

Reflecting news and views

The Reflector

a publication of the Illinois/Wisconsin District of the Church of the Brethren

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District Executive: Kevin Kessler

Moderator Notes

A Quote from Bob Logan: Finding leadership for a congregation or a District or a Denomination is the same problem for all. If the goals for any of these do not motivate the work of the potential leader, they will either refuse to lead or (far worse) they will accept the title but make little or no progress in the work, either from not knowing where they are going or (far far worse) not caring enough to do the serious work that is needed. When I last talked to Dr Logan, he had found leadership for the congregations of seven church plants and six of the seven were going to achieve their five year successes. Among church planters, five years of meeting as a worshipping body is a planters success and time for the replacement of the church planter with a ministering pastor. The American Baptists have about the same success rate. They should be expected to be just as successful as Dr. Logan since they use the same developmental rules. One of the young men who was planting congregations for the American Baptists wrote a book titled "Hand Grenades in Church Planting" It detailed the ten mistakes most likely to cause failure in a church planting situation. Three of the problem areas deal with aspects of the assignment of goals in the potential leadership. 1. Dont have any goals(Dont inform the leaders is the same thing)! 2. Interfere with the leader making the job harder! 3. Assign goals to a leader who will not have any sense of accomplishment for the work.

This is not going to be the longest notes for the year. We are in our busiest season, The gardens (now 84 4'x16' garden plots and one half acre of row crops.) The row cropping section is available for all the other special plantings. We have three Master Gardeners who split up the morning from eight until noon and three policemen that included the garden on their patrol. Starting at one in the afternoon and running until four in the afternoon We have indoor activities. The kitchen is in use as mostly K thru 12 students learn to bake and cook overseen by the newly retired pastry chef of one of the hotels here. In the rest of the basement books are read for the younger and

reading skills improvement books for the upper grades who need additional work. Various crafts and skills for vacationing students. My point: Each of the adult leaders are enthusiastic about what they are doing and will be back again tomorrow.

As for me and my house: I am continuing to learn to read and write Syriac Eastern Archaic (Jesus native language and, very importantly, the only language for most of the Nazritzii he taught. (Nazritzii = citizens of Nazareth and members of the synagogue there.) Remember that speaking in any language other than Syriac in the synagogue or anywhere else while talking about Jewish matters. (Aramaic is a subset of the dialects which include mostly versions of Syriac.) (Aramaic is not generally used by Linguists.)

Thank You for your prayers for Us. Think: If we as a church need to have things that are absolute truth, dont we need God's works (miracles) to testify? Saying that much, In the bible, does the production of a miracles in the presence of a teacher testify to the presence (God) as well. They are the evidence that God has His hand in what Jesus does. Bless you and all of yours.

—Paul Kohler

Annual Conference 2018

The Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren, 2018, is now officially in the books. Brethren from across the country along with contingents from our international partners met in Cincinnati, Ohio, for 5 days of spiritual nourishment and renewal, conversation and fellowship, and business and contemplation.

A significant component of our life together in the Church of the Brethren at present is the emphasis being given to a Compelling Vision. An entire morning of the business session was dedicated to begin exploring questions related to this process.

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DE Ponderings

MRI Theology

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

—Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

The Sunday morning preacher at Annual Conference, Leonard Sweet, provided a lesson in MRI theology which seemed fitting in the midst of the compelling vision process within which we find our denomination engaging over the next couple of years. Sweet envisioned the Church putting aside its emphasis in developing mission and vision statements to focus on the Great Commission. Within these two verses at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, and particularly in verse 19, Sweet points out that we have all we need in understanding what we are called to do. Our calling is threefold: missional, relational, and incarnational, or MRI for short.

We are called to go, not remain within the walls of our buildings trying to attract people to come. Going is missional, reaching out into the communities where we live.

In our going we are to make disciples, to enter into relationship. Sweet noted that we focus much time and energy today talking about and working to create leaders, when, instead, our calling is to create disciples. Another way to think about this, we are to be in relationship, with God and with others.

And then, third, all nations, or more accurately, all cultures, are invited to the table, into fellowship, into the way of God. This is the incarnational piece. No one is excluded from receiving the love of the God through Jesus the Christ. This supreme love is manifest (incarnated) within us to be shared freely and openly with all.

The above is an oversimplification of Dr. Sweet's sermon. For the complete sermon, follow this link: <https://livestream.com/livingstreamcob/AC2018/videos/177417549>. However, I have reflected on Dr. Sweet's sermon and imagine the distance this MRI theology might take us on our compelling vision journey. What if, instead of thinking about ways a

compelling vision will make us more attractational, we begin to consider the opportunities and options we have for reaching out to our communities, our zip codes? Instead of committing arduous hours of creating and finding leadership, we focus our energy on building relationships, connecting deeply with others, sharing about the wonder and grace of Jesus the Christ? And instead of fearing other cultures, we rather give tremendous effort to learn more about those cultures.

Sweet was careful to say that none of this will be of any value or purpose if we fail to center attention on Jesus. The Great Commission states that we are to hang on everything that Jesus commanded. What did Jesus teach? Go with these instructions in hand. How did Jesus relate to others, even those despised by his tribe? Make *disciples*, connections, friendships, just as Jesus did with the vulnerable, the underserved, the hated. And, then, journey with others at a level well beyond superficial, building trust rather than enmity between multiple cultures.

Imagine a compelling vision not as something new and creative but rather a tried and true commission given to us some two millennia ago. Imagine what this MRI theology will help us to understand about who we are and how we function and what our relationship is to the One who calls us. And, then, imagine the outcomes encouraged by goals and objectives tied directly to the tried and true. The possibilities seem endless AND exciting. What do you think?

District Conference 2018 at Cerro Gordo Church of the Brethren

Mark your calendars to the 2018 District Conference! The IL/WI District will hold its annual conference on November 3 and 4 at Cerro Gordo Church of the Brethren. The Moderator is Paul Kohler, of Champaign Church of the Brethren. There will be a pre-conference continuing education event for ministers from Thursday evening to Friday. Be on the lookout for more information!

**IL/WI District
Church of the
Brethren**

Save the Date!

**2019
District
Potluck**



**We invite you to
come and enjoy this
time of District fel-
lowship!**

**More details will be
forthcoming.**

- **4 Workshops**
 - Bible Study
 - Taize Worship
 - Footprints in our neighborhoods
 - A story of revitalization
- **Potluck Meal**
 - Two Worship Sessions
 - Time for Fellowship

**When: April 6, 2019,
from 9:30 am to
3:30 pm
Where: Franklin
Grove COB**

**Potluck Theme: “Moving Within Our Neigh-
borhoods”**

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the Brethren**

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Annual Conference 2018

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Delegates also voted to suspend business of the 2019 Annual Conference to give purposeful attention to the compelling vision process when delegates next meet together. In the interim until the big meeting in Greensboro, NC, in 2019, hearing/listening sessions will be held in each of the 24 districts through the U. S. and Puerto Rico. Information about sessions in the IL/WI District will be publicized within the next few weeks. Stay tuned.

Of special interest to the IL/WI District was the Unfinished Business item #3, Creation Care. This item began as a query from the Polo congregation in our district, approved by our district conference, and accepted by Annual Conference to be studied. The study committee presented its report to the delegate body and moved that the recommendations presented in their report be adopted. After 3 minor amendments to the recommendations, the motion passed. Two outcomes of this work is a page dedicated to creation care on the brethren.org website (www.brethren.org/creationcare) and the implementation of a creation care network. The

recommendations set forth in the Creation Care study are structured to meet on denominational and district, congregational, and individual levels. The suggestions are doable, attainable, and have potential for making a positive and lasting impact on all of creation.

The worship experiences were complete with spirited music and spirit-filled preaching. Living Parables video segments provided opportunity to witness the viability of the Church of the Brethren globally (this is a word according to Moderator Samuel Sarpiya). Worship and other moments of conference were captured on video and may be viewed at the following link: livestream.com/livestreamcob/AC2018.

Moderator Samuel Sarpiya led the conference superbly adding in moments of humor and times of prayer. He then handed over the gavel to Donita Keister who will serve as Moderator through Annual Conference 2019 under the theme of Proclaim Christ Reclaim Passion. Paul Munday was called to serve as Moderator Elect.

For more news, photos, and videos of Annual Conference 2018, visit the official Annual Conference webpage at: www.brethren.org/ac.

Kreston Lipscomb retires

After forty-five years of pastoral ministry Kreston Lipscomb will be retiring on July 15, 2018. A reception and meal will be held at the meetinghouse of Springfield First Church of the Brethren on Saturday, July 14, beginning at 3:30 p.m. A potluck meal begins at 5 p.m. Kreston will also preach Sunday morning of July 15th.

Kreston served as pastoral staff at several Chicago-area United Methodist congregations and also was a chaplain at Northern Illinois University in the mid-70s. He graduated from Bethany Theological Seminary in 1978. That same year, he was licensed to the ministry in the Church of the Brethren at the York Center congregation. Kreston was ordained by the Southern Ohio District Church of the Brethren in August of 1979. He then pastored the Lower Miami Church of the Brethren in Dayton, OH from 1979 to 1986.

Kreston began his work as pastor of the Springfield congregation on July 15, 1986, and is completing thirty-two years in that role. He served in numerous positions in our district, preached at Annual Conference, and worked with ecumenical and interfaith organizations in Springfield, Illinois.

In the midst of his pastoral journey he also married Elizabeth Scudder Lipscomb. They have three

daughters, with two grandchildren and a third on the way.

* * * * *

July 14, 2018 at First Church of the Brethren, 2115 Yale Blvd., Springfield, IL 62703

3:30 - 4 p.m. Informal gathering to visit with Kres, his family, and friends

4 p.m. - 5 p.m. Recognition of Kres's service

5 p.m. Dinner provided by the congregation

July 15, 2018 Kres's final day at the pulpit. Although there will be acknowledgement of his retirement, he says "Let worship be worship" on that day.

We would love to fill the church both days with those who love and wish to recognize Kres's service. We'll make room and food for everyone!

By the way, he also doesn't want to use the word program to describe the Saturday event. I'm going to be spending time with the online thesaurus!

Thank you so much for all of your support of First Church as we move forward.

Evelyn Taylor

District Members Attend the Church Planting Conference

The Church of the Brethren gathered this past spring for the Church Planting Conference entitled "New and Renew: Revitalize, Plant and Grow." (See picture.) Here are a few comments from some who were in attendance:

"I became more aware of how willing church planters are to risk their comfort to move into new neighborhoods that are not just down the street but rather on the opposite side of the country without any guarantee of success. Their willingness to follow a call in this manner is a great example to those of us in established congregations to risk our comfort to meet our neighbors next door and on the opposite side of our community." —Kevin Kessler, District Executive and Pastor of Canton Church of the Brethren

"It was great to be together with people and church planters from across the U.S. and to especially attend with so many members from the Illinois Wisconsin, District." —LaDonna Nkosi, Convening Pastor of The Gathering Chicago, TheGatheringChicago.org.

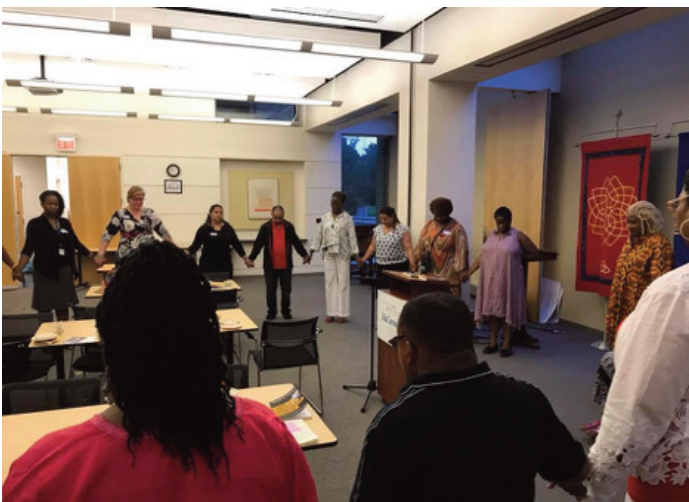
"Revitalize and Grow were the words that caught my attention! The workshop that helped me most was "Decoding Your Community" by Ryan Braught. For the last two years I had been going out into the community around our church, which is - Freeport Church of the Brethren in Illinois, to spread God's Word but met with little success. But this workshop really moved me into action and gave me insight and tools as to how we as a church can try and

successfully do God's work in our community. Now I have a vision and a plan to work with our Commissions and together we will go all out to fulfill the Great Commission." —Pastor Christina Singh, Freeport Church of the Brethren

"I still so admire our church planters who are willing to start churches that might not look or seem very traditional to any of us but are meeting the needs of showing Jesus to today's hurting world. As a pastor with several years of traditional church history, I am excited to be "moving into the neighborhood" to let others also share in the richness we have had all these years inside the church walls. I have learned all about how to lead the Polo COB through attending the planting conferences." —Leslie Lake, Pastor of Polo Church of the Brethren



The Gathering Chicago hosts #Refresh Leaders Gathering



The Gathering Chicago recently hosted an Anniversary Leaders #Refresh Gathering where Dr. Frank Thomas was a speaker. Our theme was Acts 3:19-20 "Times of Refreshing Come from the Presence of the Lord."

Thirty-six people from across Chicago, suburbs and Indiana attended sharing in prayer, encouragement and inspiration for the journey. Please be welcome to join our mailing list and connect in for upcoming events, prayer initiatives and gatherings. Know that The Gathering Chicago is praying with and for you, your church and ministry locally and globally. Contact: TheGatheringChicago.org or call 773-595-4048.

From *Newsline*

May 25, 2018

The Church of the Brethren e-mail news service, to subscribe go to cobnews@brethren.org

Conference business ranges from changes in delegate representation, to a new vision for mission, to creation care, and more

Delegates to this year's Annual Conference will address 11 new and unfinished items of business.

New business includes "Change in Delegate Representation at Annual Conference," "Vision for a Global Church of the Brethren," "Brethren Values Investing," "Polity for Electing Brethren Benefit Trust Board Directors," "Polity for Electing the District Representative to the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee."

Unfinished business includes "Vision of Ecumenism for the 21st Century," "Vitality and Viability," "Creation Care," "Compelling Vision," "Denominational Leadership Gathering," and various amendments to the denomination's bylaws.

New business:

Change in Delegate Representation at Annual Conference

Recommended by the denomination's Leadership Team (Conference officers, general secretary, and a representative of the Council of District Executives), these changes would increase the ratio of Annual Conference delegates to membership of congregations and districts. The ratio for congregations would increase from 1 delegate per 200 members to 1 per 100 members, and for districts from 1 per 5,000 members to 1 per 4,000 members. This would add five people to the Standing Committee of district delegates. The document explains, "Conversations around decreasing membership often lead us to hold at arm's length its realities and simply hope for 'better times.' The Leadership Team would rather actively walk with this current reality and seek ways to increase the vitality and effectiveness of Annual Conference." Go to www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business/NB/NB-5-Change-in-Delegate-Representation.pdf .

Vision for a Global Church of the Brethren

Adopted by the Mission and Ministry Board at the initiative of staff of Global Mission and Service, the document has been in process for some time. Those involved in its development include the Mission Advisory Committee and church leaders from

several countries. Impetus came from a disconnect between polity and practice. An Annual Conference mandate for a global church is present in previous statements, but those call for international districts rather than the independent denominations that have developed. The new vision is for a global Church of the Brethren "as a union of autonomous bodies, a spiritual community bound together by a common passion to be followers of Christ, a common New Testament theology of peace and service, and a common commitment to be in relationship with one another." Go to www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business/NB/NB-3-Vision-for-a-Global-Church-of-the-Brethren.pdf .

Brethren Values Investing

This change to the Articles of Organization of Brethren Benefit Trust proposes the term "Brethren Values Investing" in place of "Socially Responsible Investing." Go to www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business/NB/NB-3-Vision-for-a-Global-Church-of-the-Brethren.pdf .

Polity for Electing Brethren Benefit Trust Board Directors

This change to BBT Articles of Organization would require no more than two nominees for election of a director to the BBT board, replacing the current requirement for four nominees. Go to www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business/NB/NB-2-Polity-for-Electing-BBT-Board-Directors.pdf .

Polity for Electing the District Representative to the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee

To align polity with practice, the Leadership Team recommends changes regarding where the committee makes its recommendation about pastoral salaries and how the district executive member of the committee is chosen. Go to www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business/NB/NB-4-Polity-for-Electing-the-DE-Repr-to-the-PCBAC.pdf .

Unfinished business:

Vision of Ecumenism for the 21st Century

This proposed new statement guides the denomination's ecumenical witness in a time of increased religious diversity. It comes from a committee established as part of a recommendation

in 2012 from an Interchurch Relations Study Committee. It states, in part: “We will continue to build and nurture positive relationships with other faith communities. In doing so, we strengthen a history of service and missions, disaster response and relief ministries, and peace witness—nationally and globally. These relationships further our understanding of opportunities for mission and ministry, and they instill a cooperative readiness to act upon needs and areas of common concern when they arise.” Go to www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business/UB/UB-1-Vision-of-Ecumenism-for-the-21st-Century.pdf .

Vitality and Viability

This report originated with a query from Mid-Atlantic District on “Future District Structure.” The 2015 Conference returned the query but called a committee to study its concerns related to vitality and viability. The report takes into account the work of the Mission and Ministry Board and the 2017 Review and Evaluation Committee. The report aims to articulate “matters of the heart,” and calls the church to “a time of renewal of relationships with our Lord and Savior and with each other,” outlining structure for a “Year of Sabbath Rest and Renewal.” The document identifies differences regarding human sexuality and approaches to scripture. It makes some specific recommendations for dealing with differing perspectives in the church and recommends a process “to ensure that congregations who may leave do so in an accountable, amicable, and gracious process...avoiding litigation.” It concludes with a series of five Bible studies. Go to www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business/UB/UB-2-Vitality-and-Viability.pdf .

Creation Care

This report comes from a study committee elected in 2016 to respond to a query from Illinois and Wisconsin District. The report focuses “on the charge given to us by Annual Conference by examining the impact of the use of fossil fuels and contributions to climate change on our brothers and sisters around the world, and how Brethren can take action to reduce that impact.” Outcomes of the committee’s work include a website offering a series of resources related to energy efficiency, renewable energy, financial matters, faith and liturgical resources, and community action; and a commitment by the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy to coordinate a Brethren Creation Care Network. Detailed recommendations encourage Brethren “to integrate an understanding about the real cost of fossil fuels and climate change into every part of your life, as an individual, as a

member of a congregation, and as a member of the denomination.” Go to www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business/UB/UB-3-Creation-Care.pdf .

Compelling Vision

A report from the Leadership Team reviews ongoing work toward a “compelling vision” to guide the Church of the Brethren. The process begins at this year’s Conference, where a full business session and a portion of a second will be dedicated to engaging attendees, followed by further opportunities in districts throughout this year. The recommendation is “that all new business for the 2019 Annual Conference be set aside so that the delegate body and other Annual Conference participants can focus their attention on the essential conversations that will lead to discerning the compelling vision that Christ intends for the Church of the Brethren.” Go to www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business/UB/UB-4-Compelling-Vision.pdf .

Amendments to the Bylaws of the Church of the Brethren Inc.

The Mission and Ministry Board recommends bylaws changes in response to the 2017 Review and Evaluation Committee. The changes would affect the coordination of denominational envisioning; oversight of the Annual Conference office, director, and budget; membership of the Leadership Team; and some terminology. One amendment would update the name of Southern Ohio District to “Southern Ohio-Kentucky District.” Go to www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business/UB/UB-6-Amendments-to-the-Bylaws-of-the-Church-of-the-Brethren-Inc.pdf .

Denominational Leadership Gathering

Last year’s Review and Evaluation Committee recommended a gathering of denominational leadership every three to five years, and action was delayed for a year to do a feasibility study. The Program Feasibility Committee determined that current structures provide enough collaboration and that the cost is too high. The original recommendation returns to the floor this year for action. Go to www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business/UB/UB-7-Denominational-Leadership-Gathering.pdf .

Find the listing of business items at www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business .

(For a summary of Annual Conference 2018 actions, visit www.brethren.org/ac. Also see the Annual Conference article in this newsletter, a

perspective of Annual Conference from DE Kevin Kessler.)

-- In related news, **Madeline McKeever of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin begins June 19** as the 2018-19 BHLA intern. She graduated in 2017 from Judson University with a bachelor of arts degree in Interdisciplinary Communication and has worked for four years in the university's Benjamin P. Browne Library as an assistant in the reference department.

-- **"How old were you when you became an activist for social justice?"** asks the Dunker Punks Podcast this week. In this episode about a group of inspired elementary-schoolers raising money to help girls go to school through the Malala Fund, Sarah Ullom-Minnich interviews Lucy and Becky Bowman about their work on the project. Listen at http://bit.ly/DPP_Episode60 or subscribe on iTunes Podcast at http://bit.ly/DPP_iTunes.