



Brethren in Christ U.S.

2023

Annual Report





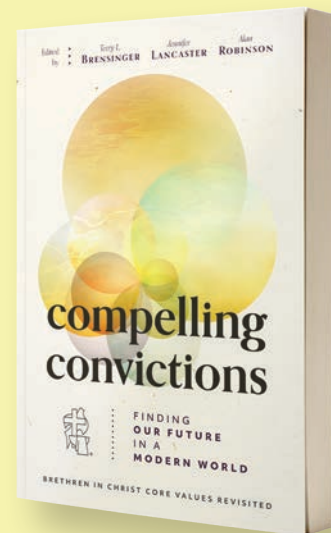
Created in 2022, the **Brethren in Christ U.S. Legacy Society** celebrates those who arrange for gifts toward BIC ministry in their estate plans. This kind of planned giving enables donors to support the causes and ministries close to their heart beyond their lifetimes.

Now with more than one hundred members, the Legacy Society represents a significant investment in future funding for BIC ministry of all kinds, including: World Missions, local congregations, regional conference initiatives, Common Ministry, Awaken, and SPICE.

Contact Mark Templeton for more information.
(717) 697-2634 ext. 5421 | templeton@bicus.org

Much has changed in the twenty years since our 10 Core Values were identified, including a worldwide pandemic, dynamic social shifts, the ongoing decline of the Western church, and vast advances in technology. With such massive shifts, it seems vital that we prayerfully reflect on how those values might help our churches engage a dramatically new social context.

In *Compelling Convictions* - releasing Summer 2024 - global Brethren in Christ pastors and leaders call us to unleash our creative energies, roll up our sleeves, and put these Core Values to good use for the future of the Church.



Humanity was created for relationship with God, a relationship that transforms every area of life and deepens as we learn to know our Creator. Out of this formation, we follow him to love the world and share the redemption he offers.

This July 12-15, join us for **General Assembly 2024** in Cincinnati, Ohio, where our theme - Formed to Follow - invites us to embrace our identity as disciples created to follow God.

bicus.org/event/general-assembly-2024

Formed to Follow

DEAR FRIENDS,

Comparing the life cycle of congregations to human life cycles is common. For humans, the life cycle is birth, growth, maturity, decline, death. The congregational life cycle can be very similar, unless some form of renewal takes place, preferably before decline sets in. It is also common to use the term “thriving” for humans, and increasingly this term is also being used in relation to congregations. Thriving implies vibrant health and vigorous growth; but, just as in humans, the opposite also exists.

Failure to thrive, a medical term used for children who have not developed according to the normal or standard expectations of height and weight, can sadly often refer to congregations as well. This may take place early in the life cycle of the congregation; sometimes it occurs as congregations age and they no longer experience the health or growth of their early days. Just as there are many reasons why a child may fail to thrive, the causes of congregational failure to thrive can be many and complex. They may be internal to the congregation, such as a lack of passionate spirituality or loving relationships. At times there may be external causes such as significant demographic changes in the immediate community.

A Vibrant Goal

It has always been the goal of Brethren in Christ U.S. to have thriving congregations. Our Regional Conference structure and bishop oversight, as well as educational and training programs, exist to help congregations be flourishing and outreaching witnesses in their communities. Our World Missions' ministry exists to plant and support vibrant and missional congregations in other countries.

In recent years, we've placed renewed emphasis on this goal. At the 2022 General Assembly in Kansas, delegates voted to approve a revised Congregational Governance section in the *Manual of Doctrine and Government* (MDG). The revision included an article on Congregational Health that begins, “Amidst other goals and objectives of BIC U.S. congregations, a central aim for each congregation should be to experience health and vitality in its ministries and relationships.” (2022 MDG, page 59). The MDG continues with several “indicators of health,” which include loving God, loving others, compelling mission, inspiring leadership, joyful generosity, and effective approaches.

In addition to this new MDG article, one of our Project 250 priorities is to “multiply missional congregations, movements, and leaders.”

Introducing the Thriving Congregations Initiative

In 2023 – after years of applying but not being selected – we were delighted to be awarded a \$1.25 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., a nonprofit foundation based in Indiana that offers grants for Christian organizations to support congregational vitality. We are deeply grateful to Lilly Endowment Inc. for this generous grant that will fund our new Thriving Congregations Initiative for the next five years.

This grant will be utilized to strengthen congregations by examining their internal health and community connection. As a donor-designated grant, the funds will be used in accordance with the grant application that we submitted; and, beginning in 2024, we look forward to investing these resources to help participating congregations be healthy, thriving, and reproducing. We encourage all pastors and congregational leaders to apply.

For our congregations to thrive, the most important thing will be a passionate desire to be ambassadors of the Kingdom of God, both individually and congregationally, who live so that his kingdom comes and his will is done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt. 6)

Alan Robinson
National Director



Alan Robinson
National Director, BIC U.S.



Learn more about the initiative at:
bicus.org/thriving-congregations

EXPLORING THE SPIRITUAL FRONTIER

Trailblazing pastors cross boundaries in Roanoke, Virginia

In the 1740s, two frontiersmen, Mark Evans and Tasker Tosh, explored the heart of a salt lick valley in the Appalachian Mountains. Through their optimism, patience, courage, and inspiration, “Big Lick” became the city of Roanoke, Virginia.

These days, two Brethren in Christ “frontier pastors” explore the spiritual land of Roanoke: Roberto Alegre, lead pastor of La Roca BIC, and Jennifer Hickey, lead pastor at Community of Faith Church.

While these pastors and their congregations are different from each other and diverge from many of the norms seen in the Allegheny Conference of Brethren in Christ U.S., both lead a prophetic charge, paving the way for more people to cross cultural and societal boundaries. And they are doing it with optimism, patience, courage, and a whole lot of inspiration through the power of the Holy Spirit.

La Roca BIC

Pastor Roberto Alegre, Jr. was born in Havana, Cuba, where he grew up in a Christian home. In his youth, Cuba was a country where there was no freedom of religion; in school, Roberto was persecuted by other students and even teachers

for his Christian faith. At the age of 11, his family moved to Miami, Florida, where Roberto spent the next 27 years of his life.

In 2007, God called Roberto (along with his wife Mayelin and their four children) to Roanoke to plant a Spanish-speaking congregation, La Roca BIC. At that time, only 2% of the people in Roanoke were Hispanic. Yet with a passion for reaching others with the love of Jesus, Roberto explored the Hispanic and Latino neighborhoods armed with tracts and friendship evangelism, determined to further the kingdom of God in the Spanish-speaking community.

Now seventeen years later, more than 7% of the population in Roanoke is Puerto Rican, Mexican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, and others from Latino backgrounds, a diversity that also exists in the La Roca church family. As the Hispanic presence grows in Roanoke, so does La Roca, now numbering up to 250 on some Sundays.

La Roca’s biggest challenge is an abundance of children. Around 50 children attend each week, and in this new generation of believers, a reverse language barrier presents itself. For some children raised in the U.S. by Spanish-speaking parents, English has become their first language. La Roca’s children’s ministry must discern how to lead these English-speaking, culturally-Hispanic young people.

The peace and love found at La Roca draw in the unchurched, the nonbelievers, and the seekers alike. But more importantly, it is through the joy of the worship and the good news of the Gospel in their native language that lives are being transformed by the power of Jesus Christ. For when the Spirit of God is moving in a church such as La Roca, the peace and joy of Christ is seen, experienced, and shared with others.

Community of Faith

Jennifer Hickey’s first call was to secular work. She earned her BA from Kutztown University in Speech Communication and first came to learn about the Brethren in Christ when she attended Grantham BIC in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. It wasn’t long until she was working as Minister of Young Adults and Administration there. Eventually Jen



“While these pastors and their congregations are different from each other, both lead a prophetic charge.”

began seminary at Evangelical Theological Seminary in Myerstown, Pa., and earned a master’s degree in biblical studies with an emphasis on theology and spiritual formation.

Jen continued to live for Jesus and create environments where people could thrive and find value in themselves and what they did. Her occupation in collegiate dining brought Jen and her husband Dan to Virginia. God showed up (again), leading them to Community of Faith Church and further calling Jen to full-time ministry in 2021.

First planted by a BIC pastor in 1996, Community of Faith Church today is a congregation of about twenty. In this precious community, transforming relationships with Jesus and with each other are pursued. While small congregations like this are not unusual in the Allegheny Conference, Community of Faith is the only one with a female lead pastor. Brethren in Christ U.S. fully recognizes and supports women in all levels of ministry leadership, but Pastor Jen navigates well the opposition and questions that come from those who may not understand or affirm her position.

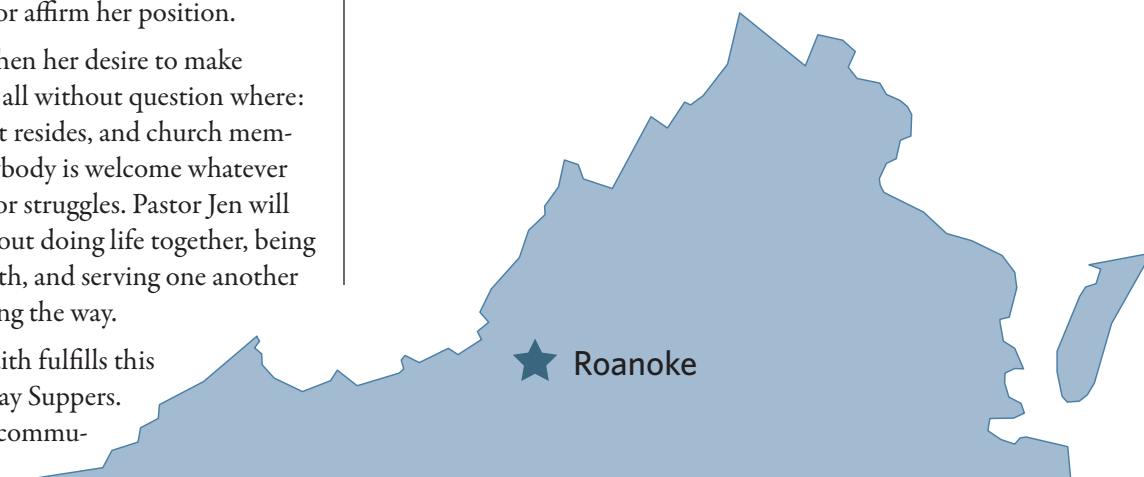
These extra hurdles only strengthen her desire to make Community of Faith a place for all without question where: Jesus is the focus, the Holy Spirit resides, and church members follow him faithfully. Everybody is welcome whatever their stories, questions, doubts, or struggles. Pastor Jen will tell you that this church is all about doing life together, being intentional about spiritual growth, and serving one another and the broader community along the way.

One way that Community of Faith fulfills this vision is through Second Saturday Suppers. Once a month, they offer a free commu-

nity meal with church members and neighbors sitting down together for good food and friendly conversation. While the Community of Faith numbers haven’t changed much, the people have. Everyone participates in some way to impact the surrounding community for Jesus.

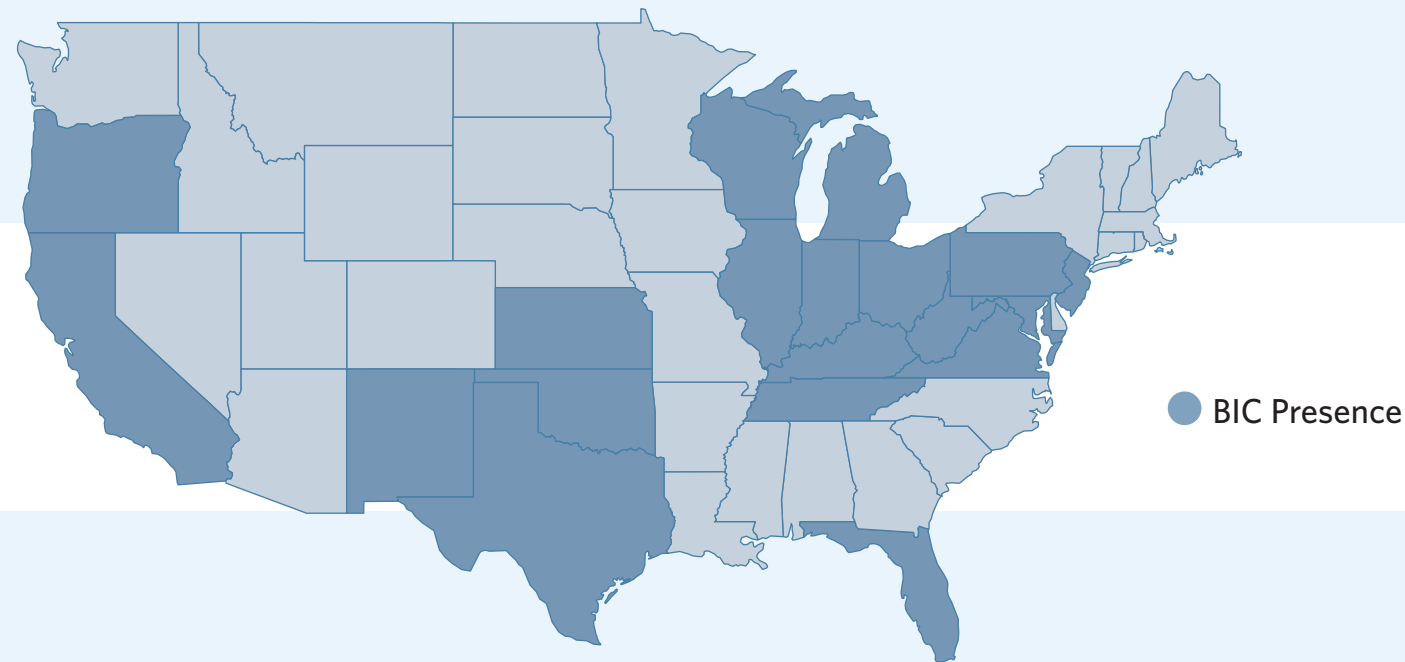
Trailblazing for the Glory of God

Despite the differences, biases, and challenges that Pastor Roberto and Pastor Jen face in their respective roles, the truth of the message they proclaim is the same. God uses pastors that possess enough optimism, patience, courage, and inspiration from the Holy Spirit to provide congregations with a true picture of what God’s love looks like. The revealed truth is evidenced in ways that are biblical and relevant as Jen and Roberto cross cultural lines to advance the Gospel. For we know that the truth of Jesus Christ never changes. Rather, this truth manifests itself by changing us.

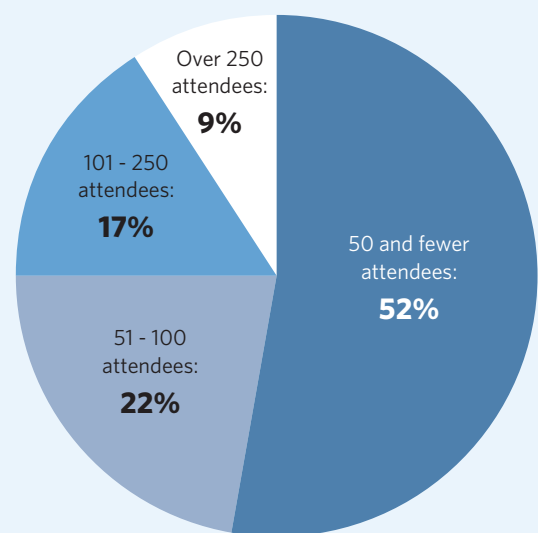


Pastor Alegre and his wife, Mayelin

••• U.S. CONGREGATIONS •••



AVERAGE SIZE OF BIC U.S. CONGREGATIONS



21,480 WORSHIPPERS

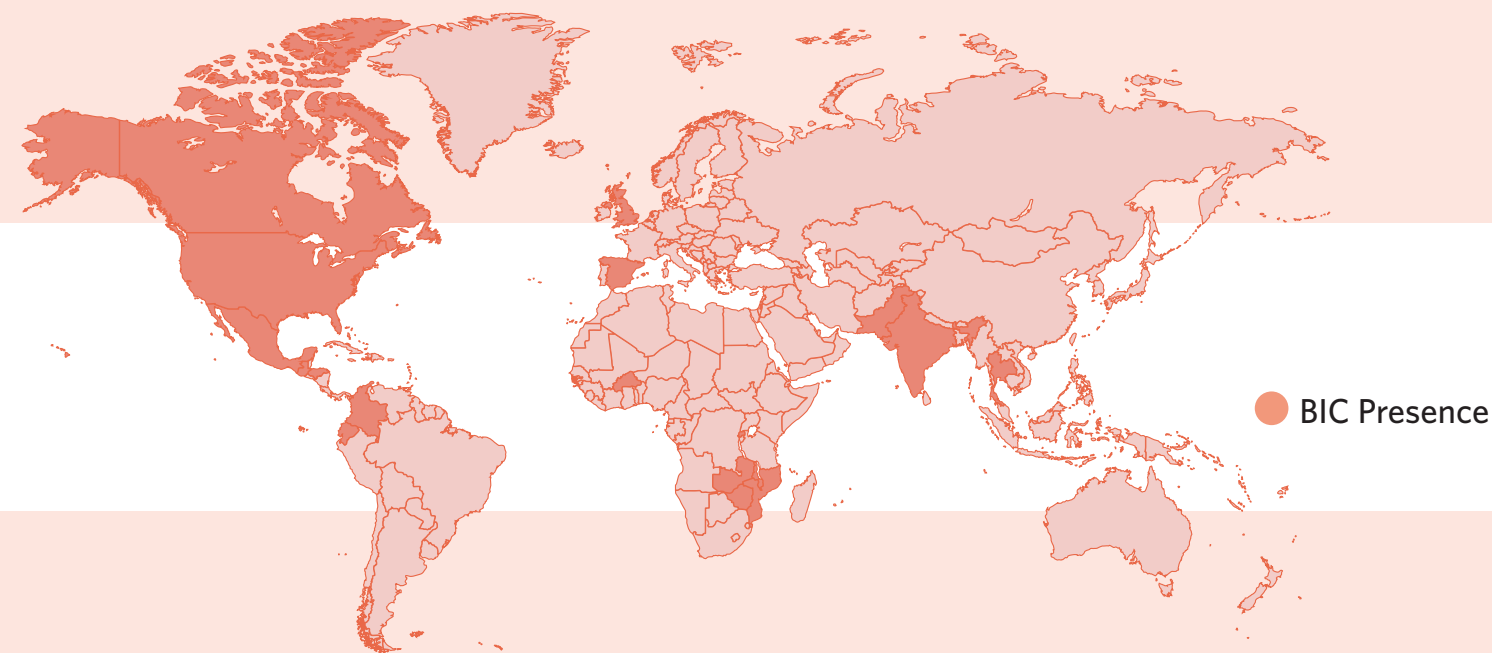
on average attended weekly services at

238 congregational sites across 19 states

826 people began or renewed relationships with Jesus*

730 individuals baptized*

••• WORLD MISSIONS •••



Our Global Team:

69 GLOBAL WORKERS

- including BIC U.S. employees and partners - located in **21 countries**;

51% SERVED AMONG

least reached people groups.

45 INITIATIVES

supported through the partnership handbook

learn more: partnership.bicus.org

18 participants in the missionary development program

42 international church plants supported

38 ministers licensed

8 ministers ordained

443 ministers currently licensed or ordained

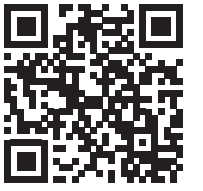
97 ministry scholarships awarded to international leaders

\$149,960 sponsored 815 children in the SPICE program

RISKY FAITH, LEGACIES OF SERVICE

Global workers share how God walked with them across cultures

Read more at:
bicus.org/tag/risky-faith



Walking by faith is risky and filled with paradoxes, something that Jesus' disciples certainly felt. They simultaneously experienced miracles, hunger, fellowship, derision, provision, threats, healing, weariness, breakthroughs, great loss, and great love.

Just like the disciples, Jesus beckons us to take risks with him. Brethren in Christ U.S. World Missions' history is filled with women and men who responded to God's call even when it was risky. We recently met with four households who have been taking those risky steps for decades, repeatedly saying "yes" to Jesus. Whether married, single, or as families with children, these individuals remind us that God's invitation to join his work in the world stands – regardless of age, status, or limitations.

B. and M. B. Spain, 1988-present

As newlyweds and recent college graduates, the Bs followed God to Madrid, Spain, expecting a 3–6-year ministry commitment. They quickly discovered that the Spirit was asking them to invest their entire lives in the Spanish Church.

As their work began, they learned that when God calls, the Spirit equips. God used their weaknesses to open paths of connection to others. Humble service and hospitality overflowing from their passions pointed people to Jesus, and a network of churches grew as the Lord brought key people into the ministry team.

In 2020, after thirty-two years in Madrid, the Bs once again said "yes" to God and left their beloved church family for Asturias on Spain's northern coast. This move, too, involved risk. Now as business owners in a small town, they strive

to extend the Kingdom through intentional and organic discipleship.

Mike and Lori Cassel Mexico & Guatemala, 2005-present

In the late 90's, the Cassels had three children, steady jobs, and were involved in their local congregation. A hurricane relief trip to Honduras was the eye-opening experience that initiated their journey of discovering God's heart for the world, and other believers walked with them through their discernment process. They connected with people from different cultures, joined additional short-term trips, and eventually attended Bible school to expand their knowledge base. They fondly remember World Missions staff helping them explore potential locations, and in 2005 they deployed to Mexico.

The journey was often discouraging. Some doors were closed, and they discovered that language and cultural adaptation were going to be lifelong learning processes. Yet as challenges came, God repeatedly displayed his faithfulness and helped them to grow. As Jesus called Peter, the fisherman, to be a fisher of men, Mike, the carpenter, learned to build the living church. The Cassels took risks (eventually relocating to Guatemala) and learned to be adaptable by being church planters, pastors, worship leaders, and mentors for developing local leaders. They continue to follow, motivated by seeing people open their hearts to Jesus.

Kris G. Southeast Asia, 2004-present

"A moving boat can be steered." These words from a trusted mentor came at a pivotal moment as Kris discerned God's call in her early thirties. A teacher from eastern Pennsylva-

nia, she had a natural interest in people of different cultures, encouraged by many short-term trips and the exchange students her family hosted. Through those experiences, she felt God drawing her to go to the nations.

Her mentor's words motivated her to continually step forward, even when unsure of where or in what role she would serve. She discovered that God often uses our vocations – which in her case was teaching literacy – to open doors for natural ministry. What began as an organic connection of teaching English expanded in countless ways as God led her into deep relationship with others and with him. Those steps were sometimes scary. They drew her away from self-reliance and drove her to dependence on Jesus. Kris can now look back and see how God used her humble steps of faith to grow a young church in Southeast Asia.

Doug and Barb Miller Malawi, 2000-2023

Moving from God's initial call to actively living it is a process that can take time; the Millers found that God prepared them gradually for a burden to share Christ with unreached people groups. Cross-cultural ministry experiences as young adults led to pastoral training in Guatemala, which encouraged them in their congregation in Pennsylvania to pray for God to be known throughout the world. Praying as a family of seven about this call on their lives led to intentional study and preparation for the next step. Their local church family and larger BIC church body helped them to discern where they may be able to serve; and in 2000, they deployed to Malawi.

Their years in Malawi were not always easy; a devastating bicycle accident left Barb wheelchair-bound and significantly

changed their lives. But now, the Millers celebrate 27 active fellowship groups that have been introduced to Jesus through chronological Bible studies and continue to meet. The Millers retired to the U.S. in 2023, but Doug and Barb can look back at these decades and joyfully say it was the most gratifying time of their lives. The reward of following Christ far outweighs any sacrifices they made.

Risky faith looks different for each person. Is God calling you to leave the comfort of the familiar? Do you feel the Spirit's nudge to take a step outside of others' expectations? Maybe the Lord is leading you to give generously or to release someone you love to follow God's call. Whatever the cost, these stories of risky faith remind us that in God's kingdom, risky faith produces joy and long-lasting fruit.

May God be leading you cross-culturally? Here are six ways to discern and prepare.

- Grow in intimacy with God: all ministry needs to flow from that relationship
- Invite mature believers to join you in the discernment process
- Learn through short-term service opportunities
- Connect with local international students, refugees, and immigrants
- Practice simplicity in possessions and finance
- Engage in World Missions' Missionary Development Community



FACING FREDDY

BIC Conferences' joint response to historic Cyclone

In March 2023, Cyclone Freddy struck the east coast of Africa. Devastating floods and landslides displaced over 650,000 people and killed more than 1,000. Malawi was impacted most severely. In response, Brethren in Christ (BIC) conferences in the U.S., Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe collaborated to provide immediate and ongoing aid.

Seeing the need of their brothers and sisters to the north, BIC Zimbabwe collected items for those affected in Malawi and Mozambique, donating seven bales of clothing and blankets. BIC U.S. sent money from the Global Compassion Fund to pay shipping costs to transport the clothing and blankets from Zimbabwe to Mozambique and Malawi.

Months after the storm passed, food insecurity continued to be a devastating result of Cyclone Freddy. The storm struck at the end of “hunger season” when harvest nears and food stores run dangerously low; this is possibly the worst time for such a catastrophe. In Malawi, funds from the Global Compassion Fund were used to sponsor food distributions in March, April, July, and November, helping hundreds of seriously affected and vulnerable families. This continued food aid not only eased the acute pain of food scarcity but also allowed those impacted to use their financial resources to rebuild and repair their homes.



Ministers pray over bags of maize before distributing them to Cyclone victims in Malawi.

Rapid response is paramount in the aftermath of a natural disaster such as Cyclone Freddy. Thanks to the Global Compassion Fund, over \$33,000 was released in 2023 to care for Cyclone Freddy victims, and we continue communication with regional BIC leaders to assess ongoing needs.

This kind of collaborative response to a crisis is only possible because of the decades-long relationships between BIC conferences in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and the U.S. As the church, we are all part of the same family, of the same body, and as such we can aid those within the church in their time of greatest need. Romans 12:4-5 says, “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

At its core, the Global Compassion Fund is founded on Christ’s love and a desire to care well for the international Brethren in Christ family. When giving and serving is done as an act of worship, the impact of the Global Compassion Fund far exceeds the sum of numeric donations or distributions. The Global Compassion Fund provides a channel to participate in living out the Gospel, offering comfort and care to those in need, for Christ’s glory.

\$122,701

was distributed from the Global Compassion Fund.

Natural disasters	\$66,050
Food security	\$7,603
Displaced people	\$12,223
Other needs.....	\$36,825









14 locations received aid including: Ecuador, Greece, India, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Spain, Venezuela, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Leadership Council

- Alan Robinson, national director
- Heather Beaty, bishop, Susquehanna Conference
- Ron Howell, bishop, Midwest Conference
- Bill Donner, 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

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Tom Law,
board chair,
Pacific Conference | Alan Robinson,
national director,
ex officio member | 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 | Jonah Langenderfer,
member-at-large |
|  |  |  |
| Jacob Lougheed,
member-at-large | Brian Mbuu,
assistant chair,
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

FINANCIALS

Income	2023*	% of total	2022*	% of total
Congregations	\$ 3,409,431	39%	\$ 3,760,149	77%
Undesignated	2,522,096		2,726,172	
Designated	887,335		1,033,977	
Individuals/Organizations	3,819,508	43%	2,072,327	43%
Undesignated	592,982		289,633	
Designated	3,226,526		1,782,694	
Investment Gains/(Loss)	1,379,321	16%	(1,269,463)	-26%
Undesignated	244,998		129,416	
Designated	1,134,323		(1,398,879)	
Bequests	114,602	1%	238,091	5%
Undesignated	248		2,628	
Designated	114,354		235,463	
Registrations & Other	82,790	1%	36,681	1%
Total Income	\$ 8,805,652		\$ 4,837,785	
Spend				
Global Ministry	\$ 2,369,010	39%	\$ 2,202,634	38%
<i>missionary support, church planting, international ministry training and scholarships</i>				
Regional Ministry	1,461,462	24%	1,378,062	24%
<i>church planting, leadership development, conference leadership</i>				
Global Projects	966,139	16%	1,195,289	21%
<i>relief, aid, evangelism, and education partnerships with international churches</i>				
Shared Services	855,030	14%	835,656	14%
<i>finance, communications, human resources, development</i>				
National Ministry	421,795	7%	505,866	9%
<i>denominational leadership, ministerial credentialing</i>				
Project 250	38,716	1%	108,280	2%
Related Agencies	52,859	1%	62,035	1%
DB Pension Costs	(149,972)	-2%	(489,524)	-9%
Total Spend	\$ 6,015,039		\$ 5,798,298	
Change in Net Assets	\$ 2,790,613		\$ (960,513)	
Net assets, January 1	\$ 17,741,615		\$ 18,702,128	
Net assets, December 31	\$ 20,532,228		\$ 17,741,615	
Undesignated	4,986,968		3,818,012	
Designated	15,545,260		13,923,603	

*All numbers are as of Dec. 31. Numbers for 2023 are preliminary. Audited 2023 financial statements will be published online summer 2024. The 2022 numbers are audited and final.



Brethren in Christ U.S.

717.697.2634 | bic@bicus.org
431 Grantham Road,
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

Visit us online: bicus.org

Like and follow us:
[facebook.com/brethreninchristus](https://www.facebook.com/brethreninchristus)
[instagram.com/brethreninchristus](https://www.instagram.com/brethreninchristus)

Writers: Salynda Hogsett, Kara K.,
Alan Robinson, Naomi Roth, Jill Thompson

Designer: Michael Bowlin