



Reflecting news and views

The Reflector

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District Executive: Kevin Kessler

What am I reading?

by Paul Kohler, Moderator-Elect, Champaign

A rabbi and a story teller, who was fascinated with the life and times of Jesus, wrote a very interesting book about said subject. The author's name is Sholem Asch and his book is "The Nazarene". We naturally associate "the Nazarene" with Jesus, and thus it is strange that Jesus does not enter the scene until the 570th page. "The Nazarene" centers on Jesus, but its main focus is on the text of the folkways and belief structures of the four major language groups with which Jesus interacted. The author explores the language of Jesus' home, Nazritzii (Syriac Eastern Dialect). He also examines the following groups:

- the other Syriac, spoken in Jerusalem
- the Roman speakers (Latin speakers neither compliant nor having similar traditions)
- the Greeks (Language Ellenah and traditions and belief structures similar enough to cause huge problems for the translator)

During the author's exploration, "strange" and "wrong" things happen. For example, Jesus went about the country of his birth preaching and teaching in the synagogues. The translator's presentation creates an illusion that He taught in Greek. However, according to Jewish law, conducting worship in Greek would be considered unclean. Ramifications include at the least being escorted out of the synagogue and at the worst, stoning. Also, Syriac was – and still is – the required language for various part of worship. Worship in a foreign tongue was permitted only in countries where the majority of congregants were known to speak a foreign language. Even now, the congregation's warden polices violations. A more modern example of this can be seen in American synagogues. In the United States, English and Syriac are the languages used during worship. Thus, if Jesus taught in the Galilean synagogues or quoted scripture in the countryside, He spoke Syriac. Those listening expected to hear Syriac, as other languages were considered unclean.

Rabbi Asch points out many of the problems Christianity and Yeshuva bar Yoseph, bas Miriam, ben David, also known as Jesus, faced in the early days. On an interesting and better note, the Mishna, which is a growing and changing book of oral law, now contains many of the actions and laws that Jesus suggested changing. One example is that in Jesus' time, under then Mishna law men could not commit adultery. Now, under revised Mishna law, a man commits adultery if he is a married man or if she is a married woman (Mishna: Baba).

I wish you the very best and will see hopefully see you at the Annual District Conference.

"The Nazarene" was originally written in Yiddish, so if you are planning on buying a copy, choose carefully.

Shalom



Champaign's Crafts supply area for the after school children

York Center COB Service Project

District Conference 2017 will have a Community Out-Reach Service Project. We will be collecting non-perishable food items, such as canned goods (soups, fruit, vegetables, etc.), and boxed goods (cereal, pancake mix, crackers, etc.). These items will go to the Lombard / Villa Park Food Pantry, which York Center Church supports.

There will be boxes in the church narthex for the food items Friday night and Saturday.

DE Ponderings

I have an appreciation for the writings of Vernard Eller, one time professor of Religion at the University of LaVerne, primarily because his views are cutting edge and sometimes cutting. I never knew him personally, but I gather from his books that he was a person comfortable in his own skin even if what he said or wrote stirred thoughts and emotions in others.

Presently I'm reading a book Eller wrote entitled *Towering Babble: God's People Without God's Word*. I have a hunch this book, when it was published in 1983, raised some eyebrows. Eller speaks rather directly to the church that it was losing its grounding in theology. The church, in Eller's mind, seemed to be moving more in the direction of anthropology. In other words, the church was becoming more human-centered than God-centered.

Eller wrote: "Above all, at the heart of our faith, we dare not allow the glorifying of the human to encroach our glorifying of God." And then he proposed a minimum, core theology consisting of eight points. Point #5 rose to the surface for me. It says: "Human ego-assertiveness, any desire to look heroic in the sight of God, is sin." This statement put me in a state of reflection and I began to ruminate about the present state of our denomination.

A number of thoughts are suggested as reasons for our current state of uncertainty about denominational unity. We don't agree on the authority and understanding of scripture. Matters of human sexuality become lines in the sand. Conservatism or progressivism is the problem. Various forms of theology take us in different directions. Whether we view scripture from a literal or a literary perspective is a key factor.

Is it one of the above reasons that cause disunity among us? Or is it all of the above and more? Or could it be something different?

Let me be clear that I don't have the definitive answer. However, Eller has given me pause. Could his point #5 be a reason that has not been given attention in our 21st century dilemma? Does the possibility exist that heroism is a factor in our present situation? In efforts to make/keep the church "pure" or to offer a prophetic voice or to find the solution to our problems, are we in any way wanting to emerge as the hero who once and for all brings about a way forward which we can all agree on?

Could it be we have not found the way forward yet because our approach is too anthropological (heroic) rather than theological (God)? Are we expecting the answers/solutions to come from us rather than diligently seeking the mind of Christ to understand God's purposes for us?

I am not suggesting that the questions I ask insinuate an answer. I simply offer the questions as another way to approach the problem, and to suggest that adequate time is taken to receive theology inspired responses rather than too quickly accepting anthropological solutions.

So thank you, Vernard Eller, for decades-old thoughts that have relevancy for our current situation.

Online Forum on Space-Sharing by Congregations

Dr. Paul Numrich, an ordained minister in the IL/WI District and professor in the Snowden Chair for the Study of Religion and Interreligious Relations at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, is leading a three-installment online forum about who shares space, the benefits of space-sharing, and conflicts over shared space in



congregations. The forum is part of a research project with the primary goal to identify factors that lead to relatively conflict-free arrangements.

Dr. Numrich is extending the invitation to our district to participate in this forum. For additional information and to enroll in the forum, visit the website of the Methodist Theological School in Ohio or use this link to access the forum website page:

www.mtso.edu/academics/faculty/ongoing-faculty-projects/space-sharing-by-congregations/.

IL/WI Participation in Brethren Disaster Ministries – Missouri Flood Recovery

The IL/WI District is scheduled to send a volunteer team the week of November 12-18, 2017, to the Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) project in Eureka, MO. This area was devastated by floods in 2015 and again in 2017. Persons with an interest in being part of this team should return the attached registration form, or submit questions, by October 1, 2017, to Loren Habegger, BDM District Disaster Coordinator at ILWI.DDC.LH@gmail.com or by regular mail to Loren at 211 James Dr, Westmont, IL 60559.

Also, IL/WI persons could be part of an additional district volunteer team scheduled to be in Eureka the week of January 21 - 27, 2018.

BDM Response to Hurricane Harvey

BDM will be supporting both the short and long-term recovery of the impacted communities in Texas and Louisiana (and possibly Florida, depending on the path of Irma). Current details are provided on the BDM web site: brethren.org/bdm/hurricane-harvey.html

Before Hurricane Harvey made landfall, Children's Disaster Services (CDS) teams of trained and certified volunteers were activated and ready to travel. By the end of August, CDS had deployed 24 volunteers to Texas, with at least 30 more volunteers planning to arrive soon.

At this stage cash donations are a preferred response. Donations can be sent to:

**Emergency Disaster Fund
Hurricane Harvey Response
Church of the Brethren
1451 Dundee Ave.
Elgin, IL 60120**

There is also an urgent need for **Clean-up Buckets and Hygiene Kits**. Completed kits are being collected for shipment by the Brethren Service Center at 601 Main Street, New Windsor, MD 21776. Learn more about these and other kits at cwskits.org.

Volunteers interested in assisting in on-site recovery should coordinate with BDM to be placed on a volunteer list. In the mean time volunteers can continue to serve on other BDM project sites.

The 37th Annual Country Store and Chicken Noodle Soup Lunch will be held at the Freeport Church of the Brethren on Thursday, October 5, 10:30 am – 1:30 pm.

The lunch includes homemade chicken noodle soup, roll, gelatin salad, cake, and beverage for \$7.00. The Country Store includes many baked goods like pies, breads, and cookies; plants; jam; crafts; and fall produce such as pumpkins, squash, and gourds.



The church is located at 777 W. Pleasant St. (corner of S. West Ave. or Hwy. 26). Handicap parking and chairlift are located at the Pleasant Street entrance. All others are welcome to use the door from the parking lot.

CONTACT: Linda Simler
Freeport Church of the Brethren
815-541-0170

How best to help: Advice from Brethren Disaster Ministries

Church of the Brethren Newslines
September 9, 2017

“Financial donations are best,” said a communication from Brethren Disaster Ministries about how best to help aid those affected by the hurricanes. Also needed are donations of Church World Service (CWS) kits and clean-up buckets that are specifically designed to meet the immediate needs of disaster survivors.

“Please do not send donated clothes and household items,” said the Brethren Disaster Ministries communication. “There is lack of space to store them and response groups must spend time organizing them instead of helping the survivors with their more urgent needs.

“Cash donations are always preferred over material donations. Cash can provide funds needed to meet immediate needs, including purchasing goods and services in disaster-stricken communities, boosting the local economy and lessening the need to transport items from a distance.”

Monetary donations

A Hurricane Irma response fund has been created within the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) of the Church of the Brethren, to allow Brethren Disaster Ministries to provide support to survivors of Hurricane Irma both internationally and in the United States. Brethren Disaster Ministries will work in conjunction with partners and churches in the affected areas to help the most vulnerable in those communities to recover from this overwhelming storm.

Also, donations are still being received to the Hurricane Harvey response. These donations also are received into the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF).

Give donations online at www.brethren.org/edf . Send checks by mail to Emergency Disaster Fund, Hurricane Harvey or Hurricane Irma Response, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

Kit and clean-up bucket donations

Individuals, congregations, and districts may consider collecting CWS Gift of the Heart kits, using the instructions at <http://cwskits.org> . These kits are urgently needed at this time, and may be delivered or sent to the Material Resources program at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., or to other CWS kit collection depots.

More suggestions for action

- Pray for all those impacted and for all the responders who are serving them.
- Plan a disaster relief fundraiser.
- Register for the waiting list to volunteer for Brethren Disaster Ministries at www.brethren.org/bdm/rebuild/volunteer.html .
- Attend a Children’s Disaster Services training in order to become a CDS volunteer, able to serve children and families during future disasters.
- Contact National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (National VOAD), which is taking names of people interested in volunteering. Your information will be shared with organizations when they begin accepting volunteers. Go to www.nvoad.org/hurricane-harvey/hurricane-harvey-how-to-help .

POWER HOUSE 2017

A regional conference for Church of the Brethren youth

Who am I?



1 Corinthians 12:27

Nov. 18-19



Speaker:
Jamie Makatche



Camp Alexander Mack | Milford, Ind.
Register online at manchester.edu/powerhouse

From *Newsline*

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

Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) is extending the deadline for applications to participate in the Fall orientation unit. The deadline has been extended to Aug. 31. Dates for the orientation unit are Sept. 24-Oct. 13, at Camp Pine Lake in Eldora, Iowa. For more information go to www.brethren.org/bvs

Moderator invites denomination to online 'townhall meetings'. Annual Conference moderator Samuel K. Sarpiya is issuing an invitation to Brethren across the denomination to join in online "townhall meetings" that he plans to hold once a month beginning Sept. 28. The online "townhalls" will explore the theme for the 2018 Annual Conference, "Living Parables."

Read the full story at www.brethren.org/news/2017/moderator-invites-brethren-to-online-townhalls.html

'Living Parables': About the Annual Conference theme

by Samuel K. Sarpiya, Annual Conference moderator

The simple understanding of a parable is literally from Jesus' parables, which were stories that were cast alongside a truth in order to illustrate that truth, or the telling of a familiar story to illustrate big truths. Jesus' parables were teaching aids and can be thought of as extended analogies or inspired comparisons. A common description of a parable is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Read the full reflection at www.brethren.org/news/2017/living-parables-annual-conference-theme.html

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Newsline

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Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) seeks an accountant/bookkeeper for a full-time, exempt position based at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. The primary function is to manage all aspects of day-to-day bookkeeping and accounting processes. Duties include managing all aspects of daily bookkeeping and accounting processes for A/P, A/R, payroll, journal entries, and bank reconciliations in accordance to GAAP. The ideal candidate will have an undergraduate degree in accounting and a strong working knowledge of fund accounting. Experience with Microsoft Great Plains is preferred. This position requires a person who is very detail oriented, with the ability to prioritize workloads; proficiency with computer systems and applications; and exceptional organizational and telephone skills. Impeccable follow-up abilities are a must. BBT is seeking candidates with strong verbal and written communications skills, proficiency in Excel, and a demonstrated track record of providing superior customer service and a willingness and ability to expand knowledge and effectiveness through classes and workshops. Current and active membership in the Church of the Brethren is preferred; current and active membership in a faith community is required. Salary and benefits are competitive with Church Benefits Association agencies of comparable size and scope of services. A full benefits package is included. Send a letter of interest, résumé, three professional references, and salary-range expectation to Donna March at 1505 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120, or dmarch@cobbt.org. For more information about Brethren Benefit Trust, visit www.cobbt.org

Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) is seeking to fill the position of interim administrative director. The position is anticipated to be for one year, with hours and wages to be negotiated. Responsibilities include to strategize, coordinate, and aid communication within the organization, working alongside the Program Director to help CPT better align with the mission of the organization to confront

areas of lethal conflict and undoing oppressions; to help CPT assess the administrative components of its work and how it connects to the organization as a whole with regard to projects and Steering Committee including: structure, roles, decision making flow, constituency relations; bring skilled understanding of organizational structures and models, and how to make organizational change. The interim nature of the role will allow for greater freedom to provide constructive criticism of areas that are weak in relation to fulfilling mission, vision, and values of partnership which are not in line with stated CPT values of partnership. Their main purpose is to help the organization change into the new model and prepare for working with a new administrative director. Duties also include participating in the onboarding process of the Development Coordinator and the newly hired Communication Coordinator, including developing internal communication processes and practices, and engaging with the Program Director to consider areas where projects and the Administration Team can more efficiently and effectively work together; among others. Qualifications include experience in working with Christian, ecumenical, and interfaith organizations; experience in director level and interim leadership; ideally 10 years of leadership experience; graduate studies in relevant field to organizational management or CPT's work. Apply by submitting a resume, cover letter, and brief description of approach to interim and transitional processes to [hiring@cpt.org](mailto: hiring@cpt.org). Review of candidates will begin immediately.

Annual Conference moderator Samuel Sarpiya will be leading a workshop titled "A Story of Biblical Peacemaking" on Saturday, Sept. 30, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at Harrisonburg (Va.) First Church of the Brethren. Ordained and licensed ministers who attend can earn .3 continuing education units. The workshop is sponsored by the Pastoral Support Committee of the Shenandoah District Ministerial Leadership Team. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. The cost is \$10, and reservations are due by Sept. 25 by calling or e-mailing Sandy Kinsey at 540-234-8555 or districtoffice@shencob.org.