



**Brethren in Christ U.S.**

2021

# ANNUAL REPORT

Doing a new thing





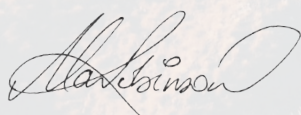
# DEAR FRIENDS,

In Isaiah 43:19, the LORD says, “See, I am doing a new thing!” God is faithful, unchanging in his being, and yet he is constantly involved in what is new. Critically for the followers of Jesus, we read of a new commandment in John 13:34-35: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

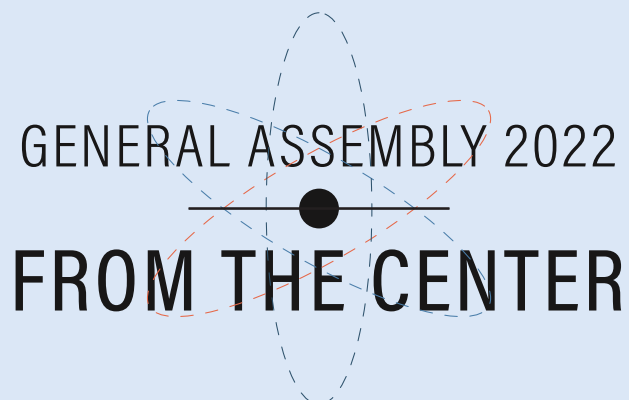
Living the new commandment in an ever-changing world requires us to also be involved in new things. I am grateful that across the Brethren in Christ there are many ways we are seeking to partner with God. This Annual Report briefly shares some of these new things. You will read of expanding cross-cultural ministry opportunities in Southern California through Gateway Karis BIC, new General Conference Board members and their hopes for the future, and BIC U.S. missionaries responding to God's calling to do something unexpected through their vocation.

God is still doing new things. And he continues to work in and through human beings. May we be committed to partnering with him in these works.

Thank you for your partnership in these new things.



**Alan Robinson**  
National Director  
Brethren in Christ U.S.



Join us in Salina, Kansas for our 2022 General Assembly, July 22-25. This year's theme – From the Center – encourages us to examine the core of our faith while also reflecting on our growth. We pray this event is an opportunity to reconnect with brothers and sisters from the larger BIC family and return to home congregations encouraged and equipped to continue the work that God has for us.

240  
congregational sites  
across 21 states

BIC U.S.  
congregational  
presence

congregational sites  
across 21 states



on average attended weekly services  
in-person and online

began or renewed  
relationships with Jesus\*



individuals baptized\*

27 ministers  
licensed



4 ministers  
ordained



508

ministers currently licensed  
or ordained (12/31/21)

2



# UNITY IN DIVERSITY

## Two multicultural churches unite in Southern California

It was a warm October day in Southern California, and the meeting room held a quiet buzz as twenty pastors waited for the course to start. These pastors had gathered from across California, Arizona, and even Japan to attend a BIC U.S. Core Course on the Theology of Salvation at Gateway Karis BIC in Chino, California.

Within the Brethren in Christ, Core Courses help lay the foundation for ministry. Many of these course participants were young pastors from diverse backgrounds, and at the end of this two-day course, they left better equipped for ongoing ministry and more connected with fellow BIC pastors.

While this may seem like an ordinary theology course, the story of Gateway Karis BIC and the growth this Core Course represents is a story worth sharing.



**Pastor Peter Song**

### A Foundation of Friendship

Five years ago, Gateway BIC and Karis Church were two separate congregations meeting under the same roof. Land in Southern California is expensive, and smaller congregations frequently rent from larger ones. Karis Church, led by Pastor Peter Song, was an independent congregation made up of younger Korean and Chinese families. In 2017, they began renting space from Gateway BIC.

The congregation of Gateway BIC, one of the oldest BIC churches in the Pacific Conference, was at the time mostly white, Hispanic, and Black. Because of the church's large facility, it was not uncommon for them to rent building space to other local congregations.

Gateway's senior pastor Paul Lehman-Schletewitz saw these leases as an opportunity to connect with local church leaders. "The Lord has already brought us together," he said. "How can we work together?" Paul intentionally built relationships with the pastors of each congregation that shared their space and looked for ways to collaborate in ministry.

Soon after Karis' rental agreement was finalized, Paul invited Peter to meet for prayer and fellowship. From Peter's per-

spective, "This is the guy who controls my church's lease – how can I say no?" Now, four years later, the church co-leaders laugh about Peter's initial reaction.

Through monthly meetings, pastors Paul and Peter quickly discovered they had attended the same school and shared some of the same mentors. Soon, the relationship between landlord and leaseholder transformed into one of genuine friendship and camaraderie as brothers in Christ.



**Pastor Paul  
Lehman-Schletewitz**

### Becoming BIC

Out of Peter and Paul's friendship, Gateway BIC and Karis Church started partnering in ministry. First, they launched joint preschool and kindergarten programs, and eventually this collaboration expanded to a youth Sunday school class and college outreach initiative.

As the relationship between the two congregations continued to blossom, the seeds were planted for Karis Church to join the Brethren in Christ. In 2018, Pastor Peter called the Karis congregation together for a churchwide meeting to address one question: do we join the BIC? After the congregation voted, the way forward was clear with over 96% of members voting to officially join.

The two now-BIC congregations continued to share the same building and partner in children's and youth ministry. After a while, they felt led to join as one church body, and in 2019, this unified group of diverse congregants became officially known as Gateway Karis BIC.

### A Marriage of Churches

Less than three years after they met, pastors Peter and Paul found themselves jointly leading a multicultural, multigenerational congregation. While Paul says it felt like a breath of fresh air for the two congregations to unite as one, he is frank about the challenges the group faced. Any two congregations coming together will bring their own expectations for worship and fellowship. For Gateway Karis, this melding also



included the cultures of the Korean, white, Chinese, Black, and Hispanic individuals that made up the congregation.

For this diverse group of individuals to walk together in life and ministry, Gateway Karis had to rely on the grace of God. Peter and Paul recognized that their relationship could model the unity they wanted the whole church to embrace, and the two men intentionally led with humility and understanding. They encouraged their staff, lay leaders, and congregants to spend time with members of different ethnic backgrounds, learning from each other and growing in faith together.

The congregation's pursuit of unity can clearly be seen each Sunday morning with services in Korean, English, and live translations into Mandarin. While this multilingual approach means that each congregant can hear a message in their own language, Paul recognized early on that there was potential for the church to become a collection of disjointed ministries separated by language. That idea didn't fit within the vision for a unified Gateway Karis congregation. The pastors of Gateway Karis now preach on the same subject or passage of scripture each week so all members hear the same message, even if the language is different.

### Building for the Future

The future is bright for Gateway Karis. The Core Course they hosted in the Fall is just an early indicator of its potential, and the congregation is positioned to deeply impact its members, the broader Chino, Calif. community, and even individuals an ocean away.

Many of Gateway Karis' younger staff members participated in the Core Course and are working to become licensed BIC ministers. Pastor Peter has a passion to raise the next generation and closely disciples these emerging leaders, preparing them for their own dynamic leadership and ministry.

Soon, the staff of Gateway Karis will be able to minister to an entirely new segment of the Chino community. Construction for a church building in a developing residential area is underway and will be this growing ministry's new home. This location is across the street from a junior community college, and Pastor Paul hopes that this move will enable the church to reach more young families and college students.

Additionally, Gateway Karis' future vision includes international impact. Pastor Mitsuru Ishido of BIC Japan participated in the Core Course this Fall. As a pastor in a Christian-minority country, he was deeply encouraged by the fellowship at Gateway Karis, and he returned to Japan rejuvenated for ministry. In the future, Peter hopes to provide more of these training opportunities to international BIC pastors so they can be uplifted by the greater body of Christ.

### Shared Vision

Pastors Peter and Paul hope their story encourages other pastors and churches to build relationships with each other across ethnicities and social barriers. "If we work together with the genuine sense that we want to build the Kingdom – not my ministry or my name – we can find some amazing opportunities for common ministry that are greater than the sum of their parts," says Paul.

The story of Gateway Karis BIC includes a much bigger dream than just the impact of one diverse congregation. Theirs is a shared vision for a preview of the atmosphere of eternity. Gateway Karis may not have multitudes "from every nation, tribe, people, and language," but their multicultural, multigenerational, multilingual church is a sweet foretaste of the glory of Heaven (Rev 7:9).



Theology of Salvation Core Course Participants



In 2020, we launched **Project 250**, five priorities to guide BIC U.S. to our 250th birthday in 2028. We have been working hard over the past year to set these priorities in motion.

### Hiring a Project 250 Coordinator

In August, Jennifer Lancaster joined the team as the Project 250 Coordinator. She works closely with BIC U.S. leadership to pursue the collective desires of the project. As the project unfolds over the next several years, she encourages BIC congregations to “lean into embracing these priorities as foundational to the BIC identity.”

### Impact Seminar: The Basin and the Towel – Approaching Global Ministry Through Servanthood

This fall, BIC U.S. World Missions hosted Impact Seminars in each regional conference which addressed the third and fourth Project 250 priorities. These seminars sought to raise awareness of the need for and challenges of cross-cultural ministry and help participants better understand the global BIC Church.

Each event included presentations from World Missions staff, video clips from international BIC leaders, and break-out discussions. Over 40% of BIC U.S. ministers participated in one of the seven events. “The information that was covered in this seminar was vast,” said Glenda Baublitz, family ministries pastor at New Life Community Church in Carlisle, Pa. “The videos of active missionaries and their stories brought a deep level of vulnerability to our break-out discussions.”

### Leadership Council Advisory Team

The newly established Leadership Council Advisory Team (LCAT) met for the first time in September. “Leadership Council wanted to ensure that conversations had by Leadership Council accurately reflected the diversity of BIC U.S.,” said Alan Robinson. LCAT members represent each regional conference and contribute their diverse perspectives to Leadership Council decision making. The team seeks to empower and promote the leadership capabilities of appropriately qualified women and people of color across the BIC, directly working to address the fifth Project 250 priority.

### What's Ahead in 2022?

BIC U.S. has partnered with MissionInsite to deliver demographic reports for our church communities. These reports will provide information about local communities as well as the demographic make-up of congregations. Access to this reporting will benefit individual congregations as they seek to minister to their community. Additionally, BIC U.S. will be better suited to allocate resources and develop ministry-specific initiatives to support congregations.

*Learn more at [bicus.org/project-250/](https://bicus.org/project-250/)*



**Jennifer Lancaster**  
Project 250 Coordinator



**Mark Templeton**  
Development Officer

Planned giving through your will or accumulated assets is an effective and easy way to partner with the work of Brethren in Christ U.S., regional BIC U.S. conferences, World Missions, or a specific BIC congregation. If you have made or would like to discuss a provision in your estate plan, we invite you to contact Mark Templeton for further information about the Brethren in Christ U.S. Legacy Society.

[templeton@bicus.org](mailto:templeton@bicus.org) | 717-697-2634 ext. 5421



# WORLD MISSIONS

## 77 GLOBAL WORKERS

including BIC U.S. employees and partners located in

## 20 COUNTRIES

41% of  
global team

served among least-reached peoples

 World Missions  
presence  
For security, World Missions  
presence in three countries  
is not represented on map.

\$149,351

in aid was distributed from the Global  
Compassion Fund, providing relief from:

COVID-19 .....	\$23,755
Natural disasters .....	\$30,208
Famine .....	\$72,658
Other .....	\$22,730

9+ countries

received aid including: Cuba, Ecuador,  
India, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nepal,  
Venezuela, and Zimbabwe

37

international church  
plants supported

\$149,960

sponsored 815 children in  
the SPICE program

47 initiatives

supported through the  
Partnership Handbook

LEARN MORE: [PARTNERSHIP.BICUS.ORG](https://partnership.bicus.org)

77



ministry scholarships  
awarded to international  
leaders

19



participants in the  
Missionary Development  
Program



# MANY VOCATIONS, ONE MISSION

## How missionaries use their professional skills in the field

It all started with an email to Donald and Karen Vundhla: there is an Administrative Coordinator role in southern Africa and we think you would be a great fit.

The Vundhlas, preparing to enter their retirement years, were hesitant. “His first thought – and probably mine too – was, ‘That’s jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire!’” Karen recalls, laughing.

After retirement, Donald and Karen had already planned to return to Zimbabwe (Donald’s home country and where they first met while Karen served at the BIC Mtshabezi Mission in the 70s). They had even considered spending a year or two in voluntary service. But jumping into full-time ministry was an entirely different commitment altogether.

However, the seed was planted.

The more they prayed and sought God’s will, the clearer it was that Donald and Karen were meant to take this role. In May 2021, they packed up their home in Baltimore, Maryland, kissed their two daughters goodbye, and boarded a plane to begin a new chapter of life in southern Africa.

### A Doorway to a New Culture

Since the Brethren in Christ first started sending missionaries over 120 years ago, the landscape of missionary service has greatly changed. Most BIC missionaries have modern conveniences like reliable electricity and running water, and many are stationed in more urban or suburban areas. But

some things haven’t changed. Relationships remain the heart of mission work, and humility and teachability create the foundation for sharing the truth of the Gospel in understandable, culturally-appropriate ways.

Modern cross-cultural workers come from a variety of backgrounds and often use their professional training, skills, and experience to share the Gospel. The BIC U.S. World Missions team today includes teachers, engineers, professors, accountants, agricultural experts, pastors, doctors, and nurses. Professional skills provide a unique opportunity to integrate into new cultures in incarnational ways, and at times open doors that may otherwise be closed.

### Nursing and Hospitality in Dearborn

Jenni\* grew up in Pennsylvania and first sensed a call to cross-cultural ministry – specifically among Muslims and Arabs – while in middle school. This missional mindset directly impacted her college career. She first started studying psychology, but soon changed her major to nursing because “it was a quicker way into helping people,” she says.

Today, Jenni lives and works in Dearborn, Michigan, which World Missions identified as a strategic location for ministry in 2018. Dearborn is home to the largest concentration of Muslims in the U.S., and many of them come from lesser-reached people groups in countries that do not welcome missionaries and Christian organizations.

Jenni serves as a Kingdom Professional, a missions-minded individual using their vocational skills to practically impact the community with the Gospel. She works at a local clinic and teaches the next generation of healthcare workers at a nearby university. While these professional roles allowed her to care for people in practical ways, she deeply desired to build more interpersonal connections even closer to home.

Many of her neighbors are first- or second-generation immigrants, and Jenni is one of only a handful of non-Arabs in her community. When she first moved in, her new neighbors were somewhat wary of her. Building trust took time, but she kept waiting for the right doors to open. In a strange twist, the right door was her own.



Donald and Karen Vundhla







**Islamic Temple in Dearborn, Michigan**

As a homeowner, she started renting rooms to a couple of single women. One of these women was a Muslim refugee who had minimal resources and faced many challenges. Jenni worked hard to make sure this woman was welcomed and cared for, and the community noticed. Jenni's hospitality had a ripple effect and earned her significant respect and opened previously-closed doors within her neighborhood.

Jenni points out that much of Jesus' ministry was simply being with people exactly where they were. "My job is to care for people," she says, "and the Bible says that the kindness of the Lord will bring people to repentance." (Rom. 2:4) Jenni's prayer is that her faith, care, and kindness – whether in her home or at the clinic – will show others the way to Christ.

### **Administration and Mentorship in Southern Africa**

Donald and Karen are putting their lifetimes of professional experience to work in their new administrative roles. Prior to their move to southern Africa, Karen was an oncology nurse, and Donald worked in business management and accounting. He also possesses a Master of Divinity, and together they have many years of ministry experience. "I should have known really that skills we acquire pop up in unexpected areas," Donald now reflects.

In his new ministry role, Donald walks alongside bishops and pastors throughout southern Africa. He helps them develop new leaders and wrestle with theological and spiritual matters as the church continues to grow. Thanks to his accounting expertise, he can also offer advice to conferences

that are struggling financially. "My business and accounting experience has been invaluable in finding ways that conferences can financially weather these challenging times [of COVID]," Donald says.

Karen's 46 years in nursing and management have translated to this new season of life as well. While she may not be working in the medical field any longer, she has a unique ability to observe needs, often beyond words spoken. She is also highly detail oriented. These combined traits are an invaluable asset as she and Donald continue to build relationships throughout the region.

While service in Africa may not have been part of their original retirement plan, the Vundhls know that God still has work for them to do. "The past can be our training field for further 'mission work,'" says Donald, "but we don't retire from being Christians and following the paths God has for us."

### **Creative Service**

We serve a creative God who uses our passions and previous experiences to build his Kingdom. "When we look in our past," Donald says, "we will see how the Lord prepared us for wherever we are today and tomorrow." He points to the examples of David and Moses who were both shepherds before God called them to lead the Israelites through particularly turbulent stages of their history. These great leaders of Israel reveal how God uses the skills of his people to do his work in the world.

Donald, Karen, and Jenni can each attest to how God used their seemingly random prior experiences to uniquely position them to impact their communities. From helping church leaders deal with the realities of COVID-19 to caring for immigrants and refugees within the United States, their professional skills have enabled them to impact their world for Christ.

*\*Name changed and likeness not shown to protect ministry relationships.*





# NEW PERSPECTIVES

## Q&A with GCB Members

Over the past two years, we've added many new members to our General Conference Board (GCB). They have brought with them fresh perspectives, new ideas, and passion for the Brethren in Christ Church in the U.S. We connected with GCB members Brian Mbuu, Jose Rodriguez, and Naomi Smith to hear what their experience has been so far and learn their hopes for the future of BIC U.S.

### How did you come to be a part of the BIC?

**Brian** – My wife and I started attending Harrisburg BIC (Pa.) after graduating from Messiah University. We felt a calling to be a part of a Church that strives to be an authentic and diverse congregation and joined as members in 2003.

**Jose** – Growing up, I was heavily involved in the first BIC missions congregation in Cuba, and then stepped into pastoral ministry when my family moved to Miami, Fl. in the late 80s. Since then, I've been involved in various regional conference leadership roles.

**Naomi** – My father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all BIC pastors. I grew up in a BIC church but have also spent time in Wesleyan and Mennonite churches. I am now back at home in the BIC but am deeply grateful for all the steps and stops on my spiritual journey.

### As a newer member, how would you describe your time on GCB so far?

**Brian** – It has given me a greater appreciation for all the work done by Leadership Council, various task forces, commissions, and our pastoral staff. We are blessed with many individuals that have different gifts and talents that are used to serve the Kingdom.

**Jose** – It has been an interesting season to start serving on GCB. The zoom meetings make it more difficult for interaction, but it has been a blessing to serve alongside my BIC brothers and sisters around the country.

**Naomi** – I had not served on a governing board before, so it felt like jumping into the deep end of the pool. I had a lot to learn about organizational culture and procedural rules. But I have enjoyed growing in appreciation for what it means to be a part of a decision-making body.



Jose Rodriguez



Brian Mbuu



Naomi Smith

### Much of the work of GCB goes on behind the scenes. For people who aren't familiar with GCB, what do you think is the most valuable component of its work for the larger church?

**Brian** – I believe that one of the most important aspects of GCB is how we steward our resources. Our resources are primarily comprised of people and finances, and it is important to keep both in mind when making decisions. I am encouraged and humbled to work with a team that values both aspects.

**Jose** – We take care of a wide range of administrative topics. In my short time on GCB, we've addressed gender discrimination allegations, temporary bishop placements, and revisions to the Manual of Doctrine and Government.

**Naomi** – Part of our work is on a big scale, in the realm of casting vision for the denomination. But equally important is the "nitty-gritty" work we do in overseeing changes in governance documents, property ownership, and financial realities. It's not glamorous, but those tasks are critical to the health of the larger church.

### With Project 250 in mind, what do you hope the BIC church will look like in 10 years?

**Brian** – My prayer is that our strategic priorities for the BIC church will allow us to continue growing spiritually closer to Christ. We have a rich history to build upon, and I believe that as we work together towards attaining our outlined goals we will be better examples of Christ to our communities.

**Jose** – I hope the BIC church remains in the Word, while opening to be more inclusive, growing, and vibrant.

**Naomi** – I hope that we will look like an even more diverse group of brothers and sisters in Christ, who welcome new faces to the family while remaining steadfast in our faithfulness to God's word, our allegiance to Jesus, our sensitivity to the Spirit, and our love for one another.

# FINANCIALS

Income	2021*	% of total	2020*	% of total
Congregations	\$ 3,455,024	45%	\$ 3,229,707	43%
Undesignated	2,630,054		2,548,835	
Designated	824,970		680,872	
Individuals	2,757,688	35%	2,300,595	30%
Undesignated	215,790		296,502	
Designated	2,541,898		2,004,093	
Investment Gains/(Loss)	1,314,073	17%	1,251,307	17%
Undesignated	113,684		118,611	
Designated	1,200,389		1,132,696	
Bequests	181,344	2%	227,186	3%
Undesignated	19,963		7,500	
Designated	161,381		219,686	
Registrations & Other**	21,977	1%	535,044	7%
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 7,730,106</b>		<b>\$ 7,543,839</b>	

## Spend

Global Ministry <i>missionary support, church planting, international ministry training and scholarships</i>	\$ 2,133,940	40%	\$ 1,989,357	36%
Regional Ministry <i>church planting, leadership development, conference leadership</i>	1,263,181	24%	1,265,239	23%
Global Projects <i>relief, aid, evangelism, and education partnerships with international churches</i>	766,116	15%	644,797	12%
Shared Services <i>finance, communications, human resources</i>	676,076	13%	604,009	11%
DB Pension Costs	-	0%	559,883	10%
National Ministry <i>denominational leadership, ministerial credentialing</i>	386,138	7%	383,020	7%
Related Agencies	58,892	1%	66,405	1%
<b>Total Spend</b>	<b>\$ 5,284,343</b>		<b>\$ 5,512,710</b>	
Change in Net Assets	\$ 2,445,763		\$ 2,031,129	
<b>Net assets, January 1</b>	<b>\$ 16,208,276</b>		<b>\$ 14,177,147</b>	
<b>Net assets, December 31</b>	<b>\$ 18,654,039</b>		<b>\$ 16,208,276</b>	
Undesignated	1,731,248		1,563,463	
Designated	16,922,791		14,644,813	

\*All numbers are as of Dec. 31. Numbers for 2021 are preliminary. Audited 2021 financial statements will be published online summer 2022. The 2020 numbers are audited and final.

\*\*Other income in 2020 includes \$480,814 received through the Paycheck Protection Program.

# LEADERSHIP TEAMS

## Leadership Council

**Alan Robinson**, national director  
**Heather Beaty**, regional administrator, Susquehanna Conference  
**Ron Howell**, bishop, Midwest Conference  
**Perry Engle**, bishop, Pacific Conference  
**Bryan Hoke**, bishop, Atlantic Conference  
**Jonathan Lloyd**, director, World Missions  
**Mitchell Martin**, director, Finance and Shared Services  
**Aner Morejon**, bishop, Southeast Conference  
**Rob Patterson**, bishop, Allegheny Conference  
**Lynn Thrush**, bishop, Great Lakes Conference

## General Conference Board\*



**Cathy Musser**,  
board chair,  
member-at-large



**Nicole Airth**,  
member-at-large



**Denise Conway**,  
Midwest Conference



**Rachel Diaz**,  
secretary, Southeast  
Conference



**Sherri Flohr**,  
Allegheny  
Conference



**Adam Forry**,  
Atlantic Conference



**Bonnie Hershberger**,  
member-at-large



**Abby Kean**,  
Great Lakes  
Conference



**Tom Law**, vice chair,  
Pacific Conference



**Emerson Leshner**,  
member-at-large



**Brian Mbuu**,  
member-at-large



**Kevin Noll**,  
member-at-large



**Jose Rodriguez**,  
member-at-large



**Naomi Smith**,  
Susquehanna  
Conference



**Julie Stout**,  
treasurer,  
member-at-large

Learn more about our leadership teams:  
[bicus.org/about/leadership-structure](https://bicus.org/about/leadership-structure).

\*Alan Robinson, national director, serves as ex officio member.  
 Denise Conway began her term in February 2022.





**Brethren in Christ U.S.**

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