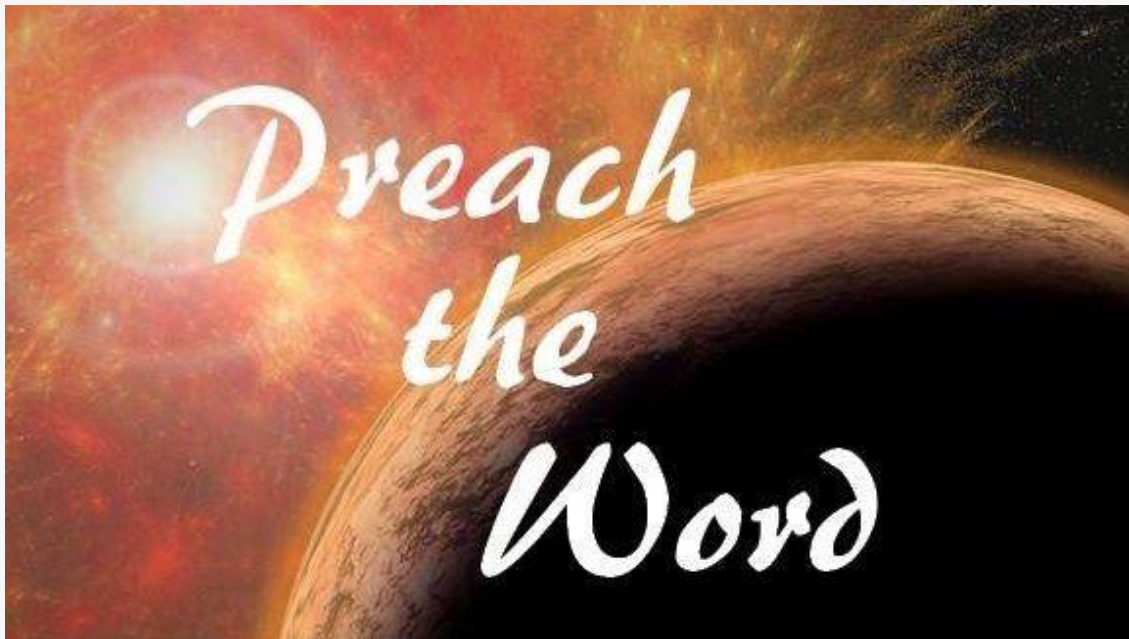


The Reflector

An e-publication of the Illinois & Wisconsin District of the Church
of the Brethren



DE Ponderings

by Kevin Kessler

In September 2016 I had the honor and privilege of performing a wedding in the beautiful and majestic Rocky Mountain National Park. Tammy and I spent a few days in Estes Park, CO, and then traveled on west to Rifle, CO, to see her nephew who was serving as park ranger intern a state park. The scenery was absolutely breath-taking in the mountains. After returning home, I wrote

the following prayer in my journal.

O Masterful Creator, how great are your works. The topography of land, the variety of life, the good and difficulties of life all mixed together leaves me in a state of awe. The plains, flat and rolling, producing crops. The hills and mountains complete with phenomenal rock formations, and made whole with the addition of wildlife—elk, deer, bear, turkeys, rodents, etc.

You, Creator God, bring wholeness and balance to the created order which we are given to enjoy. But we have the responsibility to care for it—to help maintain balance, to help restore balance where imbalance occurs.

With my breathing, I am grateful for all you provide, God. With my mind and hands let me be about assisting you, joining you in sustaining the glory, majesty, mystery, and beauty of your created order.

Life, O Giver of all, includes death. For those families who have lost loved ones in tragic highway accidents, bring healing to their grief. Release them from anger and any self-blame.**

May we also find ways, O Lover of our souls, to find and restore peace among us, especially where racial tension exists, where misunderstanding between law and citizen exists, where political factions separate us, where theological understandings get in the way of relationships. Encourage and embolden us, O God, to be good kingdom citizens so that we are the best citizens of this world. Open our minds and hearts and eyes to know that both your kingdom and this world are not mutually exclusive.

I have so much for which to be thankful. And because of this abundance, let me always be mindful of joining you in caring for the abundance around me. Amen.

**As we were traveling home, we had to detour off the interstate due to a major accident. We lodged nearby that evening and learned that lives were tragically lost.

The Moderator's Column

Speaking about our Neighbors

I am excited to begin my term with the IL/WI District as your Moderator. The theme, *“For the Glory of God and Our Neighbor’s Good”*, has become such an important one for our country as we see all of the needs of our neighbors.

I chose this theme because like Fred Rogers I believe that “appreciation for our neighbors is a holy thing– that we look for what’s best in a person we hope to be with at the moment and at that time we are doing what God does all the time. So in loving and appreciating our neighbors, we’re participating in something sacred.”

I want to thank all of you, both as individuals and as churches, for the work you are already doing in exploring ways to help those who desperately need food, clothing, shelter, and other important things to have a quality of life. And mostly, for how we are all trying to share the love of Jesus to those who still don’t know him.

The Church of the Brethren has a long history of going beyond to meet the needs of ALL and to show the love of Jesus to absolutely everyone, regardless of whether we know them.

It is in that vein that I would like to challenge us each month to have an **Extra Plate**. You may use an offering plate, a food plate, a box; you set up the visual. However, each month I will be challenging our churches to give to our own communities, perhaps in a way that we have never given before.

In light of the government shutdown in which so many people not getting their paychecks, my challenge for this month is this: *collect what extra money you can in your extra plate this month and have your pastor/board chair/ deacon/ take it to a utility payment center and pay someone's bill who is about to have their water, heat, or gas shut off!*

Please note that all these challenges have no dollar amount on them; whatever you gather will help! The idea is to help those that we do NOT KNOW!

It would be great if you can report back to myself or the District office with videos, pictures, stories, or even ideas of challenges you would like me to include. We are here to lift our neighbors up and show them we care, even if we are not close friends. If we do this together I can't imagine the changes that would happen.

Thank you in advance for participating in a loving way with your neighbors. Hint for February: It's the month of Valentine's Day!

Blessings, Moderator Leslie Lake

If you would like me to come and talk with your Board or congregation about our theme this year, please contact me. I am anxious to know how I can be of assistance to the District.

lesliejlake@gmail.com

419-651-0650

BDM St. Thomas USVI January 6–19, 2019

by Cindy Weber

Fourteen other persons and I traveled to St. Thomas, an island with a population of about 51,000, for a Brethren Disaster ministry. Many in our group were from Southern Ohio and Maryland. What a fabulous two weeks! We primarily assisted with two homes and did some minor work on two others. Ages in our group ranged from one 28 year old to the oldest at 79 years old. Most volunteers were in their late 60's and early 70's.

There is a great need on this island. A representative of the group overseeing recovery projects who partnered with the Church of the Brethren to make the connection with the St. Thomas Disaster Committee, had assessments on three thousand homes that still need help.

We completely demolished one house, although this isn't what BDM usually does. The owner called us his "angels". He was so grateful that at the end of the first week he prepared us a wonderful Puerto Rican meal, which he served at his apartment. He works as a chef at a fine hotel on the Island. His sister owns a hair salon and as an expression of her gratitude she gave free haircuts to four to five men.

The first day we arrived to work on one of the houses, the homeowner, an older woman, was in tears because she had received a letter the day before stating that FEMA wouldn't be providing any additional financial assistance. She mistakenly thought that meant she was losing her home. She saw several homes around her get new roofs and was so upset we were unable to work on her

house that day. The next day, she was calmer and was thrilled to receive our help. Over the next two weeks we ripped off the ragged blue tarp, took off the old roof, replaced it with new wood, tar paper, 2x4's and attached a new metal roof.

Inside the house, someone had previously taken down most of her walls, leaving the framework. Her belongings were packed into plastic boxes or bags, piled high and deep. When they went to assess her house she had been sleeping on the toilet with her head on her arms on the sink. She received a large cushioned chair which she then slept in. Her bed had been soaked and had mold in it. She had been living they way for about 2 two years.

We completed one room with paneling and trim. We then began to put paneling and trim in her bedroom, and about half of it was completed. In both rooms we first had to remove a lot of belongings before we could begin work. We also replaced her ceiling fan and repaired her front door. While we were there she received a new stove and refrigerator. The stove was installed by a professional who came after we left. We also removed a lot of junk from her and a neighbor's yard. Everyday after work we were given the opportunity to swim in the Caribbean, which I took advantage of—it was like heaven! During evening free times we played games and came together as a temporary community.

We didn't work during the weekend and we took a ferry to St. John's where we worshiped on the beach, had a tour of the Island, swam/snorkeled and did a bit of shopping. Also, we did laundry, toured and shopped on St. Thomas.

In the past, I felt comforted knowing there would be another group coming in to continue the unfinished work. Sadly, due to politics of the St. Thomas disaster committee, there isn't any scheduled groups, including COB, yet to come. We had daily devotions before the morning and evening delicious meals. Two points that really struck me were: for two weeks, we, like Jesus and his disciples, took time from our lives and laid our lives down to help others. Jim Dorsch, our team leader who had previously been to Sri Lanka, shared how a man they were assisting said, "others send a lot of money to assist, which we really appreciate,

however, *you came!* We came and made a difference! I am grateful to the district for your support.

Newsline

-- **Shine: Living in God's Light seeks a part-time contract content editor.** Shine is a cooperative curriculum project of Brethren Press and MennoMedia. Contract content editors report to the project director, work closely with curriculum writers, and edit manuscripts in accordance with Shine editorial and production guidelines. Applicants must have excellent editorial and writing skills, understand faith formation and developmental stages, operate well in a collaborative environment, and be well-grounded in Anabaptist beliefs and practices. A bachelor's degree is required, a graduate degree in theology or education is preferred. Application documents are available online and will be received through Jan. 31 at www.ShineCurriculum.com/jobs . Email Joan Daggett at joand@mennomedia.org with questions.

-- **The Brethren Historical Library and Archives seeks an archival intern** to work at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. The Archival Internship Program develops interest in vocations related to archives, libraries, and Brethren history. The program will provide the intern with work assignments and with opportunities to develop professional contacts. Work will include processing archival materials, writing descriptive inventories, preparing books for cataloging, responding to reference requests, and assisting researchers in the library. Professional contacts may include attending archival and library conferences and workshops, visits to libraries and archives in the Chicago area, and participation in a Brethren Historical Committee meeting. The Brethren Historical Library and Archives is the official repository for Church of the Brethren publications and records with a collection of more than 10,000 volumes, 3,500 linear feet of manuscripts and records, 40,000 photographs, plus videos, films, DVDs, and recordings. The term of service is one year, beginning June 2019 (preferred). Compensation includes housing at a Church of the Brethren volunteer house, stipend of \$550 every two weeks, and health insurance. Requirements: a graduate student is

preferred, or an undergraduate with at least two years of college; interest in history and/or library and archival work; willingness to work with detail; accurate word processing skills; ability to lift 30-pound boxes. Submit a resume to COBApply@brethren.org or to the Office of Human Resources, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120; 800-323-8039 ext. 367. All submissions must be completed by April 1.



List of Items for Collection for Second Hand Rose Project

District Potluck Mission Project—April 6, 2019

From the garden, to the skate park, to the Second Hand Rose store – this was the *Into the Neighborhood Story for the Polo COB*. In order to strengthen our endeavor, we are asking our neighbor COB churches to bring any of these items listed below with them to place in containers at Franklin Grove. These items will be taken to *Second Hand Rose*, our store in Polo. Requested items will help youth feel more welcome and comfortable in the store. We are trying to provide items that are their sizes, tastes, and needs. Thank you for your support!

Youth sized clothes 10–16, boys and girls (shirts, especially bright t-shirts)

Jr. sizes 0–16 same things

Jeans in all sizes above

Tennis shoes of all kinds

Hair accessories, bows, hairbands, etc.

Socks and hats (particularly wild hats–youth love them) for boys, baseball caps

School helps (fun pencils, erasers, anything unicorn, fun folders)

Small purses, stuffed animals

2019 Brethren Workcamps

The Church of the Brethren Workcamp Office is excited to release the 2019 workcamp dates and locations! A total of 18 different workcamps will be offered for junior high, senior high, young adult, and we are able participants. To view the full schedule, which includes the dates, location, cost, and description of each workcamp, visit www.brethren.org/workcamps/schedule. Registration will open on January 17, 2019 at 7:00pm (central time). Please encourage the youth and young adults of your congregation



to attend a workcamp this summer. If you have any questions or would like a 2019 workcamp brochure mailed to you, contact the Workcamp Office at cobworkcamps@brethren.org.

Other Notables

[IRS Mileage rates for 2019](#)

[BBT Job Opening](#)

[BDM News](#)

[Ventures in Christian Discipleship Opportunities](#)

[A Thank You from the Garnett Family](#)

District Newsletters

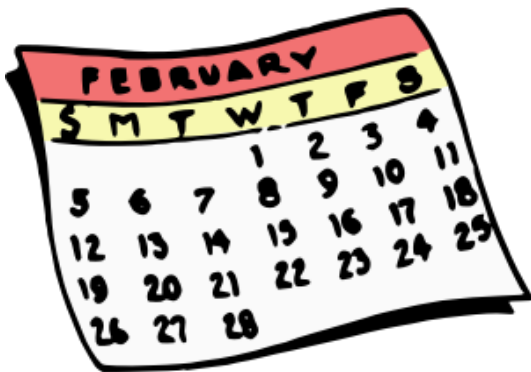
[York Center](#)

[Franklin Grove](#)

[Canton COB](#)



Do you know a college bound high school senior? [If so, Pinecrest Community is offering a scholarship!](#)
[Click here for more information.](#)



Upcoming events

District Newsletter
Deadline – February 6,
2019

Church Revitalization
and Development Team
(CRDT) Meeting –
February 9, 2019

[Read More](#)



