
The Reflector

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



DE Ponderings

by Kevin Kessler

I've often hesitated in beginning a project because I've thought, "It'll never turn out to be even remotely like the good idea I have as I start." I could just "feel" how good it could be. But I decided that, for the present, I would create the best way I know how and accept the ambiguities.

--Fred Rogers

I am prone to procrastinating, sometimes because I have something else I'd rather do than the project that needs to be completed. Other times I procrastinate for the reason Mister Rogers suggests. What I want to do may not turn out as I hope it will or it may not have the intended impact, therefore, why attempt it.

The Mister Rogers quote comes from a book full of his philosophy and a chapter entitled Creativity and Play. Why attempt something that leaves us uncertain about the impact of the outcome, or how it will be perceived? My response is this: to give creativity the opportunity to shine as we play with a variety of possibilities. As creativity blossoms so do those engaging in and impacted by it.

I enjoy writing creatively. I'm not a skilled writer so I can easily procrastinate this creative process. Recently, I decided to put my writing inadequacies aside and playfully write. I created an essay that is still being refined but I enjoyed the opportunity to be creative. Perhaps this exercise will entice me to do more, to move beyond procrastination and engage in an enjoyable activity regardless of whether what I write has any impact. I am accepting the ambiguity.

Ambiguity has become the new normal amid the current COVID-19 pandemic. When will we be able to worship together in the same space? Now that we are worshipping together virtually, what online platform is best? How do we virtually practice worship with integrity? How do we continue the mission of the church, and/or the congregation in which we participate? How do we continue to provide moments of connection with our friends and family who find technology challenging?

As I listen, read, and observe, the responses to the previous questions vary widely. No two contexts are the same, thus the need for a variety of approaches. Arriving at workable solutions requires ingenuity, creativity.

I'm amazed at the level of creativity in the IL/WI District that is being revealed as we navigate these ambiguous moments in history. Leaders and participants of congregations have put procrastination on the shelf and immediately began putting into practice forms of meeting together virtually not or infrequently used before. Successful outcomes were not guaranteed. Yet, stories abound of connecting with people well beyond the limits of a worship space and names in the directory.

Ironically, a pandemic that forced us to distance from one another socially has opened the door for increased connections. This benefit is the result of using

creative means, which we did not hesitate to act on immediately. We've done, and are doing, the best that we can. And with the results we are experiencing, the future remains bright, even as we move into it accepting the ambiguities that await us.

The Moderator's Column

Hey There District Family!

Wow, in the last month, what it means to "Be the Church" has really changed for us! We've been told to not be our "Usual Brethren Selves"! No firm handshakes and definitely no hugging. Forget those visits to the Nursing home and put your visit the local hospital on hold. And wow - no washing feet! Plus, we missed out on that fantastic Love Feast meal.

That simple church in the country, which once shunned computers, iPads and cell phones, now counts on them to have worship! Zoom is no longer what a jet plane does, but instead it is the only way we can have church Board meetings! However, now they are shorter, praise God!

I don't know about you, but this "old Dog" is growing tired of learning new tricks! Yet, good has come from this. We make more phone calls to check in on folks and we have renewed the art of sending notes via snail mail. We no longer take for granted our little stores and coffee shops. Instead we shop less at "big box" stores and more at Dollar General, and we buy "Take-out" from the local café.

When this Covid-19 crisis begins to calm down, let's not go back to "business as usual" - we are better then that. Let us continue to value relationships, be patient, and share love and kindness. Let us be more like Christ!

Love ya'll,

District Moderator Rick

'Our end goal is unity': An interview with general secretary David Steele

Church of the Brethren Newline

February 14, 2020

"Our end goal is unity," said Church of the Brethren general secretary David Steele in an interview about an effort by a group called Covenant Brethren Church to explore separation from the Church of the Brethren. Steele said that the denomination's leadership "recognize there are differences and diversity within the Church of the Brethren, but our goal is to strive for unity."

On Saturday, Feb. 1, Steele and Annual Conference moderator Paul Munday met with leaders of the new group for some three hours of conversation. That meeting followed on previous meetings that members of the Church of the Brethren's Leadership Team have had with members of the group. The Leadership Team includes the Annual Conference officers, general secretary, and a representative of the Council of District Executives.

Steele said these meetings have been held "to hear their concerns, what they are working at. We are making efforts to keep the communication lines open." At the Feb. 1 meeting, Steele said the Covenant Brethren Church leadership made it clear that their intentions are no longer simply exploratory but that separation will happen.

The Covenant Brethren Church chose its name at a meeting in Woodstock, Va., last November. The decision to explore separation was made last July in Chambersburg, Pa., at a meeting of some 50 people from 13 districts. The group is exploring office locations in West Virginia, has named a temporary executive board and task groups, and is developing bylaws and a statement of faith. The temporary board includes both Brethren Revival Fellowship (BRF) leadership and prayer summit leadership, including Grover Duling (chair), Eric Brubaker, Larry Dentler, Scott Kinnick, James F. Myer, and Craig Alan Myers. The temporary board includes a district executive, district moderators, and BRF leaders.

The group has said its reasons to explore separation are to provide "a haven for congregations who are making the decision to leave, but want to retain their Brethren values, and do not want to be independent" as well as "failure of the denomination to stand strong on biblical authority" and a complaint that the compelling vision process does not address "the homosexual issue."

Steele shared his concern to dispel rumors swirling around the denomination about the Covenant Brethren Church. One is that there are many congregations that have left or are planning to leave the denomination. Another is that congregations are leaving in order to join the new group. However, Steele said that to date he has confirmation of only a dozen or more congregations that have withdrawn, in just a handful of districts, for a variety of reasons. There is no indication that they intend to join the new group, he said, and sexuality may not be a factor for all of them, he noted. Some have been functionally separate from denomination and district for many years, evidenced by their lack of giving and lack of participation in Annual Conferences and district conferences. He gave the example of one congregation that has been disaffected for decades based on disagreements over ecumenical organizations. Others simply want to go independent. Steele also dispelled rumors that whole districts may separate. There is no process in Church of the Brethren polity for a district to take such a step, he said.

"I recognize that there is a secondary narrative that has emerged in our life together, one that is living out frustrations, that is moving away from the church rather than seeking unity, rather than continuing conversation and prayer and reading scripture together," Steele said.

In response to criticism of the compelling vision process, Steele emphasized it was never intended to address sexuality but is intended "to move the conversation above that to matters of faith and vision and where the church ought to be." The committees working on the compelling vision over the past few years have

gleaned data from gatherings across the denomination and two Annual Conferences in order to seek a vision. He believes that the process did not fall short "but did exactly what we were intending for it to do. Compelling vision was not intended to fix us, but it does point us in a direction that we can all embrace and focus on."

Steele highlighted other recent successes that he would like the members of the church to focus on right now, instead of focusing on division. Those successes include districts that are taking vigorous steps to renew their passion for ministry together, and the December meeting of leaders of international Brethren bodies who strongly affirmed a new global structure for the Church of the Brethren worldwide. These successes "are exciting and can bring new life," he said. "We lose track of these when the secondary narrative becomes dominant. It is not all doom and gloom."

Challenges for denominational leaders during this time include how to find a way to work together. One challenge he named is that districts are employing different approaches toward leaving congregations. "This is a time for collegial conversation," Steele said. "I believe it really begins with the Leadership Team and the Council of District Executives finding a common pathway forward, a commitment to work together."

Similarly, Steele wants to work toward an understanding with leaving congregations. He is deeply concerned about how congregational separation "is tearing congregations apart. There is a sense that some people in those congregations want to stay in the denomination. They are torn between relationships with their family and friends and their loyalty to the Church of the Brethren."

-- Additional information may be found in a statement from the Leadership Team published last November at www.brethren.org/news/2019/denominational-leadership-teamstatement.html.



Annual Conference Update

In March, we shared through Newsline that our planning is continuing for the 2020 Annual Conference. Since then the Annual Conference Office has received a number of emails from members who ask either: 1) Are you going to cancel Annual Conference? Or 2) Why haven't you cancelled Annual Conference yet?

We want to assure you that we are thinking carefully and praying about how to proceed. We also want to assure you that the health and safety of all those related to Annual Conference is our first priority.

From the outside, it can appear like this is a simple decision in light of the headlines related to COVID-19. However, it is quite involved, with many steps, given the evolving nature of the COVID-19 crisis and our commitment to work mutually with our partners in Grand Rapids.

To that end, we are in close conversations with the Devos Place Convention Center and three hotels in Grand Rapids with whom we have contracts. Our reality is that because we signed legal contracts five years ago, the Annual Conference Office and Church of the Brethren would owe hundreds of thousands of dollars in cancellation penalties if we unilaterally cancel our conference. But if there is a mutual decision with our partners in

Grand Rapids to not have Annual Conference this year, they may opt not to charge cancellation penalties.

Thus, we have chosen to take the slower path of working together with our partners in Grand Rapids, staying in conversation, discussing options, and negotiating next steps.

For your information, the convention center and two of the three hotels are currently completely closed. They do not know when they will open again. So that is yet another unknown as of today. Our partners in Grand Rapids are well aware of the serious challenge of COVID-19 because they are also living in the middle of it.

Overall, we want to make a decision that, most importantly, protects both the health and well-being of everyone involved with the Annual Conference and secondarily protects the church against major financial losses.

We realize this is a longer, slower process than many might wish for, but be assured we are moving forward prayerfully. Please know that it is still a possibility for Annual Conference to be cancelled, but we hope that will not be the case, even though we recognize attendance might be smaller. For now, the Annual Conference staff persons (Debbie Noffsinger, Jon Kobel and Chris Douglas) are working from their homes to continue the many details of putting together a conference. We understand the tremendous spiritual importance of the Annual Conference gathering, if it is possible to do so safely by July.

We do want to remind you that if you are already registered, or if you are considering registering, Annual Conference has a very generous cancellation/refund policy that protects you. Up until a week before Annual Conference begins, you can receive a full refund. www.brethren.org/ac/cancellation-refund-policy.html

In closing, please know that any decision about Annual Conference will be made in a timely manner, prayerfully and carefully, prioritizing the health and safety of those who would attend. Please join us in prayer that God will give us the wisdom, patience, and courage to make the best possible decisions.

Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee:

Paul Munday, Moderator
David Sollenberger, Moderator-Elect
James M. Beckwith, Annual Conference Secretary
Jan Glass King
Emily Shonk Edwards
Carol Hipps Elmore
Chris Douglas, Annual Conference Director (*ex officio*)

*Annual Conference exists to unite, strengthen and equip
the Church of the Brethren to follow Jesus.*

Photo by Glenn Riegel

Go to
www.brethren.org/ac/2020
for more information about
Annual Conference 2020!

DR. TOD BOLSINGER AND DR. MICHAEL GORMAN TO SPEAK AT 2020 CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN ANNUAL CONFERENCE

ELGIN, IL – Dr. Tod Bolsinger and Dr. Michael J. Gorman, two nationally acclaimed church leaders, will be featured resource persons at the 2020 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference to be held July 1-5, 2020, at DeVos Place Convention Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Dr. Bolsinger will be the featured speaker at an all-conference equipping session on Friday, July 3, where he will address “Doing Church in Uncharted Territory.” On Thursday, July 2, he will speak at the Moderator’s Dinner on the topic of “Adventure or Die” and lead an insight session themed “Standing the Heat, Surviving the Sabotage.” He will also speak at a breakfast event Friday morning, July 3, on “The Fire and the Anvil.”

Dr. Gorman will resource the Church of the Brethren Minister's Association pre-conference on June 30 and July 1. His focus will be "1 Corinthians: Challenges for Today's Church." He will also serve as Bible study leader each morning for the entire Annual Conference on selected passages from the book of Revelation. In addition, Dr. Gorman will lead an insight session on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings on the topic "Reading the Bible Missionally." On Saturday, he will speak at a luncheon on the theme "Non-Violence in the Writings of Paul."

Dr. Tod Bolsinger serves as Vice President and Chief of Leadership Formation at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. Previously, he served the seminary as Vice President of Vocation and Formation and Assistant Professor of Practical Theology. Holding both a PhD in Theology and Master of Divinity from Fuller, Dr. Bolsinger also serves as an executive coach for corporate, nonprofit, educational, and church organizations in transformational leadership. He has authored three books, including his most recent, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*. For seventeen years, he was the senior pastor of San Clemente Presbyterian Church in San Clemente, California, after serving for ten years at First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood. Dr. Bolsinger and his wife Beth have two children.

Dr. Michael J. Gorman holds the Raymond E. Brown Chair in Biblical Studies and Theology at St. Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore, Maryland. He has taught at St. Mary's since 1991, as well as serving as the Dean of St. Mary's Ecumenical Institute from 1995 to 2012. Dr. Gorman is the author of nearly twenty books and scores of articles, including several books on Paul; books on Revelation, the Gospel of John, and the atonement; volumes on biblical interpretation; and short books on topics in Christian ethics. Dr. Gorman received his B.A. in French from Gordon College and his M.Div. and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary, where he taught Greek. He is a member of the Society of Biblical Literature and an elected member of the Society for New Testament Studies. A United Methodist layperson, Dr. Gorman is a frequent lecturer at churches, institutions of higher education, and clergy gatherings of many traditions in the U.S. and abroad. He is married to his high school sweetheart, Nancy, and they have three adult children.

For more information on the 2020 Annual Conference, entitled "God's Adventurous Future," visit the Annual Conference website at www.brethren.org/ac/.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING NEWS

The District Leadership Team met Saturday, November 9, at Pleasant Hill Village in Girard, IL. The Team was reorganized with Carol Kussart (Cerro Gordo) and Mary Dulabaum (Highland Avenue) being called as co-chairs and Jan Dietrick (Mt. Morris) as secretary. Phyllis Batterton (Woodland) and Ed Watkins (Peoria) were welcomed as the newly called members to the team.

Agenda items to which the team gave attention are as follows:

- Approval of previous minutes
- Review of financial reports (financial secretary, treasurer, Brethren Foundations Funds)
- Reserves held as of Oct. 31, 2019: \$499,378.49 of which \$262,394.04 is in the Endowment Fund
- Total reserves and cash: \$522,371.87
- Received DE Report (of interest: 5 congregations in or completing the pastoral search process)
- Discussed at length ways to enhance ministry with the youth, young adults, and families in the district
- Approved a 4% draw from the Endowment as per the endowment charter and recommendation of the Property and Asset Management Team
- Agreed to do a fundraising emphasis prior to year end
- Reviewed appointments to leadership positions the Leadership Team is responsible for
- Thanked Pleasant Hill Village for being a gracious host. Thanked Dawn Smith for giving us a tour of the facility.

District Leadership Team Meeting Places 2020

Jun. 6, 10 a.m., First COB, Springfield

Aug. 8, 9 a.m., Zoom Conference

Oct. 10, 10 a.m., First COB, Peoria

Nov. 14, 10 a.m., Pinecrest Community

District Leadership Team					
Position	Term	Name (Congregation)	Address	Email	Phone
Moderator	1 year	Rick Koch (Milledgeville)	P.O. Box 365 Milledgeville, IL 61051	revrick4433@gmail.com	815-225-7812
Moderator Elect	2 years	Blaine Miner (Dixon)	115 N. Union St. Elgin, IL 60123	blaineminer86@gmail.com	847-404-6635
Clerk	3 years	Kristi Kellerman (Highland Ave)	380 S. Oriole Trail Crystal Lake, IL 60014	kristi.kellerman@gmail.com	815-814-1360
Recording Secretary	Appointed	Jan Dietrich (Mt. Morris)	2770 W West Grove Rd. Mt. Morris, IL 61054	jdiet220@hotmail.com	815-738-2365
Standing Committee	3 years	Dennis Webb (Naperville)	2407 Oakfield Dr. Aurora, IL 60503	djkrwebb@hotmail.com	630-236-8166
Financial Secretary	3 years	Christine Knotts (Peoria)	2214 W Riviera Dr. Peoria, IL 61614	knotts.christine@gmail.com	309-253-6802
Treasurer	3 years	Ellis Boughton (Yellow Creek)	25156 Spring Valley Rd. Shannon, IL 61078	ellis.boughton@live.com	815-864-2049
District Executive		Kevin Kessler (Canton)	135 Ingersoll Blvd. Canton, IL 61520	kevink.iwdcob@gmail.com	309-224-4828 (C) 309-649-6008 (O)
Administrative Assistant		Andrea Garnett (Lutheran)	269 E. Chestnut St. Canton, IL 61520	andreag.iwdcob@gmail.com	309-649-6008
Called Member	3 years	Ed Watkins (Peoria)	1013 W. Wonderview Dr. Dunlap, IL 61525	watkinsedwardjc@gmail.com	309-397-2401
Called Member	3 years	Phyllis Batterton (Woodland)	8441 E. Sand Branch Rd. Ipava, IL 61441	pjbatterton@gmail.com	309-759-4897
Called Member	3 years	Mary Dulabaum (Highland Ave)	401 North Worth Ave. Elgin, IL 60123	mdulabaum@gmail.com	847-989-7723
Called Member	3 years	TBD*			
Called Member	3 years	Prudy Widlak (York Center)	448 Raintree Ct., Unit 3J Glen Ellyn, IL 60137	pramwid@gmail.com	630-790-1897
Called Member	3 years	Ginny Haney (Mt. Morris)	313 W. Main St. Mt. Morris, IL 61054	pastorginny1@frontier.com	815-677-0975

Called Member	3 years	Carol Kussart (Cerro Gordo)	12129 Angle Crossing Rd. Cerro Gordo, IL 61818	ckussart@gmail.com	217-855-3258
		*TBD = to be determined			

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!

Newsline

-- **Discipleship Ministries staff have shared a prayer request for the Church of the Brethren-related retirement communities.** "We ask that the church be in prayer for the 21 retirement communities that are part of the Fellowship of Brethren Homes," said Joshua Brockway, co-coordinator of Discipleship Ministries. "Please pray for the administrators as they steward their resources to provide care in the midst of a pandemic. Pray for the nurses and staff as they care for the community members physically, emotionally, and spiritually. And most of all, pray for the mental and physical wellbeing of the community members themselves. May God watch over each one, granting wisdom and peace."

Go to www.brethren.org/homes/directory.html for the listing and web addresses for the 21 communities in the Fellowship of Brethren Homes.

-- **Retirement communities have been sharing suggestions for ways to help their residents and staff during the pandemic:**

Financial donations for purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) may be particularly helpful during this time. Several of the church-related communities, including Fahrney Keedy Senior Living Community in Boonsboro, Md., have made such requests.

Some retirement communities are welcoming donations of home-sewn masks for staff and residents. There are many websites offering instructions for making masks, here is one recommended by Pinecrest, a Church of the Brethren retirement community in Mount Morris, Ill.: www.regmedctr.org/webres/File/031920%20Properfit%20Clothing%20Co_%202_5%20PM%20Surgical%20Mask%20Sewing%20Instructions.pdf.

Also from Pinecrest comes this suggestion to help residents who may be feeling isolated as their facilities are closed to visitors. "If you're looking for ways to keep your children busy while they are off school, would you consider having them make a card or a picture for our residents? You could mail them to 'Any Resident,' Pinecrest Manor, 414 S. Wesley Ave., Mt. Morris, IL 61054."

-- **The deadline for applications to the Renz Scholarship has been extended through April 30.** The James E. Renz Pinecrest Memorial Scholarship is a \$1,000 scholarship striving to honor and recognize a graduating high school senior who, through unselfish acts and future plans, has demonstrated a commitment to healthcare, social work, or ministry studies. Eligible seniors will either be a member of a congregation within the northern region of the Illinois and Wisconsin District of the Church of the Brethren, or a high school senior in Oregon, Ill., or a Pinecrest employee or dependent, or a home-schooled or private school student from within the Oregon school district. The Pinecrest Board of Directors established the scholarship, first awarded in 2014, to recognize the lifetime contributions of Jim Renz, which included 40 years on the board, 24 years as secretary. Download the requirements and application from www.pinecrestcommunity.org/images/pdfs/2020_Renz_Scholarship_Pinecrest.pdf. For questions contact giving@pinecrestcommunity.org or 815-734-1710.

-- **A Weekly Virtual Campfire is being held by Camp Mack via Facebook Live each Sunday at 7 p.m. (Eastern time).** "Join us singing along, enjoying your popcorn, and being in community," said an invitation. Go to www.facebook.com/events/2491707141142969.

-- **Children's Disaster Services (CDS) training workshops** begin in February at several locations around the country. The workshops train prospective volunteers to serve with CDS to care for children and families affected by disasters. Find an interactive map of the next round of CDS workshops at https://maps.esp.tl/maps/_CDS-Training-Workshops-2020/pages/map.jsp.

-- **Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS)** is inviting Church of the Brethren congregations to send Christmas cards and holiday greetings to the current BVS volunteers. "Our volunteers love receiving cards and greetings from Brethren congregations!" said an announcement. To request a list of the current BVS volunteers contact bvs@brethren.org.

-- **The World Council of Churches (WCC) is seeking young songwriters** to enter a song-writing competition for its 11th Assembly. The Worship Planning Committee together with the WCC Youth Engagement program are presenting a creative opportunity to young people between the ages of 18 and 35 who attend a WCC member church--which includes the Church of the Brethren. "The Youth Song Writing Competition at the 11th Assembly in 2021 is an intentional effort of the WCC to engage young people in every aspect of what we do in the life and works of the whole fellowship," said Joy Eva Bohol, WCC program executive for Youth Engagement. Contestants are expected to compose their songs around the assembly theme "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity." The top eight songs selected from each region will be included in assembly worship resources. Songs can be written in any language but must be accompanied with an English translation. Every submission will be reviewed by a dedicated committee. The top three entries may be invited to lead and perform their songs in a musical event during the assembly. Download the entry form at www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/youth/entry-form_songwriting-competiton-for-youth. Download the Guidelines and Mechanics form at www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/youth/guidelines-and-mechanics-song-writing-competition. Download the competition flyer at www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/flyeryouthcontestdoc.pdf. Submission deadline is June 30.

-- **The Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry invites pastors to apply** to participate in its Part-Time Pastor; Full-Time Church program. Open to any Church of the Brethren pastor serving in a congregational role that is less than full-time, the program offers support, resources, and companionship for the 77 percent of the denomination's clergy who serve as multivocational pastors. Pastors who join the program will receive one-on-one encouragement and consultation with a regionally based "circuit rider" who will schedule an in-person visit to encourage and help identify specific challenges and places where some extra support could be helpful. The circuit rider will work to connect pastors with colleagues, educational resources, and experts who can offer guidance, companionship, and encouragement. This grant-funded program is free of charge to Church of the Brethren multivocational pastors. Find more information and the online application form at www.brethren.org/part-time-pastor. Contact Dana Cassell, program manager, with questions at dcassell@brethren.org.

-- **"Coronavirus worries got you down? Social distancing making you feel, well...distant?** We've just started a brand new season of the Dunker Punks Podcast!" said an invitation to listen to Brethren from across the country talk about life and the struggles of a modern-day Anabaptist. In Episode 94, titled "Will You Let Me Be Your Servant?" the podcast features a conversation about Brethren Volunteer Service from the McBride triplets who are all currently in BVS. The most recent episode delves into "The Making of a Dunker Punk" as Ben Bear talks to Donna Parcell about her life as a counter-cultural Brethren and her joys and struggles with raising another Dunker Punk. Listen to these episodes and the podcast's extensive archive of almost 100 episodes at arlingtoncob.org/dpp or on iTunes at bit.ly/DPP_iTunes. Participate in the continuing conversations on social media by searching @dunkerpunkspod.

-- **The National Council of Churches**, of which the Church of the Brethren is a member denomination, is offering daily scriptures, prayers, and meditations by Christian leaders from a wide variety of church traditions. Yesterday's meditation, for example, was written by Timothy Tee Boddie, a minister at the Alfred Street Baptist Church and immediate past general secretary and chief administrative officer of the Progressive National Baptist Convention in Washington, D.C. Find this daily devotional resource at <http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/topics/daily>.

-- **Allison L Snyder will begin June 22 as the 2020-2021 intern in the Brethren Historical Library and Archives.** She is a graduate of McPherson (Kan.) College with a bachelor of arts in history and English. She currently works as a lead/co-teacher for Little Tigers Learning Center and volunteers as a youth advisor for Panther Creek Church of the Brethren.

-- **The Church of the Brethren's Office of Peacebuilding and Policy has welcomed Galen Fitzkee as a new intern** working remotely from his home in Manheim, Pa. Fitzkee is wrapping up his junior year at Messiah College where he is majoring in Peace and Conflict Studies and minoring in Spanish and politics. He is a member at Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

-- **The Older Adult Ministry is posting worship resources for Older Adult Month in May** on the older adults page of the Church of the Brethren website. The theme is "Still Bearing Fruit" (Psalm 92:14) and the worship resources can be used for online worship. The ministry also is inviting congregations to share their experiences of ministry with older adults. "We, in the Church of the Brethren, are blessed by the presence and wisdom of the elders in our congregations. Perhaps you can set aside one Sunday in May to honor your older adults. Maybe you can ask younger folks to share stories of how an older adult has been a blessing in their life." Go to the Facebook page of the National Older Adult Conference (NOAC) to share your experiences of worship honoring older adults, at www.facebook.com/cobnoac . Find the downloadable worship resources at www.brethren.org/oam .

-- **Messenger magazine is offering online puzzle pages for children and families staying safe-at-home during the pandemic.** The two pages of puzzles have been put together with help from Zoe Vorndran, intern at the Brethren Historical Library and Archives, based on the Church of the Brethren camps at www.brethren.org/messenger/articles/2020/puzzles-brethren-camps.html and the church-related colleges and universities at www.brethren.org/messenger/articles/2020/crossword-brethren-colleges.html . "Zoe, thank you for the challenging clues!" said a note from the Messenger editorial team. Messenger is the denominational magazine of the Church of the Brethren.-- **The World Council of Churches (WCC) has announced a webinar and a new e-book offering examples of "best practices"** from churches across the world that are taking their ministry and services online because of COVID-19.

The webinar on "New Ways of Being the Church" is scheduled for 9 a.m. (Eastern time) on April 29. "The webinar will bring inspiration and knowledge to churches who want to develop their ministry online, discovering how churches continue to pray and worship together," said an announcement. "Via livestreamed speakers, the hour-long webinar will also offer time for questions and discussion. A video will be available for replay as well. Speakers will include pastors and communication experts from around the world." The webinar is organized by the WCC in partnership with the Lutheran World Federation, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Global Christian Forum, World Association for Christian Communication, and European Christian Internet Conference.

A new publication by one of the featured speakers at the webinar, Heidi Campbell, professor of communication at Texas A&M University and director of the Network for New Media, Religion, and Digital Culture Studies, is called "The Distanced Church: Reflections on Doing Church Online." This e-book was created with input from 30 practitioners and researchers sharing their current experiences and observations. Contributors come from 10 different countries, representing 12 different Christian denominations. "The goal is to get this material out to those who will most benefit from a project of this nature--religious communities wrestling with the sudden move from offline to online ministry through digitally-mediated contexts," said Campbell.

Find out more at www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/taking-your-ministry-online-webinar-new-publication-will-give-solid-how-tos .

Extra Tidbits

[2020 IRS Mileage Rates](#)

[James E. Renz Pinecrest Memorial Scholarship](#)

District Newsletters

[Franklin Grove](#)

[York Center](#)

[Mt. Morris](#)

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.

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.

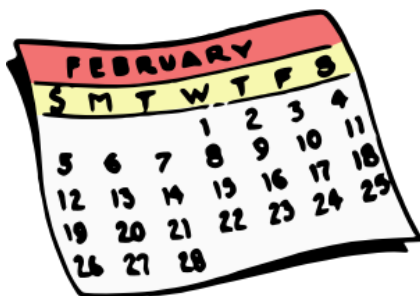
Serving is rewarding!

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.



Upcoming Events

May 19, 7 p.m. - Program & Arrangements Meeting, Zoom
May 30, 9 a.m. - MLDT Meeting, Zoom
June 6, 10 a.m. - District Leadership Team Meeting, Zoom
July 1-5 - COB Annual Conference
August 8, 9 a.m. - District Leadership Team Meeting, Zoom
