



Brethren in Christ U.S.

ANNUAL 2018 REPORT

**History of Church
Planting (p. 2)**

**Church Planting in
Lexington, Ky. (p. 4)**

**Engaging the
Islamic world (p. 10)**



to know, love, & follow Jesus

General Assembly 2018

July 13-16, 2018

More than 580 people congregated in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, for General Assembly 2018.

For nearly 150 years, we have gathered at General Assembly. Core to our heritage is *covenant community*: the belief that ministry is not realized in isolation. Rather, in the Brethren in Christ family, we value interpreting Scripture and discerning God's calling collectively.

Simply put, we follow Jesus together.



DEAR FRIENDS,

What has God given to us?

His son, life eternal, salvation, a beautiful world?

These are good and true responses. Along with many gifts, however, God has also entrusted us with *weighty, significant responsibilities*.

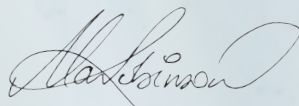
The apostle Paul tells us that God, having reconciled us to himself through Christ, has given us the *ministry and message of reconciliation* (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

For more than 240 years, the Brethren in Christ have taken seriously being people to whom God has committed the ministry and message of reconciliation. The story of our denominational family combines the *quest for piety* with the *desire for obedience* to carry out this dual mission. Those who have run the race before us have become part of the great cloud of witnesses cheering us on as we carry the baton of reconciliation in a sinful and divided world (Hebrews 12:1).

During 2018 the Brethren in Christ U.S. continued the ministry and proclaimed the message of reconciliation. The *2018 Annual Report* cannot possibly highlight all the ministry fulfilled through congregations across the country and missions around the world. However, the report does highlight aspects of our story during the last 12 months.

Be encouraged as you read about leaders serving incarnationally among the communities of Lexington, Kentucky, and Okeechobee, Florida. Be encouraged as you learn from the groundbreaking mission of Christian apologist and polemicist Jay Smith. Be encouraged as you hear of World Missions ministry initiated by missionaries and global partners, many of whom are brothers and sisters from the Brethren in Christ national churches in countries throughout the world.

But in addition to being encouraged, *be challenged!* Be challenged to faithfully receive and carry what God has given us — the ministry and message of reconciliation.



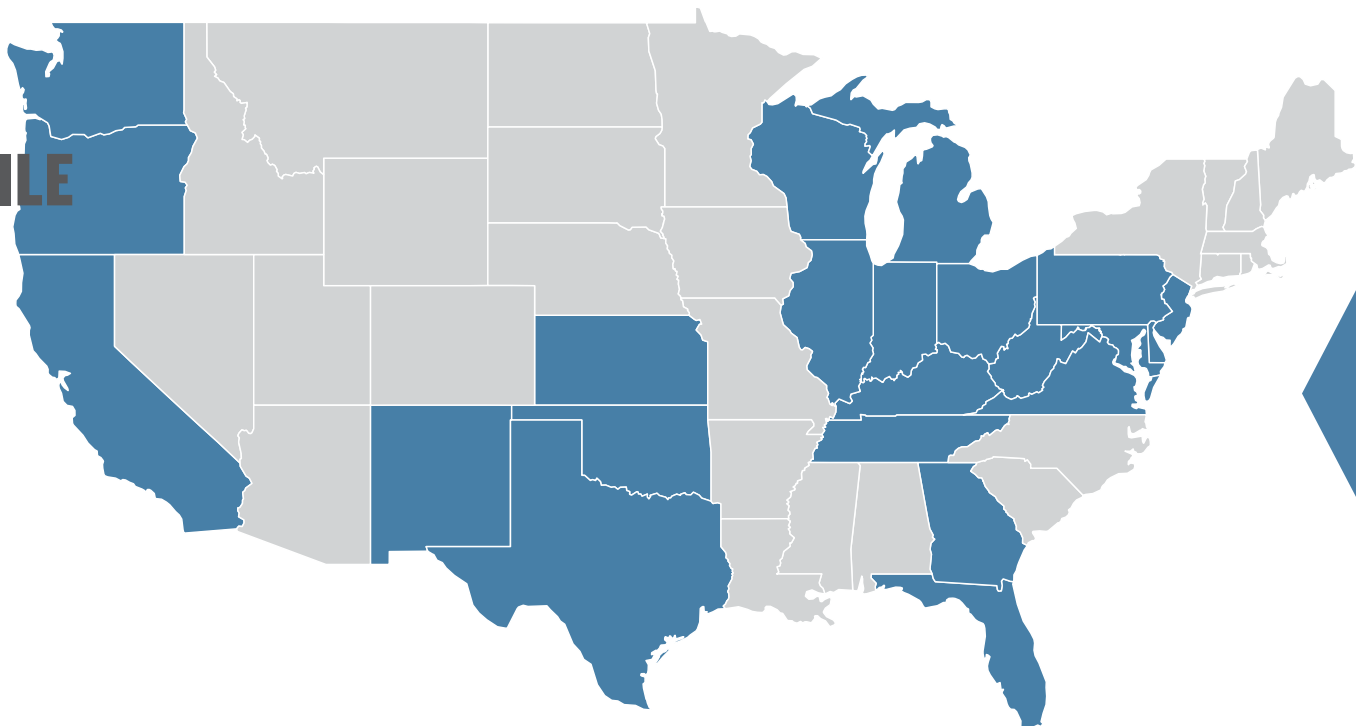
Alan Robinson
National Director
Brethren in Christ U.S.



COVER ART by Dana Wolford, Plowshares BIC (page 6). Plowshares BIC often gathers in the Plantory, a coworking space for businesses and nonprofits. Dana's artwork is displayed in the space — inviting the community to enter into worship.

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2018 PROFILE

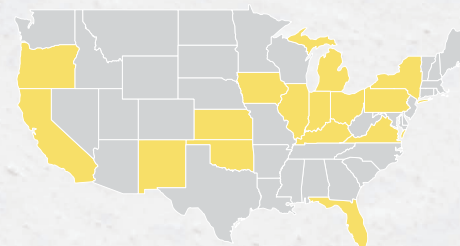
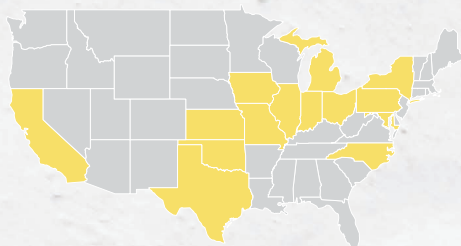
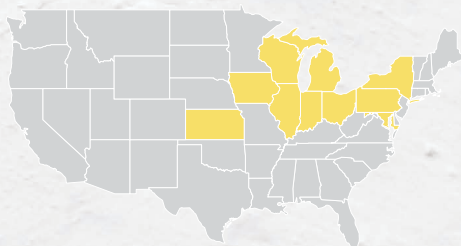


A GROWING CHURCH: Church Planting in Our History

1880

1910

1950



MEMBERSHIP: 1,663
HOUSEHOLDS: 718*

MEMBERSHIP: 3,397
SITES: 73

MEMBERSHIP: 5,837
SITES: 103

1780-1880 Influenced by revivals of the 18th century Great Awakening, families from several religious groups in Central Pennsylvania — primarily Mennonites — begin planting churches emphasizing spiritual rebirth in Jesus Christ. Over the next 100 years, the Brethren, as they call themselves, expand West in search of farmland.

Did you know? “Brethren in Christ” becomes our official name during the Civil War, when the denomination registers as a nonresistant organization.

1880-1910 In 1879, about 300 settlers colonize Kansas. Over the next 30 years, the Midwest Brethren marry a heart for evangelism with a pioneering spirit: Their innovations — such as starting revivals and Sunday schools — sharpen the denomination’s focus on evangelism, leading to the birth of U.S. and international missions.

Did you know? Facing many hardships, the Oklahoma Brethren first live in primitive dugouts, as well as sod houses and brush arbors.

1910-1950 Gaining momentum abroad, missions also flourish at home: Gutsy families pioneer ministry in rural and urban outposts designated as missions, from which congregations often multiply. By 1950, the Brethren in Christ have 43 rural and 14 city missions in North America.

Did you know? Sunday school enrollment (13,322) is more than double congregational membership in 1950.

27,330 WORSHIPPERS

average weekly attendance

1,509 PEOPLE

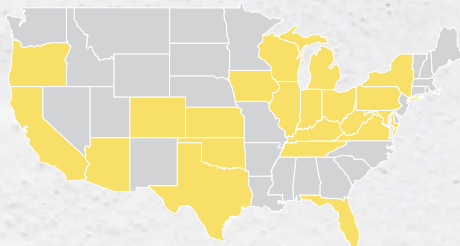
began or renewed relationships with Jesus

Number based on 92% of congregational sites reporting

261 CONGREGATIONAL SITES

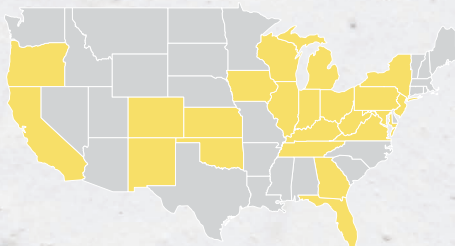
22 STATES & 1 U.S. TERRITORY

1975



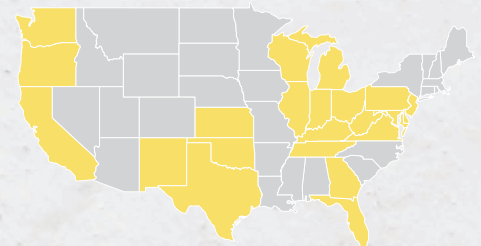
MEMBERSHIP: 10,784
ATTENDANCE: 15,715
SITES: 156

2000



MEMBERSHIP: 20,587
ATTENDANCE: 23,961
SITES: 215

2017



MEMBERSHIP: 22,982
ATTENDANCE: 28,642
SITES: 262

1950-1975 Amid rising youth attrition rates, leaders meet at the National Association of Evangelicals convention in 1950. Gathering in their hotel, they confess the denomination, bound by legalism, has lost sight of the gospel's core message: grace. The meeting opens the way for the Church to engage culture, catalyzing growth.

Did you know? Within this time span, congregational sites increase more than 50 percent.

1975-2000 From a familial fraternity of congregations, the Brethren in Christ matures into a nationally recognized denomination. Energized by the denominational growth of the preceding 25 years, Brethren in Christ leaders and laypeople welcome many new individuals and families.

Did you know? One regional conference begins a campaign to start 10 churches in 10 years. Three of the 10 congregations planted between 1976-1984 still exist today.

2000-2017 A movement ignites among a cluster of Spanish-speaking congregations in the Miami metropolitan area, following years of setbacks and modest expansion. Through planting and adopting new congregations, they now represent a fifth of all BIC U.S. congregations.

Did you know? The Greater Miami Area congregations have also adopted and planted about 50 congregations in Latin America, which equals their U.S. congregational presence.



2018 Church Plant Statistics

26 CHURCH PLANTS
supported financially

\$174,000 DISTRIBUTED
for BIC U.S. church multiplication



PASTOR PROFILE: LUKE EMBREE

Founding & Lead Pastor, Plowshares BIC (Lexington, Kentucky)

Hitchhiking across the United States at 18, Luke posed a question to the Creator of the universe.

He had been about to head West on Route 50 — the highway slicing America’s midsection — when he’d been struck by the majesty of the Appalachian Mountains. The beauty of the created world pointed to a Creator.

“*God, I know you exist,*” Luke prayed for the first time in years. “*But I want to know your name.*”

That afternoon, a driver in a Volkswagen van, a Christian, pulled up beside him. He offered Luke a ride, then a temporary place to stay.

While living there, Luke encountered a Presence who addressed him personally: “Luke, this is God, and my name is Jesus Christ.

“You don’t have to follow me. But you can never again say you don’t know my name.”

Since then, Luke says he has been captivated by the God who was willing to engage his questions.

“The most profound mystery that I’ve found in Scripture is the incarnation, that a holy, magnificent God became human and identified with us,” said Luke.

“That’s the core driver of our ministry: Jesus became one of us, so we can identify with others.”

In 2017, Luke and his wife, Christina, founded Plowshares Brethren in Christ, Lexington, Kentucky — *which centers itself in Christ’s ministry of incarnation*. Plowshares meets people in the places they live, work, and play — in office buildings, homes, and parks. They also worship within life’s weekly rhythms: over dinner, lunch breaks, weeknights.

They can follow the cadences of daily life because their congregational model is elastic. Plowshares comprises four community groups of 6-15 people. Each community group ministers within a geographic neighborhood.

By practicing church more fluidly, Plowshares engages the growing percentage of individuals and families who would never step inside a traditional church.

A Church for the Unchurched

Between 2007-2013, the percentage of U.S. individuals identifying as having no religious affiliation increased from 16 to 23 percent. The percentage is even higher among millennials (about 35 percent).¹

“We recognize fewer and fewer people are going to church,” said Luke. “It’s time for the church to go to the people.”

On Fridays and Sundays, one Plowshares community group meets at the Plantory. Housed in a former Wonderbread Factory, the Plantory is a coworking space for businesses and nonprofits.

People from the work collective, representing a range of faith and non-faith backgrounds, often join Plowshares.

“Welcome to ministry in the 21st century,” said Luke. “We are explicitly Christian, and the individuals joining us are just thrilled that Jesus would come to where they are.”

Often, following their gatherings, these individuals will ask to sit down with Luke over coffee, curious to learn more about the God interested in inhabiting their workspace. Luke loves to engage them, knowing the God who met him on the road years ago also desires to respond to their questions.

1. Michael Lipka, “A closer look at America’s rapidly growing religious ‘nones,’” *Pew Research Center*, May 13, 2015, pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/13/a-closer-look-at-americas-rapidly-growing-religious-nones.

74 GLOBAL WORKERS

including BIC U.S. employees and partners

22 COUNTRIES



In northeastern Thailand, a dedicated team of World Missions and Thai church planters are pioneering a house church planting ministry among the Isaan people. An unreached people group, **fewer than 1 percent of the 18 million Isaan people profess a relationship with Jesus.**

Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” (Luke 10:2). Approximately 360 more global workers are needed for the gospel to fully penetrate the Isaan community.



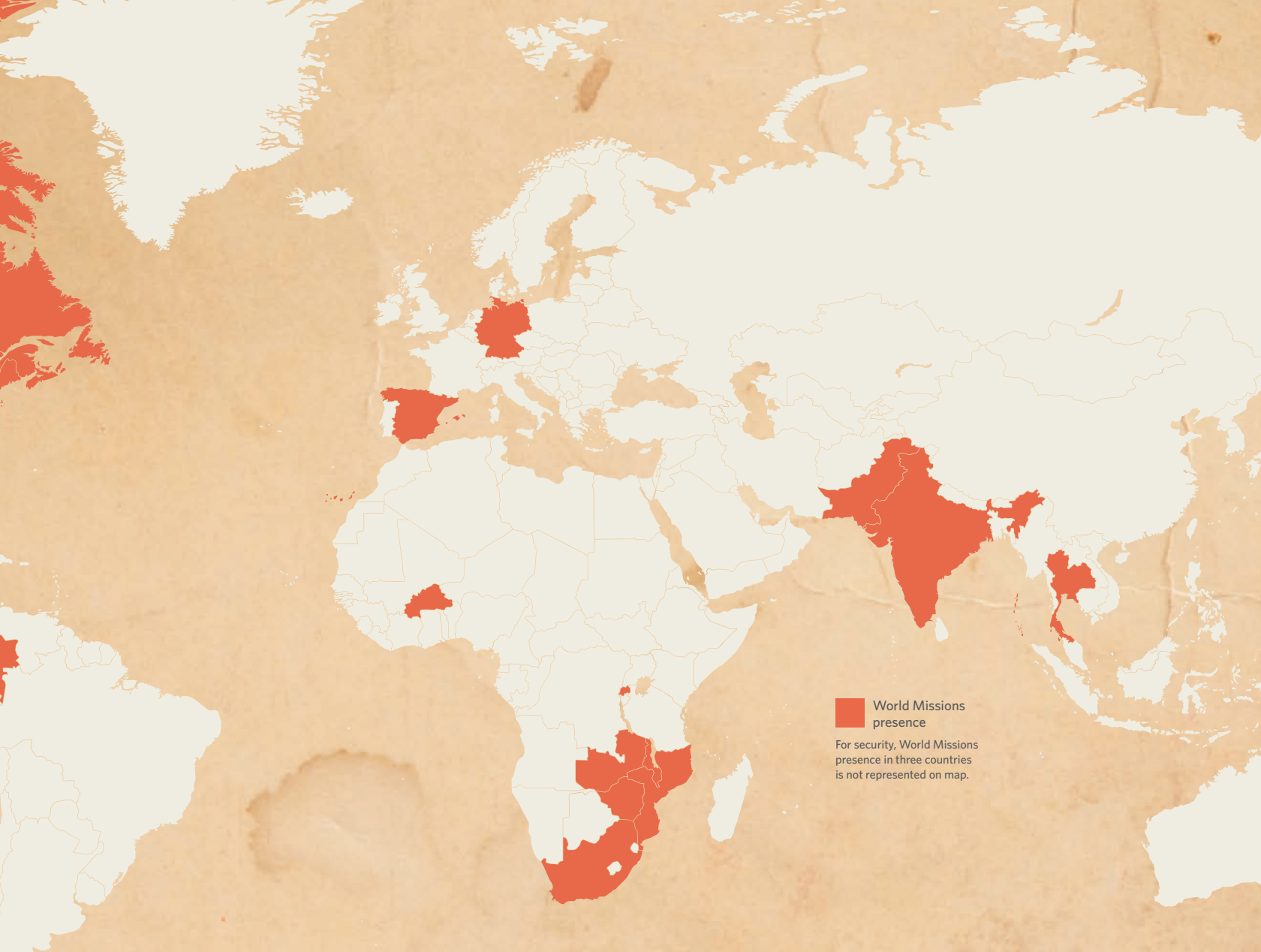
In Pakistan, Abeeshay faces extreme poverty: His father, a rickshaw driver, is addicted to drugs and cannot afford to send him to school. Through the FGA education project, Abeeshay receives a second chance: He now attends a high-quality Christian school, where he also experiences the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. Abeeshay now says, **“I want to become a pastor and preach the gospel.”**

In 2018, the FGA education project provided Christian education to more than 1,400 marginalized children across Pakistan. As global partners of the project, we helped support 11 schools to offer Christ-centered education to children like Abeeshay.



Around the world, many pastors cannot attend seminary. For example, 60 percent of pastoral leaders in our leadership programs in Honduras have just a sixth-grade education.

Through our pastoral leadership training, **Honduran pastors are being equipped to teach the gospel.** In 2018, more than 70 leaders participated in Bible and theology classes at our BIC Bible Institute and Continual Formation in Ministry program founded by missionary Nathan Bert.



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

48 PARTNERSHIPS

with the global BIC family in evangelism, education, and health care

36% OF GLOBAL WORKERS

served least-reached peoples

143 MINISTRY SCHOLARSHIPS

awarded to international leaders

54 INTERNATIONAL CHURCH PLANTS

supported by BIC U.S. World Missions

1,189 INTERNATIONAL LEADERS

participated in leadership training



ENGAGING ISLAM, ON ITS OWN TERMS

Dr. Jay Smith, BIC U.S. World Missions

Apologetics course through Jay Smith's veins.

His theological lineage includes Francis Schaeffer. The theologian disciplined Jay's missionary parents, who, in turn, disciplined Ravi Zacharias, the globally renowned, Indian-born Christian apologist.

But rhetoric, he argues, is also in the DNA of India, his birthplace. It's no coincidence the world's most formidable apologists like Zacharias, Dinesh D'Souza, and Vishal Mangalwadi come from the subcontinent of India. For hundreds of years, they have held *munazaras*, formal debates, in public squares.

In the Indian subcontinent, debate is a social art.

The Indian subcontinent is now the epicenter of the Islamic world. India, alone, is to be the largest Muslim population globally by 2050.¹ And Asians already make up more than 60 percent of the world's Muslims (over 600 million), Arabs, by contrast, 20 percent.²

Thus, Jay engages the growing Muslim populations from Asia in styles of communication that emulate their own: apologetics and polemics. Christian apologetics is a *defense* of Christianity, polemics an *offense* against Islam, through theological and historical critiques.

Today Jay travels around the world equipping Christians to dialogue with Muslims and debating Muslim leaders. He's also helped found the Pfander Centre for Apologetics, which studies Islamic theological and historical critique with the purpose of engaging Muslims with the gospel.

While having an impressive theological ancestry, **Jay became an acclaimed apologist and polemicist through grit** and a willingness to take a theological — and, sometimes, physical — beating.

In the 90s, his theological sparring partners, who were often combative, were almost exclusively more radical Muslims (Islamists) from South Asia. Much of their zealousness flows from their religious views: For example, in South Asia, 76 percent of Muslims believe individuals should be killed for abandoning Islam; 84 percent support sharia law; and 81 percent back extreme penalties, like severing hands of thieves.³

Devout and educated, such Muslims confronted Jay with questions unknown to modern Western Christian apologetics.



An Education in Hyde Park

Full of bravado, Jay arrived in London armed with master's degrees in both Christian apologetics and Islamic studies — ready to engage Muslims with the gospel and to get a doctorate in polemics.

"I thought I knew everything," he said, laughing. "Then I encountered Speaker's Corner." For more than 160 years, individuals have been exercising free speech at the historical site located in Hyde Park.

There, the Muslim apologists arrived with Bibles overflowing with Post-it notes, each marking a supposed error in the biblical text.

They deftly attacked Christianity.

"I came back whipped and humiliated," he said of challenging their theological arguments for the first time.

But he returned to Hyde Park the following Sunday. Each week, Jay was pummeled theologically and, on occasion, physically, as the agitated crowds harassed him.

Afterward, he documented their questions.

Within six months, he had a list of 50 recurring questions from Muslims about Christianity, most unidentified by modern Western Christian apologists. (Western apologetics address a secular framework: questioning the existence of God. But devout Muslims believe in God. Their concerns relate to the Trinity or divinity of Jesus.)

Soon, Jay garnered attention for his innovative research, and universities across England began to invite Jay to debate Muslim clerics. In 1995, a Cambridge University historian in Islamic history helped him outline 10 criticisms on Islam for a debate.

"To this day, no one has answered those 10 criticisms, and we have added many more to them," said Jay.

Platform Opens Access to Question Islam

In 2005, YouTube was founded, unlocking doors to engage the Islamic world. In many societies adhering to Islam, barriers exist to questioning religion. So, in 2006, Jay created PfanderFilms, an outreach of the Pfander Centre.

The platform enables Muslims to investigate religious questions. In the last 20 years, Western historians have unearthed data undermining the historicity of much of Muhammad's life and the text of the Qur'an.

Until now, such historical critique has been confined to the ivory tower. *But PfanderFilms has become a bridge between Western academia and the Islamic world.* It provides open access to groundbreaking theological and historical critique of Islam.

"We want Muslims to decide for themselves whether Islam holds up to its historical claims," said Jay.

Today PfanderFilms has more than 3 million views, many from Muslims in countries hostile to the gospel.

Jay is mindful his apologetics and polemics were smelted in Speaker's Corner. The Muslim apologists there refined his arguments, ridding them of theological sediment and inconsistencies, to extract apologetics speaking the language of his audience.

And in so doing, they taught Jay to boldly profess Jesus Christ to the Islamic world.

1. "10 Countries with the Largest Muslim Populations, 2010 and 2050," *Pew Research Center*, April 2, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/muslims/pf_15-04-02_projectionstables74/.

2. "Mapping the Global Muslim Population: Asia-Pacific Overview," *Pew Research Center*, October 7, 2009, <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population9/>; "Demographics of Islam," *Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, Georgetown University*, accessed Jan. 16, 2019, <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/essays/demographics-of-islam>.

3. "The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society," *Pew Research Center*, April 30, 2013, <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-overview/>.

"WE WANT MUSLIMS TO
DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES
WHETHER ISLAM HOLDS UP TO
ITS HISTORICAL CLAIMS."

FINANCIALS

\$5,832,009 RECEIVED

\$3,130,206 designated | \$2,701,803 undesignated

53% CONGREGATIONS

43% INDIVIDUALS

2% REQUESTS

2% OTHER



20% designated

95% designated

100% designated

Percent of revenue restricted for specific uses

\$5,103,007 DISTRIBUTED

40% GLOBAL MINISTRY

38% U.S. MINISTRY

12% SHARED SERVICES

8% GLOBAL PROJECTS

1% RELATED AGENCIES

1% BIC PENSION FUND



missionary support, church planting, international ministry training and scholarships

church planting, leadership development, denominational and conference leadership, pastoral credentialing

finance, communications, human resources

relief, aid, evangelism, and education partnerships with international churches

Note: The amount reported as received includes \$1,158,814 for the Honor the Past: Build the Future campaign. Total investment loss of \$340,786 is not included as part of the amount received. The loss in investment value is consistent with the overall market decline in 2018, with the anticipation that, over time, longstanding investments yield returns.

All numbers are as of Dec. 31, 2018, and are preliminary. Audited 2018 financial statements will be published online summer 2019.

LEADERSHIP TEAMS

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Alan Robinson, national director | **Bob Beaty**, bishop, Susquehanna Conference | **Perry Engle**, bishop, Midwest and Pacific Conferences | **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

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board chair
member-at-large



Sherri Flohr
Allegheny
Conference



Adam Forry
Atlantic
Conference



David Espinosa
Great Lakes
Conference



Jeff Piepho
Midwest
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Tom Law
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Kevin Noll
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Alan Robinson
national director
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