

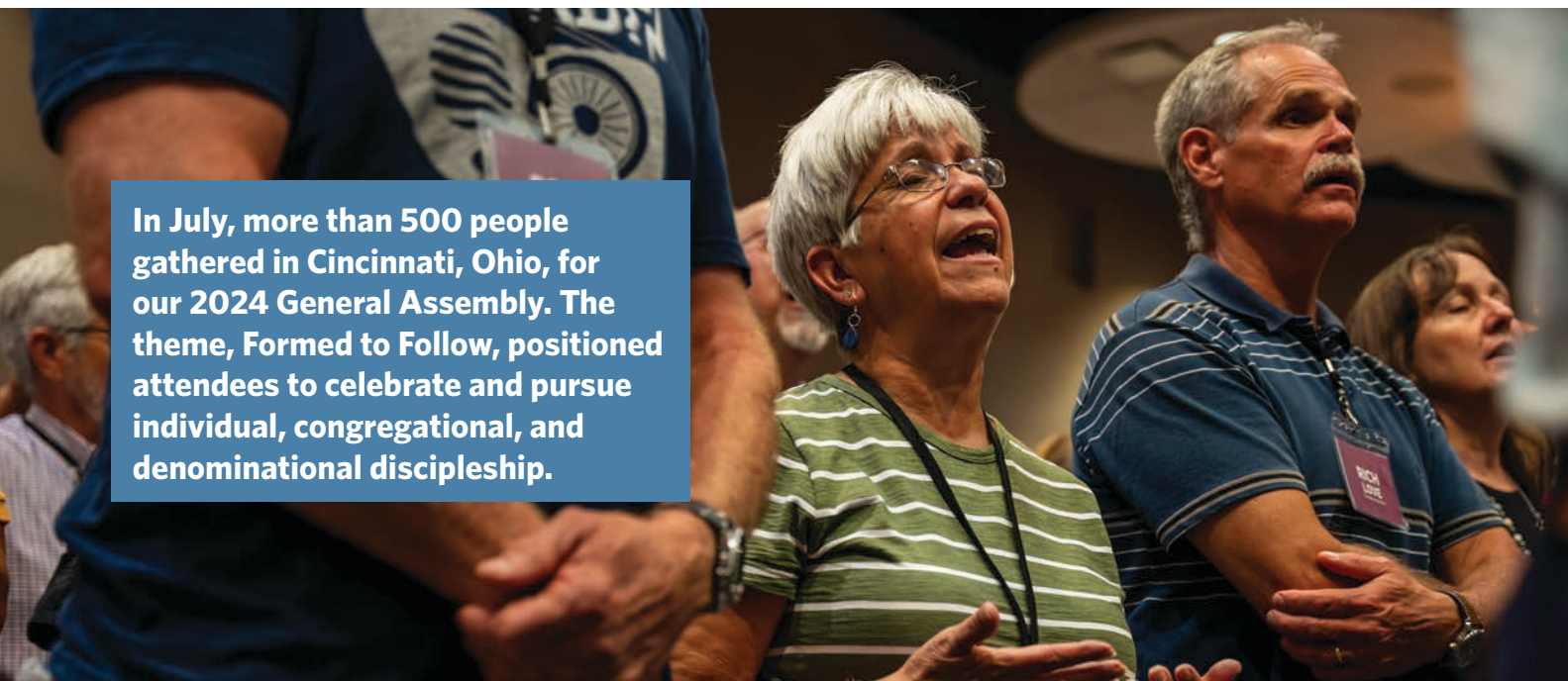


Brethren in Christ U.S.

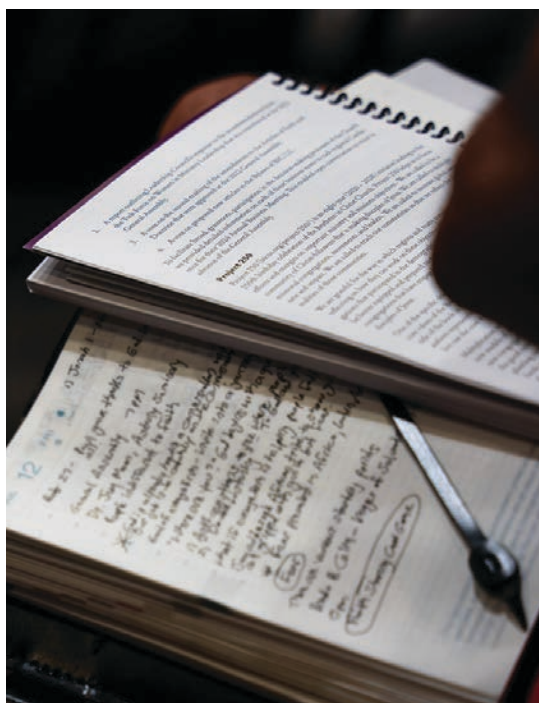


Annual Report

January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024



In July, more than 500 people gathered in Cincinnati, Ohio, for our 2024 General Assembly. The theme, *Formed to Follow*, positioned attendees to celebrate and pursue individual, congregational, and denominational discipleship.



A LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

My wife, Sharon, and I are privileged to be the grandparents to five grandchildren under 10, and we frequently provide childcare when their parents are out. Some of the games we play are loud, physical, and exhausting. I am always happy when we transition to a quieter game. One of our favorites is “Guess Who?” In the classic game, you try to identify the mystery person on your opponent’s card. (An important aside, I am not one of those grandparents who lets the child win, but I often lose anyway.)

This game came to mind recently when I found myself in a congregational board meeting and someone referred to “the denomination” as a group separate from those gathered around the table. While I know the commentator’s intention, I responded that “the denomination” is us, all of us. In the denominational “Guess Who?” all of us,

individuals and congregations, are the answer.

I encourage you to reflect on your understanding or perception of our denomination. Think of “us” rather than “them.” If each of us could make this transition, we will be much more likely to think about our place, role, and contribution to the great work to which God calls us. We will be able to celebrate what God is doing in and through us, all of us.

The stories and reports in this publication highlight just a few examples of God’s work among the Brethren in Christ in the U.S. and around the world. We give thanks for every instance of God’s redemption. Simultaneously, we earnestly pray for God’s grace, peace, and power to transform lives, homes, communities, and the world more and more.



I am grateful that all of us can be a part of what God is doing in and through – guess who? – us, all of us, together.

Blessings in Christ,

Alan Robinson
National Director

Legacy of Love

The Brethren in Christ’s legacy is one of deep love for the Lord, scripture, and the world. This nearly 250-year history is marked with visionary and sacrificial generosity. As we look to our future, you can be a part of this rich legacy.

The BIC U.S. Legacy Society celebrates those who choose to support future ministry by designating gifts through their Will or estate plan. Planned giving employs tax-effective charitable strategies while effectively providing a stable financial future for BIC ministry.

Already, the Legacy Society has 116 members accounting for nearly \$4.3 million in future funding for Common Ministry, World Missions, regional conferences, and local congregations.

If you would like to discuss planned giving options or have already made provisions for a gift, please contact Mark Templeton, development officer. The Legacy Society welcomes gifts of all sizes, and participation may be anonymous.

templeton@bicus.org | 717-697-2634 ext. 5421

COOPERATIVE *Congregations*

Three churches – who each speak a different language – have found life is better together at the Mt. Rock Worship Center.

On a warm Sunday in July 2023, while Grace Nepali Church met for the very first time at the Mt. Rock Worship Center (Mt. Rock BIC), church members from Ríos de Agua Viva – the Spanish-speaking congregation that also meets at Mt. Rock – slowly filed into the back of the room. With heads bowed and hands raised, they quietly prayed, interceding for this young congregation. They didn't share a language, but they shared the Holy Spirit.

A Changing Community

Pastor Brad Stutzman, who oversees ministry at the Mt. Rock Worship Center in Shippensburg, Pa., has seen his community's ethnic makeup shift significantly, something shared by many rural American towns:

Their proximity to major highways attracted corporations like Walmart and Amazon to build e-commerce distribution centers, creating new jobs in the community. Employment opportunities drew new people into the area, bringing their foods and customs with them and transforming the town's cultural landscape.

While European and Hispanic groups have deep roots in the Shippensburg region, a growing number of Nepali and Bhutanese families have arrived over the past five years. "You walk into your local Walmart," explains Pastor Brad, "and you might travel halfway into the store before you hear English being spoken." He sees this shift with a missional eye of a seasoned church planter: "God has brought the nations of the world to our community."

Today, three culturally unique Brethren in Christ congregations call the Mt. Rock Worship Center home: Grace Nepali, Ríos de Agua Viva, and The Rock. While each exists as an independent congregation, they share more than a building. Being united in purpose and mission, the five pastors who lead these groups – Brad Stutzman, Fernando Garcia, Deepa Pradhan, Tony Marker, and Ann-Margret Neilsen – are each passionate about bringing more people to Christ. As a result, they've created a one-of-a-kind church structure to meet the dynamic changes in their community.

Independently Interconnected

Despite being independent congregations, leadership of the Mt. Rock churches is intrinsically linked. Pastor Brad provides varying levels of oversight to all three congregations but primarily leads Ríos (a Spanish-speaking congregation he planted in 2003) with assistance from Pastor

Fernando. Pastor Tony heads up The Rock (English-speaking), and Pastor Deepa leads Grace Nepali, the newest of the three.

While many may expect a multicultural church to feature bilingual worship songs and live sermon translation (a structure that works for many*), the Mt. Rock congregations have found that independence allows them to minister in culturally relevant ways. "Each culture focuses on what it can do and knows how to do," says Pastor Fernando.

However, the three congregations are unified in their mission to reach the Shippensburg community for Christ. "No matter the culture, we are the light of the world," says Pastor Deepa. "We share the good news."

Once per quarter, members from all three congregations go into the community for evangelism. Following an intentional hour of prayer, they divide into mixed groups of three or more with people from each congregation in every group. "It doesn't matter if you speak Nepali, Spanish, or English. We're versatile because there's no language barrier," laughs Pastor Tony.

The congregations also foster unity through their shared youth program. The aptly named Fuse Youth Group, led by Ann-Margret Neilsen, brings together teens from all three congregations for learning and fellowship each Wednesday. "It gives them the opportunity to understand that people who come from different cultures can believe in and serve the same Lord," she says. Fuse is also impacting the parents in the congregations who are getting to know each other better through their children.

A Reproducible Model

It hasn't been simple; questions and challenges arise from unexpected places. For example, when three congregations share a building, who's in charge of it? If one group owns and the others rent, a power imbalance forms. "This is why we created the Mt. Rock Worship Center," says Pastor Brad. "We've separated the ministries from the facility, so all three congregations are 'renters.'" Each congregation contributes a percentage of their offerings, and they share equal decision-making power related to facility upkeep.

Wrestling through this challenge and others like it is worth the effort for the Mt. Rock congregations. As these different cultures join together, it's clear that Jesus is Lord of all, even languages and cultures. "The language [you speak] is not that important," says Pastor Deepa. "Jesus said we're all in one body. That's how I see the unity."



Top: Pastor Brad Stutzman. Bottom: The Rock

*Our 2021 Annual Report featured Gateway Karis BIC Church in California who has adopted this format.



Their unity births missional passion, driving them to bring even more people in their community to Christ. “I believe the bottom line is to always have a love for souls,” says Pastor Fernando, “and of course love for God. When we love God, we will also love any culture [or people group].”

Across North America, cultures are colliding for the first time in communities like Shippensburg. The Church has a unique opportunity to become a place where these cultures can find unity in Christ.

“I don’t believe what’s happening at Mt. Rock is singular,” says Ann-Margret. “I believe that we’re all called to gather, know each other, and worship together. I think this is something that God’s going to continue doing.”

Page 4 Photos - Top: Deepa Pradhan, lead pastor of Grace Nepali. Middle: Ríos de Agua Viva. Bottom: Tony Marker, associate pastor of The Rock. Page 5 photos – Top: Fernando Garcia, associate pastor of Ríos. Middle: Ann-Margret Neilsen leads the Fuse Youth Group. Bottom: Grace Nepali.



Photo – In October, representatives from each congregation in Cohort A attended a training on strengthening their congregations’ identity and mission. The training happened twice, once in Pennsylvania (above) and once in Ohio, to accommodate the geographic spread of participants.

To Dream Again

This year, 17 congregations formed Cohort A of the Thriving Congregations Initiative, a program designed to strengthen churches’ values, mission, and community.

“Priority 3 of Project 250* is to multiply ‘missional congregations, movements, and leaders,’” says Bishop Lynn Thrush of the Great Lakes Conference, “and the Thriving Congregations Initiative was designed to pursue this marvelously gospel-central enterprise.”

The Initiative is a comprehensive program that includes qualified, godly trainers; congregational leadership beyond pastors; coaching relationships built over several years; and funding to accommodate the above. Through individual coaching, assessments, and large-group gatherings, participants have been encouraged, challenged, and equipped to fulfill God’s mission in their unique contexts.

At one large group training in October, Bishop Lynn “observed the growing trust of leadership, the pleasure of discovered insight, and the recognition of the Holy Spirit’s presence.” He continues, “I fully believe the Thriving Congregations Initiative is strengthening and preparing BIC congregations for the future God has in store.”

Here’s what Cohort A is saying:

Parker Ford Church in Pottstown, Pa. – It was so helpful for us to participate in a guided process that asked us to dream again. What might Jesus want to do in and through our congregation? What more do we want him to do?

Lakeview Community BIC in Goodrich, Mich. – I’ve been to a lot of corporate meetings in my career which often disappoint more than benefit. This was not like that. The biggest thing we learned so far – which was quite reassuring – was that our congregation and leadership team was generally aligned when reviewing congregational health markers.

New Life Believers in Williamsport, Md. – We are participating in the Initiative because we believe God is calling us to develop ministry programs that will help families in our community thrive. We are currently evaluating our current ministries to become more family focused and would like to develop counseling programs and family-based seminars to help families in crisis.

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



5 LESSONS

THE MT. ROCK PASTORS HAVE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT CONNECTING WITH BELIEVERS FROM OTHER CULTURES. THEIR ADVICE TO OTHERS SEEKING MULTICULTURAL CONNECTIONS:

1. Start by asking God for opportunities to meet people from other cultures.
2. Prioritize relationships; leave your comfort zone and demonstrate you’re simply interested in fellowship.
3. Ask how your congregation can help before offering a solution.
4. Be generous and collaborative with your facility, time, and relationships.
5. Don’t let a language barrier hinder praying for someone; Jesus transcends language.

*Project 250 is a set of five priorities to guide Brethren in Christ U.S. to the denomination’s 250th anniversary in 2028. Learn more at bicus.org/project-250.

U.S. CONGREGATIONS

22,721 WORSHIPPERS

on average attended weekly services at

232 congregational sites
across 19 states

1224 people began or renewed
relationships with Jesus*

767 individuals
baptized*

438 ministers currently
licensed or ordained

23 ministers
licensed

5 ministers
ordained

*Number based on 73% of congregational sites reporting.



WORLD MISSIONS

Our Global Team:

62 GLOBAL WORKERS

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

19 participants in the missionary development program

97 ministry scholarships awarded to international leaders

\$162,868 sponsored 815 children in the SPICE program

48% SERVED AMONG

least reached people groups.

42 international church plants supported

45 INITIATIVES

supported through the partnership handbook

learn more: partnership.bicus.org



DISCOVERING FAMILY IN SHARED HISTORY

By Bishop Antonio Gonzalez

One of the key – but often unseen – ministries of BIC U.S. World Missions is training international church leaders through scholarships, the Directed Study Program, and most recently international Core Course gatherings. BIC Core Courses lay a ministry foundation by exploring history, theology, and leadership. The global BIC community expressed a growing appetite to receive this training for themselves, and in March, pastors from Colombia, Panama, the U.S., and Spain gathered in Bogotá to complete the BIC History and Values Core Course.

Antonio Gonzalez, bishop of BIC Spain, was one of the participants. Here he shares how the gathering went beyond learning church history to instilling a deep familial bond among the participants.

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For most of BIC Spain's pastors, this was the first opportunity to participate in an international training course. Many of the pastors from Spain were not yet familiar with the BIC Church in other parts of the world, and the meeting was a wonderful opportunity to expand their knowledge.

Three of the four Spanish pastors in attendance are of Latin American origin, as is a large part of our Spanish church membership. That cultural connection, despite the differences between our backgrounds, favored communication and mutual integration during our time in Colombia. We greatly appreciated the welcome we received from the BIC Church in Bogotá, enjoying Colombian coffee and food in fellowship with our brothers and sisters from various parts of the world. Despite how tired we were from the time change, the local church was attentive to us, facilitating our class participation.

This course was particularly important for us as some of the pastors in Spain are just beginning in the ministry. The mere fact of getting to know other pastors and sharing their problems and struggles with them was very relevant. The learning community was also a community of life through which we could share and reflect on the challenges of pastoral life.

Learning the rich history and origins of the Brethren in Christ, from its origins among European Anabaptists to the formation of the Brethren in Christ Church in Pennsylvania, was very important to all of us. Especially stimulating were sessions about Pietism among the Brethren in Christ and the theological streams that contribute to the special profile in our history. The fraternity between current BIC leaders was joined by the simultaneous awareness of a unified history, rich with testimonies of following Jesus.

From my point of view, this is the most important thing about meetings of this kind. They help to foster the awareness that we belong to a larger body, not only in today's world but also throughout history. In this way, our small struggles in local churches are framed in a much broader perspective. By meeting with other brothers and sisters, we can realize that we are not alone in our difficulties, just as we are not alone in our consolations (2 Cor 1:7).

In this sense, I believe that all the participants who came from Spain were struck by the experience of being part of a body and of belonging to a great history of following Jesus. This has made us very aware of the importance of working for the unity among churches and for maintaining a faithful witness.

A similar Core Course gathering took place in Southeast Asia with participants from Japan, India, Nepal, South Korea, and Thailand. Plans are underway for more international Core Course gatherings in Latin America and other regions.

HELP IN LIFE'S WORST MOMENTS

Have you experienced a *worst* moment in your life? A sudden job loss, a loved one's passing, a natural disaster, or tragic accident? How did you experience God's presence and provision following such tragedy and loss? Who responded immediately with practical care?

The Global Compassion Fund exists to offer care and support in life's worst moments, meeting physical needs in ways that draw individuals and families closer to God. Throughout 2024, numerous communities around the world received aid from the Global Compassion Fund during times of crisis. Two such communities were in Nepal's Terai region and Morang District.

In January, temperatures unexpectedly plummeted as a cold wave settled over

the Terai region. Thick fog and howling winds led to bitter temperatures that became life-threatening for children and the elderly in impoverished communities. BIC Nepal leaders quickly mobilized, purchasing sweaters and warm caps for 160 school children at three government schools. Additionally, the church distributed warm blankets to more than 150 families.

In April, a devastating electrical fire swept through a village in the Morang District, leaving families destitute. BIC Nepal partnered with other local charities to rebuild 22 homes, and Global Compassion Funds contributed toward purchasing new doors and windows. Mrs. T's new home is currently under construction. "As a widow with two children, there was no hope of rebuild-

ing a good house without this support," she says. "Although the fire consumed our home and everything, God provided."

On its own, physical aid can't bring lasting hope. However, meeting felt needs in the name of Jesus is a practical way of sharing the Gospel. Providing warm clothing and blankets and contributing toward reconstruction efforts are practical opportunities to share the love of Jesus.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL COMPASSION FUND

Motivated by Christ's love, the BIC family collaboratively responds to international natural disasters, humanitarian aid crises, and extreme poverty through the Global Compassion Fund; close relationships with local churches and partners facilitate quick and effective responses.

Photos – Left: A gentleman from a BIC congregation in the Terai region received this warm blanket to stave off the cold. Right: Mrs. T and one of her daughters stand by the front door of their new home under construction.



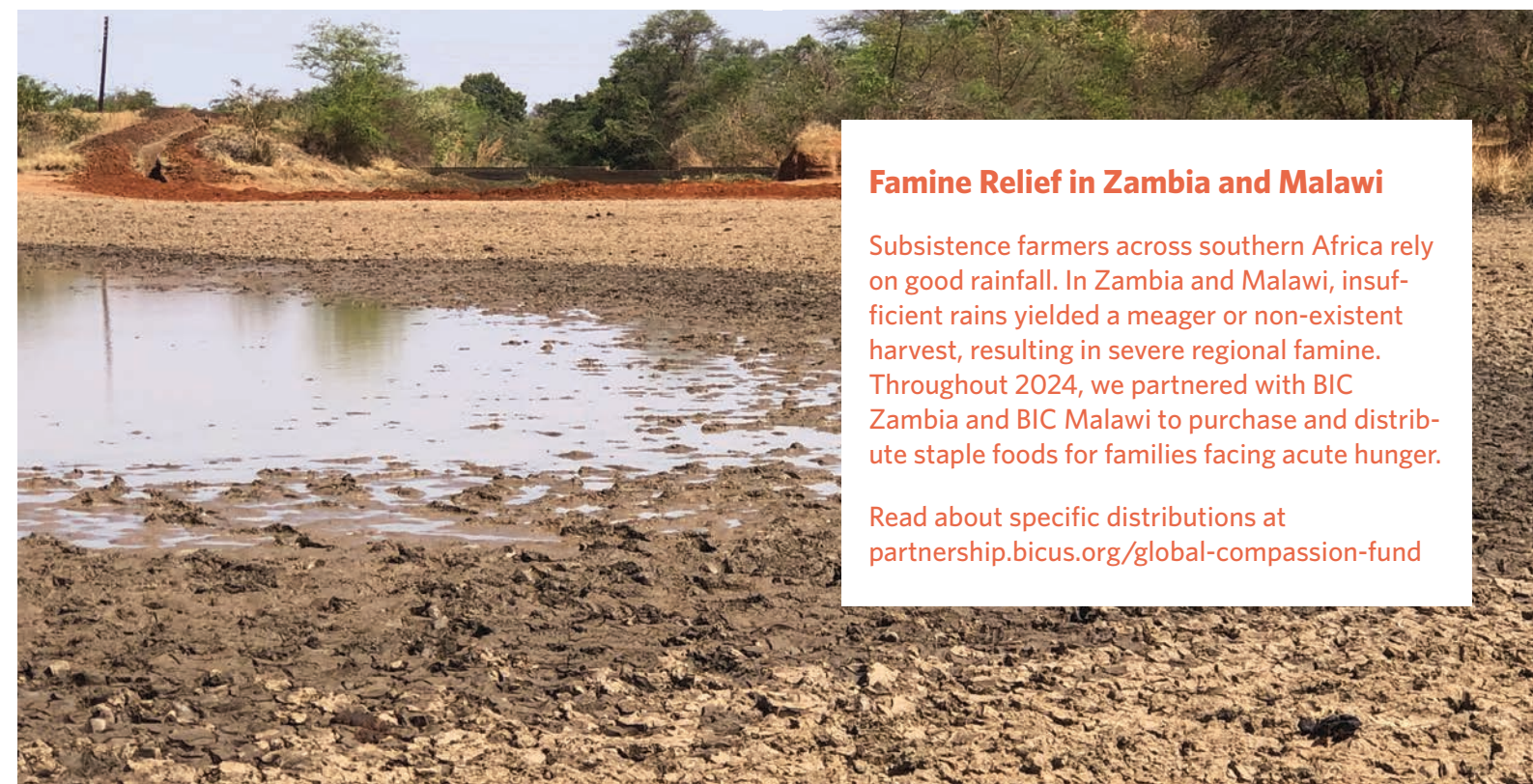
\$132,779

was distributed from the Global Compassion Fund.

8 locations received aid: India, Malawi, a Middle Eastern country, Mozambique, Nepal, Spain, Venezuela, and Zambia.



Our donors make this work possible; 19 congregations and 85 individuals contributed to the Global Compassion Fund in 2024.



Famine Relief in Zambia and Malawi

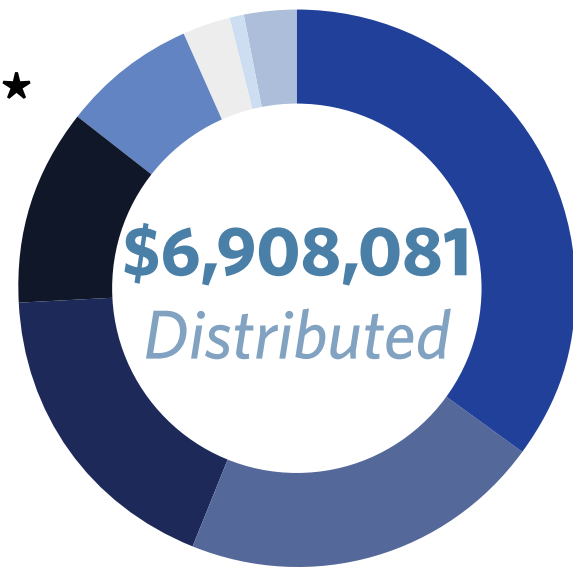
Subsistence farmers across southern Africa rely on good rainfall. In Zambia and Malawi, insufficient rains yielded a meager or non-existent harvest, resulting in severe regional famine. Throughout 2024, we partnered with BIC Zambia and BIC Malawi to purchase and distribute staple foods for families facing acute hunger.

Read about specific distributions at partnership.bicus.org/global-compassion-fund

FINANCIALS



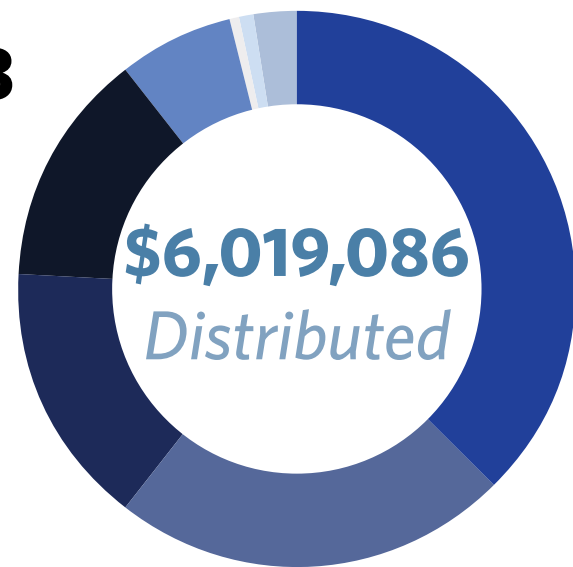
2024*



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|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 46% Congregations | 37% Global Ministry | 8% National Ministry |
| 29% Individuals/Organizations | 22% Regional Ministry | 3% Project 250 |
| 19% Investments | 19% Global Projects | 1% Related Agencies |
| 4% Bequests | 13% Shared Services | -3% DB Pension Costs |
| 2% Others | | |



2023



- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 38% Congregations | 39% Global Ministry | 7% National Ministry |
| 43% Individuals/Organizations | 24% Regional Ministry | 1% Project 250 |
| 16% Investments | 16% Global Projects | 1% Related Agencies |
| 1% Bequests | 14% Shared Services | -3% DB Pension Costs |
| 1% Others | | |

*All numbers are as of Dec. 31. Numbers for 2024 are preliminary. Audited 2024 financial statements will be published online summer 2025. The 2023 numbers are audited and final.

LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Leadership Council



Alan Robinson,
national director,
chair



Heather Beaty,
bishop of the
Susquehanna
Conference



Ron Bowell,
bishop of the
Midwest Conference



Bill Donner,
bishop of the
Pacific Conference



Bryan Hoke,
bishop of the
Atlantic Conference



Jonathan Lloyd,
director of BIC U.S.
World Missions



Mitchell Martin,
director of finance and
shared services



Aner Morejon,
bishop of the
Southeast Conference



Rob Patterson,
bishop of the
Allegheny Conference



Lynn Thrush,
bishop of the
Great Lakes Conference

General Conference Board*



Tom Law,
board chair,
Pacific Conference



Ray Chung,
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



Jonah Langenderfer,
member-at-large



Jacob Loughheed,
member-at-large



Brian Mbuu,
assistant chair,
member-at-large



Georgia Myers,
member-at-large



Kevin Noll,
member-at-large



José Rodríguez,
member-at-large



Naomi Smith,
Susquehanna
Conference

Learn more about our leadership teams:

bicus.org/about/leadership-structure

*Alan Robinson, national director, serves as ex officio member.



Brethren in Christ U.S.

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