuge for immigrant children.

However, challenges don’t paralyze us; they drive us to find other ways to serve God in our communities. We’re witnessing the fruit of working with immigrant families who arrive in this country with nothing but a dream. As we provide for their physical needs, we also minister to their souls, leading many to Christ. Some initiatives include food pantries for the community, ballet lessons for young girls, providing refugees with haircuts or clothing until they can find jobs and become self-sustaining. We’re grateful for the outcomes we see from these efforts, even if we don’t always witness immediate results, knowing that every seed planted matters.

Another challenge we face is a lack of interest among younger generations in stepping into pastoral ministry or paying the price associated with being a church planter. Nonetheless, we continue to seek strategies to address this issue, praying for God to guide those who feel called to lead in the Southeast region.

We remain committed to the goals set for us in Project 250, with our 48 congregations in the region. At local and regional levels, during our gatherings, retreats, and conferences, we aim for our churches to strengthen their identity as followers of Christ, create lifelong disciples, expand missional congregations and leaders, boost global awareness and impact, and reflect our community demographics.

Over the past two years, I’ve conducted three pastoral searches, including one in our founding congregation where the exiting pastor had served for over twenty years. Despite initial concerns about a tough transition, God has surpassed our expectations, and the church is growing and thriving. It’s a blessing to witness congregations thanking and honoring the exiting pastor while embracing and accepting the changes.

Globally, new opportunities are emerging, paving the way for the establishment of thriving congregations. We've gathered with our leaders in Colombia, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica, as well as with IBICA, where leaders from South and Central America as well as the Caribbean convened in San Jose, Costa Rica. Our most recent gathering took place in Colombia, where a core course was conducted, and we were joined by local leaders as well as leaders from Spain and Panama. It's gratifying to be part of this mosaic we call the BIC family.

As we reflect on the last two years, we're reminded of the guiding principle found in 1 Timothy 4:16: *"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."* May this verse challenge us all to be people of the Book more and more each day.

Aner Morejon
Bishop

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2. Financial and Statistical Report

Sites	2023	2022
Total number of sites	48	49
Under 25	21	21
25–50	11	13
51–75	3	3
76–100	5	6
101–150	4	2
151–200	-	-
201–300	2	1
301–500	1	2
501–750	1	1
751–1,000	-	-
1,001–2,000	-	-
Congregations started	1	1
Congregations closed	2	1
Congregations adopted	-	-
Pastors	2023	2022
Full-time lead pastors	29	29
Bivocational lead pastors	19	19
Profile	2023	2022
Membership	1,721	1,642
Attendance	3,215	3,197
Baptisms	75	65
Percentage of unrestricted congregational income given to Common Ministry (CM)	2023	2022
Percentage given to CM from congregations that reported	2.9%	1.9%
Estimated percentage given to CM from congregations that did not report*	2.5%	2.4%
Aggregate total	2.6%	2.2%

Compiled from 2023 and 2022 end-of-year reports. Discrepancies in figures from year to year may be due to lack of congregational reporting. Contact regional conference office if you have questions.

*For congregations that didn't report in a given year, income numbers from other years were used to calculate these percentages. Congregations that failed to complete the BIC U.S. end-of-year survey for the past three years were excluded.

I. Susquehanna Conference

1. General Report

Over the past two years, the Susquehanna Conference has been experiencing a season of healing and growth. Our present Conference Leadership Team has been serving together for almost four years, God is providing new pastors and leaders of increasing diversity, and we have been recommitting to the principles which have defined us as Brethren in Christ in the past and which will be central to our future vitality.

We are committed to the Great Commission.

As a conference, we recognize that our mission is to carry out the call of Jesus within our immediate sphere of influence and by utilizing our resources to reach beyond conference borders with the Good News. We are not content to simply rebound from COVID losses, but we aim to constantly pursue new growth as faithful disciples of Jesus. Across our conference, we have celebrated many new baptisms and have rejoiced over the testimonies of changed lives these baptisms represent. Many of our congregations are developing and implementing intentional discipleship strategies which have been transforming both leadership and laity alike, and we are actively pursuing new disciples, new programs, and new sites. This spring, we launched a new multiplication effort to establish eight new congregational sites by 2028, praying specifically for a congregational presence in Baltimore, State College, Selinsgrove, and Corning.

We are committed to pursuing health and wholeness.

We, as individual pastors and leaders as well as local congregations, are committed to representing Jesus well through lives defined by vulnerability, accountability, and fruitfulness. Our conference has celebrated victories in this area, and we have lamented failures. This past year, we grieved a long process of church closure in of one of our oldest Susquehanna congregations. At the same time, we have celebrated significant revitalization in two other Susquehanna congregations. In agreement with Project 250, Priority 3, we recognize that healthy pastors and leaders are most likely to produce healthy new disciples, programs, and sites. To this end, our conference has recommitted to pursuing community and collaboration, has initiated a conference-wide sabbatical recommendation, and has been providing grants supporting pastoral growth and renewal.

We are committed to following the Holy Spirit's leading.

We serve a creative God who is actively at work in and around us, and we are committed to prayerfully watching and listening for the Holy Spirit leading us forward in new, innovative ways. In the past two years, this has led to cross-conference partnerships, five new lead pastors, three of our churches hosting Nepalese worship services, and increasing community engagement for many of our local congregations. We are also finding that the Holy Spirit is increasing opportunities to shine the light of Christ in our communities through the gospel message of humility, hope, and peace.

In the midst of the good work God is doing in the Susquehanna Conference, our family has been launching two high school graduates and working to balance two spouses in full-time ministry roles. Our prayer is that we will continue to experience God's personal renewal and sustaining grace even as we lead and serve our family, our church, and our conference. To Him be the glory forever and ever.

Heather Beaty
Bishop

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2. Financial and Statistical Report

Sites	2023	2022
Total number of sites	33	32
Under 25	3	6
25–50	11	8
51–75	4	4
76–100	2	2
101–150	3	3
151–200	1	2
201–300	3	3
301–500	2	1
501–750	-	-
751–1,000	1	1
1,001–2,000	-	-
Congregations started	-	1
Congregations closed	-	-
Congregations adopted	-	-
Pastors	2023	2022
Full-time lead pastors	20	20
Bivocational lead pastors	10	10
Profile	2023	2022
Membership	2,587	2,700
Attendance	3,887	3,709
Baptisms	112	124
Percentage of unrestricted congregational income given to Common Ministry (CM)	2023	2022
Percentage given to CM from congregations that reported	9.3%	11.6%
Estimated percentage given to CM from congregations that did not report*	-	5.0%
Aggregate total	9.3%	11.5%

Compiled from 2023 and 2022 end-of-year reports. Discrepancies in figures from year to year may be due to lack of congregational reporting. Contact regional conference office if you have questions.

*For congregations that didn't report in a given year, income numbers from other years were used to calculate these percentages. Congregations that failed to complete the BIC U.S. end-of-year survey for the past three years were excluded.

J. Commission for BIC U.S. World Missions

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:22-23

Jesus prayed that we would be united in his Mission. The Mission of God is not a competition, rather it is an invitation to be involved with other believers around the world who are committed to proclaiming the gospel in word and deed. We are called to be a transformed people who follow in the footsteps of Christ and who help others to do the same. Our unity in the Church as we serve together points people to Jesus. **Prayer** is the undergirding of the work that we do together in missions. It connects us to the will of God in a way that compels us forward even in the midst of risk taking and sacrifice for the cause of Christ around the world.

During the past two years since we have met as a body, God has been moving in exciting ways. Let me highlight just a few:

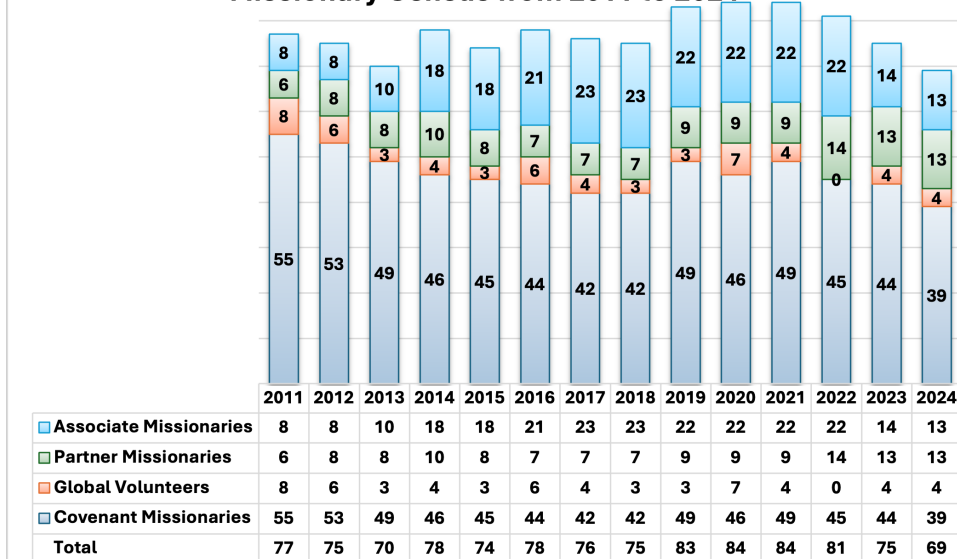
- We have a growing number of missionaries sent from congregations in our Southeast Conference.
- We are building new partnerships both domestically and internationally – from Dearborn, Michigan, to Europe and the Middle East, God is opening relational doors for collaboration and increased impact.
- In nations with established BIC churches, the opportunities for partnership in equipping and sending the next wave of missionaries continues to grow. From India to Zimbabwe, it is exciting to partner as the Church to send people on mission assignments.

Pray earnestly to the Lord of the Harvest – trends in deployments

- In our January 2024 Commission on World Missions meeting, we noted that our number of long-term missionaries had decreased significantly. We were aware of this trend in the broader North American mission sending community but had not experienced this decline until the last biennium. The decrease was in part due to a significant number of career missionaries ending service. We asked God for 10 new applicants, and in less than 6 months we have an exciting group of 11 new applicants participating in the Missionary Development Community to explore a long-term call to global missions. We ask that you continue to pray with us, in agreement with Matthew 9:38, that the Lord of the Harvest would continue to send out laborers. We celebrate qualified new candidates preparing for deployment! By General Assembly in 2026, we hope to see an increase in our long-term missionary deployments.

Participation in short-term missions experiences surged this biennium. We are presently helping coordinate three short-term trips to Bogota, Colombia; three to Dearborn,

Missionary Census from 2011 to 2024



Michigan; one to Greece; and one to Southeast Asia. These short-term experiences are all designed to be guided by a code of best practice in short-term missions. This code is known as the “Standards of Excellence” (SOE); you can find out more about these standards at this link: missionexcellence.global/7-standards/

Global Partnership

- The Wednesday Zoom prayer gathering continues to be impactful as bishops, global workers, international leaders, and committed intercessors pray together.
- In 2023, we partnered with the BIC church in India to host a Leadership Summit, inviting representatives from every Asian country where there are BIC churches. Some of the leaders in attendance had never met before, but the Spirit was evident as we listened to the work God was doing in the respective nations, prayed together, and learned about best practices in stewarding the financial resources of the Church. By General Assembly 2026, we plan to facilitate a similar gathering in Southern Africa.
- In March of this year, the dream of bringing all the established BIC Colombia church leaders together for the first time became a reality. Leaders from 5 different areas of Colombia gathered in Bogotá for a Core Course; along with three Spanish pastors and one Panamanian pastor, these leaders studied together and learned about each other’s ministries.
- We continue to actively support in prayer – and through finances –many leadership training initiatives of the global BIC church. From experienced pastors traveling into rural areas to lead seminars for younger pastors in Honduras, to



theological colleges in Zimbabwe and Zambia, to an accredited online seminary in Nepal, it is exciting to see the various methods the BIC church is using around the world to equip the next generation of leaders. We are actively working to identify the various methods used in different contexts. We envision providing a simple directory of these ideas so leaders around the world can be aware of and learn from the ideas of others.

- During 2023, we released \$122,701 from the Global Compassion Fund. Funds were sent to more than ten countries to assist with urgent needs like infrastructure damage due to flooding and cyclones, food insecurity, humanitarian needs in areas of conflict, and equipment needed for basic patient care in a hospital. We rejoice that the church has been generous in their giving to the Global Compassion Fund so that we can respond quickly when a crisis arises.
- The Partnership Handbook offers missionaries, congregations, and national churches practical opportunities for the global Church to partner together. In part due to the support of BIC congregations across the U.S., World Missions can carry all the administrative costs for these projects so the resources getting to the field are maximized.
- The Sponsorship Program for International Childrens Education (SPICE) continues to have a significant impact in India and Nepal. In this last biennium, India became the most populous nation in the world. India is also home to the most unreached people groups. Equipping more than 800 children per year in India and Nepal with biblical teaching in a healthy environment continues to be a strategic and fruitful part of our work.

In keeping with Project 250 goals of Increasing Global Awareness and Impact and Getting to Know the Global BIC Church, we are working on an short, online course on World Missions. The course will provide an overview of the biblical basis for Missions, the history of BIC Missions, our current vision, and stories of active engagement in global missions. With an investment of 2-3 hours of time, the course will help participants new to the Brethren in Christ learn about our rich history, the strength of the global BIC church, and the mission and values that guide the work that we do together.

Our vision remains compelling:

- **A church for every people**
- **The gospel to every person**
- **A mission from every church**
- **Jesus worshipped in the nations**

We believe that Jesus was clear in his command that we should make disciples of all nations. This includes people groups that are hard to reach. Throughout history a growing church is a church made up of disciples willing to take risks to build the Kingdom. To make disciples today we need to be willing to make sacrifices; this is increasingly true in our own neighborhoods as well as around the world.

We have placed an emphasis on reaching the unreached. By stating this priority we are not implying that unreached people groups are more important than the lost in “reached” people groups. We are prioritizing mission efforts to lesser reached peoples because over 40% of the world’s population has minimal access to the gospel message.

Missions is not a competition. Jesus’ prayer in John 17 identifies unity as the Christian trademark. Let us - the Brethren in Christ - be unified in our mission of making disciples.

As a pastor or delegate, we want to support your congregation’s pursuit of the local and global mission God has given you. I believe as we walk in obedience to the global call to make disciples, we will experience the blessing of that obedience in congregations across the U.S.

Jonathan Lloyd
Director, BIC U.S. World Missions

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Personnel Assignments

Personnel assigned to service under the Commission for World Missions since 2022 General Assembly. Dates indicate beginning of assignment or start of new term.

Category of Service	Name	Country/Region	Date
Covenant missionary	Josué and Mercy Abreu	Spain	2024
	Estol and Kristen Bathurst	Malawi	2022
	*Tony and Veronica Beers	Zambia	2022
	Nathan and Cathy Bert	Honduras/Nicaragua	2023
	*J. and K.B.	Sensitive Environment	2021
	B. and M. Bundy	Spain	2024
	Mike and Lori Cassel	Guatemala	2022
	Kris G.	Thailand	2024
	D. and M.G.	Middle East	2024
	C.F.	Middle East	2024
	*Orville Hade	Southern Africa	2022
	*Chris and Kara K.	Spain	2021
	Jenna Martin	Colombia	2023
	Yosuel and Jacqueline Medina	Ecuador	2024
	David and Patricia Miller	Québec	2020
	*Doug and Barb Miller	Malawi	2020
	*Glenn and Glenda Moyer	Colombia	2021
	Brian and Rochelle Myers	Four Corners	2024
	Jason and Rebekah Oberholser	Four Corners	2023
	P. and H.R.	United States	2024
	Yolanda Rice	Colombia	2022
	Mark and Maggie Roth	Zambia	2023
	*L.S.	Middle East	2018
	Jay and Judy Smith	International	2024
	*Mim Stern	United States	2022
	Ben and Eunice Stoner	Four Corners	2023
	Donald and Karen Vundhla	Southern Africa	2024
	Silk W.	Thailand	2022
Partner missionary	M. & A.B.	Middle East	2021
	Bevin & Judy G.	S.E. Asia	2022
	A.H.	Sensitive environment	2022
	Ben and Lindsey Newton	United Kingdom	2022
	*Sophie Thiesen	United States	2021
	T.S.	Sensitive environment	2020
	T. and A.W.	Pakistan	2024
Global volunteer	Chad and Michelle Wenger	United States	2022
	Kevin and Barb Kelley	Greece	2024
	Steve and Phyllis Smith	Japan	2024

*Service already completed

The following missionaries are employed by other sending organizations but maintain an associate relationship with BIC U.S. World Missions.

Category of Service	Name	Country/Region	Date
Associate missionary	Chris and Marlys Book	Zambia	2022
	Denise Conway	Four Corners	2023
	*Dan and Karen D.	India	2021
	Jonatán and Jennifer Cordova	Mexico	2022
	*Weston and Jess Martin	United States	2021
	Paul and Anita Pawelski	Ecuador	2022
	Jonathan and Laurie Raber	Peru	2022
	Francis and Audrey Sims	Rwanda	2023
	*Eric and Corrie Thuma	Zambia	2022
	M. and J.W.	West Africa	2024

*Service already completed

K. Commission on Ministry and Doctrine

The Commission on Ministry and Doctrine (CMD) exists to administer the credentialing process, to facilitate the equipping of our ministers, and to give attention to the doctrinal integrity of the church. This is so that we have a continually renewed cadre of men and women who are able to lead our congregations and ministries in the biblical and balanced understanding of Christian faith for which the Brethren in Christ have long been known.

In order to achieve these objectives, the CMD utilizes a number of strategies and tools. These include a “This I Believe” form, a Doctrinal Questionnaire (DQ), a DQ interview, and four Core Courses that equip individuals with Brethren in Christ understandings in specific theological and practical theology matters. The Directed Study Program meets the requirements for ordination for those who do not have the necessary theological education. Ministry training also provides courses and seminars that facilitate lifelong BIC learning and development for our pastors and leaders.

Credentialing

The Commission reviewed and revised the process by which an individual can explore ministerial credentialing and service with Brethren in Christ U.S. Currently, each bishop has the responsibility to meet with potential ministry candidates at the beginning of the process. The bishop’s recommendation is necessary for the individual to receive a three-year provisional license and to proceed in the credentialing process. The Commission met with members of Leadership Council to review how well the process is working and what further revisions would be helpful.

During this biennium the Commission issued 55 provisional licenses and reviewed 34 doctrinal questionnaires. The Commission conducted 36 DQ interviews and approved 35 of these candidates for six-year licenses. In consultation with the Leadership Council, the Commission authorized ten ordinations.

In addition to the issuing of licenses, the Commission is responsible for the review of ministerial credentials. Currently a minister’s credentials are reviewed every six years. At the time of renewal, the credentialed person must submit completed documents that confirm his/her ongoing commitment to Brethren in Christ U.S. and his/her understanding of our Articles of Faith and Doctrine. In addition, the individual must list his/her completion of lifelong Brethren in Christ learning. Occasionally, in the review of these documents, the Commission finds that further conversation with an individual is required before a final decision can be made on the renewal (or not) of a minister’s credentials.

Ministry Training

The CMD makes theological education opportunities available to both credentialed and lay persons in the United States.

In 2022 and 2023 the total enrollment for the Core Courses was 117 and 146 respectively. In addition to the courses being offered in English, we also offered them in Spanish.

The 2022 Impact Seminar was entitled “The Neighbor Next Door: Project 250 in Practice” based on Priority #5 Growing to Reflect the Demographic Realities of our Communities. This seminar was held in each regional conference with 204 individuals attending. For 2023 the seminar focus was discipleship based on Project 250 Priority #2 Making Lifelong Disciples.

The Directed Study Program (DSP) was launched in fall 2004. The enrollment was 119 in 2022 calendar year with 90 for 2023. To date there have been 90 graduates and more than fifty percent of whom have been ordained or are serving in some staff capacity. The graduates this biennium are Naomi Smith, Melissa Beal, Jeremy Spear, Kitty Rife. and Robert Brown.

We are grateful for the volunteer work of members of the Commission – Alan Claassen Thrush, Rob Douglass, Lynda Gephart, Lawton Jacobs, Maria Perdomo, Jeff Piepho, and Zach Spidel. These CMD members along with approved DQ readers Tim Fisher, Joshua Nolt, Jeff Williams, Chris Freet, Ryan Cagno, Ray Hock, Bob Beaty, John Yeatts, Esther Spurrier, Greg Starr, and Curtis Book have been diligent in reading doctrinal questionnaires. Additionally, the CMD members tackle theological issues with diligence and discernment, as well as honoring deceased ministers in the memorial service at General Assembly and facilitating the equipping of our ministers.

The Commission has helped equip 15 seminarians and pastors with financial assistance so that they could continue their education.

In all of its work, the Commission on Ministry and Doctrine desires to credential and equip men and women of God who faithfully live and passionately proclaim the gospel call to know, love, and follow Jesus. Knowing that the biblical convictions the Brethren in Christ espouse will fade if not continually reinforced and retold, the CMD desires to train pastors and teachers who are able and ready to pass on the biblical and balanced understanding of the Christian faith described in our *Articles of Faith and Doctrine*.

Ordained during the 2022-2024 Biennium:

Roberto Alegre, Jr.	Ryan Cagno	Vicki Podjasek
Melissa Beal	Jason Dietrich	Jeremy Spear
Maureen Brown	Christina Embree	Jill Thompson
A.B.		

Licensed during the 2022–2024 biennium:

Brian Barnette	C.F.	Patty Patterson
Jason Barthlow	Angel Gendriz	Manuel Pichardo
Glenda Baublitz	Oscar Gomez	Nick Pine
Keith Blackwell	Rony Guerra	Samuel Ramos

Aaron Brown
Sal Buonocore
Angel Carreno
Chip Crawford
Matthew Davis
Ken Dawes
Kelly Day
Steve Douglass
James Duff
John Dunlap
Spencer Egolf
Brian Emig
John Engel
Beth Fisher
Ralph Fisher

Journey Henderson
Johan Herreria
Chase Jackson
Travis Kisamore
Brian Kuntz
Melissa Lowther
DJay Martin
Evelin Montoya
Ramon Montoya
Jeffrey Moore
Guy Murray
Caleb Nowell
Sean O'Conner
David Parry

David Harold Rugama
Ellen Rupp
Anthony Snively
Jitesh Soans
Jennifer Souter
Amber Supplee
KrisAnne Swartley
Mario Tepexicuapa
Pamela Urbanavage
Carlos Uribe
Brandon Vining
Joseph Wendling
Emma Williams
Maliaj Yang

Alan Robinson
National Director, BIC U.S.

AROBINSON@BICUS.ORG

L. BIC U.S. Financial Reports

Condensed Statement of Activities

Ministry Receipts	2024*	% OF TOTAL	2023**	% OF TOTAL	2022**	% OF TOTAL
Undesignated Giving	\$ 2,933,939	61%	\$ 3,115,078	50%	\$ 3,015,805	63%
Designated Giving	1,665,064	35%	3,009,727	49%	1,742,442	36%
Registrations and Other	171,889	4%	82,774	1%	36,681	1%
<i>Total Operating Receipts</i>	<i>\$ 4,770,892</i>		<i>\$ 6,207,579</i>		<i>\$ 4,794,928</i>	
Endowments	\$ -		\$ 2,000		\$ 2,000	
Bequests	15,564		114,602		238,091	
Investment Gain/(Loss)	802,279		1,379,322		(1,269,463)	
<i>Total Other</i>	<i>\$ 817,843</i>		<i>\$ 1,495,924</i>		<i>\$ (1,029,372)</i>	
Total Receipts	\$ 5,588,735		\$ 7,703,503		\$ 3,765,556	

Common Ministry Expenditures

Regional Ministry	\$ 1,526,026	24%	\$ 1,461,462	27%	\$ 1,378,062	26%
National Ministry	656,311	11%	421,795	8%	505,866	10%
Global Ministry	2,702,466	43%	2,373,057	44%	2,202,634	42%
Shared Services	899,607	14%	855,030	16%	835,656	16%
Project 250 and Build the Future	275,036	4%	38,716	1%	108,280	2%
Thriving Congregations	121,527	2%	-	0%	-	0%
Related Agencies	55,972	1%	52,859	1%	62,035	1%
DB Pension Costs	-	0%	242,667	4%	138,212	3%
Total Common Ministry Expenditures	\$ 6,236,945		\$ 5,445,586		\$ 5,230,745	

Ministry Projects

Receipts	\$ 1,030,460	\$ 1,106,197	\$ 1,072,229
Disbursements	(1,030,460)	(966,139)	(1,195,289)
Total Ministry Projects	\$ -	\$ 140,058	\$ (123,060)
Change in Net Assets	\$ (648,210)	\$ 2,397,975	\$ (1,588,249)
(Increase)/Decrease in Pension Underfunding***	-	392,639	627,736
Total Change in Net Assets	\$ (648,210)	\$ 2,790,614	\$ (960,513)

*Figures based on 2024 budget

**2023 and 2022 figures are audited

***The net unfunded liability of the defined benefit plan was \$97,222 and \$1,047,194 at December 31, 2023 and 2022, respectively. This liability is offset by the Honor the Past fund balance, \$536,487 and \$1,216,918 at December 31, 2023 and 2022, respectively.

Net Asset Roll Forward

Undesignated	2022 Ending Balance	2023 Receipts	2023 Expenditures	Transfers In/(Out)	Investment Gain/(Loss)	Pension Underfunding (Inc)/Dec	2023 Ending Balance	Change in Net Assets
Regional Ministry	-	-	\$ (1,448,642)	-	-	-	-	-
National Ministry	-	-	(379,907)	-	-	-	-	-
Global Ministry	-	-	(508,252)	-	-	-	-	-
Shared Services	-	-	(855,030)	-	-	-	-	-
Total Undesignated	\$ 3,311,606	\$ 3,198,100	\$ (3,191,831)	\$ (7,440)	\$ 244,998	-	\$ 3,555,433	\$ 243,827
Designated	2022 Ending Balance	2023 Receipts	2023 Expenditures	Transfers In/(Out)	Investment Gain/(Loss)	Pension Underfunding (Inc)/Dec	2023 Ending Balance	Change in Net Assets
Global Ministry General	\$ 2,956,370	\$ 534,776	\$ (700,846)	\$ (16,310)	\$ 6,131	-	\$ 2,780,121	\$ (176,249)
Global Ministry Endowments	4,499,711	135,358	(199,205)	5,500	678,418	-	5,119,782	620,071
Global Emergency Risk Management	587,858	-	-	-	19,890	-	607,748	19,890
Global Donor Designated Support	2,909,472	2,224,421	(1,956,114)	14,780	-	-	3,192,559	283,087
Global Project 250	96,426	-	(900)	-	-	-	95,526	(900)
Total Global Designated	\$ 11,049,837	\$ 2,894,555	\$ (2,857,065)	\$ 3,970	\$ 704,439	-	\$ 11,795,736	\$ 745,899
National Ministry Endowments	\$ 2,023,390	\$ 2,000	\$ (61,993)	\$ -	\$ 256,310	-	\$ 2,219,707	\$ 196,317
National Donor Designated Support	59,523	76,453	(20,353)	3,470	902	-	119,995	60,472
National Build the Future	986,067	5,800	(9,500)	-	50,410	-	1,032,777	46,710
National Thriving Congregations Initiative	-	1,250,000	-	-	2,694	-	1,252,694	1,252,694
National Project 250	141,468	3,470	(28,316)	-	-	-	116,622	(24,846)
Total National Designated	\$ 3,210,448	\$ 1,337,723	\$ (120,162)	\$ 3,470	\$ 310,316	-	\$ 4,741,795	\$ 1,531,347
Honor the Past: Build the Future	\$ 1,216,918	\$ -	\$ -	(800,000)	\$ 119,569	\$ -	\$ 536,487	\$ (680,431)
Less: Pension Liability	(1,047,194)	-	(242,667)	800,000	-	392,639	(97,222)	949,972
Honor the Past; Build the Future, Net	\$ 169,724	\$ -	\$ (242,667)	-	\$ 119,569	\$ 392,639	\$ 439,265	\$ 269,541
Total Designated	\$ 14,430,009	\$ 4,232,278	\$ (3,219,894)	\$ 7,440	\$ 1,134,324	\$ 392,639	\$ 16,976,796	\$ 2,546,787
Total Net Assets	\$ 17,741,615	\$ 7,430,378	\$ (6,411,725)	-	\$ 1,379,322	\$ 392,639	\$ 20,532,229	\$ 2,790,614

M. BIC Pension Fund - Defined Benefit Plan

Statement of Net Assets Available for Benefits

Assets	2023	2022
Cash in Financial Institutions	\$ 186,779	\$ 286,950
Investments	6,236,290	5,570,364
Receivables	3,188	27,162
Total Assets	\$ 6,426,257	\$ 5,884,476

Liabilities and Net Assets

Accounts Payable	\$ 2,235	\$ 61,562
Net Assets Available for Benefits	6,424,022	5,822,914
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 6,426,257	\$ 5,884,476

Statement of Changes in Net Assets Available For Benefits

Additions to Net Assets Available for Benefits

	2023	2022
Net Appreciation (Depreciation) in FMV of Investments	\$ 304,390	\$ (463,328)
Interest and Dividends	181,980	132,655
Defined Benefit Contributions	806,425	809,180
Total Additions to Net Assets	\$ 1,292,795	\$ 478,507

Deductions from Net Assets Available for Benefits

Annuity Payments to Participants	\$ 563,378	\$ 578,479
Lump Sum Payments to Participants	82,881	92,530
Administrative Expenses	45,428	56,864
Total Deductions from Net Assets	\$ 691,687	\$ 727,873
Net Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets Available for Benefits	\$ 601,108	\$ (249,366)

N. Brethren in Christ Foundation

1. General Report

The Brethren in Christ Foundation supports the church by providing Christ-centered financial services enabling local congregations to transform lives through Jesus. The Foundation continues to enhance the services and programs offered to our denomination.

Loans

After experiencing a downturn in lending activities because of the lingering concerns relating to the pandemic, loan originations saw a dramatic increase in 2023. The Foundation funded nine new loans totaling \$5.8 million. Nearly half of the loans were closed in December 2023.

We continue to see strong interest in new loans this year. Through May 2024 we have funded another four loans totaling \$2 million. We also have four more loans in the middle of the application phase totaling \$1.5 million, and another six to nine expected to apply for up to \$4.5 million of funding later this year. In total, we anticipate distributing up to \$8 million in loan funds in 2024 if all apply and are approved, and that does not include potential loan requests that may come about yet later in the year.

Securities

Since 2022, the amount invested in the Brotherhood Loan Fund (BLF) has decreased \$4 million for a total of \$45 million. There are several reasons for this decrease. A number of our organizational investors have withdrawn funds for debt reduction, building projects and operational needs. Several individual investors have needed funds for living expenses or have reinvested elsewhere for a higher rate of return.

We at the Foundation continue to improve the offerings available to investors. We recently introduced a 15-month Term Certificate with a higher fixed rate. Effective July 1, we will offer Youth Savings Certificates geared towards long term savings for the benefit of a minor. The effective rate of return for these new certificates is 6%. Also, effective July 1, we are revising our Demand Certificate program to include a tiered rating structure. The rate of return for a demand certificate will increase based on the balance in the account.

It is vital for future lending that investments in Foundation securities increase. If investments do not increase, the Foundation could be forced to pause lending to congregations, ministries, and pastors. Your investments enable the Foundation to support the continued growth of the BIC U.S. mission.

Matching Grants

In 2023, the Foundation awarded nine matching grants for outreach initiatives, totaling over \$6,500. Those programs included weekly outreaches to a nearby senior center, vacation Bible school, harvest parties, podcasts on mental health, outdoor movies, and other community gatherings.

This year we are putting more focus on our grants and have updated our webpage and will be featuring the grants multiple times in both the denominational newsletter, *Connect*, and on social media. In addition, we are increasing the maximum reimbursement amount for the first year of a new outreach from \$1,000 to \$2,000. These efforts seem to be working, as we have already approved six grant requests through April 2024. Working with our communications staff, we hope to tell more of the outreach stories.

We remain excited about the future of the Foundation and its partnership with BIC U.S. ministries.

James Reynolds
Executive Director

JREYNOLDS@BICFOUNDATION.ORG

2. Loan Fund Summarized Financial Statements

Statement of Position			Statement of Activities		
Investments	2023	2022	Interest Paid	2023	2022
TAP and SIC	\$ 39,072,326	\$ 41,991,116	Interest Paid	\$ 1,408,651	\$ 994,648
IRA and HSA	6,901,223	7,124,346			
Total Investments	\$ 45,973,549	\$ 49,115,462	Total Interest Paid	\$ 1,408,651	\$ 994,648
Reinvestments	Reinvestments				
Loans	\$ 38,932,244	\$ 38,026,835	Interest on Loans	\$ 2,005,806	\$ 1,649,656
Minimum Cash Requirement	5,974,834	6,717,448	Net Investment Income	692,438	179,934
Unapplied Cash	1,066,471	4,371,179			
Total Reinvestments	\$ 45,973,549	\$ 49,115,462	Total Reinvestment	\$ 2,698,244	\$ 1,829,590
			Margin from Investments	\$ 1,289,593	\$ 834,942
Operations	Operating Expenses				
Cash Available for Loans and Ministry	\$ 6,067,481	\$ 7,357,477	Salaries, Ben and G&A	\$ 741,134	\$ 660,287
Building Renovation	1,900,000	401,240	Other Op-Ex	447,276	116,800
Operating Cash Reserve	750,000	750,000	Total Operating Expenses	\$ 1,188,410	\$ 777,087
Fixed Assets (Operational)	865,773	783,625			
Real Estate Held for Sale	-	-	Other Income/(Expenses)		
Other Assets	312,219	312,257	Management Service Fees	\$ (11,367)	\$ (20,629)
Other Liabilities	(259,652)	(61,669)	Rental Income	-	-
Net Assets	\$ 9,635,821	\$ 9,542,930	Farming Income	40,686	41,669
			Distributions to Charity	(41,000)	(41,500)
			Donations and Other	3,389	13,019
			Total Other Income/(Expenses)	\$ (8,292)	\$ (7,441)
			Change in Net Assets	\$ 92,891	\$ 50,414

3. Trust Fund Summarized Financial Statements

	Statement of Position			Statement of Activities				
Investments made by faithful stewards	Custodial Accounts		2023	2022	Contributions		2023	2022
	Common Trust Fund		\$ 17,761,306	\$ 15,972,473	Charitable Donations		\$ 1,478,122	\$ 1,371,196
	Split Interest and Other		2,988,661	3,010,794	Net Investment Income		2,716,599	(2,745,775)
	Total Custodial Accounts		\$ 20,749,967	\$ 18,983,267	Total Contributions		\$ 4,194,721	\$ (1,374,579)
	Reinvestments				Distributions			
used to further build the Church	Investments		\$ 22,259,913	\$ 16,804,422	Distributions to Charity		\$ 1,887,813	\$ 1,412,655
	Custodial Cash		(1,509,946)	2,178,844	Distributions to Investors		2,510,400	(2,663,653)
	Total Reinvestment		\$ 20,749,967	\$ 18,983,267	Total Distributions		\$ 4,398,213	\$ (1,250,998)
					Net Excess/(Deficit)		\$ (203,492)	\$ (123,581)
	Operations				Operating Revenue			
	Designated Donor Advised		\$ 1,640,243	\$ 1,808,974	Service Fees		\$ 263,537	\$ 270,749
	Cash Reserve		1,084,991	1,448,540	Management Service Fee		-	4,352
	Loans (unsecured)		415,395	513,371	Interest on Loans		32,358	27,506
	Other Assets		219,434	21,159	Total Operating Revenue		\$ 295,895	\$ 302,606
	Other Liabilities		(33,076)	(165,306)	Operating Expenses			
	Net Assets		\$ 3,326,988	\$ 3,626,738	Salaries, Ben, and G&A		\$ 380,195	\$ 367,749
					Other Op-Ex		11,958	72,838
					Total Operating Expenses		\$ 392,153	\$ 440,587
					Change in Net Assets		\$ (299,750)	\$ (261,562)

These statements are an abbreviated summary of the audited financial statements. For a copy of the

These statements are an abbreviated summary of the audited financial statements. For a copy of the complete audited financial statements, please go to bicfoundation.org/about/financials or write us at 431 Grantham Rd., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055. Thank you.

O. AWAKEN: BIC Network for Women in Ministry

There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28

Awaken, the BIC network for women in ministry is fully invested in a vision of God's Kingdom reality, where our lived experience in the church reflects the biblical foundations of mutuality as women and men lead together, according to gifts and calling. We pursue this as we work together to empower, engage, and equip women in ministry and leadership, and these are some of the ways we do that:

- Networking, training, affirming, and inspiring through regional gatherings and virtual events
- One-on-One mentoring
- Cohorts—groups focused on specific goals
- Collaboration with denominational leaders about how to support women clergy
- Resource Hub for all things related to women in ministry
- Advocacy

Over the last year, we have worked on the development of cohorts, which provide support, accountability, and resources around a specific group focus. Using the recommendations from the task force, we began with a Credentialing Cohort for women. This group is designed to be a resource for women in ministry, who have already begun the process. We come alongside, focusing specifically on the writing of the Doctrinal Questionnaire. Our goal is to help and bring support through the process. I work with Donna Sturr (Assistant for Leadership Development) to stay current regarding women in the credentialing process, but I also regularly have conversations with lead pastors and bishops, who ask me to reach out and tap the shoulder of specific women in their places of ministry and leadership working through this specific process.

I'm encouraged by the movement of this work in such a short time because we are seeing a positive and tighter partnership as we work together to connect support and resources. Awaken is passionate about the heart and soul of women—as image-bearers and ministers of the gospel—so, this is truly a privilege to engage and invest with women as they pursue calling, credentialing, and leadership development. Please note, that any woman who is currently working on the Doctrinal Questionnaire can register for this cohort by filling out our registration form on the mentorship page located on our website, awakennetwork.org

We believe mentorship is a powerful tool for all leaders, but we also know that mentorship can take on different forms. Building on the momentum of the credentialing cohort, we decided to launch something that could impact another area of development. In January, we began the Leadership Cohort, which is a 12-month journey focused specifically on character and soul development. Currently, we have six women, coming from diverse ministry

contexts, walking together as a community committed to intentional listening, learning, and practicing not just for their benefit, but for those with whom they lead and serve.

In March of 2023, Awaken hosted a webinar, called *Why Mutuality Matters*. Bishop Lynn Thrush from the Great Lakes Conference and Bishop Heather Beaty from the Susquehanna Conference were our featured speakers, talking about the history of women in ministry within the Brethren in Christ US and what it means to live into this conviction we hold regarding women in ministry. We had approximately 50 participants.

During the last biennium (as of December 2023) 15 women from almost every region received their initial ministerial license. Heartfelt congratulations go to Patty Patterson, Ellen Rupp, KrisAnne Swartley, Pamela Urbanavage, Emma Williams, C. F., Glenda Baublitz, Melissa Lowther, Evelin Montoya, Jennifer Souter, Maliaj Yang, Beth Fisher, and Amber Supplee. We also celebrate the ordinations of Christina Embree, Vicki Podjasek, Maureen Brown, Melissa Beal, A.B. and Jill Thompson.

As we look to 2024, we anticipate continued movement as we redevelop and launch new iterations and ideas to help support a vision that emboldens women in ministry in the church. We are so very grateful for the privilege to partner with each conference. Your investment helps in significant ways as we work together for this purpose. Thank you.

Awaken knows well, that this work we do is no small thing. We are grateful but also humbled by the part we get to play and how it contributes to the ongoing work of the Church. We are committed to innovating new and creative ways to engage, equip, and empower women as they pursue the call of God in their lives. And in all of that, we long to see the Church continue to grow in its practice of mutuality—at every level in the church—so that when a woman answers the call of God to full-time ministry, she can be confident that there is indeed a place for her to minister in the Church.

You can learn more about Awaken and discover ways to connect and support this important ministry work at awakennetwork.org. Sign up for our monthly email filled with updates, inspiration, and resources, and follow us on the socials—Facebook and Instagram. If you are a woman in ministry, consider joining our private Facebook Group, which is conveniently linked to our Facebook page. You can direct your comments and questions to all members of our Team, and if you use the contact form on the website, it goes directly to my inbox, which makes contact very accessible.

Our Awaken Leadership Team for 2024 includes: Pam Arnold, Carmen Carpenter, Margaret Engle, Bishop Bryan Hoke, Vicki Podjasek, Amber Supplee, and Jennifer Hickey

Maureen Brown
Director

MAUREEN@NEWLIFECOMMUNITY.US

Notes

Part 2:

Recommendations of General Conference Board (GCB)

1. Approval of the Minutes of the 2022 General Assembly

Whereas General Conference Board is authorized by General Assembly to approve the minutes of General Assembly, and

Whereas General Conference Board, at its September 2022 meeting, approved the minutes of the 2022 General Assembly held in Salina, Kansas, July 22 – 25, 2022, and the approved minutes were printed and distributed,

It is hereby resolved that the 2024 General Assembly confirms the action of the General Conference Board in approving the minutes of the 2022 General Assembly.

<https://bicus.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/GA2022-Minutes-For-Web-Smaller-Size.pdf>

ACTION:

Notes

2. Proposed Amendment to Article V: The Holy Spirit and the Church in the Articles of Faith and Doctrine of BIC U.S.

Whereas the Brethren in Christ U.S. has a *Manual of Doctrine and Government* (MDG) that contains the doctrine and government of the Church, and

Whereas it is necessary from time to time to update the MDG so that it continues to be current and relevant for Brethren in Christ congregations, and

Whereas it is considered helpful to amend Article V of the Articles of Faith and Doctrine so that it more clearly states the view of the Church, and

Whereas Article 1.3.1.1 of the BIC U.S. Bylaws states that “The Articles of Faith and Doctrine may be amended or repealed by a two-thirds majority at two-successive biennial meetings of the General Assembly of BIC U.S.”, and

Whereas the 2022 General Assembly approved by a two-thirds vote the proposed amendment to Article V: The Holy Spirit and the Church of the Articles of Faith and Doctrine of BIC U.S.

It is hereby resolved that the 2024 General Assembly approves the amendment of Article V: The Holy Spirit and the Church, in the Articles of Faith and Doctrine of BIC U.S.

Changes tracked with ~~strikeouts~~ and **bolds** for proposed revision

Article V: The Holy Spirit and the Church

The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to all believers according to His sovereign will and purposes. Scripture identifies a variety of gifts, given for the building up of the church and for ministry in the world. **Followers of Jesus are gifted, empowered, and called by the Holy Spirit to serve at all levels of church life, and** ~~t~~The Holy Spirit guides the church in setting apart persons, **both women and men**, for leadership. The church is responsible to discern and encourage the use of the gifts of the Spirit in its life and ministry.

(proposed revision to page 11, paragraph 2, 2022 MDG)

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Article V: The Holy Spirit and the Church

The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to all believers according to His sovereign will and purposes. Scripture identifies a variety of gifts, given for the building up of the church and for ministry in the world. Followers of Jesus are gifted, empowered, and called by the Holy Spirit to serve at all levels of church life, and the Holy Spirit guides the church in setting apart persons, both women and men, for leadership. The church is responsible to discern and encourage the use of the gifts of the Spirit in its life and ministry.

(proposed revision to page 11, paragraph 2, 2022 MDG)

ACTION:

Notes

3. Proposed Amendment to Article II: God and Creation in the Articles of Faith and Doctrine of BIC U.S.

Whereas the Brethren in Christ U.S. has a *Manual of Doctrine and Government* (MDG) that contains the doctrine and government of the Church, and

Whereas it is necessary from time to time to update the MDG so that it continues to be current and relevant for Brethren in Christ congregations, and

Whereas it is considered helpful to amend Article II of the Articles of Faith and Doctrine so that it more clearly states the view of the Church, and

Whereas Article 1.3.1.1 of the BIC U.S. Bylaws states that “The Articles of Faith and Doctrine may be amended or repealed by a two-thirds majority at two-successive biennial meetings of the General Assembly of BIC U.S.”, and

Whereas the 2022 General Assembly approved by a two-thirds vote the proposed amendment to Article II: God and Creation of the Articles of Faith and Doctrine of BIC U.S.

It is hereby resolved that the 2024 General Assembly approves the amendment of Article II: God and Creation, in the Articles of Faith and Doctrine of BIC U.S.

Changes tracked with ~~strikeouts~~ and **bolds** for proposed revision

Article II: God and Creation

God gave human sexuality a good place in creation. Being either male or female is integral to who we are and ~~in a complementary way~~ provides for the full expression of our humanity. God has given standards for expression of our sexuality that are necessary for proper relationships among people. Human sexuality is affirmed within the chaste single life or a lifelong marriage between a man and a woman.

(proposed revision to page 6, paragraph 6, 2022 MDG)

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Article II: God and Creation

God gave human sexuality a good place in creation. Being either male or female is integral to who we are and provides for the full expression of our humanity. God has given standards for expression of our sexuality that are necessary for proper relationships among people. Human sexuality is affirmed within the chaste single life or a lifelong marriage between a man and a woman.

(proposed revision to page 6, paragraph 6, 2022 MDG)

ACTION:

Notes

4. Proposed new Article 7.8 in the Bylaws of BIC U.S

Whereas the Brethren in Christ U.S. has a *Manual of Doctrine and Government* (MDG) that contains the doctrine and government of the Church, and

Whereas the incorporation documents and/or Bylaws of regional conferences and local congregations often refer to the *Manual of Doctrine and Government*, and

Whereas it is necessary from time to time to update the MDG so that it continues to be current and relevant for Brethren in Christ congregations, and

Whereas it is considered helpful to add a new Article to the Bylaws of the Brethren in Christ U.S. regarding the closure or dissociation of congregations,

It is hereby resolved that the 2024 General Assembly approves the **Article 7.8 Closure or Dissociation of Congregations**.

7.8 Closure or Dissociation of Congregations

In the event that a congregation is closing or dissociating from the BIC U.S., the following provisions shall apply:

- 7.8.1 The lead pastor, governing board, and congregation shall follow a process for closure and/or dissociation outlined by Leadership Council.**
- 7.8.2 The final determination of closure or dissociation shall be made by General Conference Board after receiving the recommendation of Leadership Council.**
- 7.8.3 The property assets of the congregation shall be available to be utilized as indicated in Article 11.**

ACTION:

Notes

5. Amending Article 11.3.1.3 in the Bylaws of BIC U.S.

Whereas the Brethren in Christ U.S. has a *Manual of Doctrine and Government* (MDG) that contains the doctrine and government of the Church, and

Whereas the incorporation documents and/or Bylaws of regional conferences and local congregations often refer to the *Manual of Doctrine and Government*, and

Whereas it is necessary from time to time to update the MDG so that it continues to be current and relevant for Brethren in Christ congregations, and

Whereas it is considered helpful to amend Article 11.3.1.3 in the Bylaws of the Brethren in Christ U.S.,

It is hereby resolved that the 2024 General Assembly approves **Article 11.3.1.3** to be amended as follows:

- 11.3.1.3
- In the event that ~~the work of any~~ a congregation has ~~been terminated~~ **closed** or dissociated from the BIC U.S. the property assets of such congregation shall be at the disposal of the Board of Directors of the Regional Conference within which the congregation was located. ~~The assets shall be to invest in available~~ **to be utilized** ~~work~~ consistent with the purpose of the BIC U.S. ~~as stated in Article 1.2.~~ The determination whether a congregation has terminated or dissociated shall be made by General Conference Board after receiving the recommendation of Leadership Council: If the Regional Conference BOD resolves **proposes** to **invest utilize** such assets ~~in~~ **to benefit** a project or organization that is not a ministry of the BIC U.S., **such action is subject to the approval of** the General Conference Board ~~must approve such~~ action.

ACTION:

Notes

6. Appointment of General Conference Board Members

Whereas the Article 2.2.5 of the Brethren in Christ U.S. Bylaws states that General Assembly is authorized to “Appoint members of General Conference Board,” and

Whereas Articles 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 of the Brethren in Christ U.S. Bylaws state that the General Conference Board nominates new Board Members following consultation with and receiving recommendations from Leadership Council and the Board of Directors of Regional Conferences, and

Whereas the General Conference Board has done its work of nominating individuals for the various positions required to be filled for the upcoming biennium,

It is hereby resolved that the 2024 General Assembly approves the nominating committee report as presented and that the national director cast a unanimous ballot for all nominees as presented. New terms begin at the close of the 2024 General Assembly.

Appointment of General Conference Board Members

MEMBER (OF)	CURRENT	NOMINEE	TERM EXPIRATION - NUMBER
Allegheny	Sherri Flohr	Sherri Flohr	2028 – <i>2nd term</i>
Atlantic	Adam Forry		2026 – <i>3rd term</i>
Great Lakes	Abby Kean	Abby Kean	2028 – <i>2nd term</i>
Midwest	Denise Conway	Denise Conway	2028 – <i>2nd term</i>
Pacific	Tom Law	Tom Law	2028 – <i>2nd term</i>
Southeast	Rachel Diaz		2026 – <i>3rd term</i>
Susquehanna	Naomi Smith		2026 – <i>1st full term</i>
At large	Bonnie Hershberger		2026 – <i>1st full term</i>
At large	Jonah Langenderfer		2026 – <i>1st term</i>
At large	Jacob Loughheed		2026 – <i>1st term</i>
At large	Brian Mbuu	Brian Mbuu	2028 – <i>2nd term</i>
At large	Kevin Noll	Kevin Noll	2028 – <i>2nd term</i>
At large	Jose Rodriquez	Jose Rodriguez	2028 – <i>2nd term</i>
At large	Julie Stout	Georgia Myers	2028 – <i>1st term</i>
At large	Vacant	Ray Chung	2026 – <i>Filling vacated term</i>
Ex officio	Alan Robinson		

ACTION:

Notes



Sherri Flohr, Allegheny Conference

Sherri Flohr, representing the Allegheny Conference, began serving on General Conference Board in 2018.

Sherri has led at national, regional, and local levels of the Brethren in Christ U.S. At the national level, Sherri serves as facilitator for the BIC Directed Study Program and has been a member of the BIC Equipping for Ministry team.

For the Allegheny Conference, she serves on the board of directors, as well as the discipleship council. She has also served on bishop selection for the conference. Sherri has led young adult, youth, and ministry programs and events for Allegheny Conference and Roxbury Holiness Camp, where she was a director and committee member.

Having grown up in the Chambersburg (Pa.) BIC Church, Sherri was on the Board of Christian Education, a member of the personnel committee, and director of VBS. Today, Sherri participates in Five Forks Church, Waynesboro, Pa., where she was director for youth ministries, and served on the church board, worship committee, and Sunday school teaching team. She led several international mission trips and continues to serve in various ways at Five Forks Church.

Sherri has a Master of Arts in global leadership from Fuller Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies and a bachelor's degree in Christian education and music at Messiah College (now Messiah University). Having benefited from leadership training in the BIC U.S. Church, Sherri has a vision to see the BIC U.S. continue to emphasize developing and equipping leaders to live out their full potential in Christ.

Sherri, and her husband, Mark, reside in Chambersburg, Pa. They have two adult children.



Adam Forry, Atlantic Conference

Adam Forry, representing the Atlantic Conference, began serving on General Conference Board in 2014.

He grew up as part of the Mount Pleasant BIC congregation, Mount Joy, Pa., where generations of his father's family attended. After graduating from Messiah College (now Messiah University) in 1999, Adam went on to serve as an associate pastor in two BIC congregations and then became

lead pastor at Speedwell Heights BIC, Lititz, Pa. in 2008. That same year, he completed his Master of Arts in Ministry at Lancaster Bible College. Since 2019, Adam has served as senior pastor of Elizabethtown (Pa.) Brethren in Christ Church (EBIC).

As a "cradle BIC," Adam is excited that the BIC faith family has expanded and crossed potential barriers of all kinds to become a diverse, international church with 80 percent of its people outside North America. He sees local churches as the center of God's work in the world as they seek to reach people for Christ, disciple believers, and make an impact locally

and globally. He is grateful to serve on both GCB and the Atlantic Conference board of directors as they support and strengthen the mission of local congregations.

Adam enjoys reading, trying new foods, and going for walks with his mini goldendoodle. He and his wife, Kimberly, live in Elizabethtown, Pa., with their daughter, Cassie, and sons, Trace and Liam.



Abby Kean, Great Lakes Conference

Abby Kean, representing the Great Lakes Conference, began serving on General Conference Board in 2020.

A proud native of Milwaukee, Wis., Abby has been a part of New Vision BIC just outside Milwaukee since 2010. Having come to know Jesus personally through the ministry of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship early in college, Abby's adult life has always been framed by an understanding that ministry

and missional living is central to the Christian life regardless of vocation. Though active in Bible studies, worship ministry, and global missions work since college, she sees her vocation as a high school history and theater teacher as her primary missionary assignment.

Since joining New Vision and the BIC (which she met through a family at her school), Abby has been a regular part of the musical worship team, a facilitator for large group gatherings, and a committed member of weekly Life Group. She has also been a member of the church board/leadership team since 2013. She has also served as the congregation's Director of Missions, helping to lead three summer teams at the Navajo BIC Mission and participating on a Vision and Prayer Team that New Vision sent to visit World Missions workers in Thailand in 2016.

When not in the classroom, working on the next school play, or "something with church," Abby looks forward to video calls with out-of-town friends and family, game nights, and long walks outside listening to a good audiobook.



Denise Conway, Midwest Conference

Denise Conway, representing the Midwest Conference, began serving on General Conference Board in 2022.

Denise is a BIC U.S. missionary in New Mexico. In 2003 she came to Christ after battling drug and alcohol addictions through her youth and young adulthood. She became a member of Revolution Church in Salina, Kans. where she was discipled and began to serve in youth ministry.

She first sensed a call to cross-cultural missions at a BIC U.S. World Missions conference hosted by Revolution in 2007, and soon after began her missionary journey among the Navajo people in New Mexico.

Her background in education is a foundation for her ministry. She has a degree in teaching from Adams State University and spent several years teaching at the BIC Navajo Mission and in a special education setting. She now helps adults who never finished high school attain their GED diplomas. She is an associate pastor at Broken Walls Fellowship, a contextual Native American church plant in Fruitland, NM, and helps facilitate a church for the homeless. Additionally, she serves on the Midwest Conference youth team and helps lead summer camps and spring retreats.



Tom Law, Pacific Conference

Tom Law, representing the Pacific Conference, began serving on General Conference Board in 2018.

An optometrist for 40 years, Tom led as vision department chairperson for two large medical groups in Southern California, while maintaining an active clinical practice for 23 years. He took over a private practice 17 years ago where he works full time. Passionate about sharing his faith, Tom is grateful his vocation often enables him to share the amazing grace found in Christ Jesus.

Tom serves as leadership board chairperson at Solid Ground Church, Alta Loma, Calif., where he has been a member since 1981. There he also serves as deacon, treasurer, and life group leader. Over the years at Solid Ground, Tom has assisted on various church boards and has been a worship and Awana leader, as well as a Sunday school superintendent and teacher. In connection with Azuza Pacific University, he has participated on medical missions trips to Mexico.

Tom completed a Bachelor of Science in biological science from the University of California, Irvine. At the Southern California College of Optometry, he earned a second bachelor's degree in visual science and his doctorate in optometry.

Enjoying dialoguing with people of many backgrounds, Tom believes God has gifted us with heart, intellect, and energy in order to share our faith and to engage in God's story. Living in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., Tom and his wife, Kimberly Bert, have seven children between them and five grandchildren.



Rachel Diaz, Southeast Conference

Rachel Diaz, representing the Southeast Conference, began serving on General Conference Board in 2014.

Since childhood, Rachel has actively participated in developing the South Florida cluster of BIC churches.

A member of Iglesia Rescate in Hialeah, Fla., Rachel previously volunteered in a number of Brethren in Christ congregations with worship, youth work, small groups, translation, and legal assistance. She also

served for four years on the BIC Board for World Missions. She continues to be an active member of her local church where she serves in various capacities.

Rachel's unique perspective as a bilingual, urban attorney is an asset both to the churches in South Florida and to the larger denomination. It is her prayer that the BIC U.S. would become a prominent presence in its surrounding society — strengthened, united, and growing to better reach out into the world for the sake of God's Kingdom.

Rachel and her husband, Hamlet, live in South Florida with their two daughters.



Naomi Smith, Susquehanna Conference

Naomi (Spurrier) Smith, representing the Susquehanna Conference, began serving on General Conference Board in 2021.

Naomi was born into a BIC pastoral family and spent most of her childhood in Dillsburg, Pa. She graduated from Houghton College in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in English literature. After living in Houghton, N.Y. and State

College, Pa., she and her husband Jason spent a year in Arusha, Tanzania before returning to Dillsburg in 2015.

Naomi serves as an associate pastor at the Dillsburg BIC Church, where she oversees areas of discipleship for adults and children. She is passionate about intergenerational discipleship and finding ways for people of all ages to learn together and from each other. She especially loves studying the Bible in community. She represents the fourth generation of BIC pastors in her family and is grateful for that legacy.

She lives with her husband, their three children, and her parents on the east side of a wooded mountain. She enjoys long walks, good books, family movie nights, and Saturday morning pancakes.



Bonnie Hershberger, member-at-large

Bonnie Hershberger, from the Susquehanna Conference, began serving on General Conference Board in 2021 as a member-at-large. Bonnie came to the BIC in 1997 when her husband, Dave, started serving as worship pastor of Mechanicsburg (Pa.) BIC.

She is an attorney who has practiced both in the public and private sectors. In addition to her Juris Doctor degree, Bonnie has a Master of Laws from Villanova University School of Law. She currently works as an assistant general counsel and specializes in health and benefits law.

She volunteers her legal services for the Pennsylvania Innocence Project, an organization

that works to exonerate those who have been wrongfully convicted and advocates for criminal justice reforms. Additionally, she serves as a board member and chair of the mission committee at Bethesda Mission, a ministry that has cared for the poor and homeless in Harrisburg, Pa. since 1914.

Bonnie is passionate about cultivating intimacy with God, living a lifestyle of worship, growing in biblical literacy, and walking alongside others as they pursue the same. She and Dave live in Mechanicsburg, Pa. with their miniature schnauzer, Titus.



Jonah Langenderfer, member-at-large

Jonah Langenderfer, Great Lakes Conference, is a General Conference Board appointed in 2022 as a member-at-large.

Jonah's story began in a broken home with his parents' mental illness and eventual divorce. Jonah was placed in foster care at the age of 5. Tragically, his father died shortly after in a work accident. Yet by God's grace, it was in this tragic moment that God began to turn things around. God was work-

ing behind the scenes to bring good even out of his father's death. Instead of getting out of foster care, Jonah was put into a different foster family where he heard about the Good News of Jesus through a local Baptist church. Through this community, Jonah experienced the love and healing of Jesus that turned his life around.

Jonah sensed God's call to ministry while attending Cedarville University for a degree in Biblical Studies. After graduating in 2014, he went on to complete his Master of Divinity in 2018 from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School outside Chicago, Ill. Since 2019, Jonah has served as senior pastor of Pleasant Hill Brethren in Christ Church in Pleasant Hill, Ohio.

While Jonah was not raised Brethren in Christ, he has gratefully found a theological home in the BIC after worshipping and serving in different evangelical denominations. He believes that BIC history and DNA - like our core value of pursuing peace - has great potential to guide us towards faithfulness to Jesus in today's context in the U.S.

Jonah is a pastor in the Great Lakes Conference. He enjoys reading, movies, sports (especially basketball), hiking, eating good food, and spending time with family. He and his wife, Amy, a psychologist practicing in the Dayton area, reside in Pleasant Hill, Ohio, with their two children Preston and Pierce.



Jacob Loughheed, member-at-large

Jacob Loughheed, Allegheny Conference, is a General Conference Board appointed in 2022 as a member-at-large.

Grafted into the BIC in August 2001, Jacob first came to be part of the BIC when he moved with his family from Stouffville, Ontario, Canada to Greencastle, Pa. where his father serves as a pastor at Hollowell BIC.

Jacob has participated in a variety of ways at the local church level for the last 21 years. Currently, Jacob facilitates a Young Families Life Group, remains connected with missions in the Dominican Republic, has served as a youth sponsor, and has coached softball and basketball in local church sports leagues.

Jacob received his Master's Degree in Education from Wilson College in May of 2021 and currently works as a social studies teacher in Hagerstown, Md. He has a heart for young people and works to help them realize their potential.

In his free time, Jacob enjoys spending time with his family, traveling, the outdoors, and baseball. He looks forward to summer vacations at the beach, visiting new ballparks, and dreams of the day that the Maple Leafs will hoist the Stanley Cup. Jacob and his wife Kelsey, live in Greencastle, Pa., with their two children, Benaiah and Elizabeth.



Brian Mbuu, member-at-large

Brian Mbuu, Atlantic Conference, began serving on General Conference Board in 2020 as a member-at-large.

Born and raised in Kenya, Brian came to the United States to attend Messiah College (now Messiah University) and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. For more than 20 years, Brian has worked in various human resources roles. He currently works in state govern-

ment supporting the 14 Pennsylvania state-owned universities in the areas of human resources and labor relations. His role includes working with teams to negotiate, implement, and administer statewide labor agreements.

As a member of Harrisburg BIC Church since 2003, he has held various roles including having the privilege to serve as a member of the church board, serving as chair of the personnel committee, as well as volunteering with various ministries.

Living simply is one of the core values that motivates him to live, love, and serve the broader community. This value embodies the life of Jesus Christ and encourages us to strive for dependence on God and service to others.

Brian and his wife, Joela, live in Harrisburg, Pa. with their two daughters.



Kevin Noll, member-at-large

Kevin Noll, from the Atlantic Conference, began serving on General Conference Board in 2018 as a member-at-large.

Since 1998, Kevin has served as director of business services at Paxton Ministries, a nonprofit in Harrisburg, Pa., that provides affordable housing and support services to adults who are challenged with poverty, mental illness, and intel-

lectual disabilities. At Paxton Ministries, Kevin has responsibility for the fiscal management of the entire organization, including accounts receivable and accounts payable, payroll and benefits, budget, and annual audit, while also managing human resources and information technology infrastructure. In 2009, he played a key role in the startup of Paxton Cleaning Solutions, a subsidiary of Paxton Ministries, and he continues to oversee its management.

Kevin and his wife, Jennifer, attend LifePoint Church in Harrisburg, Pa., where Jennifer serves as the children's pastor and he enjoys leading a small group.

He is grateful for his upbringing on a Lancaster County farm, where he cultivated a strong work ethic, an ability to seek practical solutions, and a deep desire to serve others with the love of Jesus Christ. Kevin obtained a Bachelor of Science in business administration from Eastern University.

Kevin and his wife, Jennifer, live with their two children, Elijah and Rebecca, in Harrisburg, Pa. As the parent of two teenagers, he is particularly grateful for the way our denomination supports and desires to raise up the next generation for Christ.



Jose Rodriguez, member-at-large

Jose Rodriguez, from the Southeast Conference, began serving on General Conference Board in 2020 as a member-at-large.

Born in Cuba, Jose came to faith in Christ as a child and became heavily involved in the first Cuban BIC mission congregation, the Cuatro Caminos Church under Pastor Juana Garcia. After sensing a call to pastoral ministry and attending seminary, he would later serve as pastor of that church for two years. In 1989, he and his family moved to Miami, Fl. where he has served in pastoral ministry ever since; most recently providing oversight to the Esmirna congregation, which he started in 1998.

In addition to serving on the Commission on Ministry and Doctrine and the Southeast Conference board of directors, Jose founded PEACE CDC, Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides afterschool and summer camp programs throughout Miami-Dade County for approximately 250 children year-round.

Jose and his wife, Lourdes, have two adult children, Madai and Josue.



Georgia Myers, member-at-large

Georgia grew up as part of a Brethren in Christ missionary family. Born in New Mexico to parents in service at the Navajo Mission, she also lived in Zimbabwe and Zambia as a child. Upon returning to the U.S., her family attended Pleasant Hill BIC (OH) for many years. After college, she ultimately landed at Souderton BIC (PA) where she has attended for over 35 years.

She graduated from Messiah College in 1987 with a degree in accounting and began working with a regional CPA firm, earning the CPA designation two years later. She has worked in public accounting since then, becoming a partner with her current firm in 2001. Her service focus is not-for-profit organizations, and she is also responsible for the firm's finance and human resources areas.

Georgia has previously served as board member, treasurer, and/or chair of several not-for-profit organizations, including her home congregation and its preschool, the Atlantic Conference, the BIC Foundation, the Indian Creek Foundation (services for the intellectually and developmentally disabled), and Bridge of Hope National (services addressing family homelessness).

As a member of Souderton BIC, she has been active in children's ministries, facilitating both midweek and Sunday morning programs, and in church finance. However, her most rewarding times are spent as a flute-playing member of the worship team.

Georgia lives in Souderton, Pa., with her husband Steve, sons Reid and Grant, and a schnoodle named Pippin. With any available free time, she enjoys reading, movies, and traveling, and has learned just enough about basketball, football, baseball, and soccer to keep up with the men in her house.



Ray Chung, member-at-large

Ray is a seasoned human resources professional with over 20 years of experience in community and economic development, strategic planning, business development, public and private finance, and business consulting. Ray cultivates servant leaders by intentionally integrating faith, values, and principles in the workplace.

As part of the team of experienced technical HR professionals at Rising Sun Consultants, Ray excels in assessing compliance and reducing risk by providing expert guidance to ensure organizations meet regulatory requirements and implement best practices. Ray's proven track record in leadership and management has been instrumental in helping numerous high-growth organizations scale effectively.

Prior to his most current endeavor in consulting, he has led in the area of people and cul-

ture for organizations including HOPE International, LINKBANK, TE Connectivity, and Willis Towers Watson. In addition to his current job, Ray is a proud supporter of various nonprofits including HOPE International, Brethren Housing Association, Someone To Tell It To, and Open Hands Ministries.

He enjoys trail running, good coffee, and exploring the outdoors with his family. Ray and his wife, Heather, live in Dillsburg, Pa. (home of the infamous New Year's Eve pickle drop), and have three children, Micah, Delia, and Eden. They are members of The Meeting House Church.

7. Confirmation of Board Members for the Brethren in Christ Foundation

Whereas the members of the Board of Directors of the Brethren in Christ Foundation are to be approved by the General Conference Board and to be confirmed by General Assembly, and

Whereas the General Conference Board has approved the following as the members of the Board of the Brethren in Christ Foundation,

It is hereby resolved that the 2024 General Assembly confirms the members of the Board of the Brethren in Christ Foundation and that the national director cast a unanimous ballot for all nominees as presented.

PRESENT	NOMINEE	TERM EXPIRATION - NUMBER
Karl Brummer	Karl Brummer	2028 — 3rd
Anler Morejon		2026 — 3rd
Jeremy Spear		2026 — 1st
William Strausbaugh	William Strausbaugh	2027 — 2nd
Vacant		
Alan Robinson		N/A
Julie Stout		N/A

ACTION:

Notes

8. Special Motion

A motion from the floor at the 2022 General Assembly was seconded and adopted by the Assembly. It is recorded on page 150 of the 2022 General Assembly Minutes. The motion stated: “We move that the denominational leadership investigate how to broaden the exercise of authority in the Brethren in Christ Church.”

In response to the motion, Leadership Council appointed a task force to research the matter and make recommendations. The taskforce reviewed how leadership structures in the church have changed over time. They concluded that the current structure, when exercised appropriately and diligently, is broad-based and inclusive of all levels of the church. They recommended that we encourage the full exercise of authority as established in the Manual of Doctrine and Government (MDG). The following is a summary of some of the ways the Church currently seeks to be broad-based in decision-making:

The Manual of Doctrine and Government of BIC U.S. states that “Leadership Council, in consultation with General Conference Board, shall plan the program and agenda for the General Assembly” (Bylaw 2.3.3, 2022 MDG, page 36), and that General Conference Board “Bring recommendations for action to the General Assembly” (Bylaw 3.3.4, 2022 MDG, page 38). This pattern is similar to the way in which the agenda and recommendations are prepared for the annual meeting of a Regional Conference and the annual business meeting of a congregation.

If a member of a congregation feels that an item should become part of the agenda for General Assembly, he/she should request the governing board of the congregation to consider placing it on the agenda for the congregational business meeting. If it becomes part of the agenda of the local congregational business meeting, and if a resolution or recommendation is adopted by the congregation, a request can then be made to the Regional Conference Board of Directors (BOD) to place the item on the agenda of the Regional Conference Annual Meeting. If it becomes part of the agenda of the Regional Conference Annual Meeting, and if a resolution or recommendation is adopted by the Region, a request can then be made for it to be on the agenda of the General Assembly.

These processes enable a very broad-based conversation and decision-making to take place at every level of denominational life.

Congregational Authority and Decision-Making

Each BIC U.S. congregation is expected to have at least one business meeting in each calendar year. At this meeting the members of the congregation have authority to amend, repeal, or suspend any part of the congregational bylaws (subject to the approval of the Regional Conference BOD), appoint members of the governing board of the congregation, and take action on any recommendations deemed necessary by the governing board for the functioning of the congregation.

Once a congregational governing board is appointed, its duty is to provide for the administration of the congregation consistent with the actions of the congregational business meeting. In addition, the governing board serves, under the direction and authority of the bishop, as the lead pastor search committee and the lead pastor review committee. Once a lead pastor is assigned by the bishop, the governing board also serves as a support and advisory group for the lead pastor.

In order for grass-roots participation in the exercise of authority to take place, it is important for congregational members to attend and participate in the annual congregational business meeting.

Regional Conference Authority and Decision-Making

Regional Conferences are the geographic units of the BIC U.S. Each Regional Conference is led by a Regional Bishop and a Regional Conference BOD. Each Regional Conference must have at least one business meeting in each calendar year (Annual Meeting). This meeting includes all assigned ministers in the Region and delegates elected by every congregation in the Region. The voting members of the annual meeting appoint the members of the Regional BOD. The BOD helps to provide leadership to the Region, and it serves as the nominating committee for the Regional Bishop. The nominee for Bishop is approved by the General Conference Board and appointed by the voting members of the Annual Meeting of the Regional Conference.

In order for grass-roots participation in the exercise of authority to take place, it is important that all assigned pastors attend the Annual Meeting of the Regional Conference and that every congregation sends a full complement of elected delegates to the meeting.

Denominational Authority and Decision-Making

The General Assembly is the highest authority in the Church. It alone has the authority to amend, repeal, or suspend any part of the MDG, to set the number and boundaries of Regional Conferences of BIC U.S., to appoint members of the General Conference Board, and to appoint the National Director of BIC U.S. (Bylaw 2.2, 2022 MDG, page 35).

The General Conference Board includes members who are known as “the board member from (named) Regional Conference” (Bylaw 3.4.2, 2022 MDG, page 38). These members are recommended by the Regional Bishop in consultation with the Regional Conference Board of Directors, nominated by the General Conference Board, confirmed by the Regional Conference, and appointed by the General Assembly.

In order for grass-roots participation in the exercise of authority to take place, it is important that all assigned pastors attend the biennial General Assembly and that every congregation sends a full complement of elected delegates to the meeting.

ACTION:

Notes

9. Leadership Council's Response to the Recommendations of the Women in Ministry Task Force

In 2022, the women in ministry task force submitted a report to the Leadership Council (LC). A report was provided to the 2022 General Assembly. The final section of the report included recommendations from the task force to LC. These recommendations were considered and discussed by LC and the following is a summary of the LC response to the recommendations.

1. Develop policies related to sexism, nepotism, and the abuse of power that carefully define the issues and provide clear direction on how to identify and address specific situations.

LC Response: The BIC U.S. employee handbook (for employees of the denomination) has sections related to these topics. LC encourages congregations to utilize the BIC U.S. employee handbook as a template for developing local congregational staff handbooks. BIC U.S. is finalizing an updated Ministerial Misconduct Policy (MMP), and it addresses these topics. When it is finalized, each minister and congregation should make sure they are familiar with the MMP.

2. Develop a grievance and appeals policy for congregational staff members during situations of conflict with the senior/lead pastor. The policy should also include a process for addressing the trauma experienced by a staff member, as well as the designation of an impartial ombudsman to handle the grievance and appeals process.

LC Response: The BIC U.S. employee handbook (for employees of the denomination) has sections related to these topics. The BIC U.S. Ministerial Misconduct Policy (MMP) addresses these topics, and each minister and congregation should make sure they are familiar with the MMP.

3. Revise the "Articles of Faith and Doctrine" so that they clearly articulate the theological position of the Brethren in Christ affirming women in ministry.

LC Response: Amending the Articles of Faith and Doctrine of BIC U.S. requires a two-thirds majority vote at two successive biennial meetings of the General Assembly. The 2022 General Assembly took the first vote to amend the Articles of Faith and Doctrine. The 2024 General Assembly will have the responsibility to take the second vote.

4. Include all policies related to sexism, nepotism, abuse of power, and handling grievances and appeals in the Manual of Doctrine and Government.

LC Response: The 2022 General Assembly approved updates to the Congregational Governance section of the MDG. These include guidance for the hiring and discipline, in the event of misconduct, of pastoral staff. Please see Article 8 on page 68 and Article 9 on page 70 of the 2022 MDG. The MMP (see response to #1 and #2) will contain these policies. Future consideration will be given to include these in the MDG.

5. Develop templates for congregations to develop their own specific policies that protect against sexism, nepotism, and abuse of power and point to resources that will help individuals know how to file a complaint or grievance, including a single point of contact.

LC Response: We affirm that congregations should be aware of the importance of these topics and will continue to provide and/or recommend resources. These resources include the BIC U.S. employee handbook as an example or template, the BIC U.S. Ministerial Misconduct Policy, and other resources made available from time to time from the denominational office.

6. Ensure that all candidates for bishop and denominational employment demonstrate affirmation for women in ministry, in addition to other Brethren in Christ distinctives, and are advocates for women in ministry. Current bishops and denominational employees, during their term reviews, should also reaffirm their support and advocacy for women in ministry.

LC Response: The screening that is suggested in this recommendation is already in place and all members of Leadership Council affirm and advocate for women in ministry. This screening will continue to be part of the search and nomination process for members of LC.

7. Update Articles VI and VII in the Congregational Handbook section of the Manual of Doctrine and Government and create guidelines for job descriptions and titles so it is clear who can be a “pastor.”

LC Response: The 2022 General Assembly approved amendments to the MDG. Helpful sections of the 2022 MDG include Bylaws Articles 13.1, Congregational Governance Articles 1.4, 6.3.2, 8, 9, and Credentialing Articles 1.1, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, 6.1.

8. Require that all individuals who hold the title of pastor go through the credentialing process.

LC Response: This is already the case for assigned lead pastors. We affirm the desire, and we recommend to every congregation that any person who is given the title “pastor” by a local congregation go through the BIC U.S. credentialing process.

9. Expand the Leadership Council to include the Director of Awaken Network as a voting member.

LC Response: We do not affirm this recommendation. Leadership Council believes that the best way to include the Director of the Awaken Network in Leadership Council conversations is to invite her/him to participate when the Leadership Council Advisory Team (LCAT) meets with Leadership Council.

10. Add all Awaken regional conference representatives as voting members of regional boards of directors.

LC Response: We do not affirm this recommendation. Leadership boards tend to be healthier and more effective than representative boards. We do not have any other

affinity groups represented on Regional Conference BODs. Demographic analysis of Regional Conference BODs indicate they are balanced with male/female members.

11. Ensure that women are more visible in denominational and regional events and leadership.

LC Response: We affirm this recommendation and will continue to be alert to its importance.

12. Update the “Women as Pastors” impact seminar curriculum and offer it at regular intervals.

LC Response: We affirm the suggestion of more frequent teaching on the Church’s position on women in leadership as well as other theological distinctives or “accents” of BIC U.S. We affirm making resources available to the Church. The newly developed “Getting to Know the BIC” (see response to #13 and also #14) will be helpful in this regard.

13. Add a core course on Brethren in Christ distinctives, including topics like women in ministry and peace, or restructure the existing core courses to ensure that attention is given to them.

LC Response: We affirm denominational resources being available to help people better understand the theological distinctives or “accents” of BIC U.S. An online course is currently under development that is intended to meet this need and it will be a required course for any person desiring ministerial credentialing with BIC U.S. We strongly encourage any individual desiring or currently serving in a ministry leadership position to complete the course.

14. Add a Directed Study Program (DSP) course on the biblical basis for women in ministry.

LC Response: We affirm that denominational resources on the biblical basis for women in ministry should be available. This could take the form of a DSP course and/or other formats.

15. Promote Awaken’s online resource library on women in ministry.

LC Response: We affirm the work of Awaken and encourage use of its website: awakennetwork.org. We will continue to include information in BIC U.S. communications on Awaken.

16. Provide funding for the director for Awaken and empower the Awaken Network to do the following:

- A. Create a credentialing team to support women through the credentialing process.
- B. Explore creating a scholarship fund or subsidy at the regional conference level for women while they complete the credentialing process.

- C. Advocate for bishops and senior/lead pastors to encourage women to complete the credentialing process and to offer financial assistance for those in part-time and volunteer positions.
- D. Offer mentorships, leadership development activities, and peer support groups for women in ministry.
- E. Identify and encourage women with pastoral potential and forward the information about potential women pastors to bishops and congregations.
- F. Develop a cadre of women who can teach core courses, directed study courses, and impact seminars.
- G. Create opportunities for bishops to meet with all women in pastoral positions.
- H. Create, maintain, and promote an online library of recommended books, videos, podcasts, and other resources on women in ministry.
- I. Continue to develop Awaken representation in each region and strengthen relationships with bishops and boards of directors.
- J. Appoint women to serve as denominational representatives to relevant national interdenominational organizations (for example, Wesleyan Holiness Women Clergy).

LC Response: BIC U.S. affirms and supports the ministry of the Awaken Network for Women in Ministry. Funds were provided from BIC U.S. Project 250 funds. Awaken has worked and continues to work on a number of these specific recommendations. Maureen Brown, the Director of Awaken, participates annually in the BIC Leadership Orientation. A copy of her annual report is distributed by BIC U.S. to the annual meetings of each Regional Conference and to General Assembly.

ACTION:

Notes

Part 3:

Covenant & Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Reports

A. Lifeline Ministries Women's Shelter Inc., Upland, Calif. (Covenant)

In 2023, Pacific Lifeline's long-term comprehensive housing program provided case management, therapy, life skills training, and child development services to eight families (eight women and nine children). Our Next Steps housing program provided housing at reduced rent to two families (two women and three children). In addition, our extended care services provided a back to school program, Thanksgiving food, Christmas gifts, and weekly community resource emails to 40 families.

2023 highlights from each program:

- One of our shelter residents graduated from nursing school and got a full-time job as a school nurse.
- A family moved into one of our Next Steps houses. The mom is working full-time, and her son is doing well in school.
- On November 28th, we held the groundbreaking for a duplex, which will expand our Next Steps program in 2024.

Pacific Lifeline's residents are immediately engaged in a comprehensive, strategic, individualized program that guides them from homelessness to self sufficiency.

Brittany worked on budgeting, saving, increasing her income, and reunification within her family, and she moved into stable housing near an adult son. Her eight-year-old daughter improved self-regulation and greatly decreased aggressive behavior.

Breanna found childcare for her daughter, worked as a substitute teacher, worked on budgeting and building her credit, and got a full-time job with benefits with San Bernardino County. Her three-year-old daughter improved her communication and social skills.

Danielle graduated from nursing school, got a full time job as a school nurse and a part time job at a hospital, and continued her nursing education online, working toward becoming a Registered Nurse. Her one-year-old son increased his motor skills through music play with children's staff.

Isabel became a Certified Nursing Assistant, found affordable childcare, and worked toward becoming an LVN (expects to graduate in early 2024). Our children's staff helped her potty train her three-year-old.

Ashley worked on budgeting, saving, and building her credit. She found an apartment to rent with her sister. Her five-year-old son successfully transitioned into kindergarten.

Hannah saved for and bought a car, worked toward finishing her phlebotomy program, and got a job before moving out. Our children's staff helped her two-year-old daughter increase her vocabulary.

Courtney started taking classes at Chaffey Adult School to earn her high school diploma.

She also worked on her resume and job search. Her five-year-old daughter increased her social and vocabulary skills through working with our children's staff.

Whitney worked on budgeting, saving to buy a car, and enrolling her child in daycare. Through working with our children's staff, her eighteen-month-old son is now recognizing words for objects.

Carmen Hall
Executive Director

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B. Mennonite Central Committee (U.S.) (MOU)

Mennonite Central Committee, a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches, shares God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. MCC envisions communities worldwide in right relationship with God, one another, and creation.

The following are several highlights of MCC's work in the past two years.

- MCC partners with Brethren in Christ Church (BICC) Zambia schools in Southern Province to support quality education including teacher training, school repairs, and classroom supplies. MCC supports peace clubs and offers child protection training in the 12 BICC schools, with the aim of promoting a safe and peaceful learning environment for children. In Choma District, MCC and BICC are working on a conservation agriculture project in six rural communities.
- For families caught in conflict or displaced from their homes in Ukraine, colorful comforters created by MCC volunteers provided needed winter warmth – but also reminded people that they are not alone in their suffering. From February 2022 through January 2023, MCC provided 63,822 comforters, 72,000 hygiene kits, 25,339 relief kits, and 123,840 pounds of canned meat to partners in Ukraine.
- We give thanks for BIC representatives on MCC U.S. and regional boards in the past two years: Anna Bolembach, Dave Downey, Jose Lemus, Ruth Leshner, Jonathan Lloyd, Stan Morgan, Fellistus Munakombwe, Rebeca Pedroza, Hannah Snavley, Ben Stoner, and David R. Swartz.

MCC's work is not possible without the efforts of thousands of volunteers. Thank you for serving at MCC Thrift shops, relief sales, meat canning sites, and material resources centers, and for your prayers and financial support.

Thank you for being part of MCC's ministry in the name of Christ,

Ann Graber Hershberger, *MCC U.S. executive director*

Jonathan Lloyd, *MCC U.S. board member*

C. Messiah University, Mechanicsburg, Pa. (Covenant)

Messiah started the 2023-24 academic year with a total of 2,586 undergraduate students, including 596 new first-time students (exceeding our goal!) as well as 751 total graduate students. This fall we also educated 140 dual enrollment students, an exciting increase rooted in our expanded partnerships with high schools in and beyond our region. Our School of Graduate and Professional Studies continues to develop new degree programs that meet employer and societal needs such as a new Master of Social Work program (planned to launch in 2024) and a new Master of Music Therapy degree (planned to launch in 2025). This year, Messiah also introduced two new in-demand undergraduate programs—a major in robotics engineering, and an accelerated 4+1 business program that allows students to earn both a bachelor's degree and an MBA in just five years.

The University continues to fulfill the goals and priorities of its institutional strategic plan, “University Rising: the Strategic Plan for Messiah 2022-2024.” Some important updates include:

- The work of the Bridge Center for Continuing Education that develops strategic, transformative university partnerships such as:
 - A partnership between with Messiah Lifeways that collaborates on the training and of the next generation of certified nursing assistants.
 - An educational partnership with Catherine Hershey Schools for Early Learning that includes internships for Messiah University students, training and development programs, and employment and mentorship opportunities.
 - A collaboration with the Long-Term Care Resiliency, Infrastructure Supports and Empowerment (RISE) program to design and provide training to address/support the spiritual needs of employees in long-term care facilities in the South Central PA region.
 - A new partnership with The Pittsburgh Promise, a collaborative, innovative program that provides scholarships and support services to graduates from Pittsburgh Public Schools.
 - Continuing to grow our network of K-12 Pathway Partners program that allows Messiah to work together in a variety of ways with other schools that share our high-quality, Christ-centered educational mission.
 - Working with local school districts to address the teacher shortage in Pennsylvania through dual enrollment/experiential learning programs in teacher education and developing an initial certification track for emergency/intern certified teachers in local school districts through our Graduate Program in Education.

- Accreditation of our cybersecurity major, this year Messiah's program earned designation as a National Security Agency Center for Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense (CAE-CDE), an indicator of academic quality for the nation's growing cyber workforce.
- The public launch of a new wellness initiative that expanded community access to Messiah's Falcon Fitness Center and programming—and a new personal rehabilitation and exercise program (PREP).

Current fundraising/facility priorities for the University include expanding the Engle Center for Counseling and Health Services to care for the physical and mental health of our students (completed August 2023) and an enhanced main campus entrance area (construction planned to begin in spring 2024). We are also enhancing hospitality/concession areas at Starry Athletic Complex, as well as new stadium seating for lacrosse (construction planned to begin spring 2024). Phase 2 of this project will include improved seating/dug-out areas for baseball/softball and a welcome plaza. Throughout all of these changes and growth, we remain thankful for your support and for God's faithfulness to Messiah University as we live out our mission to educate students toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith.

Kim S. Phipps
President

KPHIPPS@MESSIAH.EDU

D. Messiah Lifeways, Mechanicsburg, Pa. (Covenant)

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior! As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude for the blessings and successes that have unfolded at Messiah Lifeways over the past year.

In the past year, our community has experienced significant changes, welcoming new residents who have enriched our community. The vibrancy within our community has strengthened the bonds of faith, fostering a supportive environment for all. The well-being of our residents remains a top priority and we continue to enhance our programs and services as well as our physical spaces. In 2023, we renovated a vacated personal care space on campus to offer our new Bailey Street Apartments which allow us to serve more older adults of various economic means.

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce plans for our new satellite campus, Fernecrest, just ten minutes from our Messiah Village site. This campus will increase the number of older adults in Residential Living by adding a variety of housing options on this new site. This 85-acre farm will be developed to leverage the amenities and quality of care on the Messiah Village campus, while creating some unique opportunities created by the site. The ultimate aim is to create more opportunities for older adults to experience our rich community and enjoy the highest quality of life.

To strengthen our outreach and impact, we are continuing to seek collaborative partnerships with local organizations. These partnerships enhance the resources available to our residents and foster a sense of community beyond our walls. The annual report highlights our partnerships with Messiah University and Central Penn College and we continue to explore other opportunities in the future.

As we embark on this journey into the future, we covet your prayers and support. Together, as an institution with strong support from the Brethren in Christ, we can continue to build a thriving and compassionate community that reflects the love of our Lord. We continue to face challenges, but with prayer, I believe we can live out our mission to serve older adults with Christlike love.

May God's grace continue to abound in our midst.

Karl J. Brummer
President and CEO

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Financial statements were submitted to BIC U.S. For a copy of the complete financial statements, please contact Karl Brummer.

E. Navajo BIC Mission (Covenant)

2023 has been a very challenging, growing, and exciting year for Diane and me in so many ways.

From January through August, eight short-term mission teams did VBS and work projects, including three community homes painted, cleaned up around, and sheet rock hung.

SOOP (Service Opportunities for Other People) sent a married couple who were in their late 70's and 80's who assisted with tutoring students. They were such a joy to have, and the kids really missed them when they left. They especially loved their electric car.

Mennonite Your Way sent a married couple who planned to stay one night but stayed a week working on the campus and the school.

Beauty from Ashes hosted their retreat with the community which staff had the opportunity to attend. This program provides grief counseling and how to commit to a positive change.

Major improvements were made to the water cistern that supplies the staff and ministry buildings. This work was performed by New Vision BIC in Wisconsin with Doug as their lead worker. They assisted with looking at older furnaces on campus for repair or replacement by their HVAC specialist.

In September, a small team showed for a work project and laid floor in the Desert Wind Building, and assisted with rekeying all buildings on campus.

In October, Fall Fest was hosted on campus for the community which was HUGE success.

In December, Christmas Love Gift Outreach program was a huge blessing to the local community. We also provided presents to the local dormitory school, as well as the local nursing home. Community Christmas Celebration had a wonderful turn out, with Sayani Duo singing some songs, along with some members of the community. Diane and Duane Bristow were recognized for their time on the Mission and about their upcoming retirement and missionary placements. A teen center was dedicated in their name. Christmas Staff Dinner was a great time of fellowship among mission staff, with a great meal and many laughs.

On June 4th, the O'Conner family arrived on campus, moving into the two-story house. One of the rooms has issues with a water leak. This area was repaired, painted, and new flooring was installed by the New Vision BIC team.

Duane Bristow
Executive Director

REZDUANE@ME.COM

Part 4:

Related Reports

A. Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives, Mechanicsburg, Pa.

In 1952, the Brethren in Christ Church in North America established the Archives of the Brethren in Christ Church, in cooperation with Messiah College (now University) with the goal of ensuring “the adequate records storage which is demanded by a sense of stewardship.” Today, the Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives continues to fulfill its mission “to collect, preserve, organize, describe, and make available records of historical, legal, fiscal, and/or administrative value to . . . the BIC Church.”

During the last biennium Archives staff have continued our normal work of responding to research requests from church leaders, laypeople, and scholars; acquiring and processing new collections; and supporting the church and its ministries.

In addition to our regular responsibilities, Archives staff have engaged in three special projects during the biennium. In 2023, Dr. Dwight Thomas (retired professor at Messiah University and former minister of music at several Brethren in Christ congregations) donated a major collection of hymnals to the Archives. Once it is fully catalogued and rehoused, this collection will provide researchers with a comprehensive record of Brethren in Christ hymnody as well as information about those musical traditions from which the Brethren in Christ drew their repertoire. An additional part of Dr. Thomas’s donation is a set of vinyl and taped audio recordings, including recordings of Brethren in Christ quartets and other groups.

As a second project, Dr. Thomas has taken the lead in connecting the U.S. Archives to the wider Brethren in Christ world, most recently by having persons in Zambia and Zimbabwe identify individuals pictured in photographs from our collection. By posting scans of these photographs on social media sites, Dr. Thomas has curated an array of previously unknown information that will be of great value to future researchers.

The third project is our ongoing work on the Hispanic Leaders and Congregations Collecting Initiative, which seeks to document the history of Hispanic Brethren in Christ in the United States. This project has been generously funded by donations from the Southeast Regional Conference of the Brethren in Christ U.S. and several individuals, as well as a \$5,000 matching gift from the McBeth Trust. Many of the materials collected through this initiative will be digitized and made available using MOSAIC, the Archives’ digital repository, available at mosaic.messiah.edu/bicarchives.

Devin Manzullo-Thomas
Director of Archives

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B. Brethren in Christ Historical Society

During this biennium we welcomed three new members to our governing board: David Weaver-Zercher, professor at Messiah University, and David Downey, site pastor of The Meeting House, Dillsburg, Pa., and Christina Embree, from Lexington, Ky., a church planter, Next Generation Coordinator and Minister of Generational Discipleship at Plowshares Brethren in Christ Church and Founder and President of Re-Focus Ministry, which has the mission of connecting generations at church and at home. We try to keep a balance between scholars and ministers. We regret the retirement of our secretary, Beth Mark, whose good ideas and skill with words will be missed. We also regret David Downey needing to leave our work because of another assignment with Mennonite Central Committee. Our loss is their gain.

Our Heritage Service in 2022 focused on the work of the Spirit, with a presentation by Rob Douglass. We also assisted with a tour of historic Brethren in Christ sites during the General Assembly in Salina, Kans. in July. Our Heritage Service in 2023 was a joint meeting with our historic brothers and sisters – the Old Order River Brethren, United Zion, and Brethren in Christ Churches. This service takes place on the first Sunday of June annually.

The 2022 annual meeting featured a preview of a project to create a digital replica of the Ringgold Meetinghouse. Steve Long, a land surveyor and member of the Fairview Avenue Brethren in Christ Church in Waynesboro, Pa., described the process which creates a “digital twin” of the meetinghouse that would make it possible to reproduce the building exactly. We anticipate that the digital building will be available online and the link will be published on our website. The 2023 Annual Meeting focused on the 70th anniversary of the Japanese BIC Church. It featured greetings from the Japanese Church, pictures of people who served there, and a significant conversation with a panel of former missionaries related to this significant work.

The features in the journal, *Brethren in Christ History and Life*, have shifted somewhat to balance between stories from our tradition and critical research. The stories have included those who have not been church leaders but have faithfully served without notice. The critical research has focused on being a resource for Brethren in Christ leaders. The August 2022 edition is an excellent example of this balance with the story of Bertha Heisey, a well-researched analysis of one year in the life of Frances Davidson, qualitative research on our core values, and the printed version of the Schrag Lecture at Messiah University in March about the Western wheat harvest featuring the Wolgemuth family from the Cross Roads Brethren in Christ Church.

Issues of the Journal in 2023 included scholarly papers from the Sider Institute Conference on Christian Nationalism; Jonathan Strayer’s exploration of how we got the name, Brethren in Christ; Wendy Urban-Mead’s analysis of the BIC church in Rhodesia during World War I; and Richard Hughes’s Schrag Lecture on questions related to the Anabaptist Vision. The Journal has also continued its focus on storytelling: Costandy Saba’s account of growing up in the midst of the Israeli-Palestine conflict; Zach Spidel’s reframing the story of Rhoda Lee; Charlotte Brechbill-White’s account of her childhood; Timothy Epp’s narrative on

how Anabaptists addressed “blackness;” Nancy and M.J. Heisey’s story of Elsie Bechtel’s relief work in France after World War II; Pauline Peifer’s article on her parents, Isaac and Maybelle Kanode; and Marion Musser’s survey of the history of New Hope Ministries.

We post each edition of the journal on our website where it is accessible to members, and we have a significant inventory of books and past editions of the journal available for sale (contact the editor).

Larger projects are in process that include two manuscripts, a biography of Morris Sider and a history of the BIC in the twentieth century; research on BIC in Zambia; a history of BIC Missions, and a biography of Robert Smith. Thanks to our competent, visionary editor, Harriet Sider-Bicksler, for the hours of work she devotes to nurturing these articles and books from research to publication. To assist the editor the Governing Board approved a formal process for how the Historical Society will work with potential book authors.

Our President and Executive Director met with Alan Robinson, the National Director of BIC U.S. to talk about the relationship between the Historical Society and the Church. We reviewed our mutual Covenant and affirmed our agreement to meet annually. Our Historical Society reaffirms our goal to serve as a resource to the Church.

We are deeply indebted to our diligent, resourceful staff members. We are coming toward a time of transition within our staff leadership. We are grateful that they have consented to work with the Society and train persons who will move into their positions. Along with the officers, the Executive Director and Editor carry the major portion of the workload of the Society.

We are grateful for those who serve the Historical Society in so many ways. Pray for us as we work to support the BIC church and its members.

John Yeatts, President
 David Flowers, Vice President
 Henry Johnson, Secretary
 Karen Ulery, Treasurer
 David Weaver-Zercher
 Christina Embree, Member-at-Large
 John Dietz, Old Order
 Jay Showalter, United Zion
 Leonard Chester, Canadian BIC Representative

Harriet Bicksler, Editor
 Ken Hoke, Executive Director
 Devin Manzullo-Thomas, Archivist
 Glen Pierce, Assistant Archivist

For more information go to bic-history.org.

Kenneth O. Hoke
Executive Director

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