



Church of the Brethren

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13 (NIV)

Responding through volunteers and partners in the US and globally, Brethren Disaster Ministries relies on the power, strength, joy, and peace of God to bring hope and healing to brothers and sisters caught up in the chaos of both natural and human-caused disasters. In 2023, BDM supported relief and recovery from tornadoes, floods, wildfires, and a typhoon in the United States and its territories, and to natural disasters, war, and other humanitarian crises around the world, by walking side by side with survivors as they rebuilt their lives.

And yet, it is not only disaster survivors who are blessed when BDM responds to a need. Those who serve are also blessed—indeed, some are changed forever. One volunteer who served on a rebuilding site in Kentucky commented that “an unexpected experience was the overwhelming presence of the Spirit of God. I expected the experience to be faith based, but it was an amazing week for me.” Another declared, “I came home with my cup running over, what an experience, I am ready to go again.”

In 2023, Children’s Disaster Services (CDS) faced back to back challenges responding to disasters in the Pacific, both at the invitation of partner Red Cross. Typhoon Mawar caused destruction and displacement of people when it hit the US Territory of Guam in May. A team of six volunteers traveled to Guam, serving in shelters for three weeks and caring for 563 children. In August, when a devastating wildfire destroyed much of the town of Lahaina on Hawaii’s island of Maui, CDS volunteers were called there to care for children in assistance centers. Over a six-week period, three teams of volunteers made 457 child contacts. While the typical CDS volunteer serves for two weeks at a time, these two groups of volunteers served for three weeks each, due to the distance and other logistical concerns.

CDS responded to seven other disasters in 2023, including an apartment fire, a home explosion, and tornadoes. They also cared for children of asylum seekers. In October, a team of CDS Critical Response Childcare (CRC) volunteers, who are specially trained to support traumatized children and families after mass casualty events, traveled to Lewiston, Maine, following a mass shooting there. The need for peace and hope in all of these situations was great and CDS volunteers brought their calm and reassuring presence as a beacon to the children and their families. A total of 44 CDS volunteers engaged with 1,185 child contacts during the year.

The BDM Rebuilding Program project sites in 2023 were located in two areas of Kentucky. BDM partnered with Habitat for Humanity of the Pennyryle Region for the entire year to support the rebuilding of the town of Dawson Springs, which had suffered through deadly and destructive tornadoes in December 2021. As groups of BDM volunteers helped to build houses for first-time homeowners who had lost so much when their rental properties were destroyed, they wrote Bible verses and messages of support and hope on the lumber framing the structures and prayed for the

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families who would eventually live there. This project site is scheduled to continue until at least June 2024.

In partnership with the Eastern Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church Disaster Response, BDM volunteers spent a total of 12 weeks during 2023 in Eastern Kentucky rebuilding and repairing homes damaged during massive flooding that occurred in July and August of 2022. A total of 708 volunteers and project leaders served 52 families in 2023 on these two Kentucky sites.

The BDM Global Response supports relief and recovery for vulnerable people around the world facing war, violence, floods, earthquakes, and other disasters and humanitarian crises. In partnership with the Global Churches of the Brethren (CoB) and other international agencies, the challenge to respond is matched by the knowledge that Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) grants bring hope and joy where both may be hard to find. In 2023, these EDF grants equaled \$695,700. The majority of these grants were in response to conflicts in the countries and communities of the Global Church of the Brethren family. This includes the Democratic Republic of Congo (\$94,500), Haiti (\$60,200), South Sudan (\$40,000), and Nigeria (Nigeria Crisis Response, \$220,000). An additional \$220,000 was granted to three partners serving populations displaced by the Russia-Ukraine war.

The Nigeria Crisis Response continues as a partnership with Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2023 and remains strong amidst continued violence in the country. The response program includes continued support for internally displaced people, food distributions, medical assistance, livelihood training centers for widows and orphans, distribution of seeds and fertilizer, new wells for drinking water, education assistance for orphan children, trauma workshops, and home repairs for the most vulnerable.

The total BDM programmatic expenses in 2023 were \$1,103,235. This includes the expenses from EDF allocations that support specific programs such as \$184,064 for U.S. responses (Rebuilding, CDS, etc.); \$237,447 for the Nigeria Crisis Response; \$305,424 for other Global CoB partners; and \$376,300 for all other global responses, including the Russia-Ukraine war and the Turkey-Syria Earthquake Response.

Brethren Disaster Ministries and all whom we serve are forever grateful for the steadfast and faithful support to these ministries, as well as the tireless and persistent work of the many volunteers without whom the event could not happen. Our ministry supporting hope and healing is but an extension of the compassion and love that comes from God and is demonstrated by each person who serves in God's name. It is the result of the body of Christ coming together to share God's blessings with survivors of disasters and with each other. We thank you for your part in this work!

It is our prayer that through our ministry, with your support, God's glory will be known.



Roy Winter, Executive Director for Service Ministries

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

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