

To: PSWD Delegates

From: Eric Bishop, Interim Vice President of Enrollment Management

Re: University of La Verne Report to PSWD Conference

This report represents highlights for the University of La Verne.

Dr. Pardis Mahdavi Installed

The University is excited to celebrate the selection and installment of Dr. Pardis Mahdavi as the 19th president of the University of La Verne. Dr. Mahdavi, who began on August 15, comes to the University from Montana State University. Her official Inauguration of was held on campus on October 13.

Mahdavi brings more than 20 years of scholarship, experience, and leadership in higher education. She most recently served as the provost and executive vice president at the University of Montana, a public flagship research university in Missoula.

As president, Mahdavi will lead the Southern California historic private, nonprofit institution with five colleges, several regional campuses, robust online offerings, and more than 89,000 alumni worldwide. She said the university's core values — lifelong learning, ethical reasoning, civic and community engagement, and diversity and inclusivity — along with its transformation over the years are closely aligned with her own.

"When I look at the trajectory of the University of La Verne, how it has adapted to all kinds of learners and how it really embodies the best tradition of access and excellence, and in preparing learners to really uphold democracy and engage in social transformation in the way that we would want a 21st century higher education institution to do, I am honored to join the community and excited about the work and collaborations ahead to serve our students," Mahdavi said.

Mahdavi previously held deanships at Arizona State University, the University of Denver and Pomona College, along with several leadership positions at Pomona College. She is a distinguished author, public speaker, and anthropologist. She has five single authored books, two edited volumes, and another single authored book to be released later this summer. Her research interests include gendered labor, human

trafficking, migration, human rights, and public health in the context of changing global and political structures.

Mahdavi holds a philosophy doctorate and master's degree in sociomedical sciences and anthropology, along with a Master of International Affairs in human rights from Columbia University. She has a bachelor's degree in diplomacy and world affairs from Occidental College.

Mahdavi grew up in Southern California and has three children.

She succeeds Dr. Devorah Lieberman, who retired this year after becoming the first female president of the University of La Verne in 2011.

Record Traditional Undergraduate Enrollment

The Fall 2023 Freshman class represented the largest freshmen class in the history of the University. The 741 freshmen are part of an overall student enrollment of more than 5,500 students at the University.

College of Health & Community Wellbeing

The University continues to develop its College of Health and Community Wellbeing. The college is scheduled to house many of the existing programs including the doctorate in clinical psychology, bachelor of science in nursing, masters in marriage and family therapy, and the masters in athletic training.

ULV Receives National Recognition

In September, the University of La Verne was named the top private university in California for social mobility and for the second consecutive year, sixth among all universities in the state, according to the *U.S. News & World Report's 2024 National University rankings*.

Social mobility reflects the improvement of socioeconomic status based on the enrollment and graduation of disadvantaged students. With embedded core values such as ethical reasoning, diversity, and inclusivity, the University of La Verne prides

itself in being able to ensure access to quality education and support for successful professional and social journeys.

The university has maintained its top 10 ranking for five years, establishing a lasting legacy of excellence.

“The University of La Verne’s consistent standing in these national rankings is indicative of the university’s deep commitment to the betterment of all of our students, especially those who are underrepresented and underserved,” President Pardis Mahdavi said. “As a nationally recognized Minority- and Hispanic-Serving Institution, we make sure all our students have access to supportive educational opportunities from the moment they arrive on campus, so when they graduate, they are able to give back to their communities as they once did for them.”

Top performers on the *U.S. News and World Report* social mobility ranking were measured by the extent schools graduated economically disadvantaged students who received federal Pell Grants, which means their total family incomes are usually less than \$50,000 per year. In the National Universities rankings only, this total also includes first generation student graduation rate data.

In the Best Value Schools category, the university placed 9th among the best in California. In the National Universities category, it ranked 11th among all private national universities in California and 24th among National Universities in California.

Additionally, the university has been ranked #33 in the nation within the 2024 Best U.S. College distinction in the *Wall Street Journal* & College Pulse rankings.

Out of 400 institutions, the university was scored as the fifth-highest ranking private and California university on the list. The university was recognized as one of 16 private California universities in the entire report and is among the top 15 schools for student experience and social mobility, according to results released this month.

This year’s ranking survey, created by *Wall Street Journal* in collaboration with College Pulse and Statista, focused overall scores on learning opportunities, preparations for careers, and learning facilities.

HILLCREST

2705 Mountain View Drive, La Verne, California 91750-4313
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MISSION STATEMENT

To serve and enrich the lives of older persons

VISION STATEMENT

To be the Premier Destination for Vibrant Community Living

CORE VALUES

Integrity
Respect
Service
Stewardship
Teamwork

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee: Dale Stanley, Chair; Christine Meek, Secretary; DeWayne McMullin, Treasurer; Jackie Doud, Vice Chair; Matthew Neeley, CEO; and, Jon Blickenstaff, Past Chair.

Directors: Thomas Allison, Kathy Duncan, Kitty Garvey, Dot Hess, Robert Johnston, Dan Lane, Donna Redman, Linda Saddlemire, Barbara Smythe, Susan Tenorio, Tina Wang, and Mike Welch

Ex-Officio with vote: Russ Matteson, District Executive Minister



The Gallery at Hillcrest: Embracing Ghosts Exhibit January 9—March 24, 2023

SALES & MARKETING NEWS

Hillcrest residents live days filled with accomplishments, fun-filled activities and community involvement. Listed are some of the highlights of this past year that have brought our mission and vision statements to life:

- The net entrance fees for the last fiscal year was \$7,490,479
- Hillcrest welcomed 43 new residents to the Hillcrest family.

PHILANTHROPY NEWS

- Total funds raised for the Good Samaritan & Benevolent Funds and Endowments in fiscal year ending June 30, 2023: **\$499,659.98**
- As of June 30, 2023, Woods Health Services Capital Campaign has raised approximately **\$4.5 million** toward the Woods remodeling project.
- Resident volunteer support at the Hillcrest Thrift Store and Gift Shop generated **\$43,931.50** to the Good Samaritan Fund.
- Luck of the Draw Annual Fundraiser **\$303,040.00**

Transitions at Hillcrest

By Matthew Neeley

One of the most interesting joys of working at Hillcrest is having access to the wisdom, experience, and understanding of residents. The life experiences of residents are so broad that it is likely they have already lived or outlived those experiences now being faced by Hillcrest associates. Residents often understand more about these experiences than the associates themselves because they have lived on both sides of them. This may seem like a small matter, but it is definitely an unwritten benefit for associates and perhaps for residents as well.

We have all experienced significant changes these past two and a half years. Some of those past two and a half years. Some of those include new residents and associates who have joined Hillcrest; and some who have moved on to the next stage of life. We are grateful for all who have come and are sad to see others go.

On the associate side, we welcome Keith Kasin, who joined Hillcrest September 21, 2022 as Hillcrest's new Vice President of Health Services. Keith oversees Hillcrest's care environments at Southwoods Lodge, Cedar Court, Birch Court, and Maple Court along with our skilled facility, Woods Health Services. Keith has worked for more than two decades in the field. He has experience in both for-profit and non-profit, faith-based retirement communities.



Hillcrest expressed our loving appreciation to Winnie Chen for her many contributions to Hillcrest over her six years of service. Winnie concluded her service September 2, 2022. We will miss her deeply and wish her well as she pursues her interests in the next chapter of her career.

Joel Brouwer joined Hillcrest as the new Chief Financial Officer in March, 2023. Joel oversees Hillcrest's Finance team and provides valuable information to our Board of Directors. Joel previously worked at First Quadrant, an investment management firm in Pasadena, where he was the Chief Financial/Compliance/Operations Officer. Additionally, he managed the Portfolio Accounting Department, System's Team, and oversaw the firm's financial and tax reporting. Joel has approximately thirty years of experience in the areas of financial operations, securities accounting, compliance, investment operations and systems, back office processing, financial statements, and portfolio management.



In August we said goodbye to Stacy Fringer who led dining services through the vicissitudes of the pandemic. We are pleased to welcome our new Dining Services Director, Danny Paz, who comes with extensive dining services experience in multiple settings. We also welcome Janet Zaiger, Certified Dietary Manager of Woods Health Services.



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About Camp Peaceful Pines

Camp Peaceful Pines is a summer camping site affiliated with the PSWD of the Church of the Brethren. It has been in operation for over 60 years in the central Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Carson Iceberg Wilderness. A variety of camps include: Junior / Jr High / Youth Camp, Discovery, Family Camp & Women's Retreat. We also rent the camp to groups such as family reunions when time slots are available and included this year the 'Song and Story' Fest



Discovery Camp

Camp Peaceful Pines is rustic and only open three months of the year due to severe weather in the winter and road closures. It is a cozy & inviting place, with a multitude of projects going on at any given time. 2023 saw continued work on metal roofs for Cabins 1,3, 7, 9. Current projects include replacement of Cabin 11 which began in August.

Family
Camp



Women's
Retreat



Volunteer superintendents, leaders, directors, counselors, nurses, construction workers, day laborers, families and friends all contribute to making Camp Peaceful Pines a viable spot for enjoying the great outdoors, while taking time for reflection and spiritual growth in a Christian community setting. The churches and other groups who donate annually to the camp budget help to defray the ongoing costs of running our camp. These costs include USFS fees, propane and fuel costs, garbage pickup, upkeep and maintenance of the facility, leadership stipends, upgrades to cabins and other amenities.



More information about specific camps and dates can be found on the web at

www.CampPeacefulPines.org

Camp Peaceful Pines

2301 Woodland Ave.
Modesto CA 95358

www.CampPeacefulPines.org

or search for us on Facebook
and Instagram

*Camp is located via Highway 108 adjacent to
Sonora Pass at 6,000 feet*

Thank you for your continued support of
the Outdoor Ministries program at
Camp Peaceful Pines.

Garry Pearson, 2023 Board Chair

Camp La Verne



Celebrating 100 Years Of Outdoor Ministry And Experiences!

Since 1924 Camp La Verne has been providing Brethren Churches and Nature Loving Folks from all walks of life a place to enjoy the peace, quiet, and serenity of the forest and all that Mother Nature has to offer.

We are located at 6,700 feet in elevation in the beautiful San Bernardino Mountains, with Jenks Lake, the Santa Ana River, Big Bear and numerous hiking, biking, and running trails at our fingertips! San Gorgonio is the tallest peak in Southern California, and it's trail heads are just a short hike from our doorstep!

Come stay with us! Here at Camp La Verne with our rustic yet cozy summer and winterized cabins and our four season bathroom and kitchen, we can accommodate groups of up to 100 campers throughout most of the year. Onsite and nearby activities like horseshoes, volleyball, archery, canoeing and challenge courses are here waiting for you! We also have a beautiful outdoor chapel, perfect for weddings, reading a good book, journaling, or just listening to the birds.

In addition to our scheduled summer camps, our CLV facilities are available for outside rentals such as school groups, Boy & Girl scouts, family reunions, weddings, and all denominations of church groups...everyone is welcome here!

Celebrate with us...we're turning 100! Keep an eye on our calendar... 2024 is going to be a very special year for everyone involved with Camp La Verne! Whether it's our Winter Camp, our Annual Camp Banquet, one of our CLV Summer Camps, or our Centennial Family Camp in 2024, please show your support by giving yourself the gift of a visit to us up on the mountain! We are here for you!!!

CLV Summer Camps...98% Volunteer! Thanks to our incredible Camp Directors, dedicated CLV Board Members, fantastic Kitchen Staff, and wonderful Work Camp Volunteers, Camp La Verne continues to provide to our own groups an extremely affordable 'Camp Experience' every summer for Middle, Junior, Senior High, College, and even Adult campers! (Registration for these is open to all)

If you or someone you know would like to volunteer at CLV, or serve on the CLV Board, we would love to have you! Please call us or send us an email.

CLV can be contacted at: 909-794-2931 or E-mail us at campmanager@camplaverne.org

You can also find us on the web at www.camplaverne.org and you can email us general questions at campmanager@camplaverne.org

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

In the past year, with private donations and the generosity of a grant from the Pacific Southwest District, we were able to update power lines, re-roof our wash house, and obtain materials for this Fall's re-roofing of the Camp Kitchen. While there is still so much more to do, we are making every great and small donation go a very, very long way!

(If you are able to help CLV in our quest for all of our 21st century upgrades, and want to support us, you may send your donation to Camp La Verne, PO Box 355, La Verne CA 91750-0355 or find our PayPal link on our website.)



Thanks to all and have a wonderful year!

Camp La Verne is under a Special Use Permit from the San Bernardino National Forest. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, Camp La Verne is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.



Eder Financial

BOLD. BALANCED. TRUSTED.

Eder Financial District Conference Report 2023

Greetings to the moderator, delegates, and members, as you gather for your District Conference!

Did you know Eder Financial can make a positive impact on your life, directly or indirectly, whether you qualify to use our services or not?

That's because we serve congregations and their staff so they can better perform their ministries for their members.

Eder provides a fantastic retirement plan and employee-based insurances for pastors, congregational, district, and camp employees. We can also manage special funds, like ministry funds, memorial funds, cemetery funds, and building funds for congregations and other church-related organizations.

We also provide several free workshops that help congregations learn how to grow their endowments, encourage people to include the congregation in their end-of-life financial decision-making, how to run the church as a business with good governance, and more. Ask the Eder representative attending your conference how we can bring a workshop to your congregation.

Can we serve you and your congregation if we aren't already? Give us a chance. You'll be glad you did. Ask us if your congregation, district, and camp are using our services. We welcome the conversation.

Eder Financial is now in its second year with its new name, having changed from Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust in May 2022. The transition has been well received in the denomination because of our core business model –

- We seek to serve congregations and organizations as partners, making choices and decisions surrounding participation in a retirement plan as easy as possible. It is important that we make it easy for all who can enroll to enroll, as many Americans are on track to have insufficient savings in retirement. We work to help ensure that our members are not faced with that problem, by helping them enroll early in their careers, saving to the plan consistently, and using an asset allocation model to help grow their funds. Not sure how to do that? We can help.
- We provide a concierge service model with our insurance products, answering questions and addressing all concerns proactively and satisfactorily. Our ancillary insurances of life, vision, dental, short- and long-term disability have held premium rate increases virtually flat over the past five years, which means eligible employees can protect themselves with various insurances while not suffering high premium rate increases year after year.
- Part-time employees can participate in both the Eder Retirement and Insurance plans. Ask us if you or someone you know qualifies.
- We manage funds of organizations in a manner that allows easy access, several tools for managing investments, and reports and resources that assist in the management of the funds. We would be glad to set up a demonstration for you and your organization of our fantastic customer web portal.
- And we provide education to give people information and to help them know what questions they should be asking so that they can be successful, whether helping to grow their congregations' financial base or to manage their own retirement plan or insurance offerings.



Eder Financial

BOLD. BALANCED. TRUSTED.

We also help tenured pastors and congregational, district, and camp staff who have extraordinary financial needs, if they meet certain guidelines. In 2022 the Church Workers' Assistance Plan that Eder manages granted \$250,000 to about 40 people who found themselves in financial distress with nowhere else to turn.

Most of the funds under our management conform to Eder Values Investing, which means you can utilize our services and know that your resources are being managed in accordance with the values in the Church of the Brethren tradition.

Serving others who have common bonds and convictions

Committed to serving as a Church of the Brethren Annual Conference agency, Eder is moving to include other people and organizations of faith that profess a like-mindedness with Eder Financial's values as an organization grounded in Christian faith. Program strength, product options, and lower costs come from a strong volume of business. Therefore, Eder will grow stronger in the long term by offering its ministries to others who seek competitive products backed by concierge service. If you know of a congregation, not-for-profit, or other faith-based organization that would benefit from Eder's services, please let us know.

EDER FINANCIAL BOARD and staff

The 12-person Eder Financial Board consists of people who have knowledge and experience in accounting, finance, investments, law, employee benefits, human resources, actuarial science, or represent pastors, district executives, and organizations that are Brethren or have common bonds and convictions. If you or someone you know would like to serve on the Eder Financial Board, let us know. We are always looking for people who are dedicated to service, want to do meaningful volunteer work, and are committed to being an active member of a board.

We also have 27 people on our staff, working in retirement, employee insurance, organizational investing, finance, investments, client relations, marketing, public relations, IT, data, special projects, and business development. We are a family friendly, faith-based organization that strives to provide concierge level service to our members and clients while also providing a fulfilling work environment in a permanent work-from-home setting. If you or someone you know is interested in an Eder Financial job, let us know.

CONCLUSION

Despite the expansion of its charter to bring in other members and clients of like mind from beyond the Church of the Brethren, Eder Financial remains committed to the denomination. Our organization was created by the Annual Conference to serve pastors, employees, churches, and organizations. That commitment to service has not wavered. We are here to help our members and clients achieve their financial goals. As we adopt new taglines, new goals, new language to articulate our vision, bridging our past with our future, one of our more recent BBT taglines melds quite nicely with Eder's future vision of walking alongside those we serve. "Building financial security. Bettering the world. Together." If you and/or your congregation have not walked with us in the past, let us do so in the future. In other words, those who have not given Eder Financial a look for a few years, or ever, should do so. Together, Eder will help you reach your financial goals which will help strengthen your ministry to the church.

Donna Rhodes
Board Chair

Nevin Dulabaum
President

Dear followers of Christ,

What does God need from the Church of the Brethren now (and are we prepared to give it)? What does it mean for us to be a “peace church” in today’s world?

Founded in 1974, On Earth Peace is an agency of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference which seeks to embolden the Church of the Brethren as a historic and living peace church. Our name comes from the angel’s song at Jesus’ birth, “On Earth Peace and Good Will to All,” and we work to lift that song in today’s world.



Historically, our Brethren identity as a peace church was defined in part by our relationship to war: *Following Christ, we were against war.* Even as time passed and many Brethren didn’t agree with pacifism, the Church’s identity as a force for peace and against war remained vital. What is the core of our peace commitment today? What are we against, and what are we for--in God’s name?

In a church and world that is very polarized, what does it mean to you to be a follower of the Prince of Peace? In some ways, the war we were against has come home, and the sorely-needed peace (and justice) is more complicated than our ancestors in the faith may have known. Some parts are still the same--the all-surpassing love of Christ as a foundation of that peace--and yet the world in which we proclaim God’s love has changed, and so must our engagement with it.

On Earth Peace believes the Church of the Brethren has been called for such a time as this. We as Brethren are a relational, warm, discipleship-centered community. We help put hands and feet to God’s call to love all people. On Earth Peace seeks to help the Church of the Brethren become what it can be, “for the glory of God and our neighbor’s good.”

Here are three OEP initiatives we believe can help the Church of the Brethren become what’s needed in today’s world.

- **1000 Brethren Kingian Nonviolence Training.** We are seeking to train a new generation of Christian leaders in nonviolence, to focus our “peace” and aid in our community ministries.
- **Standing with People of Color Study/Action Process.** Together with the Southern Ohio/Kentucky District, OEP is leading a two-year denomination-wide study/action process focused around key conversations we’re asking the church to have.
- **Church of the Brethren Gun Violence Prevention Organizing Team.** A hearty band of Brethren from across the country has come together to galvanize all Brethren to stand and act together on the scourge of gun violence in the US.

Please consider whether your family can support this ministry financially. We hope your congregation will include our ministry as part of your outreach giving in your 2024 budget.

Write to us at OEP@OnEarthPeace.org and share how God is moving you towards peace or justice in these times. Visit www.OnEarthPeace.org to learn about our work and find upcoming events.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Guynn".

Matt Guynn

For OEP’s executive team, with Darlene Johnson and Marie Benner-Rhoades



Be **BOLD**



Since 1905, Bethany Theological Seminary has followed the example of Jesus by preparing others for lives of ministry and service. Our innovative learning community is grounded in an Anabaptist and Radical Pietist witness. We provide students with exceptional opportunities for advanced biblical and theological study that values both faith formation and academic freedom. We empower students to answer their calls from God and to lead through spiritual engagement, faith-filled thought, and transformative practice.

BE BOLD AT BETHANY

With the support of a \$1M grant from the Lilly Endowment, Bethany Theological Seminary is launching Bethany BOLD, a new initiative that will prepare students to lead congregations as they respond to diversity and division. (BOLD stands for Build, Organize, Love, and Dare.) The rigorous and demanding program will challenge Bethany's best and brightest students to apply their faith and education to address real-world problems, including poverty and racial injustice. Students selected for Bethany BOLD will be required to engage in service in the Wayne County community, participate in educational activities (like lectures and training sessions) outside the seminary, and participate in purposeful reflection about their experiences in the program. Participants in Bethany BOLD receive full-tuition scholarships, free housing, and a monthly living stipend.

OUR OFFICE IN JOS

Thanks to the generosity of alumni and friends, we are building a new office for our staff members in Nigeria.

This new space is adjacent to the Technology Centre in Jos, where Nigerian students attend classes in the Certificate in Biblical Peacemaking program. The newly constructed space will help staff better serve current and future students.

NEW FACULTY

Two new professors joined the Bethany faculty last fall.

Dr. Margaret "Maggie" Elwell is assistant professor of peace studies and director of Bethany BOLD. Elwell earned both her MDiv and PhD from Princeton Seminary. She previously directed the Center for Theology, Women, and Gender at Princeton Seminary, taught at the University of Maryland, and was a middle school teacher in Baltimore City Schools.

Dr. Tamisha Tyler is visiting assistant professor of theology and culture and theopoetics. She joins Bethany as a Louisville Institute Post-Doctoral Fellow. Tyler earned her doctorate at Fuller Seminary. Her scholarly and teaching interests include the novels of Octavia Butler and Afrofuturism.



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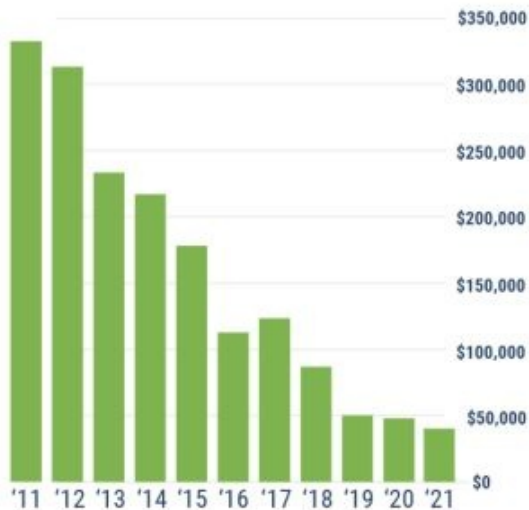


There's a Place for You at Bethany!

Bethany Theological Seminary is committed to helping all qualified students to answer their call from God and receive an exceptional education without taking on additional educational or consumer debt. As many seminaries have struggled with enrollment, our vibrant community has grown — and we have room for more students, both studying from a distance or joining our on-campus community and living in our “Neighborhood” of houses a few steps from campus.

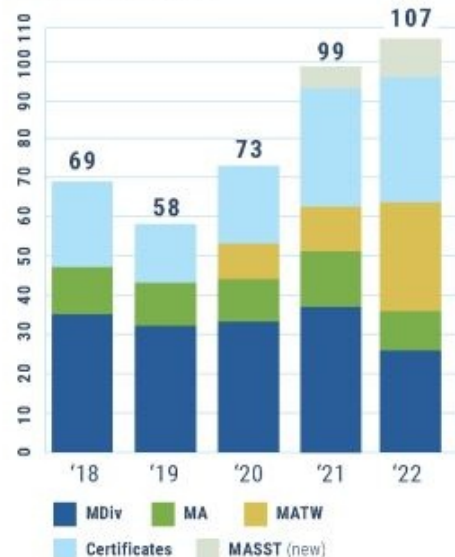
In recent years the Seminary has dramatically reduced total student borrowing, even as enrollment has grown. Students in our Bethany BOLD program, for example, receive reduced tuition, free housing, living stipends, opportunities for meaningful community engagement, and a course in Conscious Financial Living. Our goal is to help students earn Bethany degrees without taking on additional student or consumer debt.

TOTAL AMOUNT BORROWED BY ALL STUDENTS, PER YEAR



5-YEAR ENROLLMENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Historical Headcount



OUR MISSION: As an innovative learning community, grounded in an Anabaptist and Radical Pietist witness, Bethany Theological Seminary empowers every student to lead through spiritual engagement, faith-filled thought, and transformative practice — so that the world flourishes.



“When I was considering graduate school programs, I didn’t want to put additional financial burdens on my parents. I have lived in community for most of my life, so that was an attractive aspect of the Neighborhood as well. Bethany has been a wonderful choice for me.”

/SUSUYU LASSA, MASST 2022



“Generous scholarships and free housing made it possible for my wife (Hope Staton, MDiv 2023) and I to give our undivided attention to our studies. We have been able to immerse ourselves in this community and take on leadership roles in chapel and other Seminary activities. Living here helped us to see how we can adapt to new situations, which we know will be great preparation for our careers in ministry and service — no matter where life takes us.”

/CLARKE STATON, MA and MASST STUDENT



“I follow each student’s financial journey closely to ensure that they have the resources needed to make smart financial choices now and in the future.”

/TERRI MITCHELL, FINANCIAL AID AND ENROLLMENT ASSISTANT



“At Bethany, we believe that financial concerns should not be an obstacle to students answering a call from God to ministry and service. Providing an education that is exceptional, accessible, and affordable is our core mission.”

/REV. DR. JEFF CARTER, PRESIDENT

Making Seminary Affordable

85 PERCENT TUITION DISCOUNT

Thanks to the generous support of alumni and friends, and the careful investment of our resources, Bethany is very affordable.

GENEROUS FINANCIAL AID

Most students pay only the base tuition of \$1,100 per semester, qualifying for enough financial aid to cover the remaining costs.

TYPES OF AID AVAILABLE

- Academic Excellence Scholarship
- Church Covenant Grant
- Bethany BOLD
- Need-based grant
- Federal Work-Study
- Federal Stafford Loans
- International student aid



An exceptional biblical and theological education,
accessible and affordable for all.

Bethany At-a-Glance



DEGREE PROGRAMS

- Master of Divinity
- Master of Arts
- Master of Arts: Theopoetics and Writing
- Master of Arts in Spiritual and Social Transformation



CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

- Certificate of Achievement in Theological Studies
- Certificate of Achievement in Biblical Peacemaking
- Certificate in Intercultural Biblical Interpretation
- Certificate in Just Peace and Conflict Resolution
- Certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination



BETHANY ACADEMY FOR MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

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- Seminario Biblico Anabautista Hispano-de la Iglesia de los Hermanos
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Bethany's impact is possible because of the generosity of our friends.

Make a gift today at bethanyseminary.edu/donate

BETHANY QUICK FACTS

- **711** licensed or ordained pastors in the Church of the Brethren are graduates of Bethany Theological Seminary.
- **10 of 24** Church of the Brethren District Executives are Bethany graduates.
- This year, **six** Nigerian students graduated with graduate certificates. President Jeff Carter and Mark Lancaster, assistant to the president for international programs, traveled to Nigeria in May and met with church leaders, staff, and Bethany students and alumni.
- In May, we awarded **14** master's degrees and **12** graduate certificates.
- This year, **114** students were enrolled at Bethany, pursuing master's degrees or certificates.
- The Bethany BOLD program has created new partnerships between the Seminary and local non-profit organizations
- Total financial support from Congregations and Alumni during calendar year **2022** totaled **\$383,833.06**.





Church of the Brethren

Dear Friends and Family of Faith in the Pacific Southwest District,

Greetings in the name of Christ! My thoughts and prayers are with you, as you plan and prepare for your District Conference. I hope it will be a time of earnest conscientiousness and responsibility related to carrying out the denomination's mission, and a time of praise and celebration for the ways your congregations are putting Christ's love into action. May we feel God's presence among us.

I'm looking forward to our 237th recorded Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, scheduled for July 3–7, 2024, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Annual Conference is a special time in the life of our denomination. Yes, it is an occasion to facilitate the business of the church through the various business sessions, study committees, agency reports, and queries. But it is also a time for Brethren from all walks of life to celebrate our unique place and ministry in – and as – the Body of Christ. From inspirational worship services to quality leadership development, open dialogue to rejuvenating fellowship, Annual Conference invites us to welcome, encourage, and engage with one another as a community of faith.

In her book, *Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again*, author Rachel Held Evans wrote that Christianity can't be an individual endeavor. Following Christ is a group activity – and one that, simultaneously, has been messy and incarnate since the beginning. Because, as Held Evans writes, “the church is not a group of people who believe all the same things; the church is a group of people caught up in the same story, with Jesus at the center.”

As Brethren, we know this to be true. Since our founding more than 300 years ago, we've been a faith family that has chosen another way of living: the way of Christ. We are a people called to live and experience our faith together – in community – in service to and with God, each other, and our neighbors. Each of us brings our own unique perspectives and experiences to this community. And it is through our willingness to share our faith journeys with one another that we can experience and see God's vision for us more fully and, therefore, be transformed together by God's Spirit.

So, I invite you to join me and our denominational community in Grand Rapids next summer. Let's gather together knowing each of us is welcome and worthy – integral parts of the Body of Christ, answering God's call to build authentic relationships and community with ourselves, each other, and those around us.

In grace and peace,

Madalyn Metzger

2024 Annual Conference Moderator



Church of the Brethren

May 2023

Though the Brethren as a group have existed for nearly three hundred years, we subscribe to no formal creed. We simply try to do what Jesus did. Jesus brought a message of life, love, and hope. But he offered much more than inspiring words: He understood that people's spiritual needs also include day-to-day human ones – food, health, rest, comfort, friendship, and unconditional acceptance. "I am the way," he told his followers. He showed them how to trust, how to care, and how to help. Steadily, lovingly, even radically, Jesus went about saving the world – by serving its people. Because we believe his message, we seek to do the same.

– Church of the Brethren Identity Pamphlet

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings to you in the name of Christ our Savior!

It is an honor and privilege to write to you on behalf of the staff, volunteers, and Mission and Ministry Board of the Church of the Brethren. We are praying for you, your congregations, and your district as you gather to worship, sing praises, pray, fellowship, and accomplish the tasks set before you by your District Moderator.

I am grateful for the many ways your district and local congregations faithfully strive to live out the Gospel – to simply try to do what Jesus did. The vital ministries of our Church of the Brethren congregations small to large are at the heart of our Church. We should never diminish the essential role that each unique part of the body plays in our common ministry together.

As we know all too well, there are a number of loud voices on either side of the issues we face inside and outside the church that are demanding our attention and have dominated much of our time these past number of years. My efforts at intentional listening are to hear the voice of the Church – listening for God's voice arising not from the loudest few, but from the gathered community. As I listen, there is no doubt that some of you clearly resonate with the dominant voices, yet the prevailing voice is one of hope – hope in one Body in Christ continuing our ministry and work together.

We have not been doing "together" very well as a Church. I am aware that many are weary of the struggle, yet as disciples of Jesus we are called to another way of living – a way that is not always easy and requires struggle. I would invite you to join me in our continued struggle to follow Jesus. It is my hope that we might change our adversarial posture to one of serving one another – one in which we stoop to wash the feet of our brother or sister in Christ. I believe such a change in posture positions us to listen more intently to one another – thus better able to love and care for the other. I believe that such a posture of service would be transformational for our Church and our neighborhoods.

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1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, Illinois 60120 847-742-5100 800-323-8039 Fax: 847-742-6103

My friends, I do hope you can see that our work together is worthwhile. We are doing good ministries together locally in our congregations and districts and denominationally. Our efforts at offering the cup of cold water model to the world that we are about another way of living – the way of Jesus. May we not forget that through our simple acts of service, we too are working to save the world – in Jesus' name.

Your servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Steele', written in a cursive style.

David Steele
General Secretary



PART-TIME PASTOR FULL-TIME CHURCH

SUPPORTING MULTI-VOCATIONAL PASTORS

Greetings from the Part-time Pastor; Full-time Church program of the Office of Ministry of the Church of the Brethren!

It is our pleasure to share information about this valuable program with your district conference.

The aim of the program is to resource and support Multi-Vocational Pastors (MVPs), those working less than full-time or who are less than fully compensated, with companionship and wisdom sharing all along their journey.

Taking our cue from Jesus' walk with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we offer through the program deep compassionate listening and a desire to help pastors reflect on the events of their lives as together they seek Spirit-inspired wisdom. Circuit riders and leaders of the program aim to imitate Jesus in listening well and offering support and resources that can strengthen MVPs and help them thrive in their ministry and partnership with congregations.

Here are a few of the ways the program seeks to help pastors thrive -

1. ***Companionship*** – We invite your district's MVPs to become matched with one of the program's wise, seasoned circuit riders who will offer a listening ear, program resources, and spiritual support in collaboration with your district leadership
2. ***Wisdom sharing*** – pastors may join a short-term virtual book study led by circuit rider, John Fillmore, and learn from companions on the journey from the wider church. Or ask one of the program's leaders to lead a virtual study for your district's pastors
3. ***A Breather*** - Take a break from your day and check out "A Resting Place" with Erin Matteson, circuit rider and spiritual director, and others in brief, centering, prayerful videos posted on our Facebook and Instagram pages (see links on reverse side of flyer)
4. ***Guidance*** - Request an experienced circuit rider or program consultant to help your pastors lead their congregation's conversations regarding mission and outreach
5. ***Dreaming*** - dream and plan about what resources your district's pastors need and support them in requesting a grant from the program for a retreat or continuing education event for all pastors. Invite program staff and consultants to provide leadership for the event.
6. ***Sabbath rest*** – modest financial grants are available for MVPs who need to find respite from ministerial responsibilities for a day, a weekend, or longer.

Find out more – see reverse side for program staff's contact info and social media sites

Part-time Pastor; Full-time Church Program Staff

Richard Wehrle, Program Manager

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Join the program or simply learn about its resources.

parttimepastorfulltimechurch@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/ptpftcbrethren/@ptpftcbrethren

<https://www.instagram.com/ptpftcbrethren/>

Main Website:

<https://www.brethren.org/ministryoffice/part-time-pastor/>

A ministry of the Church of the Brethren



Church of the Brethren

March 2023

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The earthquake in Turkey and Syria, war and violence from Ukraine to Africa, and a US school shooting are some of the things that have challenged BDM to respond creatively and prayerfully to deep hardships and loss in 2022 and the beginning of 2023. Whether responding to a natural disaster, violence, or other crisis, BDM staff and volunteers journeyed with survivors and families toward recovery and hope, often transforming lives, in places like Waverly, Tenn.; Uvalde, Texas; Dawson Springs, Ky.; and North Fort Meyers, Fla.

Encouragement for this ministry is found throughout the sacred scripture, such as Galatians 6:9a, 10a: “Let us not lose heart in doing good, . . . while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people”. It is also found in our partners such as Pamlico County (N.C.) Disaster Recovery Coalition, which shared: “[Not] only have you (BDM) helped to repair hurricane damaged homes, but you have also helped to restore and mend broken hearts. The light you have shown, and the relationships you have built with survivors and their families, will long have an impact on them and their generations.”

Children’s Disaster Services (CDS) volunteers responded this past year with deep compassion to the school shooting in Uvalde (Texas), floods, wildfires, and hurricanes. In Uvalde, specially trained volunteers (Critical Response Childcare teams) supported children and families of the 19 children killed by a lone shooter. These volunteers had 385 contacts with children as they helped them process the trauma and build resiliency in the face of this tragedy.

After Hurricane Ian made landfall in late September 2022, causing catastrophic damage along southwest Florida, CDS volunteers were initially housed by rebuilding volunteers with homes in the area. CDS teams served for six weeks in Florida shelters, with over 400 child contacts. During 2022, a total of 86 CDS volunteers served 1,065 children on eight responses. CDS also held three volunteer training workshops resulting in 40 newly trained volunteers, bringing the total CDS volunteer base to 576 by year’s end.

In March 2022, the BDM rebuilding program network of volunteers finished four years of repairing and rebuilding homes in the Carolinas following Hurricanes Matthew (2016) and Florence (2018). The program transitioned to Waverly, Tenn., for the remainder of the year, in response to devastating August 2021 flooding, when over 17 inches of rain fell in 24 hours. In October, a three week short-term response supported new home construction in Dawson Springs, Ky., where tornadoes destroyed around 650 homes in December 2021. Volunteer leadership on the projects was provided by 47 disaster project leaders from across the country who served to welcome and support 572 volunteers. The rebuilding program site moved to Dawson Springs, Ky., in January 2023 to continue the tornado recovery with local partners.

A local hybrid response to the October 2021 tidal flooding in Maryland’s Somerset and Dorchester counties was led by members of the Mid-Atlantic District, with support from BDM staff, vehicles, and equipment. In 2022, two homes were repaired by 35 volunteers through a

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Brethren Disaster Ministries, 601 Main Street, P.O. Box 188, New Windsor, Maryland 21776-0188
410-635-8731 800-451-4407 Fax: 410-635-8739

grant award from Lowes Home Improvement and the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD). This funding included \$30,000 in Lowes Gift Cards to purchase construction materials for the homes and \$4,200 to support volunteer housing and meals. This work will be completed in 2023.

In early February 2023, the world watched the rescue of survivors of the Turkey-Syria earthquake that has taken more than 50,000 lives. BDM responded quickly with Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) grants to partners working in both countries. The quake adds to the list of global catastrophes, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, resulting in a war that has displaced more than 12 million Ukrainians and, reportedly, caused nearly 7,000 Ukrainian deaths by the end of 2022. BDM responded to this crisis with EDF grants (totaling \$215,000 in 2022) in collaboration with five key partners. Additional grants are expected early in 2023.

The BDM global response includes dual programs in Haiti that continue the 2021 earthquake response, with \$166,969 in funds, while also addressing the acute overlapping crisis caused by the total collapse of the Haitian government. With severe hunger on the rise, a special program is helping to provide food to vulnerable families in the communities around the Haitian Brethren churches through a \$39,000 grant. Smaller EDF grants supported global Churches of the Brethren in Uganda (\$27,500) and Venezuela (\$10,000) with flood recovery programs, as well as the South Sudan Mission (\$11,000).

The Nigeria Crisis Response, a continued response to terrorism since 2014, provided support to four camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), food distributions, medical assistance, livelihood training centers for widows and orphans, seeds and fertilizer, new wells for drinking water, and home repairs for the most vulnerable. Additional EDF grants included support for vulnerable Syrian refugees and Lebanese in Lebanon, continued hurricane and flood recovery in Honduras, and support for programming of the Rwandan Church of the Brethren.

The total BDM programmatic expenses in 2022 were \$1,676,048. This includes the expenses from EDF allocations that support specific programs such as \$274,393 for U.S. responses (Rebuilding, CDS, etc.); \$190,076 for the Nigeria Crisis Response; \$281,469 for other Global CoB partners; and \$364,909 for all other global responses.

This ministry is only possible because the whole church is working together. Individual members and supporters, volunteers, churches, districts, and the auctions are part of the body of Christ coming together to pray, serve, give hope, and help families heal. Through all this we pray that more people come to God and know God's amazing love.

Thank you for your support and encouragement. You are an integral part of the body bearing witness to God's love for all who are lost and need Christ.



Roy Winter, Executive Director for Service Ministries

On behalf of BDM staff: Jenn Dorsch-Messler, Sharon Franzén, Kim Gingerich, and Michael Scalzi

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ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

BRETHREN VOLUNTEER SERVICE

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF BVS!

BVS BY THE NUMBERS

Volunteers currently serving:

27

(18 in the US, 3 in Europe, 1 in Latin America, 4 in Asia, 1 in Africa)

Currently active BVS project sites:

About 50

Number of US states home to BVS project sites:

16 (plus D.C.)

Current BVS monthly stipend:

\$250

Total volunteers serving in BVS since 1948:

7,000+

A diamond jubilee of service around the world

In 1948, young adults encouraged by Brethren leader Dan West brought a surprise motion to the floor of Annual Conference that left an indelible mark on the denomination.

While service had long been part of the Church of the Brethren, delegates embraced that proposal to formally start Brethren Volunteer Service, enabling young Brethren and others to respond energetically to the devastation of World War II in Europe, to hunger in Puerto Rico, and to a variety of needs around the US.

Seventy-five years later, BVS continues to be one of the great touchstones of Brethren faith: a source of leadership development, faith formation, relationship building, identity, mutual service, and more.



The anniversary is being celebrated with a new book from author Jim Lehman, *A Year of Living Differently*, published by Brethren Press, as well as special commemorations at Annual Conference, National Older Adult Conference, and elsewhere, plus some local and regional celebrations. A 75th anniversary Facebook group drew about 500 members who shared stories, and photos, while a monthly e-newsletter delivered other highlights.

We are grateful to everyone who has been part of that story, one that is still being written around the world.

BVS welcomes a new director

Chelsea Goss Skillen began as the new director of BVS in October 2022.

Emily Tyler resigned in February 2022 after three years in the position, and former director **Dan McFadden** provided interim leadership for eight months.

Originally from the Richmond, Va., area, Chelsea did an undergraduate degree at Bridgewater (Va.) College and has a master's in Organizational Leadership from Regis University. She spent two years as a BVSer previously.



NEWS & NOTES

Other new staff welcomed this past year included **Marissa Witkovsky-Eldred** as interim coordinator of short-term service; **Walt Wiltschek** as part-time office coordinator; and **Virginia Rendler**, who is starting as interim volunteer coordinator in July 2023. **Pauline Liu** completed her service as volunteer coordinator in February.

Mid-year retreats

Each year, current BVSers in the US gather for a mid-year retreat to take a break, talk about their experiences, reconnect with one another, and prepare for the remainder of their service time. In March 2023, a group of 20 volunteers (including two German volunteers serving with other placement organizations) met at Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla., for several days together that included discussion, a service project, games and relaxation, and a trip to the beach.

Volunteers serving in Europe planned to gather in late June in Galway, Ireland for a similar retreat. BVS marked 50 years of working in Northern Ireland in 2022.

Explore the BVS
Facebook group
and e-news!



UPCOMING ORIENTATIONS

BVS will be welcoming new volunteers at two orientation units in the summer and fall of 2023. The summer unit will take place **Aug. 1-9 at Inspiration Hills Camp in Burbank, Ohio**, while the fall unit will be held **Sept. 26-Oct. 4 at Camp Koinonia in Cle Elum, Wash.** About 25-30 volunteers are expected again this year. A strong partnership with EIRENE in Germany continues to benefit BVS' overall recruitment.

Faith X: Another way of serving



Short-term service opportunities through FaithX (formerly the workcamp program) in 2023 included 11 total trips with about 170 youth and advisors participating. Experiences were available in nine states plus Washington, D.C., and Spain.

FaithX introduced a new pricing model this year based on participants' ability to pay, with subsidized, standard, and supporter (extra donation) options available. The 2023 FaithX theme was "Voices for Peace," drawn from Romans 15:1-6.

PARTNERS IN SERVICE

This year's BVS Partners in Service Award was given to Jim Lehman, a member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill., who has been a long-time supporter of BVS.



Most recently, Jim curated and wrote the 75th anniversary book, *A Year of Living Differently*. Jim has also written other BVS publications in the past and has connected with many volunteers over the years, chronicling BVS' history.

The award is presented each summer at the BVS luncheon held during Annual Conference.