

Second L.E.A.D. Conference held at Ephrata

Hebrews 11:8 was the theme of the second Church of the Brethren L.E.A.D. Conference held at Ephrata (Pa.) Church of the Brethren on May 1-3, organized by the denomination's Discipleship and Leadership Formation staff. Attendance included 112 people in person and 8 online.

Michaela Alphonse, pastor of Miami (Fla.) First Church of the Brethren, opened the gathering with a challenging sermon reflecting on the need for church leaders to obey God, no matter the cost.

A wide variety of workshops were held in three languages—English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole—with leadership from more than 20 presenters from across the Church of the Brethren.

Three keynote messages by Tod Bolsinger expounded on the concept of following God's Spirit into unknown places and situations. An author, professor, and former pastor, Bolsinger drew



Tod Bolsinger, the keynote speaker for the 2026 L.E.A.D. Conference.

on illustrations from scripture and from history to describe how the church in North America in 2026 finds itself in uncharted territory.

“What got us here won't get us there,” was his common refrain, meaning that the landscape of the culture has

shifted and Christianity is not the dominant influence it once was. Bolsinger noted that relying on old methods and patterns that served the church well in the past may not be as effective in sharing the unchanging Gospel within our rapidly changing world.

Global Church of the Brethren Communion meets in Spain

After many meetings on Zoom with the delegates and alternates, the Global Church of the Brethren Communion met in person on Spain's northern coast in April. The last in-person meeting of the communion was in 2022 in the Dominican Republic. A number of representatives did not get visas to enter Spain, so a Zoom connection was provided for those who could join online.

The Gijón congregation of Iglesia Una Luz En Las Naciones, where pastor Santos Terrero started his ministry 20

years ago, hosted the meeting. He serves as president of the Global Church of the Brethren Communion.

Each day began with a time of devotions and prayer led by various countries. “State of the church in action” reports were shared and topical sessions were held around a theme from Acts 4: “The authority of the church in the face of opposition.”

To ground the assembly in shared history and theological heritage, secretary Alexandre Gonçalves traced the development of the communion by naming the “five pillars” of its global vision:

- Affirming autonomy
- Embracing indigenous churches
- Mutual sharing of resources
- Practicing servant leadership
- Sharing core Brethren values while respecting cultural differences

The communion voted unanimously to accept the Church of the Brethren in Burundi into the global fellowship. The group also heard updates on contacts with house churches in Cuba and interest from Iglesia de Los Hermanos Comunidad de Fe of the Dominican Republic.



The Global Church of the Brethren Communion representatives from around the world spent an afternoon helping out with the Gijón congregation's food bank ministry.

\$500,000 grant supports Brethren Disaster Ministries

The Church of the Brethren has been awarded a half-million dollar grant to support Brethren Disaster Ministries. The grant was received from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its initiative, “Hope After the Storm: Capacity Building for Faith-Based Disaster Relief Organizations.” It will support “a three-year program expansion and improvements to US-based programs,” said Roy Winter, executive director of Service Ministries.

The grant will support Brethren Disaster Ministries goals of strengthening US programs and increasing volunteer participation. To expand, the program needs more volunteers to support children after disasters, rebuild homes, and provide onsite leadership, and needs to update systems, communications, and tools to increase volunteer recruitment and participation. The funds also help purchase two new vans.

Winter emphasized that continued financial support of Brethren Disaster Ministries programs will be important during the three-year grant cycle, as the grant does not fund normal operations.



Cheryl Burnhough-Cayford

The planning team for National Older Adult Conference 2027

(from left): Dennis Webb of Illinois and Wisconsin District, intercultural coordinator; Heidi Berkenbosch of Northern Plains District, workshop coordinator; Kim McDowell of Mid-Atlantic District, worship co-coordinator; Glenn Bollinger of Shenandoah District, hospitality coordinator; Christy Waltersdorff of Illinois and Wisconsin District, NOAC coordinator; and Ilexene Alphonse of Atlantic Southeast District (wearing a special stole for Haitian Flag Day), worship co-coordinator.

Legal and Mutual Aid Fund reaches goal of \$250,000

The **Deportation Defense Response team** has announced that its Legal and Mutual Aid Fund achieved a goal of raising \$250,000 by Easter weekend. The fund aids church members affected by immigration enforcement. As of April, more than 95 grants had been distributed via more than 30 congregations. A new goal has been set to raise \$400,000.

Personnel

Madalyn Metzger and **Rhonda Pittman Gingrich** have been named to new interim leadership positions on the denominational staff following the retirement announcement of Wendy McFadden, longterm publisher of Brethren Press and executive director of Communications.

Madalyn Metzger on June 15 began as part-time interim executive director of Engagement and Communications, moving to fulltime July 13. She will lead Communications and Mission Advancement. She was moderator of the 2024 Annual Confer-

ence and has had a lifelong involvement with the Church of the Brethren. Most recently she has been chief marketing officer at Everence. She will work remotely from northern Indiana and be onsite regularly at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill.

Rhonda Pittman Gingrich begins in August as part-time interim leader of Brethren Press, in addition to her work as director of Annual Conference. She will provide leadership in a time of discernment of how Brethren Press may best be supported moving forward. Her responsibilities for Annual Conference will be shared by Debbie

Noffsinger, Conference assistant, who has transitioned from part-time to full-time.

Michelle Martinez began April 27 as manager of Accounting and assistant treasurer at the Church of the Brethren General Offices. She is a graduate of the University of Phoenix with a bachelor of science in accounting and a master's in business administration. Previously, she worked at the Village of Niles, Ill., as senior accountant manager.

Adam Lane began May 27 as program assistant for Children's Disaster Services at the Brethren Service Center in

New Windsor, Md. He is a graduate of Huntington University with a bachelor's in Worship Leadership and of Bethany Seminary with a master of arts in Spiritual and Social Transformation. He and his family are members at Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren in Hagerstown, Md.

Gaston Pierre-Louis has joined the Part Time Pastor; Full Time Church program of the Ministry Office as a circuit rider. He will fill in after Founa A. Badet, director of Intercultural Ministries, steps down as a circuit rider effective July 31.



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