

The Herald

District Conference Issue

Give Me Jesus



**NORTHERN OHIO DISTRICT CONFERENCE
MOHICAN CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN**

AUGUST 2-3, 2019

MAY 2019 – VOLUME 63 | ISSUE 2

Message from the Moderator

In a world enamored with so many things we are invited to remain focused on Jesus. We live in a gimme culture where people long for things of every kind. There are homes and cars, jobs and relationships. Every manner of “thing” is out there to entice us and distract us. As a church our focus can become skewed as well. Longing for the next program to grow our church or focused on the latest social issue of the day. We get distracted by the political climate, spending our time and resources to debate and differ over issues of every kind. We are determined to be right and prove others wrong.

Let me remind you that we already have a Savior. It is not the government or a thing. He is Jesus, the Son of Almighty God, the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. It is He and He alone who can save us, who can meet our needs, who can give our

life purpose and hope. No other relationship and no other thing can provide what Jesus has already provided. His miraculous birth, His sinless life, His atoning death, burial and Resurrection bear testimony to who He is.

As we prepare for district conference this year my hope is that we will renew our focus on Jesus. May He be the one and only one we look to for hope and purpose. Allow all of the things that may distract you to fall away and place your love, attention and affection solely on Jesus. Will you declare with me today, Give me Jesus. He is my hope, He is my Savior and He is my Lord.

Doug Price,
Moderator



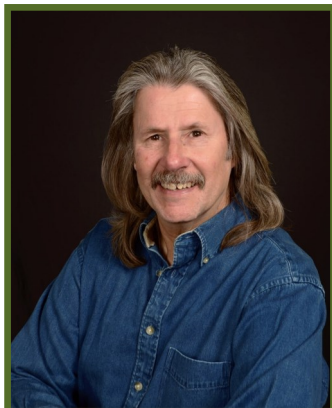
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Conference Speakers, August 2-3

Mohican Church of the Brethren, West Salem, Ohio

**Doug Price, Ordained Minister,
Northern Ohio District
Friday Evening**

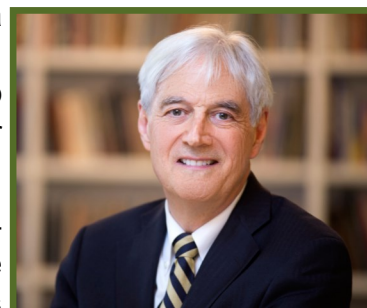


Doug Price has served as a pastor for 34 years. He served 27 years in the Dupont congregation and seven years in the Elm Street congregation. Doug has been married for 37 years to his wife Rhonda. They are blessed with two children and seven grandchildren.

Doug attended Huntington College in preparation for ministry. In the past Doug has served the Church in many capacities including on District Board, Standing Committee and the General Board of the Church of the Brethren.

He is blessed to currently be caring for family and continuing to share his gifts in ministry. He enjoys, hunting, bicycling, motorcycling, fly fishing, gardening and all of God's great Creation.

**Paul Munday, Ordained Minister,
Mid-Atlantic District
Saturday Evening**



Paul Munday has been a pastor, church administrator, writer, speaker, workshop leader, consultant, and teacher for more than 40 years.

Paul is currently, Moderator-Elect of the Church of the Brethren. He also serves as Moderator of the GraceWay Church of the Brethren, Baltimore, MD., and the Hagerstown Church of the Brethren, Hagerstown, MD.

During the academic year, 2016-2017, Paul was a Visiting Scholar at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J. Prior to that appointment, Paul served for 20 years as Senior Pastor of the Frederick Church of the Brethren in Frederick, MD. From 1983-1996, Paul was a staff member for the national ministry of the Church of the Brethren, serving as director of evangelism and congregational growth, and staff for Korean ministry.

Paul is married to Robin Risser who is organist, and Director of Traditional Worship at Central Presbyterian Church, Baltimore, MD. Their son, Peter is a sociologist, and their daughter Sarah is an interior designer and freelance blogger (dorseydesigns.com). Paul and Robin are first-time grandparents to their new grandson: John Dorsey.

Worship Times and Special Offerings

Friday, August 2nd 6:30 p.m.

A special offering will be taken during worship for Brethren Disaster Ministries general fund. Our local service project is the Mohican Church of the Brethren Grocery Bag Ministry. Please consider bringing non-perishable food items to support this ministry. Items currently most needed are: cereal, peanut butter, jelly (various kinds), pasta, pasta sauce, and canned vegetables. Please note that they will not give out anything that is expired. Thank you in advance for your generosity!

Saturday, August 3rd 6:30 p.m.

A special offering will be taken during worship for the Central Committee District Conference Fund. This fund provides for conference expenses, including but not limited to supporting host church expenses, ice cream social, conference speakers travel and expenses, delegate materials, books and handouts, youth and children's activities, display area, insight sessions and much more!



District Conference Schedule

Friday, August 2nd

- 11:00 a.m. Exhibit & Peace Auction Set-up Begins
- 12:00 p.m. Registration Begins
- 1:00-4:30 pm. Pre-Conference Workshop: "Kingdom Building: Evangelism in All its Fullness!" – Paul Munday
- 5:00 p.m. Dinner
- 6:30 p.m. Opening Worship / District Youth; Doug Price, Moderator – opening message
- 8:00 p.m. Ice Cream Social sponsored by East Chippewa Church of the Brethren

Saturday, August 3rd

- 7:30 a.m. Prayer Walk – Paul Bartholomew
- 8:30 a.m. Business Session
Children's Activities: K-5th Grade
- 10:10 a.m. Non-Delegate Session: "Kingdom Building: Evangelism in All its Fullness!" – Paul Munday
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:15 p.m. Insight Sessions:
The Matthew 18 Mandate – Paul Munday
Inspiration Hills: What's Next? – Shannon Kahler
Children's Activities: K-5th Grade Resume
- 2:30 p.m. Business Session Resumes
- 3:45 p.m. Insight Sessions:
Church Improvement Loan Fund – Stewardship and Finance Commission
The Matthew 18 Mandate – Paul Munday
Inspiration Hills (camp tour)
- 5:00 p.m. Dinner
District Board Reorganization
- 6:30 p.m. Worship / Mohican Praise Team; Paul Munday, Annual Conference Moderator
Installation of Officers

Childcare (toddlers and preschoolers) is available during the Pre-Conference, Worship Services, Business Sessions and Insight Sessions, located in the Childcare area. Childcare coordinator is Ashley Johnson (Mohican).

Children's Activities (K-5th grade) are provided by Mohican CoB staff during Insight and Business Sessions. Children's Activities Coordinators are Karen Anderson and Renee Kunkel (Mohican).

Jr. & Sr. High Activities are provided by Esther Harsh, District Youth Coordinator. Youth registration begins at 4:00 p.m. Friday and activities continue overnight through Saturday evening at 5:00 p.m.

Ice Cream Social Friday Evening at 8:00 p.m. Come join the fun and fellowship Friday evening at 8:00 p.m. for an ice cream social at District Conference. Special thanks to East Chippewa Church for sponsoring this event!

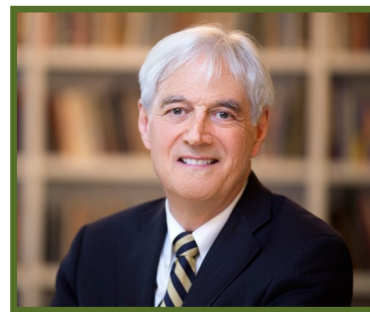


Pre-Conference Workshop

Friday, August 2nd 1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., 0.3 CEU's for Clergy

"Kingdom Building: Evangelism In All its Fullness!" Guest Speaker: Paul Munday, Ordained Minister, Mid-Atlantic District, Moderator-Elect of the Church of the Brethren

Focus: Faithful evangelism is proclaiming Jesus in both Word and Deed. As we do, we announce the full reign of God, living out the heart of the Lord's Prayer: Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. In this workshop we will rediscover evangelism in all its fullness.



Paul Munday, Ordained Minister,
Mid-Atlantic District, Moderator-
Elect of the Church of the Brethren

Non-Delegate Session, Saturday August 3rd

10:10 a.m.—11:10 a.m., 0.1 CEU's for Clergy

"Kingdom Building: Evangelism In All its Fullness!" – Paul Munday

This will be a condensed version of the pre-conference workshop. **Focus:** Faithful evangelism is proclaiming Jesus in both Word and Deed. As we do, we announce the full reign of God, living out the heart of the Lord's Prayer: Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. In this workshop we will rediscover evangelism in all its fullness.

Insight Sessions, Saturday August 3rd

1:15 p.m.—2:15 p.m.

The Matthew 18 Mandate – Paul Munday, 0.1 CEU's for Clergy

Conflict is rampant, in relationships, families, churches and culture. Yet rather than confronting conflict, we avoid it, going to 'third parties,' engaging in gossip and idle talk, rather than going direct to our adversaries. Jesus counsels, however, in Matthew 18: go direct to our adversaries. In this insight session, we will rediscover the wisdom and effectiveness of 'Matthew 18.'

Inspiration Hills: What's Next? – Shannon Kahler, Staff and CAC Members

If you haven't been to camp in a while, you may not recognize it! The district has spent several years investing in much needed improvements to our ministry tools (facilities, grounds and expanded activity areas) and we are ready to begin using these tools by serving our congregations and community in many new ways. In an effort to expand the reach of this district ministry, we have begun partnering with area schools, community organizations, and churches in need of space for their summer camp programs. Join us as we share our vision to maximize the potential of this district ministry.

3:45 p.m.—4:45 p.m.

Church Improvement Loan Fund – Stewardship and Finance Commission

Find out how the new Church Improvement Loan Fund established by the Northern Ohio District can help your congregation with needed repairs or improvements to your church building with a 0% interest loan.

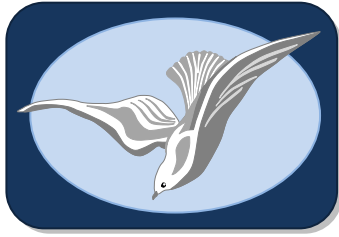
Inspiration Hills: Tour the Camp – Shannon Kahler, Staff and CAC Members

Hop on the bus and head on over to Inspiration Hills just a few minutes away from Mohican Church of the Brethren to get a personal tour of the grounds and facilities.

The Matthew 18 Mandate – Paul Munday, 0.1 CEU's for Clergy

See description above. This Insight Session is being offered at both the 1:15 p.m. and 3:45 p.m. times.

Coming At District Conference!



The Silent Auction For the Peace Endowment Fund Support District Peace Education Efforts!

The Peace Task Team organized the auction to raise money for the District Peace Endowment Fund. This fund supports peace education efforts in the District. The first Silent Auction at District Conference to support Peace Endowment Fund was held at Oberlin College in 1988.



As one of the Historic Peace Churches, we are committed to teaching



Christ's message of peace – peace within ourselves as we make our peace with Jesus; peace within our families, our congregations, and with our friends; peace in our communities; and peace in the world with our friends and those we may call enemy. The Peace Endowment Fund was established in 1982 to support efforts in the District to teach the things that make for peace!

We Need YOU!

- to bring handmade items and goodies (handcrafted items, artist's work, homemade food) for the auction!
- to come prepared to bid on the donated items in the auction!

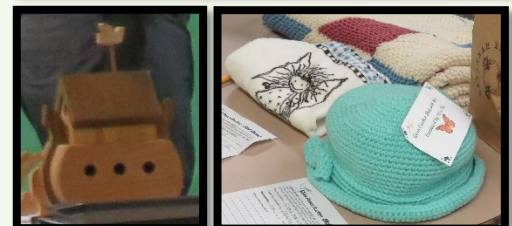
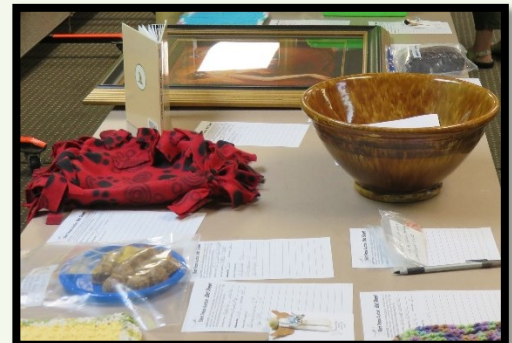
Donate by:

- Bringing your donated items to the Exhibit Area Friday, August 2 by 5 p.m.
- Giving us an estimate of their value
- Noting what a minimum starting bid should be

How to Bid:

- The Silent Auction runs from 5 p.m. Friday to 6:15 p.m. Saturday.
- The person with the highest bid on an item at 6:15 p.m. Saturday takes the item home in return for their contribution to the Peace Endowment Fund!
- All items should be picked up on Saturday evening.

We appreciate all those who support peace education efforts by donating items or by bidding in the auction!



Jr. High and Sr. High Youth Registration Form

August 2-3, 2019 Northern Ohio District Conference

Send Registration Forms to: Northern Ohio District, 1107 E. Main Street, Ashland, OH 44805

Youth attend District Conference at no charge

You may also register on-line & print conference materials from the District Website: www.nohcob.org.

Senior High (9th-12th)

Junior High (6th-8th)

Congregation Name _____

Your Name _____

Address _____

Street

City

State

Zip Code

Phone Number (____) _____ E-mail _____

Is this your first conference? Yes No

Are you a delegate? Yes No

Registration Fee: No charge for youth.

Registration Fee: \$ 0.00

Meals: Meals will be provided for youth at no charge.

Special dietary needs? _____ **Total Meals:** \$ 0.00

***Lodging:** Youth will lodge at Inspiration Hills at no charge

(bring your own bedding and towels)

Total Lodging: \$ 0.00

Total Cost: \$ 0.00

How will you be coming to District Conference?

With my Family

With my Youth Leader

Driving Myself

If you need help with transportation call Esther at 330-880-7161

*Youth are expected to stay overnight at Inspiration Hills Camp on Friday and participate in all youth activities.

In addition to this Conference Registration form, you must complete the Youth Registration Form at www.nohcob.org/youth (if you have completed this in the last calendar year, no need to complete it again).

Youth Advisor Registration Form

August 2-3, 2019 Northern Ohio District Conference

YOU MUST REGISTER BY JULY 21 IF YOU WANT MEALS

Send Registration Forms to: Northern Ohio District, 1107 E. Main Street, Ashland, OH 44805

You may also register on-line & print conference materials from the District Website: www.nohcob.org.

Congregation Name _____

Your Name _____

Address _____
Street City State Zip Code

Phone Number (____) _____ **E-mail** _____

Is this your first conference? Yes No Do you want a Conference Book? Yes No

Registration Fee: \$25.00 pre-registration (\$35.00 on site) Registration Fee: \$ <u>25.00</u>
--

Meals: Advisors will eat meals with the youth. Meals will be provided for Advisors at no charge.

Special dietary needs? _____ Total Meals: \$ <u>0.00</u>

*Lodging: Youth Advisors will lodge at Inspiration Hills at no charge
--

(bring your own bedding and towels)

Total Lodging: \$ <u>0.00</u>

Are you attending the Pre-conference event? Yes No

Do you wish to receive CEU's? Yes No

Total Registration Fee, Meal, & Lodging Costs

(Make checks to "Northern Ohio District")

Total Cost: \$ 25.00

*Youth Advisors are expected to stay overnight at Inspiration Hills Camp on Friday and participate in all youth conference activities.

In addition to this Conference Registration form, you will receive a link to complete a background check if you have not done so in the past year.

Child Under 12 Registration Form

August 2-3, 2019 Northern Ohio District Conference

YOU MUST PRE-REGISTER BY JULY 21 IF YOU WANT TO ORDER MEALS.

IF YOU ARE REGISTERING ADULTS, USE ADULT FORM

Send registration forms to: Northern Ohio District, 1107 E. Main Street, Ashland, OH 44805

Child 1

Congregation Name

Child's Name M/F Age/Grade

Address (Street, City, State)

Parent's Name

Parent's Phone Number

Is this your child's first conference? Yes No

Parents' contact information at conference

Who will pick up children from their activities?

(Children attend District Conference at no charge.)

Child Under 12 Individual Meals

<input type="checkbox"/> Friday Dinner	<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Lunch
<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Breakfast	<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Dinner

There is an Ice Cream Social Saturday after worship. The cost is included in registration fees. Will your child attend? Yes No

Preschool Children: Child care is provided during Pre-Conference, worship on Friday and Saturday, and Saturday business sessions and insight sessions. Please indicate below if/when your child will be in Child Care.

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Conference	<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Business Sessions
<input type="checkbox"/> Friday Worship	<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Insight Sessions
<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Worship	

Grade School Children: Children's activities are provided for children in grades K through 5 during the Saturday business sessions and insight sessions. Register children who will participate in Children's Activities. Will your child attend Children's Activities on Saturday? Yes No

Does your child have any special needs, food allergies, etc.? Yes No Explain:

Parent or Guardian's Signature:

Child 2

Congregation Name

Child's Name M/F Age/Grade

Address (Street, City, State)

Parent's Name

Parent's Phone Number

Is this your child's first conference? Yes No

Parents' contact information at conference

Who will pick up children from their activities?

(Children attend District Conference at no charge.)

Child Under 12 Individual Meals

<input type="checkbox"/> Friday Dinner	<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Lunch
<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Breakfast	<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Dinner

There is an Ice Cream Social Saturday after worship. The cost is included in registration fees. Will your child attend? Yes No

Preschool Children: Child care is provided during Pre-Conference, worship on Friday and Saturday, and Saturday business sessions and insight sessions. Please indicate below if your child will be in Child Care.

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Conference	<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Business Sessions
<input type="checkbox"/> Friday Worship	<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Insight Sessions
<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Worship	

Grade School Children: Children's activities are provided for children in grades K through 5 during the Saturday business sessions and insight sessions. Register children who will participate in Children's Activities. Will your child attend Children's Activities on Saturday? Yes No

Does your child have any special needs, food allergies, etc.? Yes No Explain:

Parent or Guardian's Signature:

Northern Ohio District Church of the Brethren
2019 DISTRICT CONFERENCE DELEGATE AUTHORIZATION FORM

Mail the form to: Northern Ohio District, 1107 East Main Street, Ashland, Ohio 44805

Please do not include any payments with this form. All payments should be sent with the Registration Form along with any choices for meals.

CONGREGATION NAME: _____

Delegate 1	

Name	

Complete Mailing Address	

Phone Number:	E-mail Address:

Delegate 2	

Name	

Complete Mailing Address	

Phone Number:	E-mail Address:

Delegate 3	

Name	

Complete Mailing Address	

Phone Number:	E-mail Address:

Delegates Authorized by: (Pastor, Clerk, or Moderator) **Sign below, name and title**

Number of Delegates: District Polity says: "There shall be two (2) for each member church or fellowship with 200 or fewer members. Larger churches shall have one (1) delegate for each additional 100 members or fraction thereof. One delegate should be a church board member. No elected delegate shall serve more than two years in succession, except in those congregations where the average weekly worship attendance is (35) or less.

News from Eden Church of the Brethren

Eden Church of the Brethren, Canton, set a goal this year to increase visibility and awareness in its community, to help folks know WE are here for them and that Eden CARES! The congregation is accomplishing this goal by inviting friends, neighbors and family members to any of 12 special events offered at the church through-out the year. Such fun activities as an Ice Cream Social in August, Eden's annual Easter EGGstravaganza the weekend before Easter, Summer Bible Camp in June, and *Trunk-or-Treat* in October are among these special events!



Also important is getting out INTO our community, allowing the congregation to have a presence at various township and village events (parades, festivals, celebrations) offered in the communities where Eden members live. One such event is "*Patriots in the Stadium*," offered annually by Perry Township (Stark County), where many churches, organizations and merchants host booths at the Perry H.S. Stadium, along with an array of family-fun activities sponsored by the Township. Eden is gearing up for this event, held this year on Saturday, May 11.

However, whereas most other participating groups offer something (food, trinkets, etc.), Eden offers conversation, prayer and friendship. Last year many meaningful conversations were held with persons who perhaps never had even heard of Eden Church of the Brethren. This year the congregation is anticipating even more opportunities to serve, share, and care! And the members of Eden are always on the look-out for similar opportunities to participate in the many communities adjacent to the church.

Ashland First Church of the Brethren 2018 Hottle Grant Update



In March 2018, Ashland First Church of the Brethren applied for and received \$5,000.00 from the Northern Ohio District Hottle Grant Fund for roof improvements. A Sunday School wing added to the church in 1960 had a flat roof. Over the years, this roof required a lot of maintenance and had recently deteriorated to the point of major leakage. Our leadership team decided to install a pitched roof for future generations. The roof construction began in August 2018 and finished in February 2019. The total cost of the new roof was \$73,510.00. We are very thankful for the grant monies received from the district.

This has improved the appearance of our church and we can now use the sections we had to avoid due to leaks. We continue to work on enhancing and updating the church exterior. You will also see new windows in 2019, thanks to a grant fund gift from Trinity Lutheran Church in Ashland of \$10,532.49 toward our window replacement. We want the city of Ashland to know that things are alive and well at Ashland First! Thank you, Northern Ohio District Church of the Brethren for helping us to accomplish these goals. See the amazing transformation!



Church Improvement Loan

The Northern Ohio District exists to support our congregations in all aspects of ministry and church growth. Sometimes congregations are held back by building limitations or are overwhelmed by the cost of maintaining aging structures. Because of this great need, the District Board voted to set aside \$350,000 from the sale of the Water Street property to establish a new "Church Improvement Loan Fund".

Loans are now available for building and improvements and repairs to the main ministry property at 0% interest from the District for amounts up to \$20,000 with higher amounts taken into consideration on an individual basis. Examples of projects would include building additions, structural repairs, adding handicap accessibility, parking lot improvements, new restroom facilities, replacing an old furnace, adding air conditioning, new lighting, roof replacement, window replacement, painting, signage, etc. Access the Guidelines and Application form at www.nohcob.org/loan or call the District Office for more information.

Welcome New Pastors



Stephen Keib Commissioned and Installed as Pastor at Maple Grove

March 3, 2019 was a special day for the Maple Grove congregation as Stephen (Steve) Keib was Commissioned in the Church of the Brethren and installed as Pastor.

Stephen Keib and with Lynda Kysor, Maple Grove Board/Search Committee Chairperson

Steve has been active in ministry for 20 years, serving in both children's and youth ministries, as a Minister of Music, and as an Associate Pastor. Most recently Steve completed his role as the Children's Pastor at the Crosspoint Church in Bangor, Maine coordinating ministries for over 140 children each week. He has a Master's Degree in Religion and Biblical Studies.

Steve and his wife Sarah have three children—Austin, Brianna, and Evan. Steve grew up in Galion, Ohio where his father is still a pastor as well.



Cody Etter Licensed and Installed as Youth Pastor at Dupont

April 19, 2019 was a special day as Cody Etter was licensed to the ministry and installed as Youth

Pastor Cody Etter and his wife Madison with Pastor Steve Heilshorn and Pastor Emeritus Terry Porter

Pastor at the Dupont Church of the Brethren. Cody has been working with the youth for several years serving first as an advisor and now in a pastoral role. Cody and his wife Madison were married just last year, and Madison is a wonderful partner in ministry. Cody is enrolled in the Buckeye Brethren Institute, our district's ministerial training program and is on track to graduate next spring. Cody also farms on the family farm.

Who are we? We are volunteers who believe that we can make a difference in someone's life.

Why volunteer? The rewards are far greater than people will ever know.

When? We go twice a year. In the spring and in the fall. Next trip is October 6-12, North/South Carolina.

Where? Wherever recovery work is needed.

Who can help? You can. Thinking I cannot do it is not a good excuse.

Why? Because Jesus learned and taught as he went and we can too.

The greatest thing we can do is show our love to those who need it. Contact Bob Patalano, 419-651-3647 or Brenda Hostetler, 330-682-9123 for more information and visit our webpage at www.nohcob.org/bdm.



Pastoral Placement

Congregations actively in the search process:

Akron Springfield (full-time) – Search Committee interviewing. *George O'Reilly* serving as interim.

Brook Park (3/4-time) – Search Committee interviewing. *Tom Michaels* serving as interim through May.

Elm Street (15 hrs/week) – Search Committee in negotiations. *Dr. Byron Hawbecker* serving as interim.

Zion Hill – Search Committee working on congregational profile. *Scott McPeek* began serving as interim May 1st.

Congregations that have not yet begun the Search Process or have chosen not to seek at this time:

Lake Breeze – *Stephen McLaughlin* serving as interim.

Lakewood – *Gene Wyse* serving as interim and beginning the credentialing process.

Updated 05/02/2019

Mark Your Calendar

- 6.5** Western Area Pastors Lunch, The Barn Restaurant, Archbald, OH
- 6.11** Eastern Area Pastors Lunch, Front Porch Café, Hartville, OH
- 6.12** Central Area Clergy Breakfast, Tim Hortons, Ashland, OH
- 7.3-7** Annual Conference, Greensboro, NC
- 7.3** Western Area Pastors Lunch, The Barn Restaurant, Archbald, OH
- 7.9** Eastern Area Pastors Lunch, Front Porch Café, Hartville, OH
- 7.10** Central Area Clergy Breakfast, Tim Hortons, Ashland, OH
- 8.2-3** District Conference, Mohican CoB, West Salem, OH
- 8.3** District Board Reorganization, at District Conference, Mohican CoB, West Salem, OH

District Prayer Calendar

May 26—June 1

Pleasant View CoB (Pastor James Washington) and Poplar Ridge CoB (Pastor Ben Polzin)

June 2—June 8

Reading CoB (Pastor Larry Bradley) and Richland CoB (Pastor Jim Frado)

June 9—June 15

Ross CoB (Keith Stoller, Preacher) and Silver Creek CoB (Pastor Terry Baldwin)

June 16—June 22

Sugar Creek West CoB (Pastor Michael Huffaker) and Sugarcreek East CoB (Pastor Dick Marshall)

June 23—June 29

Swan Creek CoB (Pastor Dick Neuwirth) and Woodworth CoB (John Polanski, Preacher)

June 30—July 6

Zion Hill CoB (Interim Scott McPeek) and Adrian CoB (Pastor David Morton)

July 7—July 13

Akron Eastwood CoB (Pastor Paul Bozman) and Akron First CoB (Pastor Tobin Crenshaw)

July 14—July 20

Akron Springfield CoB (Interim George O'Reilly) and Ashland Dickey CoB (Pastor Jeff Messner)

July 21—July 27

Ashland First CoB (Pastor Tina Hunt) and Bethel CoB (Pastor David Wyant)

July 28—August 3

Black River CoB (Pastor Mark Teal, Associate Pastors Dean Foster and Cullen Thompson) and Bristolville CoB (Pastor Fred Keener)

August 4—August 10

Brook Park Community CoB (Interim Tom Michaels) and Center CoB (Pastor Mark Kell)

Annual Conference Church of the Brethren 2019 Business



The following **Unfinished Business** items will be presented to the 2019 delegate body:

UB1: Compelling Vision

UB2: Update to Polity Regarding AC Agencies

Clarification on Annual Conference Compelling Vision Conversations

The Compelling Vision process began with a deep desire to find pathways to increased effectiveness in our ministry together as a denomination, in the midst of our diversity, and in some cases, division.

It is a call to pause our ongoing debates on the issues that divide us and step together into a place where we focus on respectful conversations to better understand the realities of our life together, discerning the way forward in God's plan for us. As the process has unfolded, events largely unrelated to the Compelling Vision process have led to escalated tensions around our division. As a result, some expectation has arisen that the Compelling Vision conversation at 2019 Annual Conference will directly address issues around homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

We understand that questions seeking understanding around both our commonality and our tensions are important as we explore our future of continuing to serve Christ together. **However, the Compelling Vision process is not intended or designed to 'test', directly or indirectly, the desire of the body to maintain, change, or establish any particular official position/statement of the Annual Conference.** Rather we seek to understand: Where are we united? Where can we build a bridge? Where do we need other options for a way forward outside our current framework?

Over all, we hope to ultimately answer this most important question: **How can we best strengthen the mission of Christ in our congregations...in our communities...in the world?** Working to answer this overarching question will help lead us to a compelling vision to be considered at the 2020 Annual Conference when the delegate body deliberates over the final product of the compelling vision process.

Isaiah prophesies the reign of God through Christ saying, "...He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks..." (Isa. 2:4)

May we come to Annual Conference focused expectantly on the Holy Spirit's powerful work among us. In the spirit of this prophecy, and as a people proclaiming Christ's reign in our lives, may we set aside our defensive and confrontational postures and come instead with a spirit prepared to till afresh the soil of our life together, so the seeds of God's Word can be planted among and through us aspiring to future abundant crops in God's Kingdom. May we find the way to passionately reclaim this rich mission of the church with renewed vision.

Briefing Video:

www.brethren.org/ac/2019/business

Important information for all Delegates and any other interested persons.

District Board chooses Forgiveness

None of us have a perfect record except at not being perfect. There are things that we have done and will do that we wish would have never been done, but the past cannot be undone. We are grateful for the gift of forgiveness through our Lord and Savior, Jesus.

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus tells us, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Also, in Matthew 6:14-15 we are told "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

We are also reminded of the parable Jesus told about the unforgiving servant. He owed a debt he would never be able to pay back, and the King forgave his debt when he asked for mercy. Then he went out and found a fellow servant that owed him a small amount and he did not offer him forgiveness, even when he begged for mercy. We all need to follow the example of the King and extend forgiveness.

All of these things were brought to our mind as the Executive Committee and then the District Board discussed forgiving the balance of the debt owed to the District by Kristen Bair. Kristen was convicted of embezzling \$400,000 from the Northern Ohio District while she was employed as the District Secretary. Our confidence was shattered, our anger and grief ran deep, and the healing process has been long.

Kristen was sentenced in 2014, spent 6 months in jail and has been on probation since then. We have received periodic payments that have paid the debt down to approximately \$372,000.

During our April 2018 Executive Board Meeting Steve Simmons felt that it was time to grant forgiveness of this debt that was never going to be paid back. We took time for prayer and reflection. At the Fall Meeting, Steve was asked to write a letter of forgiveness and it was presented to the Executive Committee in February this year and passed on to the whole Board.

At the District Board meeting on March 9th, 2019 the motion to forgive Kris Bair the debt she owed was voted on by paper ballot and it passed unanimously.

The District has come a long way in this healing process from this deep wound and the next step is forgiveness!

We have signed a Release from the restitution order for Kristen Bair and are asking the court to release the Certificate of Judgment that set up the terms of the restitution order. We don't know what the court is going to do but we are doing our part by forgiving.

God through Jesus modeled this kind of forgiveness and in gratitude for all that has been forgiven us, we choose to forgive. It is our prayer that God's grace and love be known as we seek to live faithfully as followers of Jesus.

The Follow-Up

On May 17, 2019 at 8:35 am, Kris Hawk, District Executive, had a video visit with Kristen Bair through the Ashland County Jail's visitation system. She shared with Kristen Bair that the District Board had unanimously decided to release the balance of the debt that she owes to the Northern Ohio District.

Kristen immediately teared up and said "that's too generous" over and over. We talked about forgiveness. Kristen tearfully said "I am so sorry for what I did." She wiped tears from her eyes through most of the visit.

On May 21st Kris Hawk received an email from Kristen Bair. Here are some excerpts of her words:

First off - I want to say thank you so incredibly much for the District's generosity regarding the debt I owe to the district and the congregations. I was so amazed and so thankful talking to you on Friday that all I could do is cry and pray after our visit. Especially in light of the last few days a huge weight has been lifted from my shoulders. God truly does work in mysterious ways and I am feeling incredibly blessed right now.

I would like you to pass along to the District Board how truly thankful, grateful and appreciative I am feeling. I feel horrible that I betrayed everyone's trust in me and I really do wish I had the means to make this right. All I can say is thank you, thank you, thank you from the bottom of my heart. I have no excuse for my actions, but I am working to forgive myself knowing God has already forgiven me.

And if everyone could say a prayer for Tyler and Jessie (her children) I would greatly appreciate it. Sincerely, Kris Bair

Prayer for Annual Conference

I invite all to be in prayer for Annual Conference and especially for the Compelling Vision process. A [prayer calendar which guides us to a scripture and prayer focus for each day](#) is available for you to use beginning Sunday, May 5 and continuing through the week of Annual Conference. I believe there is great power in many participating in prayer together around the same purpose, and I hope you will join with this effort. You may download a prayer calendar at this link: www.brethren.org/compellingvision

Many of you are coming with various expectations surrounding our work at this Annual Conference. I encourage us to suspend all expectations except this one: that the Holy Spirit will move among and through us in miraculous ways as we come together to proclaim Christ through our worship, our study, our fellowship, and our intentional conversation about the future of the Church of the Brethren. May it be so!

With enthusiastic expectancy for the movement of God's Spirit,
Donita Keister

July 3–7, Greensboro, NC

Sheraton/Koury Convention Center

Go to www.brethren.org/ac/2019

for more information about Annual Conference 2019!

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