

General secretary signs global Christian letter

General secretary **David Steele** was one of more than 200 Christian leaders from around the world who signed a public letter in advance of the address to Congress by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on July 24.

“As global Christian leaders committed to peace and justice and the recognition of the image of God in all humanity, we abhor the ongoing violence that has now continued for more than nine months between Hamas and the Israeli military,” the opening paragraph said, in part. “More than 1,100 people were killed by the Hamas

attacks on October 7th, and mass killings by the Israeli military in Gaza have taken more than 39,000 lives. More than two-thirds of Gaza . . . have been destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Not only the livelihoods but even the wherewithal to maintain the most basic subsistence of two million people has been erased. Children are dying of malnutrition, credible reports indicate prisoners are being tortured, and efforts to release the hostages are not being prioritized. These atrocities stain the conscience of all humanity, and in this, we include ourselves as Christian leaders and the global church.”

The letter continued with calls for a permanent ceasefire, return of hostages, release of Palestinian prisoners held without due process, immediate access for humanitarian response in Gaza, an end to arms flows into the conflict zone, and prevention of the spread of violence in the region, among other measures.

It also delineated the threat the conflict poses for continued existence of Christianity in the Holy Land, saying, in part: “We fear the existential threat to the Christian presence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories—the very place where our faith tradition began.”

Mission and Ministry Board sets 2025 budget parameter

The **Mission and Ministry Board** set the 2025 budget parameter for the Church of the Brethren’s Core Ministries during a pre-Annual Conference meeting in Grand Rapids, Mich., on July 3. Chair Colin Scott led the meeting, assisted by chair-elect Kathy Mack and general secretary David Steele.

The 2025 budget parameter for the Core Ministries was approved at \$5.13 million in income and \$5.66 million in expense. This parameter was recommended by the Executive Committee, with a couple of changes to the original parameter proposed by staff. The revised parameter includes, among other things, an increase in the cost-of-living adjustment for employee salary and benefits from the proposed 1 percent to 2.5 percent, and changing the use of designated funds from \$481,000 to \$0. There is an anticipated 7 percent increase for employee medical insurance. In approving the revised parameter—which is based on 10-year giving trends as well as investment transfers—the board also approved a significant budget deficit of \$529,000, which is to be addressed by the Executive Committee between now and the fall board meeting.

In other business:

The board received a financial update for current year 2024 from treasurer Ed Woolf.

The Strategic Planning Committee received approval for a recommendation intended to enhance the direct linkage between the four “pillars” of the strategic plan and denominational ministries, through infusing communications with the language of the strategic plan and encouraging more direct advocacy by board members and staff. The four pillars are “Pursue Christ’s call to

discipleship,” “Embody the biblical command to love our neighbors,” “Seek God’s racial justice,” and “Reclaim New Testament models of giving.” The board engaged in an hour of conversation around the goal “Seek God’s racial justice.”

The board called a new Executive Committee for 2024–2025: Michaela Alphonse, Joel Gibbel, and Rosanna Eller McFadden, with chair Colin Scott and chair-elect Kathy Mack.

Lauren Seganos Cohen, Meghan Horne Mauldin, and J. Roger Schrock were recognized for completing their terms on the board.

The board also shared prayer concerns, recognized staff transitions, honored recipients of the Revelation 7:9 Award presented by Intercultural Ministries, and welcomed international guests.



Intercultural Ministries director Founa Badet (at left) with five of the six recipients of the Revelation 7:9 Award, which was presented during the Mission and Ministry Board meeting: (from left) Gilbert Romero, Matt Guynn, Duane Grady, Joshua Brockway, and Michaela Alphonse. Not pictured: Joe Vecchio.

Bethany Seminary celebrates the class of 2024

Bethany Theological Seminary celebrated commencement in

Richmond, Ind., on May 11, awarding 11 master's degrees and 17 postgraduate diplomas and certificates. The ceremony took place in Nicarry Chapel with speaker Micah McCreary, president of New Brunswick (N.J.) Theological Seminary.

This year, Bethany held its first-ever commencement in Nigeria, at the seminary's center in the city of Jos on May 21.

Receiving a master of divinity: Stephen Flores, Jason Haldeman, and Jason Harsh.

Receiving a master of arts: Elena Bohlander.

Receiving a master of arts in Theopoetics and Writing: Eric Bader, Kelley Hudlow, Shana Leck, Sarah Orrell, Alina Skujins, and Jaime Staehle.

Receiving a master of arts in Spiritual and Social Transformation: Clarke Staton.

Graduate certificates also were



awarded: Erin Dalrymple and Anitra Kraus received a certificate of achievement in Theological Studies; James Grossnickle-Batterton, Elena Bohlander, Michelle Grover, Patricia Halbeck, Betty Ann Miskowiec, and Sheila Pick received a certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination; Raymond Rischpater received a certificate in Inter-contextual Biblical Interpretation.

The ceremony in Nigeria honored 21 students who earned the postgraduate diploma in Biblical Peacemaking and 1 who earned a certificate of

achievement in Theological Studies. Leaders from Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) who participated in the ceremony included EYN president Daniel Y.C. Mbaya, who is an adjunct lecturer for Bethany. Representatives of EYN, the Anglican Church, and Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) all brought congratulatory messages. Attending from Bethany were president Jeff Carter, academic dean Steve Schweitzer, and executive director of Student Services Lori Current.

Short-term disaster rebuilding project set for Kentucky

Brethren Disaster Ministries has finalized the location for a short-term rebuilding project this September through November, returning to the Dawson Springs, Ky., area. This is where a previous longterm rebuilding project helped with recovery following tornadoes that hit in 2021.

Housing will resume at the Habitat for Humanity Pennyriple Region Warehouse. The goal will be to complete the homes that Brethren Disaster Ministries started work on but could not complete by the middle of August, when the full project closed.



Brethren Disaster Ministries volunteers work in Kentucky.



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