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# The Reflector

An e-publication of

the Illinois & Wisconsin District of the Church of the Brethren



**DE Ponderings**  
by Kevin Kessler

The Congregational Consulting Group ([www.congregationalconsulting.org](http://www.congregationalconsulting.org)) has, over the past several weeks, provided a series of articles on polarization. All have been good but the 4<sup>th</sup> in the series written by Lawrence Peers and published today was, I thought, most insightful.

Peers looks at causes of polarization. He references an article written by Jesuit Matt Malone published in *America: The Jesuit Review*. Malone writes:

...in contemporary politics, the question is not “What is the cause of polarization?” The question is “Who is the cause of polarization?” And the answer is: You are. You are the cause of polarization. And I am. Together, we are the causes of polarization. Unless we are willing to admit that, then the situation will only get worse. For polarization is not something that is happening to us but something we are causing. And the temptation to think that you or I are not complicit in it and that the fault lies entirely with someone else is actually what polarization is.

Even before reading these articles, I had been thinking about ways in which I’m complicit in polarization. I can easily enter conversation with someone with whom I agree on controversial matters. If the one I’m speaking to has a strongly different view, though, the conversation is more difficult. If at any time I knuckle down to win the conversation or speak poorly of the other following our time together, I have entered the throes of polarization.

Finding a way through this social dilemma is not easy. Thankfully Peers offers some helpful resources in his article which are designed specifically to assist polarized parties in finding an amicable way forward. I recommend reading the article (<http://www.congregationalconsulting.org/when-polarization-becomes-a-tug-of-war/>) and reviewing the embedded resources.

Peers’ article invited me to reflect more on the Feb. 24 lectionary text, Luke 6:27-38, a part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain. Instructions given include loving enemies, doing good to those who hate you, lending expecting nothing in return, judging not, condemning not, and forgiving. Two key understandings from this text are verse 31 (Do to others as you would have them do to you.) and verse 38 (...for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.)

There are moments when those we disagree will hurt us. Jesus clearly offers better ways to react than with retaliation. For example, I may find it easy to talk about someone behind their back especially if that person vehemently disagrees with me and has said “sticks and stones” things that I know I’m supposed let slide. If I succumb to talking behind their back, am I not judging them? If I am judging, am I treating them in a way that I want to be treated? Am I ready to accept the same measure of judgement that I’m doling out?

I tackled these questions in the message I shared during worship Feb. 24. I offered that a better approach is to do as Thumper was instructed in Walt Disney's *Bambi*: "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all." Even this advice doesn't go far enough. So here is my contribution: "If you can't say anything nice, then dig deeper until you can, and then say those nice things to the one with whom you disagree." I would appreciate being treated in this manner and receiving in like measure such kind regard.

The easy work is being complicit in polarization with the measure received being more polarization. The hard work is following the teachings of Jesus with the measure received being healthy relationships.

What Jesus suggests may seem impossible but not if we continue to put it into practice. Author Brian McLaren stated in his book *Finding Our Way Again* that "Practice may not make perfect, but...it does make currently impossible things possible." Whatta ya think? With a lot of practice we just may be able to shift the tide of polarization into the beauty of healthy, working relationships. Imagine this outcome being the measure we get back.

## The Moderator's Column

Greetings once again from your Moderator as we end one month and look anew at our District's theme and challenge together: "for our neighbor's good!" I hope you took on the challenge of the **Extra Plate**. At my home church of Polo, we gathered \$200 and took it down to City Hall to pay for stranger's water bills! The mayor and town clerk were astonished and said it was the first time a church or anyone has helped people they **don't know! The challenge is still on!**

Ash Wednesday is March 6<sup>th</sup> and it is a time that many denominations celebrate giving something up. I would like to challenge our churches to give something away. Instead of collecting your money and giving it together somewhere, create a large picture of a plate posted in a position either in your Narthex or Fellowship Hall with some coins or paper dollars available near the poster. Your assignment during your weeks is to **pay it forward it some way to people in your lives.**

When you come to church, take a coin or dollar there and state what you did and then post it on your plate on the wall. At the end of the month, **please snap a picture of the poster and send it to the district office so that we can include it in a**

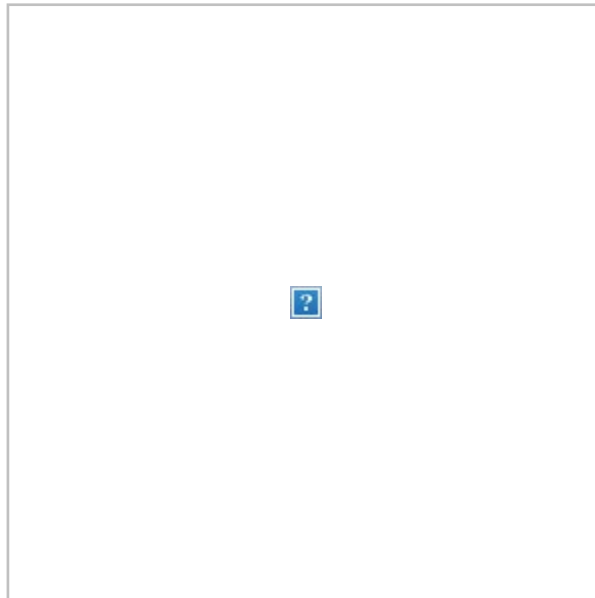
**video for District Conference this year!**

I would love to show everyone all the different ways that we worked at giving to others, particularly those we don't know with love and support like Jesus told us to try and do.

Good luck: pay for those coffees, buy that paper, and pay for that meal in line at the drive-through, or at the movies, or at the store. I can't wait to see what we do with this one. And remember: we are doing this **"For the glory of God"**.

**Blessings,  
Leslie Lake**

**National Older Adult Conference  
September 2-6, 2019**



**Older Adults of the Illinois and Wisconsin District**, are you thinking about attending this year's NOAC?? Would you be interested in riding a District bus to the conference? We are willing to investigate the cost if enough people are interested. Below are the details for the conference itself. We are getting a ballpark cost from a couple of companies. Of course, the cost per person will also depend on the number going. If we would fill the bus with 55 people, the cost could be between \$180.00 and \$220.00 per person. Pray about it and say YES!!!!

If you are interested, please contact Vicki and Leonard Matheny at 309 256-8846 (text is okay) or e-mail at [mathelw@gmail.com](mailto:mathelw@gmail.com) or the District office at 309 649-6008 or e-mail at [andreag.iwdcob@gmail.com](mailto:andreag.iwdcob@gmail.com).

**Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center  
in the beautiful mountains of western North Carolina**

NOAC is a Spirit-filled gathering of adults who love learning and discerning together, exploring God's call for their lives and living out that call by sharing their energy, insight, and legacy with their families, communities, and the world.

Registration will open online on **April 15**. The cost per person is \$195 if you register before July 20. First time attendees will get a \$20 discount. Your registration fee does not include housing or meals. After you register you will be able to go to the Lake J housing reservations website to make your lodging reservations.



# 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**

## **Shannon McNeil to be on team of advocates for Mission Advancement**

**Church of the Brethren Newsline**

**February 8, 2019**

Shannon McNeil has been hired by the Church of the Brethren as a fulltime Mission Advancement advocate, working out of the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. She and Nancy Timbrook McCrickard will serve as a team of advocates working at relationship-building with donors.

McNeil begins in the new position on March 4. Most recently she has been manager of human resources and constituent affairs in the Office of the Governor in Chicago, Ill. She is a member of Neighborhood Church of the Brethren in Montgomery, Ill., a graduate of Bridgewater (Va.) College with a bachelor's degree in international studies, and a graduate of the University of Chicago with a master's degree in Middle Eastern studies.

In her work for Mission Advancement, as part of the team of advocates, McNeil will be building relationships with donors through various means of communication, traveling cross-country to make personal visits to donors, interpreting the work of the denomination, encouraging giving to support that work, and discussing planned giving strategies with donors.

## District Website

When is the last time you visited the [IL/WI District Website](#)? There you'll find helpful information about your district including but not limited to:

- [District Calendar](#)
- [Eco-Stewardship](#)
- [District Newsletter](#)
- [Ministries](#)

Don't delay! Check it out! See what you can learn about your district!

## Supporting Your District

The IL/WI District is active in a variety of ministry and mission efforts, both directly and indirectly. For these efforts to continue, resources are needed. Assets available to keep ministry and mission moving along include you (people serving people), tools (tool trailer w/ tools for disaster response work), knowledge and wisdom (years of experience and access to institutions of learning), and, of course, money (endowment, reserves, congregational and individual giving, bequests).

Assets are abundant but unless these gifts are cared for there is potential for depleting them. Therefore, district teams and the combined efforts of many work diligently to ensure asset sustainability.

Still, it is important to know where gaps exist, or a little extra boost would be helpful. For instance, our district has deep interest in and long-standing support of disaster relief efforts. A separate fund is established to assist folks who give of their time and travel great distances to assist. The district's Disaster Relief Fund is hovering around \$1,000.00. Sending a team to serve on a disaster response site can cost nearly \$500 or more. To ensure the sustainability of this important ministry, designated gifts to this fund are welcomed and deeply appreciated. Having funds available to assist with travel may be the difference of someone sharing their gifts or staying home. Consider making a contribution!

Other options are available for contributing, as well, including the following:

- Endowment Fund

#### Mission and Mortar Fund

- General Fund
- Emerging Ministries
- Ministry Training

Every gift regardless of size is a significant boost to the abundance of assets in our midst. All contributions ensure that our district goes beyond the plateau of survival to the pinnacles of thriving, providing ample opportunities to serve faithfully.

## District Mission and Mortar Grant/Loan Program

Is your congregation beginning a new mission outreach program but a little short on cash? Is your congregation faced with a major repair or capital improvement project that exceeds your congregation's capacity to pay for it? Did you know that the district has a program to assist with your needs? It's called the Mission and Mortar Grant/Loan Program and is available to help meet the needs mentioned above.

Grants are available up to \$2,500.00 and non-interest bearing loans up to \$5000.00. A congregation that applies must provide financial data and be a regular contributor to the district. Applications are considered on a first-come first-served basis and are reviewed/approved by the district Leadership Team.

If you would like more information or wish to apply, visit the [district website](#). Send completed applications to the IL/WI District Office, 269 E. Chestnut St., Canton, IL 61520.

## GIFTS DISCERNMENT AND CALL COMMITTEE

The Gifts Discernment and Call Committee (GDCC) is commissioned to discern the gifts of persons for the purpose of inviting and calling them in to positions of leadership and team/committee participation. The GDCC delves into this work based on the names and information available to them. The likelihood is that gifted persons are not invited and called to serve because the GDCC lacks names and information. If you feel compelled to serve in the district and have not been asked, you can connect to the district [webpage](#) and learn how to share your name and information with the GDCC. Simply complete the online profile form after clicking on the "online profile form" link in the website article. Or call the district office (649-6008) and a profile form will be emailed to you.



Do you know someone you believe has gifts to serve at the district level? Invite them to visit the district webpage or share their name with the GDCC or district office.

Serving is rewarding!

## Farewell Open House for Pastor Matt Rittle and Robin Gay

The Franklin Grove church would like to invite everyone to attend a farewell open house for Pastor Matt Rittle and Robin. It will be on Sunday, April 14, from 1-3 pm at the Franklin Grove Church of the Brethren. As most of you know, Pastor Matt has accepted a position at the Arlington Virginia Church of the Brethren and will be leaving at the end of April. Matt has contributed so much to our church, the district, and the denomination. This will be a good time for fellowship and good-byes. We hope to see you there!

## Newsline

— “Ever wondered what it’s like to be involved in ministry and leadership...while simultaneously bringing a mini-human into the world?” asks an announcement of the latest **Dunker Punks podcast**. “Elizabeth Ullery Swenson and her panel of new mothers tell all about the struggles and beauties of doing just that.... This episode goes out to all the Baby Brethren and Dunker Punk-ins out there!” Listen online at [http://bit.ly/DPP\\_Episode77](http://bit.ly/DPP_Episode77) or on your favorite podcast app.

## Brethren are invited to spiritual preparation for visioning at Annual Conference

**Church of the Brethren Newsline**

**February 8, 2019**

By Donita Keister

The Compelling Vision Process Team is inviting all Brethren to connect with a Facebook page dedicated to spiritual preparation for the visioning conversations that will happen during the 2019 Annual Conference in Greensboro, N.C. The page is titled, “COB

Compelling Vision Spiritual Connection Page” and may be found at [www.facebook.com/COB-Compelling-Vision-Spiritual-Connection-Page-1050919648604889](https://www.facebook.com/COB-Compelling-Vision-Spiritual-Connection-Page-1050919648604889) .

Each month begins with a devotional introducing the focus for the month written by Annual Conference moderator Donita Keister. Throughout the month there will be additional posts developing the focus by various members of the team.

The team will be making a prayer calendar available for the months of May and June to help individuals and congregations participate in helping with preparation for Annual Conference through several weeks of focused prayer. The prayer calendar will be available near the end of March as a download from the compelling vision page on the Church of the Brethren website at [www.brethren.org/compellingvision](http://www.brethren.org/compellingvision) and from the Facebook page.

The team is hosting an online compelling vision conversation on Saturday, March 23, at 2 p.m. (Eastern time). This will be done on the ZOOM platform. The link will be posted on the Facebook page. It would be helpful to have a sense of how many will be joining us so we are asking those who are planning to log on for the conversation to register. Sign up for the event on the Facebook page or email [cvpt2018@gmail.com](mailto:cvpt2018@gmail.com) .

Another opportunity to engage in preparation for the Annual Conference compelling vision conversations will be through district delegate briefings. While these briefings are usually focused on the various items of business to be processed at Conference, briefings this year will be focused on the visioning conversations and how delegates can prepare for them.

-- *Donita Keister is moderator of the 2019 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren. Find out more about Annual Conference at [www.brethren.org/ac](http://www.brethren.org/ac) .*

## **ILLINOIS/WISCONSIN DISTRICT ESTABLISHES ENDOWMENT**

As of January 2, 2019, the Illinois/Wisconsin District of the Church of the Brethren has in place a Permanent Endowment. Several years prior, the district received a disbursement from the Frances E. Senger Trust with a request that the funds be endowed at the discretion of the District Leadership Team. Action on the request was delayed until 2018. The Property and Asset Management (PAM) Team, while reviewing district assets, determined that setting up an endowment would be an appropriate response to the Senger Trust request. Following careful examination of the mechanics of an endowment, the PAM Team encouraged the Leadership Team

to endow the Senger Trust funds. The Leadership Team subsequently moved forward in creating the Permanent Endowment Fund.

No withdrawals of funds from the Senger Trust were made since it was received. As a result, the balance appreciated in value to approximately \$230,000.00 by late 2018. Due to negative market fluctuation, the balance at time of issuance of the endowment was approximately \$207,000.00. Up to 4% of the total value of the endowment may be withdrawn annually after fees and expenses have been paid and at no time shall the balance be allowed to fall below \$200,000.00. Any changes to the endowment will require a supermajority vote of both the PAM and Leadership Teams of the district.

For more information about the Permanent Endowment, visit [www.iwdcob.org/ministries.shtml](http://www.iwdcob.org/ministries.shtml) and click on Endowment to view the Endowment FAQs document.

## **National commission considers changes to Selective Service**

### **Church of the Brethren Newsline**

**January 23, 2019**

By Victoria Bateman

The Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy attended a press conference of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service held at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 23. This commission is tasked with exploring national attitudes toward military and volunteer service, and potentially recommending changes to the Selective Service system.

Several faith-based organizations submitted public comments to the commission, and the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy continues to monitor how the commission engages with the issue of religious freedom and conscientious objection in their work.

The commission was created in response to the question of whether or not women should be required to register with Selective Service. In addition to expanding the number of Americans who are required to register in the event of a military draft, the commission is considering changes that are of concern to the Church of the Brethren and other peace churches, including increasing the number of high school students who take a version of the military entrance exam and making some type of military or civilian service mandatory for all Americans.

If you would like to share your perspective on the Selective Service with the commission, public comments may be submitted at [www.inspire2serve.gov](http://www.inspire2serve.gov) .

A video of the panels is

at [www.facebook.com/Inspire2ServeUS/videos/755683714800714](https://www.facebook.com/Inspire2ServeUS/videos/755683714800714) . Conscientious objection is discussed starting at minute 58:50.

There are public meetings and hearings taking place regularly, and interested Brethren can find an updated listing at [www.inspire2serve.gov/content/events](http://www.inspire2serve.gov/content/events) .

-- *Victoria Bateman is a Brethren Volunteer Service worker at the Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy in Washington, D.C. For more about this ministry go to [www.brethren.org/peacebuilding](http://www.brethren.org/peacebuilding) .*

## 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](http://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](mailto:cobworkcamps@brethren.org).



## Other Notables

[District Potluck Registration](#)

[IRS Mileage rates for 2019](#)

[Ventures in Christian Discipleship Opportunities](#)

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

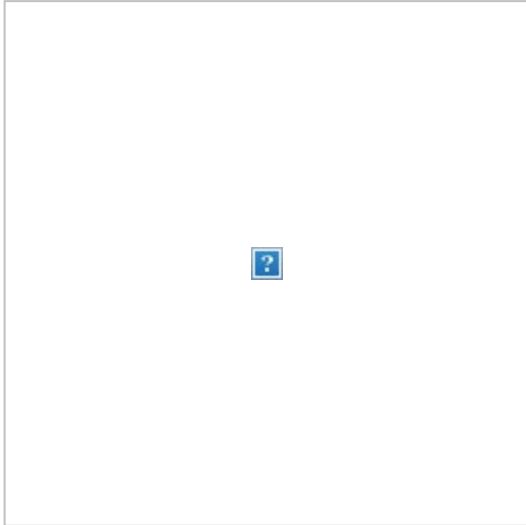
## District Newsletters

[Dixon COB](#)

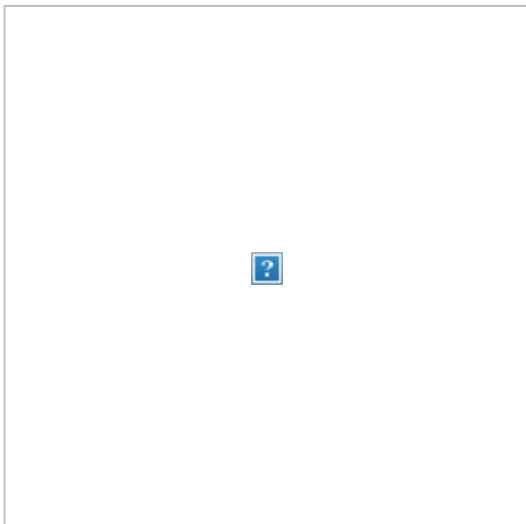
[York Center](#)

[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

**GDCC Meeting - March 2, 10 AM**

**P&A Meeting - March 2, 1:30 PM**

**District Newsletter Article**

**Deadline - March 6**

**MLDT Meeting - March 30, 8 AM**

**District Potluck - April 6**

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