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### DISCERNMENT-A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

This has been the first year using the 2004 Constitutional direction identifying through prayerful discernment the gifts of sisters and brothers, call them, gain their consent to serve, and present them to District Conference for affirmation as leaders. The prayer discipline is important for calling leaders, exploring difficult concerns in our lives or our congregations, making significant choices, and seeking the guidance of the Spirit of God.

In the prayer Jesus taught, "Thy will be done". As we finish, the dedication of those words flies out of our minds. God gives us the freedom to choose, but we don't pause long enough to discover God's will. The essence of discernment is searching for "the will of God" in our lives. The Holy Spirit guides us and calls out the gifts God has given us. The intensity of stress and speed, the addiction to immediate gratification, materialism, self-centeredness, prejudices, and other sins in our culture consume our souls. We can seek God's will through our faith individually, in our families and congregations, and in relationships with others. Today most believers don't take time for daily prayer or reflection on Scripture. We can't go where God is not. The discipline of discernment helps us, in faith and prayer, to follow God's way.

As a form of contemplative prayer, it differs from other prayers of meditation, praise & celebration, suffering and grief, or casual "quickie" prayers. Prayerful active listening, being open and aware of the issues, and standing committed to faithfully serve God in our choices and responses are facets of relating with the mystery of God in our lives. Tellhard De Chardin said, "We are spiritual beings having a human experience, not human beings having a spiritual experience." As members of Christ's body, we are on a spiritual journey together.

In his recent book, *Another Way of Believing: A Brethren Theology*, Dale Brown writes: "Discernment...has taken on an important function in Anabaptist circles-that of naming the gifts of brothers and sisters in the body. The community of faith discerns and calls out leaders while respecting the wishes of the one being called. Brethren believe that guidance by the Spirit shapes local and Annual Conference decisions. Our openness to this gift could lead to shaping the program of the church by discerning the gifts of members, rather than always shaping individuals into offices or slots." (p.86) Discernment was used historically by Brethren in calling elders, ministers, deacons, and others to service. The Holy Spirit is always with us, helping us to grow in prayer, to increase our discipleship, and to travel with God in our life's journey. We are blessed.

By Larry Ulrich is a member of York Center, a retired minister, and Chair of the Gifts Discernment and Call Committee.

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### INTERIM PASTOR AT FAITH CHURCH IN BATAVIA:

Jack Flores is a product of the Denomination's TRIM (Training in Ministry) program. Jack is a member of the Highland Ave. Church along with his wife and daughter, Rachael. Their daughter Rebekah is enrolled at Bethany. Their son Joshua is married to Amy and lives in Elgin.

Jack's background began in the Chicago Parochial System. Jack's wife was raised Baptist. It appears the result is Brethren. They have been members of Highland Ave., after a 25 year search for a Church home, since 1999. Jack was licensed by the District in 2003. A Welcome to Jack as Interim Pastor at Faith Church.

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### NEW PASTOR AT LANARK:

We want to welcome Pastor John Sgro, his wife Amanda and 2 year old Eden Marie to Lanark. Pastor John comes to us from Pleasant Dale Church in Decatur, Indiana where he was the Associate Pastor. He earned an M.Div from Bethany in May 2005. He hails from Niagara Falls, NY and Amanda is originally from Chesapeake, VA. Lanark and the District of Illinois/Wisconsin welcomes Pastor John to our District.



### **FREEPORT CHURCH BAZAAR:**

The Freeport Church of the Brethren will hold its 25th ANNUAL Country Store Bazaar and Luncheon on Thursday, October 20, 2005. The bazaar includes fall decorations, produce, houseplants, gifts, cards, woodworking, crafts, homemade noodles, and a complete line of bakery items. Hours are 10:00 AM - 1:30 PM.

The luncheon begins at 11 AM, featuring homemade chicken noodle soup, gelatin salad, rolls, cake, and beverage. Tickets are available in advance or at the door for a \$4 donation.

Freeport Church is located at 777 W. Pleasant Street at the corner of Hwy. 26 (S. West Ave.). Handicap parking and a chair lift are available at the Pleasant Street entrance. For more information contact Linda Simler at 815-232-7344.

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### **BRETHREN PASTOR TRAINS CLERGY**

The Mayor's Office asked The Council of Religious Leaders in Metropolitan Chicago to provide spiritual care for several thousand evacuees from Hurricane Katrina. The Council is the only interfaith, inter-religious group in Chicago able to select, train, and supervise clergy. Larry Ulrich represents the IL/WI District to the CRLMC. For the last two years Larry has been a member of a steering committee planning for spiritual care to victims of a disaster. Other Brethren pastors and chaplains in the Chicago area volunteered to provide spiritual care in Chicago and Elgin.

Larry Ulrich, York Center

#### **Remember District Conference**

November 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup>  
Springfield First Church  
Please attend some or all.

*YOU are invited!*

### **YOUTH CABINET:**

Greetings! Here is an update from the district youth cabinet,

The cabinet met in August to choose members for the 2005-2006 cabinet. Three seniors departed from this past year. Seven new members were selected: Allison Gible, St. Charles (Highland Ave.); Daniel Brumbaugh Keeney, Elgin (Highland Ave.); Cassidy McFadden, Elgin (Highland Ave.); Megan McNeil, Peoria (Peoria); Elyce Naylor, Polo (Elyce isn't Brethren, but has come to camp regularly and had a Brethren sponsor for her Cabinet application); Megan Patterson, Milledgeville (Milledgeville/Dutchtown); Laura Thompson, Batavia (Faith).

The cabinet has agreed to donate the pitcher created for the district for the 2002 NYC to this year's district conference silent auction.

Becca Lipscomb from Springfield becomes president for 2005-6. Other officers will be selected at our next meeting on Sept. 17 at Naperville. Our cabinet planning retreat comes in October. District youth retreat will run concurrently with District Conference, in Springfield. Roger Schrock is our guest/keynote leader.

Dates/site for the spring retreat are not yet set. Another big project for the year is arranging transportation for the district to the 2006 National Youth Conference (July 22-27, Ft. Collins, Colo.). Walt Wiltschek will coordinate that..

This summer a number of District youth went on denominational workcamps. Many were at Annual Conference in Peoria. More than 70 youth attended senior high camp at Camp Emmaus as well as the Youth Peace Travel Team and Don Vermilyea.

It was a wonderful week!

Walt Wiltschek

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