

Illinois & Wisconsin District
of the
Church of the Brethren
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Happy
New
Year



ADVENT WORSHIP

The Chicago Area Churches of the Brethren gathered Sunday, December 5 for their annual Advent Worship service. Hosted by the Faith Church in Batavia, the service was planned and led by the Chicago area Pastor's group. The service was a joyous celebration of carol singing, scripture and prayers. Music was provided by Chicago First Church's men's ensemble, the Highland Avenue choir, and Bob Webber from Neighborhood Church. All seven congregations filled the sanctuary.. A generous offering of \$525.71 was given to support the ministries of the district. After Worship came a time of fellowship. The Chicago Area Churches will gather for a joint worship service during Lent.

Submitted by: Christy Waltersdorff

EXPECTANCY?

The New Church Development Board has used the word "expectancy" in its annual report. "We must create an environment of expectancy that church planting will occur." Whom shall we expect to do the church planting? Here are some of my thoughts on the expectation of church growth for the district.

I've heard the phrase, "Somebody **oughta** do that!" I've been decoding that phrase as: "I think that might be worth doing, but it is not worth my time to do it myself." The phrase says the speaker isn't going to own the project, and it also discourages others from ownership.. If he/she doesn't think that is worth his/her time, then it probably isn't worth my time either. I don't use the phrase and ask others: "Are you going to be the resource for that?" If you aren't willing to work on it, don't complain!

So what is the expectancy for church planting. The NCDB has resources, money (some) and people (6 1/2) and few church planters. People who have planted churches before need encouragement to do it again. It's three to five years of hard work, with the result never being a sure thing. (Ask Tom and Linda Devore about the level of effort required) Typing "church planter" in any of the internet search engines will get many hits. (71,506 today on Ask Jeeves), 95% of which are sites searching for church planters. The rest are church planter resources for sale.

(Expectancy cont.)

There are three possible scenarios for our district. I expect we will see some mixture of the three. On the mixture rests the future of the district. The district will live, die, or change its form depending on which of the three we use.

I think in terms of preserving the Brethren culture and tradition, that planters arise within the Brethren. For planters, new church members and development people to come from within the churches, the vision of the churches must apprise high value to outreach and evangelism. There are many unchurched people in our communities. With help we can find them and bring them to the Brethren culture or bring them BACK to the Brethren way of things.

What should the culture of the new church be? Brethren leadership must teach the Brethren way and tradition. Following the outreach of the Brethren into communities in the 1820's, the churches began preaching in English. Tradition, good German hymns and preaching, was broken in favor of the new English speaking membership. Some of the new leadership was non-brethren and they brought change with them. Brethren history shows each new wave of non-brethren people bring new ideas changing Brethren culture and tradition. Church planters may be found from non-Brethren sources. New planters will likely come from churches already having a culture and expectation of evangelism and church planting.

Our families need to teach that there is no more important activity than spreading the gospel. Our children should grow up with it on the table. Family vision should include spreading the gospel with the children knowing it. So it must be with our churches. Unless we are willing to see our growth led from without, we need to lead it from within.

There is a third scenario. If we do not communicate an expectancy to our membership that the church be continuously developed and if none find it worthwhile to lead, then the church will continue on its downward course to a bitter end.

As for me and my house, I know what we shall do. It is time for examining our vision prayerfully to renew and communicate our expectation that church growth is not what somebody **aughta** do, but what we all must do.

I bid you peace and joy... Paul Kohler (:-->>



219th Church of the Brethren Annual Conference

Where : Peoria, Illinois

When : **July 2 through 6, 2005**

Our District is the Host!!! If asked to help, please say YES!!!!

Go to: <http://www.brethren.org/ac/peoria/peoriamain.htm> to get complete details.
See you in Peoria!!

Correction: District Conference Wrap-up

The results of the Election / Callings were reported incorrectly. Our newly called Standing Committee member is Sister Esther Frey. Sister Kathleen Brinkmeier please accept my most humble apologies for the miss print. I hope it did not cause either of you any hassle.

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