

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*



## Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year from the Illinois-Wisconsin District office and Leadership Team.

**Kevin Kessler**, District Executive

**Beth Carpentier**, Administrative Assistant

**Bob Champlin**, LT Chairman

**Jim Lehman**, V. Chair

**Carol Novak**

**Bill Pocklington**

**Greg Beach**

**Mandy Rahn**

**Mark Flory Steury**, Moderator

**Stan Rodabaugh**, Moderator Elect

**Gil Crosby**, Secretary

# DE PONDERINGS by Kevin Kessler



## Idols and Quick Fixes

I've recently been mulling over in my mind thoughts about idols and quick fixes, mainly because of what I've been reading in a book entitled *The Sacred Wilderness of Pastoral*

*Ministry*, which focuses on scriptural narratives about John the Baptist. The author of this work is David Rohrer, teaching pastor of the University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, WA.

Rohrer reveals some interesting insights about the audiences that John the Baptist addressed. Some members of John's audience Rohrer describes as persons interested in finding redemption through nothing more than ritual forgiveness rather than inward transformation, the latter being evidenced by outward actions congruent with the inner change. "Sin management through religious washings and purification rituals" is the definition Rohrer applies to the actions in which this sector of John's audience is engaged.

The employed implication is that religious practices were considered to be the quick fix for sins. Candidly speaking, ritualistic religion had become for some the solution to the problem of sin, a substitution for the reality that truly could absolve sin, namely God. Anything standing in for God, we commonly agree, is an idol.

Infrequently, if ever, (here I may be speaking more from my personal understanding) do we associate John the Baptist's prophetic voice with denouncing idolatry. Most notably, we remember John making the path straight in preparation for the coming Christ, pointing toward the One whose sandals he was not worthy to tie, the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. John's greatest passion was in revealing the Christ, the one who had all power and authority to remove sin and administer grace. Albeit his passion, John also conveys that obstacles obscuring vision, idols, need to be named and brought to light in order for the ultimate solution to ever have a chance of coming into view.

Thus, the question for me personally, which begs a response, is, what are the idols obscuring our vision today? Will responses to this question seem more judgmental than prophetic? Maybe, but no response approves an inadequate status quo.

Therefore, I'll attempt a response by posing additional questions, reducing the risk of sounding like an absolutist, while keeping open the door for

meaningful conversation. How are contemporary social issues, producing more polarizing questions than unifying solutions, which exact our time and energy, blurring our vision like a translucent window treatment and causing us to miss the fullness of Christ's redemptive power for our lives and this world? In what ways are we expecting quick fixes to the complexities emerging from diverse understandings of these issues? Should quick fixes be the goal or would we be better served by "...looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith..."? (Heb. 12:2a, NRSV) Is it feasible to believe while focusing on Jesus that an inward transformation is possible? And from internal change, can there emerge outward action, revealing to all who observe us, that we have something more in common that unites us than anything that divides us?

Religious rituals and social issues are not unimportant. However, their effectiveness is diminished if or when they become idols destined for use as redemptive quick fixes. Therefore, during moments when it's tempting to idolize rituals and issues, then giving ear to prophetic voices calling us to engage in times of renewing focus seems reasonably beneficial.



## ENGAGE: Spring Campus Visit Day

Bethany Seminary  
Richmond, Indiana  
Friday, March 1, 2012

Come check out the campus through the eyes of a student. Or suggest to those in your church who have a unique call to ministry to ENGAGE in a day of learning and experiencing what is happening at Bethany. Personal visit days can also be arranged if desired.

# District Conference 2012



The theme of the Conference chosen by Moderator Fletcher Farrar was “The Courage of Daniel” and represented by the artwork of Kay Guyer.

The conference began Friday evening with a great Hymn Sing led by Jonathan Shively, Exec. Dir. of Congregational Life Ministries. The Friday evening service began with Moderator, Fletcher Farrar capsulizing the 12 Chapters of Daniel. The featured speaker for the Evening was Dan Ulrich,



New Testament Professor at Bethany. He spoke from Daniel 6, “Courage to Continue, Courage to Change”. He told of how Daniel told the truth to the King and was rewarded. Daniel’s courage also got him thrown into the Lion’s den but was saved by His God. We were encouraged to “Go with the courage of Daniel.



Saturday found 64 delegates from Churches of the District gathered to carry on the business of Illinois-Wisconsin. The meeting went

smoothly under the direction of Moderator, Fletcher Farrar, Moderator Elect, Mark Flory-Steury and Clerk Bill Williams. The parliamentary



was Carol Kussart. Three Churches shared their ministries with the Conference, York Center Mt. Morris, and Champagne on “Bridging Cultural Divides”, all three churches work in their communities bringing all people together to work in harmony with shared goals.

Two delegates arrived from Stanley, Wisconsin Church of the Brethren after an 8 hour journey to represent their church at District Conference. Greg and Laurie Natzke were welcomed as the only delegates from Wisconsin.

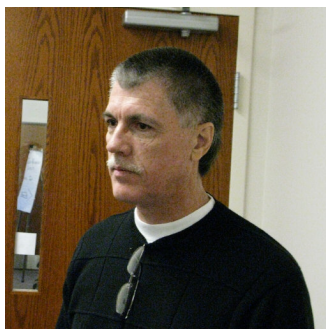


People wearing the purple shirts represented our host the Virden Church of the Brethren. They checked us in, served snacks and were generally available to answer questions and give directions.

Pastor Rick Koch from the Dutchtown Church presided over the silent auction and was the successful auctioneer at the live auction of the donated quilts and a cedar chest from District Churches. Proceeds from the auctions totaled \$2,865.







Our District Executive gave his report and spoke on “Who are the people Jesus misses most”? Those are the people who are missing not the lost. Several delegates commended Kevin for the excellent work he provides for the District. Churches celebrated “Pastor Appreciation Month” in October but we have extended it further. Send Kevin a card expressing your appreciation for his Ministry.

Saturday evening came to a close with the performance of a Brethren group called Mutual Kumquat, four very talented gentlemen who brought us those great songs, “Song for the Veggies” and “Let’s Get Fruity”. Their 1 ½ hour show kept the audience’s attention especially for Jacob Jolliff’s virtuoso performance on the Mandolin. It was an excellent end to a day busy with business.



Sunday moved the conference to Pleasant Hill and the Virden Church. Virden celebrates 100 years in service to our Lord.



A wonderful feature of the Sunday service was the painting skills and testimony of Andy Raines who painted pictures of Jesus in a matter of minutes while the choir sang. Andy shared with us his calling by God to be a “Passion painter”. He told God he didn’t know how to paint, God said, “Don’t worry, I know how.”

Outgoing Moderator, Fletcher Farrar asked the District and members to reach out to those Churches that have a loose affiliation to the District. We need to approach them with Brethren love and to let them feel a part of Brethren District. Incoming Moderator Mark Flory-Steury shared his theme and vision for the coming year, “Renewal”. He told us how all the “Re” words revitalization, reform, reconstitute, restructure, and resurrection mean to make new again.



The guest speaker Sunday Morning came to us from Chicago First Church of the Brethren, Pastor Benjamin Reynolds. Pastor Reynolds topic revolved around Daniel 3 and the story of the Lion’s Den and the Fiery Furnace. He spoke of the three teenagers who refused to bow to the king and for the Courage of their convictions were thrown into the fiery furnace. God stepped in, saved them, and converted a King. We too have to stand up for our rights against racism and bigotry. We need to stand apart

from our culture and stand up for our convictions. God is with us as he was with those three boys in the fiery furnace.

Our new Moderator, Mark Flory-Steury and Moderator Elect, Stan Rodabaugh were commissioned by District Exec. Kevin Kessler.



## District Conference Auction Results



Thank you once again to everyone who donated any item to this year's Silent and Live Auctions while at District Conference at Lake Williamson Retreat Center. We had 92 items for the

Silent Auction & 13 items that we auctioned off at the live auction. I also want to thank each and everyone of you bidders, whether you got the item you wanted or not. Bidding is the key! More thank you's go out also to the Staff at Lake Williamson & the Virden Church for getting whatever I needed. To Greg, Brian, Lisa & Jim who helped me with the live auction. And to my wife Beckie who did more than you will ever know! This year the Silent Auction brought in **\$1,341.75**. The live Auction raised **\$1,485.00**. The total amount raised was **\$2,865.00**. Yes the first two numbers do not equal the third. A few folks rounded up the amount they owed.

On behalf of my wife Beckie and I, we enjoyed very much helping out the District by running these auctions once again. Hopefully next year's auctions will be just as fruitful and fun!

Pastor Rick Koch, Dutchtown Church

## District Youth Visit Pleasant Hill Village



The Church of the Brethren Illinois / Wisconsin District Youth visited Pleasant Hill Village Healthcare Saturday, Nov. 3 while attending District Conference. They created a piece of art that reflected on the conference theme of "Give Us the Courage of Daniel" from the Bible story of Daniel in the Lion's Den. They also learned about Alzheimer's and Dementia Care while touring C Hall. The residents enjoyed meeting with them.

## Pastor's Mother Crochets Crosses For District Conference



Pastor David Barnett's mother, Patricia Barnett wanted to do something to help the Virden Church celebrate their 100th anniversary at District Conference so she crocheted over 200 of these crosses to give out at the Lake Williamson District Conference.

Those that attended the conference could show their appreciation by sending Mrs. Barnett a thank you note of appreciation at the following address: Mrs. Patricia Barnett, 4800 Anderson Road, Newburgh, IN 47630

## Camp Emmanuel looking toward 2013

We really are looking forward to 2013 with excitement about planning our special year. We have contacted Studio Screens with a design ready for t-shirts, book bags and possibly laundry bags. We think that we will have a store available for anyone wanting to purchase additional items in addition to what they receive when attending camp. This could make some extra money to take care of the costs, with maybe a little left over.

We pray that Family Camp will get outside groups to come in on Saturday for a Gospel and Song Fest. Saturday works better for entertaining groups who need to be in their own church on Sunday.

We plan for special days throughout next year for outside groups to come in. Some examples are trivia night, swim day, ping pong tournament, bag lunch and hiking day at Camp Emmanuel, fishing tournament, Master Gardener day, and more. If you have other ideas, now is the time to let us know what you would like to see at Camp Emmanuel.

Randy works on the handicap docks in his free time and it is almost lake ready!!!! We will just need a few good men :- ) to help him get it in place. Sink or float? WE HOPE FLOAT!!!!

Hope you are all doing well and let's keep in touch with ideas and comments.

Blessings from JoEllen and Randy Doyle, Camp Managers.



# Disaster Relief Trip For the District of Illinois/Wisconsin



**When:** February 9th – February 17th

**Where:** Prattsville, New York

**Who can go:** All Adults who want to serve  
Youth 16 & up with Parental consent

**Housing:** Bunk Beds, Shared Bathrooms  
We will be staying at the Huntsville Christian  
Training Center

**Food:** Breakfast and Dinner @ House  
Lunch on the job site

**What would we do:** Depends on Job Skills  
Inside & Outside work to be done

**How many can go:** up to 15  
We have 8 solid people committed

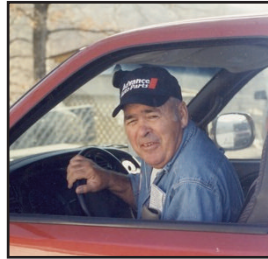
**Cost:** Expenses to and from New York  
Spending money while there  
Dutchtown Church has \$400.00 for trip

**When do we need to know:** By January 15th  
Please let me know as soon as possible

**Contact:** Rick Koch, call 815-499-3012 or e-mail  
revrick-dutchtown@jcwifi.com

I know that you all are very busy with your jobs and with all of the preparations for Christmas. But please be thinking about participating in our upcoming Disaster Relief trip. I need to begin making travel plans soon. If you cannot go and would still like to help with a financial contribution, those are needed as well. Simply send that money to me. Looking forward to hearing from you real soon! Rick Koch

# Peoria Church Mountain Mission Trip Dedicated to Jim Harshbarger



This Year's (2012) Mountain Mission trip was missing a big supporter, organizer, and collector of donations. Jim Harshbarger suddenly passed away the afternoon after loading his truck for the trip.

For many years Jim promoted the trip to the congregation and spent many hours driving around the area collecting donations. He was always available to go where someone had furniture, appliances, household items and clothing to contribute to the annual trip to Missions in Eastern Kentucky. Jim looked forward to making the trip to Henderson Settlement, Red Bird Mission and Jackson Mission many times twice a year. There was a noticeable empty space in the caravan this year. A ceremony was held in the parking lot dedicating this trip in memory of HIS faithful servant, Jim Harshbarger.



Even though Jim was missing his son, David, and grandsons Dylan and Randy took over the helm of Jim's GMC/Ford truck and trailer to make the trip in his Dad's memory. David joined fourteen other mission adventurers making the 610 mile trip to the mountains of Eastern Kentucky where poverty exists on a major scale.

# Hurricane Sandy Update

Children's Disaster Services works in New Jersey, New York



*We're rebuilding New Jersey! is the title that Children's Disaster Services volunteer Connie Rutt suggests for this picture. CDS is onsite in two shelters in New Jersey and New York, caring for children affected by Hurricane Sandy. Through creative play and the loving presence of CDS volunteers, children and their families receive help to deal with the emotional toll.*

Brethren Disaster Ministries and ecumenical partner Church World Service (CWS) have issued updates on their responses to the unfolding disaster and continuing human needs in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. Church members who are considering donating to the response are encouraged to give through the Emergency Disaster Fund ([www.brethren.org/edf](http://www.brethren.org/edf)) in support of the Brethren response including the work of Children's Disaster Services ([www.brethren.org/cds](http://www.brethren.org/cds)).

## Twenty childcare volunteers are onsite

"The Children's Disaster Services response is progressing, though slowly, in this midst of this huge and devastating disaster," reports Roy Winter, associate executive director of Global Mission and Service and Brethren Disaster Ministries.

Children's Disaster Services (CDS) is currently working in two shelters, one in New Jersey and one in New York. Twenty CDS volunteers are on site in New Jersey and New York, or will be in the next 24 hours. CDS' trained and certified volunteers set

up childcare facilities in shelters and other sites in cooperation with FEMA and the Red Cross, providing care for children and families.

"Children are so often forgotten" in the midst of disaster, Winter says, commenting that Children's Disaster Services is really the church's early response team. "We go in as so often Brethren do, to speak for the forgotten."

*Reprinted from Newline – Church of the Brethren e-mail service*

## Hurricane Sandy Relief Efforts



According to a November 2 Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) report by Jane Yount, "As the relief effort following Hurricane Sandy gets underway, BDM is encouraging Brethren to donate to the Emergency Disaster

Fund to support the BDM response, including deployment of Children's Disaster Service volunteers." (Read this and other reports in full at [www.brethren.org/bdm/updates](http://www.brethren.org/bdm/updates).)

"Donors should keep in mind the most effective and useful donation is a financial contribution," said Zach Wolgemuth, associate director of Brethren Disaster Ministries. He noted, however, that "efforts to assemble Church World Service Clean-up Buckets are extremely important and encouraged."

Speaking of Church World Service, a special edition of Newline reported yesterday that shipments of relief materials worth over \$600,000 are being distributed from the Brethren Service Center on behalf of CWS. You can read more on this story at [www.brethren.org/news](http://www.brethren.org/news).

If you would like to support Brethren Disaster Ministries, visit [www.brethren.org/edf](http://www.brethren.org/edf), or make checks payable to Emergency Disaster Fund and mail to Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Thank you!



# Cerro Gordo welcomes new pastor



The Cerro Gordo Church of the Brethren is pleased to welcome a new pastor. Tim Laird and his wife Betty Sue come from New

Enterprise, PA. They moved here in the midst of Hurricane Sandy which, thankfully, was not too bad in southern Pennsylvania where they have come from.

Tim is retired from the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and now, having completed the training necessary to become ordained through the Susquehanna Valley Satellite, a branch of Bethany Theological Seminary, is in a full time pastorate here. Betty Sue has worked in a chiropractic office for many years but plans to help Tim in his ministry in Cerro Gordo.

They have 2 grown sons and 2 grandchildren that they left behind in Pennsylvania.

Both Tim and Betty Sue have worked with youth. Tim enjoys bicycling, racquetball, disc golf, archery,

and hunting. Betty Sue likes to walk, read, and spoil her dogs Buddy and Muffy. She wants to learn to play the piano and looks forward to being involved with the church. Both enjoy being out and about in the community and are eager to meet Cerro Gordo residents. They are very personable and will be an asset to our congregation.

Tim's first Sunday preaching was November 4.

## Advent Help from Bethany



To our Friends in ministry,  
On behalf of the faculty at Bethany Seminary, I encourage you to visit the Bethany website in your Advent planning. Faculty

members are providing four devotionals for each week in Advent based on the lectionary texts. The first week's devotionals are posted at [www.bethanyseminary.edu/resources/devotionals](http://www.bethanyseminary.edu/resources/devotionals). The remaining week's offerings will be posted soon.

We hope they provide inspiration and encouragement this Christmas season. Thank you,

Jenny Williams, Director of Communications

## Bethany Trip to Israel - 2013



**Jesus said, "Follow me!" Come and explore his invitation more deeply in the Holy Land!**

**Dan Ulrich**, professor of New Testament studies at Bethany Seminary, and **Marilyn Lerch**, director of the TRIM program for the Brethren Academy of Ministerial Leadership, are leading an Academy travel course to Israel in **June 2013** and invite Bethany alumni/ae and other interested travelers to join them. It is an excellent opportunity to earn CEU credits.

Along the way, Dan and Marilyn will lend their expertise to that of the professional guides with Educational Opportunities, an organization that has taken groups to the Holy Land for years. From Bethlehem to Nazareth, the Dead Sea to the Sea of Galilee, the Mount of Olives to the place where it is said Jesus was crucified, the group will tour the sites that are part of the faith story for Christians around the world. Hear the scriptures read on location and get a glimpse of the Middle East today with its vibrant population and fascinating culture.

A complete travel brochure is available on the Bethany website at [www.bethanyseminary.edu/sites/default/files/docs/academy/Holy\\_Land\\_Trip\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.bethanyseminary.edu/sites/default/files/docs/academy/Holy_Land_Trip_Brochure.pdf). For full trip details, including passport deadline information, go to [www.bethanyseminary.edu/sites/default/files/docs/advancement/HolyLand\\_AlumInfo.pdf](http://www.bethanyseminary.edu/sites/default/files/docs/advancement/HolyLand_AlumInfo.pdf).



# 2012 Calendar

## DECEMBER

- 1 .....Ministerial Leadership Dev. Team, TBA
- 2 .....First Sunday of Advent
- 9 .....First Day of Chanukah/Hanukkah
- 25 .....Christmas Day
- 31 .....New Year's Eve



## SAVE THESE DATES

### Fifth Brethren World Assembly

A worldwide gathering of Brethren groups descended from Alexander Mack, Schwarzenau, Germany, 1708

Theme: "Brethren Spirituality:  
How Brethren Conceive of and  
Practice the Spiritual Life"

Dayton, Ohio  
(Brookville) Area

- † Morning Plenary Sessions
- † Workshops/Panel Discussions
- † Tours of Sites of Brethren Interest
- † Evening Worship Services



July 11-14, 2013

Watch for registration information:  
[www.brethrenencyclopedia.org](http://www.brethrenencyclopedia.org)  
[www.brethrenheritagecenter.org](http://www.brethrenheritagecenter.org)

## Lands of the Bible Study Tour in January, 2014

In January 2014, Bridgewater College chaplain Dr. Robbie Miller will again lead a 15 day study tour of Israel/Palestine as part of his **Lands of the Bible** interterm course. The tour, conducted by the University of the Holy Land in Jerusalem [www.uhl.ac/en/](http://www.uhl.ac/en/), will visit sites of biblical and religious importance including Jerusalem, Jericho, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Capernaum, Caesarea, Masada, Qumran, Shechem, Samaria and many more. The tentative itinerary is attached. The Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center will grant 8 CEUs for the study tour. Pastors and members of the Illinois and Wisconsin District are welcome to participate in the tour as space permits. Inquiries should be directed to Robbie Miller at [rmiller@bridgewater.edu](mailto:rmiller@bridgewater.edu) or at 540-828-5383.



## Exploring Your Call

Bethany Seminary  
June 14 - 24, 2013

EYC invites rising juniors and seniors in high school to experience hands-on learning and exploration of where their lives' passions meet God's great purpose. This grant-funded program creates space for discernment and community building amidst the myriad of competing interests for Brethren youth. Registration is already open, so encourage youth in your congregation or district to apply for this amazing opportunity.

## Annual Conference 2013

You're invited...

...To Annual Conference in Charlotte, NC

June 29 through July 3, 2013!

Find more information and a new promotional video at

[www.brethren.org/ac](http://www.brethren.org/ac)