

The Reflector

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



Reflections from the Journey

In this season of Easter, we reflect on the post-resurrection stories where Jesus engages with his disciples. Luke 24: 36-48 is one of them. "Ho hum," you might say. But that's not the way the disciples experienced these times. What wild experiences! So disorienting! They've been through so much trauma with Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion, and then all of this! What does it mean? Is it real? So many disciples have stories to tell about Jesus. They don't know what to think, and then Jesus appears to all together. He just appears! Who is this? What is this? A ghost? Is there some kind of mass hysteria - - all of them having the same apparition? They're trying to make sense of it. But nothing in their previous experience gives them a frame of

reference. Nothing in their life, in their world, has prepared them for this. As the text says, they are startled, terrified, disbelieving, and wondering.

It strikes me how incongruent the words startled, terrified, disbelieving and wondering are with the term **witnesses**. Jesus proclaims that the disciples are witness in the Luke 24: 36-48 passage.

Startled + Terrified + Disbelieving + Wondering = Witnesses

As you can see, I put an equals sign after those first four words and before “Witnesses”. For a while I thought it really should be a sign that indicates that these things are NOT equal. It seems like startled, terrified, disbelieving, and wondering wouldn’t add up to being witnesses. How could these disciples, who were still trying to make sense of their experiences, be effective witnesses? Here they are just a couple days after Jesus’ horribly cruel death, in the midst of their raw grief, in the midst of not believing the stories they’re hearing from their own companions, and Jesus is calling them witnesses.

But you know what? As Jesus is there with them, he’s opening their minds and hearts. He shifts to a teaching role to help them understand what the scriptures have been pointing to all along. He’s starting the process for them of being transformed into people who are no longer only startled, terrified, disbelieving, and wondering. Over the next fifty days, the reality of the resurrection is sinking in. The disciples are then filled with the power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost so that they really can live fully into the role of being witnesses to all that Jesus taught them, all that they experienced, all that God was doing in the world.

What Jesus started with them that day, they continued – studying and praying over the scriptures, pondering what Jesus had taught. They weren’t ready that day to be witnesses, but they would be ready.

As I think about us being witnesses, I’m reminded of the Compelling Vision that Annual Conference will be considering this summer. The language of it is a striking contrast to those four words (startle, terrified, disbelieving, wondering) from the post-resurrection story. Here is the Compelling Vision.

“Together, as the Church of the Brethren, we will passionately live and share the radical transformation and holistic peace of Jesus Christ through relationship-based neighborhood engagement.

To move us forward, we will develop a culture of calling and equipping disciples who are innovative, adaptable, and fearless.”

There’s a part of me that is ready to embrace that vision. I want us to be like that. I long with all my heart for the Church of the Brethren and every congregation in every district to reflect that language. Then I think – we are not ready to be like that. How can we possibly embrace that vision, that commitment, when we are struggling so much as a denomination with divisiveness and conflict? How can we even begin to do that with the year that we’ve just been through? Maybe we’re not ready just yet, just like the disciples were not ready yet in the first few days after the first Easter. But they became ready; they got ready through their commitment to ground themselves in Jesus’ teaching, through living into the relationship with the risen Christ, through their study of the scripture, and through openness to the power of the Holy Spirit that would come upon them fifty days later.

Now for us, it’s fifty-plus days until the beginning of Annual Conference when the whole church will come together to decide whether and how to adopt and embrace this Compelling Vision. I’d like to suggest that we hold this vision close to us over these coming weeks. Perhaps some of you have been engaging in the Bible Study materials offered in connection with the Compelling Vision. I’d like to suggest that we pray for ourselves and for the whole church to change from being startled, terrified, disbelieving, and wondering, to being passionate, transformed, innovative, adaptable, and fearless disciples, as the

Compelling Vision says. Will you pray for that with me? I hope you will.

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

I've been challenged each month by the concept of extending charity. The words of Christ push me to examine with more depth what it means to do or not do for those described as the least of the body of Christ.

Several years ago, I decided to attend the National Older Adult Conference (NOAC) sponsored by the Church of the Brethren, in part because of the keynote speaker, Sister Joan Chittister. I purchased one of her books, "The Time is Now: A Call to Uncommon Courage," which has helped me reflect on the theme, "Extending Charity".

The second chapter of the book focuses on paradox. Oxford Languages defines a paradox as, "a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true". In this chapter, Sister Chittister indicates there are two types of being holy.

In the Brethren context, there are two types of doing service or charity. The first is going out and doing the work in the worst conditions imaginable for the neediest in our community and the world. These would be represented by the Brethren Volunteer Service workers (BVSers) and missionaries. Sister Chittister calls these the saints, the courageous, the salt-of-the-earth people.

The second type are those who see the world and are angered by the circumstances which create the need for charity. These individuals are the passionate activists, the protesters, and agitators, and are often described as naïve, deluded, and out of touch at best. One group we praise, while the other group we ridicule and criticize their works.

Sister Chittister referenced Archbishop Camara of Brazil as he responded to criticism of his ministry. She quotes him as saying, "If I give alms to the poor, I am labeled a saint; If I ask why they are poor I am labeled a communist". Charity can be seen as one coin with two sides. But as Christians called to follow Jesus and to act righteously and justly, we must tend to the need and the cause.

Sister Chittister poses the question, "Which holiness is greater: The doer, the martyrs or those who changers are - the prophets? Which is better," she writes, "to be prophetic or pastoral? Which is more important, to do charity or demand justice?" She references Jesus healing a blind man on the sabbath and asks whether it was a political, pastoral, or prophetic act.

Extending charity is tricky business. Sister Chittister writes “Charity without prophecy can only serve to make the world safe for exploitation. Why pay more when there is a ‘safety net’ for the poor?

On the other hand, prophecy may disturb society but not comfort it.” The danger is that the issue is intellectualized and becomes impersonal. The challenge in extending charity is to both provide care and comfort for those in need and address the situations which created the need.

Jesus’ words sting a bit. “As you have done, or not done, you have done or not done for me”. What will be your part in extending charity? Will you be a doer, walking alongside, or a prophet who challenges the status quo? Or are you one who is comfortable and wonders what the fuss is all about?

2021 District Conference Update

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Program and Arrangements committee has made the decision to hold the 2021 District Conference virtually on November 6, 2021. This decision was made with prayerful consideration, out of an abundance of caution, and for the safety of all concerned. This year’s conference will follow a similar format to the 2020 Virtual District conference which was a shortened format. We will once again use Zoom to connect with one another. We look forward to being able to safely meet in person at the 2022 District Conference. Please watch for more information as it becomes available.

Welcome to the new IL/WI District DE

The Leadership Team of the Illinois/Wisconsin District has called Walt Wiltschek to serve as district executive minister. He will begin serving in this half-time position in a virtual capacity on September 1, 2021 until he relocates to the district in November.

An ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, Walt currently is pastor of the Easton, MD Church of the Brethren in Mid-Atlantic District as well as an academic advisor at Chesapeake College in Wye Mills, Maryland. Walt also serves as chair of the Camp Mardela board of directors and is a member of the district ministry interviewing task team.

Walt has extensive experience in various areas of denominational life having served for 10 years on the Church of the Brethren communications staff, including six-plus years as editor of Messenger magazine. He held the position of University Chaplain and Director of Church Relations for Manchester University from 2010-2016.

Prior to serving as associate pastor of Westminster Church of the Brethren in Westminster, MD, Walt was a sports copy editor and staff writer of the York Daily Record in York, PA.

Walt is a graduate of York College of Pennsylvania with a Bachelor of Science in secondary education/mathematics as well as a Master of Arts in communications and journalism/media from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL. His theological training includes a Certificate of Biblical Studies from Eastern Mennonite Seminary and a Master of Arts in Religion from Lancaster Theological Seminary with a concentration in education and youth ministry.

Walt brings a deep love of youth ministry and camping having given volunteer time serving in a majority of the Brethren church camps over the years.

The Office of Ministry is pleased to welcome Walt to his new role and wishes him well as he begins his service.

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.

MODERATOR'S DISTRICT Q&A SESSIONS COMPLETED; FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AVAILABLE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ELGIN, IL - Between October 2020 and February 2021, the Annual Conference Moderator, Paul Munday, hosted the "Moderator's District Q&A" sessions in partnership with the Annual Conference Moderator-Elect, Dave Sollenberger, and the Annual Conference Secretary, Jim Beckwith.

Twenty-four ZOOM sessions were held in fourteen districts across the denomination; all districts were invited and encouraged to participate. The focus of the sessions was the "state of the church." The Q&As were open to all, both clergy and laity; districts were encouraged to publicize them widely. Resulting from these Q&A sessions was a set of frequently asked questions (FAQ's) specifically related to the discussion that arose from those gatherings.

The questions are not exhaustive of every question on the hearts and minds of our constituency. Rather, they are representative of inquiries posed by both clergy and laity in a variety of districts. The responses to each question also are not exhaustive; additional detail, however, is found in the endnotes.

A link to the FAQs follows:

<https://www.brethren.org/ac2021/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2021/03/State-of-the-Church-FAQs.pdf>

Additional questions are welcome.

It is hoped the FAQs will help respond to questions related to information needed, and questions related to concerns, surfacing from our constituency.

For additional information on the Moderator's District Q&A sessions or the FAQs, please contact Moderator Paul Munday directly at moderator@brethren.org.

Contact Information:

Paul Munday, Moderator, Church of the Brethren

Moderator@brethren.org

INTRODUCTION TO WHITE SUPREMACY/HATE GROUPS AND A DISCUSSION-DRIVEN EXPLORATION OF RACIAL IDENTITY

Thursday, May 13, 2021, 6:30-8:30 PM

Our Presenters from the Southern Law Poverty Center:

Lecia Brooks and Diane Flinn

Co-Sponsored by Ill/Wisconsin District Church of the Brethren Leadership Team and Ministerial Leadership Development Team

Clergy can receive Continuing Education 0.2 credits for attending by registering for the event with the District. Please register by contacting Andrea at andreag.iwdcob@gmail.com.

Topic: Introduction to White Supremacy Workshop - SPLC

Time: May 13, 2021 06:30 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84761569724?pwd=dUI2U3hIOTJndWsvay83YmdWSGN3dz09>

Meeting ID: 847 6156 9724

Passcode: 636242

Program Description:

Hate and extremist groups are both harbingers of and symptoms of the persistent and historical, unrectified racism central to the United States and our culture. Knowledge of these groups and their recent proliferation can help us understand current socio-political forces and invite us to explore race and its role in shaping beliefs, relationships, and who we are. This session provides an informative presentation and a dialogic exploration of how our understanding of race and racism impacts our effectiveness in creating equity and safety within a community.

Our Presenters

Lecia Brooks is the Chief of Staff for the SPLC, where she provides counsel to senior leadership, assists with strategic planning and works with people from across the organization to ensure the SPLC's success, whether it is achieving long-term goals or maintaining effective daily operations.

Before her current role, Brooks served as the SPLC's Chief Workplace Transformation Officer, where she supported leadership and staff efforts to build a culture of inclusiveness and ensure a continued focus on diversity and equity.

Brooks also previously served as the SPLC's Outreach Director, where she traveled across the U.S. and abroad to speak about hate and extremism. Earlier, she was director of the SPLC's Civil Rights Memorial Center, an interpretive experience designed to provide visitors to the Civil Rights Memorial with a deeper understanding of the Civil Rights movement.

Brooks, who joined the SPLC in 2004, has a wealth of experience in diversity advocacy training for corporations and nonprofit organizations, including Walmart, Lyft, Pixar, the Salzburg Seminar, and the Newark Public Library.

Diane Flinn, Senior Consultant, Diversity Matters

Diane Flinn is a diversity and social justice professional with over twenty-five years of experience developing programs and facilitating dialogue on race and racial identity, gender and sexual identity, interfaith alliance, and building institutional capacity for equity. She has been a consulting partner on projects across not-for-profit and for-profit sectors, including the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance, City of Los Angeles, Raytheon, Marlborough School, Paradigm Treatment Centers, and the National Conference for Community and Justice.

Ms. Flinn comes to social justice and inclusive community building through her professional experience in social and mental health and education, as well as through her personal journey from a child of a small midwestern town to a long-time resident of Los Angeles; she is equally at home in both environs. She holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a teacher certification from the University of Washington.

The Gathering Chicago is 5!

Join us for the online celebration, Sunday, May 16th!



Sun, May 16, 2021 5:00 PM CST

The Gathering Chicago Anniversary #5

[Tickets](#)

SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY~ If The Gathering Chicago has been a blessing to you, share with us just how. Share your testimony. Make a video (on your phone- vertical) 2-3 minutes or email us in writing that we may share as a part of the Anniversary Celebration. Send to connect@thegatheringchicago.org

[Share an anniversary gift here](#)



TheGatheringChicago.org

Registration open at Camp Emmanuel!

Hello Friends of Camp Emmanuel,

Registration is open for the 2021 camping season! We're thrilled to be having camps this year since we've missed you all very much! Like other camps, we will be following the state and local rules for COVID prevention and response in order to stay open and hold camps this year. These rules are similar to those in place at most schools across the country, so many of you will already be familiar with them. We'll be wearing masks and maintaining social distance when appropriate and washing hands frequently.

One other change this year is our limited capacity. Currently, there can only be 30 people at each camp. We hope this regulation changes before the camping season begins, but right now, registration is first come, first served.

See our website --www.campem.com-- for a camp schedule, to get registered, and for more information. Please address any specific questions to your camp director.

We're looking forward to a great camp season! Can't wait to see you all!

The Camp Board

Insight Sessions and Networking Groups



By Walt Wiltschek

If Annual Conference had been in Greensboro as scheduled this summer, you might have spent part of your days attending insight sessions, visiting exhibit booths, chatting with other Brethren, or dining around the table at a meal event. While the pandemic protocols won't allow that sort of large-scale physical interaction this year, Brethren are invited to experience some of that virtually with a wide variety of online insight sessions (more than 40, from agriculture to writing) and dozens of networking groups involving colleges, camps, and numerous Brethren agencies and programs.

Insight sessions will provide educational opportunities (including always-desirable CEU's for pastors and others in ministry), while the **networking groups** allow less-formal forums to talk about shared interests, trade ideas, and catch up on the latest news.

Don't miss out on the Brethren buzz! All insight sessions and networking groups can be accessed via the online site by anyone registered. Insight sessions will run 12:30-1:30 p.m. and 9:15-10:15 p.m. Eastern (9:30-10:30 a.m. and 6:15-7:15 p.m. Pacific) each day July 1-3, while networking sessions run 12:30-1:30 p.m. and 5:30-6:30 p.m. Eastern (9:30-10:30 a.m. and

2:30-3:30 p.m. Pacific). For more details about each group [click here](#).

[Click here to register for Annual Conference NOW!](#)

In case you missed it:

April 27 email: [May AC Newsletter](#)

April 20 email: [Compelling Vision and ballots](#)

March 2 email: [March AC Newsletter](#)

February 22 email: [Online Worship Gathering](#)

January 26 email: [AC pivots from hybrid to online](#)

Pastoral Transition

The Polo Church of the Brethren is in negotiations with a candidate. Let us hold their search committee, congregation, and candidate in prayer as they prepare for a negotiation weekend in early June.

Annual Conference Delegates

The Annual Conference Office has shared a list of congregations that registered delegates to our Annual Conference scheduled for June 3 – July 4. If you haven't registered a delegate please do so soon! Here's a link for registration:

<https://www.brethren.org/ac2021/registration/>

The Conference will be virtual, so anyone with an internet connection can attend virtually. Find everything you need to know at: <https://www.brethren.org/ac2021/>

On Earth Peace Community Meetup

I am excited to invite you to participate in an On Earth Peace Community Meetup on May 11, a *Congregational Peace Health Checkup*.

This **90-minute version** of our in-depth Congregational Peace Health Checkup provides an opportunity to reflect on *your own congregation's* life, assessing its vitality and opening up possible areas for growth.

Brief conversations or explorations will be drawn from this list of topics:

- Biblical Foundations of Peace
- Handling Conflict / Making Decisions
- Leadership Development
- Service Ministries / Justice Ministries
- Life Transformation
- Worship and other practices
- Dismantling Systems of Oppression & Building Beloved Community
- Community engagement

In On Earth Peace's Community Meetups, started during the pandemic, we welcome new and returning friends and seek to build community, conviction, and capacity. These sessions provide a time for relationship and conversation, with focused content that we engage together.

The meetup will be taking place on **Tuesday, May 11th, at 7pm EST** and will last 90 minutes. You can [CLICK HERE](#) to see the start time in your local time zone.

[Click here to RSVP](#)

If you have any questions, please email Dennis at organizing@onearthpeace.org.

National Youth Conference 2022 theme, dates, and cost are announced

Church of the Brethren Newsline

May 1, 2021

By Erika Clary

National Youth Conference (NYC) 2022 will focus on Colossians 2:5-7 and the theme “Foundational.” The event will be held July 23-28, 2022. The registration fee, which includes food, lodging, and programming, will be \$550. Youth who have completed ninth grade through one year of college at the time of NYC (or are age equivalent) and their adult advisors will gather at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo. Online registration will open in early 2022 on www.brethren.org.

The National Youth Cabinet did not let coronavirus restrictions stop them from beginning their hard work of planning for NYC. They met virtually this winter and hope to meet in person for future meetings. Members are Benjamin Tatum, Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Virginia District; Elise Gage, Manassas Church of the Brethren, Mid-Atlantic District; Giovanni Romero, York Center Church of the Brethren, Illinois and Wisconsin District; Haley Daubert, Montezuma Church of the Brethren, Shenandoah District; Isabella Torres, Nuevo Renacer Church of the Brethren, Atlantic Northeast District; and Luke Schweitzer, Cedar Grove Church of the Brethren, Southern Ohio and Kentucky District. Adult advisors are Kayla Alphonse, Miami First Church of the Brethren in Atlantic Southeast District, and Jason Haldeman, Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren in Atlantic Northeast District. The cabinet will be led by NYC 2022 coordinator Erika Clary of Brownsville Church of the Brethren in Mid-Atlantic District, accompanied by Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries for the Church of the Brethren.

The cabinet discussed theme ideas relevant to senior high youth. Ultimately, the theme that emerged was “Foundational,” based on scripture from *Colossians 2:5-7*, “*For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, and I rejoice to see your morale and the firmness of your faith in Christ. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*”



We talked about all of the ways that God is revealed as the foundation for our lives throughout the Bible. Some examples of this are the cornerstone, the way that God can be seen as an anchor for our lives, and how we remain rooted in God in all circumstances.

Isabella Torres noted, “Picking the theme was difficult at first because we had so many different ideas, but all of our ideas always intertwined with having a foundation in God. To me, it is a great theme, and it is also something I find to be very important as a youth today.”

Luke Schweitzer shared, “I am really excited about this theme and I cannot wait to see what the speakers and youth do with it next summer.”

Watch for NYC 2022 updates at www.brethren.org and social media of the Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

— *Erika Clary will serve as coordinator of National Youth Conference 2022, working in the Church of the Brethren’s Youth and Young Adult Ministries through Brethren Volunteer Service.*

NOAC service project will fund books for Junaluska Elementary

School

Church of the Brethren Newsline

May 1, 2021

By Libby Polzin Kinsey

Participants at National Older Adult Conference (NOAC) love to serve. Past NOAC efforts have helped build the libraries of Junaluska (N.C.) Elementary School classrooms, providing hundreds of books to children living in the host town for the conference.

This year, when NOAC will be held virtually, participants are invited to help Ira Hyde, Junaluska Elementary School librarian, create a more culturally diverse library for the low-income community where he serves children in grades K-5.

Libby Kinsey and Ira Hyde have created a list of rich, diverse books for the Junaluska Elementary School library. The books are of all genres, focusing on characters of color, stories that show how much we all have in common, as well as the interesting ways we are unique.

NOAC participants and churches are invited to donate funds toward the purchase of books on the list. Hope Church of the Brethren in Freeport, Mich., already has donated \$500 to get the ball rolling.

Donations of any size will go far in furthering this effort, revealing the beauty to be found in God's rich, diverse global community.

Make checks payable to the Church of the Brethren with the notation "NOAC Book Drive 2021" on the memo line. Mail checks to Church of the Brethren General Offices, Attn: NOAC Book Drive, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

Or donate online at www.brethren.org/NOAC-book-drive.

— *Libby Polzin Kinsey is the book drive coordinator for NOAC 2021. Find out more about the conference at www.brethren.org/noac.*

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!

New and Renew workshop presenters include Coté Soerens and Darryl Williamson

Church of the Brethren Newsline

April 22, 2021

By Erika Clary

Join us for the New and Renew Virtual Conference, May 13-15. We will be exploring the theme "The Reward of Risk," guided by many terrific workshop presenters and keynote speakers. Two workshop presenters for the event are **Maria-José "Coté"**

Soerens and Darryl Williamson.

Soerens is a church planter in Seattle, Wash., where she is nurturing a faith community rooted in the South Park neighborhood where she lives. Born in Chile, she came to the US at the age of 25 and has since started a number of initiatives in the private and nonprofit sector. Her favorite is Resistencia Coffee, a neighborhood-owned and -operated coffee shop at the heart of South Park.

She also is a co-founder of Cultivate South Park, a neighbor-led asset-based community development group dedicated to identifying, connecting, and celebrating the gifts of South Park residents to co-create a more equitable community. There, she serves as part of the Urban Fresh Food Collective and the South Park Arts and Culture Collective. She also serves on the city of Seattle's Equitable Development Initiative advisory board and the Cultural Space Agency Council, both focused on increasing access to community-controlled spaces for communities of color in Seattle.



Soerens' workshop is titled **“Trusting God, Trusting Neighbors: Mobilizing Power and Assets in the Neighborhood.”** She writes: “Despite our best intentions for missional engagement, congregations can sometimes have an awkward relationship with the communities where we worship and serve.” Her workshop will explore practical ways to engage communities in liberating, collaborative, and generative ways that build belonging and common mission.



Williamson has been lead pastor of the Living Faith Bible Fellowship in Tampa, Fla., since January 2010. He helped transition the church from a primarily middle-aged African American membership to a multicultural, multiethnic, multigenerational congregation. He is active with three organizations whose ministries focus on seeing the gospel advance in marginalized communities in the US and abroad. He leads Arise City and is on the board of the Crete Collective and the Underground Network.

He also serves on the Leadership Council of the Gospel Coalition. He has a gospel-centered concern for spiritual formation, racial reconciliation, restorative justice, faith-work economics, ethics and theology, and church history. He has contributed to

two books: *12 Faithful Men: Portraits of Faithful Endurance in Pastoral Ministry*, and *All Are Welcome: Toward a Multi-Everything Church*.

Williamson will be presenting a workshop titled “**The Promise of Church in Hard Places**,” which will address why establishing churches in neglected communities will not only bring spiritual and holistic restoration to those neighborhoods, but also will usher in a mission movement in cities across the national landscape. In his workshop, the vision of the Crete Collective will be presented.

Worried that you will be unable to attend live sessions? Those who register will have access to recordings of all sessions and workshops until Dec. 15. Ministers who want continuing education units (CEUs) will receive a form to mark either attendance at live sessions or recordings to earn up to 2.0 units.

Registration costs \$79, plus \$10 for continuing education credit, and includes access to recordings of worship, sermons, and workshops. Register and find out more at www.brethren.org/discipleshipmin/newandrenew.

— *Erika Clary is working temporarily for the Church of the Brethren Discipleship Ministries until starting a Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) position as coordinator for National Youth Conference 2022.*

‘Play, on Purpose’ webinar to take place May 11

Church of the Brethren Newsline

May 1, 2021

By Erika Clary

“Play, on Purpose,” a virtual webinar featuring Lakisha Lockhart, associate professor of Practical Theology at Chicago Theological Seminary, will be presented by the Youth and Young Adult Ministries on May 11 at 8-9:30 p.m. (Eastern time). After registering for the webinar, participants will watch a 30-minute video before joining the live conversation on May 11. Ministers may earn 0.2 continuing education units through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

Lockhart is from Columbus, Ga. She is a “daughter, sister, wife, mother, and the coolest auntie around.” She holds a bachelor’s degree from Clafin University, a master of divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary, a master of arts from Vanderbilt University, and doctorate from Boston College.

As part of “Play, on Purpose,” participants will learn about the theological, spiritual, and neurological dimensions and benefits of play—in addition to engaging in various play practices.

Play, on Purpose

Presenter:

Dr. Lakisha R. Lockhart

*Assistant Professor of Practical Theology
at Chicago Theological Seminary*

In this virtual interactive workshop participants will not only learn about the theological, spiritual, and neurological dimensions and benefits of play, but they will also engage in various play practices. Participants will play, dig deeper into play, and even leave with additional assignments (play practices) to try. Come open and ready to learn about and embody what can occur when you play, on purpose.



Those looking for a new burst of energy and practical tools for ministry with youth and young adults will appreciate this workshop. Lockhart's work is well-grounded in theology and pedagogy, providing a unique opportunity for growth.

Register at <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJArf-6hpzwiHdZUUZ5Hnn9kBJwcXLUERge>. For more information, contact Youth and Young Adult Ministries director Becky Ullom Naugle at bullomnaugle@brethren.org.

— *Erika Clary will be serving as coordinator of National Youth Conference 2022 in the Youth and Young Adult Ministries of the Church of the Brethren, working through Brethren Volunteer Service.*

Seminary Graduation

Vivek Solanky, a licensed minister in our district and a member at the Naperville Church of the Brethren, will graduate from Bethany Theological Seminary on May 8th with a Masters of Divinity degree. We rejoice with Vivek, his wife Shefali, and son Josiah, as they celebrate this accomplishment! Vivek has been approved for ordination by the Naperville Church and Illinois/Wisconsin District pending a pastoral placement. Let us hold Vivek in prayer as he seeks employment.

Multivocational pastors are invited to summer book study

Church of the Brethren Newswire

April 30, 2021

By Dana Cassell

The Part-Time Pastor; Full-Time Church Program invites multivocational pastors of Church of the Brethren congregations to join a summer book study of *Part-Time is Plenty: Thriving Without Full-Time Clergy* by Jeffrey MacDonald.

John Fillmore, who serves as a leader in the program and pastors the Nampa congregation in Idaho, will lead the six-week study over Zoom, from June 8 through July 13.

Multivocational pastors comprise 77 percent of all Church of the Brethren pastors, and the designation includes part-time pastors, pastors who serve as part of a pastoral team, pastors serving through the plural non-salaried ministry, and anyone whose congregational role is less than a formal, full-time agreement.

Learn more about the Part-Time Pastor; Full-Time Church program at www.brethren.org/part-time-pastor. Register to join the book study at <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZctceggqDsoE9U0ab18yLQHTRR-Gr97yxpe>. The book may be purchased through Brethren Press at www.brethrenpress.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=0664265995

— Dana Cassell is Thriving in Ministry program manager for the Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry.



New Website Promotes Environmental Awareness in Congregations

The Green Circle at Bethany Theological Seminary has created [a website](#) featuring resources for pastors and church leaders who want to promote environmental awareness in their congregations.

The site includes resources for worship, activity suggestions for children and youth, and material on the theology of God's creation — all geared to the needs of congregations in the Church of the Brethren. Curated by Ingrid Rogers, a student pursuing a Certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination, the site began as a project for a course in ecotheology taught by Joelle Hathaway, assistant professor of theology.

Rogers says that her interest in creating this website connects to the paper "Creation: Called to Care," which the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference passed in 1991, urging congregations and individuals to educate themselves about environmental issues and take steps to limit negative impacts on the environment and to work to protect and restore creation.

"Since this paper was adopted, the environmental situation of our planet has deteriorated exponentially," notes Rogers. "More than ever, Christians need to respond. At Bethany, an environmental awareness group known as the Green Circle formed a few years ago in support of local initiatives. The group has now launched a new website pulling together resources for worship and education that can help pastors, congregations, and individuals who seek to address the call to creation care."

With the support of the Green Circle (a committee with representatives from Bethany faculty, staff and students), Rogers took the lead in creating the website. During her research phase, Rogers polled 11 Bethany students who currently serve as pastors of Church of the Brethren congregations and selected content based, in part, on those students' responses. Rogers drew on existing materials available on Mennonite, Quaker, United Church of Christ, and Roman Catholic websites.

Dan Poole, assistant professor of ministry formation, believes that the Moodle site will be very helpful to pastors and congregations. "This site should serve handsomely for pastors and those desiring a more eco-friendly and eco-informed community."

Launched ahead of this year's Earth Day (which will be celebrated on April 22, 2021), the Green Circle hopes that [this new website](#) will be a helpful resource for congregations for years to come.

Note: We want to learn about steps your congregation has taken for creation care — like launching a community garden, organizing an event to promote environmental awareness, or making the church building more energy efficient. Pictures or short videos are welcome. [Get in touch by email.](#)

Join the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Virtual Blood Drive

Help us continue the yearly tradition of donating blood during the Annual Conference even though we are not meeting in person.

Make a pledge through the Virtual Blood Drive and donate blood locally. Put the power of your faith into action.

How can YOU join the 2021 Virtual Blood Drive?

- Pledge today to give blood at www.brethren.org/virtualblooddrive2021 or by calling/emailing Brethren Disaster Ministries.
- Find a blood drive near you at www.redcross.org/giveblood.html. Make an appointment to donate, preferably between June 15-July 15, 2021.
- Take a photo when you donate blood to encourage others and to celebrate your gift.
- Tell us that you followed through with your pledge so we can keep track of total donations.
- Send us your photo! You can also share it on social media:

#SleevesUpBrethren2021.

It's that easy!

Questions? Need more information? Call BDM at 1-800-451-4407 x1 or email bdm@brethren.org

Network seeks mission advocates for each congregation and

district

Church of the Brethren Newslines

April 8, 2021

By Carol Mason

Do you wonder about what is going on in mission work these days? Ever since the Mission Alive Conference of 2012, it has been the goal of the Global Mission office to have a network of mission advocates who want to answer this question for you.

At that time, volunteers were found in each of our church districts who would make sure mission prayer requests, news, and plans were presented at district conferences, printed in district newsletters, and made readily available to each congregation within a district. These volunteers are called District Mission Advocates.

As Mission Advocate Network coordinator, I am updating this network in time to welcome our new Global Mission executive directors Eric Miller and Ruoxia Li. In addition to district advocates, we are updating the Congregational Mission Advocates list as well, so the new directors know they have volunteers in every congregation willing to keep mission news in front of our church members.

If you have a passion for mission, and love to share what you learn about this growing work, consider becoming a mission advocate in your congregation or district!

The mission advocates help us host international visitors to district conferences and Annual Conference, arrange for pastor exchange Sundays and speaking engagements, and will be vital to the next Mission Alive event that may be held as soon as 2022. Remember hosting the EYN Appreciation Choir in 2015? We thank our mission advocates and their congregations for all the behind-the-scenes work they did for that massive undertaking.

Find out more about the Global Mission Advocate Network at www.brethren.org/global/gma, where you may contact me to express interest in becoming a mission advocate. Also, sign up today to receive the Mission Prayer Updates to continually lift up the joys and concerns of our global church. And keep watching this webpage for mission resources and news.

— *Carol Mason is Mission Advocate Network coordinator for the Global Mission office of the Church of the Brethren.*

Overflowing with hope: An interview with NOAC coordinator Christy

Waltersdorff

Church of the Brethren Newslines

March 12, 2021

This week, Newslines 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.

Overflowing with Hope

—Romans 15:13



The planning team for NOAC 2021. Photo by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

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.

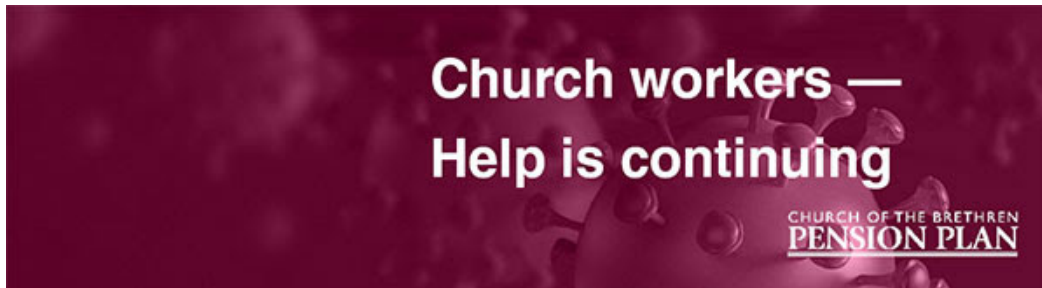
— Find NOAC on Facebook at www.facebook.com/cobnoac. The NOAC webpage is at www.brethren.org/noac.

Posted in [Church of the Brethren Newsline](#) Tagged [Christy Waltersdorff](#), [Church of the Brethren](#), [National Older Adult Conference](#), [NOAC](#), [NOAC 2021](#), [Older Adult Ministry](#), [Older Adults](#), [online conference](#)

COVID emergency grants for church workers are extended again

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.



“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.cobbt.org, for more information and the grant application form.

Church of the Brethren hires new Director of Brethren Historical and Archives

Jennifer Houser has been hired by the Church of the Brethren as the director of Brethren Historical Library and Archives, working from the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. She is a graduate of Messiah College with a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministries; and of Duke Divinity School with a Master of Divinity degree, where she was also the archival assistant. Jennifer is currently working as a reference associate at Mishawaka-Penn-Harris Public Library and part-time as pastor at Crest Manor Church of the Brethren. Jennifer will begin her work on August 2, 2021.

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.

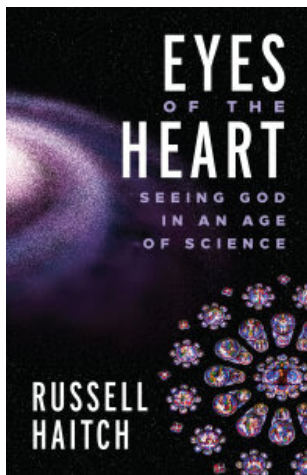
Mail completed forms to Yearbook, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120. If you've already put yours in the mail, thank you!

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.



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](#).

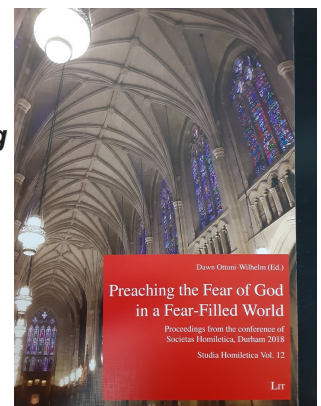
Gab Sessions with Gaby

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 Newsline
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.



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

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

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>

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."



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

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.

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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

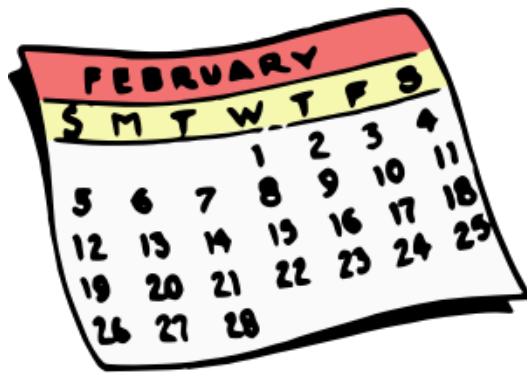
847-644-1174

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

- May 11, 1:30 pm: Calling the Called Committee
May 13, 6:30 pm: Southern Poverty Law Center Workshop
June 12, 9 am: MLDT Meeting
August 10, 9 am: Potluck Team Meeting
-

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.

— **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.

— **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.lmpeacecenter.org. For questions and more information contact 630-627-0507 or admin@lmpeacecenter.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.

— **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.

— **Three “Best of the Church Press” awards were received by *Messenger***, the Church of the Brethren magazine, at this week’s annual meeting of the Associated Church Press. An award of excellence (first place) was received for “The Exchange” page in the department category, written by Walt Wiltschek (read it online at www.brethren.org/messenger/uncategorized/the-exchange). Another award of excellence went to Bobbi Dykema for her article “Compassion” in the biblical reflection category (read it online at www.brethren.org/messenger/bible-study/compassion). An award of merit (second place) was received by publisher Wendy McFadden for her article “The Wounds of War and a Place for Peace” in the category of theological reflection (read it online at www.brethren.org/messenger/reflections/the-wounds-of-war). Find more *Messenger* articles and subscribe to the magazine at www.brethren.org/messenger.

— **The Shine Vacation Bible School has been named fifth** in the “Vacation Bible School Top Picks 2021” by the Building Faith ministry and Lifelong Learning department at Virginia Theological Seminary. Shine is a Christian education curriculum jointly published by Brethren Press and MennoMedia. “Lifelong Learning at Virginia Theological Seminary has offered Vacation Bible School reviews for more than 15 years,” said the announcement. “Our department has spent countless hours assessing intensive, formative curricula so that hundreds of folks can rely on an authoritative assessment. This year our “top picks” are based on our intimate knowledge of the publishing companies and information from their websites.” Find the announcement at <https://buildfaith.org/vbs-top-picks-2021>. Find out more about Shine at www.shinecurriculum.com.

— **Illinois and Wisconsin District is partnering with the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)** to offer a workshop on the evening of May 13 on white supremacy and hate groups, and a discussion of racial identity. The event follows on the district’s intentional work on healing racism. “Last August, the Leadership Team drafted and shared a statement addressing racial injustice,” said the announcement. “Since then, the district held a book study on White Fragility, and concerns regarding the safety of people of color when they attend in-person events has led to another learning opportunity.” Presenters are Lecia Brooks, chief of staff for the SPLC, who has a long history with the center where her previous roles included chief workplace transformation officer, outreach director, and director of the Civil Rights Memorial Center; and Diane Flinn, senior consultant for Diversity Matters, with more than 25 years of experience developing programs and facilitating dialogue on race and racial identity, gender and sexual identity, interfaith alliance, and building institutional capacity for equity. Clergy can receive .2 continuing education units by registering for the event with the district. Contact the district office at andreas.iwdcob@gmail.com.

— **“What does it mean for us as Brethren to be engaged in racial healing in this time?”** asks an announcement of the current Dunker Punks Podcast. “What impacts can we have? Consider these questions as you listen to Rev. LaDonna Sanders Nkosi talk about the Healing Racism Grant and new racial healing initiatives in the Church of the Brethren on this week’s episode.” Go to bit.ly/DPP_Episode112 or subscribe to the podcast on iTunes. Follow Dunker Punks and join in the conversation on social media @DunkerPunksPod.

— **Samuel K. Sarpiya**, ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren and former Annual Conference moderator, has a new book out called *The Highest of All Mountains: A Guide for Christians Seeking Peace and Becoming Peacemakers* (Wipf and Stock, 2021). The book is “for people who believe that the gospel is a message of peace and this gospel of peace is relevant for our time,” said the publisher’s description. Find it for sale by Brethren Press at www.brethrenpress.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=9781725270275.

— **LaDonna Sanders Nkosi**, director of Intercultural Ministries for the Church of the Brethren, has had a book of poetry published titled *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: A Poem Book: Messages on the Journey from the U.S. to South Africa and Back Again*. Said a description: “From the intensely self-aware and moving homage to South Africa in ‘Remembering South Africa’ to the impassioned ‘The White Gaze,’ each poem takes us on a self-reflective, introspective journey of connection, identity, godly value, and worth, provoking the reader to perceive the simple truth. It is only in remembering who we are in

God, will we see each other clearly without filters or skin-color-tinted glasses.” Find it for sale by Brethren Press at www.brethrenpress.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=1736737104.

— **Bobbi Dykema**, pastor of Springfield (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, has written an article on “Visual Arts: Protestant” for the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. A summary is online at <https://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-804>. Access to the full article is available for a fee.

— **The Church of the Brethren seeks to fill a fulltime hourly position of Buildings and Grounds assistant.** This position provides support for the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., and other properties in Elgin that are owned by the denomination. Responsibilities include building and equipment maintenance, warehouse operations, shipping, mail, and supplies, among others. Skills and knowledge required include ability to relate with integrity and respect within and beyond the organization, knowledge and experience of building operation and facilities management, knowledge of electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and mechanical work is helpful but not required. Also required: ability to bend, stoop, climb, lift and carry 50 pounds, work in an extreme environment in or out of doors, handle hazardous materials and exposure to hazardous situations, skills in oral and written communication, and ability to access, input, and retrieve information from a computer. At least five years of Buildings and Grounds operations experience is helpful but not required. A high school diploma or equivalent is required. Applications are received beginning immediately and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis until the position is filled. Apply by sending a resume by email to the Office of Human Resources, Church of the Brethren, at COBApply@brethren.org. The Church of the Brethren is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

— **Church World Service (CWS) is hiring for three positions to work with asylum seeker “Welcome Programs,”** including asylum seeker case management, Call Center management, and border shelter support. The organization seeks qualified and diverse candidates to fill these remote positions, with a “plus” for candidates living in a border state. CWS Asylum Services, part of the Immigration and Refugee Program, provides comprehensive support to asylum seekers in the United States. This includes supporting reception at US southern border shelters, providing case management services across the US, offering remote support through the CWS Call Center, and providing legal services to asylum seekers.

CWS seeks a motivated, flexible, service- and advocacy-driven individual to serve as a **Call Center program manager** who will develop, manage, and expand the CWS Call Center. The Call Center is a national program that provides information and referrals to migrants across the United States. Technical, coordination, and interpersonal skill sets are required. This individual must have the ability to work independently in a fast-paced environment and navigate challenging systems. Multi-tasking, customer service, and ability to navigate online research in a fast-paced environment are required. Fluency in English and Spanish required.

CWS seeks a motivated, flexible, service- and advocacy-driven individual to serve as a **Call Center specialist**. Technical, coordination, and interpersonal skill sets are required. Fluency in English and Spanish required. This individual must have the ability to work independently in a fast-paced environment and navigate challenging systems. Multi-tasking, customer service, and ability to navigate online research in a fast-paced environment are required.

CWS seeks applicants for the **Monitoring and Evaluation coordinator** position, with the primary role to manage the implementation of monitoring, evaluation, and research for these services. Strong technical skills are required. This individual must have the ability to work independently while coordinating regularly with a broader team remotely. Experience designing and implementing M&E systems is required.

Find out more and apply at cwsglobal.org.

— **A recording of the Moderator’s Town Hall held in March** with William Willimon on the topic “Peacebuilding When We’re So Divided” is now available at www.brethren.org/webcasts/archive, where a link to a study guide also is provided. “We are excited to share this resource with you, praying it will continue to bear much fruit for Christ and the Church,” said an announcement from Annual Conference moderator Paul Munday.

— **“When did you first know you were a leader in the church?”** asks the Dunker Punks Podcast. In a sequel to Episode #107, “Linking Arms in Leadership,” Anna Lisa Gross shares interviews with other church leaders about this question. “Explore the kinds of leadership that our church needs and calls for as you listen!” said an announcement. Find the new episode at bit.ly/DPP_Episode113 or by subscribing to the Dunker Punks Podcast on iTunes or your favorite podcast app.

— **Fabiola Fernandez has resigned as manager of Information Technology for the Church of the Brethren**, effective May 21, to accept a new position with the city of Elgin, Ill. She has served in the denomination’s IT department for five years, since she was hired May 23, 2016, as systems specialist at the denomination’s General Offices in Elgin. In May 2019, she was promoted to the position of manager of IT. She holds an associate’s degree from Elgin Community College and a bachelor of science degree in operations management and information systems from Northern Illinois University.

— **“What does it mean to live the peace of Jesus publicly?”** asks Dunker Punks in an announcement of their next podcast. “We welcome back Naomi Yilma and introduce Angelo Olayvar from the Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy as they discuss acting, organizing, and advocating for peace.” Listen to this episode by going to bit.ly/DPP_Episode114 or by subscribing on iTunes at bit.ly/DPP_iTunes.

— **The Festival of Homiletics**, an annual festival on preaching and a respected source for continuing education for pastors, is online this year. Registration is free to view four to five prerecorded video sessions each day May 17-21. A “recording package” may be purchased to watch sessions at a later time and gain full access to bonus material including additional speaker presentations, live workshops, and more learning opportunities. The line-up of nationally known speakers includes Craig Barnes, president and professor of Pastoral Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary; Traci Blackmon, executive minister of Justice and Local Church Ministries for the United Church of Christ; Otis Moss III, pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ; Walter Brueggeman, professor emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary; Anthea Butler, associate professor of Religious Studies and Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania; writers and speakers Diana Butler Bass and Brian McLaren; among many others. Find out more and register at www.festivalofhomiletics.com.

— Zechariah Houser has been hired by the Church of the Brethren as the coordinator of short-term service for Brethren Volunteer Service, working from the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. He is a graduate of Messiah College with a Bachelor of Arts in Youth Ministry and a minor in Peace and Conflict Studies; and of Duke Divinity School with a Master of Divinity degree. Zech is currently working as a part-time pastor at Crest Manor Church of the Brethren. Zech will begin his work on August 9, 2021.

Lee Marsh has been hired by the Church of the Brethren as the Buildings and Grounds Assistant for Buildings and Grounds, working from the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. He is currently working as a truck driver at Nu-Way Transportation and previously worked as a warehouse manager/driver at Goodman Distribution Inc. Lee will begin his work on May 17, 2021.

Kim Gingerich has been hired as the interim program assistant for the rebuilding program of Brethren Disaster Ministries, working out of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. She has been serving and living full-time on the BDM Rebuilding Sites as a long-term disaster project leader covering office and household management since January 2014. Kim is from York, PA where she previously served as the district disaster coordinator for the Southern PA District and is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren. Kim will begin this interim work from the BDM office on May 17, 2021.

Rhonda Pittman Gingrich has been hired by the Church of the Brethren as the director of Annual Conference. She is a graduate of Bridgewater College with a Bachelor of Arts in English Education and Music; Bethany Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree; and of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities with a Doctor of Ministry degree.

Rhonda has provided significant leadership for the Church of the Brethren Compelling Vision Process, which will conclude with delegate action at this year's Annual Conference. Previous denominational leadership included coordinating National Youth Conference (1990); Church of the Brethren 300th Anniversary Committee (2000-2008); Annual Conference Revitalization Task Force (2010-2012); and Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee (2014-2017).

Rhonda is currently working as an adjunct faculty at the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership and as a program director at Camp Pine Lake (Northern Plains District). She will begin her work on August 23, 2021, working from her home in Minneapolis and from the General Offices in Elgin, Ill.

In the District Family

Cathy and Dana McNeil, of the Peoria Church of the Brethren, welcomed a granddaughter into their family recently. **Georgiana** was born to their daughter Megan on February 4. They live in Manassas, Virginia. We rejoice with Cathy and Dana who are eager to see their granddaughter in person! God's blessings to all of them!

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.
