Church of the Brethren

Emergency Disaster Fund

June 28, 2026

Appropriation 26-12 — General Ledger #58055— Project 2460C

Minutes

Bethlehem Bible College Shepherd Society – Israel-Hamas War

The staff at Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) request an additional allocation of $20,000 from the Emergency Disaster Fund to support ongoing programming of the Shepherd Society of Bethlehem Bible College to provide food and medical assistance to vulnerable families in Gaza and the West Bank, respectively, emphasizing children who are often disproportionately affected by the current situation.

On Oct. 7, 2023, a Hamas led militant group attacked communities and military bases in Israel. During this attack, 1,195 Israelis and foreign nationals were killed, including 815 civilians. Another 251 Israelis and foreigners were taken captive into the Gaza Strip. In response, Israel declared a state of war with Hamas on Oct. 8, followed by a blockade of the Gaza Strip on Oct. 9, including cutting off electricity and blocking all food and fuel shipments. Israel began air strikes through missile attacks and bombing on Oct. 11, resulting in one of the most destructive bombing campaigns in modern history. The Israeli military began the invasion of the Gaza Strip on Oct. 28. In the last 30 months the invasion and systematic destruction of buildings and homes in the Gaza Strip continued with only brief pauses for several ceasefire agreements. The destruction of buildings, homes, and infrastructure is staggering.

During 2024 and into mid-2025, Israeli operations moved decisively into southern Gaza, particularly Khan Younis and Rafah, where the majority of Gaza's displaced population had sought refuge. Rafah's destruction marked a critical turning point for humanitarian response. As Gaza's primary entry point for aid and medical evacuations, Rafah's damage, and subsequent Israeli control severely undermined humanitarian logistics. Aid agencies reported an inability to move supplies safely or consistently, while malnutrition, preventable disease, and civilian deaths mounted. At this point nearly the entire population of Gaza had been displaced at least once, many multiple times, often into tented settlements lacking sanitation, adequate food, or protection from the elements. In 2026, Gaza remains in a condition of prolonged humanitarian emergency rather than recovery. Israeli forces continue to be deployed in significant portions of the territory, restricting civilian movement and access to agricultural land, the coastline, and key infrastructure. Eighty percent of the population is unemployed. Airstrikes, demolitions, and sporadic ground operations have continued despite the formal ceasefire, causing ongoing civilian casualties and renewed displacement. Large areas remain contaminated with unexploded ordnance, making return unsafe and slowing humanitarian and early recovery work.

The United Nations reports more than 72,289 Palestinian fatalities (over 730 since the 2025 ceasefire) and another 171,912 injured. Gaza's health system is only partially functional, with hospitals chronically short of fuel, medicine, specialist staff, and equipment. Water and sanitation systems have not been fully restored, contributing to ongoing outbreaks of diarrheal diseases, hepatitis, and skin infections, particularly among children. Shelter conditions remain dire, while 1.9 million people living in the Gaza Strip are displaced, living in damaged buildings, or makeshift shelters.

In November 2024, an EDF grant of $25,000, focused on several program activities including the provision of emergency food, water, fuel, and other supplies for displaced people in the Gaza strip and

vulnerable families in the West Bank; support for an educational program for children in Gaza City who have not been able to attend school due to the war, including psychosocial support; winterization supplies; and the development of trauma counseling training programs.

In April 2025, an EDF grant, of $20,000, focused on medical support both for the clinic at St. Porphyrios Orthodox Church and for medicine and medical equipment to Al Ahli Hospital.

In November 2025, an EDF grant of $20,000 supported a Shepherd Society request for the Restoring Hope Campaign, a program in partnership with the Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation (BASR) hospital, to produce prosthetics, using 3-D technology, for children in Gaza who have lost limbs. The prosthetics are created in Bethlehem using measurements gathered by trained technicians in Gaza and sent via tablet or phone to the hospital. The program also provided provisions for psychosocial support/trauma recovery services to the children. The program has been delayed due to the Israeli government restrictions on imports into Gaza.

This latest grant request will focus on ongoing programs to address the needs of children in Gaza and the West Bank. This program is designed to provide essential food assistance and medical support to vulnerable families in Gaza and the West Bank by prioritizing accessibility, consistency, and dignity — ensuring that children are not only included in assistance efforts but are intentionally centered.

> Gaza: Assistance will be delivered through church-based shelters and distribution points using a community-based model that relies on local partnerships, coordinated locally through a small team responsible for beneficiary coordination, distribution logistics, and follow-up. Locations will be where families already gather for safety and support. Food distributions will include both parcels and prepared meals, reaching approximately 150 families over a period of three months, ensuring children have access to nutrition despite displacement and limited cooking resources.
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> West Bank: Medical assistance will continue to support individuals requiring medications, treatments, and surgeries. In 2025 alone, more than 2,600 individuals were assisted through this program, with demand continuing to rise as economic conditions worsen and the cost of care increases. Support is anticipated to reach approximately 200 children over the course of this project proposal.

APPROVAL for this allocation was given by Ed Woolf, Treasurer; David Steele, General Secretary; and Mission and Ministry Board members Michaela Alphonse, Daniel Butler, Edward Cesar-Fincher, Barbara Daté, Joel Gibbel, Tina Hunt, Robert Jackson, Josiah Ludwick, Kathy Mack, Sarah Mason, Rosanna Eller McFadden, Dierdre Moyer, Karen Shively Neff, Colby Patton, Eric Ramirez, Janice Shaw-Morgan, and Joanna Wave Willoughby.

Shannon McNeil Smith, recorder

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Church of the Brethren
Emergency Disaster Fund
August 11, 2026
Appropriation 26-15 — General Ledger #58500 — Project 2463E
Minutes

Eglise des Freres au Congo (Church of the Brethren in the DR Congo) – Invasion of Goma and the Eastern DR Congo Response

The staff at Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) request an additional allocation of $200,000 from the Emergency Disaster Fund to a five-month emergency humanitarian aid program for families impacted by the war in Eastern DR Congo. The funds will provide humanitarian assistance to 1,776 households (roughly12,400 individuals) living in refugee camps in Burundi.

The eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) remains in the midst of one of the most severe humanitarian and security crises in its recent history, now well into its third year. Since the M23 rebel group (operating under the banner of the Congo River Alliance, or AFC) relaunched its offensive in early 2025, it has overrun Congolese army (FARDC) forces in the largest cities in North and South Kivu provinces, displacing millions. Beginning with the fall of Goma in January 2025 and followed soon after by the capture of Bukavu in February 2025, M23/AFC has entrenched itself across vast stretches of both provinces, establishing parallel administrative structures and exerting direct control over people's lives. Despite a peace agreement signed in Washington, D.C. in December 2025 between the DRC and Rwanda, and a subsequent Doha Framework Agreement, fighting has continued. M23 now claims a force of 30,000–40,000 fighters, reportedly having recruited and trained more than 9,000 new fighters in mid-2026 alone. M23/AFC continues to clash with Congolese army (FARDC) units, Wazalendo militias that are allied with FARDC, and other armed groups in the South Kivu highlands.

South Kivu's strategic city of Uvira (home of a CoB congregation and the founder of the Brethren movement in the country), situated along the border with Burundi, became another focal point of this crisis. After heavy fighting and significant civilian displacement, M23/AFC forces seized control of the city on December 9–10, 2025, closing down critical humanitarian and military corridors. Under intense pressure from U.S. mediators, the group announced a withdrawal beginning December 16, 2025. Throughout the region, frontlines shift quickly, and despite a fifth Joint Security Coordination Mechanism meeting under the Washington Accords in July 2026 and new UN sanctions on M23-linked individuals and entities, no durable, comprehensive ceasefire has taken hold.

The human cost of this protracted conflict has been severe: at least 7,000 people were killed in 2025 alone. UN officials report more than 1,500 additional civilians were killed in the spring of 2026, mostly through the use of drones, heavy artillery, and other explosive weapons in populated areas. Equally disturbing are the UN reports of more than 90,000 cases of conflict-related sexual violence recorded in 2025, continuing in 2026 as an ongoing "reign of terror" of sexual torture perpetrated largely by M23. Across the DRC, 6.9 million people are now internally displaced, more than 5 million of them in the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri; UNHCR projects total displacement will reach 9 million by the end of 2026.

New waves of fighting continue to add to these numbers leaving entire communities cut off from essential services, with families forced to flee at a moment's notice as fighting engulfs new areas. Markets, banks, schools, and health facilities have been disrupted or abandoned, food insecurity now affects an estimated 28 million people, and an ongoing Ebola outbreak has further strained an already-collapsing health system. The closure of banks is devastating to the local economy and has limited the ability to purchase food and water for survival. It also makes sending support to Eglise des Freres au Congo (Church of the Brethren in the DR Congo) difficult.

Since January 2025, more than 90,000 Congolese refugees have crossed the DR Congo border into Burundi, seeking shelter, safety, and aid. The majority of these refugees are women, children, and the elderly, often fleeing under harrowing conditions on unofficial routes. The overcrowded Busuma refugee site alone now hosts tens of thousands of Congolese refugees, straining already-limited food, water, and shelter resources. While UNHCR and the governments of the DRC and Burundi began organizing small, facilitated voluntary return convoys in April 2026, new arrivals have continued to outpace returns. Congolese Church of the Brethren leaders report that dozens of church families are among these refugees.

As of early August 2026, the eastern DRC stands at a critical juncture. Diplomatic initiatives — from the Washington Accords to the Doha Framework and African Union mediation — have produced agreements on paper, but on-the-ground realities continue to deteriorate. Experts on this part of Africa continue to share deep concerns that this conflict could expand into a wider regional war.

The majority of the Church of the Brethren congregations are located south of Bukavu along Lake Tanganyika. The Uvira Church is on the northern edge of Lake Tanganyika, 76 miles to the south. The headquarters of the Church of the Brethren in the Congo are just 21 miles further south in the village of Ngovi.

To support the Congolese Brethren, five grants have provided targeted assistance since the invasion of Goma. The early February 2025 emergency $30,000 grant helped provide emergency food and supplies to communities with Church of the Brethren families in the Goma area. The distribution was done slowly and one house at a time to avoid attracting the attention of criminal or rebel groups. A $20,000 grant at the end of February provided similar emergency aid to families in Bukavu and other impacted areas in the South Kivu Province. Since the banks were closed (and remain closed), leaders of the Rwandan Church of the Brethren received the grant funds and provided the DR Congo church leaders with U.S. currency to purchase maize flour, dried beans, vegetable oil, and soap for the families identified as most in need.

The third grant of $50,000 provided initial support for up to15,000 households at the Musenyi and Makamba refugee camps in Southern Burundi, including funding for an aid distribution while the Congolese church continued developing a more comprehensive response plan. The program was refined during Roy Winter’s visit to meet with the Congolese and Burundi church leaders and visit the Musenyi Camp in early May 2025. The grant also covered travel, housing and meeting expenses for all participants.

The Musenyi Refugee Camp is in the Rutana Province, near the border with Tanzania. It was originally designed for about 10,000 refugees, but currently houses just over 20,000, mostly from the DR Congo, including Brethren families, and is located on flat land that is prone to flooding. Run by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the camp is underfunded, with officials reporting that they can offer only limited medical care and food supplies, with the per person per month ration of beans and rice reduced to only 4.4 pounds.

The fourth grant of $298,600 has supported relief programing and trauma relief training for Congolese refugees in Burundi and impacted families still in the DR Congo. There were challenges that delayed some programming, mostly related to negotiating with the refugee camp leadership and the United Nations staff to have the programming plans approved. The other delay happened when Uvira was attacked, closing the banks where the program funds are held. This prevented the planned December 2025 programming from being implemented. The table below details the 2025 expenses and remaining balance that will be carried over to 2026.

A fifth grant of $75,000, approved in February 2026, was combined with the $21,620 carry-over from 2025 to support an intended three-month (February–April) relief effort for Congolese refugees in Burundi and impacted families still in the DR Congo. Initially a larger year-long program was proposed, projecting refugees would still be in Burundi. With the changing situation and reopening of Uvira, a shorter-term plan was deemed most appropriate.

A continuation of relief programming is planned for the remainder of 2026 incorporating cash assistance programs, Trauma Healing and Mental Health trainings and Gender-Based Sexual Violence Prevention trainings. The programming will be focused on the Bikinga-Busuma and Musenyi refugee camps in Burundi. Monthly cash assistance for food, medical, clothing and household items is planned for 1,086 households in the Bikinga–Busuma camp. This relief will target the most vulnerable families including female-headed households, physically and mentally disabled, orphaned or separated children and the elderly. Cash relief programming is targeted for 690 vulnerable households in the Musenyi camp. Three different weeklong Trauma Healing and Psychosocial First Aid training sessions are planned for a total of 90 participants. Three different one-day Gender-Based Sexual Violence prevention training programs are planned for another 90 participants. These training events include meals for all participants and travel support for the trainers.

APPROVAL for this allocation was given by Ed Woolf, Treasurer; David Steele, General Secretary; and Mission and Ministry Board Members Michaela Alphonse, Daniel Butler, Edward Cesar-Fincher, Joel Gibbel, Tina Hunt, Adelia Lucatorto, Josiah Ludwick, Terri Luzynski, Kathy Mack, Sarah Mason, Deirdre Moyer, Colby Patton, Eric Ramirez, and Gretchen Zience.

Shannon McNeil Smith, recorder

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Church of the Brethren

Emergency Disaster Fund

August 11, 2026

Appropriation 26-16 — General Ledger # 58055 — Project 2480A

Minutes

Church of the Brethren in Venezuela (ASIGLEH) – Earthquake Relief

The staff at Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) request an additional allocation of $55,000 to support the earthquake relief activities of the Church of the Brethren in Venezuela (ASIGLEH). This grant will allow programming to continue while long-term plans and budget development are completed. A larger grant request will be made once program planning is completed.

On the evening of June 24, 2026, Venezuela was struck by a rare double earthquake, a magnitude 7.2 quake near San Felipe, Yaracuy state, followed just 39 seconds later by a magnitude 7.5 quake near Yumare, roughly 160 km west of Caracas. Together these are the strongest earthquake events to hit Venezuela since 1900.

Damage was concentrated in Caracas and the coastal state of La Guaira, where roughly 80 percent of buildings collapsed. Nationwide, around 1,000 buildings were damaged or destroyed, along with more than 400 schools and water systems. Venezuela's main international airport was shut down for 42 days but has since reopened and is undergoing repairs. Healthcare infrastructure was hit especially hard with 38 hospitals sustaining damage, and at least 20 health facilities facing severe medical-supply shortages even as they were overwhelmed with quake-related injuries.

Casualty figures rose steadily for weeks after the quake as rescue teams reached harder-hit areas; search-and-rescue operations have since concluded and recovery efforts are underway. As of early August, Venezuelan officials report the confirmed death toll has risen to more than 6,100, with roughly 61,000 people treated in hospitals for quake-related injuries; tens of thousands of people remain missing, and the U.S. Geological Survey's PAGER system has cautioned that the ultimate death toll could exceed 10,000. UNICEF estimates that 1.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, including roughly 680,000 children. Nearly 2.5 million people across the country were directly affected by the disaster.

The World Bank has estimated physical damage from the earthquakes at nearly $20 billion, and as of early August only about 16.5 percent of debris nationwide had been cleared. The quakes struck a population already strained by years of economic collapse. Hyperinflation, projected above 600 percent in 2026, has made basic food and healthcare unaffordable for most Venezuelans.

The Venezuelan government estimates roughly 18,000 people were left homeless; tens of thousands remain displaced overall, many sheltering in schools, parks, sidewalks and other public spaces. Overcrowding and limited access to clean water and sanitation at these sites have driven a rise in diarrheal disease and skin infections, particularly among children. With the 2026–2027 school year set to begin in September, humanitarian partners are also working with authorities to transition

schools now serving as shelters back into use. While the emergency phase has passed, officials expect recovery to take months, and in the hardest-hit communities, years.

The Church of the Brethren in Venezuela (ASIGLEH) reports no damage to any of their congregations and limited damage affecting members of their churches.

With the initial $5,000 grant in July 2026, the Venezuelan Church assessed the situation, met with potential response partners, and provided some initial relief of food and water while making plans for a larger long-term response. Other relief agencies have shared statistics indicating that 21,000 people are living in 28 camps in the hardest-hit areas alone — a higher figure than the government has reported.

The church is developing a plan to train, support and deploy volunteers to provide care in the shelters. The programming will include:

- Meals for families in shelters
- Special food for young children
- Social, emotional and spiritual support to survivors
- Educational support for children
- Household supplies including bedding and mattresses.
- Medical supplies and first aid
- A special program providing for the needs of orphaned children by working in partnership with local Girls Homes.

An initial budget for this program covers volunteer support, program logistics, and implementation of the planned activities. BDM staff have been working with church leaders to refine the program plan, identify relief activities the church has the skills and capacity to provide, and develop a budget for the response.

APPROVAL for this allocation was given by Ed Woolf, Treasurer; David Steele, General Secretary; and Mission and Ministry Board Members Michaela Alphonse, Daniel Butler, Edward Cesar-Fincher, Joel Gibbel, Tina Hunt, Adelia Lucatorto, Josiah Ludwick, Terri Luzynski, Kathy Mack, Sarah Mason, Deirdre Moyer, Colby Patton, Eric Ramirez, and Gretchen Zience.

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