

Building Hope



MDS 75TH ANNIVERSARY

CELEBRATION OF SERVICE

FEB 14-15, 2025 | WICHITA, KANSAS



**BUILDING
HOPE
75
YEARS
1950-2025**

[Reunite with fellow volunteers](#) | [Hear disaster survivor stories](#) | [Honor the legacy](#)



Welcome to the 2025 MDS Annual Celebration in Wichita!

We hope you enjoy your time together this weekend, reconnecting and celebrating the work of MDS across the U.S. and Canada. Thank you to all our volunteers, donors, staff, and friends who support MDS!

—Annual Celebration Committee

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FEB 14 – FRIDAY WORKSHOPS

THEME: MAKING NEW MDS FRIENDS

8:00AM DOORS OPEN

9:00AM WELCOME

10:00AM HOUSE BUILD BEGINS

ENDS 4:30PM

10:00AM WORKSHOP SESSION 1

Option A: Capacity Building—Growing the MDS Network

LOCATION: THE BIG ROOM

Option B: Instilling Service and Compassion in Our Youth

LOCATION: THE POINT

12:00PM LUNCH / TOURS DEPART

1:00PM WORKSHOP SESSION 2

Option A: Capacity Building—Growing the MDS Network

LOCATION: THE BIG ROOM

Option B: Event Planning

LOCATION: THE POINT

2:45PM WORKSHOP SESSION 3

Option A: Capacity Building—Growing the MDS Network

LOCATION: THE BIG ROOM

Option B: Partnering with Local Businesses

LOCATION: THE POINT

4:30PM REGION MEETINGS

LOCATIONS: B1, A2, A3, A4

FRIDAY EVENING CELEBRATION

THEME: REBUILDING HOPE

5:30PM DINNER

7:00PM CELEBRATION SERVICE

Welcome

LANA TIESZEN AND JEFF KOLLER

Tabor, Bethel & Hesston Joint Choir

GREGORY ZIELKE, HENRY WATERS, RUSSELL ADRIAN, KEN RODGERS

“Building and Celebrating Hope”

KEVIN KING

“The Way of Hope”

ROSS PENNER

Greetings from NVOAD

APRIL D. WOOD

2024 Year-in-Review Video

“MDS in an Upside-Down World”

JOHN DILLER (PRESENTED BY TIM SCHRAG), JEFF BLACKBURN, CLEO KOOP

MCC Greetings

ANN GRABER HERSHBERGER

Joint Choir & Hymn Sing

GREGORY ZIELKE, HENRY WATERS, RUSSELL ADRIAN, KEN RODGERS

Closing Remarks

LANA TIESZEN

Closing Hymn

8:45PM ICE CREAM AND CELEBRATION CAKE

FEB 15 – SATURDAY

8:00AM DOORS OPEN

8:30AM CELEBRATION SERVICE

Welcome	LANA TIESZEN
“Carry Each Other’s Burdens Carefully”	EVELYN PETERS-ROJAS
Devotional	BRENT WARKENTIN
Singing	ANDREW VOTH
“The Deep End of Hope in the Wake of Hurricane Helene”	EMMA CHURCHMAN
Region 2 Sharing	
“Lives Changed”	JEFF KOLLER / LUPE AND ROXY SANCHEZ
Singing	ANDREW VOTH
“Helping to Rebuild Hope, One House at a Time”	MARK REMPEL
“Intersection of Hope”	MICHELE WHITEEAGLE
Board Recognitions	WAYNE YODER
2026 Annual Celebration	MANNIE FLAUD
Closing Remarks	LANA TIESZEN
Hymn Sing	ANDREW VOTH

10:30AM MORNING ACTIVITY OPTIONS

First Reading of <i>Mended</i> , a new MDS children’s book	LOCATION: B1
Storm Reunions	LOCATION: A1, A2, A4
House Build Begins	

12:00PM LUNCH / TOURS DEPART

1:00PM AFTERNOON ACTIVITY OPTIONS

House Build	
Sewing Circle	LOCATION: B1
Cornhole Tournament	LOCATION: GYM
MDS Storytelling / Release of <i>Many Hands</i> , a new MDS photo book	LOCATION: THE POINT

4-5:30PM DINNER

5:00PM EVENING ACTIVITY OPTIONS

Volleyball Tournament	LOCATION: GYM
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9:00PM END OF EVENT

EVENT MC



LANA TIESZEN is Region 3 Vice Chair and a member of the National Board of Delegates. After a career in accounting, she is following her family's commitment to MDS, serving first as a long-term and weekly volunteer and now in organizational roles. Lana considers a genuine smile and flexibility to be a volunteer's most valuable tools.

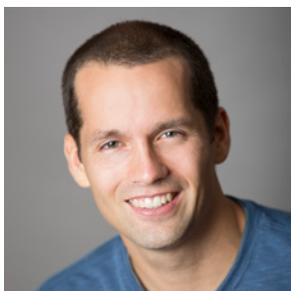
SPECIAL GUESTS



DR. GREG ZIELKE is the Director of Choral Activities and Professor of Music at Tabor College. He specializes in developing choirs' musicianship and storytelling through music. He has led numerous tours across the U.S., Europe, Australia, and China, and performed at Carnegie Hall in 2009 and 2016. Dr. Zielke holds degrees from Tabor College, Wichita State University, and the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music.



DR. HENRY S. WATERS, a Mississippi native, is currently the Director of Choral Music and Associate Professor of Music at Bethel College. At Bethel, he directs the Concert Choir, Chapel Choir, and Chamber Singers—an ensemble he revived during his first year in the position. The academic courses Dr. Waters teaches include Conducting, Music Appreciation, Twentieth-Century American Music, Hymnology, and First-Year Seminar.



RUSSELL ADRIAN, D.M.A., has been on the Hesston College music faculty since 2015, where he conducts the Bel Canto Singers, teaches music theory and private voice, and has led four international chorale tours through Europe. He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting from the University of Minnesota, a Master of Music in Choral Conducting from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and degrees in music and mathematics from Bethel College. He directs music at Tabor Mennonite Church and lives in rural Goessel with his wife, Camille, and their three children.

SPECIAL GUESTS



KEN RODGERS has been on the Hesston College music faculty since 1988. He teaches piano, organ and music appreciation classes. He is a 1985 graduate of Hesston College and holds a bachelor's degree in music education from Goshen (Ind.) College and a master's degree in church music from the University of Kansas (Lawrence). Ken's parents were members of the Sunday School class which started MDS.



APRIL WOOD has served as President & CEO of National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (National VOAD) since July 2021. With nearly 25 years of nonprofit leadership, she previously held senior roles at the American Red Cross. April has also served as a National Member Representative, Board Member, and Board Chair for National VOAD. She is committed to fostering collaboration, diversity, and effective disaster relief services to communities in need.



JEFF BLACKBURN recently completed 29 years as the pastor of Greensburg Mennonite Church in Greensburg, Kansas. He now serves as the Campus Coordinator for the Friends Preaching Initiative at Barclay College in Haviland, Kansas, where he teaches and coaches aspiring student preachers. Jeff and his wife, Lori, have been married for over 39 years, and their daughter, Cassie, and her husband are the parents of their two grandchildren.



CLEO KOOP is a retired pastor who served twenty-five years in three congregations in the central Kansas area. He also served as the Disaster Management Program Director at Hesston College for five years. Currently, he is retired but continues to serve on the Kansas MDS Unit Board and as the Project Director for the MDS Cabinet Shop, a Kansas MDS Unit project.

SPECIAL GUESTS



ANN GRABER HERSHBERGER has served as the executive director of MCC U.S. since 2020, after previously serving as board chair for 10 years. With over 30 years of experience teaching nursing at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, Ann and her husband, Jim, who pastors a Mennonite church near Harrisonburg, have a rich history of service. They spent more than 10 years with Rosedale Mennonite Missions and MCC in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Ann and Jim enjoy their three adult children, their spouses, and six grandchildren.



EVELYN PETERS-ROJAS comes from southeastern Manitoba and, except for 11 years in Bolivia, has lived here all her life. Although a teacher by profession, she gravitated toward working with volunteers and spent most of her career in this role, including 19 years with MCC and 15 years with MDS. Evelyn and her husband, Rene, live in Winnipeg and visit Bolivia frequently. They have three adult daughters and four fabulous grandchildren.



BRENT WARKENTIN has been the Lead Pastor at Ridgepoint since August 2005. He grew up in Wichita before spending his teenage years as a missionary kid in Indonesia. Prior to coming to Ridgepoint, Brent served for five years as a youth pastor in Kansas and California, followed by fifteen years as a pastor in Buhler, Kansas. Brent has been married to his beautiful wife, Joan, for over 35 years. They are the proud parents of Janet (son-in-law Thomas, grandson Lincoln, and granddaughter Sutton) and Stacey (son-in-law Ryan Neufeld, grandson Braylen, and granddaughter Makenna).



DR. ANDREW VOTH is Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at McPherson College. A Kansas native, Andrew grew up in Topeka before attending Bethel College, where he earned a degree in music education. He then pursued graduate studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

SPECIAL GUESTS



EMMA CHURCHMAN is a spiritual and business leader with over 25 years of experience helping individuals reclaim hope and strength after trauma. A trauma chaplain, mentor, and author of “The Deep End of Hope in the Wake of Hurricane Helene,” she draws on her own journey of overcoming childhood adversity to guide others. As a PhD candidate in Conscious Business Ethics, Emma blends soulful leadership with practical recovery strategies. A speaker and coach, she lives in Gerton, North Carolina, with her husband, Jeff, and their dachshunds, Winston and Leroy.



ROXY AND LUPE SANCHEZ lost their home to Hurricane Harvey in August 2017. Their lives were forever changed through their connection with MDS. While they received a new home, the most significant impact was the deep relationships they formed with MDS volunteers, leading to ongoing partnerships with the organization. As recently as November 2024, they worked with MDS and have since become volunteers, serving at Pine Ridge, SD. Their spiritual lives have deepened, and they are now leaders in their congregation.



MICHELE WHITEAGLE has served as the Region 4 Board Chair since September 2020. She is grateful for the gift of volunteering and how MDS has profoundly impacted her life. Michele lives in Kamiah, Idaho, with her husband, Wayde, and is the proud mother of two daughters and grandmother to five grandchildren.



SUSAN KIM and **JULIE KAUFFMAN** often write and photograph stories for MDS. They are grateful for the many opportunities to travel to MDS responses and meet the amazing, everyday people whose hands help build homes and whose hearts show care. They count it a privilege to hear tough recollections, to share laughs, to bear witness and document the stories of disaster survivors and volunteers so others can experience them too. They edited the new MDS photo book “Many Hands,” with the hope that it will inspire generations and generations to continue the MDS story.

SPECIAL GUESTS



BERRIE TORGAN-RANDALL is an author/illustrator working from her home studio in Media, PA. Berrie's illustrations have appeared in Ladybug Magazine, and her debut early reader graphic novel, "Bella & Blue: Bella Meets Blue" was published by The Little Press Publishing in 2022. Berrie anticipates the second book in the series to launch in October 2026 titled "Bella & Blue: Times Two." Berrie's debut picture book, "Just Ducky: A Friendship Takes Flight," was recently acquired by Cardinal Rule Press to be released October 2025.



HILLARY DAECHER has been writing short stories since she was a child. Her lifelong aspiration to be a published author has come true with SOAR in 2020. Hillary graduated from the University of Delaware with a degree in English and Communications. She resides in Lititz, PA, with her husband and two wonderful children navigating everyday life. She constantly tries to find time to write stories that parents and children can relate to. Her kids inspire her daily to reach for the stars and allow her to dream bigger like she used to as a child. "Mended" is Hillary's third published children's book.



MARK REMPEL is a retired high school principal who began his education career as a shop teacher. He is an active member of the British Columbia MDS Unit and currently serves as Secretary on the MDS Canada Board. Mark has volunteered in various roles on MDS projects in both Canada and the United States. He is also serving as the Disaster Response Coordinator for the MDS project in Lytton, BC. When not working on an MDS project, Mark enjoys spending time at his local golf course.



FRIDAY WORKSHOPS

CAPACITY BUILDING: GROWING THE MDS NETWORK

The breadth and depth of the MDS network is well-known to many of us. But is there more? This interactive workshop explores familiar and not-so-familiar practices and opportunities for growing volunteer capacity.

INSTILLING SERVICE AND COMPASSION IN YOUTH

A panel of leaders for children and youth will share from their experience ways to teach about service, compassion, and loving your neighbor in the context of disaster response and mitigation.

EVENT PLANNING

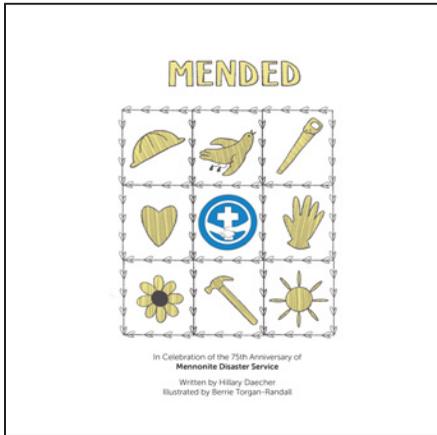
This is an interactive workshop where participants will learn best practices to coordinate engaging MDS events that guests will be excited to attend!

PARTNERING WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

Join us for a panel conversation with business leaders whose companies are involved with MDS in various ways. Hear stories of how and why they decided to partner with MDS. Learn ways that MDS volunteers can build connections with businesses in their local area.



SATURDAY ACTIVITIES



MENDED – A NEW MDS CHILDREN'S STORYBOOK

Join us for the debut of "Mended," a new children's storybook by author Hillary Daecher and illustrator Berrie Torgan-Randall. Follow Tyler and his stuffed bear, Leroy, as they find hope and healing with the help of MDS volunteers after a storm devastates their home. Enjoy a live reading of the book, meet Leroy, and take part in fun activities for kids. Books and stuffed bears will be available by donation, and the author and illustrator will be on hand for a book signing.

MDS STORYTELLING OPEN HOUSE

Hear from a variety of talented storytellers about the many memories made over MDS's 75-year history. Come prepared to share your own stories! We will also hear from editors Julie Kauffman and Susan Kim on their new MDS photo book, "Many Hands," about moments experienced by volunteers and disaster survivors over the past two decades. It's a celebration of simple acts of service that connect us to neighbors near and far.



SATURDAY ACTIVITIES

SEWING CIRCLE

Sewing groups and individuals across Canada and the U.S. are invited to join the MDS International Sewing Bee. Come together at Annual Celebration or join us from your hometown via Zoom to learn how you can spread the word about MDS with your sewing group. Then spend the afternoon sewing wall hangings or creating prayer shawls for MDS clients. We can't wait to see what you create!

HOUSE BUILD

MDS will begin building house panels indoors at the 4-H Hall (7001 W 21st St N) near Ridgepoint Church. Once completed, the panels will be transported to a family in need. Come and swing a hammer, even if it's just one nail!

STORM REUNIONS

Join us for a heartfelt reunion with fellow MDS volunteers. Come share memories over light refreshments. This is a wonderful opportunity to reconnect and exchange inspiring stories from your service with MDS. We look forward to celebrating our shared experiences together.

CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT

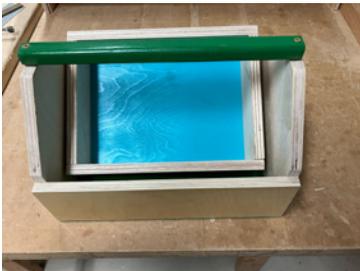
Discover how to use cornhole as a fun way to introduce people to MDS! Afterward, enjoy participating in a cornhole tournament.

VOLLEYBALL TOURNAMENT

Join us for a fun-filled volleyball tournament. Individuals and teams are welcome, with youth groups especially encouraged to participate. See you on the court!

SILENT AUCTION

Be sure to visit the foyer to view and bid on exciting items in our silent auction! We have a handmade clock, four cornhole sets with bags, 10 cutting boards, and five toolboxes made from scrap wood from the MDS Cabinet Shop. All proceeds will go to the MDS Cabinet Shop. If you would like to donate to this ministry, please visit the auction table to give your donation.





KANSAS UNIT THE CABINET SHOP

RESPOND + REBUILD + RESTORE

“ Coming together to produce these cabinets for homeowners who have lost their homes to disasters, it’s just a fulfilling experience for the volunteers. But another side benefit is the comradery that we have here. It’s been really great.”

CLEO KOOP
MDS KANSAS UNIT CHAIR / CABINET SHOP COORDINATOR



ABOUT MDS



MDS is rooted in Anabaptist values of peace, justice, and service, following Christ's example by serving others. Our goal is to restore hope to disaster survivors by organizing and empowering volunteers to repair and rebuild homes in the U.S. and Canada. We value faith in action, caring relationships, and mutual respect.

MDS volunteers collaborate with local congregations, other organizations, and government agencies to respond to disasters like floods, fires, tornados, and hurricanes, as well as helping vulnerable individuals who lack resources to recover.

We welcome everyone to make a difference through volunteering or giving—no experience required, just a willing heart. Learn more at mds.org or visit the MDS booth this weekend!



MDS BOARD

U.S. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Wayne Yoder, Chair
Aaron Groff, Vice Chair
Sally Unrau, Secretary
Niels Lichti, Treasurer
Ivan Shirk, Groffdale/Region 1
Woody Driver, Region 1
Fred Hershey, Region 2
Mitch Kingsley, Region 2
Phillip Bridgewater, Region 3
Lana Tieszen, Region 3
Sally Unrau, Region 4
Mary Yoder Holsopple, Region 4
Mannie Flaud, Old Order Amish
David Brubacher, MDS Canada

U.S. BOARD OF DELEGATES

Becca Cordes, MC USA
David Zarate, U.S. Mennonite Brethren
Don Rheinheimer, Member at Large
Elizabeth Troyer-Miller, Member at Large
Karen Shelly Smucker, Member at Large
Margarita Bloodworth, Member at Large
Moses Troyer, Member at Large
Paul Yoder, Beachy Amish
Robert Brenneman, New Order Amish
Scott Soden, Brethren Church
Sue Ewert, Member at Large
Dan Yoder, Member at Large

CANADA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Brubacher, Chair
Henry Warkentin, Vice Chair
Lester Weber, Treasurer
Mark Rempel, Secretary
Karen Sheil
John Sawatsky
Phil Wiebe
Ike Epp
Denis Sabourin
Murray Bunnett
Elvira Wiebe
Wayne Yoder

U.S. REGION OFFICERS

Stanley Jantzi, Region 1 (East Coast)
Rollie Ulrich, Region 2 (Midwest)
Jeff Koller, Region 3 (Plains States)
Michele WhiteEagle, Region 4 (West Coast)

**// I want to get
good sleep and cook
something decent in
my new house."**

LORIA ADAMS
TORNADO SURVIVOR
MOSS POINT, MISSISSIPPI



A new set of volunteer-built cabinets from Kansas completes Loria Adams' kitchen in Moss Point, Mississippi. For tornado survivors like her who lost everything, MDS volunteers mean a world of difference. She recalls, "When I saw my house was just a slab, I thought: Lord, what we gonna do? But now I know: God's got it."



Building HOPE



MDS volunteers served **52,027** days helping **513** households recover from disaster.

"If my mother could see me now."

MDS volunteers built Betty Holloway (pictured left) a new home in Moss Point, Mississippi, after a tornado ripped through the town in June 2023. When Betty moved in a year later, she was remembering her mother, who passed away before the storm.

"If she could see me now—my mother would be 109 years old," said Betty. Many of the damaged homes, like Betty's had been in families for generations.

Speaking of generations, many young people volunteered not only in Moss Point but across the U.S. and Canada. As Kari Weaver, 20, from Apple Creek, Ohio, volunteered in Moss Point, she said she simply really enjoyed serving others. "I had more fun here than I did on vacation," she said.

The impact MDS has on disaster survivors is often indescribable. After MDS helped Jade Shamen from British Columbia build a new home in the wake of a wildfire, Jade said: "It is a tremendous thing to have this happen. To have a house built for you, it's beyond words."

For all the volunteers who swung hammers, prayed, crafted wall hangings, cooked, or lended a listening ear,

THANK YOU!



6,486 volunteers from across Canada and the U.S. gave their time, skills and compassion to build

135 new homes, complete

287 repairs, finish

49 cleanups, and build

9 new bridges for households who experienced a disaster.

This volunteer labor is a value* of

**\$13.94 million USD/
\$19.23 million CAD**

All statistics from 8/1/2023 through 7/31/2024.
*Labor value based on a volunteer rate of \$33.49 USD/hour. (www.independentsector.org)



Respond. Rebuild. Restore.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The AC Committee would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Kansas Unit for making this event possible, and to Wayne Stucky, AC committee member, for his dedicated efforts in organizing all logistics. A special thank you to Ridgepoint Church for graciously providing their facilities, and to the Equipping Day Team for organizing Friday workshops. We are deeply grateful to our guest speakers and partner organizations for traveling to join us in this special celebration. Our thanks also go to the Tabor, Bethel, and Hesston choirs, along with their choir directors, for blessing us with their beautiful music. Much appreciation to Cleo Koop and the cabinet shop for providing the items for auction. We also thank all of you who worked behind the scenes, in ways large and small, to enable us to come together with such joy. As we gather over meals, share stories, and map our future journey together, your collective efforts are a light to all of us, and to disaster survivors—past, present, and future.

BOARD RECOGNITIONS

The following board members will be stepping down after many years of dedicated service to the MDS mission. We extend our deepest gratitude to them and their families for their commitment, leadership, and support throughout their time on the board. Their contributions have made a lasting impact, and we are thankful for their faithful service.

Wilmer Hoover, U.S. – 9 years

Ronn Frantz, U.S. – 8 years

Gerald Dyck, Canada – 6 years

Murray Bunnett, Canada – 6 years

Tim Schrag, U.S. – 5 years

Michele WhiteEagle, U.S. – 5 years

Stanley Jantzi, U.S. – 3 years

Thank you for your exceptional service and for helping shape the future of MDS. We are truly grateful for the legacy you leave behind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MDS is deeply grateful to Everence as primary sponsor of the event. Thank you for your continued generosity and for playing a key role in making this event a success!



Thank you to the MB Foundation for sponsoring the Friday evening Cake and Ice Cream Social.



We appreciate how Everence and MB Foundation help donors align their resources and values to support the mission of MDS.

ANNUAL CELEBRATION PLANNING COMMITTEE

Tim Schrag
Wayne Stucky
Brian Pipkin
Jeff Koller
Jesse Huxman

EQUIPPING DAY TEAM

Becky Gochnauer
Terry Zehr
Gabby Bomberger



Creative giving tools

Provided through Everence Charitable Services

Your generosity will help Mennonite Disaster Service through the powerful advantages of planned giving. Gift plans offer a way to increase your impact, carry out your charitable wishes, and receive possible tax advantages.

What can you give?

Cash is a common gift, but you can also donate many other assets, sometimes with significant tax advantages. These can include stocks, bonds, mutual funds, real estate, farm commodities, life insurance, IRAs and other retirement accounts, coins, toys, stamps and other collections.

What gifts help now?

Donor advised funds

You may donate cash or other assets (see above) to your own personal donor advised fund. The asset is usually sold and the money is then available for distribution to Mennonite Disaster Service at any time you wish. This tool is particularly advantageous for appreciated assets.

Family endowments

Individuals can give assets, including bequests, to establish a donor advised fund in your family name. It is an alternative to a private foundation. The family decides together about annual charitable distributions, and as a result, establishes a legacy of giving.

Charitable lead trusts

This arrangement provides current income from your gifted assets to Mennonite Disaster Service for a period of time but returns the assets to you or your heirs.

Brad Fair

Development Manager
Mennonite Disaster Service
583 Airport Rd
Lititz, PA 17543
Phone: 717-929-4163
bfair@mds.org

Working together

Gift plans are offered by Everence Charitable Services, administered by Everence Trust Company and/or Everence Foundation, a donor-advised foundation that has served individuals, congregations and institutions since 1952.

Dennis LeFevre, CFP®

Financial Consultant
Everence Financial®
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What gifts help later?

Charitable bequest plans

Indicate in your will, or by beneficiary designation, that a portion of your assets should be left as a bequest to Mennonite Disaster Service. A bequest may simplify your estate and reduce estate and inheritance taxes.

Life insurance

Give an existing policy or apply for a new one, of which Everence Foundation is both owner and beneficiary. Annual premiums can be paid through your donor advised fund and Mennonite Disaster Service will receive the life insurance proceeds upon your death.

Retained life interest

You give your home or farm while continuing to live on the property for your lifetime. You receive an immediate tax deduction, and the property is sold at your passing, with the proceeds distributed according to your charitable recommendations.

What gifts give back to you?

Gift annuities

You may give cash or securities and in return, you receive guaranteed lifetime annuity payments at a fixed rate. At the end of your lifetime, the remainder goes to Mennonite Disaster Service. Immediate or deferred annuities are available.

Charitable remainder trusts

A gift of real estate or securities is received into a trust, converted to cash and invested. You receive income from the trust, and the remainder goes to Mennonite Disaster Service after you pass away.

Securities offered through Concourse Financial Group Securities, Inc. (CFGS), Member FINRA/SIPC. Advisory services offered through Concourse Financial Group Advisors, a DBA for CFGS, a Registered Investment Advisor. Investments and other products are not NCUA or otherwise federally insured, may involve loss of principal and have no credit union guarantee.

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