



Brethren in Christ U.S.

2020
*Annual
Report*

Finding hope
in stories of
faithfulness

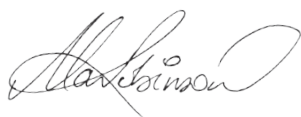
DEAR FRIENDS,

It's **no surprise** that 2020 was a difficult year for most of us. Between the global pandemic, racial tensions, and a contentious election, each day seemed to bring new challenges and heartache. Congregations were not immune to these troubles as many pastors and leaders had to make hard choices and were faced with conflicts within their churches. As 2021 unfolds, many of the same issues persist and have brought uncertainty into the new year.

Despite the challenges of the past year, I am encouraged that God moves and works through his people in every situation. There are many testimonies of God's faithfulness to be shared from the past year, and we've highlighted a few of them in this report:

- The BIC Church in India continues to grow despite COVID-19 restrictions that disrupted established evangelistic outreach.
- Church planters encourage us with reflections on their journeys to create meaningful faith communities.
- Pastors and church leaders share how online worship services have enabled their congregations to rethink ministry and reach new audiences.

I pray you find hope and encouragement in these stories of God at work among us. I pray that God's spirit will strengthen and guide us in the months ahead. In all of these things, let us not forget our calling to be ministers of reconciliation and Christ's ambassadors on this earth (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).



Alan Robinson
National Director
Brethren in Christ U.S.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2020

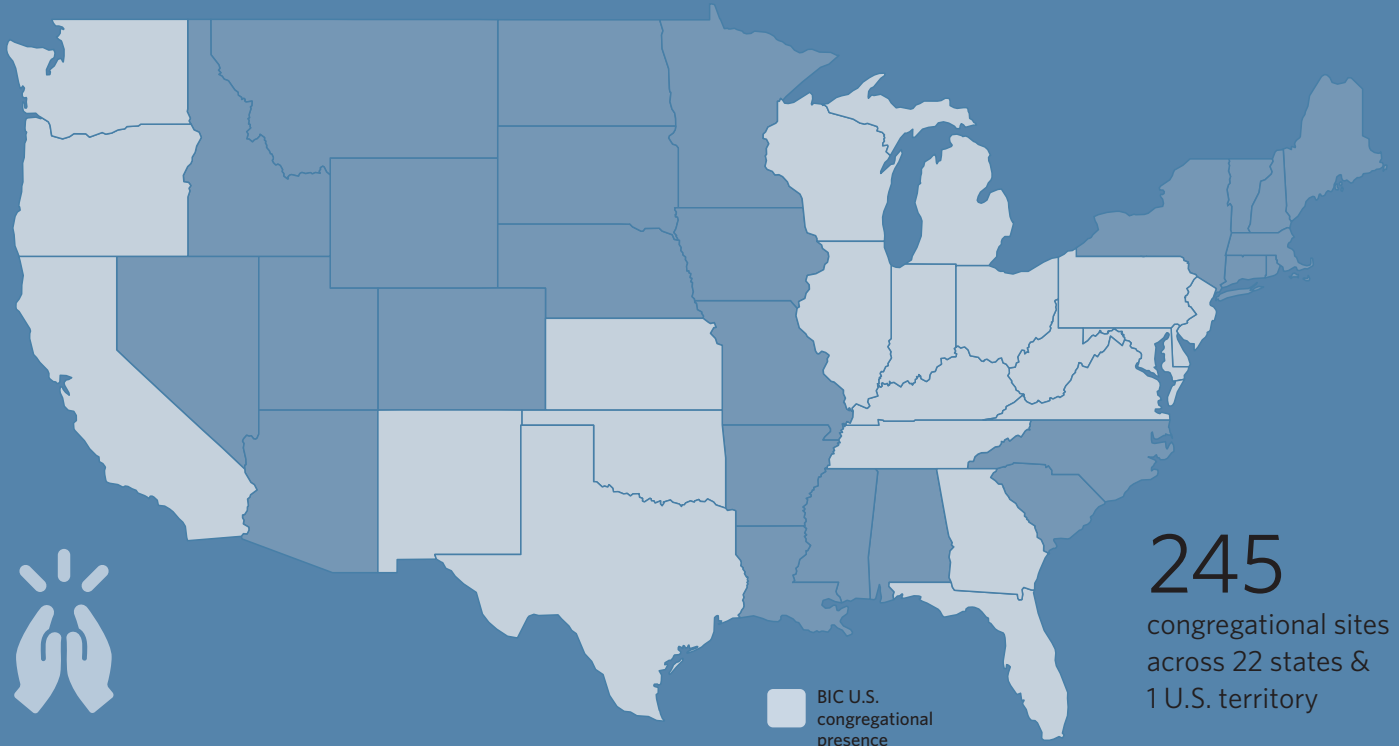
ROOTED READY

INSPIRED BY THE PAST • POSITIONED FOR THE FUTURE

General Assembly 2020 was live streamed to over 400 people on Saturday, July 11. The theme, Rooted and Ready, called us to stand strong in our rich past while stepping out into the future to which God is calling us.

While our larger community could not gather together in 2020 because of COVID-19, we look forward to congregating in Salina, Kansas for General Assembly 2022.

U.S. CONGREGATIONS



22,500
WORSHIPPERS

on average attended weekly services
in-person and online*

10,764 + 11,736
on average attended weekly in-person services* on average attended weekly online services*

776
PEOPLE

began or renewed
relationships with Jesus*

379
individuals baptized*

MINISTRY TRAINING

28 ministers
licensed



7 ministers
ordained



505
ministers currently licensed
or ordained (12/31/20)

*Number based on 88% of congregational sites reporting.

SNAPSHOTS OF A GROWING CHURCH

The journeys of three church planters

The Brethren in Christ wouldn't be the Church it is today without our long history of church planting. Over the course of our nearly 250 years, it has been an important avenue of growth and a legacy we continue to support.

To get an inside look, we talked with pastors Anler Morejon, Keith Miller, and Steve Airth who shared glimpses of what church plants look like at different stages of growth. We talked about what led them to church planting, the vision behind their churches, and how God is moving through their congregations.

20 church
plants

financially supported
in the U.S. in 2020



\$169,900

distributed for church
multiplication



Zion BIC church members gather for an outdoor baptism in February 2020.

Growing New Believers Zion BIC (Miramar, Fla.)

Anler Morejon grew up in a pastoral family but never imagined he'd be a lead pastor himself. For most of his adult life, he worked in bi-vocational ministry as a youth leader and audio-visual consultant for churches around Miami. But in 2017, he and his wife Isabel sensed a distinct call toward church planting.

After a year of seeking God's will with his family, Zion BIC launched in January of 2019 in Miramar, Fla. The congregation began meeting in a hotel conference room before eventually finding a local elementary school to call home. By all measurements, it was a successful launch with approximately fifty people attending each week.

Zion's mission statement, "saved by grace, transformed by love to serve with passion," represents the journey of each Christian, said Anler. Whether they are new to the faith or have been a Christian their entire life, Zion seeks to walk alongside its members at every stage of their faith journey and help them grow to eventually disciple new believers themselves.

Zion celebrated its two-year anniversary in January 2021. As they look to the future, Anler is focused on strengthening his congregation's commitment to God. "A lot of fear has been instilled in our members this past year," he said, "and I want to make sure that we are standing on a solid base of God's truth."



Anler Morejon



Keith Miller

Creating Community LifePath Church (Newark, Del.)

Keith Miller was a youth leader when he and his wife Bethany sensed a call toward church planting. After years of prayer and discernment, they moved to Newark, Del. in 2011 to start LifePath, which held its first official service in September 2012. Since then, it's grown to about 100 members.

From the beginning, Keith wanted LifePath to be a different kind of church, one based around community. "Our mission is to create communities of disciples that reconnect people to Jesus, to one another, and to God's redemptive work in the world," said Keith.

Keith doesn't want people to view Church as something you have to do; instead, he wants LifePath's members to realize that Church is something they are. Everything about LifePath is structured to create community, from dialog and response sessions after every Sunday service to accountability groups that meet for meals and coffee throughout the week. By using Zoom, they have been able to maintain that community throughout the pandemic.

Keith is excited that LifePath has become established enough to reach beyond the walls of their congregation to local and global communities. About five years ago, they started creating small business loans for women in India to purchase sewing machines. In Newark, they've been able to support students and families who live under the poverty line.

Looking toward the future, Keith wants to continue redefining what Church is and can be. "Church is not a Sunday morning activity," he said. "It's a community of people who happen to meet on a Sunday." He hopes that, as the LifePath community grows, they will continually reach out to their neighbors, their town, and the world.



LifePath Church members chat after a Sunday service, held in a local school auditorium.



Steve and the GracePoint team livestream a service from the church building they purchased in 2020.

Mentoring Disciples GracePoint Church (Ontario, Calif.)

Steve Airth first sensed a call to church planting while he was serving on the Pacific Conference's board for Evangelism and Church Planting. After several years of prayer and discernment, he and his wife Nicole launched GracePoint in 2005. "My desire was to meet people where they were," said Steve. He felt strongly that a church plant would enable them to connect with people who may normally be glossed over by society and the Church.

GracePoint is centered around discipleship and has a high level of accountability woven into their DNA. Over 75% of the congregation attends mid-week small groups that, pre-pandemic, would gather in people's homes. Through these discipleship touchpoints, people come to see a life with Jesus as something that expands beyond Sunday morning and into their jobs, hobbies, and everyday life.

From 2005 to 2020, GracePoint met in a local elementary school as it grew to an average of 90 people attending on a weekly basis. In September 2020, they purchased their own building and were excited to welcome people through its doors ... until the pandemic thwarted their plans. Currently, they use the church to livestream their Sunday morning services.

As the congregation grows, Steve wants to continue the legacy of church planting. Once they have about 200 regular attendees, Steve hopes to send a small grouping to plant another church like GracePoint, one centered around community and discipleship. "The plan is to repeat that process as many times as possible to reach new parts of our community and see lives changed by Christ."



Steve Airth

PROJECT

250

Project 250 is a set of five priorities that will guide Brethren in Christ U.S. towards our 250th anniversary in 2028. With the help of voices from across the denomination, we identified five key priorities for the coming years.

1. Reaffirming Our Identity as a Community of Christ-Followers

Our identity in Christ precedes every other aspect of who we are and what we are called to do as God's people. We are committed to keeping Jesus at our center, going directly to the Word of God for guidance, and teaching our core values as guiding principles for life and practice.

2. Making Lifelong Disciples

Jesus calls us to a lifelong journey of discipleship and to invite others into intimacy with Christ. We are committed to enabling our congregations to engage in this work by providing teaching and resources for those at all points along their faith journey.

3. Multiplying Missional Congregations, Movements, and Leaders

Our congregations are called to impact and invest in their own communities. We are committed to strengthening and multiplying leaders and congregations of all sizes to be healthy, thriving, and reproducing.

4. Increasing Global Awareness and Impact

BIC U.S. World Missions has been active in cross-cultural ministry for over 100 years and has helped establish a network of pastors, churches, and ministries all around the globe. We are committed to providing education about our global footprint and building relationships between our congregations and missionaries.

5. Growing to Reflect the Demographic Realities of our Communities

The communities that surround our congregations are diverse, and we want our congregations to reflect that. Additionally, we want to increase the number of qualified women and people of color serving in BIC U.S. assigned ministry roles and governing boards. We are committed to providing resources, encouragement, and accountability as we grow in this area.

Learn more about Project 250 and our specific goals for each priority:
bicus.org/project-250.

WORLD MISSIONS

75 GLOBAL WORKERS

including BIC U.S. employees and partners located in

21 COUNTRIES



36% of
global team

served among least-reached peoples

\$111,789

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

COVID-19	\$56,122
Natural disasters	\$17,571
Famine	\$27,817
Other	\$10,279

13+ countries

received aid including: Colombia, El Salvador, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, the Middle East, Mozambique, the Navajo Nation, Spain, Venezuela, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

37

international church
plants supported

\$149,960

sponsored 815 children in
the SPICE program

49 initiatives

supported through the
Partnership Handbook

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

90



ministry scholarships
awarded to international
leaders

19



participants in the
Missionary Development
Program



PANDEMIC PREPARED

How the BIC Church in India unknowingly laid the groundwork for ministry during COVID-19

Danesh had been sick for several days. Despite trying many medicines and treatments, his fever would not lessen, and his family was getting worried. A BIC evangelist named Aarav heard of Danesh's illness and offered to pray for healing. Miraculously, Danesh recovered the following week.

Hoping he would be receptive to the Gospel, Aarav invited him to a community prayer gathering. Danesh wasn't sure as his family had a long-standing tradition of worshipping idols. While he knew of some Christians in his village, he never took their message to heart and certainly had never attended one of their gatherings. But his healing experience had softened his heart.

When believers in his village gathered later that week, Danesh was there, listening attentively. Moved by the prayers and testimonies shared at the meeting, Danesh accepted Christ as his Savior then and there.

Discipling Lay Leaders

Danesh lives in the Odisha region of eastern India, a largely rural region that is home to approximately 20,000 BIC believers in about 200 villages. The Brethren in Christ Church in Odisha employs several pastors and evangelists like Aarav who travel widely throughout the region, leading prayer and worship gatherings like the one Danesh attended.

BIC Odisha also intentionally invested in the discipleship and training of local lay leaders in recent years. Through a series of 2–3-day seminars, those in small villages across the region could receive training in the core elements of Christianity and practical tips for sharing the Gospel. These events were intended for newer Christians who wanted to learn more about the scriptures and become leaders in their local church gathering. Over the years, thousands of believers have participated in these trainings and are now equipped with simple, practical evangelism tools.

After Danesh's conversion, he was inspired to share the hope he found in Christ with those around him. Aarav invited

him to participate in these local lay-leader trainings which better equipped him to share the Good News.

Shortly thereafter, Danesh met his wife Vanya and the two have become a strong ministry team. They both play instrumental roles in their village's prayer group and Vanya leads several women's ministries. In 2019 alone, it's estimated that hundreds of people came to Christ through their ministry and testimony.

Adaptive Evangelism in a Pandemic

This model of lay-leader discipleship and training, established years ago, has prepared BIC Odisha for ministry in the midst of a global pandemic. When COVID-19 struck, the Indian government imposed strict travel bans across the country. These restrictions made it impossible for pastors and evangelists like Aarav to travel and minister to villages as normal, effectively halting the established outreach pattern.

However, working within the travel restrictions, individuals were permitted to travel short distances to stay with relatives in other villages. This allowed lay leaders like Danesh and Vanya and dozens more to continue reaching the people of Odisha with God's hope and peace. They look for opportunities to talk about God, share their own testimonies, and pray with those in need.

While it is hard to get an exact number of how many people came to Christ through this network, it's estimated that hundreds of new believers and several new church plants were added in 2020.

Pastors and evangelists are eager to continue their ministry once travel restrictions are lifted, and BIC Odisha hopes to resume their leadership seminars soon. But, in the midst of it all, they praise God for preparing them for the pandemic in ways they never could have anticipated.

CULTIVATING AN ONLINE FAITH COMMUNITY

Fueled by a pandemic,
BIC U.S. congregations
invest in virtual ministry

Because of group gathering restrictions, many churches were forced to turn to online worship services in 2020. While this change was unexpected, it provided an opportunity for leaders to adapt and rethink what church looks like.

We invited pastors and ministry leaders from around the country to reflect on the past year and share how online worship has impacted their ministry and faith community.



Samuel Loy, Video Producer
Revolution Church (Salina, Kan.)

Even before the pandemic hit, we were aware of how important it is to have a strong online presence. We've been streaming our services online since 2010 and people would often "attend" virtually before coming in person. We had people walking through our doors who knew our names and our faces before we ever knew theirs! Our online services helped them feel welcomed into the Revolution family before ever setting foot in our building.

But the pandemic forced us to be more mindful of how we relate to those attending online. We changed the language we used when addressing our online audience, calling them "our family" to help them feel included. Our children's pastor began creating kid-centered videos for families, and we adjusted our camera angles to make the livestream feel immersive. These little changes all worked together to make the online church experience more personable.

We're thankful that, thanks to our livestream, our congregation has been able to stay engaged. Since opening back up, roughly 75% of our congregation has returned to the building, but our online ministry has roughly doubled since the

previous year. We look forward to seeing how God continues to work through our online community in the future.

Cindy Agoncillo, Young Adult Pastor
Mechanicsburg BIC (Mechanicsburg, Pa.)



At the beginning of the pandemic, our team put together pre-recorded Sunday services for people to watch from home. We also shared devotionals and worship videos throughout the week. Our staff worked closely with our church community to create these materials and enlisted the help of everyone from pastors to worship volunteers to lay leaders.

We wanted to make sure it wasn't just our pastoral staff on camera. We are blessed to have a strong network of individuals and families who were willing to lead virtual devotionals and worship from their homes. Each week, as different members of our community contributed, it helped keep us connected.

Our online ministry has also kept us engaged with those who cannot attend or are not yet comfortable coming in person. As we look to the future, we see the continuing value of providing an online service on Sunday mornings. Not all members of our community can attend every Sunday. Having invested in livestreaming technology, we see the value of continuing to livestream our services even after the pandemic subsides.

Ryan Showalter, Associate Pastor
Solid Ground BIC (Alta Loma, Calif.)



Online church is not an extension of the church; it is the church. In 2020, it was imperative that we not only respond but find new and creative ways to expand what God is doing. We wanted to reach people who never would have set foot in a traditional church setting.

One way that we expanded was through weekly Facebook Live prayer times. These half-hour sessions have helped our church stay connected and have expanded our reach in a time when people are desperately seeking connection. We've connected with friends of those who call our church home as well as those who have moved away from our community. We've also connected with people who are skeptical about religious environments but are more willing to engage on the Facebook platform.

We have been blessed by our online presence as it enables us to connect deeper and reach people we couldn't have otherwise. We plan on continuing to look for ways to expand this online outreach in the future.

FINANCIALS

Income	2020*	% of total	2019*	% of total
Congregations	\$ 3,229,707	43%	\$ 3,135,929	41%
Undesignated	2,548,835		2,395,981	
Designated	680,872		739,948	
Individuals	2,300,595	30%	2,412,098	32%
Undesignated	296,502		264,883	
Designated	2,004,093		2,147,215	
Investment Gains/(Loss)	1,251,310	17%	1,713,784	23%
Undesignated	47,107		40,009	
Designated	1,204,203		1,673,775	
Registrations & Other**	535,034	7%	56,817	1%
Bequests	227,186	3%	273,401	3%
Undesignated	7,500		-	
Designated	219,686		273,401	
Total Income	\$ 7,543,832		\$ 7,592,029	

Spend

Global Ministry <i>missionary support, church planting, international ministry training and scholarships</i>	\$ 1,989,357	36%	\$ 2,115,681	38%
Regional Ministry <i>church planting, leadership development, conference leadership</i>	1,265,239	23%	1,384,557	25%
Global Projects <i>relief, aid, evangelism, and education partnerships with international churches</i>	644,797	12%	598,962	11%
Shared Services <i>finance, communications, human resources</i>	604,009	11%	639,848	11%
DB Pension Costs	559,883	10%	395,158	7%
National Ministry <i>denominational leadership, ministerial credentialing</i>	383,012	7%	391,275	7%
Related Agencies	66,405	1%	53,078	1%
Total Spend	\$ 5,512,702		\$ 5,578,559	
Change in Net Assets	\$ 2,031,130		\$ 2,013,470	
Net assets, January 1	\$ 14,177,147		\$ 12,163,677	
Net assets, December 31	\$ 16,208,277		\$ 14,177,147	
Undesignated	1,564,064		619,211	
Designated	14,644,213		13,557,936	

*All numbers are as of Dec. 31. Numbers for 2020 are preliminary. Audited 2020 financial statements will be published online summer 2021. The 2019 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



Rachel Diaz,
secretary, Southeast
Conference



Sherri Flohr,
Allegheny
Conference



Adam Forry,
Atlantic Conference



Bonnie Hershberger,
member-at-large



Abby Kean,
Great Lakes
Conference



Ron Kramer,
Midwest
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.

*Alan Robinson, national director, serves as ex officio member.
 Bonnie Hershberger and Naomi Smith began their terms in January 2021.



Brethren in Christ U.S.

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