



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

## From the District Moderator



In this column I would like to introduce myself to the district churches, and invite your responses to my comments—here or elsewhere.

Though born in Kansas, I grew up in Canada and have my earthly citizenship in two places. My pastoral career began in a Chicago

Mennonite church; I was quickly fired after three months, and then did an interim at another Chicago Mennonite church. During that interim, someone introduced me to a Church of the Brethren congregation on Chicago's west side, a congregation looking for a pastor. That First Church relation started in February 1982. Prior experience to pastoral work included teaching in Colombia, South America, prison ministry in Canada, and refugee work in southern Africa. I am married for 33 years, and we have a twenty-eight year old daughter.

First Church has been a wonderful experience—the congregation has blessed me for close to thirty years, teaching me much about faithful Christian living, making the Bible more and more relevant to people's daily struggles—I often wonder why I ended up at the congregation. It was never on my personal radar screen but God has blessed me through that relationship. For this I am immensely grateful to God and to the First Church community.

Next month I would like to say a little more about the theme that is evolving with me, from Ephesians 4.14-16—*Growing up into the head*.

*We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming.*

*But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each*

*part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.*

I would also like to say I am quite ready to visit any district congregation for a weekend, a Sunday, a midweek discussion, at your invitation. Chicago as a city may have a rough-and-tough bully reputation, but I would remind us all that in such a context, at First Church we seek to faithfully live out the gospel of God's peace, God's mercy and God's compassion. That would be my first contribution to any visit.

Orlando Redekopp  
Chicago First Church of the Brethren

## Building peace in the city of Rockford

In a recent memo from On Earth Peace, director Bob Gross writes: Rockford, Illinois, is a divided community. Like many cities, it is polarized by economic disparities and racial tensions which have existed for generations. These tensions threatened to explode recently, when an African-American teenager was killed by two white policemen, inside a church building.

Samuel Sarpiya, who is planting a new Church of the Brethren in Rockford, found himself in a unique position to help the community choose a peaceful way forward. "I'm looking to you for guidance," he said. "Can you provide the training and support we need to lead our community in responding nonviolently to this situation?"

On Earth Peace program director Matt Guynn developed a proposal for an intensive two-day training in strategic nonviolence, as taught and practiced by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., followed by continued organizing and leadership training. When Samuel took Matt's proposal to the broad-based Rockford Roundtable, the plan was adopted by leaders from many segments of the community. Gross went on to say that this was a

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# DE Ponderings

by Kevin Kessler, District Executive



The 2009 Annual Conference theme continues to reverberate in my mind. The scripture reference on which the theme is based reads, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God..."

(II Corinthians 5:17-18a, NRSV)

The potential emanating from this text is far reaching.

As I reflect on the words in II Corinthians, I am reminded of Jesus' statement in John, chapter 14, verse 12: "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these... (NRSV). Greater things are on the horizon than have been witnessed or experienced. Something new is awaiting. Important to remember, though, is that Christ is the center from which the new comes.

I'm captured by a sense of excitement when I put all of this in the context of the Illinois/Wisconsin District. I firmly trust that this district is grounded in Christ. The evidence is overwhelming. Congregations and individuals who are the district are committed to Christ-like ministry and living in numerous ways. Separately and collectively, congregations are engaged in supporting missions both locally and globally with monetary and human resources alike. Stories abound of groups of people being sent to other countries to build homes for families, to promote peace in highly conflicted areas, and to offer hope in the midst of despair. Additionally, news is shared about groups that travel to places within the borders of the United States to assist in rebuilding homes and lives where natural disasters have occurred. Individuals willingly and sacrificially give of their resources—monetarily, physically, emotionally, and in many other ways—to ensure the continuation of bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and proclaiming God's favor upon humankind. Not uncommon, as well, is the commitment congregations and individuals give to the work of this district as they share money, gifts, and time so that God may be glorified and the good of our neighbors may be accentuated.

With such Christ-likeness among us, how can we not be excited? We've witnessed and experienced the

new among us. Can we not anticipate even greater things happening among us? I can, and do!

With each succeeding year in this district, and with each new person who adds their gifts to the mix of servant-leaders among us, possibilities have become realities. In fairly recent history, a New Church Development Board was birthed, a District Deacons team was organized, budgets have been balanced, and good efforts have been sustained to strengthen relationships.

This sampling of the new among us happened because much effort was given to make it possible and to sustain it. Continuing such solid, strong efforts, as we move forward, will potentially generate even greater things.

Watch, see the new things among us as they continue to happen. And remember this: "Take care, brothers and sisters, that none of you may have an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partners of Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end. (Hebrews 3:12-14, NRSV)

## Rev. Don Flory has gone to be with the Lord

**Rev. Donald Flory**, a former pastor in this district, passed away on September 21, 2009. At the time of his death, Rev. Flory lived in Findlay, Ohio. His wife Leah survives, along with two daughters.

Rev. Flory retired as a United Methodist pastor but had maintained his ordination in the Church of the Brethren. He was a graduate of Manchester College and Bethany Theological Seminary, and he was an active member of the Fostoria Lake Plains Barbershop Chorus.

## Building peace in Rockford

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leap of faith for On Earth Peace knowing that the work would require several thousand dollars beyond their current budget.

On Earth Peace sought donations from the across the denomination to support this work in Rockford. The response has been significant. As a result, On Earth Peace, Samuel Sarpiya, and the Rockford community can begin a process of healing and efforts toward renewed non-violence in the city.



# Mountain mission trip brings rewards for Peoria Church of the Brethren

After many months of gathering clothing, toys, furniture and storing them all around the church, a group of dedicated people loaded four trucks, four trailers and a van to the top for our annual trip to Henderson Settlement and Red Bird Mission. Beautiful sunny weather stayed with us from loading until Sunday morning. Even though the work was demanding sometimes spirits were high preparing for the trip and meeting with the Methodists at Mt. Zion.

The day before loading trucks



*Photo by Joan Nelson*

people showed up to sort baby clothes and sanitize baby furniture and toys. The Peoria Church specialized in supplying the baby nursery at Henderson. That area runs out of supplies long before their other operations and they are truly grateful to receive the truck load we can bring them. Keep this in mind throughout the year and save all the baby items you can for next year.

The group was small this year with a total of only 9 vehicles and 19 people. But the energy and enthusiasm was the same as in years past. Those who travel to Eastern Kentucky receive far more than they leave after visiting the Mission work done by these people and volunteers. The people of Eastern Kentucky show their appreciation as well during our visits with their stories of how people are helped in this area of the US that suffers from few jobs, isolation and poverty.

Thanks to the volunteers who sort, load, travel and drive on the Peoria Church of the Brethren annual Mountain Mission Project.







## Illinois/Wisconsin District Office

**Wishing you CHRISTMAS joy**

**and a**

**blessed NEW YEAR!**

**Kevin Kessler**  
District Executive

**Beth Carpentier**  
Administration Assistant

*“Do not be afraid; for  
see—I am bringing you good  
news of great joy for all the  
people: to you is born this day  
in the city of David a Savior,  
who is the Messiah, the  
Lord.”*

*“Glory to God in the  
highest heaven, and on earth  
peace among those who he  
favors!”*

Luke 2:10b-11, 14 (NRSV)

## Christian Peacemaker Teams

*Barnraising* work progresses on the new CPT building. We have a new roof, new windows, sub-flooring on the first floor to list a few. Work progresses but we are also very aware of our December move in date. Much work still needs to be done. Is there a group from your church who will donate time? Do you know a retired carpenter who would be interested in helping? Or a handi-woman/man? Or do you have one day, several days, longer that you could come to work on the house. We need folks with carpentry, electrical and plumbing skills as well as those who can work with direction. As these folks work, we also need people who can clean up and do basic work. If you are coming from out of town, we can provide housing.

Work continues after December 1 so if now does not work—schedule a time after January 1. Please keep me informed as to when you or a group will help or anticipate helping. Peace work happens in many ways—help create a space where peace will vibrate through the walls into the larger world.

I look forward to working with you to plan your time to help.

In God's grace and peace, Joyce

Joyce M. Cassel, CPT House Volunteer Coordinator  
636 N. Harvey, Oak Park, IL 60632  
708-445-1998 home, 630-606-5670 cell

Seek justice, love mercy, walk humbly

# District Potluck



**May 1, 2010**

at

**Peoria Church of the Brethren**

**Worship • Workshops • Fellowship • Food**

**LEADERSHIP WILL INCLUDE**

**JONATHAN SHIVELY,**

**KEVIN KESSLER, ANNA LEE HISEY PIERSON,**

**DANA MCNEIL, AND OTHERS.**

Registration from 8:00 – 9:00 a.m.

Registration Fee – \$5.00

More registration information will follow later.

The day's schedule will be from 9:00 a.m. to 3:20 p.m.

Plan now to attend this exciting event. Bring your favorite potluck dish to enjoy with others from across the district. Drinks and table service will be provided. Share this information with others in your church. There will be something for everyone including pastors, music leaders, deacons, computer people, and those who simply want to learn, worship, and enjoy wonderful fellowship. So, bring a car load. More details about workshops coming later.

This one-day event is being planned by your **District Deacons**  
on behalf of the Leadership Team of the District.

**GREAT HARVEST CHURCH PLANTING**



**Pray that Jesus will be seen in unexpected ways and in unexpected places this Christmas.**     *Denominational Prayer Focus for December 2009*

**Consider adding our church planters to your Christmas shopping list.**

**Ware Family  
Christmas Wish List**



New & Used Coats  
(all sizes to give out in community)  
Gift toward Phone/Internet Service  
(\$100/month)  
Gift toward Sound System (\$1000)  
Gasoline Card (any amount)  
Gift toward Utilities (\$200/month)  
Gift toward Video Projector (\$600)  
Gift toward Bus Passes  
(to give out in community)



Herman and Betty Ware  
Richard Marez  
2734 W. 18<sup>th</sup> St. Floor 1  
Chicago, IL 60608



**Sarpiya Family  
Christmas Wish List**



Gasoline Card (any amount)  
Office Depot Gift Card  
Gift toward Rent (\$700/month)  
Gift toward Utilities (\$180/month)  
Gift toward Phone (\$90/month)  
Gift toward Internet (\$50/month)  
Wal-Mart Gift Card (food/clothing)  
Gifts toward Outreach

Samuel and Gretchen Sarpiya  
Anna, Ella Joy, Debora  
4924 Orchard Lane  
Rockford, IL 61101

**A Note Regarding Your Contribution**

Please send your gift to Jack Flores, NCDT Financial Secretary at 337 Chaparral Circle, Elgin, IL 60120. Please clearly indicate for which ministry and for which purpose you are making the contribution. If you are sending a gift card, and you wish to send it directly to the family, please notify the Financial Secretary so that he can send you a receipt for the charitable contribution for your taxes.

**NDCT comparison financial information for 2007, 2008, and Oct 2009 is now available at [www.ncdb.org](http://www.ncdb.org). Click on the Harvest Happenings link on the left. The reports are toward the bottom of the page.**

## Position Announcement – October 2, 2010

<b>Position</b>	Director of Financial Operations
<b>Description</b>	<p>Full-time salaried position based in Elgin, Ill., for a not-for-profit organization that provides Pension, Insurance, Foundation, and Credit Union services for 6,000 members and clients nationwide. This third-level management position reports to the Chief Financial Officer.</p> <p>Brethren Benefit Trust is an agency of the Church of the Brethren, a Protestant denomination founded in 1708 that includes 1,100 congregations, five colleges and one university, one seminary, and more than 20 affiliated retirement communities.</p>
<b>Function</b>	The primary responsibility is to direct the accounting operations of the Brethren Benefit Trust insuring an accurate reflection of its financial position through the reporting and interpretation of the financial information. In addition, the Director of Financial Operations is responsible to design, implement, and maintain systems as they affect financial reporting in order to provide management with timely and accurate information to achieve its objectives.
<b>Scope of Duties</b>	Primary duties are to direct all activities related to the supervision of the Finance staff, including priority setting of work assignments and performance evaluations. Serve as a resource to assist the various program directors and staff in planning, operating, and controlling the financial operations of each business as well as the entire operation. Direct the monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting for the accounting of all entities under the Brethren Benefit Trust. Direct the planning and budget activities and prepare timely management reports. Plan, direct, prepare, and file all required tax returns for BBT entities, as well as handle any required amendments and communication with the Internal Revenue Service.
<b>Travel</b>	The Director of Financial Operations travels to BBT Board meetings and to other BBT-related events as appropriate.
<b>Knowledge/ Experience</b>	Seeking candidates with undergraduate degrees in accounting, business, or related fields, along with advanced certifications or degrees, such as CPA or MBA. Candidates should have eight years' experience in finance, administration, and personnel supervision, preferably for not-for-profit organizations. Strong knowledge of accounting systems and in business planning is desired. Current and active membership in the Church of the Brethren is preferred; current and active membership in a faith community is required.
<b>Salary/ Benefits</b>	Competitive with Church Benefits Association agencies of comparable size and scope of services. A full benefits package is included.
<b>Applying</b>	As soon as possible, please send a letter of interest, resume, three references (one supervisor, one colleague, one friend), and salary-range expectation to Donna March at 1505 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120, or <a href="mailto:dmarch_bbt@brethren.org">dmarch_bbt@brethren.org</a> . For questions or clarification about the position, please call 847-622-3371. For more information about Brethren Benefit Trust, visit <a href="http://www.brethrenbenefittrust.org">www.brethrenbenefittrust.org</a> .