

Pastor's *memo*

NORTHERN OHIO DISTRICT CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
JANUARY 2017

2017 Clergy-Spouse Retreat February 19-21 Holiday Inn French Quarter, Perrysburg, Ohio

Plan on joining us for the upcoming Clergy-Spouse Retreat February 19-21, 2017 at the Holiday Inn French Quarter, Perrysburg, OH. The theme for the retreat is “Tethered Freedom” (Psalm 78). Our guest speaker will be Jason Barnhart. Jason serves as the University Chaplain at Ashland University in Ashland, Ohio. He is currently completing doctoral work at La Salle University where he is studying Brethren historical theology. Jason is originally from McGaheysville, Virginia, but came to Ashland to attend Ashland University ('04) and then Ashland Theological Seminary ('08). An elder in the Brethren Church, Jason has a passion for the intersection of Brethren thought with current events finding the Brethren way to be a critical voice in American Christianity. He co-edited a book in 2014 entitled, *A Brethren Witness for the 21st Century*, which brought various Brethren voices together to discuss the historic values of the Brethren movement. He is currently working on a biography of Brethren elder J. Allen Miller. Jason and his wife, Allison (AU, '06), reside in Ashland with their two children,

Miles (age 7) and Clementine (age 4).

Brethren are a people that look out for the next generation—but what does this look like and how is it central to our witness as a people?

Jason will help participants reflect on the intergenerational truths and challenges of Psalm 78. Participants will reflect on those that poured into their lives, identify next generation leaders to journey alongside, and explore how these two paths are interwoven in their respective callings. Young and old will discover that while the church growth movement made the separation of generations a preferred strategy, our future as Brethren depends on how the generations come together to model family to a disconnected world. Online registration link: <http://nodcb.memberzone.com/events/details/clergy-spouse-retreat-1132>



Mark Your Calendar

- **February 14—Executive Committee Meeting, District Office, Ashland, OH**
- **February 19-21—Clergy Spouse Retreat, Holiday Inn French Quarter, Perrysburg, OH**
- **March 5-7—New Pastors Retreat, Camp Mack, Milford, IN**
- **March 11—District Board Meeting, Dupont CoB, Dupont, OH**
- **March 25—Teacher's Training Event, Ashland First CoB, Ashland, OH**

Pastoral Placement

Congregations actively in the search process:

Bethel – Congregational profile completed.

Congregation arranging pulpit supply.

Brook Park – *Tom Michaels* serving as interim. Search Committee appointed, first meeting scheduled in January.

Dupont – Searching for youth/associate pastor. Profile completed.

Paradise – *Terry Vaught* called as pastor December 4.

Pleasant View – *Dr. Byron Hawbecker* serving as interim. Congregational profile completed.

Woodworth – *John Polanski* serving as interim and beginning the credentialing process.

Congregations that have chosen not to seek at this time:

East Nimishillen – *Matthew Reed* serving as interim.

Eden – *Wayne Scott* serving as interim.

Lake Breeze – *James Washington* serving as interim.

Lakewood – *Gene Wyse* serving as interim.

Maple Grove – *John Ballinger* serving as interim until 2/2018.



Sing to the LORD a new song...

District Prayer Calendar

January 1—January 7

County Line CoB (Pastor Tom Dearth and Associate Pastor Chris Ewing) and Defiance CoB (Pastor Gene Yenser)

January 8—January 14

Dupont CoB (Pastor Dan Wust) and East Chippewa CoB (Pastor Brad Kelley)

January 15—January 21

East Nimishillen CoB (Interim Matthew Reed) and Eden CoB (Interim Wayne Scott)

January 22—January 28

Elm Street CoB (Pastor Doug Price) and Faith in Action Fellowship (Pastor Jim Gorrell)

January 29—February 4

Freeburg CoB (Pastor Mike Zellers) and Hartville CoB (Pastor Anthony DiMarco)



Left to Right: Pastor Mark Teal, Sandy Foster and Associate Pastor Dean Foster, Black River CoB

Pastor's Notes



Left to Right: Reese Vaught, Pastor Terry Vaught and Sherry Reese Vaught, Paradise CoB

Ordination Service for Dean Foster

Dean Foster, Associate Pastor at Black River Church of the Brethren, was ordained December 11th during the morning worship service. The sharing time had many in the congregation expressing appreciation to Dean and his wife, Sandy, for the impact they have had in the life of the congregation. Pastor Mark Teal presented Dean with a picture frame that will be filled with a picture of Dean, Sandy, and the congregation taken at the end of worship that morning. The celebration continued with a meal shared together as a church family.

Pastoral Renewal Agreements—It is important for the pastor and the church that a copy of the current employment agreement be part of the pastor's ministry file that is kept in the District Office. If you have not already, please send a signed copy of the Renewal Agreement for 2017 to the office as soon as possible. A copy of current interim contracts are also needed. These can be scanned and emailed or a paper copy mailed. Thank you for helping us to keep the files current.

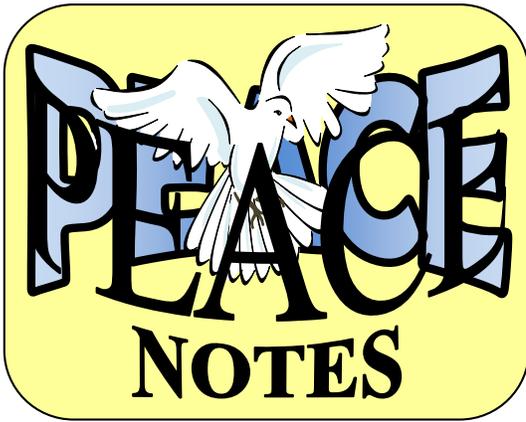
Self-Allocations (Outreach Giving)—Thank you to all who contributed to the district budget in 2016. Attached is the report that shows what has been received year-to-date as of December 20th on the pledged received. In order to be credited in the 2016 calendar year, contributions need to be postmarked by December 31st. We have received many of the Outreach pledge forms and are grateful for the generosity and the information.

District Office Holiday Hours—The District Office will be closed on December 26th and January 2nd in observance of Christmas and New Year's Day. Julie Watson and Esther Harsh will be out of the office beginning December 23rd through January 2nd. Kris Hawk will be in the office during regular business hours, December 27th through December 30th.

Christmas Blessings—May the wonder of Christmas fill your heart with joy, peace and love. As we move through this time of transition, we are so grateful for your prayers and support. The Northern Ohio District Staff: Kris Hawk (Interim District Executive), Shannon Kahler (Camp Executive Director), Linda Fry (Peace and Conciliation Advocate), Esther Harsh (Youth Coordinator), Lisa Snyder (Treasurer), Jen Recker (Financial Secretary) and Julie Watson (District Administrative Secretary).

Terry Vaught Called As Pastor at Paradise

Terry Vaught had been serving as interim at Paradise Church of the Brethren for several months when the congregation extended the call for him to become the pastor. The installation service was held on December 4th amidst a time of celebration and conversation about the direction of the church in the months to come. Terry most recently served at Pastor of Visitation of Maple Grove. Terry, his wife Sherry (also an ordained minister) have one son, Reese.



Jesus teaches that the greatest commandments are, first to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind; and second to love your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27). He then adds that loving only your neighbor is not enough. We are to love our enemies as well (Matthew 5:43-45a). These teachings are at the core of Jesus' message and ministry. We are called to do as he did. To strive to be perfect as Jesus was perfect. That is to, in the manner of our living, be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world. We have a powerful message to share with a needy world. It is a message of salvation, of covenant relationship with Christ, of oneness with all the people God created. It is a message of peace.

The concept of 'peace' in the Bible has a broad range of meanings. The Hebrew word Shalom, includes well-being, health, unity, abundance, wholeness, fullness of life and the absence of war or violence. It also includes being in harmony with creation. That peace comes from God is clear (Ezekiel 34:24-27). It comes when God and his people are in a covenant relationship with each other. When the people break the covenant, peace is lost.

Jesus came into the world as the prince of peace to offer a new covenant that will restore the relationship between God and those who covenant with him (Romans 5:1). Unlike in the Old Testament when the identity of 'God's people' was narrowly defined, the new covenant in Jesus is offered to all people (Ephesians 2:13-22).

Entering into covenant with Christ affects our relationships with people as well – all people, not just those who also follow Christ. Accepting this covenant - being in right relationship with Christ makes us one with each other across the lines of race, class, nationality and anything else that can separate people. Living in this covenant relationship - that is peace (Colossians 3:15; Romans 12:18; II Corinthians 13:11).

Peacemaking Resources:

- District **Shalom Team** is called to help people resolve conflicts when they arise and prevent division and brokenness. Shalom Teams look to Matthew 18 to provide a framework for addressing conflict within the church. (Contact the District Office for more information.)
- The **Peace Task Team** works with the District Peace & Conciliation Advocate to plan peace education programming in the District. (For more information contact Linda Fry, District Peace & Conciliation Advocate.)
- The **Peace and Conciliation Advocate** works with pastors, congregations, and the District youth to help people of all ages learn peacemaking skills including Biblical peace principles, listening skills, conflict resolution skills.
 - Works with the Peace Task Team and Shalom Team
 - Is available to preach and leads workshops when asked (see contact information below)
 - creates peace education materials for all ages. A list of available resources is available upon request.
 - publishes the quarterly *Peace Advocate News*. It is mailed to pastors, church board chairs, congregational peace representatives, district board members, all Church of the Brethren camps (at their request), some other Church of the Brethren leaders. Anyone can receive a copy upon request. It is also posted on the district website. Back issues are available.

District Peace Advocate Contact information: Linda Fry, District Peace & Conciliation Advocate, 492 Connor Drive, Mansfield, OH 44905, 419-589-7719, E-mail: linda@nohcob.org

Contact information for the District Office: Northern Ohio District, Church of the Brethren, 1107 East Main Street, Ashland, OH 44805-2806, Phone: 419-281-3058, District Website: www.nohcob.org ☞ Interim District Executive Minister: Kris Hawk, E-mail: krishawk@nohcob.org ☞ District Administrative Secretary: Julie Watson, E-mail: julie@nohcob.org

Updates for a New Year

“And now we welcome the new year. Full of things that have never been.” (Rainer Maria Rilke) This year does promise to be full of things that are new to us: in our culture and in the church, some that bring challenge and fear, some that bring hope and light. But the love and strength that is ours in Christ remains constant!

Within our District, the Search Committee works towards choosing a District Executive. Money from the Hottle gift has been freed up to allow more churches to dream of what might be in terms of outreach ministries. Our District Board and staff work towards resourcing our churches, a number of which are struggling.

Within the denomination, this will be a year of challenge. Delegates at Annual Conference took the following action related to the query on same sex weddings:

“Query: Same Sex Weddings The 2016 Annual Conference adopted a motion from the floor to refer the concerns of the query to the Leadership Team in consultation with the Council of District Executives to bring clarity and guidance concerning the authority of Annual Conference and districts regarding the accountability of ministers, congregations, and districts, bringing recommendations to the 2017 Annual Conference.”

The Council of District Executives (CODE) Executive Committee and leadership team have met on this issue. The full CODE (including myself) and leadership team will meet at the end of January to make decisions on what to bring to Annual Conference in 2017. There is great theological diversity around the CODE table. There is also a strong commitment to something more than a recommendation for more study or more time.

The light is more easily seen in the darkness, and so times of fear and change are also times of hope and renewal. I ask that we continue to surround our churches, our district, and our denomination with prayer. It is our great and powerful God that sees way past our own understanding of possibilities. May we be faithful as we seek his face, continuing the work of Jesus to bring light and life to the world.

My prayer for each of you – and for all of us together – as a new year begins comes from Romans 15:13. **“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”**

Blessings in Christ, Kris Hawk, Interim District Executive

Announcements

Search Committee—The District Executive Search Committee met on December 15th with Stan Dueck, Director of Transforming Practices, Church of the Brethren at the District Office. The committee is in the process of completing the District Profile and will be in conversation during the holidays to prepare the announcement of the position through the Church of the Brethren General Offices in early January.

The Herald—The Northern Ohio District Office will soon begin drafting the Winter Issue of The Herald. If you have an article you would like to contribute to The Herald, February 2017 Winter Issue, please send it to the District Office no later than January 16, 2017. Please keep your article between 150-200 words and provide a couple of pictures (digital preferably) to accompany the article if you like. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the District Office. Thank you!

Upcoming CEU Events

Saturday, January 28th

2017 Clergy Tax Seminar—Registration deadline: Friday, January 20. (.3 CEU's) Register here: <https://bethanyseminary.edu/brethren-academy/clergy-tax-seminar/>

Sunday, January 21st

The Real Deal in Brethren History: What Really Happened Out There, and What Does It Mean For Today?—Frank Ramirez, Church of the Brethren, storyteller, historian, and pastor, will be the presenter for the next Ventures course, 9 a.m. to noon (CST) Saturday, January 21st, 2017. He will provide the real answers to questions such as Who founded the Church of the Brethren? (It wasn't Alexander Mack) and which Brethren historian was wrong about the past, yet correct



about the future? Ramirez will illuminate this webinar with little known stories, and provide fresh perspective on how our past can help inform us as we face our future. Registration information is available at www.mcpherson.edu/ventures.

Ventures in Christian discipleship is an online program of McPherson College, designed to equip church members with skills and understandings for faithful and dynamic Christian living, action, and leadership. All courses are free, but donations are welcome to help continue this effort.