

BDM rebuilding focuses on Hurricane Helene

The Brethren Disaster Ministries Rebuilding Program has a new focus on recovery from Hurricane Helene in North Carolina. This April, the program began serving survivors in Ashe, Henderson, and Transylvania Counties.

Previously, the program had helped Helene survivors through a two-week project in Spruce Pine, N.C., in May 2025, and a project in Johnson County, Tenn., from September to November 2025.

In Ashe County, a two-week

project was carried out working with the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church.

In Henderson and Transylvania Counties, an eight-week rebuilding project began April 12. Volunteers are working in partnership with Henderson County and Thermal Belt Habitat for Humanity, and the Transylvania County Habitat chapter.

Additional Hurricane Helene recovery sites in North Carolina may include a 10-week site in Yancey County beginning June 7.



Donnell Polkman

A new home being built by Brethren Disaster Ministries volunteers in Henderson County, N.C., for a Hurricane Helene survivor.

Standing Committee acts on transition from Eder to Everence

Standing Committee approved two documents related to Eder Financial’s transition of services to Everence Association Inc. in a Zoom meeting on April 13. The meeting of the Standing Committee of district delegates to Annual Conference was led by moderator Don Fitzkee.

Eder is an Annual Conference agency which, along with predecessor organizations, has been in existence for 83 years as a Church of the Brethren organization. Everence is a financial services nonprofit that is a ministry partner to the Mennonite Church USA.

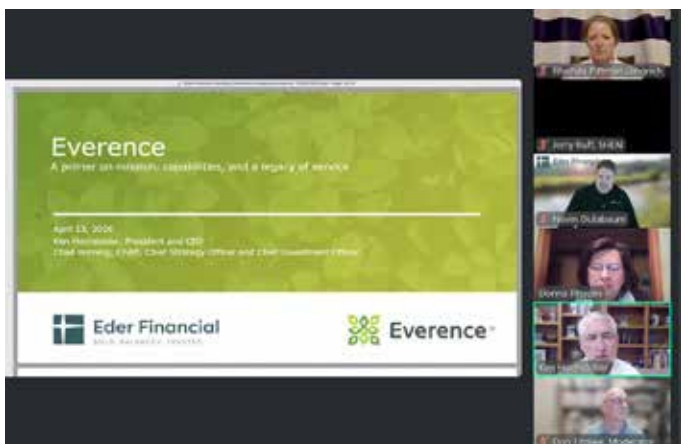
The decision endorses Everence as the Church of the Brethren’s preferred provider for services being transferred by Eder to Everence, primarily employee retirement and organiza-

tional investing. Standing Committee approved an interim Memo of Understanding (MOU) for a Resource Partnership between the Church of the Brethren and Everence and a “Certificate of Secretary” as legal foundation. The documents outline how Everence proposes to serve the Church of the Brethren, its members, and institutions pending approval of a final agreement with Annual Conference in 2027.

With the interim MOU, the Church of the Brethren authorizes transfer of the Eder Retirement Plan, its assets, and existing participants to the Mennonite Retirement Trust; shifts institutional investment management to Everence; and grants Everence access to gatherings of the Church of the Brethren at the denominational and district levels. Everence will not have agency status with Annual Conference but will be a “resource partnership.”

Eder cited changing demographics, financial realities, and challenges from the COVID pandemic as reasons for the transition. The pool of full-time, benefits-eligible pastors in the Church of the Brethren is significantly reduced, said a release. “Approximately 70 percent of Church of the Brethren congregations are served by part-time pastors who are unable to access full benefit packages. As a result, only about 200 congregations currently have employees actively contributing to the Eder Retirement Plan. . . . At the same time, the organization’s staffing, product offerings, and service expectations have expanded, creating financial pressures that are no longer sustainable.”

Most Eder employees are expected to be let go by the end of 2026. They are receiving severance packages and professional help with job placement.



Everence leaders presented information about their organization during the special meeting of Standing Committee.

Grants

Emergency Disaster Fund:

■ **\$95,000 supports the Nigeria Crisis Response through 2026.** After 12 years, 2026 will be the last year of an annually planned program. Going forward, grant requests from Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) will be considered case-by-case.

The 2026 plan focuses on resettlement in Nigeria of families from a refugee camp in Cameroon, including repair or rebuilding of 30 homes, assistance to 800 households, and scholarships for 60 children. An additional \$10,000 was added to the planned grant for newly displaced families affected by Boko Haram violence following the US missile strikes against terrorist groups in December 2025.

■ **\$25,000 supports aid by the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development (LSESD)** for families displaced by the war between Israel and Hezbollah. LSESD's relief arm, Middle East Revive and Thrive, developed the plan for at least 10,000 families needing assistance.

Global Food Initiative:

■ **\$20,000 supports a goat and chicken farming project of the Church of the Brethren in Uganda.** The project trains people in livelihood development and

supports improved nutrition for vulnerable communities including those related to Radiant Star Orphanage and Junior School.

■ **\$6,990 supports an agricultural training component at the Great Lakes Bible School.** The school is a ministry of the Rwanda church. Students will receive practical training in sustainable and low-resource farming practices.

■ **\$4,576 supports Farming God's Way in the Church of the Brethren in Burundi.** Trainings are for a holistic model that combines faith and creation care with regenerative agricultural practices.

Brethren Faith in Action:

■ **\$5,000 to Iglesia el Buen Pastor,** Blacksburg, Va., supports families facing immigration issues.

■ **\$5,000 to Monte de Hermon,** Bassett, Va., supports families facing job loss and a reduction of hours.

■ **\$5,000 to Mountain View Fellowship Church of the Brethren,** McGaheysville, Va., helps fund a commercial-grade sign with message board.

■ **\$5,000 to Onekama (Mich.) Church of the Brethren** supports ECHO His Love programs for those experiencing homelessness.

■ **\$5,000 to Troy (Ohio) Church of the Brethren** supports a Laundry Outreach project.

FAITH COMMUNITIES SAY NO TO HISTORIC
\$1,500,000,000,000
PENTAGON BUDGET



The Office of Peacebuilding and Policy signed an interfaith letter opposing the proposal for a \$1.5 trillion budget for the Pentagon. "Our traditions are united by a shared moral conviction," the letter said, in part. "This proposed budget would represent a staggering 50 percent increase over the already enormous \$1 trillion dollar FY 2026 Pentagon budget—at a moment when millions of Americans are losing access to health care, food assistance, and other vital support."

■ **\$5,000 to Union Grove Church of the Brethren,** Muncie, Ind., supports a paper pantry.

■ **\$4,800 to Ridgeway Community Church of the Brethren,** Harrisburg, Pa., supports a monthly drive-through breakfast ministry.

■ **\$3,900 to Potsdam (Ohio) Church of the Brethren** funds community outreach events in 2026.

■ **\$2,500 to Camp Emmaus,** Mount Morris, Ill., supports renovation of volleyball and basketball courts and a campfire-picnic area.

Personnel

Huma Rana on March 27 resigned as director of Financial Operations for Eder Financial, to accept an offer with the Salvation Army. She began with Eder in July 2015.

Eder Financial on April 2 concluded the work of three staff: **Russ Chrusciel**, director of Retirement Benefits, an employee since 2022; **Beth Martin**, Marketing director, an

employee since 2022; and **Felicia Kaplan**, Content Marketing manager, an employee since 2024.

Michelle Martinez began April 27 as assistant treasurer and manager of accounting for the Church of the Brethren at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. She holds an accounting degree and a master of business administration.

Risa E. Dickson has been named president of the University of La Verne, Calif., after being interim president since 2024. The ULV board affirmed her leadership following input from the university community prioritizing experienced leadership, continuity, and stability, among other priorities.

Tim Courtright has resigned as executive director

of Camp Swatara in Bethel, Pa., effective Sept. 5.

Andrew Hamilton, Southeastern District executive, will represent the Church of the Brethren on the board of Churches for Middle East Peace. He follows Nathan Hosler, director of the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, who served on the CMEP board for 14 years.



Post this page You are welcome to photocopy these news pages. For more Newsline stories, go to www.brethren.org/news