



Reflecting news and views

The Reflector

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District Executive: Kevin Kessler

From the Moderator



John 17: 20-23 NIV

²⁰ "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,
²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: ²³ I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ¹

Just as Jesus so fervently prayed for his disciples and future believers, that same cry permeates our lives today. In the current world Satan is pulling us away from Jesus in such strong terms that he seeks to divide and conquer our faith. Our churches continue to shrink and die off while many never attend any church at all. We must seek to make Jesus and our faith the number one priority in our lives. We must strive to find unity within and without our churches.

When we become divided Satan comes in and develops fractures. Here we miss the fullness of Jesus Christ and the true course that God intended for our lives. In John 17 we see Jesus coming to the close of his time with his disciples. One can only imagine the sincerity and passion of his prayer. Future generations are among the list contained in his words. Can we afford to be lax in our earthly journey? We must continually seek his face in all we

do. Church has to become more than a habit. Study and prayer must be a daily part of our lives.

When Satan begins to crack our spiritual shield, we must be ready to address his incursion with a faith-based response. Every day I see and talk to individuals whose lives are on the brink of spiritual collapse. We are warriors for the gospel who must share our testimony and values based on Scripture. Our strength comes from our faith. It is at the trying times that we must turn to God in prayer. He then is allowed to work for his good. Unity is the result of working together in prayer and discernment. Satan stands no chance against the power of our faith through Jesus Christ. Jesus prayed that we might be brought together in complete unity to let the world know that we have Christ as our Lord and Savior and that God loves us just as he loves His Son.

Let us always seek unity.
In Christ always,
Pastor Ellis, Moderator

2016 District Conference

Living Together in Unity
Rockford Community Church
November 4-5

Friday Evening:

Worship: Ellis Boughton
Friday Evening After Worship: Ice Cream Social

Saturday:

Business Session, Live & Silent Auctions

Registration form:

http://iwdcob.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/110243323/2016_Dist_Conf_Registration_Form.pdf

Auction information:

http://iwdcob.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/110243314/2016_District_Auction_Poster.pdf

More information: www.iwdcob.org



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

DE Ponderings

A benefit of my work as District Executive is visiting congregations and pastors throughout our district. Reasons for visits are varied, such as providing support to pastoral search teams; helping with conflict; responding to concerns; conducting licensing, ordination, and installation services; and simply meeting with no specific agenda at all. Whatever the purpose, the opportunity to connect and foster relationships is, in my view, the most vital piece of the visit experience.

I will confess that I have missed or, maybe more accurately stated, neglected opportunities to make visits in the district. I recently made an effort to visit congregations that I have failed to make connections with for quite some time. I quickly realized during those visits that I am the one who had missed something valuable by failing to connect more often.

The visits were filled with wonderful conversation, with questions about the district and denomination, with concerns, with stories and news about the good things happening in the life of the congregation.

The things I heard are too good not to share.

The Rock Community Church (Fairfield, IL) is starting a school in their church.

The Martin Creek congregation (Fairfield, IL) shared that a 14-year-old youth accepted Christ.

The Allison Prairie congregation (Lawrenceville, IL) gives \$10,000 annually to outreach, providing to a different organization or ministry each month.

The Romine congregation (Salem, IL) remains stable, the pastor providing ministry once-a-month to a local nursing home, as well as preaching revival services in a neighboring town.

The Hurricane Creek congregation (Mulberry Grove, IL) offers events on a regular basis to which the community is invited to participate.

These are small, rural congregations but they are vital, energized, and committed to serving Christ through the ministries in which they engage.

These recent visits have reminded me of the richness of our district. We, the IL / WI District, are an eclectic assembly of congregations, leaders, and people. Our views and theological understandings are varied across the geography of the district. We don't always agree on matters of faith and practice.

And we live in a kind of tension that stretches our ability always be certain about our relationships.

Nevertheless, what I find across this district is a strong commitment to following Jesus Christ, and then taking that commitment to the next level of being doers, committed disciples and apostles.

James writes: "But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing." (James 1:22-25 NRSV)

I continue to witness the blessings of this district's *doing* and it is something wonderful to behold.



Anabaptist Worship Exchange

The Anabaptist Worship Exchange website is an online place to share worship materials among Anabaptist congregations. Users may post any worship resource they have created, including liturgy, music, and sermons, to be shared with other users. "The idea is to open the local church to the denomination," Brockway said. Resources can be sorted by type of material, lectionary cycle, biblical reference, and contributor. All editing is the responsibility of the user. Visit the website at www.anabaptistworshipexchange.org.

Pleasant Hill Village “A Night with the Stars” Auction and Dinner on October 15

It will not matter if the skies are cloudy or bright on Oct. 15, 2016. On that date, the “Stars” of Pleasant Hill Village will shine at the Brethren Home of Girard’s annual Auction and Dinner fundraiser.

Titled “A Night with the Stars,” Pleasant Hill Village will celebrate the stars who comprise our galaxy as we honor residents, families, staff, volunteers, sponsors and board members. Proceeds for the event will pay for needed projects at Pleasant Hill Residence and Pleasant Hill Healthcare.

The event is presented by Designer Landscapes of Farmersville and Sav-Mor Pharmacy of Virden.

Doors will open at 5 p.m. and the prime rib dinner will begin at 6 p.m. The auction will begin at 7 p.m. The event is at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Virden, IL.

Since 1905, Pleasant Hill Village has been a vital part of Girard and Virden. We offer, on a non-profit basis, an independent living and assisted living facility at Pleasant Hill Residence and a skilled nursing facility, complete with an Alzheimer’s and dementia unit, at Pleasant Hill Healthcare.

York Center COB news

Sept. 24- Unity Picnic

The three congregations that share our building- YCCOB, Parables Community (Jeanne Davies' new church project), and God's Congregation Worship Center (African American congregation) have invited the DuPage County Sheriff's Department and the Villa Park Police Department to enjoy good food, games, and fellowship from noon-3 p.m.

60/20 Celebration- 60 years in our building, 20 years of my pastorate (March 1, 2016)

August 26 is the 60th anniversary of ministry in our current building. We will have an ice cream social to celebrate.

On Sunday, October 16 we will celebrate both anniversaries in worship with the theme, "Here in this Place. A catered meal and program will follow worship and Sunday School.

We hope to raise \$38,000 at this event and we plan to use the proceeds to pay for needed items such as new vital sign machines, an updated shower room for Pleasant Hill Healthcare, new room curtains and improvement of our walking paths and other landscaping work. We also will use the proceeds to make improvements on Girard Area Homes, a low-income housing unit owned and operated by Pleasant Hill Village.

The financial troubles in the State of Illinois have impacted Pleasant Hill Village. Our calculations are that the state owes the facility about \$1.5 million in reimbursements for care. PHV’s annual revenue is about \$5.3 million.

This lack of funding has strangled cash flow, forcing us to delay payments to vendors and take out a line of credit with a financial institution. In spite of all this, we are proud to say that we have worked diligently and creatively to maintain the same excellent care our residents expect and deserve.

The Auction and Dinner gives us a chance to raise money for projects that are not luxuries, but are forced to be because of our budget realities.

To join us at the event, please contact Darrin Burnett at dburnett@pleasanthillvillage.org or 217-627-2181. Tickets are \$40 per person. To donate an auction item or make a monetary donation, please contact Darrin.

The event is also sponsored by Rovey Seed, Burgess & Son Plumbing, the Bettis Family, and Smoky-Jennings Chevrolet.

Dunker Punks

“Dunker Punks imagine a different world, and make it so by consistently choosing Jesus’ radical love,” said an announcement of the latest Dunker Punks podcast by young adults in the Church of the Brethren. Titled “Everyday Revolution,” the podcast interviews Joshua Brockway, the Church of the Brethren’s director of Spiritual Life, on the topic of discipleship. A new co-host, Dylan Dell-Haro, takes the lead on the microphone. Find the Dunker Punks podcasts at <http://arlingtoncob.org/dpp>.

Germany Tour 2017 with Mark Flory-Steury

Plan to travel to Germany next summer, July 9th – 20th, 2017 with Mark Flory Steury to celebrate and commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. October 31, 1517 is the date that Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to the castle church door in Wittenberg. We will visit many sites related to the Reformation including Wittenberg, the Wartburg Castle and Luther's birthplace of Eisleben. We will also visit sites related to the Pietist movement (Halle) and the early Brethren (Schwarzenau). Included in the tour will be the cities of Dresden, Leipzig, Erfurt, Marburg and Berlin. We will also take a day trip to Strasbourg, France. And we will end our visit with a Rhine River cruise. Contact Mark Flory Steury at 630-701-5348 or florysteury@gmail.com. You may also visit the website www.cvent.com/d/mfqt9v to see a full itinerary and to register. Hope you can join us!"

A film clip of a Brethren contingent carrying a large sign proclaiming "Church of the Brethren" in a Civil Rights-era march is currently part of a television advertisement for an organization of neighborhood medical centers in the Chicago area. The clip gained the attention of Ralph McFadden, coordinator for the Fellowship of Brethren Homes, who shared with Newslines his feeling that having the denomination's Civil Rights involvement displayed in such a good light this summer "was very interesting, enlightening, and encouraging."

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