



Reflecting news and views

The Reflector

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

January 2013 / Volume 10 / Issue 1

District Executive: Kevin Kessler

Notes from the Moderator: Mark Flory Steury



“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.”
Romans 12:2

“Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored; renew our days as of old.” Lamentations 5:21

Renew. It’s probably safe to say that, as individuals and as congregations, we all long to be renewed. The Christian life is an ongoing journey. We begin our Christian pilgrimage at our baptism. Sometimes in our journey we feel energized and inspired. Other times we feel tired and unresponsive to God’s Spirit. As Christians, our constant prayer is to be renewed.

Spiritual care and growth takes effort. Just as our lawns and gardens need attention and nurture to look healthy, so too, we need to give time to our

spiritual well-being. What is it that nurtures our spirits as Christians? What is it that helps us to feel renewed as congregations?

As I have visited churches for many years, I have heard the frustrations that many congregations feel. Why is our congregation not growing? Why isn’t our sanctuary full on Sunday? Why don’t things work like they used to? What happened to the lively congregation we used to be?

In the coming months I’d like for us to focus as a district on the word **“renew”**. How can we as individuals, congregation and the district be renewed? What does it mean for us to “Be transformed by the renewing of our minds?”

Let’s pray for God’s renewal among us—in our personal lives, in our congregations, within our district. May our prayer be the prayer of the writer of Lamentations, “Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored; renew our days as of old.”

Small Congregation Seminar



Are you a leader in a small congregation? Are you looking for a way to gather with others for a time of encouragement? If so, **“Strengthening Your Small Congregation”** may be just what you need.

This one-day seminar will be held Sat., April 13, at Camp Alexander Mack in Milford, IN

Keynote speaker Margaret Marcuson will present a conversation about *“Leaders Who Last: Sustaining Yourself in Small Church Ministry,”* and several workshops will be held including *“Worship in Your Own Voice,” “Money and Your Ministry,”* and *“The Pastoral Care Team.”*

This unique event was inspired by two pastors with a strong desire to support other leaders in small congregations. You can read their whole story in the January 10 edition of Newsline.

To find out more about this important and uplifting event, visit www.brethren.org/smallchurch, or e-mail congregationallife@brethren.org or call 800-323-8039 ext. 303.

“Strengthening Your Small Congregation” is sponsored in part by Congregational Life Ministries. To support the life-changing work of these ministries visit www.brethren.org/give.

Reprinted from E-Brethren Newsline.

DE PONDERINGS by Kevin Kessler



For the first article I'm submitting to the District Newsletter in 2013, I thought I'd share a few resources that I find either enlightening or helpful, or both. It is known that I like to read. Out of the 40 plus books I read last year, here are the 5 top picks.

Planting Churches in the 21st Century by Stuart Murray (Herald Press, 2010): I think that church planting will have more of an effect on church revitalization than the inverse. This book supports my thinking.

With: Reimagining the Way You Relate to God by Skye Jethani (Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2011): Jethani's thesis is stop living your life under, over, from and for God and start living in communion with God.

Grace Goes to Prison by Melanie G. Snyder (Brethren Press, 2009): A wonderful story about Grace Marie Fortney Hamilton's work in the prison system, revealing the importance of prison ministry and how it makes a difference in the lives of those who are incarcerated.

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens (Halcyon Press): I try to read at least one classic a year. I had the opportunity to read this book with a clergy book club.

Team of Rivals by Doris Kearns Goodwin (Simon and Schuster, 2005): A look at why Abraham Lincoln chose cabinet members who came from different political parties, and how those differences worked to the advantage of moving the country forward during a very tumultuous time.

Some internet resources that I enjoy and find helpful are:

Leading Ideas, an email resource from Lewis Center for Church Leadership (www.churchleadership.com) that has a variety of good articles on leadership, specifically geared for the church.

Alban Weekly, another email resource that comes from the Alban Institute (www.alban.org). These articles are very often helpful for understanding ways to navigate in the changing church culture.

TED.com (www.ted.com) is a place to find wonderful video presentations on a large variety of subjects and pertinent topics. Many are intellectually invigorating, some humorous, others inspirational. This is one of my favorite Internet sites to visit.

The Text This Week (www.textweek.com) is a helpful site with a wide range of resources based on the common lectionary. I use this site extensively when preparing for sermons and worship.

Periodicals:

Christian Century is one I enjoy, as it keeps up on what is happening in ecumenical circles, and provides articles on a variety of topics. Plus, two issues a year recommend books to read. My favorite issues!

And last but not least, two good friends:

Barnes and Noble
Amazon

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.)

"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.

If you would like to support Brethren Disaster Ministries, visit 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!**

DISTRICT POTLUCK

SAVE THE DATE!

Who: Sponsored by your District Deacons

What: District Potluck

Where: Peoria 1st Church of the Brethren

When: April 27, 2013

Why: To pass on information for us to use in the life of our congregations and to enjoy a wonderful day of fellowship and fun!



The District Deacons are working hard at obtaining speakers and workshops that are relevant to your life and to the life of each congregation.

Here is a sample of the workshops that will be presented:

'Disaster Relief Work 101 – Dollars are Delightful, but Bodies are Better!'

An opportunity for you to learn the basics about Disaster Relief Ministry, to hear stories from veteran Disaster Relief workers from their past trips and to consider if God is calling you to this ministry.

Dennis Webb has agreed to do sessions on multiculturalism and David Doubt will provide deacon training.

Please watch future updates for more workshops and registration information.

Don't just THINK about joining us for our next district potluck...

Save the date today!

February Disaster Relief Project:

It is now less than a month away when our District is responsible for manning the Disaster Relief site in Prattville, New York. Those dates that we will be actually working are February 11-15, but because of the distance it will take two days to go out and to come back. I know that this is a big commitment to be gone for nine days, but this is a great opportunity for you to minister to those in need in the wake of such a terrible disaster. We still have room for you! If you are interested please e-mail me at revrick-dutchtown@jcwifi.com or call me at 815-499-3012. ALL helpers are welcome. So that I can complete the travel plans I need to cut-off registration on February 1st. Looking forward to hearing from you. Pastor Rick Koch Dutchtown Church

There has been one small change in our Disaster relief Trip that will make our trip little bit shorter. We will need to be out of the Retreat Center we are staying at on Friday morning. We can work a half day and then head out or pack up on Friday morning and leave by 9:00 or so. Either way we will now be home on Saturday night. Once again please get back to me soon. Pastor Rick Koch

Pleasant Hill Village Seeks Board Member



Pleasant Hill Village in Girard IL, is currently seeking a Brethren board member to serve an unexpired term until November 2014. If you, or anyone you know may be interested, please contact Allen Krall at (217) 585- 8599 or Kendall Cole at (217) 965- 4039.

*Molly Hannon 217-627-2181
Marketing Director, Pleasant Hill Village
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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
www.brethrenheritagecenter.org



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.

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
For full trip details, including passport deadline information, go to www.bethanyseminary.edu/sites/default/files/docs/advancement/HolyLand_AlumInfo.pdf

Remembering Marvin W. Thill

The Journal-Standard

Posted Dec 26, 2012 @ 05:08 PM

Marvin W. Thill, age 78 of Stockton, IL, died Wednesday, December 19, 2012 at home. He was born April 25, 1934, the son of William and Ruth (Bruss) Thill. He was a 1952 graduate of Stockton High School, and later graduated from the Olivet Nazarene University. Marvin married Betty Folkens on August 12, 1954 in Stockton.

Marvin served as pastor at the Church of the Brethren in Plattsburg, MO; Adel, IA; Wenatchee, WA; Enders, NE; and Warrensburg, MO. He retired to the Stockton area in 1997 and served as pastor in the Freeport area. He enjoyed raising sheep and back packing in the Cascade Mountains in WA. He also enjoyed photography, making post cards, master gardening, and raising Corgis.

Marvin is survived by his wife Betty; two daughters, Kristin Thill (Mark McKenzie) of Oregon City, OR and Lisa Thill (Gordon Franck) of Columbia, MO; three sons, Curtis Thill (Yolanda Yoder) of Paoli, IN, Byron Thill of Seattle, WA, and Jeffrey (Karin) Thill of Orlando, FL; five brothers, Wesley (Betty) Thill of Lena, IL, David (Pat) Thill of Freeport, IL, Ron (Harriet) Thill of Renssler, IN, Lowell (Sonja) Thill of Bourbonnais, IL, and Carlyle (Claire) Thill of North Vernon, IL; and six grandchildren, Levi, Jordan, Leah, Audrey, Hannah, and Kristina.

He is preceded in death by his parents.

A visitation was held Sunday, December 30, 2012 at the Hermann Funeral Home in Stockton. The memorial service was held December 31, 2012 at the Wesley United Methodist Church in Stockton.

A memorial fund has been established for On Earth Peace and Heifer International. Condolences and remembrances may be sent to the family.



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.

2013 Calendar

February

- 2District Leadership Team Meeting - Peoria
- 13Ash Wednesday
- 14Valentine's Day
- 17First Sunday of Lent
- 18Presidents Day

March

- 1World Day of Prayer
- 8Mission & Ministry Board, Elgin
- 10Daylight Savings Time Begins
- 17One Great Hour of Sharing
- 20First Day of Spring
- 24Palm Sunday
- 28Maundy Thursday
- 29Good Friday
- 31Easter Sunday

April

- Child Abuse Prevention Month*
- 13Leadership Team Mtg Neighborhood Church
- 22Earth Day
- 27**DISTRICT POTLUCK – PEORIA**

May

- Older Adult Month*
- 2National Day of Prayer
- 5National Youth Sunday
- 9Ascension Day
- 12Mother's Day
- 19Pentecost
- 25Young Adult Conf. Camp Pine Lake, Eudora, Iowa
- 26Trinity Sunday
- 27Memorial Day

June

- 5World Environment Day
- 8Leadership Team Meeting, Peoria
- 14 - 16..Nat'l Jr Hi Conference, Elizabethtown, PA
- 21First Day of Summer
- 21 - 27..Song & Story Fest, Camp Myrtlewood, Myrtle Point, Oregon
- 27CODE Meeting, Charlotte, NC
- 28Mission & Ministry Board, Charlotte, NC
- 29 - July 3Annual Conference, Charlotte, NC

July

- June 29 - 3Annual Conference
- 4Independence Day
- 9Ramadan Begins
- 28Parent's Day

August

- 10Leadership Team Meeting, Pinecrest, Mt. Morris

September

- 2Labor Day
- 2 - 6.....National Older Adult Conf., Lake Junaluska, NC
- 8Grandparent's Day
- 13Yom Kippur
- 15Bethany Sunday
- 21International Day of Peace
- 22First Day of Autumn

October

- Domestic Violence Awareness Month*
- 6World Communion Sunday
- 12Leadership Team Meeting, Neighborhood
- 18 - 21..Mission & Ministry Board, Elgin, IL
- 24World Disarmament Day
- United Nations Day
- 27Reformation Sunday
- 31Halloween

November

- 1 - 2.....Ill.-Wisc. District Conf., Mt. Morris
- 3National Junior High Sunday
- Daylight Savings Time Ends
- 11Veteran's Day
- 15 - 16..Leadership Team Retreat, Camp Emmanuel, Mt. Morris, IL
- 24Christ the King Sunday
- 27Hanukah Begins
- 28Thanksgiving

December

- 1First Sunday of Advent
- World Aids Day
- 21First day of Winter
- 25CHRISTMAS DAY
- 31New Year's Eve

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