

The Reflector

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



Reflections from the Journey

Over the years I have appreciated the writing of Joyce Rupp. She has a way of expressing heartfelt struggles and joys in light of a faith grounded in God. Some months ago I acquired her book *Prayers of Boundless Compassion*. I got no further than the first selection titled, "The Body of Compassion", before needing to stop and take stock of my own capacity for this vital quality in the life of Christian faith. Here's the first prayer in her book:

"I pray to be the face of compassion –

that those who come within my view
find a cordial, kindly reception
written upon my facial landscape.

I pray to be the ears of compassion –

that those who come filled with distress
will experience my attentive presence,
ready to listen without distraction.

I pray to be the eyes of compassion –
that those who lack society's support
will receive my nonjudgmental gaze,
a look of unbiased, heartfelt welcome.

I pray to be the shoulders of compassion –
that those who come laden with burdens
will be able to set things down for a while,
and have the load lightened when they leave.

I pray to be the heart of compassion –
that those who feel overwhelmed with suffering
will sense my empathic response,
one that forgoes a desire to fix the hurt.

I pray to be the mouth of compassion –
that those whose voice is not heard
will be empowered and supported
by my determined, vocal stand for justice.

I pray to be the hands of compassion –
that those whose life could benefit
from my presence and my actions
will be assisted by the humble offering.

I pray to be the feet of compassion –
that those who long for companionship
will see that I walk beside them,
joined in the strength of a common humanity

I pray that the Light of compassion shining in my soul will recognize
and receive the Light shining in others, that together we will care
for creation with respect and have gratitude for all that exists.”

(Taken from *Prayers of Compassion* © 2018 by Joyce Rupp,
Used by permission of Sorin Books. All rights reserved.)

That is a tall order, that prayer! I have often thought of myself as a compassionate person, and I've hoped that others would see me that way and experience me that way. I've hoped that when people remember me after my earthly life is over that they will say I was compassionate. And yet I know all too well that I can be judgmental and biased. I know that I can neglect to “suffer with” the other person, which is what compassion means. I know that I can be so focused on my own agenda that I do not listen to the heart of the person in front of me. So to ponder how my very body might express compassion stretches me, challenges me, urges me to be more attentive to each interaction I have with other people.

And so I must sit with this prayer. I must take time to let the prayer reside in me and resonate with my being. How will praying this prayer transform me? Will I allow it to grow in me, bringing new life in me? Will it resurrect the holy compassion that sometimes gets buried beneath the weight of everyday living? Perhaps you, the reader of these words, will do the same as you continue on your journey of faith. And lest you forget, remember to be compassionate with yourself as you seek to extend compassion to others.

Connie R. Burkholder
Interim District Executive

Information about the Interim District Executive Position

Connie lives in McPherson, Kansas, so her ministry will be done by email, phone, and Zoom. Since her ministry is to be ¼ time and she has

responsibilities as part of a pastoral team in McPherson, she will generally not be available for Sunday morning commitments. Special circumstances would be negotiated. Her contact information is:

Email: crburkholder56@gmail.com

Cell phone: 620-245-4600

Moderator's Musings

by Blaine Miner

As I think about extending charity, I initially think of my response to Jesus' teachings to care for the least of my children. I then think of the idea of charity and doing good. I do not think of the risk involved in giving or doing good works.

I realized in our Christian walk, our faith involves a lot of risk. Jesus taught about counting the cost. Be prepared to see things through to the end and make sure you have what is needed to see the task through. Do we ask ourselves the question of what it will cost? What are the ramifications of our actions?

I started reading, "The Time is Now: A Call to Uncommon Courage," written by Sister Joan Chittister. In her chapter titled, *Risk*, she writes her memory of a guided meditation. The leader led her to imagine the setting in the time of Jesus' ministry. She finds Jesus teaching, healing, and visiting. As Jesus mingles from group to group, he stops and looks at her, as she is on the fringe of the crowd, and asks, "What will you do for these—simply stand there looking on?"

We have completed Lent and Easter. When I think of what God intended for his creation, I cannot help but think of the risk he took by first having his son come to us as an infant, then how Jesus' ministry led to his arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection.

Sr. Chittister asserts that the prophets we read were common people. They responded to the voice of God to speak out about injustices, unrighteous living, and failure to attend to the widowed, the fatherless, and the foreigner. The prophets in their time were not high on the list of people admired by the ruling class.

As we examine our walk with Christ, are we truly seeking the mind of Christ? In the book, "My Utmost for His Highest," Rev. Oswald Chambers writes in his March 30th devotion that our prayers need to be part of our worship. If we are demanding that God do things our way, our hearts are hardened. We are void of compassion if we have not sought the mind of Christ regarding those we pray for.

If we are truly an Easter people, what risks will we take in order to extend charity to the ones Jesus called least?

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN GUIDANCE ON COVID-19

Congregations in the IL/WI District are at a variety of places in matters of COVID-19 response. Some are meeting again in-person either strictly outdoors and others indoors, both with certain restrictions. Some have decided to wait until later to begin having in-person gatherings.

The Church of the Brethren denomination has posted helpful Guidelines for responding to the challenges of the pandemic. To access that information, visit this webpage: <https://covid19.brethren.org/>

Following local community guidelines, if available, is also advisable.

Utilizing best practices to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone is advised especially now that COVID cases are on the rise.

2021 Virtual District Potluck

The 2021 Virtual District Potluck was a rousing success! Sessions included:

- Bible Study
- Racism
- Indian Spices and easy recipes
- IT and the Church
- Leader Limits: Helping Your Pastor Thrive
- Sex Trafficking
- Train to Age
- Worship as Art: How Community Energizes Practice
- Closing and Opening Worship

If you missed the District Potluck, you can watch all the sessions on the District's YouTube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiAd6V0ObrJJ7jBouX7AI-Q/videos>

Session Attendance:

Day	Time	Session	Count
Tuesday	6:30	Opening Worship	36
	7:30	Bible Study	34
	6:30	Racism	28
Wednesday	7:30	Indian Spices & easy recipes	39
Thursday	6:30	IT and the Church	32
	7:30	Leader Limits: Helping Your Pastor Thrive	29
Friday	6:30	Sex Trafficking	26
	7:30	Train to Age	25
Saturday	10:00	Worship as Art: How Community Energizes Practice	29
	11:00	Closing Worship	30

If you are a pastor who would like to still get CEUs, please contact Connie Burkholder for more information.

If you are interested, Jonathan Shively's slides from his presentations can be found here:

- Thursday - Leader Limits: Helping Your Pastor Thrive - <http://bit.ly/LeaderLimits>
- Saturday - Worship as Art: How Community Energizes Practice - <http://bit.ly/WorshipArtistry>

After viewing the sessions, please fill out the evaluation at the following link: <https://forms.gle/uGvRFU2fqwvZDq4t8>

If you feel so inclined, you are welcome to donate to the work of the Illinois & Wisconsin District here:

<https://www.paypal.com/donate?>

[token=B2neDSOCE2wtol3DaibwIDNgYyuCOMDuNbpIlttNZvl4Q3XTwTruIWPr5k1wsHJ9Gr3cgRT7vL0UVILG0](https://www.paypal.com/donate?token=B2neDSOCE2wtol3DaibwIDNgYyuCOMDuNbpIlttNZvl4Q3XTwTruIWPr5k1wsHJ9Gr3cgRT7vL0UVILG0)

Thank you to everyone who attended and made this year's potluck possible! We couldn't have done it without you!

Until next time,

The IL/WI District Potluck Committee

Attend the New and Renew Conference!

With the coming of the New and Renew Conference on May 13 - 15, the Church, Revitalization and Development Team is offering scholarships for a few lucky attendees. CRDT is offering to pay the attendance fee (\$79) for the first 3 attendees that email the CRDT team.

Here are the rules:

1. Be one of the first 3 people to send an email to Bill Williams at - wms108@mchsi.com
2. After you have been notified that you have won, you must pay for

the conference and then send a copy of your receipt to Leonard Matheny at this email address: mathelw@gmail.com. Leonard will then send the receipt to the district office and you will be reimbursed. May everyone be blessed and renewed with the knowledge gained at this conference!

Overflowing with hope: An interview with NOAC coordinator Christy Waltersdorff

Church of the Brethren Newsline
March 12, 2021

This week, Newsline editor Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford interviewed National Older Adult Conference (NOAC) coordinator Christy Waltersdorff. The NOAC Planning Team has made the decision that the conference, held every two years, will be fully online in 2021 instead of in-person at its usual site in Lake Junaluska, N.C. Dates are Sept. 6-10. Registration starts May 1 at www.brethren.org/noac.

The theme is “Overflowing with Hope” inspired by Romans 15:13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Christian Standard Bible).

The NOAC Planning Team includes (from left) Paula Ziegler Ulrich, Karen Dillon, coordinator Christy Waltersdorff, Glenn Bollinger, Pat Roberts, Jim Martinez, and (not shown here) Rex Miller and staff Josh Brockway and Stan Dueck.



NOAC 2021. Photo by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

The planning team for

Why take NOAC online?

We made the decision last October, and at that time there was no vaccine yet. We felt like for the common good for everyone, we shouldn't meet in person. We were concerned about things like if the bus lines would be running. There were so many uncertainties. We decided it would be better to have it online rather than not at all. The NOAC demographic is in the highest risk category, and even now who is to say who all will be vaccinated by September?

This is all brand new. We're making it up as we go along! We're asking people who know what they're doing to help us figure it out.

What will be the highlight of this online conference?

People who have not been able to attend can attend—people who can't travel, or who are unable to get off work, for example. I'm hoping that this will especially help people with health issues.

I am hoping that congregations and Brethren retirement communities will safely invite people in to watch it together at viewing parties. And I am hoping that people will register to help pay for the costs such as speakers and technology. People think that because it's not onsite, it's not going to cost us anything, but it is. Even if people are watching it as a group, we're encouraging each of them to register.

Will you be offering help for people to participate if they have trouble using the Internet or have difficulties accessing the online sessions?

Yes, I am going to be asking district offices to get information out to congregations to help people. That's why we thought viewing parties would be a good thing, to help people who don't know how or who don't have the tech. I really am counting on local congregations and the Brethren retirement communities to help people figure it out. The churches that have the capacity for going online have really stepped up their game, and hopefully that will work to our advantage.

What are you looking forward to at NOAC this year?

We are really putting together a good conference. It's the same speakers we were going to have in person, and the preachers, everything from our onsite plans are going to carry over. It's going to be a good, powerful, strong experience.

Our keynote presenters are Karen Gonzalez, Lisa Sharon Harper, and Ken Medema and Ted Swartz. Our preachers are Andrew Wright, Paula Bowser, Don Fitzkee, Christy Dowdy, and Eric Landram. Our Bible study leader is Joel Kline.

I know that people will miss being together, however it's a year of a pandemic. To keep everyone safe is our priority. Loving our neighbor, and all that stuff!

What will the schedule be like?

We are maintaining the same week as usual and are picking up the major pieces of NOAC, just figuring out how to make them work online.

We're starting with Monday evening worship. Worship will be held each evening, Monday through Thursday. The mornings, starting Tuesday, will be Bible study with Joel Kline and then the keynote speakers. There will be afternoon workshops. We have ideas for virtual ice cream socials with the colleges. There will be a virtual fundraiser "Walk Around the Lake" and an opportunity to buy books for the Lake Junaluska elementary school. Libby Kinsey is working with the school librarian on a list of books about diversity that the library doesn't yet have, and Brethren Press will be featuring the list on their website.

Exact times are still to be determined. In planning the daily schedule, we have to be aware of the different time zones from west coast to east coast. I'm always aware of how unfair the time schedule is for the western folks. But because everything will be recorded, that will help people catch up if they missed something.

What does the future look like for NOAC?

The plan is to be back at Lake Junaluska in 2023. We're hoping that offering this year's online will encourage new people to come to the next NOAC. We've looked at other locations but it's hard to find any other place that's comparable. Lake Junaluska offers the setting and the facilities.

How can people follow along with the planning?

Follow along on our Facebook page and our web page. And give input! The Facebook page recently asked what kinds of workshops people want, for example. Registration opens May 1 and that link will be available on the webpage. We will have paper forms available too.

— Find NOAC on Facebook at www.facebook.com/cobnoac. The NOAC webpage is at www.brethren.org/noac.



Registration closes April 15th

Registration for FaithX (formerly Workcamps) 2021 closes one week from today on April 15th. You can [view the summer schedule](#) and [register today](#) on our website!

Fourteen FaithX experiences are being offered this year, which have been separated into a tier system. There are nine Tier 3 experiences planned for regions around the country, three Tier 2 experiences planned for individual congregations, and two Tier 1 options planned – one contiguous week of Tier 1 and one set of five Wednesdays.

This year, FaithX will be open to anyone who has completed 6th grade, with no age cap. We hope this allows people who have been supporters of the ministry in the past an opportunity to experience it themselves!



Registration is open now, but will close on **April 15th**. [Register now](#) or learn more about FaithX this year at our website.

Please reach out us at faithx@brethren.org or give us a call at (847) 429-4386 if you have any question or we can be helpful in anyway. We can't wait see you at a FaithX this summer!

Chad Whitzel and Alton Hipps
Coordinators of the 2021 FaithX Ministry
faithx@brethren.org
(847) 429-4386



COVID emergency grants for church workers are extended again

Church of the Brethren Newsline
March 26, 2021

A release from Brethren Benefit Trust

When the pandemic hit the US in full force in March 2020, it quickly became apparent to some that financial pressures were impacting a group of pastors and church, district, and camp employees. Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) was one entity that quickly realized the need.

**Church workers —
Help is continuing**

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
PENSION PLAN

“Our customer service representatives started receiving calls by those who almost overnight found themselves in financial difficulty, for any number of reasons,” said Nevin Dulabaum, BBT president. “Our Employee Benefits team approached me with the message that we should address this need, and so we quickly assessed our options, and in the matter of a few days created the COVID-19 emergency relief grant program.”

The Church Workers' Assistance Plan was created as an Annual Conference directive, which in 1998 asked BBT to serve as administrator of the benevolence program. Funds contributed by the churches, districts, and camps provide financial support grants to church workers in dire financial need. BBT distributes the grants through an application system that is cared for by BBT staff.

Grants awarded: Traditional vs COVID emergency grants

2020	Traditional Church Workers' Grants	COVID-19 Emergency Grants
Dollars distributed in 2020	\$290,057.66	\$215,571.26
Number of recipients	45	73

2021 YTD	Traditional Church Workers' Grants	COVID-19 Emergency Grants
Dollars distributed year-to-date	\$67,540.75	\$64,113.59
Number of recipients	32	21

In 2020, the Church Workers' Assistance Plan program provided \$290,000 in grants to 45 people. However, once the pandemic hit, it was immediately obvious that the need for assistance might escalate.

BBT set aside a block of funds for a special COVID-19 Emergency Grant program; got a separate, streamlined application up and running; and put the word out. Working in conjunction with the district executives, the first round of grants became available on March 20, 2020, and applications were accepted for four months.

As the district executives let BBT know how helpful this grant money was and expressed worry that the need was going to continue, BBT responded by opening up additional grant funds, in four-month blocks, three more times since then.

The next round of grants begins April 1 and runs through the end of July 2021.

"In meeting with the district executives early this year, BBT heard their strong support for extending the COVID-19 grants through the end of 2021," Dulabaum said. "BBT will consider doing so, based on how quickly the country recovers from the pandemic as the vaccination of Americans continues," he added.

It is important to maintain strict privacy guidelines for our grant recipients, but we can share that of the 94 COVID-19 grants awarded so far, 76 have been distributed to church employees, and 14 have been distributed to camp employees.

Please visit the BBT website, www.cobb.org, for more information and the grant application form.

Bethany Seminary Launches New Professional Master's Degree

For students who hear a clear call and are following a specific path to practical ministry, Bethany Theological Seminary has launched a new master's degree program that links spiritual formation with a focus on social change.

[The Master of Arts in Spiritual and Social Transformation \(MASST\) degree](#) program launches in the fall of 2021 and will significantly broaden the Seminary's offerings to students who want to focus and specialize their ministries. The program is designed to serve individuals pursuing careers in non-profit leadership, social services, or spiritual direction. This new program is uniquely positioned to link Bethany's Brethren heritage to the interests and needs of current students. According to Academic Dean Steve Schweitzer, MASST is a natural outgrowth of Bethany's mission and draws on the strengths of the Seminary's stellar faculty. The program is also a thoughtful response to trends across theological education in the U.S., and it is only the second master's program in the United States to focus on spiritual and social transformation in this combination and integrative way.

"In recent years, seminaries are conferring more Master of Arts than Master of Divinity degrees," notes Schweitzer. "It makes sense for us to continue to expand our offerings, and we want to start with what we know we can do well."

The Church of Brethren has, of course, always connected spiritual formation with a passion for social transformation. The new MASST degree provides students with options to deepen their faith and enrich their present and future ministries. Students will be able to take most of the required courses at a distance from campus and benefit from the same generous financial aid that is available to students in all Bethany programs. MASST will appeal to students who wish to pursue advanced degrees while continuing to work in their own communities.

This is the latest addition to Bethany's robust offerings, which include the Master of Arts in Theopoetics and Writing, six certificate programs, as well as the updated Master of Divinity and Master of Arts programs. These expanded offerings will allow Bethany to build on its recent positive enrollment trends and appeal to new categories of students.

"This new MASST program allows students another educational option to pursue their vocational call through unique courses and practical experiences. We've designed the MASST to be flexible and focused in light of student interests and needs," Schweitzer says.

Students in the MASST program can choose from five "Paths" or concentrations of courses, including Non-Profit Leadership (in partnership with Eastern Mennonite University) and two programs in Spiritual Practices and Direction (in association with Oasis Ministries). Other focus areas are History as Argument and Meditation and Public Theology and Witness. All concentrations will benefit from Bethany's existing strengths, and students will learn alongside those who are seeking certificates, other M.A. degrees, and the M.Div.

"For anyone who is ready to say, 'this is my call and this is my path,' the MASST degree is a way to name and claim your ministry and your career," says Schweitzer.

As is true for all Bethany degree programs, MASST students will have access to generous financial aid, including the [Pillars and Pathways Residential Scholarship](#), which allows students to earn a graduate degree without taking on additional student or commercial debt.

[Read more about MASST here.](#)

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[APPLY FOR ADMISSION BY MAY 15, 2021](#)



Yearbook forms due April 15

April 15 is the deadline for congregational forms to be received by the Yearbook Office in order for information to be included in the 2021 Yearbook.

Paper copies of the forms have been mailed to each congregation. If you have not received the forms or would like digital copies, please contact Jim Miner, Yearbook Specialist, at 800-323-8039 ext. 320 or yearbook@brethren.org.

Mail completed forms to Yearbook, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120. If you've already put yours in the mail, thank you!

A new web page containing instructions, especially on how to count worship attendance for 2020, and other resources related to the Yearbook is found at www.brethren.org/yearbook.



Happy Easter!

It is with great love and joy that we at OEP look toward our greater community and give thanks for the time, effort and resources they have honored us with. During the time of remembrance that we celebrate during this Easter season, we thank you, our community, for the wonderful communion you have helped us create and further provide to our world.

From all of us at OEP, to all of you, thank you!

With this time, we would also like to give back to you, our community, [with our Easter resources, a collection of materials created for guided meditation on the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ.](#) We hope these powerful resources find you and your family well in this time of gratitude and peace.

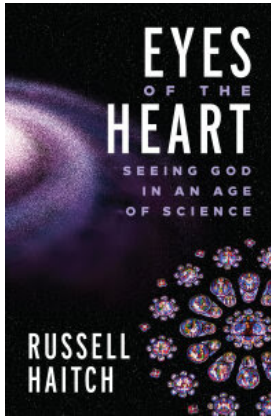
Peace & Love, OEP





Peace Essay Contest

Bethany Seminary is now accepting submissions for its Peace Essay Contest. The theme for this year's contest is "Civil Resistance and Non-Violent Social Change in an Increasingly Virtual World," and the competition is open to students in high school, college, seminary, and graduate school. Prizes of \$2000, \$1000, and \$500 will be awarded to the top three essays. The deadline for entry is May 15. Read more [here](#).



Russell Haight's New Book

Dr. Russell Haight, professor of theology and human science, has published a new book, *Eyes of the Heart: Seeing God in an Age of Science* (Fortress, 2021).

The book offers a model for unifying Christian convictions and mainstream science, and it will be of special interest to pastors, small group leaders who work with youth, and youth themselves. Read more [here](#).

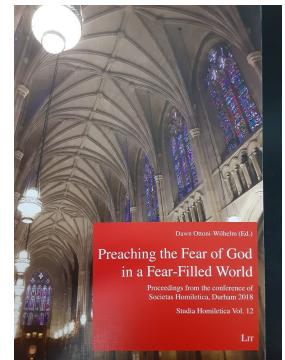
Gab Sessions with Gaby

Admissions Counselor Gaby Chacón will host a series of information sessions for those interested in learning more about Bethany programs. If you, or someone you know, is interested in pursuing advanced study at Bethany, this is the perfect opportunity to learn more about degrees and certificates, scholarships, our residential community, and more. Sessions are scheduled for March 15, March 29, April 12, April 26, and May 10. You can join these sessions on [Zoom](#).

Preaching the Fear of God

Dr. Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm is editor of a newly published book entitled *Preaching the Fear of God in a Fear-Filled World: Proceedings from the conference of Societas Homiletica, Durham 2018*. The collection of conference presentations highlights rhetorical, biblical, political, and spiritual dimensions of fear.

Learn more [here](#).



Compelling Vision Bible Study

Dr. Denise Kettering-Lane will lead a bible study for youth and young adults on March 14, 8-9 p.m. Denise will contribute a scholarly perspective to this series of sessions focused on the Church of the Brethren's Compelling Vision. Her session will discuss passages from Matthew and will take place on Zoom.

[You can register here.](#)

Class of 2018 — Take Our Survey

Members of the Class of 2018 — please watch for Bethany's alumni survey. We value your feedback about our programs, so please take a few minutes to share your thoughts. The alumni survey will be distributed by email on March 15.

Youth and young adult calendar lists upcoming events to be offered online

Church of the Brethren Newswire

February 26, 2021

An updated calendar of online events for youth and young adults has been announced by the Church of the Brethren's Youth and Young Adult ministry. Most of the following events were shared in a letter from director Becky Ullom Naugle to youth advisors and pastors (<https://mailchi.mp/brethren.org/youth-young-adult-ministry-2021>). Information also is being shared via Facebook at www.facebook.com/BrethrenYYA.

"It goes without saying that virtual events are not the same as in-person events, and I lament with you the loss this represents," she wrote. "Yet, as we model for others how to find and follow the movement of the Holy Spirit in challenging times, I hope these new online opportunities enrich our faith and the faith of those we walk beside."

She noted that the National Junior High Conference and Ministry Summer Service will not be offered this year because of complications related to COVID. Ministry Summer Service will resume in 2022, and the next National Junior High Conference will take place in 2023.



Feb. 28 – Deadline for junior and senior high youth groups to express interest in participating in the **Youth Fellowship Exchange**, an opportunity to connect youth from different congregations for online fellowship. Youth advisors are invited to fill out an interest form at <https://forms.gle/pc2yt26usAUBDZht7>. Find out more at www.brethren.org/news/2021/new-youth-fellowship-exchange.

March 7 – The second in a series of **Compelling Vision Bible Studies** for young adults, junior high and senior high youth, and accompanying adults. These studies will be held in the evenings on select dates through June. Groups as well as individuals are encouraged to attend. "Together" is the theme for the event on March 7, at 8-9 p.m. (Eastern), led by Audrey and Tim Hollenberg-Duffey. Register at <http://ow.ly/ZgLP50DGRJN>.

March 14 – Bethany Theological Seminary professor Denise Kettering Lane will lead the **third session in the Compelling Vision Bible Studies series**, focusing on "as the Church of the Brethren," on March 14 from 8-9 p.m. (Eastern). Register at <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJltcO-rqDopHNTMU-BdDaJ-bJ6JL5YRGHGt>.

March 24 – "Living Letters" art workshop for young adults led by Jessie Houff, Community Arts minister at Washington (D.C.) City Church of the Brethren.

April 11 – "Living Letters" art workshop for junior high youth, led by Houff.

April 24-28 – **Christian Citizenship Seminar** for senior high youth and adult advisors. This year the theme is "Economic Justice" (Luke 1:51-53). Online sessions will be held in the evenings. Registration costs \$75 per person. For more information and to register, go to www.brethren.org/ccs.

May 2 – National Youth Sunday, an annual event calling congregations to celebrate their senior high youth by inviting them into worship leadership. Theme and worship materials will be posted by March 15 at www.brethren.org/yya/national-youth-sunday.

May 11 – “Play, on Purpose,” a webinar for youth advisors, led by Dr. Lakisha Lockhart. Continuing education credit will be available.

May 28-31 – National Young Adult Conference for young adults age 18-35. This year’s theme is “Unfolding Grace” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Registration opens Feb. 26. Cost is \$75 per person. For more information and to register go to www.brethren.org/yac.



Aug. 1 – “Living Letters” art workshop for youth advisors, led by Houff.

Nov. 7 – National Junior High Sunday, an annual event celebrating junior high youth, encouraging congregations to welcome them into worship leadership. Worship resources will be posted later this summer at www.brethren.org/yya/jr-high-resources.

2022 – National Youth Conference. Planning is beginning now for next year’s NYC, a conference held every four years for senior high youth and first-year college students (or those of equivalent age), and their adult advisors.



New & Renew Conference 2021 is Virtual

Join us for the New & Renew Virtual Conference, **May 13-15, 2021**.

New and Renew is an opportunity for pastors and leaders of new church plants and established churches to come together for worship, learning, and networking.

The conference theme is **The Reward of Risk**, developed from the Gospel of Matthew 25.28-29a. Often in our conversations around church planting and church renewal, we talk about the possibility of failure regarding risk. But have we ever stopped to ponder the possibility of reward amid risk? What might it look like to celebrate those who have taken the risk for the Kingdom of God? Join us as we explore the Reward of Risk and celebrate those who risked for the Kingdom of God.

The three-day virtual conference has more than 20 sessions to broaden your knowledge of church planting and congregational renewal. Besides the workshops, inspirational worship and keynotes will invigorate your calling and passion for ministry.

Unable to attend the conference? No problem! Registration means you can access the recorded sermons, keynotes, and workshops recordings for six months after the event. That means you can watch recorded presentations that are helpful for your ministry context and earn CEUs.

If you are looking for new and practical ways to engage your community and congregation, look no further than the New & Renew Conference 2021. You don't want to miss out on this great experience!

New & Renew Conference Pricing

\$79 per person

\$10 for individuals wanting CEUs.



Stan Dueck
Leadership/Personal Coach
Director, Organizational Leadership
Church of the Brethren
sdueck@brethren.org
847-429-4343

[Learn more](#)

For conference updates, schedule and more, go to: www.brethren.org/newandrenew

For questions please contact:

Randi Rowan, churchplanting@brethren.org

Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 303 or 847-429-4303

Register for May Ventures Course

The May course from the Ventures in Christian Discipleship program at McPherson College will be "The Ministry of Jesus, Ubuntu and Cultural Competency for These Times" to be taught by LaDonna Sanders Nkosi, public poet, global traveler, and cross-cultural community builder who is the Senior Leader of the Gathering Chicago and the Gathering Global Network. She is the Director of Intercultural Ministries with the Church of the Brethren.

As followers of Jesus, we have a responsibility to foster communities and relationships of respect that honor and welcome people from across various cultures and backgrounds. This course explores biblical examples, the ministry of Jesus, and current texts to provide helpful skill-building in increasing our cultural competency, respectful multicultural engagement practices, and beloved community building as described by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Kingian Nonviolence and Philosophy.

Participants are asked to read at least the first three chapters of the book "Everyday Ubuntu: Living Better the African Way" by Mungi Ngomane and to keep a cross-cultural skill-building journal as a part of the course. A copy of the book can be found through Brethren Press: www.brethrenpress.com, your favorite book retailer, local library, or audiobook provider. Poetry, video, journaling, reflections, and conversations together will be key components as participants explore and build their cultural competencies as followers of Jesus in these times.

The course will be held online in two evening sessions, with **Part I on Tuesday, May 4 and Part II on Tuesday, May 11 from 6 to 8 p.m. CDT**. Continuing education credit is available. During the registration process, you will have the opportunity to pay for CEUs and give an optional donation to the Ventures program.

All previously held Ventures courses are available through the online [archive](#). They are a wealth of insight and information. These recordings are now eligible for CEU credit through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership. If you desire CEU's, please work directly with the Academy to fulfill their requirements.

Registration for all courses and more information about Ventures in Christian Discipleship is available [online](#).

[Registration](#)

Delegate Registration for the 2021 ONLINE Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, June 29-July 4, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Registration for both delegates and non-delegates for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference will open at 12:00 Noon Central Time on Tuesday, March 2, 2021. The delegate registration fee is \$305 per delegate. Registration will stay open through the end of conference.

Delegate registration fees provide each delegate with a Conference booklet and the business materials packet. Each congregation registering a delegate will also receive a copy of the 2021 Annual Conference minutes.

Please note: Unique to this year's ONLINE Annual Conference, each delegate MUST HAVE THEIR OWN PERSONAL EMAIL ADDRESS, A COMPUTER OR TABLET, AS WELL AS ADEQUATE WIFI SERVICE IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN CONFERENCE. *Please ensure that your selected delegate meets these requirements to participate so that your congregation can be fully represented at Annual Conference.*

We are aware that some congregations do not have much access to the Internet and we hope delegates from those congregations will be able to participate. Perhaps your district office will have counsel as to how you can obtain individual Internet connections for each of your delegates.

One online site will be used for all business, insight sessions, networking groups, concerts, Bible studies and more. A link and password for access to the site will be emailed to each registrant in the days prior to the start of Conference. Training sessions will be provided in the weeks before Conference begins for those wanting to learn how to navigate the site. The many details of the event will be frequently updated on www.brethren.org/ac. Please check back often! Also watch for weekly emails sharing information about all that Annual Conference will have to offer online.

Registering a Delegate

Beginning Tuesday, March 2, at 12:00 noon Central Time, congregations may register their delegates online at www.brethren.org/ac. Click the "Registration" button and then choose "Delegate Registration." Payment options include paying by credit card or sending a check. Each delegate's complete name, address, email, and phone contact are required. **Please use the delegate's own email address, not the church email!** If you need assistance, call the Annual Conference Office at 800-323-8039 ext. 366, or 847-429-4366.

Delegate Eligibility and Allotment

Delegates must be full members of the Church of the Brethren. The number of delegates for each congregation is based on the membership statistics as reported in the 2020 Church of the Brethren Yearbook. The number allowed is as follows:

Up to 200 Members	1 delegate
201-400 Members	2 delegates
401-600 Members	3 delegates
601-800 Members	4 delegates

Non-Delegate Registrations

Non-delegate registration opens the same day as delegate registration. When registering anyone other than a delegate, click on the "Non-Delegate Registration" button. This year's reduced price of \$99 for non-delegates provides access to the business sessions, insight sessions, networking groups, concerts, Bible studies and more.

All five worship services will be available free of charge to all registered and non-registered persons.

New Delegates

Please encourage delegates who have never been or have not recently been to Annual Conference to attend the New Attendee Orientation session, online at 3:30 p.m. Central Time on Wednesday afternoon, June 29.

Online Information

Please check out our webpage at www.brethren.org/ac2021 for more information about Annual Conference, including leadership, themes, schedule, concerts and much more. New information is added regularly so check back often.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding registration.

Debbie Noffsinger, registration coordinator

Annual Conference Office

Church of the Brethren

1451 Dundee Avenue

Elgin, IL 60120

Dial direct: 847-429-4366

Toll free: 800-323-8039, x366

dnoffsinger@brethren.org

Leadership Summit on Wellbeing takes place April 19-22 as a virtual event

Church of the Brethren Newsline



February 6, 2021

By Philip Collins

The Church of the Brethren is hosting a Leadership Summit on Wellbeing, a virtual event for clergy and other church leaders. This multi-day event covers a wide array of topics that are intended to provide a holistic approach to sustaining leaders.

Dr. Jessica Young Brown, a counseling psychologist and assistant professor of Counseling and Practical Theology at Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University, is the keynote speaker. She specializes in bringing together mental health work and the church, particularly for church leaders.

Other speakers include Ron Vogt, Bruce Barkhauer, Melissa Hofstetter, Tim Harvey, and Erin Matteson.

The summit will take place on the evenings of April 19-22. Attendees will have access to five pre-recorded sessions to view before attending the event online, which will consist of follow-up Q&A sessions on the material viewed. Each presenter covers a different aspect of wellbeing, including physical, emotional, financial, relational, and spiritual wellbeing.

Registration opens Feb. 8. To register and to find more information, visit www.brethren.org/leadership-wellbeing. Early-bird registration is available for \$50 before April 1, when registration will increase to \$75.

— *Philip Collins, a student at Bethany Theological Seminary, is serving as logistics coordinator for the Leadership Summit on Wellbeing.*

PINECREST COMMUNITY'S 2021 RENZ SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED

Applications are now being received for the James E. Renz Pinecrest Memorial Scholarship. This \$1,000.00 scholarship strives to honor and recognize a graduating high school senior who intends to pursue an education in healthcare, social services, or ministry studies.

Eligible graduates will be either 1) a member of a Church of the Brethren congregation within the northern region of the Illinois and Wisconsin District; 2) or an Oregon High School senior; 3) or a Pinecrest employee or dependent; 4) 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 Mr. Renz, which include 40 years on the board, 24 years as secretary.

Read more about the requirements and download the application on Pinecrest's website: <https://www.pinecrestcommunity.org/News-Releases/2021-Renz-Scholarship-Applications-Now-Accepted>

Annual Conference office releases two ballots to be presented to 2021 delegate body

Church of the Brethren Newsline



February 5, 2021

Timothy Botts

The logo for Annual Conference 2021. Art by

The Annual Conference office has released two ballots to be presented to the delegates at the Church of the Brethren annual meeting on June 30-July 4, 2021. The event is online-only (www.brethren.org/ac).

When last year's Conference was cancelled because of the pandemic, the Nominating Committee recommended deferring the 2020 ballot to 2021. Each person on the 2020 ballot has been asked their willingness to be considered in the 2021 vote. People holding positions elected by Annual Conference whose terms expired in 2020 have been asked their willingness to extend their terms until the election in 2021.

This has resulted in two ballots coming before the delegate body this year: the 2020 deferred ballot and the 2021 ballot.

Those elected from the 2021 ballot will serve the usual term for their office.

Those elected from the 2020 deferred ballot, except for the moderator-elect, will serve one year less than the usual term.

Here is the 2020 deferred ballot:

For Annual Conference moderator-elect: **Tim McElwee** and **Paul Liepelt**.

Liepelt is a pastor at Annville (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. He has been a member of the denomination's Mission and Ministry Board, and has served on the executive committee. In past experience on the denominational staff, he taught at Kulp Bible College in Nigeria 2004-2007. He is an ordained minister and holds a master of divinity degree from Bethany Theological Seminary.

McElwee lives in Wolcottville, Ind. Now retired, his leadership in the church includes a number of roles at Manchester University over more than 30 years, including vice president for advancement and for academic resources, and associate professor of peace studies. While an ordained minister he served as campus pastor. He has been chaplain for the Timbercrest retirement community. In the 1990s he was denominational staff in Washington, D.C. He also has been senior director of development for Heifer International. He holds a master of divinity from Bethany Seminary and a master's and doctorate from Purdue University.

For the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee: **Beth Jarrett** of Harrisonburg, Va.; **Walt Wiltschek** of Easton, Md.

For the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, representing laity: **Richard E. Allison**, Claysburg, Pa.; **Arthur Fourman**, Dayton, Ohio.

For the Mission and Ministry Board, Area 1: **Josiah Ludwick**, Harrisburg, Pa.; **Mandy North**, Manassas, Va.

For the Mission and Ministry Board, Area 4: **Daniel L. Butler**, Grundy Center, Iowa; **Kathy A. Mack**, Rochester, Minn.

For Bethany Seminary trustee, representing clergy: **Chris Bowman**, Manassas, Va.; **Frances R. Townsend**, Onekama, Mich.

For Bethany Seminary trustee, representing laity: **Irene Beltran**, Pomona, Calif.; **Jacki Hartley**, Elgin, Ill.

For the Brethren Benefit Trust board: **Janis Fahs**, North Manchester, Ind.; **David L. Shissler**, Hummelstown, Pa.

For the On Earth Peace board: **Ruth Aukerman**, Union Bridge, Md.; **James LeFever**, Los Angeles, Calif.

Here is the 2021 ballot:

For the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee: **Kim Ebersole**, North Manchester, Ind.; **Nathan Hollenberg**, Broadway, Va.

For the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, representing laity: **Robert S. McMinn**, Huntingdon, Pa.; **Kevin Schweitzer**, Dayton, Ohio.

For the Mission and Ministry Board, Area 3: **Karen Shively Neff**, Gotha, Fla.; **Phillip C. Stone Jr.**, Linville, Va.

For the Mission and Ministry Board, Area 5: **Barbara Daté**, Eugene, Ore.; **Annali Topf**, Los Angeles, Calif.

For Bethany Seminary trustee, representing laity: **Drew Hart**, Harrisburg, Pa.; **Nohemi Flores**, Pomona, Calif.

For Bethany Seminary trustee, representing colleges: **Katharine Gray Brown**, North Manchester, Ind.; **Steve Longenecker**, Harrisonburg, Va.

For the Brethren Benefit Trust board: **Sara Davis**, La Canada Flintridge, Calif.; **Carl Eubank**, Dayton, Ohio.

For the On Earth Peace board: **Rudy Amaya**, Pasadena, Calif.; **Alyssa Parker**, Harrisburg, Pa.

Making webinars count: announcing new policy for clergy continuing education credit

By Janet Ober Lambert, Director of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership

It has long been the practice of the Church of the Brethren to require live participation in educational events in order for clergy to receive



continuing education units (CEUs). However, a new policy from the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, in partnership with the Ministry Advisory Council, is changing that.

Recognizing that live participation is becoming increasingly difficult for multivocational ministers and given the growing library of recorded webinars available from denominational agencies, the Brethren Academy is offering clergy the opportunity to view and report on prerecorded webinars and other educational events for CEUs. A standardized reporting process will provide the necessary accountability.

For recordings to be eligible for CEUs, they must: 1) have been created by a Church of the Brethren agency, 2) be no more than 10 years old, and 3) have been originally offered for CEUs according to the criteria set forth by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

After viewing a recording that meets these criteria, clergy may go to the Brethren Academy webpage at <https://bethanyseminary.edu/brethren-academy> to complete a "Continuing Education Report for Recorded Material." This fillable form requires the clergyperson to demonstrate knowledge about the material viewed. Completed forms may then be printed and mailed to the Brethren Academy along with the certificate fee. All submissions will be reviewed by the academy's director.

Viewing a recording after the event will be equivalent to the credit awarded for attending a live presentation. For example, attending a one-hour live webinar is worth 0.1 CEU. Viewing that same webinar after the fact also is worth 0.1 CEU.

CEU certificates will not be awarded for quantities of less than 0.2 CEUs. Two one-hour recordings may be combined for a total of 0.2 CEUs or one longer recording may be viewed. A separate "Continuing Education Report for Recorded Material" is required for each recording. The CEU certificate fee is \$10 per submission, with a limit of four recorded events, of any length, per submission. Paper certificates will be mailed to clergy and records of these certificates will be kept by the Brethren Academy.

Participating in live events continues to be valuable for the Church of the Brethren. Gathering in person provides opportunities to ask questions, exchange ideas, build relationships, as well as pray and worship together. The Brethren Academy hopes this new opportunity will supplement rather than replace live events. The intent is to expand opportunities to learn for all who minister, for the glory of God and our neighbor's good.

To read the full policy, visit <https://bethanyseminary.edu/brethren-academy> and scroll down to the section on "Continuing Education."

MESSAGE FROM THE WAGGYS

A committee of the Global Church of the Brethren Communion has developed a survey and asks that all interested Church of the Brethren (CoB) members in the US respond. This will also be sent in Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole to CoB denominations of those language groups. The survey names 19 characteristics that some identify with the CoB. The intent is to receive feedback from across our 11 country denominations as to which of these are considered essential, important, or irrelevant to the individual respondent.

The committee believes that this survey can lay the foundations for intentional ongoing dialogue among the worldwide CoB on our theological and denominational identity, and strengthen ties between the sister churches.

Results will inform discussions between these CoB denominations (in Brazil, DR Congo, Dominican Republic, Haiti, India, Nigeria, Rwanda, Spain, Uganda, the US, and Venezuela) in order to develop criteria for what bodies might be included in this global fellowship in the future, as there are many inquiries for affiliation.

The data may also provide information about areas for more emphasis in education. For example, if a high majority of the respondents say trine immersion is irrelevant, what might that tell us? To see the survey and enter your responses please follow the link below.

[ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN](#)

We strongly encourage you to answer the survey and in this way contribute to the Global Church of the Brethren Communion. Please complete the survey by the **end of April**.

CHURCH SECURITY: 4 MAJOR QUESTIONS IN 2021

Don't Miss Out! Watch Our Church Security Webinar

More than 1,000 ministry leaders joined us for a discussion about four safety and security questions churches are asking in 2021:

- How can I engage my safety team as a ministry?
- What do I need to know to identify and minister to people in crisis?
- What is my safety team's role in protecting ministries against emerging threats?
- How can my team attempt to de-escalate a crisis situation?

Our panelists include two church security specialists and an associate pastor who oversees safety and security at his church. You'll want to hear what they say.

[Watch On Demand](#)

CONSIDERING RESUMPTION OF IN-PERSON GATHERINGS

Our district includes two states: Illinois and Wisconsin. Each state has its own set of dynamics related to the COVID-19 pandemic and thus considering the resumption of in-person gatherings of our communities of faith should take into consideration respective state guidelines. In addition, the welfare of our congregational constituencies needs to be considered during decision-making, as well.

Our district has not made a statement or created a document with definitive guidelines to use for resuming in-person services. However, a list of resources, including some helpful questions, has been compiled for your use as you enter into a decision-making process. As we become aware of new information, we will make it available to you through the newsletter and/or occasional memos.

If your congregation has developed guidelines or statements that you are willing to share, send them to the district office indicating this intent, and we will be happy to distribute it.

Questions to consider

- 1) What are the professionals in our area advising at this time? What do governmental leaders say is safe? What do the medical experts in our communities advise as it relates to gathering in person? How will we weigh and balance what may be conflicting information?
- 2) If we were to resume in person gatherings what do we see as the risks? What do we see as the gains? What steps will we need to take to provide a safe and healthy space and experience for people?
- 3) What portion of the congregation would feel safe in returning to in person gatherings? What portion should not feel safe returning at this time because of their age or other medical conditions? Are there commitments we can make as a congregation that would help people feel safe and included?
- 4) If we were to resume in person gatherings how do we provide for those who have been able to be with us in our current forms of gathering but would not feel comfortable coming to the building and being together in the same room?
- 5) If we are to resume in person what will we require of those who attend? How will we support safe practices when together? What is the

maximum number of persons we can have in the worship space and abide by government and health guidelines?

6) If we resume in person activities, will it only be for worship at this time? What about other aspects of our ministry such as children's, youth groups, Sunday School, meetings, and more?

Resource List

Guide to Returning (Wisconsin)

<http://content.delivra.com/etapcontent/WisconsinCouncilofChurches/attachments/WCC%20Guide%20to%20Returning%20to%20Church%20-%20Ministry%20During%20COVID19.pdf>

Information from Lewis Center for Church Leadership

<https://www.churchleadership.com/tag/covid-19/>

Article from Congregational Consulting Group

<https://www.congregationalconsulting.org/caught-between-anxiety-and-anger/>

Information from Church Mutual

<http://d31hzhk6di2h5.cloudfront.net/20200518/aa/78/b9/76/a691037ea57238bafccae0cd/CM0308-2020-05-RC-Recommendations-for-a-Safe-Return-to-Worship.pdf>

Information from Brotherhood Mutual

<https://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/resources/safety-library/risk-management-articles/disasters-emergencies-and-health/general-health-and-injury-prevention/coronavirus/before-we-gather/>

Shenandoah District Best Practices

<http://images.acswebnetworks.com/1/929/BestPracticesReopening2020.pdf>

State of Illinois Guidance for Places of Worship

<https://www.dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/Church%20Guidance.pdf>

Restore Illinois – Phases 1-5 explained

<https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/restore-illinois-introduction>

District Leadership Team Meeting Places 2021

April 10, 2021: 9 a.m., Zoom

June 5, 2021: 9 a.m., Zoom

August 7, 2021: 9 a.m., Zoom

October 9, 2021: 9 a.m., Zoom

November 13, 2021: 9 a.m., Zoom

District Leadership Team

Moderator (1 year term): Blaine Miner, Dixon

Contact: blaineminer86@gmail.com

847-404-6635

Moderator-elect (2 year term): Harold Rose, Canton

Contact: hrose@cantonusd.org

309-357-3590

Clerk (3 year term): Kristi Kellerman, Highland Ave.

Contact: kristi.kellerman@gmail.com

815-814-1360

Recording Secretary: Jan Dietrich, Mt. Morris

Contact: jdiet220@hotmail.com

815-738-2365

Standing Committee (3 year term): Dennis Webb, Naperville

Contact: djkrwebb@hotmail.com

630-236-8166

Financial Secretary (3 year term): Christine Knotts, Peoria

Contact: knotts.christine@gmail.com

309-253-6802

Treasurer (3 year term): Ellis Boughton, Yellow Creek

Contact: ellis.boughton@live.com

815-864-2049

Interim District Executive: Connie Burkholder

Contact: crburkholder56@gmail.com

620-245-4600

Andrea Garnett, Administrative Assistant

Contact: andreag.iwdcob@gmail.com

309-649-6008

Carol Kussart, Chair; Cerro Gordo

Contact: ckussart@gmail.com

217-855-3258

Phyllis Batterton, Vice-chair; Woodland

Contact: pjbatterton@gmail.com

309-759-4897

Ed Watkins, Peoria

Contact: watrkinsedwardjc@gmail.com

309-397-2401

Mary Dulabaum, Highland Ave.

Contact: mdulabaum@gmail.com

847-695-2652

Kyle Brinkmeier, Yellow Creek

Contact: brinkky@hotmail.com

815-291-4664

Jonathan Shively, Highland Ave.

Contact: shively.jonathan@gmail.com

847-644-1174

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!



Upcoming Events

- Saturday, April 10, 9 am: Leadership Team Meeting
 - April 13, 1:30 pm: Calling the Called
 - April 15, 7:00 pm: Moderator's Town Hall
 - April 17, 9 am: MLDT
 - April 17, 1:00 - 6:00 pm: Moderator's Town Hall
 - April 20, 7:00 pm: Program & Arrangements Committee
 - April 21, 9:00 am: District Potluck Team Meeting
 - May 13, 6:30 pm: Southern Poverty Law Center Workshop
-

Newsline

-- **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..

-- **Children's Disaster Services (CDS) has added a number of new resources** for children and families to its COVID-19 resources page. Go to <https://covid19.brethren.org/resources-for-children-families>.

-- **The document “Checklist for Reopening Church Buildings”** offers practical suggestions for congregations navigating the transition of returning to their church buildings. Now available in both Spanish and English, the resource was developed by members of the Recovery Response Task Team of the Church of the Brethren denominational staff: Stan Dueck and Joshua Brockway of Discipleship Ministries, Roy Winter of Global Mission and Service and Brethren Disaster Ministries, and Nancy S. Heishman of the Office of Ministry. Go to <https://covid19.brethren.org> .

— **An updated edition of the Church of the Brethren Manual of Organization and Polity**—with footnotes instead of endnotes for easier research—is now available at www.brethren.org/ac/ppg.

— **Applications are being received for the James E. Renz Pinecrest Memorial Scholarship**, a \$1,000 scholarship given by the Pinecrest retirement community in Mount Morris, Ill. The scholarship recognizes a graduating high school senior who intends to pursue an education in healthcare, social services, or ministry studies. To be eligible, students are either a member of a Church of the Brethren congregation in the northern region of the Illinois and Wisconsin District, an Oregon (Ill.) High School senior, a Pinecrest employee or dependent, or a home-schooled or private school student from within the Oregon school district. The scholarship is in honor of the lifetime contributions of Jim Renz including 40 years on the board, with 24 years as secretary. For more information and the application form go to www.pinecrestcommunity.org/images/pdfs/2021_Renz_Scholarship_Application.pdf.

— **Annual Conference registration opens March 2** at 1 p.m. (Eastern time) at www.brethren.org/ac. The Church of the Brethren annual meeting is online-only this year. Worship services are free and open to the public, but registration and a fee are required to attend the business sessions, Bible studies, workshops, insight sessions, concerts, and more. The Annual Conference office has begun publishing a newsletter with details about the 2021 annual meeting, find the first issue at www.brethren.org/ac2021.

— **Creation Justice Ministries seeks applicants for the position of executive director**. The Church of the Brethren relates to this organization, which is a former ministry of the National Council of Churches. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the executive director will have overall strategic and operational responsibility for Creation Justice Ministries’ programs and execution of its mission. The overarching responsibility will be to continue and enhance the program ministries and to encourage and enable member communions to address eco-justice issues through their own programs. The executive director is responsible for day-to-day operations, ensuring financial stability, focusing on mission-related programs and activities, overseeing and directing staff, and maintaining accurate and complete financial and organizational records. The executive director is the chief fundraiser, administrator, and ambassador for the organization. For more information see www.creationjustice.org/join-our-team—we-are-hiring-an-executive-director.html.

— **Bethany Theological Seminary has announced its 2021 Peace Essay Contest**, made possible by the Jennie Calhoun Baker Endowment and sponsored by Bethany’s Peace Studies program. This year’s topic is “Civil Resistance and Nonviolent Social Change in an Increasingly Virtual World.” Said an announcement: “More than five decades after civil resistance movements worldwide, communities local and global continue to be threatened by state-sanctioned violence. From movements in opposition to police brutality in Nigeria led by #ENDSARS and in the United States organized by #BlackLivesMatter, to the farmer protests in India and the pro-Navalny movement in Russia, people are joining in solidarity to rise up and demand a better world. How can we create and participate in nonviolent social change in an increasingly violent—and virtual—world?” Prizes of \$2,000, \$1,000, and \$500 will be awarded for the top three essays. The contest is open to full- and part-time students in high school, college, seminary, and graduate school who are en-route to a degree. International, ecumenical, and interfaith students are encouraged to participate. Essay submissions must be received by May 15. Find the contest rules and submission guidelines at <https://bethanyseminary.edu/events-resources/2017-peace-essay-contest>. For more information, contact Susu Lassa at lassasu@bethanyseminary.edu.

— **“Welcome to a new season of the Dunker Punks Podcast!”** says an invitation to the first episode in the new season, which teams up with Michaela Mast and Harrison Horst from the Shifting Climates Podcast to talk about the human right and need to access nature. “Listen as they follow instances of environmental racism and address the need for climate justice activism in the church today.” Find the Shifting Climates Podcast at www.shiftingclimates.com to learn more. Listen to the new season of the Dunker Punks Podcast at bit.ly/DPP_Episode110 or on iTunes and Stitcher.

— **The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center is offering a new one-day refresher course** for those who have participated the Mediation Skills Training Institute. Sessions are available on May 11 and June 12 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Central time).

The fee is \$99. The full five-day version of the course is available at various dates. Find out more at www.ImpeaceCenter.org. For questions and more information contact 630-627-0507 or admin@Impeacecenter.org.

— **The deadline has been extended for young adults to apply** for the Stewards Program at the World Council of Churches (WCC) 11th Assembly in 2022 in Karlsruhe, Germany. Joy Eva Bohol, WCC program executive for Youth Engagement, notes that the new deadline is made with the view to encourage a wider diversity participating in the program, bringing their faith, experiences and visions to an ecumenical experience of togetherness and friendship. The deadline extension also takes into consideration the delays imposed by the current COVID-19 situation, and requests received from aspiring young participants. The new deadline for applications is now June 30, 2021. Click here for guidelines and the application form: www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/guidelines-application-form-wcc-stewards-programme-2022.

— **The Brethren Historical Library and Archives (BHLA)** is hosting a “Q&A with Bill/Digital Retirement Party” as a Facebook Live event on April 6 at 10 a.m. (Central time). This is “the proper sendoff that Bill [Kostlevy] deserves before he heads into his retirement,” said an announcement. “His wealth of knowledge on Church of the Brethren history has served the BHLA so well in his tenure as director and will be greatly missed. We will talk about his works and research he has done and the chat feature during the live event will be open for the questions you have for Bill.” Find out more at www.facebook.com/events/430362324692878.

— **Brethren Disaster Ministries is announcing a new program from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** that will be rolling out in April to help assist individuals with funeral costs for those who have died from COVID-19. Families struggling to pay for funerals of loved ones who experienced COVID-19 related deaths in the United States after Jan. 20, 2020, and meet eligibility requirements will be able to apply. An official death certificate will be required that attributes the death to COVID-19 or indicates the death may have been caused by or was likely the result of COVID-19 or COVID-like symptoms. Eligible funeral expenses are capped at \$9,000 per applicant, and must not have been reimbursed through another source. Brethren Disaster Ministries will be sharing more information soon about the program.

The full archive of past issues of *Messenger*, the Church of the Brethren denominational magazine, is now online. Available to the general public are *Messenger* issues from 2000-2019 at www.brethren.org/messenger/archive, where there also is a link to access the issues of *Gospel Messenger* and *Messenger* from 1883-2000 that are saved in the Brethren Digital Archives. The most recent two years of the magazine—currently 2020 and 2021—are reserved for subscribers to the print magazine, who receive a password to access those digital copies. For questions contact cobweb@brethren.org.

Extra Tidbits

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.
