



Zakariya Muse/EYN

EYN struck by new attacks

Violent attacks have marred the start of the new year for Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria).

On Jan. 15, an ISWAP/Boko Haram attack on the town of Kautikari in Chibok Local Government Area of Borno State killed at least 3 people and burned 2 EYN churches and at least 26 houses. The 5 people abducted ranged from age 9 to age 20, with one of those kidnapped having been able to escape. The churches that were burned were EYN No 1, Kautikari and EYN LCC Mission Road.

On Jan. 20, an attack on the community of Pemi in the Chibok Local Government Area of Borno State killed 1 person and burned the main auditorium of the Pemi EYN church, 6 shops, 8 houses, and other properties. The attackers abducted 17 children, including a 4-year-old boy.

Faith groups urge peace in Ukraine

With the threat of a Russian invasion looming in Ukraine, faith groups wrote to Congress and the Biden administration calling leaders to protect human lives and prevent war. The Office of Peacebuilding and Policy was one of those signing the letter. "Rather than relying on militaristic approaches, our leaders must invest in efforts to sustain peace and prevent harm to those who would suffer the most from the devastating and long-term impacts of conflict," the letter said.

Bridgewater mourns deaths of officers

The Bridgewater (Va.) College community is mourning the deaths of police officer John Painter and campus safety officer Vashon "J.J." Jefferson, who were shot and killed on the college campus on Feb. 1. The two men were coworkers and close friends. A former student was charged in their deaths.

General secretary David Steele sent a letter of condolence to Bridgewater president David W. Bushman: "Our church and its members reach out with Christian caring during this time of grief for the officers' families, the college's students, faculty, and staff, as well as the town and the entire community that has been touched by this tragedy," the letter said. "We realize that you are mourning a deeply personal loss, while also walking through a time of great fear and anxiety that will have repercussions for some time to come—in particular for students and staff and their families."

Classes were canceled throughout the week of the shootings and mental health counseling was made available to all students.

Several special events were held in honor of the two officers and to support the community, including gatherings to sing the school's alma mater, "Bridgewater Fair," an ecumenical prayer gathering at Bridgewater Church of the Brethren, and a request for prayer, scripture, and encouragement for the young adults affected by the tragedy, posted on Facebook by the Youth and Young Adult Ministry office.

The college has established a John Painter and Vashon "J.J." Jefferson Memorial Student Support Fund.



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Conference prepares COVID plan

The Program and Arrangements Committee has published a COVID-19 response plan for the Annual Conference to be held July 10-14 in Omaha, Neb.

“One of our top priorities is caring for the health and wellbeing of all Conferencegoers,” the committee wrote. “The Program and Arrangements Committee developed the following plan in consultation with epidemiologist Dr. Kathryn Jacobsen and physician and former Program and Arrangements Committee member Dr. Emily Shonk Edwards.”

The committee decided not to implement a vaccine requirement but the plan strongly encourages vaccinations for everyone who is eligible. Vaccines will be required for key leadership and others who may need the flexibility of removing masks while speaking. Vaccines will be required for anyone volunteering with the early childhood program. COVID tests are encouraged for all Conferencegoers within 24 hours of arrival. Those receiving positive test results should stay home and will receive a refund of their registration fee.

See www.brethren.org/ac2022/covidresponse.

Devotional breaks sales records

The 2021 Advent devotional from Brethren Press, *Do Not Be Afraid* by Angela Finet, broke sales records for the devotional booklets. More than 7,000 copies were sold. Brethren Press has offered seasonal devotionals for Advent and Lent for almost 20 years, since the first was published for Advent 2002. From 2019 to 2021, unit sales grew by 13 percent. More than 400 churches and individuals now participate in a subscription program to receive the devotionals at a discount.



Personnel notes

Bill Scheurer completed almost 10 years as On Earth Peace executive director before the organization restructured in late 2021 and eliminated the position. Scheurer's term of service was shaped by crisis and challenges and the work of clarifying the organization's identity. He supported staff work on an internship program that led to more than 90 interns participating since 2016; supported the adoption of Kingian Nonviolence as a core framework; helped prompt the agency to recreate its values,

vision, and mission statements; helped create a three-year set of strategic priorities (2020-2022); and provided leadership for the decision to join the Supportive Communities Network of the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBTQ Interests in 2019. During his tenure, Scheurer served a term as board chair for the Fellowship of Reconciliation and continued relationships with organizations resisting the militarization of youth and supporting conscientious objection.

Sherry Chastain resigned Dec. 31, as program assistant for Children's Disaster Services (CDS). She worked for CDS for more than four years, beginning on May 23, 2017. Her previous work at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., was for IMA World Health.

Kay Gaier and **Anna Lisa Gross** have been named co-interim executives for South/Central Indiana District, in a half-time position that started Jan. 17. Gaier will focus on supporting pastors and congregations, connecting with district committees and teams, and continuing orientation and educational opportunities for pastors. Gross will focus on pastoral and congregational transitions and will represent the district with the Council of District Executives and other organizations.

Brethren Benefit Trust announces changes

Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) made two changes beginning Jan. 1, related to its strategic goals to adapt to denominational demographics and societal pressures. BBT adopted a work-from-home model for all staff, allowing all positions to be remote from centralized office space at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., and began implementing a new organizational structure.

The former seven-person management team has been succeeded by a four-person executive team consisting of the president; CFO and vice president of Investments; vice president of Products and Services (retirement, insurance, organizational investing, and client relations); and vice president of Vitality (data, IT, marketing, sales, communications, human resources, and special project management).

The following staff changes have been made: **Loyce Borgmann** is leading the Client Services team, on which **Steve Mason** also serves. **Ed Shannon** is product director for Pension. **Jeremiah Thompson** is product director for Insurance. **Dan Radcliff** is product director for Organizational Investing. Other directors include **German Gongora** (IT), **Huma Rana** (Finance), and **Tammy Chudy** (Special Projects). **Scott Douglas** retired at the end of January.