



Reflecting news and views

## The Reflector

a publication of the

Illinois/Wisconsin District of the Church of the Brethren

District Executive: Kevin Kessler

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### DE PONDERINGS

The emerging church conversation is becoming more and more prevalent. It is a conversation that captivates me and continues to pique my interest in what Christianity and the church is becoming in a culturally and spiritually pluralistic world.

A common misconception about the emerging church conversation is that it is a movement in which and by which the church is caving in to relativism. The claim is that churches engaged in this conversation adhere to no absolute truth but are advocates for accepting anything proclaimed as a truth. Peter Rollins, a participant in the emerging church conversation disputes this claim in his book, *How (Not) to Speak of God*, when he states that “relativism is inherently self-contradictory and devours itself.” To claim that all truth is relative is an absolute statement which is self-contradictory.

Rollins contends, rather, that truth is more perception-based. It’s how we “filter the real world through our experiences, language, intelligence, culture, and so forth.” His philosophy is that there *is* an absolute truth; we are just not capable of knowing it completely. We have glimpses of it. The apostle Paul states it this way: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” (I Cor. 13:12 NRSV)

The Greek philosopher Plato’s theory of forms (or ideas) sheds some light on this concept of an absolute truth of which we only have a glimpse. Plato believed that objects of perception (those things we see, touch, hear, etc) are forms of a universal abstract concept (something beyond which our finite minds can understand). Simply, there is one mold (the abstract concept) from which come many different forms (perceived objects). There is a cookie cutter (one mold) from which comes different kinds of cookies (we see various cookies but they are all cookies).

The emerging church conversation is comfortable with the abstract concept (mold) of one God with various perceptions (forms) of what that “mold” is. Our experiences of and in life help shape the forms. The one God is perceived in various ways. As a result, labels are frequently used to define the form that we understand.

Those involved in the emerging church conversation have difficulty with labels. In one section of a book by Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*, several persons involved in the emerging church conversation share their thoughts on labels that are assigned to us depending on our set of beliefs. There are evangelicals, fundamentalists, liberals, mainliners, post-evangelicals, post-protestants, etc. These labels are based on perceptions of God, our ideas of the forms God takes. Are these labels important? Yes, but not to the point of being defined by them. It is more important to let our ideas (forms) point us to the abstract—God. And, then, for those of us with labels different from another to realize that our unique forms are still representations of the true form (mold)—God. I like Simon Hall’s (Revive, Leeds, U.K.) addition to the conversation: “My main aim for the community is not to be ‘post’ anything but to be ‘and’ everything. We are evangelical *and* charismatic *and* liberal *and* orthodox *and* contemplative *and* into social justice *and* into alternative worship.” The many forms meld into one, which give labels the distinction of moving us to an understanding of God. We can learn from each other rather than judging each other. If we are all of these forms, as Hall suggests, why judge each other? For in judging we judge self.

The more I read about the emerging church conversation the more I think the Church of the Brethren is to some degree emergent. Our aim is not to label but to be followers of Jesus, the closest form that we know of the one God. We don’t claim any creed but allow each other through Bible study and prayer and discernment to find our way to the one God without creedal judgments and with openness to community, the body, through which we understand the Holy Spirit speaks. I feel that the emerging church conversation is a good one in which to involve ourselves since we’ve sort of been involved in it anyway. We may add some real value to the conversation.

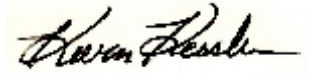
The emerging church conversation is relatively new and new things can make us a little uncomfortable. There are parts of the conversation that stretch my comfort zone. Has this brief look into the emerging church conversation caused some discomfort for you?

(DE Ponderings cont.)

Do you find it interesting? I'd like to hear from you. Email me ([kevink.iwdcob@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kevink.iwdcob@sbcglobal.net)). I might even use your comments in future articles (with your permission, of course). Let's talk!

**Note:** If you are interested in reading more on the emerging church conversation, I recommend *How (Not) to Speak of God* by Peter Rollins (Paraclete Press, 2006). I'm just beginning to read *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*

by Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger (Baker Academic, 2005) and am finding it very interesting and informative. I also recommend anything written by Brian McLaren. His trilogy (*A New Kind of Christian*, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, and *The Last Word and the Word After That*) is very interesting, as well as entertaining, reading.



## Living Peace Church News & Notes

Focusing on the peace & reconciliation ministries of the church. Greetings from On Earth Peace!

### So... what are your plans for the summer?

We know that this question is the bane of every college student's existence. There's a lot of pressure to make the most of your summer, and to have a great time, too. That's a tall order, but we have a suggestion for you...

**Apply for the Youth Peace Travel Team (YPTT).** A joint project of On Earth Peace, the General Board, and Outdoor Ministries Association, the team travels to Brethren camps and Annual Conference. The YPTT leads workshops, games, songs, and worship which encourage campers to think about Christian living in the context of peace and social justice. We are looking for dynamic college students, ages 18-22, who are Brethren and interested in a summer of outdoor ministry. Team members receive a stipend.

**If you answered "D", you are ready to apply for the Youth Peace Travel Team!**

Applications are due FEBRUARY 4, 2008, which is right around the corner!

For application or if you have questions, visit [www.onearthpeace.org/YPTTFAQS.html](http://www.onearthpeace.org/YPTTFAQS.html), or contact Susanna Farahat, On Earth Peace Coordinator for Peace Education (email: [sfarahat\\_oepa@brethren.org](mailto:sfarahat_oepa@brethren.org), or call: 410.635.8706).

**On Earth Peace:** An agency of the Church of the Brethren helping people discern the things that make for peace  
P. O. Box 188, New Windsor, MD 21776 • 410-635-8704 • [www.brethren.org/oepa](http://www.brethren.org/oepa) • [oepa\\_oepa@brethren.org](mailto:oepa_oepa@brethren.org)

1/08

You'd get a chance to hone your leadership skills, teach about living consciously, and spend a lot of time outside with new friends. Are you ready to...

- A) lead a campfire, hang on a high ropes course, and sleep in a cabin, all the while planting seeds of peace and discipleship?
- B) engage youth in conversations about conscientious objection, dealing with conflicts at home and school, and how faith and peacemaking connect?
- C) go on that inter-state bus trip you've always wanted to take... weekly?
- D) do all of the above — and more?



## Attention Congregations

The Annual Conference Council recently completed revisions to the denominational Polity Manual. Revisions include changes to polity created by Annual Conference actions through the most recent annual meeting in Cleveland in 2007.

The 2008 version of the manual is now available free of charge online at [www.brethren.org/ac/PPG/](http://www.brethren.org/ac/PPG/) in downloadable pdf format.

Congregations without Internet access may request a hardcopy version for \$10 each, including shipping and handling. Requests with checks payable to Annual Conference should be sent to the Annual Conference Office, P. O. Box 720, New Windsor, MD, 21776-0720.

Annual Conference Office, 500 Main Street  
New Windsor, MD 21776-0720  
800-688-5186

**Website:** [www.brethren.org/ac](http://www.brethren.org/ac)



## **BRETHREN BENEFIT TRUST POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT**



- Position:** Manager of Publications
- Description:** Full-time one-year interim salaried position based in Elgin, Ill., available immediately.
- Management Level:** Third level management position. Manager reports to the Director of Communications.
- Function:** Has daily oversight for BBT's publications – newsletters, press releases, annual report, Web site, and other special projects – and serves as a senior writer.
- Scope of Writing:** Manager will report on news and information related to BBT's ministry areas of Pension, Insurance, Foundation, and Credit Union. BBT's mission includes a wellness component, both financially and in body/spirit, and so some writing will cover how individuals can make good personal financial decisions while other pieces will explore wellness aspects of heart/soul/mind. Stories will also report on how BBT promotes Brethren values in the corporate world with socially responsible investing initiatives through its management of \$450 million in Pension, Foundation, and Credit Union monies.
- Responsibilities:** Manage publication schedule, content for various publications and website, and create writing and photo assignments; work with production coordinator and contracted designers; assist BBT's marketing and promotional efforts.
- Travel:** The Manager of Publications travels to the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, to the fall BBT Board meeting, and to other denominational events as assigned. Total travel is from three to six trips each year.
- Qualifications:** Seeking a candidate with at least an undergraduate degree, preferably in Communications, English, Marketing, Business, or related field, with experience/expertise in writing, copyediting, and/or project management. Knowledge of business is helpful. Active member of the Church of the Brethren preferred.
- Salary:** Competitive with Church Benefits Association agencies of comparable size and scope of services. A full benefit package is included.
- Application:** Please send letter of interest and resume with salary range expectation to Nevin Dulabaum at 1505 Dundee Ave., Elgin, Illinois, or [ndulabaum\\_bbt@brethren.org](mailto:ndulabaum_bbt@brethren.org). For questions or clarification about the position, please call Dulabaum at 847-778-8274.

## **WITTMAYER TO BE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF PENSION PLANS FOR BBT**

Jay Wittmeyer has accepted the position of interim director of Pension Plans and Employee Financial Services for the Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT), as of Jan. 1, 2008. In his new position, he will serve on the Management Team of BBT.

Wittmeyer began working for BBT on Oct. 30, 2006, as manager of publications. In this role, he developed knowledge of the BBT Pension Plans by attending Investment Committee meetings of the board, and writing pension-related newsletters and other pension communications. He also has a strong interest in finance and investments.

He holds master's degrees in English and in conflict transformation with a focus on organizational development. He has led workshops and has extensive experience in public speaking. He served as assistant director of Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Peace Center. From 1996-99 Jay worked for Mennonite Central Committee in Bangladesh as a community development officer. From 2000-04 he served the MCC in Nepal as project director of a community health project, and as organization development facilitator at a hospital.

He is currently in the Training in Ministry program of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, and has been licensed to the ministry by Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill.

*--reprinted from the Dec. 19, 2007 COB Newslite*



## INTER MEDIATION WORKSHOP FAITH-BASED

**Mediation** February 16, 17; 23, 24, 2008 Camp Mack , Milford Indiana

**Leaders:** Janet Mitchell, Attorney-Mediator and MoR practitioner, and Angie Briner , Executive Director of Education for Conflict Resolution



**Audience:** church leaders, pastors, deacons, Shalom Team/Discipleship and Reconciliation team members, and anyone interested in introductory level mediation to help others work through their differences.

**The Ministry of Reconciliation, a branch of On Earth Peace, welcomes natural peacemakers and those interested in conflict resolution to a two-weekend mediation workshop.** A refreshing, faithful approach to interpersonal peacemaking will be taught through a series of interactive and collaborative sessions. This workshop will introduce the process for mediating between individuals and provide hands-on mediation practice. Learn effective communication skills for all ages, conflict theory, how the Christian faith informs our approach to mediation, how to understand & work with style differences in communication, and mediation skills to assist those in conflict to work through their differences.

**Schedule:** Feb 16-17 & Feb 23-24  
Saturdays from 9:00am to 9:00pm; Sundays 9:00am to 3:00pm

**Cost:** \$275-\$350 based upon a sliding scale. Includes tuition, lodging, meals and materials. Commuters pay \$225-\$300 based upon a sliding scale. 2.0 Continuing Education Units are available to Church of the Brethren ministers. To register or for more information, send name, contact info and number of participants to Annie Clark at [annie.clark@verizon.net](mailto:annie.clark@verizon.net) or call 260-982-8595. **Registration deadline is Jan. 10, 2008.**

### Thinking about Consensus

For several years, the staff and board of On Earth Peace has utilized a model of consensus decision-making in meetings. The beauty of consensus is the openness of the process. Participants find space for many viewpoints, deep thinking, and time to work through reservations people may have about a decision to be made. There is also space for deep listening and opening to God's spirit. Clarity emerges for the group through a well-designed process. At MoR, we've put together a workshop called "Exploring Consensus Decision-making" which is based on the work of C.T. Butler and Amy Rothstein. Their book, "On Conflict and Consensus" is available at no cost online at <http://www.consensus.net/>. The book and the workshop are generating a lot of interest in the Church of the Brethren right now. Care to join the wave? Give us a call at 260-982-8595. Peace, Annie Clark  
MoR Coordinator

### Resources for Consensus Decision-making

Seeds for Change offers an online guide to consensus at: <http://seedsforchange.org.uk/free/consens>  
They also publish a guide by the Trapeze Collective at: <http://seedsforchange.org.uk/free/practicalconsensus.pdf>  
Rob Sanders publishes his facilitator's guide to consensus at: <http://www.ic.org/nica/Book/Cover.htm>  
Tree Bressen publishes a comprehensive list of resources on consensus at:  
<http://www.treegroup.info/resources/handout-resources.pdf>

**The Final Word** [Humans] must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## UPCOMING CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION TRAININGS AROUND THE US

<u>Ministry of Reconciliation</u>	<a href="http://www.onearthpeace.org">http://www.onearthpeace.org</a>
February 16-17; 23-24	Faith-based Mediation (30 hours)- Camp Mack , Milford , IN
February 22-23	Basic Conflict Mediation for Peacemakers: At Home, Work or Play (8 hours)- Columbus , OH
February 28-29	Missouri/Arkansas Matthew 18 Training for Trainers - Peace Valley , MO
April 3	Keeping a Cool Head in a Hot Meeting -New Windsor , MD
April 4-5	West Marva Matthew 18 Training for Trainers - Keyser , WV
April 12	Exploring Consensus Decision-making - Dayton , OH
<u>Alban Institute</u>	<a href="http://www.alban.org/">http://www.alban.org/</a>
January 15-18	Emotional Intelligence: Becoming a Conflict Competent Leader - Santa Barbara , CA
<u>Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution</u>	<a href="http://raven.bethelks.edu/kipcor">http://raven.bethelks.edu/kipcor</a> Gary Flory, Director
January 22-31	Practical Skills for Working with Culture, Gender and Power in Conflict -North Newton , KS
February 12, 13, 19, 20	Practical Skills for Managing Interpersonal Conflict -North Newton , KS
<u>Lombard Mennonite Peace Center</u>	<a href="http://www.lmpeacecenter.org/">http://www.lmpeacecenter.org/</a>
March 31-April 4	Mediation Skills Training Institute - Ames , IA
<u>Public Conversations Project</u>	<a href="http://www.publicconversations.org">http://www.publicconversations.org</a>
April 3-5	The Power of Dialogue: Constructive Conversations on Divisive Issues - Watertown , MA
<b>Contact Us On Earth Peace</b>	P.O. Box 188, New Windsor , MD 21776
<a href="http://www.onearthpeace.org">www.onearthpeace.org</a>	or <a href="mailto:annieclark@mchsi.com">annieclark@mchsi.com</a>

## CROSS CULTURAL CONSULTATION AND CELEBRATION April 24-27, 2008 Elgin, IL

During this 300th anniversary year of the Church of the Brethren, the 2008 Cross Cultural Consultation and Celebration will be held in Elgin, IL, the home of the General Offices. Elgin is a significant location in Brethren history. We gather to look ahead and envision where God is leading our Church. Our time in Elgin provides us an opportunity to see the offices of several Brethren agencies and meet their staff. We will visit congregations in the greater Chicago area as hosts for meals and worship. We gather for prayer, worship and to strengthen existing relationships or to begin new ones. We gather in Jesus' name as we further the Kingdom's vision expressed in Revelation 7:9.

### Meals:

There will be no set fee for meals but participants can contribute towards expenses during the worship offering opportunities. Our meals will come from a professional catering company and Brethren congregations in the Chicago area. Vegetarian meals will be available.

### Offerings:

There is no registration fee for this event. Free will offerings will be collected during the worship service each evening to offset expenses for meals, airport transportation, travel and other expenses.

### Housing:

Options for housing are two hotels in the Elgin area and staying in a private home. Your hosts will provide transportation each day to the Church of the Brethren General Offices, and provide breakfast. You may also make your own housing arrangements.

### Airport transportation:

Those who are flying, transportation will be provided to and from the airport.

### Registration & schedule information:

Online registration will open Dec.

1. If you'd like to register before then, please send in the paper registration form (PDF) or e-mail Joy Willrett at [jwillrett\\_gb@brethren.org](mailto:jwillrett_gb@brethren.org) You may also request this information directly by contacting: Joy Willrett, Congregational Life Team, 1451 Dundee Avenue,

Elgin, IL 60120 1-800-323-8039  
[jwillrett\\_gb@brethren.org](mailto:jwillrett_gb@brethren.org)

### Cross Cultural Ministry Team

**Mission Statement:** We are called to enrich and strengthen the Church of the Brethren by our unity as people of color, modeling for the larger church the blessings of being one as God's people.  
*--adopted October 2000*

### District Executive Note:

I encourage all pastors, congregational leaders, and district leaders to attend this event. A paper approved at Annual Conference this past summer draws our attention to becoming more proactively involved in cross culture and intercultural awareness and ministry. The opportunity to participate in an awareness raising event is in our backyard. Please plan to attend!

## **2008 VOLUNTEERS NEEDED IN MINNESOTA!!!**

In late August, 2007 a weather system produced heavy rains in the upper Midwest as remnants of Tropical Storm Erin made their way inland, producing major flooding across a broad area of the central U.S. Storms downed trees and power lines, leaving an estimated 375,000 customers without electricity as flooding from this event claimed at least 22 lives.

In the wake of the storms seven counties in SE Minnesota received a federal declaration. Preliminary estimates indicate at least \$26 million in flood damage and including 1,500 damaged homes across six counties.

In response to this flooding, Brethren Disaster Ministries is working closely with the Northern Plains district to begin working in the Rushford, MN area. Currently there is an immediate need for volunteers to help begin the reconstruction in this area.

During the winter months this project will operate on a week by week basis requiring volunteers to be flexible. Please prayerfully consider this opportunity to assist our brothers and sisters in Minnesota.

Please contact Zach Wolgemuth, Associate Director, Brethren Disaster Ministries  
410-635-8737 (office) 410-259-6194 (cell) for information or to schedule your group.

### **Volunteers Needed:**

January 6-12, 13-19, 20-26, 27- February 2, February 3-9, 10-16, 17-23, 24-March 1, March 2-8

### **Housing/Meals:**

Housing will be at St. Marks Lutheran Church and an adjacent parsonage. Sleeping arrangements will be set up in two separate quarters for men and women. Each quarter will have 6 full size bunk beds w/ mattresses bringing sleeping capacity to 24 (12 men and 12 women). We would still ask that you limit group size to 15 volunteers. Be sure to have volunteers bring their own bedding and or a sleeping bag. Housing will be shared with other volunteer groups and meals will be provided locally. Cooked meals will be provided for both breakfast and lunch. Supper may consist of sandwiches or a cooked meal from a local church. Wireless internet is available in the one building used to house volunteers.

St. Marks Lutheran Church, 104 E North Street, Rushford, MN 55971 - Project Phone # 410-596-3427

### **Directions:**

- Take Interstate 90 either from the West or East To exit 249 (just south of Winona, MN or just North of Rushford)
- Exit 249 is Minnesota State Hwy 43
- Go South on Hwy 43 to Rushford, approx 10 miles
- Hwy 43 becomes Mill Street in Rushford
- After crossing Rush Creek, go 1 or 2 blocks and turn left on North Street
- It is ½ block to St. Marks, A redwood color stained church on the right, south side of the street
- Enter the basement thru the rear door on the right side

### **Transportation:**

Volunteers will need to use their own vehicles on project to go back and forth between the housing facility and the work site.

Volunteers can be reimbursed for project related fuel costs or mileage upon request.

### **Work/Tools:**

Work will consist of but may not be limited to insulation, drywall, flooring, cabinets, painting.

Currently there is no tool trailer on site and tools are being provided by the long-term recovery group.

Volunteer groups are asked to bring some basic tools.

## **JR. HIGH WINTER RETREAT, JAN. 18 – 19, PEORIA CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN**

Illinois Wisconsin District Jr. High Winter retreat will start at 7:00 on Friday and close January 19 @ 4:00pm. We will meet at First Church of the Brethren Peoria.

Jr. High Youth grades 6-9 are welcome. Yes, I realize that 9th graders are in high school but I have had requests to include them especially for those who are not quite ready to go to the high school events. This event begins AFTER supper time on Friday. So participants will need to have eaten before they arrive. We will ask everyone to bring snacks to share. A Brethren (snack) Potluck.

We expect at least one adult, at the event, for every 6 youth. Please do not send youth without adult chaperones. If you are send both male and female youth send male and female chaperones. Adults will be asked to participate in all events.

There will be a nominal fee for participants to cover food and supplies.

Mark your calendars. More information will be coming soon.

Lisa Fike [frptcob@juno.com](mailto:frptcob@juno.com) . . . . . Share life as it happens with the new Windows Live. **Share now!**

## **THE WAY OF CHRIST**

The Way of Christ is a spiritual renewal event sponsored by Mennonite, Brethren, and Church of the Brethren believers in Illinois. Through this three-day event participants share in a vibrant portrait of the grace-filled life Jesus lived and taught. It is a time where the hope of Christ is celebrated, the believer's purpose in life claimed, the love of God in Jesus proclaimed.

### **Purpose of The Way of Christ**

In today's world, does our faith permeate all areas of our lives? Can it be sustained in our living? Can it grow there? Can it transform the hearts of the people with whom we share our lives? Is it relevant for this time? Those in the Way of Christ movement think so!

The Way of Christ movement does not propose a new type of spirituality. It reinforces a simple intentional one through which the believers grace-filled life may; in a natural loving way, be lived and shared with others.

### **Spring Weekends**

Spring 2008 Weekends #13: Men - March 6-9; Women - March 13-16

### **Who Should Attend?**

Believers:

- who know their spiritual lives need strengthening;
- who strive to be credible in prayer, study, and sharing their faith;
- who understand being Christian involves responsibility;
- who seek both the spiritual foundation and moral reserve to purposefully live their lives;
- who follow Jesus in an on-going manner in their daily living.

### **Contact One of the Following . . .**

. . . to receive an application or to have questions answered. Also for more information, go to the websites:

[http://newlifeministries-nlm.org/ideas/Way\\_of\\_Christ.htm](http://newlifeministries-nlm.org/ideas/Way_of_Christ.htm) or <http://www.plowcreek.org/way1.htm>.

Judd Peter at [juddpeter@earthlink.net](mailto:juddpeter@earthlink.net) or 815-554-1217

Phil Kaufmann at [pkman@udnet.net](mailto:pkman@udnet.net) or 815-646-4889

Cal Zehr at [cczehr@juno.com](mailto:cczehr@juno.com) or 815-646-4287

Dan Rusmisel at [d\\_rusmiselle@yahoo.com](mailto:d_rusmiselle@yahoo.com) or 815-238-3421

## **REGIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE NOT HELD IN 2008**

The Regional Youth Conference (RYC), normally scheduled in April at Manchester College, will not be held in 2008 according to Dave McFadden, Manchester College Executive Vice President. Declining attendance at this event led organizers to ask how youth and congregations in Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan might be better served.

During a meeting with youth pastors from Northern and South/Central Indiana districts, Steve Crain, Manchester College Campus Pastor, and Dave McFadden learned that the traditional late April date conflicts with end-of-year school activities for many youth. Also, the "mini-NYC" approach spreads leadership and participants too thinly.

McFadden says, "We know there will be disappointments with our decision but we hope this disappointment is a good sign that there is ongoing interest in a six district event. As the interests and schedules of youth change, we want to adapt creatively to those changes." McFadden relates other possibilities will be considered and a group will be charged with planning an event in the fall of 2008 or spring of 2009. Questions are welcomed and may be directed to Dave McFadden by email at [dfm@manchester.edu](mailto:dfm@manchester.edu) or by phone at 260-982-5050.

## **ECUMENICAL PRAYER SERVICE**

The Ecumenical Millennium Committee invites you and the people of your congregation to participate with your presence at an Ecumenical Prayer Service, January 20, 2008 at 4:00 p.m. which will be held at Christ Community Church of God in Christ 1151 E. 170th St. South Holland. Dr. David Daniels will bring the message.

This will be the eighth year the service has been sponsored by the churches listed here. The EMC was formed at the end of 1999 to herald in the 21st century with Christ, and continues to promote the goal of unity in Christ as the goal and emblem of this new millennium.

You are encouraged to invite the members of your congregation/parish to this ecumenical service. Please distribute the enclosed flyer as widely as possible.

The theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2008 is "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5: 17) Despite our brokenness and imperfections, we seek through prayer the unity God intends for his creation. The service is adapted by the Ecumenical Millennium Committee from a service prepared by an ecumenical group of biblical scholars, theologians, priests, pastors and lay persons.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was established in 1908. It is now sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. It is celebrated between the feasts of Saint Peter (January 18) and St. Paul (January 25). Concurrent with Dr. Martin Luther King Day observances, it compels Christians to promote reconciliation among races, nations, and all peoples, as well as among churches.

Please promote attendance at the January 20th Ecumenical Prayer Service and participation locally throughout the whole Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Thank you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
Edgar L. Hiestand Jr.  
Chairperson WPCU service



## FALL DISTRICT YOUTH RETREAT

About 20 people took part in this year's fall district youth retreat, held during district conference in Freeport. Thanks to the Freeport Church of the Brethren for providing space for the event!

Seth Hendricks, who coordinated music for the 2006 National Youth Conference and last year's Regional Youth Conference, was the guest leader for the weekend on the theme "Encountering God on the Way." Seth is currently a student at Bethany Theological Seminary and made the long drive up from Richmond, Ind.

The three sessions took place in a worship setting, with Jewel McNary, Walt Wiltschek, and Bill Williams providing meditations on encountering God through prayer, through everyday moments and places, and through scripture.

The weekend also included a service project in Freeport, several good meals, some time for games and recreation, and a Sunday morning insight session on the district's youth ministry. The youth also joined district conference for opening and closing worship services and the Saturday evening concert---after which they served ice cream as a fundraiser for the district.

The spring youth retreat (for youth currently in grades 9-12 and advisors) is scheduled for Feb. 29 to March 2 at Decatur Church of the Brethren. Watch [www.cobyouth.org](http://www.cobyouth.org) for details.

## NATIONAL YOUTH CABINET

As the National Youth Cabinet for 2007 and 2008, we want to introduce ourselves and let you know what we have been doing. We are extremely excited about the Church of the Brethren and youth ministry. We are lucky to be able to bring the 300th celebration to the youth of our denomination. To do this we have composed a list of things that we want youth to try in honor of our 300th year as a church. Look them over and decide which one your youth group would like to start in 2008:

- ★ Do 300 hours of service
- ★ Put together 300 school kits
- ★ Donate 300 cans to a local Food Panty
- ★ Spend 300 minutes doing intergenerational activities in your Congregation with adults
- ★ Give \$300 to a worthy cause
- ★ Offer 300 prayers for peace or for one's community

We invite you to think about ways to celebrate our denomination's 300th Anniversary with your youth group's ideas. We ask that you send an e-mail to let us know what "300" project your youth group will do to celebrate the 300th Anniversary. Please send those to Tricia Ziegler [at:ladysandwick@hotmail.com](mailto:at:ladysandwick@hotmail.com)

We have made our theme this year to go along with our anniversary. It is "By the Manner of Their Living." We want to remind youth that the Church of Brethren is to be known by the manner of their living: peacefully, simply, and together. The verses we have chosen to go along with this theme are Colossians 3: 12-15. For resources and further information, including Youth Sunday materials, refer to the COB website. We will be praying for you and your ministry. Please pray with us!

With Love,

Turner Ritchie- South Central District  
Elizabeth Willis- Southeastern District  
Heather Popielarz- Michigan District  
Seth Keller- Southern Pennsylvania District  
Joel Rhodes- Middle Pennsylvania District  
Tricia Ziegler- Atlantic Southeast District  
Dena Gilbert- Advisor  
Chris Douglas- Staff

Lost Glasses, or Should I Say Found Glasses?

While cleaning up after District conference we found a pair of glasses.

They are black metal frame.

I imagine the owner has another pair. But if someone is looking for them they are here and I'd be happy to get them back to their owner.

Pastor Lisa Fike, Freeport CoB

## 2008 Workcamps

### ... Strengthen My Hands

They were all trying to frighten us, thinking,

"Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed." But I prayed,

"Now strengthen my hands."

Nehemiah 6:9 (NIV)



This call and prayer to God by Nehemiah was for strength to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem following the Jewish exile in Babylon. Nehemiah was threatened by those trying to dissuade him from doing what he knew was right. He prayed for God to strengthen and bless his hands to accomplish what needed to be done. In the same way, we face opposition from all sides when attempting to do the work of the LORD, and we need to not be afraid to call out to God to strengthen our hands.

Workcamps give each of us the opportunity to be the “hands of God” through our actions. They challenge us to take time out of our busy schedules and lives, to lend a helping hand to others in the world. Through our work, each of us acts as an extension of God, by reaching out to communities—touching the lives and hearts of those we serve. Our hands, when strengthened by God, are able to accomplish many things—from enveloping a child in a hug, to painting walls and hammering nails. “God-blessed hands” have the ability to bless, heal, and pray with others. Through a handshake we can offer the assurance of love and friendship.



The year 2008 marks a milestone for the Church of the Brethren as our 300th anniversary. Throughout this celebratory year we will remember and reflect on the lives of the many “Dunkards” who have gone on before us and prayed to the LORD for “strength for their hands.” Participating in a workcamp is your opportunity to live out your faith, not only in words, but in truth and action.



Where will you leave your **HANDPRINT** this summer?

Are you **WILLING** to touch the needs and people of our world?

Are you **READY** to call upon God for strength for your hands?

### PINECREST AND MT. MORRIS LOCATIONS FEATURED ON WGN PROGRAM

A nationally televised "Farm News Show" from WGN has been taped in part on the campus of Pinecrest Community, a Church of the Brethren retirement center in Mount Morris, Ill. Other area locations will be featured as well, such as White Pines State Park near Mount Morris. The show is scheduled for Dec. 22-24 on satellite and dish networks. It is to air at 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Dec. 22, at 7 a.m. on Dec. 23, and 5 p.m. on Dec. 24.

--reprinted from the Dec. 19, 2007 COB Newsline

# The Bounce from New Beginnings

*a Church of the Brethren.*



## LET'S STAY CONNECTED!

This is our church's attempt to let know what's happening at New Beginnings Fellowship. We want to know what's happening in your churches too!

The more we can share ideas, concepts and strategies with each other-the more blessed our missions become.

We hope each church will consider producing an e-newsletter to share the "Yea God's" that are happening as well as sharing each others burdens. Tom DeVore, Pastor-New Beginnings Fellowship

## Leading a Turnaround Church

It's been an exciting ride since we closed the doors to the church for three months and re-opened on Christmas Day, 2006. During that three month period we assembled a "turnaround team" and reinvented ourselves. We decided to have a "go for broke" attitude and trust God not to let us go broke! So far it's working. Being in "maintenance mode" was no longer acceptable. We were going to be a missionally minded church-with our mission field being as far as we could walk by foot. We've hammered our community with door knob hangers every couple months, sent invitations, prayer walked, personally invited and we are experiencing a New Beginning. Folks-We started off with eight tired, weary, burned out people who still had enough of a fleeting hope, that they were ready to try anything to turn things around and become a healthy vibrant community of Christ Followers.

The result-We're now averaging fifty for worship-the place is buzzing with excitement, anticipation and hope. Kid's are running all over the place and we're scrambling to keep up! Don't get me wrong-we're certainly not where we want to be, but we've had steady numeric and spiritual growth this past year.

Last month our "Turnaround Team" set some high goals to triple in size by this time next year and add a second service. I told them "in order to do that it would take a total "God thing" for it to happen-let's let Him do it!"

We've also set three things in place-tithe 5% to the District and 5% to Church Planting and 15% of our budget for local outreach. We figure if we can't "feed the sheep" with the other 75%-something is drastically wrong. We've received \$10,000.00 from a generous donor to give birth to a new church within the next two years.

We've restricted our giving to these objectives primarily because we believe (1) We must become a healthy church first-we have to reach our Jerusalem. (2) We believe we must support the District in our effort to become healthy again-we must reach out to Judea. (3) We must reproduce-give birth multiple times. (4) When we reach these commands of Jesus then, and only then will we reach the ends of the earth-going global.



Last Sunday we Dedicated Six Children to God! Yea God!



We also Baptized Five People! Yea God!



And We Received Five New Members! Yea God!

Excerpts from New Beginnings Fellowship's November 2007 Newsletter.  
Visit them on the Web at [www.newbeginningsfellowship.cc](http://www.newbeginningsfellowship.cc)

## 2008 District Calendar

<b>January</b>		
5	9:30am	Program and Arrangements Committee, Peoria COB
6		Epiphany
12	9:00am	District Leadership Team
14	7:00pm	District Deacons Conference Call
18-19		Jr. High Retreat, Peoria COB
18-25		Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
21		Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
26-Feb. 1		Council of Dist. Executive's Winter Meeting, Cocoa Beach, FL
<b>February</b>		
6		Ash Wednesday
10		First Sunday in Lent
14		Valentine's Day
17		Second Sunday in Lent
18		Presidents' Day
24		Third Sunday in Lent
28-Mar. 2		TRIM/EFSM Orientation, Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, IN
<b>March</b>		
1	10:00am	Ethics Committee Training, Peoria COB
2		Fourth Sunday in Lent
7		World Day of Prayer
8th-10th		General Board, Elgin
9		Fifth Sunday in Lent
9		One Great Hour of Sharing Offering Emphasis
9		Daylight Saving Time Begins
15	9:00am	District Leadership Team
16		Palm Sunday
17		St. Patrick's Day
20		Maundy Thursday
21		Good Friday
23		EASTER
29-Apr-03		Christian Citizenship Seminar
<b>April</b>		
4th-6th		Mission Alive Conference, Bridgewater, VA
6th-9th		Midwest Dist. Executives' Retreat, Camp Mack, Milford, IN
12		Deacon Training, Dallas Center, IA
19	9:00am	District Leadership Team
24-27		Cross Cultural Consultation and Celebration, Elgin

### **Congregations to remember in prayer:**

Canton ..... 309-647-4828  
 LaMotte Prairie Federated ..... 618-586-5428  
 LaPlace ..... 217-677-2120  
 Mt. Morris ..... 815-734-4573