



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

Contributions to the column reserved for the moderator will present meditations, written by members of the congregations in the IL/WI District.

While in college, I had the amazing opportunity to travel to Romania and help teach English at a summer camp. It was very similar to what you would picture summer camp here in the United States to be: games, songs, cabins, communal meals, etc., although there were a couple vast differences. One, the restroom facilities was a hole in the ground with four walls that went from the ground to almost your waist. So, when you were using the facility you could easily see who was walking by. Two, the shower was a hose stuck through a wall of a cement building. Each cabin had their shower time assigned every couple of days; we learned to adapt.

One of the activities for the whole camp on Wednesday was to hike up this mountain to visit a monastery and enjoy the view. I was somewhere in the middle of the pack as we started our journey. Then one of the girls in my cabin slipped and badly scraped her knees. We took the time to clean and bandage her up. When given the choice to move forward or return to camp, she wanted to continue. As we continued I noticed we had fallen pretty far behind, even though I could still see the group ahead. I didn't want to push the young lady too hard until I could see if she was more injured than she let us believe. We were able to pick up our pace after some time, yet it was not enough to catch up with the whole crew.

I became extremely nervous and scared. I was with a good friend from home, yet we had no idea where we were going. Do we turn around? Do we keep going? What if we get lost with the 9 children we have in our care? This was about the only time this week we were thankful they couldn't understand English very well. It protected them from any fear. They laughed and teased one another on the path as my friend and I discussed what we should do. We noticed ahead about 50 yards was a sign. We decided

to get to the sign and see if it gave us any direction. Then we would determine our plan.

Once we got to the sign, we quickly discovered it was written in Romanian. This was not going to be much help. A young man, Vlad, that was walking in our group stepped forward to see if he could translate, as he had taken other classes and his English was better than most. The look of hope on Vlad's face diminished as he told us it was only a sign marking the name of the path we were on.

It is safe to say that I was absolutely terrified. I am not sure I have felt fear as deeply as I felt it on this day. It was more than me that was at risk. I had a dear friend, and 9 children aged 9-17 with me; children whose parents dropped them off and I looked them in the eye and said I would care for them for the week. Yet here I was, lost in a foreign land, in the wilderness, on the side of a mountain, with NO map. The fear was so strong I was becoming sick to my stomach, and the lump in my throat was getting more and more difficult to swallow.

I wish I could put into words what happened next, but I don't believe there are words designed for this type of thing. I was in the middle of what I would call a mini panic attack. When I dropped my head and whispered, "Help me Lord", I was suddenly overcome with peace and comfort. The fear that was living in my heart had vanished and was replaced with determination. I was going to finish this hike with the children. They deserve to see this view they have been promised. With little confidence, my friend agreed and we continued. It was possibly 100 yards from the sign when we followed the path around a corner and over a small hill to discover the rest of our group enjoying the magnificent view. The children we had been hiking with trotted off to join

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DE Ponderings

Praise the Lord!

*O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.*

—Psalm 106:1 (NRSV)

The Illinois/Wisconsin District of the Church of the Brethren is more than an organization registered with the State of Illinois. The District is made up of people, congregations, fellowships, projects, groups, teams, committees, boards, camps, homes, and so much more, all of which are active, vital, and alive. It is a challenge to keep up with all that is happening among us, and, truth be told, I don't keep up, which means there is just so much good happening that it is more than any one person is able to follow. My point is not to make a statement about my inability to take it all in. Rather, it is my goal to point to all the good that is happening and to say that God is good and provides in such abundance that our cups overflow. Because we are so richly blessed with gifts, talents, abilities, and skills, we are given the capacity to share blessings with others widely and broadly, and we do. And so, it is right that we give God thanks for enduring, steadfast love and abundant goodness. Let's join together in thanksgiving for God's goodness provided in the following ways.

- The opportunity to meet together as a District at the District Potluck March 18, 2017, at the Virden Church of the Brethren and then November 3 & 4, 2017, for District Conference at the York Center Church of the Brethren in Lombard, IL.
- The ministry provided by Parables Community and The Gathering Chicago, two emerging ministries in the district. These ministries have unique foci but both are committed to sharing the love of Christ in very special ways.
- Celebrate with the Mt. Morris Church of the Brethren for 150 years as a congregation and 60 years in their present building. Give thanks with them on Saturday, May 6, 6:30pm, for an evening of entertainment by Jonathan Shively; and Sunday, May 7, 9:30am, for a celebration worship service.
- The Champaign Church of the Brethren continues to provide a community garden. This congregation has also completed repairs to a chronically leaky roof.
- The Canton Church of the Brethren is finding renewed energy while embarking on a journey of Dignity, fostering wholeness, balance, and peace through respect of God's creation. Focus is being given to and objectives worked on in the following areas of passion: Community, Traditions and

History, Ministry and Education, Environment, and Relationships.

- The Dixon, Virden, First Chicago, and West Branch congregations are engaged in pastoral search processes. Give thanks for the good work the search committees are doing and for leadership that is yet to be called.
- Several persons in our district are at different stages in the process to be credentialed in set-apart ministry. Unique gifts are emerging for the glory of God and the good of our neighbors.
- The district office is being kept in good order by a talented and efficient administrative assistant.
- The Woodland congregation recently held a trivia bowl to raise money to provide scholarships for children to attend Camp Emmanuel this summer.
- The District Leadership Team, standing teams, and ministry teams are functioning with integrity and energy to keep the ministry of this district moving forward.
- Your congregation, your group, your team, your efforts, while not specifically named here (please let us know what you are doing; we are delighted to publish your activity), contribute in significant ways to the life, health, and vitality of this district, the denomination, and the Church.

To God be the glory. Amen.

On the Lighter Side...

Paul Kohler submitted some humorous church names, courtesy of Bob Logan (Coachnet) and church planter Bob Neil. At first look one might think these names are fake news, but they are real.

- *Accident Baptist Church* is obviously not Calvinist.
- *Greater Second Baptist Church of Chattanooga, TN*. Perhaps it is an alternative to the Second Baptist Church around the corner?
- *Boring Seventh Day Adventist Church* is hopefully not an example of "truth in advertising". Funnily enough, their pastor is Elder Dull.
- *Harmony Baptist Church* sounds like a great name, but it is just a half of a mile from *Harmony Baptist Church #2*.
- When Paul spoke of being all things to all people, I doubt he had this in mind: *First United Separated Baptist Church*.

Anabaptist Disabilities Network

Come as You Are!

Worship at Parables Community Church emphasizes belonging and empowerment for those with disabilities and their families

Posted by Jeanne Davies / Lombard, Illinois



Carolyn and Jonah Neher serve as greeters for the first Parables worship service.

Parables Community is a new church start in Lombard, Illinois, a suburb 20 miles west of the city of Chicago. Launched in April of 2016, Parables welcomes all people in worship with an emphasis on creating a community of belonging and empowerment for people with special needs and their families.

Many find it difficult to operate within the social norms and constructs of traditional worship. **Parables opens up those social norms so that everyone is welcome to “come as they are.”** We are a “no-shushing” zone in which making noise, moving around, singing out, leaving the room and coming back are all acceptable behaviors. We delight in our diversity and don't sweat the small stuff.

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Parables has noise-reducing headphones available for those who need them. We also have fidgets and calming aids such as weighted blankets. We have a quiet room adjacent to the worship room with beanbag chairs and pillows for anyone who would like to remove themselves from being over-stimulated for a while.

We delight in our diversity and don't sweat the small stuff.



Benjamin Shively reading scripture during worship with Pastor Jeanne

Worship at Parables Community accommodates special needs and employs special gifts. Symbols are projected for each distinct part of the service: Singing, Call to Worship, Passing the Peace, Praying, Scripture, Message, and Benediction. These symbols are also printed alongside the words in the bulletin, so that the same bulletin showing the order of the worship service can be used by readers and non-readers alike. Rhythm

instruments are used by all and songs are simple choruses that do not require the ability to read. The pastor's message is brief, designed to engage the entire community, and accompanied by projected photos that help convey the message.

At Parables Community we recognize that all people have gifts to share. We welcome everyone to share their gifts as worship leaders, prayer leaders, scripture readers, greeters, and music makers. God has given us all to one another so that the Body of Christ may be complete. Every person in the community is important and valued. Everyone belongs and everyone serves.

We recently raised \$1500 to build the "Holding Hands Bike Rack" for the Playground for Everyone at Butterfield Park, a new playground that includes play equipment for children with disabilities so that all children can play together. This is our first effort at reaching out to serve the community around us – a very exciting opportunity for us in our first year! We plan to serve at a free community Christmas Party for children with disabilities and their families. We also plan to serve together in January at Feed My Starving Children, a hunger relief organization.

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Parables Community enjoying the Special Kids Day Carnival in Elmhurst last summer

Parables Community is a part of the Open Roof Fellowship in the Church of the Brethren, recognized for our efforts at including those with disabilities. Parables is also a member congregation of the Anabaptist Disabilities Network. We received an honorable mention from the McCormick Prize for Innovative Ministry in 2016.

Parables Community is just beginning but we are looking forward to seeing where God leads us. We appreciate your prayers and support.



Jeanne Davies is Pastor of Parables Community Church

From *Newsline*

The Church of the Brethren e-mail news service, to subscribe go to cobnews@brethren.org

The Church of the Brethren Ministers' Association has announced dates and leadership for the pre-Annual Conference continuing education event in Grand Rapids, Mich. Dates are June 27-28. Keynote presenter Lillian Daniel is author of "Tired of Apologizing for a Church I Don't Belong to: Spirituality Without Stereotypes, Religion Without Ranting," and has taught preaching at a number of schools, including Chicago Theological Seminary, the University of Chicago Divinity School, and her alma mater, Yale Divinity School. Participants will receive a free copy of her most recent book. Three keynote sessions will be offered: Session 1: Four Types of Nones (Tuesday, June 27, 6-9 p.m.); Session 2: Spirituality Without Stereotypes (Wednesday, June 28, 9-11:45 a.m.); Session 3: Religion Without Ranting (Wednesday, June 28, 1-3:45 p.m.). This continuing education event is for all licensed, commissioned, and ordained ministers in the Church of the Brethren. Advance registration fees are \$85 per person or \$135 per couple, with a price for first-timers of \$45 and a price of \$50 for current seminary students and students in EFSM and TRIM. Registration fees go up at the door. Find out more and register at www.brethren.org/ministryoffice/sustaining.html.

"Did you hear about that time when even Jesus changed his mind? Have you thought about inaction to injustice as complicity? Do you consider what people are hearing when they look at your life?" asks an announcement of the latest Dunker Punks podcasts. Episodes tackle these big questions: Episode 22 features Josh Brockway and Jarrod McKenna talking about continuing the story of the New Testament by embodying the character of our faith; Episode 23 features Sarah Ullom-Minnich telling about a 23-year-old battle for environmental justice in Ecuador; Episode 24 includes a theological chat between Dana Cassell and Lauree Hersch Meyer exploring Matthew 15. Find these episodes and more on the Dunker Punks Podcast show page at arlingtoncob.org/dpp.

Global Food Initiative supports soybean consultation in Africa, community garden in Illinois. With a grant of \$2,500, the Church of the Brethren Global Food Initiative (GFI) is supporting a soybean consultation and exchange visit between Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) and Church Aid Inc. in

Liberia. Another recent grant of \$1,000 supports a community gardening initiative of Rockford (Ill.) Community Church of the Brethren. Read the full story at www.brethren.org/news/2017/global-food-initiative-recent-grants.html

General secretary continues to hold listening sessions. David Steele, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren, is holding listening sessions in church districts around the denomination. The meetings are a way for him to listen closely to people within the church, and an opportunity for church members to meet the general secretary. Last fall, several listening sessions were held--mostly in conjunction with district conferences.

In January, listening sessions were held in Illinois and Wisconsin District and Atlantic Southeast District. Beginning this month, more listening sessions will be offered in several districts in the Midwest. All are invited. Read the full story at www.brethren.org/news/2017/general-secretary-listening-sessions.html

Annual Conference registration and housing reservations for delegates and nondelegates opened on Wednesday, March 1. The 2017 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren will be held June 28-July 2 in Grand Rapids, Mich. For the online registration go to www.brethren.org/ac/2017.

The Church of the Brethren's Western Pennsylvania District seeks candidates to fill the full-time position of district executive minister. The position is available Jan. 1, 2018. The district is made up of 67 congregations, including rural, small town, and urban congregations, and extends from the northern border to the southern border of Pennsylvania. The district is interested revitalizing its congregations, and the preferred candidate is a pastoral leader who offers motivation through spiritual guidance, and will work together with district and congregational leaders to envision and carry out the work of the district. Responsibilities include serving as administrator of the leadership team of the district, facilitating and giving general oversight to the planning and implementation of its ministries as directed by district conference; assisting congregations and pastors with placement;

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encouraging congregational and pastoral vitality and spirituality, and continued personal, spiritual, and professional growth; building and strengthening relationships with congregations; ensuring effective means of communication at all levels within the district; supporting the mission and values of the Western Pennsylvania District and the Church of the Brethren. Qualifications include a clear commitment to Jesus Christ demonstrated by a vibrant spiritual life with a commitment to New Testament values and to Church of the Brethren faith and heritage; membership and ordination in the Church of the Brethren required, with ministry experience preferred; a bachelor's degree required, with a master's degree or higher degree preferred; strong relational, communication, and conflict resolution skills; competence in administration, organizational skills, and electronic communications; passion for the mission and ministry of the church; flexibility in working with staff, volunteers, and pastoral and congregational leadership. Apply by sending a letter of interest and resume via e-mail to OfficeofMinistry@brethren.org . Applicants are requested to contact at least three people to provide a letter of reference to OfficeofMinistry@brethren.org . Upon receipt of a resume, a candidate profile will be sent that must be completed and returned before the application is considered complete. The application deadline is May 19.

The trustees of Camp Galilee in West Marva District are looking for an individual to serve as camp manager. Applicants should have a solid Christian foundation, live a life that reflects these values, have a love for children of all ages, and have a love for the outdoors. A minimum of a high school education and basic computers skills are required. Responsibilities include inspecting and coordinating with the caretaker to maintain the buildings and grounds; working with cooks to prepare menus and food orders; keeping records for the camp including finances, insurance, regulatory agencies, etc.; and overseeing all other operations of the camp with the help of the trustees. Most responsibilities are during the months of April through October. The manager must be willing to stay at the camp when campers are present. An apartment and all meals are provided as well as a limited mileage allowance for travel. Salary is negotiable. Request an application from the West Marva District Office, 301-334-9270 or wmarva@verizon.net . Questions may be directed to one of the following trustees: Mark Seese, 304-698-3500; Bob Spaid, 304-290-3459; or Cathy McGoldrick, 301-616-1147.

A Healthy Boundaries 101 training session is offered on May 8, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. (eastern time). This web event sponsored by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership is an entry level ministerial ethics training led by former academy executive director Julie Hostetter and provided for seminary students entering ministry formation placements and also suitable for EFSM, TRIM, and ACTS students and newly licensed or ordained ministers who have not yet taken ministerial ethics training. Said an announcement: "We will focus on Healthy Boundary issues in the morning: part 1, boundaries, power, and vulnerability; part 2, dating, friendships, dual relationships and gifts; part 3, the pulpit, transference, hugging and touch, intimacy; and part 4, personal needs and self-care, red flags, and final reflections. The topics of social media, Internet, and finances are not part of the DVD series but will be explored briefly. The afternoon session focuses on Church of the Brethren specific materials: a review of the 2008 Ethics in Ministry Relations Paper, a PowerPoint overview of the process." Contact academy@bethanyseminary.edu or academy@brethren.org . A website link will be e-mailed to participants a few days prior to the webcast. Registration and payment of \$30 or \$15 for current students must be sent to the Brethren Academy by April 21. No phone or e-mail registrations will be accepted after this deadline date.

"Are you a college student, a seminary student, a graduate school student, or a high school student? Or do you know somebody who is? Enter the Bethany Theological Seminary Peace Essay Contest!" said an invitation. The theme is "Where Do You See Peace?" The deadline to submit essays is March 27. The contest offers a first-place prize of \$2,000, a second-place prize of \$1,000, and a third-place prize of \$500. Learn more about the theme, essay guidelines, and details at <https://bethanyseminary.edu/2017-peace-essay-contest-announced> . Submit essays at <https://bethanyseminary.edu/events-resources/special-events-at-bethany/2017-peace-essay-contest/bethany-peace-essay-contest-submission> .

Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) is accepting applications for its Peacemaker Corps. CPT got its start as an initiative of the peace churches including the Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, and Quakers. "Join us in building partnerships to transform violence and oppression!" said the announcement. Applicants must be 21 years of age

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From *Newsline*

or older and have completed, or plan to complete, a short-term CPT delegation or internship. Qualified applicants may be invited to participate in CPT's intensive, month-long training from July 13-Aug. 13 in Chicago, Ill., where membership in the Peacemaker Corps is discerned. Trained Peacemaker Corps members are then eligible to apply for open positions on CPT teams. CPT builds partnerships to transform violence and oppression in situations of lethal conflict around the world, committed to work and relationships that: 1) honor and reflect the presence of faith and spirituality, 2) strengthen grassroots initiatives, 3) transform structures of domination and oppression, and 4) embody creative nonviolence and liberating love. CPT is a Christian-identified organization with a multi-faith/spiritually diverse membership. CPT seeks individuals who are capable, responsible, and rooted in faith/spirituality to work for peace as members of violence-reduction teams trained in the disciplines of nonviolence. CPT is committed to building a Peacemaker Corps that reflects the rich diversity of the human family in ability, age, class, ethnicity, gender identity, language, national origin, race, and sexual orientation. The application deadline is March 15. Direct questions to personnel@cpt.org.

From the Moderator

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their friends and a feeling of total relief bubbled up and overflowed through my eyes. My friend looked at me with the same relieved expression and we walked arm in arm to the rest of the group.

How many times in our lives do we find ourselves in the same position? We are so overcome with fear we are almost paralyzed. Sometimes we take that fear and use it and sometimes we let the fear use us. If I would have let the fear use me, I would never have seen that most incredible view or the delight on the children's face as they saw it. I also wouldn't have been able to share their joy of accomplishment.

There were two scriptures running through my mind that day the first being, *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."* **Psalm 23:4**. You may find that humorous, and now as I look back I can laugh at the thought. Although, there was about 15 minutes left on that hike when I didn't know if I was going to find my way out of there.

Then at my darkest moment and in my deepest fear, this verse came into my heart. *"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you."* **Psalm 56:3**.

There are days when we will be afraid and we will wonder just how far we must go to see that promised view. Do not turn around, dear friends. Do not allow the fear to paralyze you. That view may only be 100 yards away. It was later that night around a campfire when we joked about our journey, when it dawned on me that I never asked Vlad what the sign said. Literally translated the name of the path was, "Fear Not".

Amanda (Mandy) Rahn

Member of: Lanark Church of the Brethren and District Leadership Team

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VENTURES



IN CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

March Ventures Course

Steve Crain, pastor of the Lafayette Church of the Brethren in Indiana, is passionate about Christian spirituality and will help deepen our bonds of spirituality on Saturday, March 11th, 9 a.m. to Noon CST. "Christ Is My New Me: A Lenten Exploration" is the title he gives to his course which will examine Galatians 2:19-20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." His goal is for course attendees to explore the depths of what Paul means, interpret the passage in its context, ponder how spiritual teachers have understood it, and open our hearts to its meaning for us, right here and now. Registration information is available at www.mcpherson.edu/ventures.

Ventures in Christian Discipleship is an online program of McPherson College, designed to equip church members with skills and understandings for faithful and dynamic Christian living, action and leadership. All courses are free, but donations are welcome to help continue this effort.

Celebrate the Mt. Morris Church of the Brethren Anniversaries

150 years as a Congregation 1867—2017

60 years in our Building 1957—2017

Saturday, May 6, 6:30PM

Entertainment by Jonathan Shively

Fellowship time to follow.

Sunday, May 7 9:30AM

Celebration Worship Service

Followed by potluck dinner.

We'd be honored to have you join us.