

Reflecting news and views

The Reflector

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District Executive: Kevin Kessler

From the Moderator



Greetings:

My theme this year is on unity as most already know. (Psalm 133: 1) Annual Conference is now history and with it begins more discussion and discernment. World issues come and go but each day finds the sun still rising in the east and the cycle of life remaining constant. My question to the church is how

do we draw together as a body of believers in spite of events that are placed in front of us each and every day? John 15: 1-2, refers to the vine that connects us to God through Jesus Christ. We are to be pruned of old stuff and grow to produce more of the fruit of God. That fruit may be looked upon as love for each other. As I have stated before, love is the glue that holds God's creation together. Love is the basic building block for unity in Jesus Christ.

Unity is the product of love in action; not just with words and study but even more so in our actions with others. Our faith without works is empty faith. 1 Corinthians 1: 10; ¹⁰ "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought." While this calls for unity, we can and will still remain individuals. We are not called to be robotic copies of each other. Yet we are first called to be followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. I would pray that the world sees us as followers of Jesus Christ in all things. The world has a history of pulling you and I away from our true calling to first follow Jesus.

Will issues ever stop tugging at our hearts and our minds? I would venture to guess that that will not happen until Jesus returns and a new heaven and a

new earth are presented to us. My concern is that the Devil will not cease his earthly draw upon our hearts and minds until the Lord returns. It is how we perceive his evil ways and how we counter those ways that determines whose we are. The Truth of God's Word is unchanging and dependable. The roadmap to unity is found within those pages. Love is a constant theme throughout and love draws us closer to Jesus Christ and to each other.

While we can stand together, side by side, and disagree on any given issue, we can walk arm in arm in Christian love and let God be God in all things great and small. Unity flows out of the ability to love God with all that we are and to love each other as ourselves. May the peace that surpasses all understanding guide us always.

In Christ always,
Pastor Ellis
Moderator

Annual Conference names new leadership, Samuel Sarpiya chosen moderator-elect

In election results, Samuel Kefas Sarpiya was chosen as moderator-elect. He will serve alongside moderator Carol Scheppard at the 2017 Annual Conference, and will be moderator of the 2018 Conference.

Sarpiya, who was born in Nigeria, is pastor of Rockford (Ill.) Community Church of the Brethren and co-founder of the Center for Nonviolence and Conflict Transformation in Rockford. He has worked as a church planter and community organizer, and is passionate about the connection between

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¹ The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Co 1:10). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

DE Ponderings

A friend recommended Kent Haruf's novel, *Benediction*, to me. Finally, after several months of sitting on my unread-books shelf, I took it down to read. It is a tender, deeply honest, fictional story of a man dying from cancer. What gives the novel fullness, though, is the way in which the author offers a glimpse into the personal struggles and associated redemption of the characters.

As I progressed through the novel, one character, a minister, began to steal my attention. His ministry in a metropolitan area had ended poorly and he was sent to small, rural town in which this novel is set. His reputation somehow preceded him to this place and he struggled to gain trust and acceptance. When the bottom dropped out from under him (people walked out during his sermon; his wife moved back to the city; he was being rejected by his son; only a handful of people in the small town accepted him), he decided to stroll along the streets of town, stopping occasionally to peer into the windows of the homes he passed.

Needless to say, this disturbed the residents who immediately called the police, arriving on the scene to inform the minister that he could not do this and must discontinue looking into the windows of his neighbors.

The warning was prefaced with conversation, the police asking the minister why he was doing this. The minister indicated that he wanted to recapture something. He thought he'd see people being hurtful, cruel, engaging in spousal abuse. But instead he saw people being kind to one another, simply going about the routine of their lives, living the ordinary. The minister identified what he observed as the *precious ordinary*. It was a redemptive moment for the minister.

The phrase, the precious ordinary, struck a chord with me. How often do we believe it is necessary to do the extraordinary in order to be successful or to receive recognition? Too regularly the extraordinary is accomplished at the expense or detriment of those we love most—family.

In reality, as Haruf points out to us through this character in his novel, it's the ordinary, the precious ordinary, that is most important. Being kind. Carrying out small details of life. Conversing together. Living in amicable, loving relationships. Nothing extraordinary, nevertheless priceless.

Haruf, it seems, picks up on the Church of the Brethren tenet of simple living. We make our mark in

life not by grandiose, impressive manners of living or lifestyles, but by living simply. Living simply is more than living with less. Living simply is offering life to others in the ordinary, precious ordinary, things that we do. Caring for our children. Serving on a disaster response team. Praying for our friends. Actively listening to another's heart-wrenching story. Weeping with those who have lost a loved one. Standing with the vulnerable.

These are the things that make an ordinary life simply precious.

Brethren Disaster Ministries Needs District Volunteers

The major Church of the Brethren Disaster Ministries program is designed to assist in the rebuilding of homes and nurturing children affected by natural disasters. In 2015 over 1200 volunteers contributed nearly 67,000 hours serving 65 families nationwide. With the ongoing frequent news of major disasters the District is formulating plans to increase its involvement in this program.

A tentative goal has been established to send a District team of 10 to 15 volunteers to a rebuild site the two weeks of January 22-28 and November 12-18, 2017. Potential sites are Detroit where flooding in 2014 affected over 100,000 homes. Other possibilities are near Columbia, SC; St. Louis, MO; and sites in Louisiana and Mississippi. The Illinois Wisconsin District is teaming with the Indiana South Central District to fill the teams for these weeks.

Volunteers for the week-long service are housed in a local church or similar facility, and receive 3 prepared meals each day. The only significant cost is travel to and from the site, which is typically covered by the District or the volunteer's local church. Only basic construction skills are required, and some volunteers also are involved in meal preparation.

Don't be surprised if the gift you receive from serving in this capacity with fellow Christians in Christ's name equals or exceeds the gift of your contribution.

To indicate your interest in participating, or to request more information, contact Loren Habegger, District Disaster Coordinator, at ilwi.ddc.lh@gmail.com, or 630-707-7446. Additional BDM information is at www.brethren.org/bdm/rebuild/volunteer.html

Bethany Theological Seminary adds new graduate certificates

Bethany Theological Seminary announced the addition of three (3) new graduate certificates—Biblical Interpretation, Conflict Transformation, and Theopoetics and Theological Imagination.

Biblical Interpretation

Purpose

This specialized certificate provides a focus on the sacred texts of the Christian faith and methods of interpretation. The importance of rigorous and reflective engagement with scripture is stressed. A student will learn with scholars of both Testaments, who bring an expertise to the life, times, culture, and context in which the Bible was written with conversation for today's application. This is suitable for anyone seeking to enhance their knowledge to be used for writing, teaching, preaching, and personal devotion.

Objective

The Certificate in Biblical Interpretation provides a means to deepen one's understanding of the Bible and methods of interpretation. The importance of rigorous and reflective engagement with scripture is stressed. Graduates with a Certificate in Biblical Interpretation will

1. skillfully interpret texts from both the Old and New Testaments using various scholarly data and methods, including historical, literary, and reader-centered approaches;
2. articulate their own hermeneutical approaches to scripture in conversation with the Anabaptist-Pietist heritage, global realities, and their own particular context.

Conflict Transformation

Purpose

A Certificate in Conflict Transformation will be useful for persons interested in gaining knowledge and skill regarding their own and others' conflicts on a personal and/or vocational level. Conflict transformation goes beyond conflict resolution and conflict management to an understanding of the journey involved in engaging conflict. This approach emphasizes the spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, waiting, and deep listening as well as an openness to the oftentimes serendipitous nature of a transformative process, which then guides us toward the relational nature of healthy conflict engagement.

Objective

The Certificate in Conflict Transformation provides a means of focusing on the work of reconciliation and

conflict transformation. Along with theoretical approaches, the skills needed for constructive work in this area are practiced both individually and in groups. Graduates with a Certificate in Conflict Transformation will

1. develop an understanding of the nature of conflict and multiple models of engagement, especially from the Anabaptist-Pietist heritage;
2. demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity to the social, spiritual, emotional, and contextual factors that influence the ability to engage in a creative process of conflict transformation;
3. practice skills that promote a healthy conflict transformation process responding to diverse settings and participants, whether among individuals or groups.

Theopoetics and Theological Imagination

Purpose

Many on a spiritual quest are now turning from theo-logics to theopoetics in an attempt to name themselves and render God's name in history. God may be the poet of the world, but the world itself does not speak. We therefore look to poets and preachers, artists and intellectuals, scientists and gardeners, young mystics and old saints to artfully manifest spiritual truth, goodness and beauty.

Theopoetics suggests that religion's nearest analogue is art and therefore practices theology as a poesis: an inspired, inventive, intuitive and imaginative act of composition performed by authors. Theological imagination opens up the mind, heart, and soul of the individual for the church and world. These explorations bring new themes and understandings into conversation with where we've come from for where we are going.

Objective

The Certificate in Theopoetics & Theological Imagination provides a means to deepen one's understanding of theology, especially as it is articulated in public venues and in wider cultural contexts that bring theology into conversation with the whole of life. Supplementing the required courses, additional coursework may come from a variety of theological areas, including classical and contemporary approaches, ecological theology, public theology, theology and culture, and ministry of writing. Graduates with a Certificate in Theopoetics & Theological Imagination will

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Peace on Wheels

An article in the June 18, 2016 issue of the Rockford Register Star provided shared about the efforts of the Rockford Community Church in designing a mobile tech lab to offer children alternatives to crime and violence.

Following a Dec. 4 shooting, the Rockford Police Department stationed a nuisance-abatement vehicle outside the housing complex where the shooting had occurred. This vehicle was put in place to discourage further crime, but residents said it was too little, too late.

That's when another vehicle began parking outside the apartments, a 30-foot RV transformed into a mobile tech lab that features eight computer stations taking up two-thirds of the trailer. Volunteers help teach elementary and middle school at-risk children computer programming, processing, graphic design and other high-tech skills. The other third of the trailer has a music-recording studio, along with video production and editing equipment.

Pastor Samuel Sarpiya states that the purpose of the lab is to "catch [the kids] while they are young." The basic goal is teaching non-violence while also providing instruction in leadership development with an objective of transforming conflict. It is hoped the lab will become a prototype "that can be used as a model across the country."

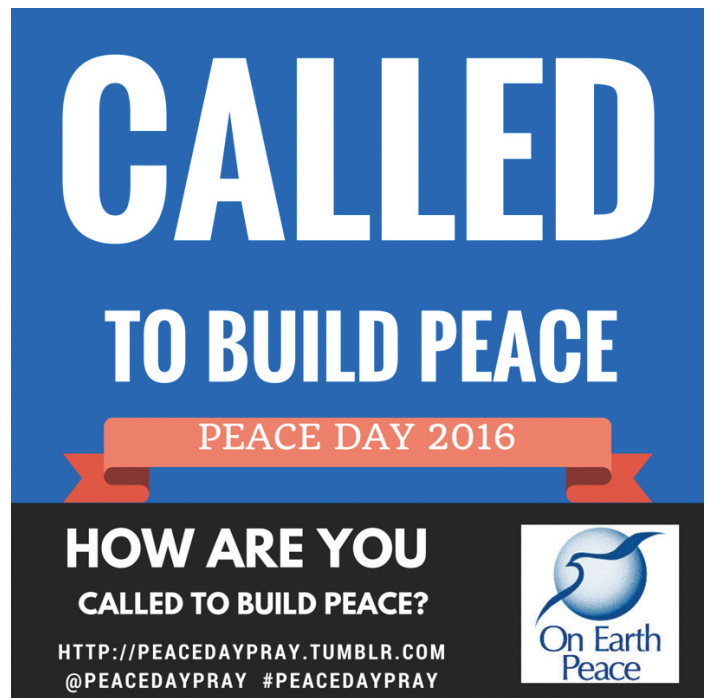
Pastor Sarpiya said the strategy is to partner with community volunteers to help teach programming offered at the lab to inner-city youth, to provide them with role-models and alternatives to crime using another outlet besides sports.

The lab is made possible thanks to the Rockford Police Department's partnership with Pastor Sarpiya, who serves as the department's chaplain. Another trailer is in the process of being transformed into an art and music lab to be operated in partnership with the Rockford Arts Council. It is expected to be revealed this summer.

Bethany

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1. engage in constructive understandings of the nature of theology, with attention to its function in the public sphere and connections to wider cultural contexts;
2. demonstrate knowledge of the diversity of approaches in theological thinking and writing, including familiarity with terminology, categories, and methods;
3. express their own theological imagination informed by theological investigation.



CALLED

TO BUILD PEACE

PEACE DAY 2016

HOW ARE YOU

CALLED TO BUILD PEACE?

[HTTP://PEACEDAYPRAY.TUMBLR.COM](http://peacedaypray.tumblr.com)
@PEACEDAYPRAY #PEACEDAYPRAY

On Earth
Peace

Peace Day 2016— How Are You Called to Build Peace?

On Earth Peace invites churches, peacebuilders, and seekers of justice to participate in Peace Day 2016. Plan a prayer service or community action event and reflect on how you and your community are called to build peace during the week surrounding September 21, 2016.

We are all called to build peace in unique and transformative ways. Some are called to resist and undo racism, some to pray without ceasing, others to heal God's creation, and others to stop war.

Some are called to build peace in their neighborhood, in their church congregation, in their local community, or somewhere across the world.

This Peace Day we invite you to follow God's call to wherever you and your church community can build peace together to God's glory and your neighbor's good.

Learn more about Peace Day and get involved:

- Tell us what you're planning and how we can help!
 - E-mail us: peaceday@onearthpeace.org
- Visit our website at <http://peacedaypray.tumblr.com>
- Follow us on Twitter @peacedaypray
- Join the Peace Day Facebook Group Conversation

Reflections on Hope Imagination and Mission

Church planting, new ministry and partnerships together

*by LaDonna Sanders Nkosi, Convening Pastor,
The Gathering Chicago*

Recently, the Church of the Brethren hosted the Hope, Imagination and Mission Church Planting Conference held in Richmond, Indiana. Members from across the US as well as our Illinois Wisconsin District participated and were involved in the conference at various levels. Mandy Smith and Ephrem Smith were our keynote speakers.

The Church Planting Conference has something for everyone! In a few words, for me, the conference was energizing, renewing and full of opportunities for meaningful conversation and relationship building. A highlight for me was the opportunity we had to meet and pray together with members of EYN and others from across the denomination (see pictures). Here's what others had to say.

"The Church Planting Conference gives us a chance to connect and share and cast vision together and to fellowship. The people in attendance were very appreciative of the space that we shared together there."

—Randi Rowan, conference organizer, Church of the Brethren Congregational Life Ministries.

"The Church Planting Conference is a conference any leader or member of any church could benefit from. Workshops, worship, activities and conversations will excite you and re-invigorate. One can leave the conference renewed for life. From the conference, I was reminded that we are all in this together, whether we are in existing congregations or are new ministry plants. Church plants can revitalize existing congregations. They can partner by sending volunteers, by partnering financially, by planting a church, by praying for and checking in on one another."

—Matt Rittle, Pastor of Franklin Grove Church of the Brethren and member of the Church Revitalization and Development Team.

"I gained a renewed appreciation for the creativity that's going on and innovation in church planting. Every person [church planter] is doing something different. I gained a real sense of hope, that I had been missing for a while. I also really appreciated the intercultural gathering."

I left with a clear sense that we're all in this together."

—Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford. Director of Church of the Brethren News Services and member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren. Check out Cheryl's article in the July/August Messenger which highlights the new and emerging ministries in the Church of the Brethren. www.brethren.org/messenger/articles/2016/church-planting-snapshots.html

Why is church planting meaningful or helpful to already existing congregations and to the district and larger church as a whole?

"Partnering in church planting and new ministry projects in the district increases the overall vitality of the church and furthers the mission of the church. These partnerships are good for the church plants as well as existing congregations. What I appreciated about the Hope, Imagination and Mission Church Planting Conference was the opportunity to have engaging conversations and to meet with other church planters, as well as the opportunity for prayer and worship together."
—Jeanne Davies, Planting Pastor, Parables Community

"Our district had real presence at the conference. As an already established church, pastors and churches can learn how to help churches that are planting. After the conference, I was able to begin re-imagining how to connect with the new ministries starting in our district like the Gathering Chicago and Parables Community."
Parables Community and Polo Church of the Brethren will be partnering in some ministry exchange and partnering activities in the coming months.

—Leslie Lake, Pastor of Polo Church of the Brethren, member of the Church Revitalization and Development Team

Stan Dueck, one of the organizers of the conference shared that some who came to the conference were discerning a call to church planting and that some districts that were looking to plant churches were able to connect with potential church planters.

"The highlights for me of this conference were the worship experiences, the stories of church plants,

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Reflections

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the time of sharing and prayer with our brother and sister from Nigeria (include names) and the Intercultural Gathering led by Yakubu Bakfwash of the Rockford Community Church."

—Stan Dueck, Consultant, Church of the Brethren Congregational Life Ministries

Our next conference will be in 2018. Plan to attend for a sense of renewal, revitalization and great times of worship, prayer and listening for God together.

LaDonna Sanders Nkosi is Convening Pastor of The Gathering Chicago

The Gathering Chicago is a Community of Prayer and Global/Local service forming in Hyde Park Chicago and is one of the new ministry plants in the Illinois/Wisconsin District along with the Parables Community in Lombard, IL. Parables Community's vision is to "create a worshipping community with people who have special needs and their families in which all participate fully in the life of the community. This includes leading in worship and on the board.



Moderator-elect

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peacemaking and the gospel of Jesus Christ. He received early training in the principles of Kingian nonviolence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and has drawn from Jesus' teaching on nonviolence and peace in his work as a pastor. He has impacted the Rockford school systems, has done training for the Rockford police department's

command staff and management in nonviolent principles, and has partnered with Nigerian Brethren and Brethren in the United States in developing a mobile library for use among several camps hosting internally displaced persons across Nigeria. Previously, beginning in 1994, he worked with Urban Frontiers Mission and Youth with a Mission, serving as a missionary around the world. He is a graduate of the University of Jos, Nigeria, earning a degree in social work. He graduated from Bethany Theological Seminary with a master of divinity in conflict transformation. Currently he is a doctoral candidate in semiotics and future studies at George Fox University in Portland Ore.

--from Newsline

"This past May, the Church of the Brethren's Hope Mission and Imagination Church Planting Conference participants were blessed to hear outgoing EYN General Secretary Jinatu Wamdeo as one of the featured speakers. Pictured here are he and his wife along with other conference participants praying together for Nigeria and families and members throughout the region. He asked that the Church of the Brethren continue to remember them in prayer issues of schooling, housing, and safety and security are at the forefront of their prayer requests." Photos courtesy of Church of the Brethren/Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



Camp Emmaus
Women's Camp 2016
August 11-13



Women of all Ages are Welcome!

Bible Program by Beth (Hare) Taylor and Mary Gardner

Self-Restoration Time Program by Mandy Rahn (Lanark COB)

Camp Director-Wendy Boettner (Freeport COB)

Camp starts with Registration on Thursday at 5:00 p.m. and ends on Saturday evening . **If you can't come for the whole camp, join us when you can!** Lodging available in Retreat Lodge. All meals provided. Cost for total camp is \$70.00 (if only staying for portion of camp, cost varies).

**Share in Bible Study...relaxation...fellowship...crafts...meditation...
campfires...worship...hiking...Prayer Time...new and old friendships.**

See schedule following. If questions, contact Wendy Boettner
at 815-517-4913 or at peacelikeariver.1@netzero.com.

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**To Register for Women's Camp, please fill out form below and send to Camp Emmaus, P.O.
Box 128, Mt. Morris IL 61054 by August 1, 2016.**

Name_____

Address_____

Telephone Number_____ E-Mail Address_____

What church do you attend?_____

Any special dietary needs?_____

Any special medical needs?_____

How much of Women's Camp will you be attending?

Thursday_____ Friday_____ Saturday_____ Sunday_____

Arriving Late or Leaving Early? _____



Camp Emmaus
Women's Camp 2016
August 11-13



Women of all Ages are Welcome!

Schedule (Subject to change):

Thursday, August 11, 2016

5:00-6:00 p.m.—Registration-Get Settled in Retreat Lodge

6:00 p.m.—Supper

7:00-9:00 p.m.-Get Acquainted, Movie Night

9:30 p.m.-Campfire, Singing, Meditation/Prayer Time

Friday, August 12, 2016

8:00 a.m.—Breakfast

9:00-11:00 a.m.- Mandy Rahn-**Self-Restoration Time-“Being the Me that God Sees”**

Noon-Lunch

1:00-2:30 p.m.—Continue Session with Mandy Rahn

3:00 p.m.-**“Update on Honduras Mission”** -Bill Hare and/or Crew

5:00 p.m.—Supper

6:00-8:00 p.m.-Bible Program by Beth Taylor and Mary Gardner-**“Why Am I Here”**

9:30 p.m.—Campfire, Singing, Meditation/Prayer Time

Saturday, August 13, 2016

8:00 a.m.—Breakfast

9:00-Noon—Continue Bible Program by Beth and Mary

Noon--Lunch in Dining Hall

1:00—3:00 Program and Craft-**“The Mask That You Wear”**

3:00-5:00 Clean up Retreat Lodge

5:00 p.m. Supper then Depart....Go In Peace and Love