

Reflecting news and views

The Reflector

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

January 2017 / Volume 14 / Issue 1

District Executive: Kevin Kessler

From the Moderator

Contributions to the column reserved for the moderator will present meditations, written by members of the congregations in the IL/WI District. The one exception will be Musa Mambula from the EYN church in Nigeria, who will reflect on our conference theme, "Do Not Be Afraid...". It seems like these followers of the risen Christ have been tested in ways that most of us cannot imagine. They have demonstrated that the promise of good news from a loving, all powerful, God can sustain us in the worst of times.

The Rev. Dr. Musa Mambula began his duties as Bethany Seminary's first International Scholar in Residence on June 16, 2016. From 1981 to 1983, Dr. Mambula attended Bethany in Oak Brook, Illinois. Dr. Mambula is a gifted teacher, preacher, administrator, and guidance counselor. In 2003 he began a six-year term as president/provost of the Theological College of Northern Nigeria near Jos in Plateau State. Dr. Mambula has served the Ekkleyisar Yan-Uwa A Nigera (EYN) and related church bodies in various capacities, including six years as the elected national spiritual advisor for EYN.

"Do not be afraid, I bring you good news."

The message by the angel in Luke 2:10, gives us the most profound, most reassuring, and the most astounding, rare good news for all the people on earth.

This is because fear is "a distressing emotion aroused by an impending danger, pain, etc. whether the threat is real or imagined". In other words, fear is a state whereby you feel frightened or afraid, regardless of whether you should be afraid or not. Note the key word is regardless, which means it is possible to feel fear when you rightfully shouldn't be scared. The EYN-Church of the Brethren in Nigeria is passing through the most difficult circumstances in her history since 1923. EYN, like the oak tree, has grown from an initial four converts in 1927 to over one million members in 2016.

Unfortunately, since the awful attack on September 11, 2001, most people have come to think of our time as an age of terrorism. In a matter of minutes, thousands of innocent people were killed at their work places that day. There was a national shock and grief, which transformed into fear and anger. The root of the word "terror" is "to frighten", in part we are describing here the spread of fear when we refer to our time as an age of terror. Luke's message in chapter 2:10 resonates with the EYN in Nigeria.

We are frightened, persecuted, and oppressed as a church by the Boko Haram terrorists. We are frustrated and neglected by the government that does not respect our rights and remains silent about our plights as Christians. But thanks be to God— Luke's message of "Don't be afraid, I bring you good news", gives the church hope; a wonderful gift from God. Hope in God is our main source of strength, courage, and resilience in the face of EYN's harshest trials and persecution. "Don't be afraid, I bring you good news", lifts our spirits, and helps us to persevere. It reminds us that God is still on the throne. Luke's message gives us the patience to trust and work at living in peace with our neighbors.



Rev. Musa A Mambula, PHD,
International Scholar in Residence,
615 National Road West,
Richmond, IN 47374

Annual Conference moderator-elect Samuel Sarpiya has received an award from the city of Rockford, Ill., where he is involved in a cooperative peacemaking effort with the police department and other community groups. The "City of Rockford Innovative and Open Team Award" in December was presented to Sarpiya and two members of the police department: Mike Dalke, assistant deputy chief, and Jason Mallo, investigator.

Moderator's Column

A multitude of the heavenly host

Luke 2:8-14

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid: for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.'" (v. 10)

The angels have the best job in scripture—they get to share the good news. They swoop in on unsuspecting humans and shower them with heavenly glory. They almost always say, "Don't be afraid." Because, of course, if you saw an angel you would probably be afraid. We picture them as otherworldly beings—sort of human but not really, with large wings and white robes and shiny halos.

Heavenly messengers play a big part in the story of Jesus' birth. God dispatches Gabriel to set the story in motion with his visits to Zechariah and Mary, and then sends an angel to Joseph in a dream on three occasions. Right after Jesus is born, an angel appears to shepherds working the midnight shift. Out of the black velvet night sky God's glory blooms before them like a thousand spotlights. An angel tells them about the birth of the savior in Bethlehem, the city of David. And he even gives them a specific sign so they wouldn't miss him: "You will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." As if that wasn't enough to get their attention, soon the night sky is filled with a chorus of angels praising God.

In those day shepherds had one of the worst jobs in the world. They spent their time on hillsides and in the wilderness trying to keep an eye on animals who were easy targets for predators or who could easily fall into a ravine or eat a poisonous plant. Shepherds had to constantly keep their eyes open and their feet moving to ensure the safety of their flock. Chances are they didn't shower or change their clothes very often. But who are the human beings to hear the birth announcement? Yep, God's topsy-turvy world is dawning.

Holy God, you send messengers to guide us—sometimes in quiet moments and sometimes in bright lights. Keep our eyes wide open.

Greetings from IL/WI Church of the Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM)

Additional persons from the IL/WI District are invited to join a team of 10-12 volunteers that will be assisting in a BDM home rebuild project the week of January 22-28, 2017. (Six persons have already committed to join the team.) The location is still being finalized, but will be probably be in West Virginia or South Carolina where recent flooding caused extensive damage.

There are no special skills required to join the volunteer team. If you know which end of the hammer to hold or know how to flip pancakes in the kitchen to feed the volunteers, and have a passion for helping those in need then you are qualified.

The week long volunteers will be housed in a local church or other facility. Very adequate meals are provided, so the only requirement is your time and cost of travel to and from the site, usually in a car pool. In return, volunteers can expect to receive a substantial reward from the satisfaction of serving as a Good Samaritan helping a family in need.

To join the January 22-28 volunteer team, or for more information, contact

Loren Habegger, IL/WI District Disaster Coordinator
ILWI.DDC.LH@gmail.com

Note that a second team will be assembled for a rebuild project the week of November 12-18, 2017.

BETHANY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY The Presidential Forum and Young Adult Event

God's Green Earth: A Call to Care and Witness is the theme for the Presidential Forum and Young Adult Event to be held March 16-19, 2017, at Bethany Theological Seminary.

Living not in the Garden but in the city and country, how can we serve God by caring for creation?

Talks and workshops will include a range of views on topics such as ethical farming and consuming, protecting biodiversity, responding to climate change, and simple living in the 21st century.

Visit www.bethanyseminary.edu/forum2017 for more information and to register for the event.

DE Ponderings

Stanley Hauerwas in *War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity* states: "...the church does not have an alternative to war. The church is the alternative to war. When Christians no longer see the reality of the church as an alternative to the world's reality, we abandon the world to war."

While I hold deep appreciation for Hauerwas' reflections on the church as an alternative to war, I am more profoundly struck by his thoughts that the church is an alternative to the world's reality. Such is the case because, in my view, the church's alternative reality encompasses more than the subject of war.

Several things have been on my mind lately, including the general election, divisive public discourse, reports of a rise in hate-related activity, the state budget crisis, concerns about the cohesiveness of our denomination...to name a few. The news, through a variety of outlets, is brimming with thoughts and solutions and suggestions for easing some of the aforementioned stresses. The church is frequently in the middle of all this turbulence offering its thoughts and responses for a better way forward, as if the church has alternative options for the difficult reality in which we find ourselves.

But to take Hauerwas seriously, the church doesn't have alternatives. The church is the alternative reality. Thus, the church is not the dispenser of quick fixes and hard answers and slick solutions. The church has a higher calling of identity, which is to be a safe space where grace abounds, justice prevails, and love wins. This higher calling and alternate reality provides space for another way of living.

Jesus is our example. Jesus came to us not with all kinds of hoopla and fanfare so often accompanying those to whom we look to for answers and leadership. Rather Jesus arrived as a baby, in a place where animals were kept. Jesus did not immediately impart wisdom, but rather grew in wisdom and stature over time. Jesus entered among us not to draw attention to fame and fortune, or the famous and the fortunate, but to journey with and advocate for the poor, the imprisoned, the blind, the oppressed. (Luke 4:18-19)

In Jesus we find not the answer but the way. The church, as followers of Jesus, offers not answers, or alternatives, but instead is a way. The church is the alternative.

So imagine a world in which the way is the present reality. It will be a world as imaged by Isaiah where

prey and predator reside together without fear and live in harmony, where the innocent can feel safe and no longer be harmed by the malicious, where relationship is priority with care and concern for the other, where all will live together peacefully, gloriously. (Isaiah 11:6-10)

The church is this alternate reality. To be otherwise abandons the world to a most unpleasant reality.

The Clergy Tax Seminar 2017 sponsored by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, the Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry, and Bethany Theological Seminary is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 28, 2017. The registration deadline is Jan. 20. Students, pastors, and other church leaders are invited to attend either in person at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., or online. Ministers may earn .3 continuing education units. Sessions will cover tax law for clergy, changes for 2016 (the most current tax year to file), and detailed assistance as to how to correctly file the various forms and schedules that pertain to clergy, including housing allowances, self-employment, W-2s clergy reductions, etc. Cost is \$30 per person. Current Bethany, TRIM, EFSM, SeBAH, and Earlham School of Religion students may attend at no cost, although registration is still required. Leadership is provided by Deb Oskin, EA, NTPI Fellow, who has been doing clergy tax returns since 1989. For more information go to bethanyseminary.edu/brethren-academy/clergy-tax-seminar.

Information Reporting

All ordained ministers, licensed ministers, and congregations need to keep the District Office informed of changes in contact information. Changes include: phone number, cell phone number, email address, mailing address, and congregational email or website. Please email Andrea Garnett, andrea.g.iwdcob@gmail.com or call (309)649-6008 with your updates. Your effort will save valuable staff time trying to track down these changes. Other information to share: changes in key leadership positions at the church or the death or serious illnesses of minister, retired ministers, or spouses. Help us serve better!

Parables Community

Dear Illinois and Wisconsin District friends,

We would like to thank you for your support of our new church start Parables Community. We are delighted to tell you that with your help the Holding Hands Bike Rack in the new Playground for Everyone, a playground that is accessible to children with disabilities, is paid for in full! We are grateful for the support that we have received from the District Leadership Team and the Church Revitalization and Development Team. We also give thanks for congregations that have supported us, including the York Center and Polo congregations.

It takes a broad base of support to launch a new ministry and we appreciate our wider church family that encourages, challenges, and sustains us. Parables Community continues to seek new ways to reach out to and serve the community around us, particularly those with special needs. More than ever, we appreciate the diverse gifts that God has given to us in the Body of Christ. We look forward to 2017 and the new opportunities that it brings for the mission and ministry of our church.

Yours, in Christ's Service,
Jeanne Davies
Planting Pastor
on behalf of Parables Community

Champaign (Ill.) Church of the Brethren

was one of the participants in a first Thanksgiving program sponsored by the Interfaith Alliance of Champaign County, according to an article in the News-Gazette. Groups that came together for the event also included, among others, the Sinai Temple, a Jewish congregation; Community United Church of Christ, Champaign; First Mennonite Church, Urbana; the Central Illinois Mosque and Islamic Center; New Life Church of Faith, Champaign; and the Baha'i Center, Urbana. "The alliance, which meets once a month, came up with the idea of the Interfaith Thanksgiving Program as a way to grow and affect the community beyond the group's monthly meetings at different places of worship," the article said. See www.news-gazette.com/news/local/2016-11-19/thanksgiving-program-grow.html.

National Youth Cabinet is named for 2017-18

The Church of the Brethren Youth and Young Adult Ministry has named a 2017-18 National Youth Cabinet. Members of the group are:

Hannah Buck from Mt. Wilson Church of the Brethren in Atlantic Northeast District

Erika Clary from Brownsville Church of the Brethren in Mid-Atlantic District

Emilie Deffenbaugh from Somerset Church of the Brethren in Western Pennsylvania District

Haley Dulabaum from Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Illinois and Wisconsin District

Connor Ladd from Columbia City Church of the Brethren in Northern Indiana District

Trevor Haren from Ivester Church of the Brethren in Northern Plains District

Adult advisors to the cabinet are Carol Elmore from Virgina District and Nathan Hollenberg from Shenandoah District.

Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, will work with the cabinet to plan National Youth Conference 2018. NYC 2018 will take place July 21-26 in Ft. Collins, Colo.

For more about the Youth and Young Adult Ministry go to www.brethren.org/yya.

Oakley Brick Church of the Brethren

in Cerro Gordo, Ill., is experiencing a surge of new life, according to the News-Gazette. The congregation is planning to rebuild after strong winds destroyed its church close to a year ago, on Dec. 23, 2015. Pastor David Roe told the newspaper that he has trouble counting the blessings that have poured in since then, thanks to strong support from the community and from neighboring churches. Read the article at www.news-gazette.com/news/local/2016-11-26/cerro-gordo-congregation-counting-their-blessings.html.

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
- 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

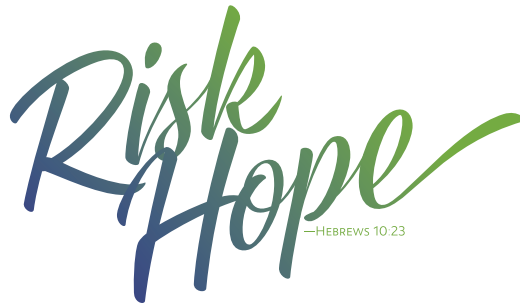
Seek Support: Interested workcampers are encourage to seek support and prayers from their faith community for the workcamp

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 • kharbeck@brethren.org • 847-429-4388



Sending Your Congregation's Delegate to Annual Conference

In 2017, the 231st 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?

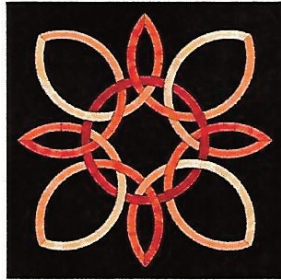
Delegates benefit personally from the opportunities for spiritual renewal, continuing education, and faith formation. Their congregations benefit from the spiritual growth that their church leadership may bring back and share with the church. In addition to business sessions, each Conference features 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, or call 800-323-8039 ext. 365.

Celebrate 2017 Annual Conference Quilting Bee

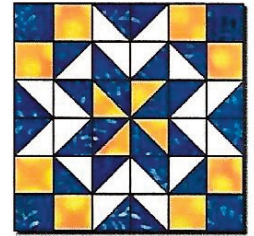
*Your finished 8 ½ x 8 ½ inch block must begin at the bottom of this sheet,
meeting this line and matching the width of this paper.*



**Your congregation is invited to
create a block
for the 2017 Conference quilts.**

Please follow instructions on the next page.

**ALL Quilt Blocks should be postmarked
by May 15, 2017**



**Mail your quilt blocks and a dollar (or more) donation
(checks payable to AACB)
to offset the cost of quilting materials to:**

**Margaret Weybright
17132 US 6
Syracuse, IN 46567
Phone - 574-831-2488**



Quilt tops are assembled before conference.

No blocks can be accepted at conference for this year's quilts.

All blocks delivered at conference will be considered
for next year's quilts and wall hangings.

**AUCTION PROCEEDS OF CONFERENCE QUILTS BENEFIT
PROJECTS TO ALLEVIATE HUNGER.**

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!”

The Conference Office reminds congregations and districts that there will be no early registration for their Annual Conference delegates in January as in years past. Both delegate and non-delegate registration will open online on the same day, Wednesday, March 1, 2017. Annual Conference will be held in Grand Rapids, Mich., from June 28 to July 2. More information can be found at www.brethren.org/ac/2017.

2017 Calendar

January

- 6..... Epiphany
- 7..... Program and Arrangements
Committee meeting, York Center COB,
10am
- 10..... Listening Session with David Steele,
First COB, Peoria, IL
- 11..... Listening Session with David Steele,
Mt. Morris COB
- 14..... District Potluck Meeting, Virden COB
- 15..... Listening Session with David Steele,
York Center COB, Lombard, IL
- 16..... Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 17..... Chicago Visioning Team meeting,
Chicago, 5:30pm
- 18-25....Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- 22-26....Council of District Executives Winter
Meeting, Melbourne, FL

February

- 1..... District Newsletter deadline for
articles / information
- 2..... Groundhog Day
- 4..... Ministerial Leadership Development
Team meeting, via Skype
- 5..... Service Sunday
- 11..... District Leadership Team Meeting,
Camp Emmaus, Mt. Morris, 10am
- 14..... Valentine’s Day
- 18..... Gifts Discernment and Call Committee
meeting, Dixon COB
- 20..... President’s Day
- 26..... Transfiguration Sunday

March

- 1..... Ash Wednesday
- 1..... Deadline for newsletter articles
- 5..... Midwest District Executives meet,
Camp Mack, Milford, IN
- 12..... Daylight Saving Time begins