



"The Newsletter of"
Illinois & Wisconsin District of the Church of the Brethren
District Executive: Kevin Kessler
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"The purpose of the Illinois/Wisconsin District of the Church of the Brethren is to support the growth and development of the member churches."

DE Ponderings

Christmas music is some of my favorite. Maybe it's because I hear it only once a year, normally. I also like the solemnity that exudes from songs like "Silent Night". A little piece I read in a devotional recently has helped me to see another element in Christmas songs-the element of surprise. "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night" has the element of surprise in it. Shepherds are watching their flocks of sheep under the night sky when all around them the glory of the Lord came down. Imagine being one of those shepherds. Imagine experiencing the glory of the Lord surrounding you. Surprise? To say the least. More like shock, fear.

I'm not exactly sure what "the glory of the Lord" might be or how it might be experienced. It sounds pretty amazing to me-THE GLORY OF THE LORD. It sounds, well, surreal, if not unreal. It's a biblical phenomenon that surely doesn't occur anymore in the modern world. Or does it? Hmmm....

Well, here's what I think. What if "the glory of the Lord" is simply those moments when God in some way, be it big or small, enters in a sensory, perceptible way the space where we are? If this is the case, God has been in the business of bursting upon the scene since the beginning of recorded history. Remember the story of Moses and the burning bush? Was that not the glory of the Lord? Remember Noah and the rainbow? Jonah and the big fish? Isaiah and the vision of the flying seraphs and hot coals? Nebuchadnezzar's amazement about the escapees from the fiery furnace? Belshazzar and the writing on the wall? Daniel and the lions' den? Not to mention, following the shepherds experience, more experiences of God's glory: the wonder of Pentecost, Stephen's vision before his death, Saul's Damascus Road conversion, the revelation of John.

Working within the premise that God is unchanging, would it not make sense that one of God's unchangeable attributes is the ability to break in upon the scene in a surprising, glorious way? Have you ever experienced an "aha" moment, one of those inexplicable, goose pimple producing moments that leaves you full of wonder and amazement? Moments like the birth of newborn baby? a view of the Northern Lights? a gentle breeze that brushes your cheek on a completely calm night? a song that moves you to tears? a thought that stops you dead in your tracks? a movement from one who has been comatose? the love of the community in a time of crisis? If you've experienced moments like these, then I'm fairly confident you've experienced the glory of God breaking in upon the present scene where you are experiencing life.

We're still surprised when this happens. We still experience God.

Hey, during this Christmas season, when we remember the surprise of those along ago who experienced God bursting in upon the scene, let's anticipate and expect God to continue surprising us. And when we're surprised, well, why not stop and simply say, "Thank you, God, for coming near!" Amen.

Congregational Resources for Advent and more from NCP

- In 2008, the New Community Project, a Brethren-related nonprofit organization, is offering five Learning Tours. The trips welcome all ages to learn about troubled areas of our world and build relationships with our neighbors and with God's creation. Offerings in the coming year: Nepal (Jan. 5-15: poverty, women's empowerment), the Ecuadorian Amazon (May 18-29: explore the rainforest, learn about threats to it), Guatemala (June 15-25: indigenous communities, reforestation efforts, possible church-to-church connections), Honduras (July 19-28: live and work in poor community), Denali National Park, Alaska (August 7-15: wildlife, global warming impacts), and Burma (August 18-27: poverty, repression, visit Christian villages). These can be transformational experiences for participants, and bring hope to our neighbors. See <http://newcommunityproject.org/tours.shtml> or contact David Radcliff (888-800-2985; ncp@newcommunityproject.org)
- Sustainability specialist Tom Benevento has joined the staff of the New Community to coordinate an Undoing Global Warming initiative and develop a model sustainable living center at his urban homestead in Harrisonburg, VA. A key part of the program is to visit congregations to do energy audits, help them reduce their greenhouse gas emissions--and save money! Contact Tom at 540-433-2363 or see http://newcommunityproject.org/grounds_keepers.shtml
- Holiday Gifts for Sudan This new initiative from the New Community Project offers the chance to give two gifts to the people of Sudan. The first is raising our voice on their behalf by signing a petition to send to President Bush and UN Secretary General Ban-kim Moon calling for urgent attention to the on-going crisis in Darfur (now in its fourth year!). The second gift is a contribution to Project Nimule, an effort sparked by four young adults who spent the summer in Nimule, Sudan last summer through NCP's Solidarity Worker's program. <http://newcommunityproject.org/nimule.shtml> This effort will raise funds for girls' education, reforestation, malaria prevention, and women's development. NCP provides posters and flyers for the project. Contact NCP at ncp@newcommunityproject.org
- Just in time for heavy kitchen use during the holidays, the New Community Project is offering Glass v Styrofoam in the church kitchen. And the winner (environmentally and economically) is... http://newcommunityproject.org/glass_styrofoam.shtml
- The New Community Project has new worship resources available. See this page <http://newcommunityproject.org/creativearts.shtml> for The King and I (Christmas night perspectives by King Herod in his palace and a shepherd out in the fields); We Two Kings (two Wise Men??), and A Woman's Place (based on parable of the widow and the judge)
- Seasonal sermon factoids: 1) Per person Christmas expenditures, US: \$780; per person annual health care expenditures, sub-Saharan Africa: \$15 2) Per pet holiday gifts, US: \$25 (Pet Supplies Plus); five months' school for girl in Sudan: \$25 3) Jesus as refugee: Mt. 2:13-15; 1 in 14 Honduras lives in the US (economic refugees), estimated 150 million environmental refugees worldwide by 2050 due to global warming (Oxford U. study) 4) Percent US toys made in China: 80; average hourly wage for worker in Chinese toy factory: 18 cents (China Labor Watch)

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Freeport Hosts District Conference - Nov. 2 - 4, 2007

Freeport is about as close as we can get to being in both Illinois and Wisconsin. The Freeport Church of the Brethren hosted the District Conference at the Masonic Temple in downtown Freeport. The building allowed the conference to be held in one spot including meals and the business sessions.

First thanks must go to Pastor Lisa Fike and the on-site coordinator Jim Bicksler. The program went smoothly with all of the energy and anxiety going on unnoticed behind the scenes. Thanks again to Freeport and their congregation for a smooth running District Conference.

Friday evening was a time for visiting, registration and an inspiring message from our Moderator Joyce Person. Joyce became moderator when the elected Moderator, Kevin Kessler, took on the responsibility of District Executive. She didn't have the opportunity of the one year term of Moderator-Elect to prepare for the position. The theme of her sermon was the theme of the 300th anniversary symbol; "Surrendered , Transformed , Empowered". She spoke of the miracle of her husband's recovery from an almost fatal experience and inspired us all to seek the power of prayer and our God. Jerry Sales, Moderator-elect served as Worship Leader.

After Worship on Friday the delegates and guests went to the fellowship area to look at the exhibits and enjoy snacks.

Saturday morning and it's down to business in the auditorium. 96 delegates and 78 guests attended the session. After an opening hymn and meditation, Moderator Joyce Person gavelled the conference into session. Next the delegates were commissioned, the minutes approved, the agenda accepted and the approval of the tellers and timekeeper.

The first order of business was the presentation of the slate from the Gifts and Discernment team of those called to District positions. The ballot (slate) was handed out, a vote taken and the tellers went to count the results.

Reports by the various Ministry teams, committees, camps, homes, etc. were all printed in the conference handout and were to be studied ahead of time. Duplicate reports were not to be given from the podium, although new information may be presented. The District Conference adjourned and reconvened for the annual meetings of the camps, homes and New Church Development Board

One Study Committee Report presented to the conference for action was to declare the New Church Development Board equally important as the District Leadership Team both reporting to the District Conference. Both teams have direction in specific areas of importance and therefore exist together to carry out those goals as defined by the District Conference. The question passed with a majority of the vote.

The other issue presented to the conference by the Leadership Team was the requested disassociation of the Astoria Church of the Brethren. The Astoria Church has unilaterally taken actions contrary to the constitution and by-laws of the district and refused to meet with the Leadership Team. The Leadership Team then felt compelled to ask for legal advice from an attorney. The matter is still pending waiting to see what, if any, action will be required of the Illinois-Wisconsin District.

After lunch the conference reconvened to install the District Executive, Kevin Kessler. After a great report from the Junior High group, the conference commissioned the Newly elected members of the District Team.

The 300th Anniversary Team presented a video and music program of the roots of the Church of the Brethren. Elder George Wolfe II and wife Anna appeared to tell their story of the early church in Illinois.

(Continued)

The evening entertainment was a lively band concert in the Masonic Auditorium.

The Sunday Worship Service featured Pastor Dennis Webb of the Naperville church. His message, "Spiritual Transformation into unified Purpose" brought the congregation to respond with "Amen" and "preach it brother".. It was an inspiring message of "get out of your cocoons and get busy spreading the word of God." The worship ended with the consecration of the new Moderator, Jerry Sales and the new Moderator-Elect, Gil Crosby. The closing hymn was "The Storm is Passing Over."

The conference choir and the youth choir provided music for worship services.

Respectfully submitted by Gil Crosby.

Pleasant Hill Village

Pleasant Hill Village held their annual Dinner and Auction on October 20th. This event was held Virden at the local Knights of Columbus Hall. There were almost two hundred people in attendance. Proceeds from this night netted \$9,244, which includes an auction and other games. The gross revenue from the Annual Dinner and Auction is estimated at \$15,300. Thank you to all who assisted with this event and made donations. Several new donations were received from Brethren Churches.

What's Happening at Your Church?

While attending District conference I heard about events that were GREAT IDEAS that could be used in other areas of the District. Almost every Church in the Illinois-Wisconsin District participates in an event or project that could easily be beneficial and available to other churches throughout the District.

The key is COMMUNICATION! Nobody in the District knows what you are doing in the furthering of Christ and his Church unless you tell us.

E-mail us; crosbygm@juno.com or mathelw@gmail.com or mail@peoriabrethren.org. Or you can write to us sending articles, brochures, ads for events, articles from you own newsletters, anything to let the rest of the District know what is happening in the name of the Brethren.. Send mail to:

Gil Crosby	Leonard Matheny	1st Church of the Brethren
1174 N. Elm Ct.	715 W. Hanssler Pl	4714 N. Sheridan Rd.
East Peoria, IL	Peoria, IL	Peoria, IL
61611-5404	61604-2705	61614-5926

We don't know what is happening until you tell us... so tell us!
Great things are happening in Illinois-Wisconsin.. We just don't know what they are.

District Conference Auction

We had 38 donations and made \$685.50. Please remind people that next years conference is in Peoria and that there we will also have plenty of room for Auction items.

Thanks Rick

International Day of Peace Event Franklin Grove Church of the Brethren

Our church began holding monthly candlelight peace vigils in November, 2002. We held events every month as a witness to our belief that Jesus calls us to be a peaceful people. These short services were held at our church, in parks, and at various other locations throughout the area. In October, 2003 we were able to have a special ceremony as we dedicated our new Peace Pole. In June, 2004 we hosted a candlelight vigil in front of our church, lighting 900 individual candles (one for each soldier that had been killed in Iraq). In August, 2005, we held another candlelight vigil on the courthouse lawn in Dixon. This time we lit approximately 1800 individual lights honoring those killed in the war. At all times, our intent was to remind people of the human cost of war and the high price paid when violence is used to settle disputes or prove a point. We have continued to hold candlelight services at our church periodically calling for "peaceful ends through peaceful means." Recently, we decided that we wanted to host another larger, more visible event so we opted to participate in the International Day of Peace on September 21, 2007. In addition to our own church, Don and Cathy Hart from the Cherry Grove Church of the Brethren as well as Janis Butterbaugh from the Dixon Church of the Brethren, helped with the planning of the event. Don and Cathy were successful in getting the major of Lanark to donate our two welcoming banners and Don collected over 400 pinwheels for the Pinwheels for Peace project! We sent letters to many of the churches and schools in



the area, inviting them to participate by making pinwheels. In response, we received over 1,120 pinwheels from all over three counties. We even received a box of pinwheels from the Nokesville, Virginia Church of the Brethren! In addition to the pinwheels for peace our church members put in many long hours "building" a Wall of Remembrance: A plywood wall almost 90 feet long with the name, age, residence and cause of death for every soldier killed in Iraq so far: 3,873 as of 9/21/07. The Dixon Park District provided us the free use of John Dixon Park in Dixon--a full block park on the main thoroughfare in Dixon and highly visible. We put up our Wall of Remembrance along the main street, "planted" the 1100 pinwheels and culminated the evening with a short candlelight service at 7:00 p.m. Although we did not get as large a crowd as we had hoped for, we may never know how many children were touched by the project as they made their pinwheels or how many people drove by. Regardless, we feel strongly that it is important for us to continue to witness to Jesus' message of peace, particularly in a time so torn by violence.

Congregations to Remember in prayer this Month:

New Beginnings Fellowship	630-879-9414
Lanark	815-493-6219
Milledgeville	815-225-7812
Romine	618-548-4341

If you have prayer requests for the district,
please e-mail your request to
kevink.iwdcob@sbcglobal.net

District Conference 2007

Welcoming and hospitable are two words that describe the Freeport Church of the Brethren, hosts for the 2007 District Conference held November 2-4. Greeters welcomed conference-goers as they entered the Masonic Temple where the conference was held. And great effort was given to making everyone feel comfortable and cared for. Kudos to the folks at Freeport for their responsiveness to the task of hosting this year's conference.

Moderator Joyce Person and Moderator-elect Jerry Sales provided excellent leadership during the business session. A 300th Anniversary celebration was enjoyed by all on Saturday afternoon. And a concert by "Sapphire Song" wowed the audience on Saturday evening. Joyce Person and Dennis Webb provided inspiring and challenging sermons during the Friday evening and Sunday morning worship services. The conference culminated with the commissioning of Jerry Sales as Moderator and Gil Crosby as Moderator-elect for 2008.

Business items of interest during the conference consisted of:

1. The affirmation and commissioning of persons to positions of leadership and ministry within and beyond the district. The positions and persons called are as follows:
 - Moderator-elect - Gil Crosby
 - Financial Secretary - Duane Steiner
 - Program and Arrangements Committee - Sunita Christian
 - Leadership Team - South/Central Region - Bob Champlin
Bill Pocklington
 - Northeast Region - Sharon Rice
 - General Board (District representative) - Willie Hisey Pierson
 - Pinecrest Community Board - Jerry Griffin
Joel Kline
Gene Schmidt
 - Pleasant Hill Board - Allen Krall
Barry Liss
 - Camp Emmanuel - John Renken
Leon Swigart
Dorothea Wood
 - Camp Emmaus - Heidi Gerdes
Sue Blankenship
Elvira Lawdenski
 - New Church Development Board - Lisa Fike
Jack Flores
 - Manchester College Board of Trustees, at large - Samuel Gunnerson
Jose Cardenas
Kyle Hupfer
Ruthann Knechel Johansen
Eugene F. Roop
2. Approved the Study Committee Report that discerned protocols of the New Church Development Board and the Leadership Team as well as how the two teams will continue their efforts for a common purpose with separate but equally important tasks.
3. Approved a budget for 2008 of \$92,000.00.
4. Received reports from various district and denominational agencies.

Overall evaluation of the conference is that it was a good one. The First Church of the Brethren congregation in Peoria is looking forward to seeing everyone in 2008 as they will be hosting the conference November 7-9.

District Leadership Team Retreat

The District Leadership Team met November 16-17, 2007 at Camp Emmaus near Mt. Morris for their annual retreat. The Leadership Team reorganized during the retreat with following persons called to serve:

Wilbur Bowman – Team Chairperson

Fletcher Farrar – Team Vice-Chairperson

Evelyn Bowman – Recording Secretary

The Leadership Team determined dates for meeting at various locations throughout the district. These dates and places are being confirmed and will be communicated to the district following confirmation.

Leadership Team members were assigned as liaisons to congregations. Your congregation should be receiving communication from your liaison in the near future. Anything you would like to communicate to or with the district, please contact your liaison. They will be happy to visit with you.

Vernon Dean Ph. 815-456-2469

Mt. Morris
Polo
Freeport
Milledgeville
Lanark
Stanley, WI

Fletcher Farrar Ph. 217-525-9083

Canton Church of the Brethren Girard
Decatur
Oakley Brick
LaPlace
Champaign
Woodland

Robert Champlin Ph. 309-647-5780

Viriden
Oak Grove
Panther Creek
Peoria
Cerro Gordo
Springfield

Loren Habegger Ph. 630-852-7515

New Beginnings Fellowship
Chicago First
York Center
Naperville

Wilbur Bowman Ph. 815-946-2301

Dixon
Franklin Grove
West Branch
Cherry Grove
Rockford
Yellow Creek

Sharon Rice Ph. 630-279-1954

Douglas Park
Highland Avenue
Neighborhood
Charismatic Christian Center

Know, also, that you may contact the District Executive, Kevin Kessler, at anytime, also. His contact information is as follows:

Ph. 309-224-4828

Email: kevink.iwdcob@sbcglobal.net

Bill Pocklington Ph. 217-627-2882

Allison Prairie
Hurricane Creek
LaMotte Prairie
Martin Creek
Romine
Walnut Grove



National Young Adult Conference

YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park Center in Estes Park, Colorado

August 11-15, 2008

Give the gift of NYAC for Christmas!

Gift certificates can be purchased in 50% and 100% increments. Once payment is received (\$162.50 or \$325) a valid gift certificate will be sent via mail to you. Please provide your mailing address and the name of the recipient of the gift certificate along with your payment mailed to:

National Young Adult Conference
c/o Rebekah Houff
1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120



Please inform the young adult recipient that they must still register starting January 7, 2008. Once the participant registers we will credit their registration with the gift certificate amount. If the recipient does not register by May 15, 2008 we will inform you and there will still be 2 weeks remaining to register for NYAC. The participant does NOT have to show their gift certificate to NYAC staff, our records will suffice. The hard copy gift certificate is for gift giving purposes only. Gift certificates can be purchased between now and May 1, 2008.

Rebekah Houff, NYAC Coordinator, Youth/Young Adult Ministries Office, 1.800.323.8039 ext. 281,
rhouff_gb@brethren.org

Our District Youth and BVS (Brethren Volunteer Service)

Cassidy McFadden
Home: Elgin, IL
Project: CooperRiis
101 Healing Farm Lane
Mill Spring, NC 28756



Christina Pandya
Home: Naperville, IL (Picture did not copy)
Project: The Palms (SORRY!)
752 S. Pine St.
Sebring, FL 33870

Alex Otake
Home: Lombard, IL
Project: SERRV
500 Main St., P.O. Box 365
New Windsor, MD 21776

