



# Brethren Disaster Ministries **BRIDGES**

Rebuilding Homes • Nurturing Children • Responding Globally

Vol. 24, Winter 2023

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Church of the Brethren

## A New Home for Survivors and BDM Volunteers

In Dawson Springs, Ky., Habitat for Humanity of the Pennyryle Region (Habitat) and the Hopkins County Long-Term Recovery Group are providing new homes to survivors of the December 2021 tornadoes which devastated Western Kentucky. These new builds are needed to bring most residents back into the community because over 650 homes were totally destroyed in this small town. Building new homes in this area is an additional program for Habitat, alongside their usual non-disaster related programs that help “families build and improve places to call home”.

Habitat is also providing a home for BDM volunteers and leaders at their facility in nearby Madisonville, Ky., enabling the BDM Rebuilding Program to set up in the area and support this disaster recovery. Through the work of BDM leaders and a move team from the Southern Ohio/Kentucky District, several additional rooms were built in a portion of Habitat's warehouse, with a loft area above the rooms



BDM volunteers work on a new home in Dawson Springs, Ky., in January 2023. Photo by Troy Barnhart

to provide housing and a safe gathering space for meals and meetings. The Habitat executive director even gave up his office as a space for leadership to sleep and is sharing office space with other staff. The rest of the BDM leadership is housed in four travel trailers in the parking lot behind the warehouse. These trailers were part of a recent donation through Good360, with one given to BDM and the other three to Habitat.

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BDM meals are prepared and served in the kitchen next to the conference room in the Habitat for Humanity offices in Madisonville, Ky. Photo Courtesy BDM

Finding a housing location in communities impacted by disasters is often a challenge and is sometimes the biggest barrier for volunteer groups like BDM to be able to help long-term. BDM and local leaders had explored two other options for housing at churches in the area. In the end, the churches were not open to hosting BDM for the extended period of time it hoped to stay in the community. With seemingly no other options available in December 2022, and with BDM scheduled to arrive in January 2023, Habitat offered their

space for housing because they were so anxious to have BDM volunteers to come to help with their work.

BDM worked on some stage of 10 new homes in Dawson Springs in the first month that volunteers served in 2023. BDM volunteers had already helped complete two homes in the area during a short-term response in October 2022. Volunteers are currently scheduled to serve for six months in Dawson Springs, with the hope of continuing work through at least the end of 2023.

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*"I appreciate all that it takes to get a site operational, and your team is excellent! Habitat seems to have a good working relationship with BDM so far and both programs work well together. I love this ministry and being able to participate as much as possible. It has certainly blessed my life each time I'm out onsite."*

—Kristine Shunk, BDM volunteer,  
& administrative assistant,  
Middle Pennsylvania District

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## Rebuilding Updates

### Waverly, Tenn., Site Closes

As 2022 came to a close, so did the BDM Rebuilding site in Waverly, Tenn. Open from April through December, the project served 40 families whose homes had been damaged in deadly flooding in August 2021. The work of 345 weekly volunteers and leaders on that site saved the families and community over \$626,000 in labor costs for the repairs. The volunteer housing site at Waverly Cumberland Presbyterian Church had housed another volunteer group before BDM arrived to use the space. That same organization has returned to continue any work remaining in the town.

### New Shower Trailer Partnership

BDM has entered a partnership with the Presbytery of Charlotte (Presbytery) in North Carolina to help supply shower facilities when needed on rebuilding sites. The Presbytery has a shower ministry that is supported by a team of experts in building, maintaining, and transporting shower trailers and shower buildings for use on disaster and recovery sites. Their fleet has provided showers for volunteers and survivors in many locations across the country, and they are dedicated to making sure those facilities are constantly being used.

Communications with BDM initially began with the shower trailer

owned by the Presbytery that was used at the volunteer housing on the Dayton (Ohio) BDM Project site. That trailer was also used at the Waverly, Tenn., site. While BDM was using the trailer, our leaders took care of any needed repairs and upkeep. Although an additional shower trailer is not needed on our current rebuilding site, the Presbytery is eager to partner with BDM as often as possible in the future. When housing at new BDM projects has no, or not enough, shower facilities, the Presbytery will loan BDM the equipment that best fits their need. As part of the partnership, BDM has donated its older shower trailer, "Rolling Waters", to the Presbytery. Shenandoah District volunteers had begun work on some needed repairs on the trailer but it had not been needed on a BDM site for several years. The

Presbytery has already continued the necessary repairs to get it back up and running for a site so that BDM or another response organization will be able to use it as needed.

### Vehicle News

A new truck was recently purchased to replace the oldest truck in the BDM fleet which was sold in 2021 because it needed extensive repairs. A portion of the funds needed to make this new purchase were donated by the Oak Park Church of the Brethren in Oakland, Md.

BDM recently received a donated travel trailer through the organization Good360 which had acquired it from Dow Chemical. The 2021 Springdale Mini is currently being used as leadership housing at the rebuilding project site in Dawson Springs, Ky.



*This used travel trailer was donated to BDM for use on Rebuilding projects.*



# Mid-Atlantic District Responds in Partnership with BDM

In October 2021, tidal flooding along the Chesapeake Bay inundated streets, homes, and businesses in Maryland's Somerset and Dorchester counties. Although approximately 150 homes were flooded, this became a "low-attention disaster", meaning the news of the event and its impact did not make the mainstream national or state media. Recovery for survivors has been difficult. FEMA funding was not available because the damage was not enough to meet the threshold for a federal disaster declaration and state funding was also not available. The recovery has been supported primarily by the Eastern Shore Long Term Recovery Group and the Maryland Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (MDVOAD).

Both BDM and the Mid-Atlantic District (MAD) participate in MDVOAD, with the district often supporting local disaster responses by providing volunteers and leaders. The recent tidal flooding response presented an opportunity for BDM to partner with MAD on home repair. To leverage resources and funding to support the work, BDM staff applied for and received a grant from National Voluntary Organizations Active in

Disaster (NVOAD) and Lowes Home Improvement. The grant included \$30,000 in Lowes gift cards to cover the costs of construction materials which the families were unable to purchase on their own and \$4,200 to cover some volunteer travel and housing costs.

MAD district disaster coordinator Jeff McKee recruited volunteers from various areas of the district who typically worked for four workdays during each trip. Those who traveled a distance were provided with overnight housing, while local volunteers traveled daily to the jobsites. Several volunteers from the Western and Southern Pennsylvania districts also joined the rebuilding effort. In total, 35 volunteers served



*Volunteers worked hard to repair homes damaged in the Maryland tidal flooding but the work was rewarding and the teamwork made all the difference. One volunteer who served in Crisfield, Md., made this remark: "The scope of the work turned out to be far more involved than was anticipated. [The leaders' skills were] as important as how the team worked together to complete the task. It was a joy for me to have been part of the team!"*

*Photo Courtesy Jeff McKee*

during nine weeks to support three families with their recovery. Even though the grant is completed, the Mid-Atlantic District plans to coordinate future trips to serve in the area in 2023.



Most of the homes where Mid-Atlantic District volunteers worked needed kitchen repairs to be livable.

*Photo Courtesy BDM*



The kitchen repairs often started with replacing flooring.

*Photo by Dave Jupin*

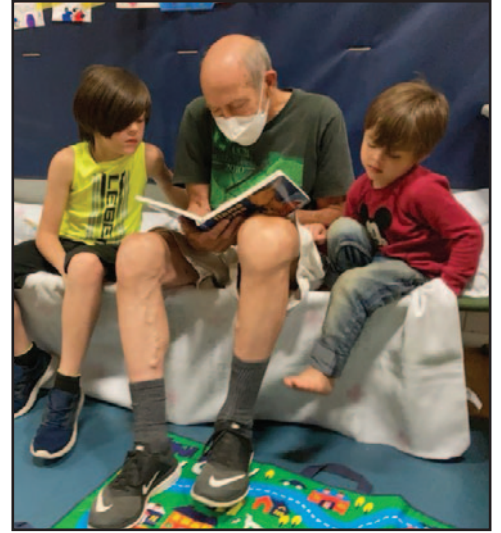
# Trauma and Children: Why CDS is Important to Children After Disasters

by Lisa Crouch, CDS associate director

Did you know that nearly half of American children are impacted by trauma? If not addressed, trauma can affect the child's brain development and manifest into behavioral reactions that can negatively impact their ability to lead a successful life. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) believes trauma can start a cascade of challenges for a child that can be difficult to tackle without proper coping skills. Many think children are just resilient and will "bounce back" regardless of the difficulties they face. However, the reality is that many children just don't have the ability or support system to simply "bounce back". According to NCTSN, at no age is a child immune to the effects of traumatic experiences. Children are falling through the cracks

and they need positive adults to invest in their future.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACES) occur in one in seven children and actually can have a compounding negative affect when a child continues to experience trauma after trauma. Add in a natural disaster and the effects are compounded even more. These ACES and traumatic experiences can produce big emotions for children and many just do not know how to handle them. When CDS sets up a childcare center after a disaster, the volunteers help children to process these big emotions and feelings on their own level through creative play. When a child feels safe and heard, they are better able to express themselves and can begin to build resiliency to handle the next disaster that comes their way.



Sometimes simply reading a story provides a brief escape from the reality of a disaster.

Photo by Pearl Miller

This reminds me of the well-known starfish story where a child is walking along the beach throwing in one starfish at a time that has been washed up in the tide. Someone asks them why they are bothering to save a few, when there are so many and it seems like no difference can be made. The child responds by throwing in another starfish and saying, "I made a difference to that one."

**Could you make a difference to a child?** I encourage you to attend a CDS training workshop to learn about working with children who have experienced trauma and how to provide a safe, nurturing environment. ***You could be that one.***

## CDS Spring 2023 Training Workshops

For training information and to register, go to [www.brethren.org/cds/training/dates](http://www.brethren.org/cds/training/dates)

**Bradford, Ohio (Dayton Area)**

**March 17-18, 2023**

Oakland Church of the Brethren  
8058 Horatio-Harris Creek Rd  
Bradford, OH 45308

**Newark, Delaware**

**April 14-15, 2023**

Ebenezer United Methodist Church  
525 Polly Drummond Rd  
Newark, DE 19711

**La Verne, California**

**April 15-16, 2023**

La Verne Church of the Brethren  
2425 E Street  
La Verne, CA 91750

**Portland, Oregon**

**April 28-29, 2023**

Fruit and Flower Child Care Center  
2378 NW Irving St  
Portland, OR 97210

It may feel like this is such an overwhelming need. How can we make a difference when there are so many children and the needs are so great? Well, there is some good news: research has found that all it takes is one positive adult in a child's life to change their trajectory forever. One positive adult! It could be you; it could be me; it could be your neighbor. You may never know what a child has experienced when you meet them, but you do have the ability to interact with them in an intentional way that makes every one of them feel safe and loved. You can be the one positive person that has an impact on that child.

*A CDS volunteer, as a positive adult, engages in medical play with a child in a shelter in Orlando, Fla., following Hurricane Ian.*

Photo by Martha Reish





# Hurricane Ian Deployment

by Colleen Reed, CDS volunteer

Each Children's Disaster Services deployment is unique, and I continue to learn with each one. I haven't been at this very long and it's definitely out of my comfort zone. A very wise CDS friend reminded me, "If it's out of my comfort zone, what about the families we are helping?"

The key to Hurricane Ian deployment was flexibility. (Isn't it always?) Initially, our team was on day-to-day standby for a week, then told to stand down before being told we were going. By planes, Ubers, and rental vehicles, we all arrived in the Fort Myers area, eager to set up a childcare center.

Flexibility continued to be a theme when it came to where we would be able to stay. We first stayed with gracious people who opened their homes to us before moving into the Red Cross tent city at the county fairgrounds. We stayed in air-conditioned tents housing about 100 people, with bathroom and shower trailers outside. It was starting to feel a little bit like Girl Scouts and church mission trips, so I started to feel a little bit more in my comfort zone.

We set up at the Hertz Ice Arena. I had seen it on the news before deploying but seeing it and feeling it was another experience. It had been over two weeks since Hurricane Ian and people were still living in the arena, most unsure of what or where to go next. The families were living on plywood set on top of the ice with their Red Cross cots and plastic bags full of clothes. Our living facilities

were quite luxurious in comparison. It took a bit more of that flexibility to find a suitable, safe place to set up "work" at the Arena, but we ended up with a wonderful private area to make sure the children were able to enjoy their time.

Unfortunately, the Hertz Arena closed rather abruptly leaving us little chance to say goodbye to our "regulars" and not knowing where we were going next. Flexibility. The families relocated to another center, and after some searching, we found that the new center had already dedicated a large space for CDS, which we were able to set up for the team that followed us.

It's difficult to leave a deployment knowing the families we help are still experiencing hard circumstances, but we do our little part. The many smiles of the children, parents, and other



Colleen Reed at the Hertz Arena in Fort Myers, Fla., helps a child create themselves on paper. Photo courtesy of CDS

volunteers are the reward. As with all CDS deployments I have been on, I have met the kindest, most amazing, and inspirational people on my teams. We meet as strangers, often at the airport, but leave as family.

## Lisa Crouch Resigns

Lisa Crouch has resigned her position as Children's Disaster Services associate director. Brethren Disaster Ministries is very grateful for the dedication and passion that Lisa has brought to CDS since August 2018. She will be missed greatly. Godspeed, Lisa, as you continue to serve children experiencing trauma!



Lisa Crouch shares the following reflection on her time with CDS.

*When I came into the position of associate director for Children's Disaster Services in 2018 and Hurricane Florence made landfall in my first solo week, I should have known it was going to be a wild ride. I have thrived on the adventure and sometimes crazy requests, and always looked for new ways to meet the challenges. CDS continues to persevere ahead due to the support of so many that believe in the mission, especially*

*the volunteers. I want to say thank you. You are truly remarkable. I admire your passion and heart for what we do. Whether I was asking you to standby, stand down, or anything in between, you were always there and ready to meet the need.*

*As I embark on the next part of my journey,*

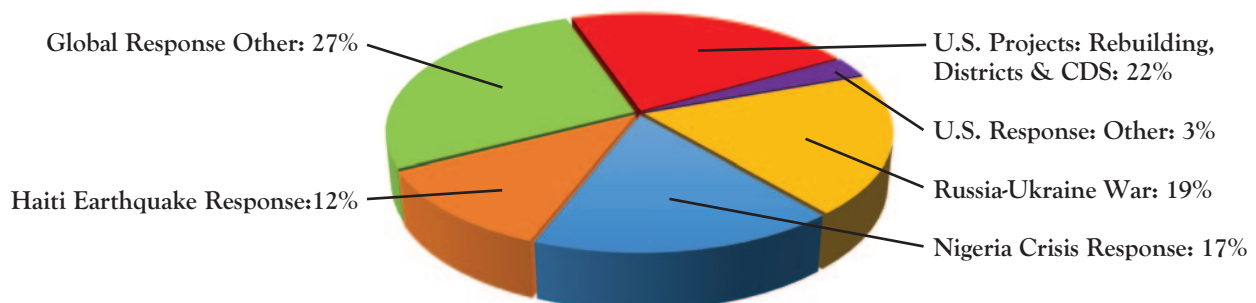
*I will carry a part of CDS with me. I am happy to say I was part of the history of this organization. I recently completed my Master of Arts in Education focused on Trauma and Resilience and will be looking to work directly with children again. My last day with CDS is March 31, 2023, but perhaps someday our paths will cross again out on a deployment. I sign off with this verse and I thank you for your pure hearts: **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.** (Matthew 5:8 NIV)*

### Would you like to receive BRIDGES by email?

Brethren Disaster Ministries is now offering our Bridges newsletter electronically. If you would like to receive Bridges by email, you may contact us at [bdm@brethren.org](mailto:bdm@brethren.org) or give us a call at 800-451-4407. Bridges is also available online at [www.brethren.org/bdm/updates](http://www.brethren.org/bdm/updates).

## Brethren Disaster Ministries 2022 Project Expenses

Status	U.S. Projects	Amount
Active	Washington City Church of the Brethren asylum seeker support	\$5,000
Active	Puerto Rico District Hurricane Fiona response	\$52,500
Active	Somerset County Long-Term Recovery Group—Chesapeake Bay (Md.) 2021 tidal flooding response	\$10,944
Completed	North Fort Myers Church of the Brethren Hurricane Ian response	\$5,000
Completed	BDM—Waverly, Tenn., August 2021 flooding response	\$75,273
Completed	Sebring Church of the Brethren Hurricane Ian response	\$5,000
Completed	BDM/CDS—Hurricane Ian response	\$6,885
Completed	BDM/CDS—2022 summer flooding response	\$1,654
Completed	CDS—Washington, D.C., asylum seeker response	\$293
Completed	CDS—Uvalde, Texas, school shooting response	\$8,675
Completed	National Youth Conference (Church of the Brethren) school kit service project	\$28,049
Completed	BDM—Kentucky December 2021 tornado short-term response	\$6,860
Completed	Delaware VOAD—Wilmington, Del., 2021 Tropical Storm Ida recovery	\$5,000
Completed	BDM—Coastal NC Hurricane Florence response	\$45,223
Completed	Church World Service—Winter tornado relief	\$15,000
Completed	BDM—Dayton, Ohio tornado response	\$3,037
	<b>U. S. Total</b>	<b>\$274,393</b>
Status	Global Projects	Amount
Active	BDM/Haiti Church of the Brethren—Humanitarian response to multiple crises in Haiti	\$39,000
Active	Christian Solidarity Program—Reoccurring flooding and landslides in Honduras	\$20,000
Active	CoB South Sudan Mission—Humanitarian aid for flooding and displaced families	\$11,000
Active	Eglise des Freres au Congo (Church of the Brethren in DR Congo) response to violence and vulnerable people	\$61,000
Active	International Orthodox Christian Charities—Russia-Ukraine war and humanitarian crisis	\$50,000
Active	Church World Service—Russia-Ukraine war and humanitarian crisis	\$125,000
Active	L'Arche International—Displaced Ukrainians with disabilities	\$25,000
Active	BDM/Haiti Church of the Brethren—2021 Haiti Earthquake Response	\$127,969
Active	Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development (LSESD)—Humanitarian assistance for vulnerable Lebanese families and displaced Syrians	\$70,000
Active	BDM/Church of the Brethren in Nigeria—Nigeria Crisis Response	\$180,076
Completed	Rwanda Church of the Brethren—Aid for street children and DR Congo refugees in Rwanda	\$10,000
Completed	Venezuela Church of the Brethren—Flood and landslide relief	\$10,000
Completed	Church of the Brethren Uganda—Flood and landslide relief	\$27,500
Completed	Church of the Brethren in Nigeria—Flood relief and response	\$5,000
Completed	Center for Caring Empowerment and Peace Initiatives (CCEPI)—Response to violence in Nigeria	\$10,000
Completed	Corus International—Russia-Ukraine war and humanitarian crisis	\$10,000
Completed	Child Life Disaster Relief—Russia-Ukraine war and humanitarian crisis	\$5,000
Completed	Proyecto Aldea Global (PAG)—Hurricanes Eta and Iota response in Honduras	\$50,000
	<b>Global Total</b>	<b>\$836,545</b>
<b>TOTAL BDM PROJECT EXPENSES</b>		<b>\$1,110,938</b>



## Brethren Disaster Ministries 2022 Project Funding & Grants

Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) Total <i>Nigeria Crisis Fund (included in EDF Total)</i>	\$2,209,715 \$127,771
Rebuilding Program Grants ( <i>not included in EDF</i> ) NVOAD & Lowes Home Improvement* NVOAD & Lowes Home Improvement	\$30,000 \$4,200
CDS Program Grants ( <i>not included in EDF</i> ) Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Grant	\$15,000
*This portion of the grant was solely provided in Lowes gift cards to purchase materials.	

## Brethren Disaster Ministries 2022 Rebuilding Responses

Project location	Disaster type	Weekly volunteers*	Work days	Hours served	Value of service***	Families served
<b>Rebuilding Projects</b>						
Coastal NC	Hurricane Florence	156	1,172	9,376	\$280,811.20	25
Waverly, Tenn.	Storm event	345	2,614	20,912	\$626,314.40	40
<b>BDM Short-term Responses</b>						
Ky. Winter Storm	Tornadoes	36	268	2,144	\$64,212.80	2
Tidal Flooding Md.**	Flooding	35	115	920	\$27,554.00	2
<b>Totals</b>		<b>572</b>	<b>4,169</b>	<b>33,352</b>	<b>\$998,892.40</b>	<b>69</b>
* Includes repeat volunteers **This was a hybrid BDM/Mid-Atlantic District response *** Estimated Value of Volunteer Service for 2022 is \$29.95 per IndependentSector.org						

## Children's Disaster Services 2022 Responses

Location	Disaster type	Volunteers*	Total work days	Hours served	Value of service**	Children served
Boulder, Colo.	Wildfire	5	37	296	\$8,865.20	25
Baltimore, Md.	Afghan resettlement	3	3	24	\$718.80	5
Claremont, Calif.	Asylee resettlement	26†	66	528	\$15,813.60	102
Uvalde, Texas (CRC)††	Mass shooting	15	165	1,320	\$39,534.00	385
Washington, D.C.	Asylum seeker response	12	18	144	\$4,312.80	56
St Louis, Mo.	Flooding	4	7	56	\$1,677.20	34
Jackson, Ky.	Flooding	4	39	312	\$9,344.40	40
Fort Myers, Fla.	Hurricane Ian	17	157	1,256	\$37,617.20	418
<b>Total: 8 responses</b>		<b>86</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>3,936</b>	<b>\$117,883.20</b>	<b>1,065</b>
*Includes repeat volunteers **Estimated Value of Volunteer Service for 2022 is \$29.95/hr per IndependentSector.org †Reflects monthly volunteers for a six month response ††Critical Response Childcare						

## Children's Disaster Services 2022 Training Workshops

Date	Location	Type of training	Participants	Trainers*	Volunteer trainer hours	Value of service**
5/13/2022	Lititz, Pa.	Level 1	13	2	40	\$1,198.00
7/13/2022	McPherson, Kan.	Level 1	11	2	40	\$1,198.00
10/14/2022	Silver Lake, Ind.	Level 1	16	3	60	\$1,797.00
9/1/2022	Online (Project Manager)	Level 2	8	1***	20	\$599.00
<b>Totals</b>			<b>48</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>\$4,792.00</b>
Scheduled training workshops & participant numbers were reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. * Includes repeat trainers ** Estimated Value of Volunteer Service for 2022 is \$29.95/hr per IndependentSector.org ***In addition to one CDS staff person						



## Earthquake Response in Turkey and Syria

On Feb. 6, 2023, major earthquakes struck southern Turkey, with the area of damage reaching into northern Syria. The number of dead surpassed 50,000 by the end of February. Close to 30 million people were affected, with many in need of food, water, shelter, and other necessities. Through Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) grants, Brethren Disaster Ministries is supporting the efforts of partners to bring relief to the earthquake affected areas.

**Turkey:** An initial EDF grant of \$25,000 was approved for Lutheran World Relief and supports sending relief items from the US to their partner, the International Blue Crescent, for distribution to earthquake survivors in Turkey and across the border in Syria. The items include quilts, personal care kits, baby kits, first aid kits, tents, thermal blankets, and feminine

hygiene products, as well as other needed items.

**Syria:** A \$25,000 EDF grant was approved for the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development (LSESD), which is already working directly with churches in the earthquake affected areas in Syria, to distribute emergency relief items such as blankets, winter clothing, hygiene kits, and food.

BDM is communicating with other partners and may be requesting additional EDF grants. For updated information, visit the BDM Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/bdm.cob](http://www.facebook.com/bdm.cob)) or contact BDM at [bdm@brethren.org](mailto:bdm@brethren.org). Donations for this Turkey/Syria Earthquake response may be made online at [www.brethren.org/giveearthquakeresponse](http://www.brethren.org/giveearthquakeresponse) or by check made out to Emergency Disaster Fund, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120.

## Ukraine in Crisis

The Russian attacks and occupation of parts of Ukraine have continued for more than a year without any indications that the war will end soon. Brethren Disaster Ministries is working with four partners to help vulnerable people and families who do not have access to other types of aid. At the writing of this update, the two primary partners, Church World Service and International Orthodox Christian Charities are reorganizing and reprioritizing their programming for the current phase of the crisis.

Additional grants to these two partners are likely to be approved to continue relief programs. Please continue to pray for peace and all impacted by this war.



## Nigeria Church Centennial Recognition



Leaders of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) at the Church Centennial celebrations in Waka, where the first baptisms took place in June 1927. From left, Vice President Anthony A. Ndamsai, President Joel S. Billi, Salamatu Billi, General Secretary Daniel Y. C. Mbaya.

*Photo courtesy of EYN*

In 2023, Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) is celebrating its centennial. It has been 100 years since the founding of the Church of the Brethren Mission in 1923 by Stover Kulp and Albert Helser. (A history of the church in Nigeria is found at [www.brethren.org/global/nigeria/history](http://www.brethren.org/global/nigeria/history)). Zonal celebrations have already begun in some of the 70 districts of EYN. Culminating celebrations will take place in March 2023 in Garkida, the place

where the Church of the Brethren mission got its start; in Kwarhi, where the EYN Headquarters and Kulp Theological Seminary are located; and in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city.

The celebrations bring much joy to the Church. At the same time, EYN continues to face the reality of continuing persecution of its members and other Christians in Nigeria, especially in the northeast states where EYN has the most congregations. Since 2014 BDM and EYN have worked closely through the Nigeria Crisis Response to support displaced families, help rebuild lives, and keep the Church strong so it can continue to minister to its members. The ongoing effort to provide seeds, fertilizer, emergency food, livelihood programs, new water wells, and more continues to be vitally important.



# Flooding, Violence and Refugees: Relief Programming in South Sudan

Working together, Brethren Disaster Ministries and the Church of the Brethren (CoB) mission in South Sudan offer relief to many communities affected by violence and/or flooding. Through a new \$40,000 Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) grant, food and agricultural relief is being provided to communities where the mission staff have been working for years. This grant continues the ministry of an \$11,000 EDF grant disbursed in September 2022.

The South Sudan mission is centered in the village of Torit in the southern state of Eastern Equatoria near the Uganda border. It is staffed by CoB Global Mission worker Athanasus Ungang and four South Sudanese staff. Focused on spreading the gospel, agricultural development, peacebuilding, education, and trauma recovery, the staff are constantly challenged by severe poverty and hunger in the area due to a long history of conflict, ongoing violence, and years of flooding.

South Sudan gained its independence in 2011 after decades of war. Once the common goal of independence was met, conflicts between various tribes and communities plunged the country into civil war in 2013. A peace agreement in 2018 has allowed a precarious unity but conflict on the

local level continues, often forcing people to be displaced from their homes.

Adding to this crisis, some regions of South Sudan have struggled through four years of historic levels of flooding that have destroyed homes, livestock, and crops. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported in October 2022 that the flooding affects two-thirds of the country, adding to a refugee crisis that remains the largest in Africa with 2.3 million South Sudanese refugees living in neighboring countries, while an estimated 2.2 million people are internally displaced.

The situation in South Sudan is critical. Whether fleeing violence or floods, most displaced families travel with little more than the clothing they wear and return to damaged or destroyed homes, no crops, no household supplies, and no income. The newest EDF

grant supports a response plan to provide basic necessities such as food, water, and medicines for some of the most vulnerable crisis-affected people in communities in Ikotos, Lafon, Magwi, and Torit counties. The grant also supports an agricultural project to develop two new farms that will provide food at harvest time to refugees returning to the villages of Obbo and Parajok in Magwi County.

Recovery in South Sudan will take years or decades. BDM plans to continue supporting the South Sudan mission's relief and recovery programming.



*People displaced by famine and political conflict in South Sudan receive bags of maize (corn) from the Church of the Brethren South Sudan Mission, which was purchased through an Emergency Disaster Fund grant.*

*Photo Courtesy of CoB South Sudan Mission*



*A large group of displaced people in South Sudan wait patiently for a food distribution by the Church of the Brethren South Sudan Mission.*

*Photo Courtesy of CoB South Sudan Mission*



# Humanitarian Response to Multiple Crises in Haiti

In Haiti multiple crises (economic, political, gang violence, gender-based violence, kidnapping, natural disasters, a cholera outbreak, and very high inflation) have merged into a spiraling humanitarian tragedy that has put the country “on the verge of an abyss”, according to United Nations human rights chief Volker Türk. Haiti is the lowest per capita income country in the western hemisphere and is also prone to natural disasters. Already at high risk of food insecurity, poor nutrition, and poverty, more than half of the 4.7 million people living in Haiti now face a humanitarian disaster, human rights violations, and a hunger crisis. In many parts of the country it is unsafe to travel or leave homes. Heads of household are limited in their ability to work or even go to the market to purchase food.

Haiti was already unstable, with a mostly failed government fraught with corruption and empty congressional offices (elections had not been held), when Haitian President Jovenel Moïse was killed in July 2021. At that time, gangs that were mostly tied to corrupt former political figures already controlled much of the country’s capitol city, Port-au-Prince. The president’s death seemed to encourage these gangs to expand their terror and violence, often using kidnapping to fund their operations. There were 1,107 documented kidnappings between January and October 2022. The gangs also use brutal violence, rape, and terror to control the people.

In August 2021, an earthquake struck southern Haiti, killing 2,201 people and adding to the growing crisis in Haiti. As has been reported over the last 18 months, Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) grants are supporting a joint BDM/Eglises des Freres d’ Haiti (Haiti Church of the Brethren) response in Saut Mathurine to rebuild homes destroyed in the tremor.

The armed gangs escalated their violence in 2022, gaining control of

the oil depot, some ports where supplies are delivered, and some of the public offices. The acting prime minister ended fuel subsidies in September, adding to the rapidly rising cost of food and supplies for desperately poor Haitian families. In October, a new cholera outbreak added to the misery of the people.

Haiti CoB general secretary Romy Telfort remarks that “Haiti’s political problems put everyone living in the country in great difficulty. In every area of the country, there are at least two groups of gangs kidnapping people, killing people, demonstrations all day, all roads blocked, cars can’t circulate, no gas, no schools, no roads, no food, there is no water for people to drink, life is becoming more threatened every day.” *(This was translated from Haitian Creole.)*

Leaders of the Haitian Church and BDM staff worked together on a planned intervention for families left hungry by this growing crisis. Traditional interventions are not possible or safe because of gang violence and the likelihood of having food supplies stolen at gunpoint. Many other relief organizations have left Haiti or limited their activities because of the violence and kidnappings.

Each of the 30 Haitian churches and preaching points have identified 20-40 of the most at-risk families in their



*Rice, beans, and cooking oil are being distributed through local Haiti Church of the Brethren churches and preaching points to the most at-risk people in their communities.*

*Photo courtesy of Haiti Church of the Brethren*

community needing assistance, for a total of 800. Through a new approach, funds have been or will be transferred through apps or bank accounts to the local church leaders. When it is safe to do so, these leaders will purchase rice, dried beans, and cooking oil at local markets to be distributed to the families in their area at a secure place and time. National church leaders are monitoring the funds transfers and food distributions to ensure quality and consistency of programming.

These food distributions will not solve Haiti’s many problems, but they will feed hungry people and remind them that others care about them and that God loves them.



*The Haiti Church of the Brethren received an Emergency Disaster Fund grant to supply vulnerable community members with food. The items shown here are part of a local distribution.*

*Photo courtesy of Haiti Church of the Brethren*



# 2023 Disaster Response Auctions

Brethren Disaster Ministries benefits greatly from the proceeds of several annual disaster relief auctions and other fundraisers. We are very grateful for the time, hard work, dedication, and creativity this represents—almost entirely by volunteer effort.

The dates for the 2023 auctions are listed here and it is our hope that as many people as possible will attend to show support for the efforts of the leaders and volunteers from these districts to provide funding for the disaster ministries of the Church of the Brethren. Up-to-date information on each auction may be found through the contact information listed here.

If you are holding an additional auction or fundraiser to benefit the Emergency Disaster Fund/Brethren Disaster Ministries, please let us know so we can help to advertise it.

## Annual Conference Breakfast

Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) will hold a Volunteer Breakfast at the Church of the Brethren 2023 Annual Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio on July 6 from 7:30-8:30 AM to celebrate and thank current and past BDM and Children's Disaster Services (CDS) volunteers and supporters.

**Pre-registration by June 5, 2023 is necessary to reserve a seat for this free event.** Please contact the BDM or CDS office (800-451-4407; [bdm@brethren.org](mailto:bdm@brethren.org); [cds@brethren.org](mailto:cds@brethren.org)). There may be a limited number of spaces available during the conference for those who have not pre-registered, but this cannot be guaranteed due to the need to pre-order the food, so please let us know by June 5 that you will be there. We are looking forward to celebrating with you!



**May 6: Mid-Atlantic District Disaster Response Auction**—Carroll County Agricultural Center in Westminster, Md.; Breakfast begins at 7:00 AM. See [www.madcob.com/disaster-response-auction](http://www.madcob.com/disaster-response-auction) or call 443-960-3052

**May 19 & 20: Shenandoah District Disaster Ministries Auction & Sale**—Rockingham County Fairgrounds in Harrisonburg, Va.; See [shencob.org/disaster-auction-and-sale](http://shencob.org/disaster-auction-and-sale); [www.facebook.com/ShenandoahDistrictBrethrenAuction](http://www.facebook.com/ShenandoahDistrictBrethrenAuction); or call 540-234-8555

**Sept. 22 & 23: Brethren Disaster Relief Auction** (Atlantic Northeast and Southern Pennsylvania districts)—Lebanon Valley Expo Center in Lebanon, Pa.; See [www.brethrenauction.org](http://www.brethrenauction.org); [www.facebook.com/BrethrenDisasterRelief](http://www.facebook.com/BrethrenDisasterRelief); or call 717-823-2745.

Attendees of the Mid-Atlantic Disaster Response Auction bid on a special quilt made in honor of Heifer International in May 2022.  
*Photo by BDM*



## Church of the Brethren Job Openings

For additional information on the following positions and to learn how to apply, please visit [www.brethren.org/about/employment](http://www.brethren.org/about/employment) or contact [COBApply@brethren.org](mailto:COBApply@brethren.org).

### Children's Disaster Services Associate Director (AD)

This is a full-time salaried position focused on providing leadership for all CDS programming including training events, volunteer deployments, and program development. As part of the Brethren Disaster Ministries team, the AD supports all BDM programming and works within the Church of the Brethren, while also connecting with ecumenical partners. The preferred location is New Windsor, Md.

The following positions are based at the Church of the Brethren offices in Elgin, Il.

### Office Manager of Global Mission

This is a full-time salaried position. The major responsibility is to support the ministries of Global Mission through efficient administration of program as assigned to the department by the Executive Director.

### Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Volunteer Coordinator.

This position is a full-time salaried position working to plan and lead BVS orientations and retreats. This person also helps support BVS volunteers throughout their service.



# BRIDGES

**Brethren Disaster Ministries**

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## Annual Conference and Virtual Blood Drives

The 2023 Annual Conference Blood Drive is scheduled for **Wednesday, July 5 from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM**, and **Thursday, July 6 from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM**. It will be held in the exhibit hall of the Duke Energy Convention Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, in partnership with the Hoxworth Blood Center. Conference attendees are encouraged to sign up online in order to book the blood donation time that is best for them. Information on the registration link will be available soon. You may also sign up to give blood at the conference. Look for the sign-up table near the conference registration or see Brenda or Ed Palsgrove.

Volunteers are needed to help in the registration and snack/recovery areas. Please contact Sharon Franzén ([sfranzén@brethren.org](mailto:sfranzén@brethren.org)) before the conference or Brenda/Ed Palsgrove during the conference.

**Virtual Blood Drive** - Not attending the Annual Conference in person? No problem! Once again a Virtual Blood Drive will be available for anyone wishing to join in the blood donation efforts by donating locally. The process is easy:

- Pledge to give blood at **[www.brethren.org/virtualblooddrive2023](http://www.brethren.org/virtualblooddrive2023)** OR by calling/emailing BDM to indicate your desire to donate.
- Find a local blood drive ([www.redcrossblood.org/give.html](http://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html)/find-drive or through your local blood services agency) and make an appointment to donate between June 1 and July 31, 2023.

- Let BDM know (through the above portal or an email/phone call) that you followed through with your pledge. This is the only way we will know if you gave blood.
- Take a photo, if you can, to encourage others.

The Virtual Blood Drive and in-person Annual Conference Blood Drive totals will be pulled together to get a full picture of the Brethren who are saving lives this summer! For information or questions, contact BDM ([bdm@brethren.org](mailto:bdm@brethren.org); 800-451-4407).



Miller Davis donates blood at the 2018 Annual Conference.  
*Photo Courtesy of BDM*

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