

# Yearbook reports 2021 statistics

**C**hurch of the Brethren membership in the United States and Puerto Rico is just over 87,000, according to the statistical report in the 2022 *Church of the Brethren Yearbook* from Brethren Press. The 2022 edition—published late last year—includes the 2021 statistical report and the 2022 directory.

This is the most recent official reporting of denominational statistics, which relies on self-reporting by churches. For 2021, only about half, or 445, of the churches in the denomination reported. This means that *Yearbook* figures are approximate.

Denominations that are part of the Global Church of the Brethren Communion outside the US and Puerto Rico are not included.

## Numbers for 2021

The *Yearbook* reported 87,181 members in 24 districts and 887 local worshiping communities (congregations, fellowships, and new church projects). This represents a net loss of 4,427 members over the previous year.

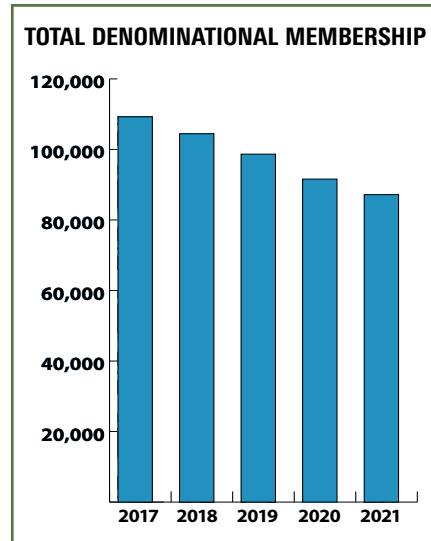
The number of local worshiping communities included 852 congregations, 23 fellowships, and 12 projects.

Shenandoah District, with 13,208 members, and Atlantic Northeast District, with 10,501 members, were reported as the two largest districts. Next largest were Virgina, with 8,570 members, and Mid-Atlantic, with 8,030 members. No other districts reported having more than 8,000 members. Six had fewer than 1,000.

The *Church of the Brethren Yearbook* is published annually by Brethren Press as a searchable PDF document. Find out more at [www.brethren.org/yearbook](http://www.brethren.org/yearbook). The 2022 Yearbook, the current edition, is \$28.99 at [www.brethrenpress.com](http://www.brethrenpress.com).

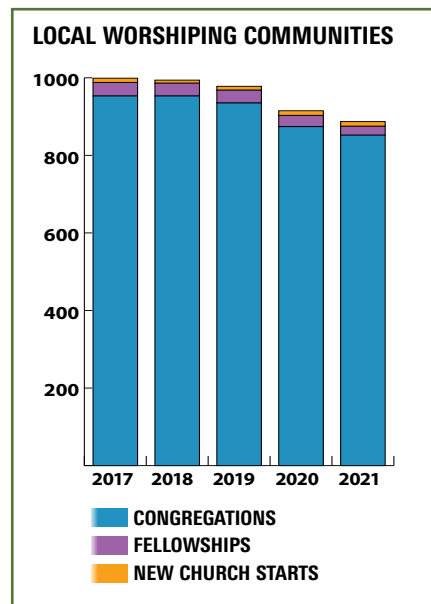
## Comparisons over the years

The statistical report includes a comparison of total denominational membership over five years from 2017 to 2021:



To compare denominational membership over more than a decade, for 2008 the *Yearbook* reported a total membership of 124,408—the first time since the 1920s that Church of the Brethren membership was below 125,000.

A comparison of the denomination’s total number of local worshiping communities, from 2017 to 2021:



From 2017 to 2021, five districts reported double-digit decreases in numbers of local worshiping communities (only active local worshiping communities, and no meeting points, are included in these numbers):

- Southeastern reported a decrease of 30, from 43 in 2017, to 13 in 2021.
- West Marva reported a decrease of 23, from 62 to 39.
- Atlantic Northeast reported a decrease of 14, from 82 to 68.
- Western Pennsylvania reported a decrease of 14, from 67 to 53.
- Southern Pennsylvania reported a decrease of 10, from 44 to 34.

The loss of local worshiping communities represents those that have become inactive or have been closed because of insurmountable membership losses or financial difficulties, and those that have left the denomination.

## Seminary introduces Bethany BOLD

**W**ith the support of a \$1 million grant from the Lilly Endowment, Bethany Seminary in Richmond, Ind., is launching Bethany BOLD. The initiative will prepare students to lead congregations as they respond to diversity and division, challenging students to apply their faith and education to address real-world problems including poverty and racial injustice.

The students selected for the program will be required to engage in service in the Wayne County community, participate in educational activities outside the seminary, and participate in purposeful reflection about their experiences. In exchange, they will receive full tuition scholarships, free housing, and a monthly living stipend.

Margaret Elwell, assistant professor of peace studies, has been named director of Bethany BOLD.

## CDS deploys short-term teams

This spring, Children's Disaster Services (CDS) deployed short-term volunteer teams in Missouri, Arkansas, and Pennsylvania.

In Missouri, three CDS volunteers served April 12-13 at a Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) in Marble Hill, caring for children affected by a tornado that hit Bollinger County on April 5. The volunteers had a total of 14 child contacts over 2 days.



Five CDS volunteers deployed to Arkansas after a series of three tornados hit on March 31. The Red Cross requested that CDS provide childcare centers in four MARCs over five days, in the towns of Little Rock, Jacksonville, and Wynne. They interacted with 80 children.

In March, two CDS volunteers served one day at a MARC in Monroeville, Pa., caring for five children whose families were displaced by a large apartment fire.

## EYN pastor shot by gunmen

Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN) mourns the death of a young pastor who was murdered in an attack on his home. Yakubu Shuaibu Kwala, who pastored a congregation in the Biu area of northeast Nigeria, was killed April 4 by gunmen thought to be affiliated with the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).

The attackers also shot and wounded his pregnant wife, who was taken to hospital for treatment. The pastor is survived by another child.

Kwala was a 2020 graduate of EYN's Kulp Theological Seminary. EYN president Joel S. Billi, who attended the burial, said of this yet-to-be-ordained evangelist, "We lost a young man who would work for the church for the next 30 years." The president urged prayers for Kwala's traumatized wife.



## Church of the Brethren emerges in Mexico

An emerging Church of the Brethren denomination is in formation in Mexico, based in Tijuana. Documents to register as an official church in the country are being submitted to Mexican authorities. The next step for will be official recognition by the Global Church of the Brethren Communion.

Leading the church is pastor Salvador Galaz Soto. The church has grown from work carried out over many years by Bittersweet Ministries, with leadership from Gilbert Romero, based in Los Angeles and Pacific Southwest District. Romero and Soto have been working at formation of a denomination in Mexico since at least 2019.

The Mount Horeb congregation in Tijuana, led by Soto and his wife, Maximina Roberta Dominguez Rodriguez, is set to become the founding or "mother" church in Mexico. Other congregations in and around Tijuana also are considering affiliation with the Church of the Brethren.

## Personnel notes

**Salvador Campero**, who has been serving with the Church of the Brethren as manager of Buildings and Grounds in Elgin, Ill., has been promoted to director.

**Joy Dawes** of Madison, Ala., began May 8 as public relations manager for Eder Financial. She holds a bachelor's degree in communications and sociology from the

University of Alabama. Her previous work has included public relations and client advocacy.

**Laura Whitman Dy** of Pittsburgh, Pa., has begun working for the Part-time Pastor, Full-time Church program of the Office of Ministry as an independent contractor focusing on social media and design. She holds a master of

social work degree from Widener University.

**Rich Osei** began April 24 as a part-time accountant with Eder Financial. He is a certified public accountant and holds degrees in mathematics and accounting and a master of business administration with an emphasis in finance from Governor's State University in Park Forest, Ill.

**Virginia Rendler** will begin July 17 as interim volunteer coordinator for Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS). She is a graduate of Manchester University with a bachelor's degree in peace studies and philosophy and a minor in religious studies. She currently is in BVS at the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland.



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