

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 Moderator's desk:



This is my favorite time of year. The change in temperatures; the crops proving the giving nature of our Lord; and the cycle of life becomes so apparent. It seems as if the natural world blends in harmony during the fall season. Wouldn't it be glorious if we humans could blend together in that same manner? Philippians 2:2 gives a call to that end..."then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind." NIV. My heart aches for those who suffer in this world because of a few who have desires to destroy.

We do not have to settle for revenge or retaliation. We have Jesus Christ as our Savior and Mediator to God. The word "love" may be over-used in our society but the love of Christ for us is never ending. He calls us constantly to love each other as he first loved us. Rather than try to resolve all of our worldly problems by ourselves in debate, let us first ask God for His will and direction and go forward with that promise. Trying to constantly force a round peg into a square hole should teach us that we are not following His will.

We are first called to be like Jesus. When we answer that call, God will provide the answer to our debate and open doors otherwise closed. God has given us all minds with which to function in a rational

manner. We do not need to follow blindly every drum beat we hear. God's Word is infallible and always true. It is the one thing we can trust in forever. If we human beings believe and follow the truths in Scripture and love God unconditionally, He will provide loving answers to our questions.

District Conference will soon be upon us and I look forward to seeing many of you there. Let us gather together as brothers and sisters in Christ and go forward arm in arm to build the Kingdom of God. He will provide what is needed if we answer his call. Worldly items will come and go just as they have in times past. But remember that we are called first to be Kingdom workers for God. Let us all seek His will in our lives and pray for His will to be done.

Unity in our service to God and to each other will result in the world being made aware that Jesus Christ is alive and well in the hearts of the Church of the Brethren. The outreach projects of the church have shown our love for those around us who are in need. That same love and concern for those we worship with should also be a beacon to others. Let us be the example of Christian love around the world. To God be the glory now and forevermore.

In Christ always,  
Pastor Ellis  
Moderator

### 2016 District Conference

Rockford Community Church  
November 4-5

More information:  
[www.iwdcob.org](http://www.iwdcob.org)



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

# Plug In

to God, each other & the world

3 John 1:13-14

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**POWER  
HOUSE  
2016**

**November 12-13**

A regional  
conference for  
Church of the  
Brethren youth

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## **Speakers:**

Church of the Brethren BVS & Workcamp Staff

## **Camp Alexander Mack**

Milford, Indiana

Check [www.manchester.edu/powerhouse](http://www.manchester.edu/powerhouse)  
for more details coming soon!

# DE Ponderings

Thinking about the state of affairs in our nation and in the world can bring me to tears. My emotions are stirred to sadness as I listen to bifurcated rhetoric, as I watch news stories that report about violence enacted upon others, as I witness the devastation of natural disasters and the lives that are left in turmoil. Sometimes I find the lump in my throat and the increased work of tear ducts from reading an emotionally-stirring story, as well. A story that comes to mind is one I recently read in *The Christian Century*. The author describes a teacher he remembered from his childhood who was stern, a disciplinarian, seemingly emotionally detached from her students. One day the school's administrator entered the classroom, whispered something to the teacher, and left. The teacher then approached one of the girls in the class whose father was seriously ill. The student, with the teacher's hand on her shoulder, looked at the back of the person in front of her in a manner of knowing what the teacher's touch meant. As the student stood, the storyteller states that he heard a sob of which he had not heard before nor since. There in the aisle stood the student embracing the sobbing teacher.

As easily as I can be moved to tears, I also have the capacity to laugh heartily. I was helping Tammy with a small task recently when she made a quick movement that resulted in an unexpected outcome. The surprised look on her face was priceless...AND hilarious. We both laughed until our sides hurt.

Laughter is said to be good medicine. The release of chemicals in our body from laughing has its benefits. While I wouldn't go so far as to say laughter is an antidote to tears of sadness, I would conclude from an experiential perspective that laughter adds balance to life.

I find it easy to get bogged down in the turmoil, difficulties, and sad stories which are experienced and/or witnessed. To laugh in the midst of this milieu of distress seems almost profane. However, a message within the Sermon on the Mount helps me to accept the balance laughter brings. Jesus offers in the sermon this encouragement: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what

you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

Could it be that laughter is a sign of dismissing worry? Through laughter we can be assured of God's providence. Laughter doesn't diminish the stark realities of stress and distress, but it does indicate that there is a power greater than our own at work to walk with all of us at all times. We trust in God to provide for our needs as we journey forward together in every emotional state. Laughter witnesses to that trust.

I will still cry. But I will not be afraid to laugh.



Thursday, Aug. 18, was a final occasion for Source volunteers from Mt. Morris (Ill.) Church of the Brethren and Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill., to stuff the packet that is mailed to each Church of the Brethren congregation. The Source packet is filled with fliers, bulletin inserts, posters, and other information about denominational programs and activities. Long-term Source coordinator Jean Clements retires in late September, and future preparation of Source packets will be handled by a mailing firm. Shown here (from left) are volunteer Donna Lehman, Jean Clements and Karen Stocking who work for Brethren Press, volunteer Pat Miller, and volunteer Uldine Baker.



# Group of Chibok schoolgirls are released from captivity

**Church of the Brethren Newsline**  
**October 13, 2016**

The Nigerian government says 21 of the Chibok schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram in April 2014 have been freed in negotiations with the insurgents, according to reports from media outlets today including the Associated Press and ABC News. The negotiations were carried out with help from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Swiss government.

Church of the Brethren staff have received confirmation of this news from Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). EYN president Joel S. Billi sent confirmation after he talked with Chibok parents and the Bring Back Our Girls organization in Nigeria. The majority of the girls abducted from the school in Chibok are from Nigerian Brethren families.

## Invitation to Join Steve Schweitzer's Course

VENTURES invites you to join Steve Schweitzer, Academic Dean and Professor at Bethany Seminary, imagine the future for our churches through a look at the Book of Chronicles. This stimulating, 3-hour online webinar, will be held on Saturday morning, November 12th,

9:00 - noon (CST). While the book of Kings explains why the people of Israel ended up in exile, the book of Chronicles was written after the exile, in the midst of significant cultural shifts, to provide a way forward. Participants will explore several central themes in the book and think together about how Chronicles might help equip our Churches to be faithful in the midst of current cultural change.

Visit [www.mcpherson.edu/ventures](http://www.mcpherson.edu/ventures) for further information and to register for this course. CEUs are available for clergy. VENTURES in Christian Discipleship is an online program of McPherson College. All VENTURES courses are free, but donations are welcomed to help continue these learning opportunities from McPherson College.

"We receive this news with great joy," said Jay Wittmeyer, executive director of Global Mission and Service. "As a church we have been in active prayer for these individuals since their abduction. Congregations continue to pray specifically for each girl. Jesus said that we should pray always and not lose heart and we have steadfastly been doing so and we will continue to do so.

"We also express gratitude to all parties involved in this negotiated release. We know that both the IRC and the Swiss government have been actively involved in working toward peace and relief in Nigeria in many ways, and we are not surprised that they have been involved in this settlement.

"We do continue to call for the release of all individuals held against their will," Wittmeyer said, "not just those from Chibok."

Some 197 of the Chibok students remain in Boko Haram hands, and "it is not known how many of them may have died," said the AP report, as published on AllAfrica.com. According to AP, the freed girls are in the custody of Nigeria's Department of State Services, which is the country's intelligence agency. Presidential spokesman Garba Shehu told the AP that talks will continue for the release of the rest of the Chibok girls.

## 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 [florysteur@gmail.com](mailto:florysteur@gmail.com). You may also visit the website [www.cvent.com/d/mfqt9v](http://www.cvent.com/d/mfqt9v) to see a full itinerary and to register. Hope you can join us!"

# Series of workcamps is planned for church rebuilding in Nigeria

Church of the Brethren Newsline  
August 19, 2016



*One of the destroyed churches in Nigeria* Photo by Roxane Hill

The Church of the Brethren is planning a series of workcamps in Nigeria, as part of the new effort to rebuild churches of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). Nearly 70 percent of EYN's churches in northeast Nigeria have been destroyed in the Boko Haram insurgency. A Nigeria Church Rebuilding Fund has been developed to help provide support to EYN congregations who are working to rebuild.

Global Mission and Service executive director Jay Wittmeyer reports that of EYN's 458 churches, which are called LCCs, 258 have been destroyed. (These numbers do not include the hundreds of additional

preaching points in EYN.) Wittmeyer hopes to be able to start out by providing \$5,000 to selected EYN congregations to re-roof their church buildings.

Church of the Brethren congregations and districts in the United States are invited to consider sponsoring a new roof for an EYN church. Gifts to the Nigeria Church Rebuilding Fund are received online at [www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis/church-rebuilding.html](http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis/church-rebuilding.html) or by mail at Nigeria Church Rebuilding, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

## Workcamps

The series of workcamps in Nigeria will take place over the next six or seven months. The first is set for Nov. 4-23. Subsequent workcamps are scheduled for Jan. 11-30, 2017, and Feb. 17-March 6, 2017.

Participants will need to raise about \$2,500 to cover the cost of transportation, food, and supplies. Those who apply for a workcamp are warned that they will face extreme heat in northeast Nigeria, as well as intense sun, and the rigors of life in a developing nation. "As members of the Church of the Brethren, we say that our motto is to live 'peacefully, simply and together.' This opportunity presents a real chance to live this out!" said an announcement of the new workcamps.

Express interest in a workcamp by contacting the Nigeria Crisis Response at [crhill@brethren.org](mailto:crhill@brethren.org) or 847-429-4329.

# Crisis in Nigeria



## CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Join in support of our Nigerian Brethren on their Long Journey Home:

Nigeria Workcamps are being formed to help rebuild churches, repair church facilities, to worship and pray in fellowship with the Nigerian Brethren and to encourage people as they recover. Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) families and their neighbors have started the long journey of recovery and return of self sufficiency. Join in helping communities and churches rebuild in Nigeria.



## NIGERIAN WORKCAMP

### WORK, WORSHIP & FELLOWSHIP



A Joint Church of the Brethren & EYN (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) Project

#### Workcamp Dates:

- November 4th—21st, 2016
- January 11th –30th, 2017
- February 17th—March 6th, 2017
- Additional workcamps in 2017 are being planned

#### Workcamp Activities:

- Majority of work will focus on rebuilding churches
- May also assist with relief activities or distributions
- Worship and fellowship with Nigerian Brethren
- Life-changing cultural experience

**Workcamp Registration:** Registration forms and additional information can be found at:

- <http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis/action.html>
- Call 847-429-4388 or email Kendra Harbeck at [kharbeck@brethren.org](mailto:kharbeck@brethren.org)
- Forms: Registration, Release/Covenant, Nigerian Visa Application, Questions and Answers

#### Important Dates:

- 90 days before workcamp: Registration, visa application and \$600 deposit due
- 60 days before workcamp: Balance of costs due (approx. \$2,000)—you will be notified of exact total.
- 90-60 days before travel meet with your doctor or a travel clinic about immunizations or medications

#### Workcamp Cost Estimate: \$2,600

- \$1,250 (approximate) - Air Transportation
- \$200 - Nigerian Visa
- \$650 - Housing, food and travel in Nigeria
- \$500 - Project materials for construction
- Expenses not included: vaccinations

**Seek Support:** Interested workcampers are encourage to seek support and prayers from their faith community for the workcamp

## SUPPORT CHURCH REBUILDING GRANTS

The Nigeria Church Rebuilding fund needs your support to provide a \$5,000 grant for each Church EYN rebuilds. Send your Support: Church of the Brethren Nigeria Church Rebuilding, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin IL 60120



[www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis](http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis) • [kharbeck@brethren.org](mailto:kharbeck@brethren.org) • 847-429-4388



# 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](mailto:ilwi.ddc.lh@gmail.com), or 630-707-7446. Additional BDM information is at [www.brethren.org/bdm/rebuild/volunteer.html](http://www.brethren.org/bdm/rebuild/volunteer.html)

# Bethany Theological Seminary opening

Bethany Theological Seminary announces an opening for the full-time position of executive director of Admissions and Student Services, with an immediate starting date. This is an opportunity for a creative professional seeking to invest their growing knowledge and experience in the development of an enhanced Department of Admissions and Student Services, including recruitment, student development, alumni/ae relations, financial aid, and Title IX compliance. A focus of the department is to help identify and encourage leaders to develop their gifts for a changing church through graduate theological education. The position is responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating a dynamic recruitment and retention strategy to create a multiethnic seminary community with a strong international student presence, and will also represent the seminary at events related to recruitment and enrollment management, develop relationships with prospective students, design creative presentations for small and large group settings, and meet with church and college constituents. The work will include significant travel for student recruitment and professional and institutional development. Applicants must hold a bachelor's degree, with a master's degree preferred. Affinity with the values and mission of the seminary is required. Three to five years of professional experience in higher education, specifically admissions or enrollment management with demonstrated success in recruitment and retention strategy, is required. Applicants should demonstrate strong oral and written communication, listening, and organizational skills; the ability to help individuals discern their vocational calling; and the eagerness to work as part of a team. Experience in communications technology and multi-cultural recruitment is highly preferred. The seminary is particularly interested in inviting applications from women and Hispanics, African-Americans, and other ethnic minorities. A complete job description with application information is available at <https://bethanyseminary.edu/about/employment>. Application review will begin Nov. 1.

*from Newsline*

# Church camp for Labor Day weekend gives welcome pause

THERESA CHURCHILL *H&R Senior Writer*  
Sep 17, 2016



ANDREW FULK, FOR THE HERALD & REVIEW

Camp Emmanuel near Astoria offers respite for families over Labor Day weekend and for other campers throughout the summer.

Summer and fall keep us busy in different ways. After enjoying family vacations, picnics, baseball and more, we must settle into a different rhythm of school, harvest, football and the ever-approaching holiday shopping season. Camp Emmanuel near Astoria, a Church of the Brethren facility my husband Andy began enjoying with his parents and siblings at age 9, has provided our family a wonderful respite from that busyness for more than a quarter-century now.

I'm talking specifically about Family Camp, a semi-structured 2½ days that happen there every Labor Day weekend.

Even if I'm stressed and tense when I arrive Friday evening, the beautiful setting and warm fellowship work their magic before Saturday is done. It's a special time of reflection and relaxation.

This year was no exception, even though it was our turn to lead the camp as deans, with the help of many others.

The weather was perfect, sunny with highs in the 70s or low 80s. The lake was clean, free of lily pads and algae. The people were just as faithful to the camp and its routines as we are, with many representing the second or third generation of the same family to attend.

Some of the best traditions are the talent show, which gives us a chance to be silly, and the campfires, which give us a chance to share and sing familiar hymns and other songs.

Another of my favorites is the Bible study/discussion that happens in the pavilion behind the main building. We call it the forum.

This year's leader was the Rev. Matthew Thiner, pastor of Astoria Christian Church, and he did a wonderful job facilitating a conversation about the first chapter of Genesis, leading us to think about each verse more deeply than we had for a while.

Not surprisingly, we spent a fair amount of time talking about how God rested on the seventh day from his labors of creating Heaven and Earth. Too often we don't allow enough quiet spaces in our lives to simply think, pray and be with God.

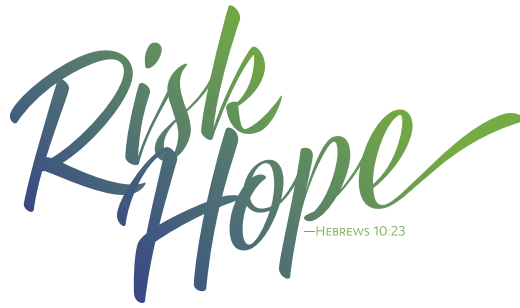
Mike Gilbert, a young father who is the primary caregiver for his mother, drew an intriguing comparison between the busyness we find so hard to set aside and the grievances we hang onto, not wanting to forgive. He urged us to let go of both as "burdens on our souls."

How right he was and what a good example he provides to explain why I love Camp Emmanuel so much.

I'm thankful it's a part of my family and a part of my year.

tchurchill@herald-review.com | (217) 421-7978





## **Sending Your Congregation's Delegate to Annual Conference**

In 2017, the 231<sup>st</sup> recorded Church of the Brethren Annual Conference will be held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. And once again congregations will be encouraged to send a delegate to come together for fellowship and to discern the business of the denomination. For those who may be unaware, here is some information on sending a delegate from your congregation.

### **Why is it important for my congregation to send a delegate to Annual Conference?**

Sending a delegate to Annual Conference is the only way to ensure your congregation has a say in decisions that affect the whole church. The Annual Conference delegate body is one of the most important—if not the highest—level of decision making in the Church of the Brethren. Each congregation may play a vital part in Annual Conference by sending a delegate or delegates. The number of delegates a congregation may send is relative to the number of members in the congregation.

### **Who can be a delegate and how many delegates does our congregation get?**

Each congregation may choose who their delegate(s) may be, and all delegates must be full members of the Church of the Brethren. The pastor of a congregation is not automatically a delegate.

The number of delegates allowed per congregation is based on its membership statistics as reported in the Church of the Brethren Yearbook for the previous year. The number allowed is as follows:

1 – 200 members	1 delegate
201 – 400 members	2 delegates
401 – 600 members	3 delegates
601 – 800 members	4 delegates
801+ members	5 delegates

### **What do delegates and their congregations get from Annual Conference?**

Delegates benefit personally from the opportunities for spiritual renewal, continuing education, and faith formation. Their congregations benefit from the spiritual growth that their church leadership may bring back and share with the church. In addition to business sessions, each Conference features daily worship services, Bible studies, insight sessions on a wide variety of topics, support groups, meal events, an exhibit hall with booths and many free resources, a Brethren Press bookstore, and much more. All of these are open to every Conference attendee. Every congregation that sends a delegate will also receive a copy of that year's Annual Conference minutes.

To take full advantage of sending a delegate, a congregation should make time for that person to report back following the Conference, so that they can share the experience with the whole congregation.

Delegate registration for Grand Rapids will open online on Wednesday, March 1, 2017. The registration fee for each delegate is \$285. For more information about how to send a delegate to Annual Conference, contact the Conference Office by email at [annualconference@brethren.org](mailto:annualconference@brethren.org), or call 800-323-8039 ext. 365.