

# The Reflector

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



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## Reflections from the Journey

In my first article for the Illinois/Wisconsin District newsletter, I shared a blessing from Jan Richardson taken from her book "Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons" (© 2015 by Jan Richardson, Wanton Gospeller Press, Orlando, Florida). I turn to that book again for a blessing as I conclude my Interim ministry among you at the end of August. Here's her blessing/poetry titled "In the Leaving."

"In the leaving,  
in the letting go,  
let there be this  
to hold onto  
at the Last:

the enduring of love,  
the persisting of hope,  
the remembering of joy,

the offering of gratitude,  
the receiving of grace,  
the blessings of peace."

Obviously, this will not be the most significant letting go that you have in your life. After all, I've only been with you for 8 months! I also haven't met many people who are part of this district. However, it is a time of letting go for the district as you continue to make a shift from a long-term District Executive, to an Interim, and now to a

new District Executive (Walt Wiltschek) in just a few weeks.

Acknowledging a time of letting go gives us space to breathe, to shift our point of view. Letting go gives us time to open ourselves to the new thing that is coming, the new experiences on the horizon, and noticing with new awareness a sense of God's presence in all of this. As Jan Richardson says, there is the enduring of love, the persisting of hope, the remembering of joy. I certainly have a deep gratitude for the gifted leaders I've worked with in the district. I have gratitude for the good ministry that is being lived out in this district and for the possibilities ahead for you. I have received grace and a blessing of peace.

So perhaps you will take a few moments to ponder where YOU have experienced those elements in your life in the last few months, whether it's in the context of your relationship with the district or in your everyday life. Surely God's presence and love has been with us!

Be assured of my continued prayers for the Illinois/Wisconsin District and for Walt as he begins. I am delighted for you and for Walt to be moving forward together in ministry. He and I have already had some transitional conversation. Please know that I will do all I can to make this a smooth transition. God's blessings to each of you for the journey ahead!

*Connie R. Burkholder*, Interim District Executive

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## Interim District Executive's Schedule

June 27 – July 4 Connie Burkholder will be attending the Council of District Executive meetings and Annual Conference meetings, all online.

Connie will take a week of vacation July 5 – 11. During this time, please contact Andrea Garnett, our Administrative Assistant for the District Office, if you are in need of assistance.

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## An Introduction from Our New District Executive

"This," I thought, as I watched senior high youth at Camp Emmaus lead an evening love feast last month, from a meal under the pavilion to foot washing amid tiki torches on a grassy field. "This is what church should look like."

They shared around picnic tables, sang beautifully, and at times surprised me with their heartfelt and compassionate choices as they invited others to have their feet washed in tin basins next to tree stump seats. It was authentic, it was emotional, and everyone was invited to participate at the level at which they felt comfortable. It was community at its best.

And I believe it's what more of the church can look like if we focus on following the example of Jesus in all our varied congregations and settings. It might look different from one context to the next, but authentic worship and fellowship and outreach is the heartbeat of being Christ in our communities. We too often become distracted from that call.

So as we begin this journey in ministry together, here are a few of my hopes for the road ahead:

- That we get to know each other genuinely and discover the gifts each individual and congregation brings to our combined work. I want to do listening sessions around the district as soon as it's feasible.
- That we would be intentional about theological, cultural, and racial diversity in the body of Christ.
- That we think less about planting congregations and more about planting ministries. What will really meet the needs of our communities—both those where we have a presence now and those where we don't?
- That we revitalize the district's youth and young adult program and bring those unique perspectives and passion and energy more fully into our life together.
- That we value and build upon the contributions and resources that our camps, retirement communities, and denominational offices add to our district life.
- That we would be generous in our grace and love, and allow our imaginations to be stretched.

I greatly enjoyed my earlier time in Illinois/Wisconsin, and I am eager to be part of the church family there again in this new role. I look forward to starting this call with you on Sept. 1, working partly remotely for the first few months before setting fully in the district by Thanksgiving. Until more formal channels are set up, you can reach me at [seattle8@hotmail.com](mailto:seattle8@hotmail.com) or 630-440-6089 as needed.

What do you think the church should or could look like? Let's dream together.

—Walt Wiltschek

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## 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](mailto:crburkholder56@gmail.com)

Cell phone: 620-245-4600

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## Moderator's Musings

by Blaine Miner

During many trips to my visit mother-in-law in Northeast Kansas, I have witnessed some maneuvers made by other drivers. The maneuvers where I shake my head the most are when cars dart between semi-trailers. I may exclaim either, "What were they thinking?" or "What nerve!" The audacity to risk life and limb at seventy-plus miles an hour astounds me. Yes, I am also anxious to complete my trip, but I am not in that much of a hurry. I want to arrive in one piece.

As I hear the debate about how public funds are spent or the struggles our congregations face with diminishing resources, I wonder if we also read the Bible not as words of encouragement but with thoughts of the nerve of the prophets: "How dare they challenge the status quo!" The passage in Matthew from which I drew my theme for this district conference can be interpreted as audacious. What nerve to praise people for going out of their way to do things for those who cannot give anything in return.

Have we become so immersed in our culture and society that we use them to measure how effective and efficient our programs are? I enjoy watching "Shark Tank" and I have learned what is important to these potential investors in particular. They ask questions like, "How much does it cost to make?", "What does it sell for?", or "What are the acquisition costs?" The sharks are looking for efficiency and the cost-benefit ratio. The only audacious part at times is the nerve of the entrepreneur to ask for money.

As followers of Jesus, we are expected to do audacious things. We are challenged to be faithful and righteous acts demand endurance. Sister Joan Chittister, in her book "The Time is Now: A Call to Uncommon Courage," speaks to the pathway to racial equality. She writes, "It took over two hundred years to abolish slavery; more years to abrogate segregation; and it seems even more years to extinguish the racism that is at our historical roots (page 51)".

In what ways might extending charity be considered audacious? It is faithful, persistent, and it thinks outside of the box. It is not enough to call out sin and evil. Charity offers a vision and new ways of promoting righteousness.

Are we willing to tell the truth in Love? Do we call out the wrong we see and accept the criticism that comes along with it? The focus should be on changing what is holding people back. In the Matthew passage as it speaks to us today, are we willing to speak up for the homeless, the unclothed, the unjustly incarcerated, the hungry, the physically and the mentally ill?

Are we willing to be bold and audacious in our mission to glorify God for our neighbor's good?

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## Changes in the District Office

Most of you know that Walt Wiltschek will be starting as our District Executive on September 1. While we are quite excited about his coming back to our District in this capacity, we are also extremely grateful for Connie Burkholder's expertise and work as our Interim District Executive. She has done an outstanding job helping us maintain continuity with ministry, programming, and pastoral placement as we are transitioning from Kevin Kessler to Walt.

There will be further changes coming soon: Andrea Garnett, our awesome Administrative Assistant, will be going on a 12-week family leave in the near future, at the end of September or beginning of October. Doing the office work during Andrea's leave will be Anna O'Brien. Office hours (10 to 15 hours per week) during that time will be up to Anna, as she is a student. Andrea and Anna have already been spending some time together so that Anna knows what to expect before Andrea's leave starts. Andrea plans to continue in her job as Administrative Assistant after her leave. She and Connie have worked well together at a distance, and Walt has expressed confidence that they will have a fine virtual working relationship too. Therefore, the physical District office will remain at the Canton church, and we are thankful for their willingness to let us remain in their space.

Program and Arrangements Committee and the Canton congregation have been working at the details of District Conference planning and paperwork to relieve the load on Andrea and on Anna, who is not familiar with the process.

Our district treasurer, who is currently Ellis Boughton, will be overseeing the financial end of things. However, the financial work that was once delegated to Andrea is now outsourced to Supportive Strategies. Leadership Team felt that it was important to have an outside firm take care of bookkeeping, bill-paying, and payroll. Supportive Solutions started their work in July, and we are still transitioning into this arrangement.

Even with these substantial changes and the care we have tried to take, Leadership Team believes that we can still continue the work of the District and in the District office as we have been. We ask for your prayers and patience during this time.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## Pastoral Transition

On June 6, the Polo Church of the Brethren voted to call **Jeffrey Davidson** to be their new pastor. Jeff and his wife, Julia Gilbert, have been living in the Washington, DC/Northern Virginia area. The Washington City COB has been their home base for a number of years, and Jeff has been part of the preaching and pastoral care ministry there. Jeff and Julia are both graduates of Bethany Theological Seminary. They will be moving to Polo for Jeff to begin his part-time ministry there on October 1<sup>st</sup>. We welcome them to Polo and to the Illinois/Wisconsin District! We also give thanks to the Polo Church search committee for their diligent work!

**Joyce Person** has been serving as Interim Pastor at the Polo Church during this transition time. She stepped in when **Leslie Lake** retired due to health issues. We are grateful for Joyce's ministry during these months. She is looking forward to returning to her musician role at the Dixon Church of the Brethren.

**Leslie Lake and her husband Bob** have remained living in the Polo Church parsonage during Leslie's recovery time. They are making plans to move from the Polo area to make way for the new pastor. Let us hold Leslie and Bob in prayer as they seek a new home. God's blessings to everyone in this transition time at the Polo Church!

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## Office of Ministry makes available documents for 2022 pastor salary and benefits

Church of the Brethren Newsline

July 16, 2021

The Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry has sent out its annual e-packet of documents for the Cash Salary Guidelines and Table for pastors for the upcoming year, 2022. The packet has been provided to the 24 district offices across the denomination, and select documents also are available to download from the Office of Ministry webpage for forms at [www.brethren.org/ministryoffice/forms.html](http://www.brethren.org/ministryoffice/forms.html).

**Some documents included in the packet are:**

— A 2022 cover letter from Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, director of the Office of Ministry.

— The 2022 Cash Salary Table and Guidelines, which are also available on the Office of Ministry webpage for forms.

— Documents pertaining to the Employment of Licensed Ministers and to Bethany Seminary student placements.

The annual start-up and renewal agreements for pastors and congregations are not included in the packet but are available online, as downloadable and fillable pdf forms on the Office of Ministry webpage for forms.

For more information or questions contact [nsheishman@brethren.org](mailto:nsheishman@brethren.org).

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## Annual Conference elects new leadership

Church of the Brethren Newsline

July 1, 2021

The delegate body of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference today voted to elect new leadership. The delegates voted on two ballots, one to fill open positions carried over from 2020—when the Conference was canceled because of the pandemic, and one to fill positions open in 2021.

All of those elected from the 2020 ballot, except for the moderator-elect of Annual Conference, will serve a term shorter by one year than the usual term for their office. Those elected from the 2021 ballot will serve full terms.

Later in the business schedule, the delegates will vote to affirm the board-elected and constituency-elected directors and trustees.

### **2020 ballot election results:**

*Annual Conference moderator-elect:* Tim McElwee

*Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee:* Beth Jarrett

*Mission and Ministry Board from Area 1:* Josiah Ludwick

*Mission and Ministry Board from Area 4:* Kathy A. Mack

*Bethany Theological Seminary trustee representing clergy:* Chris Bowman

*Bethany Theological Seminary trustee representing laity:* Jacki Hartley

*Brethren Benefit Trust board:* David L. Shissler

*On Earth Peace board:* Ruth Aukerman

*Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee:* Arthur Fourman

### **2021 ballot election results:**

*Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee:* Nathan Hollenberg

*Mission and Ministry Board from Area 3:* Karen Shively Neff

*Mission and Ministry Board from Area 5:* Barbara Daté

*Bethany Theological Seminary trustee representing laity:* Drew Hart

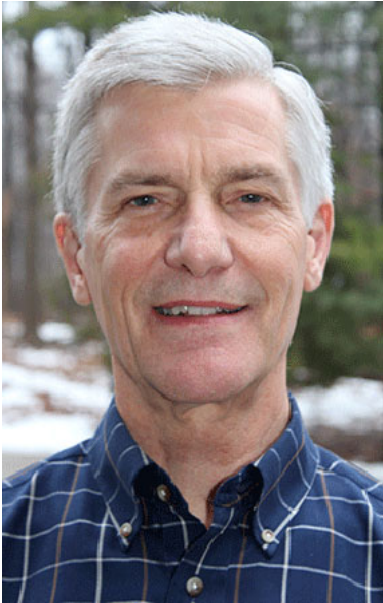
*Bethany Theological Seminary trustee representing the colleges:* Steve Longenecker

*Brethren Benefit Trust board:* Sara Davis

*On Earth Peace board:* Alyssa Parker

*Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee:* Robert S. McMinn

For more information about the Annual Conference go to [www.brethren.org/ac2021](http://www.brethren.org/ac2021).



**Tim McElwee of Wolcottville, Ind., has been elected to serve as moderator-elect of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference.** He will serve as moderator-elect in 2022 and as moderator in 2023. Now retired, his leadership experience in the Church of the Brethren includes a number of roles at Manchester University over more than 30 years, including vice president for advancement, vice president for academic resources, and associate professor of peace studies. While an ordained minister he served as Manchester's campus pastor and later as a chaplain at Timbercrest, a church-related retirement community. In the 1990s he was denominational staff in Washington, D.C. He also has worked as senior director of development for Heifer International. He holds a master of divinity degree from Bethany Seminary and a master's degree and doctorate from Purdue University.

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## Conference affirms additional directors and trustees and other appointments

Church of the Brethren Newslines

July 4, 2021

The Church of the Brethren Annual Conference affirmed board-elected and constituency-elected directors and trustees for the denomination's Mission and Ministry Board and the Conference agencies Bethany Theological Seminary, On Earth Peace, and Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT).

BBT presented one appointment that needed to be affirmed because the person was chosen to fulfill the unexpired term of an Annual Conference-elected director. BBT also reported four appointments of board members who did not need to be affirmed.

Also affirmed were district executive representatives to the denomination's Leadership Team and the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee.

**The list included names that would have been brought to the 2020 Annual Conference, some of whose terms already have concluded.** Among these were several nominated to fill unexpired terms on the Mission and Ministry Board, with those nominations coming from the Nominating Committee of the Standing Committee of district delegates to Annual Conference.

### Church of the Brethren Leadership Team

**Torin Eikler**, executive minister of Northern Indiana District, was affirmed as the appointee of the Council of District Executives to serve a 3-year term

### Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee

**Gene Hagenberger** of Hanover, Pa., and Grossnickle Church of the Brethren, was affirmed as the appointee of the Council of District Executives to fill an unexpired 3½-year term ending in 2024

### Mission and Ministry Board

**Martha Stover Barlow** of Harrisonburg, Va., and Montezuma Church of the Brethren, named by the Nominating Committee to an unexpired Conference-elected 9-month term that ends in 2021, representing Area 3

**Lauren Seganos Cohen** of San Gabriel, Calif., and Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren, named by the Nominating Committee to an Annual Conference-elected unexpired 5-year term ending in 2024, representing Area 5

**John Michael Hoffman** of McPherson, Kan., and Monitor Church of the Brethren, to serve an at-large 5-year term ending in 2025

**Meghan Horne Mauldin** of Columbus, N.C., and Mill Creek Church of the Brethren, named by the Nominating Committee to an unexpired Conference-elected 2.7-year term that ends in 2023, representing Area 3

**John Mueller** of Fleming Island, Fla., and Rock Bible Church of the Brethren, named by the Nominating Committee to an unexpired Conference-elected term that term that would have ended in 2021, representing Area 3

**Joanna Wave Willoughby** of Wyoming, Mich., and Common Spirit Church of the Brethren, to serve an at-large 5-year term that ends in 2026

**Rebecca Miller Zeek** of Duncansville, Pa., and Bedford Church of the Brethren, named by the Nominating Committee to an unexpired Conference-elected 1-year term that ends in 2022, representing Area 1

#### **Bethany Theological Seminary**

**Mark A. Clapper** of Elizabethtown, Pa., and Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren, to serve a second 5-year at-large term ending in 2026

**Karen O. Crim** of Dayton, Ohio, and Beavercreek Church of the Brethren, to serve a second 5-year at-large term ending in 2026

**John Flora** of Bridgewater, Va., and Bridgewater Church of the Brethren, to serve a second at-large 5-year term ending in 2025

**Richard Rose** of Claremont, Calif., the University of La Verne, and the African Methodist Episcopal Church, to serve an at-large 5-year term ending in 2025

#### **Brethren Benefit Trust**

**Janis Fahs** of North Manchester, Ind., and Manchester Church of the Brethren, to serve a 4-year term ending in 2025

**Donna March** of Carpentersville, Ill., and Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren, to serve an unexpired Conference-elected 1-year term ending in 2022

**Gerald (Jerry) Patterson** of Fairfax, Va., and Manassas Church of the Brethren, to serve a 4-year term ending in 2024

**Wayne T. Scott** of Harrisburg, Pa., and Mechanicsburg Church of the Brethren, elected by Pension Plan participants to represent the Fellowship of Brethren Homes for a 4-year term ending in 2024

**Kathryn Whitacre** of McPherson, Kan., and McPherson First Church of the Brethren, elected by Pension Plan participants (the Brethren Ministers Association and the Council of District Executives) to a 4-year term ending in 2025

#### **On Earth Peace**

**Rudy Amaya** of Pasadena, Calif., and Principe de Paz Church of the Brethren, to serve a 4-year term ending in 2025

**Irvin R. Heishman** of Tipp City, Ohio, and West Charleston Church of the Brethren, to serve a second 5-year term ending in 2026

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## **A Story of Stewardship**

Jesus told his followers to give what they could to further God's work here on earth. We are asked to give ten percent of our earnings. The Cerro Gordo congregation decided to sell its parsonage, and to tithe ten percent of the proceeds from that sale. At our May council meeting, our members voted to give half of that tithe to the District of IL/WI and the other half of the tithe to Brethren Disaster ministries. This amount is in addition to Cerro Gordo's annual pledged monies to the District. During the past year-plus of restrictions due to COVID-19, the Cerro Gordo congregation has been blessed by the faithful giving of its members and by the successful sale of the parsonage. We are called to share these blessings and, as a congregation, we felt we should do just that. The District of IL/WI not only needs our mental and spiritual support, but it needs our financial support as well. Our District connects each of our congregations in these two states and connects us to the larger church. We encourage each congregation to support our District financially to the fullest support that it can. Thank you for doing so.

Carol Kussart, board chair, Cerro Gordo  
District Leadership Team Chair

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## **Position of Executive Director of institutional Advancement Open at Bethany Seminary**

If you or someone you know might be interested in applying, please see the link below:

<https://bethanyseminary.edu/jobs/executive-director-of-institutional-advancement/>

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## **Annual Conference office co-sponsors webinars on theme of equipping for leadership**

Church of the Brethren Newsline

July 23, 2021

By Chris Douglas

The Annual Conference office is co-sponsoring two online workshops offered by Womaen's Caucus on the theme "Equipping for Leadership." All are invited to join! The first webinar titled "**Leadership in the Church of the Brethren**" will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 24, at 8 p.m. (Eastern time) via Zoom. The Zoom link will be sent out in August.

**Questions to be addressed include:** How do people get on Program and Arrangements Committee anyway? And Standing Committee—how is that different from Mission and Ministry Board? Do Brethren Benefit Trust and On Earth Peace pick their own board members or do we? How do I nominate people? Who can I nominate? What do I do if I get nominated? How do we deal with getting nominated every year but never making it on the ballot? Or getting on the ballot but then the delegates vote for someone else—publicly and painfully?

Bring all your other good questions, too, and Nominating Committee and Annual Conference officers will be with us as we get equipped to lead the church: today and tomorrow.

— *Chris Douglas is director of the Annual Conference office.*

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## Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren proclaims 'Peace is patriotic'



- *From Newsline*

**Members of the Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill., have folded several hundred origami cranes** and mounted them in a display on the front lawn of the church along with a banner that reads "Peace is Patriotic." Wrote James Lehman in a release published in the *Daily Herald*: "The origami crane as a symbol of peace goes back to Sadako Sasaki, a Japanese girl who was a victim of the bombing on Hiroshima. She was 2 years old and severely irradiated. Still, she lived another 10 years. She is remembered because she folded more than 1,000 cranes for peace before her death. This display is the congregation's way of celebrating the Fourth of July, lifting up their conviction that it is important for all of us as Americans to remember that working for peace is a way of honoring our country."

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## Calling the Called Event – October 23, 2021, 9:00 am – 12:00 Noon

The Calling the Called Committee invites all who may be sensing a Call from God to ministry to join us for a morning and evening Zoom session on October 23. We will explore Call stories from the scripture and from the lives of Church of the Brethren leaders, sharing in some reflection time, and hear some presentations on how to discern God's call and what some next steps may be. To whet your appetite here's a link to a video of the call story of Bob DeBolt, one of our district pastors:

<https://youtu.be/fccE-y-4ee0>

Please see the flyer for other information. Here's a link to register: <https://forms.gle/Z2wFPNEkc9AnEtUC9>

If you have questions, please contact the District Office or one of the committee members listed below. We look forward to having you join us!

Lisa Fike, chairperson

Marty Creager

Lynda Willmann



Purvi Satvedi  
Connie Burkholder, Interim District Executive

## **CALLING THE CALLED** **DISCERNMENT** **DISCIPLESHIP** **DIRECTION**



**WHEN**  
**October 23, 2021**  
**9 a.m.—Noon**

**WHERE**  
**Zoom—link provided by the**  
**district office after registration**

**Register:**  
**[https://forms.gle/](https://forms.gle/Z2wFPNEkc9AnEtUC9)**  
**Z2wFPNEkc9AnEtUC9**

**YOU ARE**  
**INVITED TO:**

**A SPECIAL IL/WI**  
**DISTRICT EVENT**  
**IN CONJUNCTION**  
**WITH THE**  
**CALLING THE**  
**CALLED**  
**COMMITTEE**

**A TIME TO:**  
**Explore, Reflect, and**  
**Discern the Call**  
**Hear other's stories**  
**Explore pathways to**  
**Ministry**

**ALSO INCLUDED:**  
**Presentations by**  
**Interim DE Connie**  
**Burkholder and future**  
**DE Walt Wiltschek**  
**Sharing of Call stories**

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## **Invitation from On Earth Peace**

Annabell Knapp, the Palestine Justice Organizer Intern with On Earth Peace, is seeking individuals or congregations that are interested in work on justice issues in Palestine/Israel. Here is the information she has shared:

The issues that we are currently working to address surround the human rights abuses that Palestinians face at the hands of the Israeli government and the apartheid state they have created. This includes forced evictions, child imprisonment, wrongful imprisonment, and extrajudicial killings. Currently, OEP is working to bring attention to bill HR 2590 known as Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act. If passed and signed into law this bill would ensure that U.S. funds that go to Israel do not contribute to the human rights abuses.

If you have any questions please feel free to email me [palestine@onearthpeace.org](mailto:palestine@onearthpeace.org)

Annabell Knapp  
(she/her/hers)  
*Palestine Justice Organizer Intern*

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Phone: +1 540 467 2211  
Facebook: [OEP-Palestine](#)

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## **Remembrance of Kermon Thomasson**

R. Kermon Thomasson, long-time employee of the former Church of the Brethren General Board, passed away at his home in Martinsville, Va., on July 12, 2021.

Kermon served in Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) as a teacher in Waka, Nigeria. At the conclusion of his BVS term, he remained in Nigeria as a missionary for 13 years, teaching history, geography and English at Waka Teachers' College. Following his service in Nigeria, he served on the denominational staff from 1974 until 1998, first as writer and illustrator for Brethren publications, exhibits, and books, and then for 20 years as editor of *Messenger*.

A memorial service is planned for Monday, July 19, 11:00 a.m. at Collins-McKee-Stone Funeral Home (109 Broad Street in Martinsville). The family will receive guests at 10:00 a.m. and at the conclusion of the service. Memorial gifts may be sent to Brethren Volunteer Service, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

The full obituary is available at <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/martinsville-va/robert-thomasson-10266406>.

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## Link to Church of the Brethren video report

- from Nancy Miner

The video report of the Church of the Brethren ministries is now available at <https://youtu.be/MwlypFFe7DM>. We hope that you will be able to share this video during your district conference.

This video report, as well as the written and pictorial Annual Report, is also posted on the Church of the Brethren website at <https://www.brethren.org/about/annualreport/>. We would be grateful if you would share these links with members of your district via your district newsletter or your website.

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## 2021 Peace Essay Contest Winners



Bethany Theological Seminary has selected the winners in its 2021 Peace Essay Contest. Funded by the Jennie Calhoun Baker Endowment, the contest is open to students in graduate school, college, or high school. Cash prizes are awarded to the top three entries. This year's contest solicited entries on the theme, "Civil Resistance and Nonviolent Social Change in an Increasingly Virtual World."



**Matthew Wiley**, of Chicago, earned the \$2000 first prize for his essay "Spirit, Flesh, and the Algorithm." Wiley is a PhD student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where he is researching ecclesial division and unity. He also works as an editor at the Henry Center for Theological Understanding. He and his wife belong to Boulevard Presbyterian Church, where they lead the youth ministry.



The \$1000 second prize was awarded to **Izaza Izeowayi**, a 24-year-old Nigerian writer and poet, for his essay, "Knowledge, Action, and Hashtags: The Effective Means to be Involved in Nonviolent Social Change in an Increasingly Violent and Virtual World." Izeowayi is currently completing an undergraduate degree program

in marketing at the University of Port Harcourt. He lives and writes in the City of Port Harcourt.



**Carol Davis**, of Canton, Ill. was awarded the \$500 third prize for her essay, "The Stories Will Rise." Davis earned a Master of Arts in Theopoetics and Writing from Bethany as well as master's degrees from Illinois State University and the University of Missouri. She recently retired as a vice president of Spoon River College where she continues serve as an adjunct instructor and artistic director of a community performing arts troupe. She has a background as a playwright and journalist.

"We were very pleased with the three winning essays, and we offer congratulations to these writers," says Scott Holland, Slabaugh professor of theology and culture, who directs Bethany's Peace Studies program. He organized the competition with assistance from a student, Susu Lassa. "We are grateful to all the writers who took time during a very challenging year to write about this important topic.

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## Wanted: Jesus in the neighborhood stories

**- From Newsline**

**We want to hear your "Jesus in the Neighborhood" stories!** How is your congregation living "Jesus in the Neighborhood"? How are your members acting as Jesus' hands and feet?

The Church of the Brethren congregations webpage at [www.brethren.org/church](http://www.brethren.org/church) now features stories about congregations from *Messenger* magazine and Newsline. Take a look for some instant inspiration.

We welcome photos, write-ups, or links to what your church is doing and being. Send materials to [cobnews@brethren.org](mailto:cobnews@brethren.org). Your submissions may be included in an upcoming issue of Newsline and/or *Messenger*, or may posted to the congregations page.

While on that page, check your church listing and send updates to [yearbook@brethren.org](mailto:yearbook@brethren.org). Recently, the congregations page at [www.brethren.org/church](http://www.brethren.org/church) has been viewed hundreds of times per week. Don't miss the opportunity to offer updated links and contact information for your congregation or fellowship to those visiting the page.

Questions about "Find a Church" or the congregations webpage can be directed to [cobweb@brethren.org](mailto:cobweb@brethren.org).

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## Fair pay for your time: A new pastoral compensation model

Church of the Brethren Newsline

July 4, 2021

*By Frank Ramirez*

Every five years the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee of the Church of the Brethren is tasked with conducting an in-depth review of guidelines for salaries and benefits for pastors. Committee members Beth Cage, Ray Flagg, Deb Oskin, and Daniel Rudy, along with staff representative Nancy Sollenberger Heishman of the Office of Ministry, have heard from many pastors who felt they were not being fairly compensated as well as from congregations who were feeling guilty about the level of compensation they were offering.

"We are in the third year of a five-year review," said Cage, chair of the group. "We appreciate the work of our pastors. Seventy-seven percent of our pastors are serving less than fulltime. We needed to reimagine the compensation and working arrangements between pastors and congregations."

The committee has put together a "Budget to Salary Calculator" that will be introduced at the 2022 Annual Conference, although it is being field tested in one district at this time. Heishman said that the committee believes that every pastor deserves to be fairly compensated, and this tool will calculate how many hours each congregation should expect from their pastor.



*Beth Cage reports to the 2021 Annual Conference as chair of the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, in this screenshot from the virtual Conference. After the close of this year's conference, Deb Oskin will assume the role of chair for the committee.*

Congregations will be able to use the tool to calculate the maximum cash salary they can offer. Having set 44 hours as a standard weekly work load for a pastor, the number of hours the congregation should expect from their pastor is calculated by entering a number of variables. These include, among others, the pastor's years of service, insurance requirements, what the scale determines is a fair salary for a fulltime pastor, and the housing situation, adjusted by the pastor's zip code.

In the example used in the Power Point presentation, it was determined that in a particular case, the pastor should work 36 hours a week, based on what the congregation was offering.

There is additional help for filling out W-2s. The calculator also will help congregations prioritize which pastoral duties they consider most critical, as well as those ministries that can be performed by church members (based on the Brethren concept of the priesthood of all believers), who will be responsible for performing those duties, and what expectations accompany those duties.

Committee members emphasized that this calculator is not designed for evaluating job performance. District offices already have systems for job evaluation in place.

Pastors and congregations will hear more about this tool in the months ahead. A recording of the session will be available online to view for a few more weeks.

— *Frank Ramirez pastors Union Center Church of the Brethren in Nappanee, Ind.*

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## Annual Conference affirms a compelling vision for the Church of the Brethren: A “table” perspective

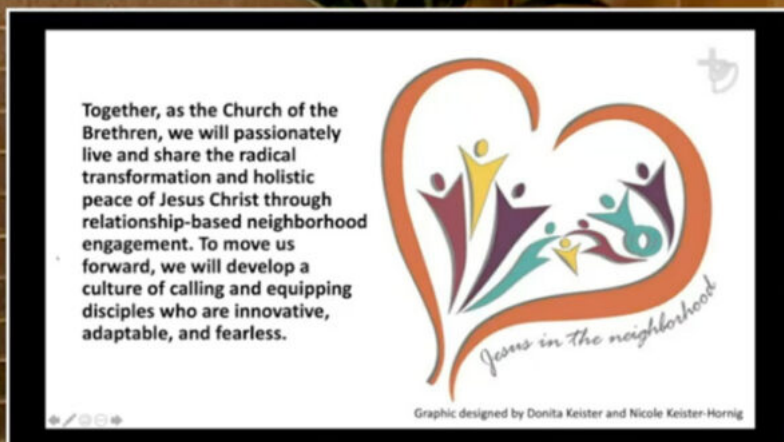
Church of the Brethren Newsline

July 3, 2021

*Today, the Annual Conference affirmed this compelling vision for the Church of the Brethren: “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.”*

*Here is a view from a participant in one of the online “tables” or small break-out groups that participated in the process of affirming the vision statement.*

● LIVE



*Rhonda Pittman Gingrich presents the compelling vision statement to the Conference.*

**'Where we make connections is where we overcome our fears'**

*By Frances Townsend*

**Thursday, July 1:**

Sitting at my kitchen table with my laptop computer just isn't the same as being at the table in the Conference hall. There is such richness to in-person connections. My virtual tablemates and I took joy in meeting one another this morning, but we missed getting to hear the reports and other business in one another's company. I remember 2019, when stories might be shared around the table of people's experiences with On Earth Peace or with Bethany when those reports were presented. Instead, as each of us listened in our own bubbles, we were back to the old days of sitting in rows, disconnected people on connected chairs.

It led me to reflect on what is happening as we meet in the hallways at Annual Conference, when we drop in to see the progress being made in the quilting area, or the blood donation area. Hundreds of little events each day reinforce our identity as a people.

After the afternoon insight session, I went to Brethren Press on my computer to look for books by the guest speakers. Next year when I can be greeted by the volunteers and staff, and carry books back to my hotel room, I will remember to give thanks with joy.

I look forward to table discussions on just about any topic, any excuse for being together. When we were introducing ourselves in the table formation process, one of our participants said, "Where we make connections is where we overcome our fears."

The compelling vision statement should create rich discussion tomorrow. The committee presented a video describing the multi-year process that has led us to this point of affirming the statement. They also broke down several of the key parts of the statement, commenting on some of the most common areas of remark or concern.

One concern was that focus on the "neighborhood" would undermine our world mission partnerships. But we heard reassurance that Jesus did not define "neighbor" narrowly. This is not meant to take us away from more geographically distant mission.

A part of the statement that invited more description regards calling leaders. The statement does not merely call on the church to call and develop leaders, but to nurture a missional stance in all of our people, calling every person to a life of courageous, radical discipleship.

Most of all, we were reminded, "Our life together must be grounded in scripture...we are a people who take the Bible seriously."

**Friday, July 2:**

The table talk session dealing with the compelling vision statement took up two solid hours, but I was surprised when 5 p.m. came. Our “table” of seven had a substantial discussion on each of the five discussion questions posed by team chair Rhonda Pittman Gingrich.

She began by describing what could be called the “soul” of an institution, and asked us, “How does this compelling vision reflect the soul of the Church of the Brethren?” Our discussion time began with an uncommon amount of silence for a Brethren group to endure. But eventually we came up with answers accompanied by stories. One person allowed that making disciples is a core value of the Brethren, but said that “innovative, adaptable, and fearless” has not traditionally characterized us. Then we considered that, naming stories about the early Brethren which proved them to be much more fearless than the current generation.

We thought about other key words in the statement and how they match up with the Brethren soul. The words about relationship, the use of “together” as the first word of the statement, all made us think of the strong value Brethren place on relationship and the church as a family of faith.

The last thought as we were called away from discussion was that the statement can be read that we are supposed to call innovative, adaptable, and fearless disciples even if we ourselves are not those things. That will require humility from us and willingness to trust in God to lead us all—definitely drawing upon Brethren values.

The second question posed to the tables was “What are the needs in your community that might be healed through radical transformation and holistic peace of Jesus Christ?” We had less difficulty starting this conversation, as all of us named big problems common to our communities—racism, poverty, addictions, mental illness, and the church’s unwillingness to openly discuss so many concerns including gender and sexuality. We considered how so often the church fails people by not owning the problems as “ours” but pretending these needs are outside the church community, so those involved feel shame and stay quiet. As we thought about that, it helped us see that it is not only the community outside the church that needs Jesus’ radical transformation, but also the people inside the church. Again, humility comes into play.

One of the reasons table talk is being used is so that people can arrive at their own deeper understandings as they work through the process. We may know in an abstract sense that other people will notice different things because of their life experiences, but it is so powerful to have real life examples of that as seven people share their perspectives—even if only in little boxes on a computer screen.

The third question was, “How might we work at calling and equipping innovative, adaptable, and fearless disciples to live out the Jesus in the Neighborhood vision?” “Listen” was a key word in many of our responses, as in taking seriously the newest people in the church. It was noted that the newest people in a congregation are the most likely to bring in other people, partly because their biggest relational ties are outside the church. One of our participants at the table has been with the church for about five years, so she spoke of some frustration with how Brethren tend to treat people as visitors for too long, instead of as members of the community who are also at the “table” as disciples. Another participant said her teenager was thinking of leaving the church because of “take it or leave it” speeches about what Brethren should believe. Disciples need guidance, but we are all disciples together, so we must allow Jesus to continue to equip us through these newer members.

### **Saturday, July 3:**

As we gathered around our virtual table this morning, Rhonda Pittman Gingrich presented us with only one question: “How might we be known—both as congregations and as a denomination—if we truly embrace and live out the vision of Jesus in the neighborhood?”

Our immediate response was a long silence. We broke the silence by considering that in today’s society churches are a lot less noticed, let alone known, than church people think. How would living out this vision turn that sad truth around?

One person used the biblical image of being known as the light on the hill, a place people would turn to when help is needed. Another person challenged us all to consider what unique gifts the Brethren might bring, different from other churches up and down the street, naming a deep understanding of peace as one of our gifts.

“If you don’t do something important,” someone said, “you’re just another building. We need to be doing the work.”

But more than one person also admitted their congregations might have some difficulty coming up with a unified vision to pursue. We discussed having the humility to put Jesus being known above having ourselves known, but many saw the term humility as an old Brethren excuse for inaction and lack of engagement with others.

Though we began the discussion with a long silence, we still had plenty to say as time ran out and we were called back to the business session.

As Rhonda read some of the statements other tables had come up with, it was obvious that this question provoked thoughtful discussion in many groups. Some of the answers were inspiring—that we would be known by our love, our compassion, our welcoming, known as healers. Other answers were more challenging—that we would be known as risk takers, known as peculiar people who actually live out our faith. And one response was sobering. By living out the vision, we might be known, but not necessarily be popular. Jesus told his disciples much the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount.

Moderator Paul Munday led the delegates through the process of affirming the compelling vision statement, done through each delegate choosing from four responses. First, “I feel inspired and wholeheartedly affirm the vision. Second, “I affirm the vision.” Third, “I have reservations, but will set them aside and affirm the vision for the good of the body.” Fourth, “I cannot affirm the vision.”

Prayer and hymn singing surrounded the choosing of options by the 450 delegates who participated. When results were tallied, the statement was affirmed with 82 percent of those participating choosing an affirmative option.

Then, the table groups were convened once again to spend a couple of minutes answering one last question: “As you consider your gifts and passions, what is one thing you personally can do to better align your way of life with the Jesus in the Neighborhood vision?”

It was a question that could not be answered so quickly.

The compelling vision session ended with a consecration. We read a responsive litany, prayed, and sang a hymn text by Rosanna Eller McFadden, "Brethren, Come and Claim a Vision."

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## NOAC Online Conference Happening Soon!

One of the benefits of holding NOAC online is that those who have been unable to travel to Lake Junaluska for NOAC due to finances, health, or schedule conflicts, may be able to participate online this year.

Online registration is now open at [www.brethren.org/NOAC](http://www.brethren.org/NOAC). Cost per person is \$100 and per couple is \$150. Paper registration forms are available upon request by calling: 1-800- 323-8039 ext. 303. The registration fee will provide access to all sessions, worship services, workshops, and recorded archives. We hope each person/couple who plans to attend will register and pay the fee so that we can continue to provide a meaningful experience for all.

NOAC 2021 will begin on Monday, September 6 at 7 p.m. with announcements, NOAC News and worship. It will end on Friday, September 10 at 9 a.m. with worship.

The daily schedule Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday will include: (all times are eastern)

- 8:30-9:30 a.m. Morning Bible Study led by Joel Kline
- 9:45- 11:30 a.m. Keynote Speakers will include Karen Gonzalez, Lisa Sharon Harper, and Ted Swartz & Ken Medema
  
- 1:30- 2:45 p.m.- Workshops and Virtual Field Trips
- 3:15- 4:30 p.m.- Workshops and Virtual Field Trips
- 7:00 p.m.- Announcements, NOAC News
- 7:30 p.m.- Worship with preachers Christy Dowdy, Paula Bowser, Andrew Wright, Don Fitzkee, and Eric Landram
- 8:30 p.m.- Virtual Ice Cream socials with Outdoor Ministries Association, Bethany Theological Seminary and our Brethren colleges/universities

We are hoping that districts and congregations will organize viewing parties (keeping in mind COVID safety protocols). Perhaps a Sunday School class or Bible Study group could plan to meet at the church or in someone's home. We are working with our retirement communities to provide opportunities for viewing, especially for those in assisted living and nursing care units.

There are opportunities for giving- we will have a Virtual "Fundraising Walk around the Lake" which will raise funds for the Emergency Disaster Fund and assist congregations which have been impacted by the COVID pandemic. We are also raising funds to provide books for the Lake Junaluska Elementary School. Donations may be made through Brethren Press. Watch for more information about these giving opportunities.

We are on Facebook at "Church of the Brethren NOAC." We also have a webpage at [www.brethren.org/NOAC](http://www.brethren.org/NOAC). Both are updated on a regular basis.

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## Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership announces latest listing of courses

Church of the Brethren Newsline

May 27, 2021

Following is the latest listing of upcoming courses offered by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, a collaboration between the Church of the Brethren's Office of Ministry and Bethany Theological Seminary.

Unless otherwise noted below, find more information about these upcoming courses and register at [www.bethanyseminary.edu/brethren-academy](http://www.bethanyseminary.edu/brethren-academy).



June 29-30: **“Interpreting 1 Corinthians for the Twenty-First Century Church”** is offered as a directed independent study taught by Carrie Eikler in conjunction with the online Brethren Ministers’ Association pre-Annual Conference event. Said a description: “In response to news about divisions within the house-churches in Corinth, Paul’s efforts to heal the beloved body of Christ included an instructive letter written in the early 50s CE. The thesis of that letter is an appeal for unity and reconciliation (1 Corinthians 1:10). Its agenda is a laundry list of issues that troubled both the Corinthians and Paul. This directed independent study...is an opportunity to interpret Paul’s letter as scripture for the twenty-first century church. As we do so, we will experience the power of Paul’s gospel to inspire, guide and unite believers today.” Registration deadline: May 28.

Aug. 16-Sept. 10: **“Sustain, Heal, and Move Towards Transformation: Understanding the Trauma of a Pandemic”** is an online course in Spanish, offered through the Hispanic Anabaptist Biblical Seminary/Seminario Biblico Anabautista Hispano (SeBAH). To express interest in this course, contact Aida Sanchez at [sanchai@bethanyseminary.edu](mailto:sanchai@bethanyseminary.edu) or 765-983-1821.

Aug. 25-Oct. 19: **“Christianity in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds”** is offered as an online course taught by Ken Rogers, professor at Bethany Theological Seminary. The course “provides a brief overview of the history of Christianity from the close of the New Testament era to the eve of the Reformation (approximately 150 to 1450 CE),” said a description. It will explore “issues in the study of history, early Christianity, and the beginning of Christian theology. Throughout, the course focuses on the development of Christian thought. Students will attempt to understand key Christian thinkers and their ideas in relationship to Christian ritual and practice; to familiarize ourselves with some of the major issues, events, and personalities in Christian history; and to become aware of the problems and methods of the disciplines of church history and theology.” Registration deadline: July 21.

Sept. 15-Nov. 9: **“Interim/Transitional Ministry: More than Mere Maintenance”** is offered as an online course taught by Tara Hornbacker, emerita faculty at Bethany Seminary. The course “is a practical exploration of the gifts and challenges specific to interim/transitional ministry,” said a description. It will explore “the necessary tasks for successful interim/transitional ministry and the personality characteristics most helpful to develop for the practice of this specialized area of congregational leadership. Students will examine the unique calling of persons to walk with congregations in both short-term and long-term intentional ministry situations.” Registration deadline: Aug. 11.

Oct. 13-Dec. 7: **“Introduction to the New Testament”** is offered as an online course taught by Matt Boersma. Registration deadline: Sept. 8.

Oct. 22-24 plus Oct 14 and Nov 4, from 6-8 p.m. (Eastern time): **“Technology and the Church”** is offered as a Zoom intensive taught by Dan Poole, faculty at Bethany Seminary. Registration deadline: Sept. 17.

Oct. 31: **“Kingdom Building in Worship”** is offered by the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center (SVMC). Currently planned to be in-person at Stone Church of the Brethren in Huntingdon, Pa., it will be taught by Cindy Laprade Lattimer, Marty Keeney, and Loren Rhodes. Said a description: “Sundays are relentless. Worship happens every...single...week. It is a spiritual, cognitive, emotional, and sensory experience. But without careful planning, worship can easily become stale, unimaginative, and bland. This seminar is designed for anyone who has a role in planning worship: pastors, music leaders, lay ministers. We will use both presentations and workshop components to support attendees in developing a process for planning worship that is meaningful, Christ-centered, cohesive, thoughtful, and sensitive.” To register, go to <http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07ehj4eg4pe32f3e5a&llr=adn4trzab>.

#### Winter/Spring 2022:

First two weeks of January 2022: **“A Place of Refuge: Urban Ministry”** is offered in Atlanta, Ga., as an intensive taught by Josh Brockway of the staff of the Church of the Brethren Discipleship Ministries. Registration deadline will be announced.

Feb. 2-March 29, 2022: **“Church of the Brethren History”** is offered as an online course taught by Denise Kettering-Lane of the Bethany Seminary faculty. Registration deadline: Dec. 20.

March 25-26 and April 29-30, 2022, Fridays 4-9 p.m. and Saturdays 8 a.m.-4 p.m. (Eastern time): **“Pathways for Effective Leadership, Part 1”** is offered as a Zoom intensive through the SVMC, taught by Randy Yoder. Registration deadline: Feb. 25, 2022. To register, contact Karen Hodges at [hodgesk@etown.edu](mailto:hodgesk@etown.edu).

April 27-June 21, 2022: **“Heaven, Hell, and the Afterlife”** is offered as an online course taught by Craig Gandy. Registration deadline: March 23, 2022.

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## 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](http://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

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## 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 programing, 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](http://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 Virgina 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](http://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.

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## 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](http://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](http://www.brethren.org/noac).

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## District Leadership Team Meeting Places 2021

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

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

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

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## District Leadership Team

Moderator (1 year term): Blaine Miner, Dixon

Contact: [blaineminer86@gmail.com](mailto:blaineminer86@gmail.com)

847-404-6635

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

Contact: [hrose@cantonusd.org](mailto:hrose@cantonusd.org)

309-357-3590

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

Contact: [kristi.kellerman@gmail.com](mailto:kristi.kellerman@gmail.com)

815-814-1360

Recording Secretary: Jan Dietrich, Mt. Morris

Contact: [jdiet220@hotmail.com](mailto:jdiet220@hotmail.com)

815-738-2365

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

Contact: [djkrwebb@hotmail.com](mailto:djkrwebb@hotmail.com)

630-236-8166

Financial Secretary (3 year term): Christine Knotts, Peoria  
Contact: [knotts.christine@gmail.com](mailto:knotts.christine@gmail.com)  
309-253-6802

Treasurer (3 year term): Ellis Boughton, Yellow Creek  
Contact: [ellis.boughton@live.com](mailto:ellis.boughton@live.com)  
815-864-2049

Interim District Executive: Connie Burkholder  
Contact: [crburkholder56@gmail.com](mailto:crburkholder56@gmail.com)  
620-245-4600

Andrea Garnett, Administrative Assistant  
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Kyle Brinkmeier, Yellow Creek  
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815-291-4664

Jonathan Shively, Highland Ave.  
Contact: [shively.jonathan@gmail.com](mailto:shively.jonathan@gmail.com)  
847-644-1174

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## 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!

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## Upcoming Events

- August 3, 1:30 pm: Calling the Called Meeting
- August 7, 9 am: Leadership Team Meeting
- August 10, 9 am: Potluck Team Meeting
- August 10, 7 pm: P&A Meeting
- August 14, 9 am: MLDT Meeting
- September 25, 9am: CRDT Meeting

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## Newsline

— **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.

— 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.

**The Anabaptist Disabilities Network is seeking a resource director** to be responsible for print and online communications including social media, triannual Connections newsletter, and monthly Opening Doors blog. Excellent writing, networking, and project management skills are required. Familiarity with disability issues and Anabaptism is desired. This is a quarter-time position at a competitive salary. Visit <http://bit.ly/ADNstaffopenings> for the position description and information about applying.

— **The Church of the Brethren seeks applicants for the position of assistant coordinator of the FaithX ministry** in the Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) office at the denomination’s General Offices in Elgin, Ill. FaithX (formerly the Workcamp Ministry) offers summertime short-term service events for junior and senior high youth and young adults. The assistant coordinator serves as a BVS volunteer with both administrative and practical ministry responsibilities. The first three-quarters of the year is spent preparing for FaithX events including choosing an annual theme, preparing promotional materials, writing and designing a devotional book and leaders’ resources, setting up financial spreadsheets, setting up and maintaining a registration database, sending letters to participants and leaders, making site visits, collecting forms and paperwork, and other administrative work. During the summer, the assistant coordinator travels from location to location, serving as onsite coordinator of FaithX events with responsibility for overall administration including housing, transportation, food, work assignments, and recreation, and also often responsibility for planning and leading devotional, educational, and group activities. As a BVSer, the assistant coordinator lives at the Elgin BVS Community House. Required skills, gifts, and experience include experience in youth ministry, passion for Christian service, an understanding of mutual ministry—both giving and receiving, spiritual and emotional maturity, organizational and office skills, physical stamina and the ability to travel well. Preferred skills and experience include previous FaithX or workcamp experience as a leader or participant, and computer skills including experience with Microsoft Office, Word, Excel, Access, and Publisher. For more information or to request an application, contact BVS director Emily Tyler at [etyler@brethren.org](mailto:etyler@brethren.org) or 847-429-4396.

— **Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill.**, is hosting a COVID-19 vaccination clinic for the homeless community this Saturday, June 12, from 1-5 p.m. The effort was the focus of an article in the *Daily Herald*, a newspaper covering the cities and suburbs west of Chicago. The clinic will give the Johnson and Johnson one-shot vaccine, in conjunction with the weekly Soup Kettle that offers a free, hot meal every Saturday. Though intended for the homeless, the clinic is free to anyone who wants to be vaccinated. Soup Kettle organizers will send cars to parks and other areas where the homeless typically gather, to offer free rides to the clinic. “Those who agree to be vaccinated will be treated to snacks and beverages, be given \$5, and be entered in a raffle to win a bag of groceries,” said the article. Read more at [www.dailyherald.com/news/20210609/elgin-church-to-host-vax-clinic-for-homeless](http://www.dailyherald.com/news/20210609/elgin-church-to-host-vax-clinic-for-homeless).

— **Ruth Karasek of York Center Church of the Brethren in Lombard, Ill.**, has been named a JustPeace Leader by On Earth Peace. She “developed a passion for peace and activism and an understanding of community development and world issues through her lifelong involvement with On Earth Peace and the Church of the Brethren,” said an announcement. In addition to participating with On Earth Peace, her peacemaking and community involvements have included work with

Children's Disaster Services and Christian Peacemaker Teams, helping to organize a cooperative grocery store, and volunteering with Good Samaritan Hospital in crisis counseling as a trained Stephen Minister. Find Karasek's JustPeace Leader profile at [www.onearthpeace.org/impact\\_leader\\_ruth\\_stowe\\_karasek](http://www.onearthpeace.org/impact_leader_ruth_stowe_karasek).

— **Updated submission information for *Messenger***, the Church of the Brethren magazine, has been posted at [www.brethren.org/messenger/submissions](http://www.brethren.org/messenger/submissions). The information may help those who would like to submit articles for consideration by the magazine's editorial team. Subscribe to the magazine by contacting your congregation's *Messenger* representative or go to [www.brethren.org/messenger/subscribe](http://www.brethren.org/messenger/subscribe).

— **Atlantic Northeast District of the Church of the Brethren seeks applicants for the fulltime salaried position of church video streaming specialist**, assisting congregations and church leaders with implementing online and hybrid church services. Primary responsibilities include helping local leaders evaluate strategies for streaming, suggesting specific hardware and configurations solutions, assisting with installations, configuring setups, training church members to use the equipment, being available for questions and requests, and coordinating volunteers to assist with all the above. Secondary responsibilities include presenting monthly workshops on tech topics and best practices, assisting with streaming district events, responding to tech requests, and more. These consultation and technical services are provided to all congregations in the district—large and small—along with limited availability for congregations and events outside of ANE, as the hope is that these services (and staffing) will expand to other districts and the denomination. As such, this position is breaking new ground, giving the opportunity and responsibility to help shape this ministry and how it is grown. Qualifications include experience with live video production and live streaming; knowledge of and familiarity with video, audio, and computer systems, especially streaming video methods, protocols, and best practices; experience with worship and various worship styles; ability to teach technology to non-techies (lay people); ability to work independently; communication skills, including the ability to listen; help desk tech support and troubleshooting skills; ability to envision, create, shape, and implement new programs and initiatives; ability to work with, encourage, and organize volunteers and other staff; ability to understand and embrace the unique dynamics and needs of worship while utilizing technology; familiarity with the Church of the Brethren. To apply, submit a résumé and a letter of interest describing what attracts you to this position, your qualifications, and your salary requirements to Atlantic Northeast District at [office@ane-cob.org](mailto:office@ane-cob.org). Applications will be received until the position is filled.

— **Following the EF3 tornado that touched down in Naperville, Ill.**, and other towns in the west and southwest of the metro Chicago region last Sunday night, Newsline received word that no Brethren churches or families were affected. The two congregations in that general area are Naperville Church of the Brethren, pastored by Dennis Webb, and Neighborhood Church of the Brethren, pastored by Purvi Satvedi.

— **Chicago (Ill.) First Church of the Brethren** partnered in a unique Juneteenth Celebration with Front Door, a West Side organization, and the Old Town School of Folk Music, which gave a drumming class in the garden next to the church. Go to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5nkHSTQ1Jw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5nkHSTQ1Jw) for a short video from the drumming class.

#### **Conference sessions are available as recordings through July, and more resources**

— Many of the online sessions of the 2021 Annual Conference—including the business sessions, worship services, concerts, children's activities, and some insight sessions—will continue to be available as recordings through July.

Registered participants will continue to have access to the event page using their personalized log in received by email, and will be able to click through to view the recordings. For questions about these recordings, contact the Conference office at [annualconference@brethren.org](mailto:annualconference@brethren.org). The Conference office plans to be closed July 5-7.

The recorded Conference worship services continue to be free and open to the public. Links to the services in English and in Spanish are at [www.brethren.org/ac2021/webcasts](http://www.brethren.org/ac2021/webcasts).

Continuing education credit is available to credentialed ministers for watching particular recorded sessions. Those sessions are listed on p. 191-192 of the Conference book. Fill out the form, keep a copy, and send the original to your district office.

**Naomi Yilma** will end her year of service with Brethren Volunteer Service on July 16, 2021. Naomi has spend this past year serving in BVS as an Associate with the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy in Washington DC. Main areas of focus were COVID recovery and vaccine access, the Advocacy Network on Africa, economic peacemaking, and coordination of the Nigeria Working Group.

— **Manchester University in North Manchester, Ind., has announced an estate gift of \$1.2 million** that will provide scholarships to students. "The widow of a 1947 Manchester graduate has left a \$1.2 million gift to the University in memory of her husband," said a release. "The Keith Kindell Hoover Memorial Scholarship Fund will provide scholarships to any worthy Manchester students at the direction of Gerda W. Hoover, who died in 2019." Keith Kindell, who died in 2003, studied communication studies at Manchester, earned a bachelor of divinity from Bethany Theological Seminary and a doctorate in psychology from Northwestern University, and studied at the University of Hamburg, Germany. It was there that he met Waltraud Gerda Wolff and they married in 1952, settling in Lombard, Ill. He maintained a clinical psychology therapy practice and taught college-level classes. Gerda Hoover earned a master's degree in German literature from Northwestern and taught high school and college German. She also published four books of poems and stories. For more information call the Manchester University Office of Advancement at 260-982-5412.

**Brethren Disaster Ministries is seeking a long-term disaster project leader to serve on a volunteer basis**, working at various domestic disaster recovery projects. This person will become part of the recovering community by helping to foster good relationships with short-term disaster response volunteers and the disaster survivors. The volunteer will work with other disaster project leaders as part of a leadership team. The office manager disaster project leader is responsible for supporting the volunteer housing site and office management. This includes working in Microsoft Office and Google Workspace, and being a primary source of project communications by phone, in person, and via email. Responsibilities also include tracking and reporting of finances and paperwork for volunteers and clients

as well as completing other project responsibilities as needed, building relationships with local partners, coordinating scheduling, and supporting incoming volunteer groups and leaders. Must be at least 21 years old, willing to move around the country depending on assignment, and willing to represent the Church of the Brethren and to be a Christian witness. The length of service will be discussed but at least seven months is preferred. Other requirements include good interpersonal, communication, organizational, and problem-solving skills; flexibility; and a valid driver's license. Housing, meals, and transportation are provided. A stipend is available, as needed. A detailed position description is available. Contact Brethren Disaster Ministries director Jenn Dorsch-Messler for more information or questions at [jdorsch-messler@brethren.org](mailto:jdorsch-messler@brethren.org) or 410-635-8737. A detailed position description is available.

— **A collection of historical photos of the construction of the Church of the Brethren General Offices** in Elgin, Ill., has been posted online by the Illinois Digital Archives. The photos were provided by the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. Gail Borden Library, the public library in Elgin, also was involved as part of its project to collect and digitize historical photos of various parts of the city. View the collection at [www.idaillinois.org/digital/collection/newgailbord01/id/38806](http://www.idaillinois.org/digital/collection/newgailbord01/id/38806).

— **Joshua Rowan** has been hired by the Church of the Brethren as the IT specialist for the Information Technology team, working from the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. He is a graduate from University of Illinois at Chicago with a Bachelors in Computer Science, and Truman College with an Associates degree in Engineering. Joshua will begin his work on August 9, 2021.

— **A special Facebook Live event will welcome Jennifer Houser** as the new archivist and director of the Brethren Historical Library and Archives at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. The event takes place Aug. 17 at 10 a.m. (Central time) at [www.facebook.com/events/223133596255760](https://www.facebook.com/events/223133596255760).

— **Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., seeks an executive director of Institutional Advancement** to manage the overall operations of development, alumni relations, local community relations, and institutional communications. This position strategizes and actively works to build relationships with a variety of constituents, enlists financial support for the seminary, and serves as a member of the president's Leadership Team. For details and how to apply, go to <https://bethanyseminary.edu/jobs/executive-director-of-institutional-advancement>.

— **On Earth Peace is offering a two-hour online introduction to Kingian Nonviolence on Aug. 12** at 5 p.m. (Eastern time). Register to attend and "meet others interested in Kingian Nonviolence, build Beloved Community, and connect with On Earth Peace's Kingian Nonviolence Learning Action Community," said an announcement. Go to [www.onearthpeace.org/2021-08-12\\_knv-intro](http://www.onearthpeace.org/2021-08-12_knv-intro).

— **Registration is now open for the "Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders"** at the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, to be held on Oct. 11-15 and Nov. 15-19. The two identical sessions will be held online via Zoom. "This workshop is designed to help church leaders deal more effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict," said an announcement. For a complete list of training events offered by the center, including a one-day "Conflict Transformation Skills and Healthy Congregations" training, go to [www.lmpeacecenter.org/all-events](http://www.lmpeacecenter.org/all-events).

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## In the District Family

### In Remembrance

The York Center Church of the Brethren joins with the family and friends of **Goldie Rohrer** for her memorial service. Goldie was the wife of **Dale Rohrer**, an ordained minister in our district. Goldie passed away in February 2020 shortly before the pandemic lockdown began. We extend our Christian prayers and sympathy to Dale and his family as they gather to remember and honor her life at this time. The church included this note in their recent newsletter: We will celebrate the life of Goldie Rohrer in a Memorial Service on Saturday, August 28 at 10:30 AM. Light refreshments will follow the service. Contact the York Center Church at 630.627.7411 if you need more information.

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## 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.

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## **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!

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## **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.