



# Southern Pennsylvania District Church of the Brethren

## Simple Living

*SO PA Dist. Mission: Create New Testament communities committed to personal transformation thru Jesus Christ*

Vision Statement:  
Working together to  
empower disciples for  
ministry & mission through:  
Leadership Development,  
Mission & Service Opportunities,  
& Creative Resourcing

### CONTENTS

Message Pgs. 1-2

District Info Pgs. 2-4

Upcoming Events Pgs. 5-6

District News Pgs. 7-13

Learning Opportunities  
CEU's Pgs. 14-18

Ministry News/Events  
Pgs. 19-27

Abavandimwe! Brothers and sisters! There are many practical reasons for simple living, but I want ultimately to help us understand the biblical reasons. I don't want to make something simple to be complicated! We have, as a church, tried to legislate simple living. Clothing, hair styles, carpet, lightning rods. The old stone farmhouse that I grew up in was built in the later years of the 1700's. My great-great-great-great grandfather Abraham Rinehart was censured by the Coventry church because of the beautiful raised panel cherry doors in the house.

But there are several things that I want to consider, along with a biblical framework (and a few Kinyarwanda words) - contentment, work, thrift, and generosity.

1. Contentment (kunyurwa nibyo ufite) - Exodus 20:7-17; Matthew 6:19-34; I Timothy 6:6-10.
2. Work (akazi) - Genesis 2:15 and 3:17-19; I Thessalonians 4:11-12; II Thessalonians 3:6-12.
3. Thrift (kwita ku bintu) - Matthew 6:19-34; Proverbs 31:30-34. Conservation, recycling, cleanliness, care of things.
4. Generosity (Ubuntu) - Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 18:18-25; 19:1-10; II Corinthians 9:6-15; I John 2:15-17.

I never saw my grandfather, Martin Urner, as he died a few years before I was born. I learned, however, from an old friend, that he was esteemed by his brethren in the church and ministry as a preacher of more than ordinary ability; so much so, that at their yearly meetings he was always called upon to preach. My friend said that on one occasion when the Yearly Meeting was held in Philadelphia, as the preachers from the country were jogging along on horseback, going to the meeting, one of the preachers said to my grandfather, 'As you will no doubt be called upon to preach at this meeting, I want you to preach particularly against the wearing of fine clothes, as the brethren and sisters of Philadelphia are becoming entirely too fashionable in their dress.' And although he urged the matter lengthily, he thought my grandfather did not give all heed to what he said, and asked, 'Did you hear what I said?' The answer was, 'Yes.' The next question was, 'Will you do it?' My grandfather replied, 'If I am called upon to preach, I hope I shall have something of more importance to talk to people about than the rags with which they clothe themselves.

(David Urner in J. N. Urner's History of the Coventry Brethren Church as quoted by Martin M. Brumbaugh, History of the German Baptist Brethren in Europe and America; Brethren Publishing House, 1899.)

So, considering that even our righteousness is as filthy rags, do I have a point here? Is there a valid argument for simple living? What IS simple living? It is finding contentment with what God has granted us and has asked of us. Finding joy in the work God has called us to. Not being wasteful of the resources of time and material. And just as importantly, being generous with these resources that we've refused to waste.

Guseng Imana - let us pray... Data wo mwijuru, turagushimiye kubwiki gihe hamwe. Turabashimira kubwimpano zoroshye zubuzima. Turagushimira urukundo n'imbabazi zawe binyuze muri Yesu Kristo.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time together. We thank you for the simple gifts of life. We thank you for your love and mercy through Jesus Christ. And as we close this time together we commit our lives to seeking first your kingdom and your righteousness, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. ~ Chris Elliott

### **Biblical Reasons for a SIMPLE LIFESTYLE ~ Georgia Markey, Interim D.E.**

Simple living refers to practices that promote simplicity in one's lifestyle. Common practices of simple living include,

- \*reducing the number of possessions one owns
- \*depending less on technology and services
- \*spending less money
- \*not keeping up with the neighbors or coworkers
- \*not needing to dress according to current styles, etc.

Henry David Thoreau, an American naturalist and author made his classic secular advocacy of life of a simple and sustainable living, in his book, "Walden" (1854). Thoreau concluded that our lives are frittered away by detail.

On Sunday, July 27th, 2025, Southern PA District Witness Commission hosted what we believe may be the first picnic for our District. (See Pg. 3) Approximately 50-60 persons, from our twenty-seven congregations, gathered at Little Buffalo State Park, Newport, PA. Following our picnic meal, we experienced Evening Vespers, with singing led by Cody and Alexandra Tomes, and a message on "Simple Living" shared by Minister Chris Elliott. (Our thanks to the Witness Commission and all who provided leadership to this event.)

Picnics seem to be a "simple activity", so I share with you Brother Chris Elliott's message to the District picnickers where he talks about the understanding of Simple Living according to scriptures. (See Pg. 1) Note: Chris also utilized, in his comments to us, some of the language regarding the subject of "Simple Living" of the natives with whom he ministers in Africa.

God Bless! Georgia

#### **SOPA District Office**

Monday - Friday

*Call for Hours*

Office Phone: (717) 778-2264

Georgia Markey, Interim District Executive

Email: gmarkeyfarmgirl114@gmail.com

Cell: (717) 887-3905

Office (717) 778-2254

Linette Quinn, Admin Assistant

Email: sopadistrict@brethren.org

Address: SOPA District COB

3375 Carlisle Rd, Suite A

Gardners, PA 17324

Website: <https://www.cob-net.org/church/sopa/>

### **Camp Eder**

Camp Eder is seeking donations of True North backdrops / cut out characters from 2025 V.B.S. The donations can be dropped off at Camp Eder or a pickup can be arranged.



#### **CAMP UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**September 3rd, Senior Day**

**October 18th, Fall Festival**

### **District Search Processes**

**York Second COB**—Pastor (currently being served by Lay Minister)

**SOPA District Office**—District Executive (currently held by Interim DE, Georgia Markey)

**York Second**—Interested Candidates, please reach out to the District Executive.

**For the D.E. Position, contact**—Sister Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, 847-429-4381, [nsheishman@brethren.org](mailto:nsheishman@brethren.org)

## District Events / News

Congratulations and Best Wishes are extended to **Paul Swope** who has been serving as minister at Rouzerville COB for a number of years. Paul was first asked to fill the pulpit at Rouzerville when there was no longer a pastor there. That pulpit fill became a regular occurrence. Brother Swope took the necessary COB courses for him to be considered as a part of the Southern PA District minister's group. Upon the Interim District Executive's arrival, it was determined that this journey had stopped and credentialing was in order for Brother Swope. Licensing was put into place and on Sunday, July 20, 2025, District Interim Executive Markey along with Ministry Commission member, Don Kauffman, officiated Worship and the Ordination of Brother Paul Swope.

This small congregation was ALIVE and WELL as they celebrated Paul's Ordination. Paul and his wife, Sylvia, were lifted up by those present as the congregation gathered around the couple for a laying on of hands and uplifting their official pastor on Sunday, July 20, 2025. Add the Swope's and the Rouzerville COB to your prayers as they minister in the Rouzerville community and beyond.



Congratulations and Best Wishes to **Elizabeth (Liz) Thorpe**, Chambersburg COB. Liz will be retiring August 1, 2025 from years of service to the Chambersburg COB spanning four decades! Liz's roles at the church include: Administrative Assistant, Director of Music, Minister of Music and Congregational Life, Pastor of Administration and Congregational Life, Pastor of Music and Spiritual Formation, and Pastor of Music and Worship.

**Enjoy Retirement Liz!**

The Brethren Home / Cross Keys Village

### God's Closet

Looking for Donations!

Items needed are:

1. Diapers: size 4 and up
2. Wipes
3. Boys and girls underwear
4. Boys gently used clothing

(infant and toddler clothing is NOT needed)

Please contact Cindy Goodling for more information: 717-887-3432



**SOPA District Picnic July 27, 2025**  
**Little Buffalo State Park**





## District and Denominational News

**Bethany Theological Seminary** has hired Mary Parrett as Coordinator of Bethany BOLD. BOLD (Build, Organize, Love, and Dare) is the Seminary's service-based program for residential students.

**The Brethren Home Foundation** has announced the promotion of Mike Kovacs to Vice President of Foundation. Mike previously served as the Executive Director at Camp Eder.

**Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership (BAML)** is seeking a part-time administrative assistant. This position provides direct support to BAML staff, students, and programs. See website for more information: [bethanyseminary.edu/jobs/administrative-assistant/](http://bethanyseminary.edu/jobs/administrative-assistant/)

It has come to our attention that **Pennsylvanians Concerned about Alcohol Problems (PCAP)** closed its ministry on June 6, 2025. PCAP is no longer taking donations and is no longer in operation.

**Virgina District Request**, Updated Congregational Directories Needed: If your congregation has updated its directory this year, please send a copy either by US Mail, Virgina, 3402 Plantation Rd, Northeast, Roanoke, VA 24012 or by email [Virgina.directordcnw@gmail.com](mailto:Virgina.directordcnw@gmail.com).

**Earle W. Fink Jr.**, retired pastor and denominational leader, passed away on May 30, 2025. Earle served as pastor at Meyersdale, PA COB, Chicago, IL First COB; Elizabethtown, PA COB, and Stone COB in Huntingdon, PA. He was moderator of the 196th Annual Conference held in 1982. In addition, Earle served as a member of the former General Board and as denominational staff. Throughout his life he contributed to many Church of the Brethren publications.

**Saturday, September 13, 2025**

### **2025 PROGRAM**

#### **THEME: ANABAPTIST/BRETHREN UNDER PRESSURE**

*Recognizing the 500th Anniversary of the Anabaptist Movement*

**Moderator: Wilmer Kuhns**

**Saturday, 10:00 A.M.**

**Saturday, 1:45 P.M.**

## **Brethren Revival Fellowship General Meeting Saturday, September 13, 2025**

**at the New Hope  
Brethren Church  
near Dunmore,  
West Virginia**

**Everyone Welcome**

Opening Hymns

Hymns

Devotions and Welcome

Devotions

Special Music

Offering

Special Music

Message.....Kenneth Leininger  
**THEN: Early Anabaptist/Brethren  
Pressures**

Message.....Roy McVey  
**NOW: Contemporary  
Anabaptist/Brethren Pressures**

Amendment to the By-Laws regarding  
Election of Committee Members

Chairman's Report & Annual  
Conference Reports .....Craig Alan Myers

Open Discussion

Lunch: 12:00 Noon  
The host church will provide lunch.

Dismissal.....3:45 P.M.

#### **CHURCH LOCATION:**

The New Hope Brethren Church is located five miles south of Dunmore, West Virginia on Route 92.

#### **THE CHURCH ADDRESS:**

12768 Frost Road  
Dunmore, West Virginia 24934

Set your GPS before you get close to ensure proper directions.

An online search might still show New Hope Church of the Brethren.

#### **LUNCH:**

The host church will provide lunch.



## UP~COMING EVENTS

### August 2025

**Friday-Saturday, August 1 & 2, 2025** West York COB Yard Sale, 8:00—5:00 / 8:00-1:00

**Saturday, August 9, 2025** Cross Keys Village/TBHC Car Show & Chicken BBQ, 10:30—1:00

**Tuesday, August 12, 2025** Stewards Commission Meeting, ZOOM, 7:00 PM

**August 13– October 7, 2025** Leadership & Administration for the Now & Future Church, Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership (see attached flyer pg. 14-15)

**Thursday, August 21, 2025** District Executive Committee Meeting, Carlisle COB, 6:30 PM

**Saturday, August 23, 2025** Mechanicsburg COB Yard Sale

**Thursday, August 28, 2025** Ministry Commission Meeting, Carlisle COB, 6:30 PM

### September 2025

**Monday, September 1, 2025** Labor Day, District Office Closed

**Monday—Friday, September 1-5, 2025** COB National Older Adult Conference (NOAC), Lake Junaluska, NC, register at: [www.brethren.org/noac](http://www.brethren.org/noac) (see attached flyer pg. 19-20)

**Tuesday, September 2, 2025** Central Zone Pastor's Meeting, Carlisle COB. 9:00 AM

**Wednesday, September 3, 2025** Senior Day, Camp Eder, register at [campeder@campeder.org](mailto:campeder@campeder.org) (see attached flyer pg. 12)

**Thursday, September 4, 2025** Eastern Zone Pastor's Meeting, Codorus COB, 12:00 PM

**Sunday, September 7, 2025** National Grandparents Day

**September 10—November 4, 2025** The Minister Theologian, On-Line Course, Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership (see attached flyer pg. 16—17)

**Thursday, September 11, 2025** Patriot Day

**Saturday, September 13, 2025** Brethren Revival Fellowship General Meeting, New Hope COB, 12768 Frost Road, Dunmore, West Virginia 24934 (see attached flyer pg 4)

**Sunday, September 14, 2025** COB Special Offering Sunday, Mission Offering

**Saturday, September 19-20, 2025** SOPA District Conference, Hanover COB, 601 Wilson Ave, Hanover, PA 17331 (see attached flyer pg. 9-10) *Contact District Office for more information*

**Monday, September 22, 2025** First Day of Autumn

**Friday-Saturday, September 26 & 27, 2025** 48th Annual Brethren Disaster Relief Auction, Lebanon Valley Expo Center, Lebanon, PA 9:00 AM—9:00 PM. (see attached flyer pg. 11)

For more information: <https://brethrenauction.org>

## UP-COMING EVENTS CONTINUED

### October 2025

**Thursday, October 2, 2025** Eastern Zone Pastor's Meeting, Hanover COB, 12:00 PM

**Sunday, October 5, 2025** World Communion Sunday

**Tuesday, October 7, 2025** Central Zone Pastor's Meeting, Carlisle COB. 9:00 AM

**Saturday, October 11, 2025** District Board Meeting, Free Spring COB, Danish/Beverage 8:30 AM, Meeting starts, 9:00 AM, 670 Free Spring Church Road, Mifflintown, PA 17059

**Sunday, October 12, 2025** Pastor Appreciation Sunday

**Saturday, October 18, 2025** Camp Eder Fall Festival, for more info: [campeder@campeder.org](mailto:campeder@campeder.org)

**October 24—26, 2025** Camp Eder Young Adults Backpack Adventure, (see attached flyer pg. 13)

**Sunday, October 26, 2025** Reformation Sunday

**Friday, October 31, 2025** Reformation Day

### November 2025

**Sunday, November 2, 2025** Daylight Saving Time Ends

**Tuesday, November 4, 2025** Election Day

**Tuesday, November 4, 2025** Central Zone Pastor's Meeting, Carlisle COB, 9:00 AM

**Thursday, November 6, 2025** Eastern Zone Pastor's Meeting, TBD, 12:00 PM

**Tuesday, November 11, 2025** Veterans Day

**Sunday, November 23, 2025** Bible Sunday & Christ the King Sunday

**Thursday, November 25, 2025** Thanksgiving Day (District Office Closed)

**Sunday, November 30, 2025** First Sunday of Advent

### **Newville & Huntsdale COB**

#### **100 Year Anniversary**

Huntsdale COB will be joining Newville COB for Worship and Communion  
Sunday, October 5, 10:00 AM.

Newville COB 100th Anniversary Service

Guest Speaker: Pastor Thomas A. Keys

Sunday, November 2, 10:00 AM



## Nurturing Spiritual Growth District Nurture Commission

What would you like to see to nurture our faith?

- A Bible Knowledge contest?
- An inter-generational or family event?
- A workshop on sharing the good news of Christ's love or discussing God questions?

Share your thoughts with Nurture: 717-761-3047.

*“Dedicate your children to God  
and point them in the way that  
they should go, and the values  
they’ve learned from you will be  
with them for life.”*

*Proverbs 22:6  
(The Passion Translation)*

## Events

35 attended Women's Retreat at Camp Eder on June 2, and 13 attended June 3, 2025.

Three baby layette baskets were filled along with many additional items for Life Choices Pregnancy Center.

Judy Cline, the Operational Director, facilitated three thought-provoking sessions on personal/ family devotions and how to pass our faith onto next generations.

Chaplain in the Park Codorus & Gifford Pincho State Parks Sundays, Memorial Day to Labor Day:

Take your youth group or Sunday School class to lead Children's Sunday School at Codorus on a Sunday, during worship in the Park and take a picnic to eat there afterwards!

**Beth Nonemaker**

**Nurture Chair**

**717-761-3047**



## District Executive Search Committee Update

The District Executive Search Committee remains actively engaged in the process of discerning the next leader for our district. We continue to review profiles and hold conversations about this vital role. While we are encouraged by the interest and thoughtful engagement so far, we are committed to moving forward with purpose, intentionally, and in prayer.

We are still accepting applications for the position of District Executive. If you or someone you know is interested in this ministry—either through a direct call to serve or through a vision for district leadership—we would welcome your referrals or nominations. If you would like to discuss the topic further, please feel free to contact us.

Additionally, if you have creative ideas on how we might approach the search or ways to support the committee's work, please don't hesitate to reach out. Your input and prayers are deeply valued as we seek God's guidance for the future of the Southern Pennsylvania District. Please reach out to:

Nancy Heishmanan at [officeofministry@brethren.org](mailto:officeofministry@brethren.org)  
or me at: [pastorianirvin@gmail.com](mailto:pastorianirvin@gmail.com)

In Christ's service,

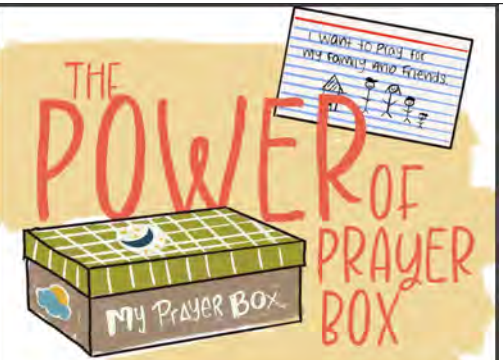
Ian Irvin  
Chair, District Executive Search Committee  
Southern Pennsylvania District  
Church of the Brethren



• District Conference will be held September 19 & 20, 2025 at Hanover COB. Please be in prayer for this event and everyone traveling to attend.

- Continue to pray for our District as the Search Committee continues its search for a District Executive.
- Remember in prayer all of our Pastors and Ministers.
- Be in prayer for our schools, students, and teachers as they start a new school year soon.

Pray for everyone's safety and a blessed year.



Create a simple and meaningful prayer box your family can use to share requests and pray together all week long.

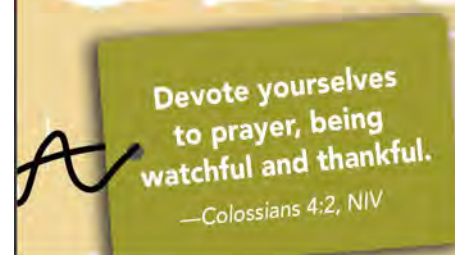
### What you need:

- Shoebox with lid
- Wrapping paper or decorative paper
- Scissors & tape
- Markers or crayons
- Stickers and other craft material (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Index cards or small pieces of paper



### What you do:

1. Wrap the shoebox like a gift, wrapping the lid separately so it can be opened.
2. As a family, decorate the box with drawings, favorite Bible verses, photos, or stickers.
3. Place the box somewhere central, like the kitchen or living room.
4. Keep index cards and pens nearby. When someone has a prayer request, they can write or draw it and drop it in.
5. Throughout the week, take turns praying over the requests as a family, or have a parent lead prayer time.



**Hanover COB**  
601 Wilson Avenue  
Hanover, PA 17331  
717-632-2267

**From the PA Turnpike** - Take Exit 245 (Gettysburg Pike) & bear to the right onto Rt. 15 south. At Dillsburg turn left onto Rt. 74 (traffic light). Continue through Dillsburg. After you pass the school on the left at the traffic light, you will want to go straight onto 194 south. (74 goes to York) Continue on through Franklintown, East Berlin & Abbottstown. (In Abbottstown you will cross over Rt. 30 at the circle.) Continue on 194 south until you reach Hanover, turn left onto Wilson Avenue & the church will be on your right.

**From York / East:** Take Rt. 30 west & turn left onto Rt. 116. Continue through Spring Grove. As you arrive in Hanover, turn right at the first traffic light onto Wilson Avenue. The church will be on your left.

**From Gettysburg / West:** Take Rt. 30 east. Continue on Rt. 30 through Gettysburg, New Oxford, & Abbottstown. In Abbottstown turn right onto Rt. 194 south. (This will be at the circle.) Continues on 194 south to Hanover, turn left onto Wilson Avenue & the church will be on your right.

**From New Windsor / South:** Take MD 31 north towards Westminster. Go east on MD 140 (this will be a short distance) & turn north onto MD 97 into PA. In Littlestown turn right onto PA 194 north towards Hanover. Stay on 194 through Hanover until you come to Wilson Avenue. continue on at the stop sign, the church is on the right.



Cover art created by:  
Kurt Ilgen, Buffalo Valley COB

### Lodging Registration (Local Brethren Member Homes)

Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Single Occupancy    ☐ Double Occupancy

### Meal Registration (Deadline 9/10/25)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please select the meal(s) for which you wish to register:

\_\_\_\_\_ Fri. Lunch \$8.00

Pulled Pork, Sloppy Joe, Macaroni/Potato Salad, Chips, Apple Sauce/Dessert (Gluten Free: meat on lettuce, green salad, GF muffin)

\_\_\_\_\_ Fri. Evening Meal \$12.00

Chicken Cordon Bleu, Scalloped Potatoes, Mixed Veggies/Salad, and Dessert, (Gluten Free: Baked Chicken Breast)

\_\_\_\_\_ Sat. Lunch \$8.00

Soup/Sandwiches, Fruit Plate, and Dessert (Gluten Free: meat on lettuce)

Special dietary needs: \_\_\_\_\_

A light continental breakfast will be available each morning.  
(Provided by persons from Faith Community COB)

### Child Care Registration (Available for Children 3 and Under)

Child \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Child Care Needed:

Friday Morning \_\_\_\_\_ Saturday Morning \_\_\_\_\_  
Friday Afternoon \_\_\_\_\_ Saturday Afternoon \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer changes...



Southern Penna. District  
Church of the Brethren  
2025 DISTRICT  
CONFERENCE

Hebrews 4:14-16

**Southern Pennsylvania District**

**Church of the Brethren**

**2025 District Conference**

**September 19 & 20**

**Hanover Church of the Brethren**



## 2025 Southern PA District Conference

*"Prayer Changes.....Hebrews 4: 14-16*

**Please join us at the 2025 SOPA District Conference for Worship and Fellowship at Hanover COB as we discern God's leading for our next year.**

### Conference Officers

Eric Reamer, Moderator

Nicholas Wingert, Moderator-Elect

### Conference Site

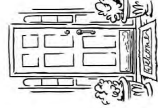
**Hanover Church of the Brethren**

601 Wilson Avenue  
Hanover, PA 17331

Cindy Goodling, On-site Coordinator

### **Conference Schedule** **Friday, September 19, 2025**

8:30-9:00 AM Registration and Refreshments  
9:00-12:00 Seminar on Prayer In the Church  
12:00-1:15 PM Lunch  
1:15-1:30 Singing/Scripture/Prayer  
1:30-1:35 Welcome  
1:35-1:45 Delegate Consecration Service  
1:45-1:50 Review and Approval of Agenda  
1:50-2:00 Review of Nomination/Discernment Process  
2:00-2:30 The Brethren Home Foundation Board Meeting  
2:30-2:40 Bible study/lesson on prayer  
2:40-3:00 Children's Aid Society (CAS) Board Meeting  
3:00-3:20 Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center (SVMC) Report  
3:20-3:40 Camp Eder Verbal Report  
3:40-4:00 Bible study/lesson on Prayer  
4:00-4:20 Time of prayer / consecration for Agency Leaders  
4:20-4:30 Standing Committee Verbal Report  
4:30 Meeting Adjourned for Day  
5:00 Dinner  
7:00-8:30 Prayer Service/Re-Licensing Service/Offering  
8:30-9:30 Ice Cream Social



## LODGING

Local COB members have agreed to open their homes to persons who wish to stay with sisters and brothers. Please make reservations by completing the form on the reverse side, one form per person/couple. Also, please note special requirements (e.g. need to be housed near someone for transportation purposes, handicap needs, children, etc.). **Reservations MUST be made prior to Conference** no later than 8/30/25 to:

**Questions, please contact Sue Ambrosius**  
by phone or email:

**Sue Ambrosius—Hanover COB**  
717-451-8613

**sue.ambrosius@gmail.com**

If you wish to stay at a nearby motel, you will find a listing enclosed in order to make your own reservations.

## MEAL RESERVATION INFORMATION

Meal Reservations must be made **prior to Conference**. Deadline for reservations will be 9/10/2025. To make reservations, complete the enclosed form along with payment and mail to:

**SOPA District Office COB**

**3375 Carlisle Road, Suite A, Gardners, PA 17324**

Questions, please contact SOPA District Office

by phone or email:

717-778-2264.....sopadistrict@brethren.org



**A list of area restaurants is enclosed should you desire to dine out.**

## CHILD CARE INFORMATION

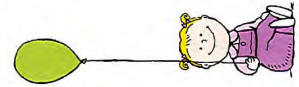
Child care will be provided for children up to age 3, prior or registration is required. Meals are the responsibility of parents. **Register no later than 8/30/2025**, by completing the form on the reverse side and mailing it to:

**SOPA District Office COB**

**3375 Carlisle Road, Suite A, Gardners, PA 17324**

Questions, please contact SOPA District Office  
by phone or email:

717-778-2264.....sopadistrict@brethren.org



## Saturday, September 20, 2025

7:30-8:30 AM Prayer Meeting  
8:30-9:00 Registration/Refreshments  
9:00-9:05 Announcements  
9:05-9:25 Bible study on prayer  
9:25-9:30 Presentation of District Conference Ballot  
9:30-9:40 District Conference Elections  
9:40-9:55 Time to fill out Ballot Nominee Forms  
9:55-10:25 Interim District Executive Verbal Report  
10:25-10:30 District Executive Search Committee Report  
10:30-11:00 District Board Report  
11:00-11:45 Review and Approval of 2024/2025 Financial Report /Review and Approval of Proposed 2025/2026 District Budget/District Financial Ministries Allocation (DFMA)  
11:45-1:45 Lunch and Love Feast  
1:45-1:50 Election Results  
1:50-1:55 District Auditor's Report  
1:55-2:10 Church of the Brethren Agency Reporting  
2:10-2:25 Denominational Report  
2:25-2:45 Bible study on prayer  
2:45-3:00 Complete Conference Evaluation Forms  
3:00-3:15 Recognition of Outgoing Board Members  
3:15-3:20 Consecration of Newly Elected/Called Persons  
3:20-3:30 Conference Acknowledgements/Passing of Gavel  
3:30 Adjournment

## Hebrews 4:14-16

14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.



## REPORT TO ATLANTIC NORTHEAST AND SOUTHERN PA DISTRICTS COB

Plans are underway for the 48<sup>th</sup> Brethren Disaster Relief Auction to be held on September 26 and 27, 2025, at the Lebanon EXPO Center. Several changes have occurred in the past year. We have a new treasurer, Lynette Gelsinger and two additional people have joined the Board of Directors. Our mission is to provide funding for disaster relief efforts throughout the US and Internationally through Brethren Disaster Ministries, which is the primary recipient of Auction funds.

Significant income was generated by the 47<sup>th</sup> Auction held September 27 and 28, 2024.

- Food Sales - \$34,233
- Heifer Auction - \$48,185
- Theme Baskets - \$12,945
- Quilts - \$34,415
- Coin Auction – \$14,626
- General Auction - \$23,962
- Silent Auction - \$5,685

Overall gross proceeds were approximately \$350,452, (including direct contributions and estate bequests) leaving approximately \$300,000 for distribution.

Distributions were as follows:

- \$250,000, to Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) Includes \$50,000 for direct Hurricane Helene Relief
- \$50,000, to ANE and SoPA Districts COB and the Auction Board for funding Disaster Relief Trips

As always, we appreciate all the support we receive from the churches in the Atlantic Northeast and Southern PA Districts and our many other supporters who have made the Brethren Disaster Relief Auction a success for 47 years and we are looking forward to the 48<sup>th</sup> year. We are always in need of volunteers. It is increasingly difficult to attract new helpers who are vital to continue the work of the auction. Please visit our website [www.BrethrenAuction.org](http://www.BrethrenAuction.org) for additional information and to donate or volunteer for the auction.

*Tom Fritz, Chair      Gary Stevens, Vice Chair*



# **Camp Eder**

**SEPTEMBER  
3RD, 2025**

## **SENIOR DAYS**

### **PROGRAM FOR SENIOR DAY**

**9:30 Meet and greet with  
continental breakfast**

**COST:**

**\$20/PERSON**

### **10:00 Morning Program:**

**Mr. Peluso brings 27 years of glass experience and education. Engage in an interactive demonstration. Ask questions and understand the how and why of glass blowing. From the basic materials to how, why, and where glass blowing started. All while enjoying a live demonstration.**

**12:00 Delicious Lunch**

**1:00 Dismissal**

**914 MOUNT HOPE RD  
FAIRFIELD, PA 17320**

**PLEASE RSVP by calling (717)  
642-8256 or emailing  
campeder@campeder.org**



# Camp Eder Young Adults Backpack Adventure

Join us for a weekend hiking on the Appalachian Trail for young adults! Immerse yourself in God's word while surrounded by the breathtaking beauty of His Creation. Ages 18-25

OCTOBER  
**24-26**

BOOK NOW **\$5/ticket**

📍 914 Mount Hope Rd, Fairfield, PA 17320

📞 717-642-8256

🌐 [campeder@campeder.org](mailto:campeder@campeder.org)

- Stay in Schwarzenau Lodge or tent/hammock camping
- Hiking the Appalachian Trail overnight and cooking over the fire





Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership proudly offers

*Leadership and Administration for the  
Now and Future Church*

8 Week Online Course

August 13 - October 7, 2025

[REGISTER ONLINE](#)

Course Instructor:  
Audrey Hollenberg-  
Duffey

## Course Description, Objectives & Requirements

### Description:

What makes for an excellent leader in the current and emerging church? What qualities must leaders cultivate to meet the needs of the now and future church? How might we stay attuned to what God is doing today and how God is calling us into the future? This course will explore these questions by engaging current theory and practical resources for developing church leaders who can address the challenges and opportunities present in today's churches. In this course, students will strengthen their spiritual fortitude and self-awareness while developing skills for administration, effective communication, conflict management, and visioning.

### Objectives:

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Define pastoral leadership using biblical examples and the latest research to determine how to serve where called.
- Understand the importance of emotional intelligence (EQ) and receive practical resources to develop a higher EQ.
- View a congregation as a system and determine how to lead alongside a congregation as they discover God's next faithful step for themselves.
- Strengthen basic and practical administrative skills.

### Requirements:

- TRIM/EFSM students must complete all reading, participate fully in the discussion forums, and submit all papers for their evaluations.
- CEU participants must complete all reading and participate fully in the discussion forums to receive credit. The papers and projects are optional.

(continued)

This course is  
available to:

- **TRIM/EFSM**  
students:  
Fulfills **1 MS Unit**
- **CEU credit:**  
Fulfills **2 Units**
- Anyone seeking  
**Personal  
Enrichment and  
spiritual  
enrichment**

Essentially, this  
course is open to **ALL!**

**Course Fee \$300.00**

**Registration  
deadline:  
July 9, 2025**

Please do not order books until  
this date and confirmation is  
received from the BAML office.



## Equipping Ministers

\*

## Deepening Faith

\*

## Enriching Lives

**Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership**

615 National Road W  
Richmond, IN 47374  
800-287-8822 x1824  
765-983-1824  
academy@  
bethanyseminary.edu  
Copyright 2025  
Brethren Academy  
All Rights Reserved

**Course Withdrawal Refund Policy**

- 100% of course fee prior to registration deadline. 50% from the registration deadline to the first day of class.
- No refunds will be given once the class has begun.
- Exceptions require the approval of the Director of the Brethren Academy.

**To earn CEU credit**

Participant will:

- Meet the attendance requirement
- Complete the assigned reading
- Engage in the course through participation
- Complete reduced assignments as outlined in syllabus

**Course Reading Resources**

- Barton, Ruth Haley. *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry*. Expanded Edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018. ISBN 9780830846450
- Beaumont, Susan. *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going: Leading in a Liminal Season*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019. ISBN 9781538127681
- Berlin, Tom and Lovett H. Weems Jr. *High Yield: Seven Disciplines of the Fruitful Leader*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014. ISBN 9781426793103
- Booz, Dr. Don R. *The Emotional Intelligence Primer: How to Be the Difference That Makes the Difference for Today's Leaders*. Booz and Associates, 2017. ISBN 9780692925560

**Expectations**

This is an asynchronous online learning course; you have the freedom to schedule your time. Please do so wisely with the expectation to devote a minimum of 10-12 hours per week during the duration of this course. ALL due dates are firm.

Students will need basic computer skills and access to the internet. If your computer is four years old or less, you should have the capabilities for this class.

**Instructor: Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey**

Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey is the Director of the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center, a ministry training and continuing education partner of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership housed at Elizabethtown College. She is a graduate of Bridgewater College (BA), Bethany Theological Seminary (MDiv), and Wesley Theological Seminary (DMin).

**Church of the Brethren Leadership & Administration** – August 13 - October 7, 2025

[Register online](#) or fill out the following information and return, along with payment to:

Brethren Academy \* 615 National Road West \* Richmond, IN \* 47374

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Best contact phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I will be taking this course for: \_\_\_\_\_ TRIM credit \_\_\_\_\_ EFSM credit \_\_\_\_\_ CEU credit \_\_\_\_\_ PE

Course Fee: \$300 payable to Brethren Academy (BAML)

Registration Deadline: July 9, 2025



Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership proudly offers

# *The Minister as Theologian*

September 10 - November 4, 2025

8 Week Online Course

[REGISTER ONLINE](#)



Course Instructor:  
Dr. Joelle Hathaway

## Course Description, Objectives & Requirements

### Description:

As a minister in a church, you are often both the “resident theologian” and “minor poet”. You are a “resident theologian” because people look to you to preach, pray, teach, and, perhaps, sing the Good News of Jesus Christ. You are a “minor poet” because practical theological wisdom requires flexible, winsome, connective, and creative minds. As an introduction to theological thinking, this course will cover some of the “big topics” Christians talk about, including God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, humanity as the image of God, and Christian hope. We will read multiple genres, including sermons and poetry, to help us explore the deep, imaginative interconnections between various aspects of the Christian faith.

This course is available to:

- **TRIM/EFSM students:**  
Fulfills **1 MS Unit**
- **CEU credit:**  
Fulfills **2 Units**
- Anyone seeking **Personal Enrichment and spiritual enrichment**

Essentially, this course is open to **ALL!**

**Course Fee \$300.00**

**Registration deadline:**  
**July 30, 2025**

Please do not order books until this date and confirmation is received from the BAML office.

### Objectives:

- Develop the foundational skills necessary for the practice of theological reflection and interpretation, particularly the practices of “close reading” and “critical charity”.
- Build a working vocabulary of important theological terms and an understanding of the central themes of theological studies.
- Clearly articulating your own ideas and arguments in a learning community characterized by attentive respect for difference, a willingness to reconsider one’s position in light of another’s experience or insight, and a commitment to learning together.

### Requirements:

- TRIM/EFSM students must complete all reading, participate fully in the discussion forums, and submit all papers for their evaluations.
- CEU participants must complete all reading and participate fully in the discussion forums to receive credit. The papers and projects are optional.

(continued)



Equipping Ministers

\*

Deepening Faith

\*

Enriching Lives

**Brethren Academy for  
Ministerial Leadership**

615 National Road W

Richmond, IN 47374

800-287-8822 x1824

765-983-1824

academy@

bethanyseminary.edu

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Brethren Academy

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**Course Reading Resources**

Reading resources will be shared closer to the course start date

**Course Withdrawal  
Refund Policy**

- 100% of course fee prior to registration deadline. 50% from the registration deadline to the first day of class.
- No refunds will be given once the class has begun.
- Exceptions require the approval of the Director of the Brethren Academy.

**To earn CEU credit**

Participant will:

- Meet the attendance requirement
- Complete the assigned reading
- Engage in the course through participation
- Complete reduced assignments as outlined in syllabus

**Expectations**

This is an asynchronous online learning course; you have the freedom to schedule your time. Please do so wisely with the expectation to devote a minimum of 10-12 hours per week during the duration of this course. ALL due dates are firm.

Students will need basic computer skills and access to the internet. If your computer is four years old or less, you should have the capabilities for this class.

**Instructor: Dr. Joelle Hathaway**

Dr. Joelle A. Hathaway is assistant professor of theological studies at Bethany Theological Seminary. She received both her masters and doctorate at Duke Divinity School and is currently developing new courses for Bethany in Theology and the Arts. Her research is interdisciplinary; of particular interest is what insights the arts and artistic practice can offer to practices of theological, liturgical, and ecological formation. Her current book project puts the Sabbath poetry of Wendell Berry in conversation with the Christian doctrine of creation. Joelle lives in Greenfield, IN with her husband Brent Smith and their two daughters.

**Church of the Brethren Leadership & Administration** – September 10 - November 4, 2025

**Register online** or fill out the following information and return, along with payment to:

Brethren Academy \* 615 National Road West \* Richmond, IN \* 47374

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Best contact phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I will be taking this course for: \_\_\_\_\_ TRIM credit \_\_\_\_\_ EFSM credit \_\_\_\_\_ CEU credit \_\_\_\_\_ PE

Course Fee: \$300 payable to Brethren Academy (BAML)

Registration Deadline: July 30, 2025





The Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center is offering a series of relevant and engaging continuing education events for both clergy and interested laity. While credentialed clergy can earn continuing education units, these topics will also benefit lay participants. We encourage you to share these events with others, as everyone is welcome to register. To register, either: Click on the event title and follow the registration link, Scan the QR code, Email [KarenHodges@SVMCcob.org](mailto:KarenHodges@SVMCcob.org), or Call 717-361-1450.



### **The Shape of Ministry in a High-Tech World**

**Monday, September 15, 2025 • 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM • Elizabethtown College & Zoom**

**Leader: Dan Poole**

**Fee for In Person: \$65.00 for .5 CEUs; \$55.00 for no CEUs.**

**Fee for Zoom: \$45.00 for .5 CEUs; \$35.00 for no CEUs**

From the barrage of social media platforms to website presence to electronic communications enabled by computers and smartphones to a 24/7 cultural expectation of availability, the shape and landscape of ministerial leadership have needed to shift to thoughtfully incorporate these tools into one's ministry practices. In this daylong workshop, we will address several key concepts and questions related to the use of tech tools in one's ministry.



### **Caring for Congregational Members at the End-of-Life – for Pastoral Leadership**

**Tuesday, October 7, 2025 • 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM • Zoom Only**

**Leader: Julie Guistwite**

**Fee: \$35.00 for .3 CEUs or \$25.00 for no CEUs**

Nearing death is as much a part of life as living. Drawing on a trifold model of terminally-ill ministry, this interactive workshop explores strategies for empowering adult congregational members at the end-of-life. This session is designed for pastors; laypersons are encouraged to attend a similar session on October 28. See below.



### **Supporting Terminally-Ill Congregation Members – for Laypeople**

**Tuesday, October 28, 2025 • 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM • Zoom Only**

**Leader: Julie Guistwite**

**Fee: \$20.00 per person for groups of 3 or more who are joining together as a group -- with one Zoom link, or \$25.00 per person if participating individually (not in a group)**

Persons seek peace, hope, and meaningful personal/spiritual moments until death. Dedicated caregivers' supportive presence and ease in relating to congregational members at the end-of-life shapes the biopsychosocial-spiritual journey. Drawing on a trifold model of terminally-ill ministry and best practice methods in communication, this interactive workshop explores strategies for supporting and empowering adult members of the church community. This session is designed for laypeople. Pastors are encouraged to attend a similar session on October 7. See above.



### **Weakness Transformed in the Gospel of Matthew**

**Saturday, November 1, 2025 • 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM • Stone Church of the Brethren & Zoom**

**Leader: Dan Ulrich**

**Fee for In Person: \$65.00 for .5 CEUs; \$55.00 for no CEUs**

**Fee for Zoom: \$45.00 for .5 CEUs; \$35.00 for no CEUs**

Paul was the apostle who heard Christ say, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9); Paul was not alone, however, in teaching that God works through human weakness in powerful ways. In this continuing-education workshop, we will find inspiration from the Gospel of Matthew to minister faithfully in situations where we or our congregations feel weak. Visual and performative arts will help us engage imaginatively with selected scriptures to deepen and strengthen discipleship. Since the Revised Common Lectionary features Matthew in 2025-26, preachers may encounter ideas they can develop into sermons for the coming year.



# Join us for National Older Adult Conference

## September 1-5, 2025

Lake Junaluska, North Carolina



"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

—Romans 15:13 (NRSV)

### Keynote Speakers:

Dominique DuBois Gilliard  
Ken Medema  
Cole Arthur Riley  
Ted Swartz

### Preachers:

Rebecca Dali  
Greg Davidson Laszakovits  
Samuel Sarpiya  
Herb Smith  
Audrey Svay



Registration is open online at:

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

If you are planning to be in person at Lake Junaluska: \$220. After July 15: \$250.

*After you register you will receive a link for housing reservations. Those fees are separate.*

If you are planning to participate online: \$150.

*If you need a paper registration form, call 847-429-4303.*

National Older Adult Conference (NOAC) is a Spirit-filled gathering of adults 50 and older who love learning and discerning together, exploring God's call for their lives and living out that call by sharing their energy, insight, and legacy with their families, communities, and the world.



Follow us on Facebook at  
Church of the Brethren NOAC



Church of the Brethren



# NOAC 2025

September 1-5

## Atlantic Northeast District Transportation: Aug 31-Sept 1 and Sept 5-6

**Cost:**

- \$415/person, Double Occupancy
- \$530/person, Single Occupancy

**Includes:**

- Elite Coach to and from Lake Junaluska, NC, Hosted by Sam and Kathy Frankhouser
- Hotel room with breakfast
- Tips

Conference fee **not** included. Each person must register for NOAC at [www.brethren.org/dlf/noac](http://www.brethren.org/dlf/noac)  
Registration opens May 1.

**Register Online at**  
**[www.ane-cob.org](http://www.ane-cob.org)** or  
fill out the information below  
and send with payment to:

Atlantic Northeast District  
500 East Cedar Street  
Elizabethtown, PA 17022

Deadline: July 28

### Pick up & Drop off Locations

Elite Coach, Ephrata	10:30am
Brethren Village	11:15 am
Elizabethtown CoB	12:00 PM
Carlisle CoB	1:30 PM
Hagerstown, MD	2:45 PM

### August 31 Hotel

Country Inn and Suites  
Roanoke, VA

### September 5 Hotel

Clarion Pointe Staunton  
East  
Staunton, VA

### Cancellation policy

A full refund will be given until July 1, 2025. A 50% refund will be given from July 2, 2025 through July 28, 2025. No refunds will be offered after July 28, 2025.

\*Meal costs during the bus trip are not included

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Lodging at Lake Junaluska: \_\_\_\_\_

Roommate for travel days: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Please select pickup location

- ☐ Elite Coach, Ephrata
- ☐ Brethren Village
- ☐ Elizabethtown CoB
- ☐ Carlisle CoB
- ☐ Hagerstown, MD

### Please select hotel accommodation

- ☐ Double Occupancy, \$415/person
- ☐ Single Occupancy, \$530/person

Payment is due upon registration. Space is limited to one bus. A waiting list will be kept should there be any cancellations.  
By registering for this event, the above cancellation policy is understood.



# JOIN US FOR THESE EVENTS

The Discipleship & Leadership Formation Team for the Church of the Brethren invites you to explore these upcoming opportunities to grow in your faith and connect with other Brethren as we seek to “develop a culture of calling and equipping disciples who are innovative, adaptable, and fearless.”

## 2025

### National Older Adult Conference

Sept. 1-5: Lake Junaluska, North Carolina

NOAC is a Spirit-filled gathering of adults 50 and older who love learning and discerning together, exploring God's call for their lives and living out that call by sharing their energy, insight, and legacy with their families, communities, and the world.

### NYC 2026 Advisor Preview Weekend

Oct. 11-13: YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado

Come check out things out for NYC 2026! Grab some CEU's at the same time. Enjoy a colorful fall weekend in the Rockies! Our time together will be helpful as you prepare for NYC 2026 – as well as fun, relaxing, and inspiring!

### Junior High Sunday

Nov. 2: Celebrated in congregations

Theme information and worship resources available online.

### Intercultural Jubilee

Nov 18-21: Camp Ithiel, Florida

The theme for Jubilee is *Embracing being Together & Awakening our Paths to the Future*. Join us for a day of rejoicing, celebrating, a special event of being in the presence of God, where all of us Brethren are enjoying one another's culture, peacefully, simply and together.

## 2026

### L.E.A.D Conference

May 1-3: Ephrata Church of the Brethren

This conference will encourage, inspire, and equip you and your congregation's leaders to further develop your ministry's effectiveness and earn CEU credit.

### National Youth Sunday

May 3: Celebrated in congregations

Theme information and worship resources available online.

### Young Adult Conference

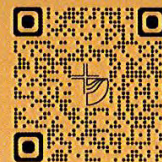
May 22-24: location TBD

YAC offers people ages 18-35 a chance to enjoy fellowship, worship, recreation, Bible study, service projects and more... with other fantastic young adults!

### National Youth Conference

July 18-23: YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado

NYC provides young people in high school and the first year of college (or are age equivalent) and their advisors the chance to gather for a week of fellowship, worship, workshops, recreation and more!



Please save these dates and go to  
[www.brethren.org/dlf](http://www.brethren.org/dlf)  
 for more information and to register.

contact us:  
 DLF@brethren.org  
 847-429-4303



**DISCIPLESHIP & LEADERSHIP FORMATION**

EQUIPPING THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD TO MAKE DISCIPLES  
 OF JESUS, FORM LEADERS, AND TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES



Church of the Brethren



# Advisor Preview Weekend

Come check things out for NYC 2026!



Oct. 11 - 13, 2025

YMCA of the Rockies  
Estes Park, Colorado



Church of the Brethren

**Rev. Charles (Chuck) Hunt, D.Min.,** of the Fuller Youth Institute, will lead continuing education sessions, which will be based on the book *Faith Beyond Youth Group*.

Our time together will be helpful as you prepare for NYC 2026 -  
as well as fun, relaxing, and inspiring!

*Register now!*

[www.brethren.org/nycadvisorpreview](http://www.brethren.org/nycadvisorpreview)

printed on FSC mix 70% recycled paper



**Drink  
this cup**



"Then Jesus took  
a cup, and after  
giving thanks,  
he gave it to them."  
~Matthew 26:27a



Photo by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayton, Kate Plott, and Matt DeBell



**Pentecost  
Offering**

Learn more at  
[www.brethren.org/  
pentecost](http://www.brethren.org/pentecost)

## Upcoming Special Offerings



Mission  
Offering

September 14, 2025



Advent  
Offering

December 14, 2025



One Great Hour  
of Sharing

March 15, 2026



Pentecost  
Offering

May 24, 2026

Update your church's standing orders  
at [www.brethren.org/offering-survey](http://www.brethren.org/offering-survey).



Church of the Brethren





**Northeast Youth Ministry Summit**  
**EVERY SQUARE INCH** MARCH 16-19 • 2026 • LIGONIER PA

Brought to you by **CPYU**

📅 March 16-19, 2026 📍 LIGONIER, PA

**REGISTRATION COMING SOON!**

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth. . . all things were created through him and for him.”  
 – Colossians 1:16

“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”  
 – Abraham Kuyper

**Standard: \$429** – Standard registration includes everything! All the training, three nights shared/bunk style housing, meals (dinner Monday through breakfast Thursday).

### **Our rapidly changing world.**

“What does it mean to live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ in today’s world?” This is one of the most pressing and basic questions we must answer for our kids as they navigate through the challenging, change-filled, and formative years of childhood and adolescence. A host of ever-present voices are catechizing our kids 24/7, providing “answers” that all-too-often mis-lead our kids into believing and living in ways that undermine their human flourishing. When these voices point them away from the message of the Gospel and into a life of “self-sovereignty”, our children and teens wind up traveling through life on the wide road that leads to destruction.

### **Our Youth Ministry Calling.**

As youth ministry leaders, our high calling and great privilege is to faithfully bring the light of God’s unchanging Word into the lives of our students and their families with the balance of grace and truth. We desire to see them come to saving faith in Jesus Christ while growing into a lifetime of biblically-faithful, whole-life Christian discipleship as they endeavor to live under the sovereignty of God and to the glory of God. In effect, we are cross-cultural missionaries who need to know both God’s Word and the cultural context of today’s world. God is calling us to effectively lead by becoming like the people of Issachar, understanding the times and knowing what the people of God are to do (1 Chronicles 12:32). This is our great youth ministry privilege and responsibility!

### **Come and Be Equipped, Connected, And Encouraged!**

The Northeast Youth Ministry Summit is a lively gathering of rookie youth workers, seasoned veterans, paid and volunteer, who come together to be equipped for ministry while connecting in rich community for four-days of youth ministry training. Once again, we’re bringing together some of the best and most-experienced practitioners who will train and encourage you with depth and faithfulness to know God’s Word and how to best communicate it in today’s world. We are excited to invite you to join us for this four-day ministry training event at the Ligonier Camp and Conference Center, nestled in the beautiful Laurel Highlands of southwestern Pennsylvania.

The Summit is brought to you by the [Center for Parent/Youth Understanding](https://cpyu.org/).

This is a Monday to Thursday event. This event is designed for the beginner youth leader to the seasoned youth pastor. Walt Mueller and CPYU (Center for Parent/Youth Understanding) is an organization located in Elizabethtown designed for current youth ministry issues.

For more information, visit <https://nymsummit.org/>



## In the Shadow Walking With Boldness

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

*2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV*

“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.”

*1 Timothy 4:12 NASB*

Did you know that approximately 50 % of the Rwandan population is under 20 years old? Sub-Saharan Africa has the youngest median age on the planet, at 19 years. Unfortunately, many of these young people are unemployed, helping at home or searching for informal work, which may include working as a day laborer for a farmer or housecleaning.

I am privileged to partner with a sewing cooperative that empowers young people with sewing skills so they can provide for themselves and their families. We recently added to our number of students, and now there are around 70 students that are busy learning to measure, cut, and sew beautiful bags and apparel out of spectacularly colorful traditional fabric.



The Grace Academy nursery school recently celebrated the end of the year with a graduation for the Top Class members. In September they will go on to the first level of primary school, or first grade, as we call it in the American context.

That is a brief overview of some of the things I have been working with the last few months. It's so exciting to see what God has been doing in this corner of Africa!



Now, moving on to some recent musings of mine...

It is now twenty and four years that I have existed on this spherical planet we dwell upon. However, I am often mistaken to be still in the adolescent years due to having a “baby face”. It is more than three years that I have lived on the African continent. The locals will often not take youthful persons seriously in a context where one is not considered a “proper adult” until marriage. There have been many things I have experienced in those three plus years that some may never face in their lives. Many things I would not even wish on any person that has ever walked this earth. I resonate with the thought of being an old soul in a youthful body.

Indeed, Africa has adopted me as her daughter. I recall walking down the stairway from the airplane into the humid air of Kigali, Rwanda on a warm October night, approaching four years ago. Breathing in the heady scent of eucalyptus smoke as I stepped onto Rwandan soil for the first time, I had no idea that this would be the place I would be blessed to call home. I had just turned twenty-one, a sheltered home-school graduate, naive Anabaptist farm girl from Pennsylvania. God has a sense of humor when He takes the people who think they are unqualified to do anything out of the ordinary. I would more likely have thought that I would be married by this time with a child or two (or three).

*"God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called."*

I may not have a husband or have borne children by the age I am now, but I am the mother of many. As a teacher, one becomes a mother to the children that come through school doors. I often refer to any child as my child, regardless if I know them or not. I would do anything in my power to protect a child, even if it means the end of my days.

I recall such a day in January of this year, the day the M-23 rebels captured Goma. Some missionary friends of mine were away, but their young daughters were still home. I was asked to escort them out of the city, to a neighboring village that was hoped to be safer. As I walked out of the relative safety of my compound walls, I did not know what I would see or what might happen. Sounds of machine-gun fire filled my ears. Bomb explosions shook the ground. Strangely, I did not feel frightened. I felt nothing as the ancient minibus shook with every bomb blast as it labored through the traffic to the mountains, our hoped refuge. I only began to fear as the bombing echoed louder and stronger throughout the hills. People I cared about were still in the middle of the fighting. I could hear the sounds of war as I talked to a friend in the heart of the cross-border fighting. I heard terror in her voice.

With all praise to the living God, each of us survived those days. Days we shall remember for the rest of our lives.

In recent times, I have discovered that I indeed have repressed trauma from that event. Our bodies and minds will keep score of such things and bring them to light in a time and place otherwise regarded as safe. I look back now and realize that I was actually terrified, but there were others whose safety I needed to secure. Survival and maternal instincts took over in split-second decisions. So quickly that I hardly realized what I was doing.

*"Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear."* -Ambrose Redmoon

Our God has put all of us on this earth for some purpose. He can use the young, the old, those terrified of their own shadow, and those that may think they are incapable of great things. We are indeed capable of much more than our minds believe. He fills us with strength for the times in which we live, for challenges that come our way, so that we can walk with confidence and boldness through the days of our lives.

In praise to the living God!  
Grace Elliott

*How you can pray:*

- A peace deal was recently made in the region; please pray for a lasting peace.
- Safe & smooth travels back to Rwanda.
- Continued healing from dealing with flashbacks from M-23's takeover of Goma.



## Request for Nominations for Denominational Offices

The calling of denominational leadership begins when members of our congregations nominate gifted individuals for the next year's Annual Conference ballot. Your nominations help shape the future of the Church of the Brethren! As you prayerfully consider the open positions, who is the Holy Spirit prompting you to nominate for leadership in our denomination?

Please share this request with the leaders and members of your congregation and encourage them to submit nominations. Nominees are needed from every part of the denomination!

The offices to which leaders will be elected this coming year are listed on the next page of this document, along with our election procedures. More detailed information about each office open for nominations is provided at [www.brethren.org/nominations](http://www.brethren.org/nominations). Please note that some nominations must be made according to specific categories and that certain areas of expertise are needed for some offices. If you know people who work in one of the areas from which nominees need to come, please make a special effort to submit the names of those who could make a valuable contribution to our ministry and mission.

Please review the "Call to Accountability" charts, which can also be found at [www.brethren.org/nominations](http://www.brethren.org/nominations) – these demonstrate how we are working toward a balance of gender, age, racial/ethnic, rural/urban, theological, and professional representation among our leadership. The delegate body decided several decades ago and has reaffirmed several times since the importance of this aspirational goal.

**Please submit nominations online via the "2026 Nominations" link at the [www.brethren.org/ac](http://www.brethren.org/ac) website.**

**Note: *You must provide the email address*** of the person you are nominating, so we can send an email to invite your nominees to submit their information online. We cannot consider those who do not respond. Please follow up with those you nominate to make sure they received our email. Please contact us if they did not.

If you do not have internet access, you may request a paper nomination form from the Annual Conference Office by e-mail at [annualconference@brethren.org](mailto:annualconference@brethren.org) or by telephone at 847-429-4364 or 800-323-8039 (and select Annual Conference Office from the menu).

**Submit all nominations by December 3, 2025.**  
The sooner, the better! We appreciate your help.

The Nominating Committee depends upon your knowledge of the gifts and availability of diverse persons who can serve. We ask you to be diligent in your prayers and in your discernment of those who can lead and inspire us in our efforts to follow Jesus together.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact:

The Annual Conference Office at [annualconference@brethren.org](mailto:annualconference@brethren.org)  
or 847-429-4364 or 800-323-8039

or the Annual Conference Secretary at [acsecretary@brethren.org](mailto:acsecretary@brethren.org)

### Offices Open for Nomination for the 2026 Ballot

**Moderator-elect** (one person, 3-year term) Ineligible (past four moderators): David Sollenberger, Tim McElwee, Madalyn Metzger, and Dava Hensley

**Annual Conference Program & Arrangements Committee** (one person, 3-year term)  
Ineligible (member completing a term in 2026): Gail Heisel

**Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board** (one person, 5-year term)  
**from Area 3:** Atlantic Southeast, Shenandoah, Southeastern, Virgina, West Marva  
*Districts not represented on MMB the past 5 years are shown in italics. \*no representation for the past 10 years*

**Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board** (one person, 5-year term)  
**from Area 5:** Idaho, Pacific Northwest, Pacific Southwest  
*Districts not represented on MMB the past 5 years are shown in italics. \*no representation for the past 10 years*

**Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee - Laity** (one person, 5-year term)  
Ineligible (member completing term in 2026): Robert "Bob" McMinn

### Election Procedures

1. From July until December each year, the Nominating Committee gathers *nominations* from across the denomination. This process seeks balance among the nominees between female and male, younger and older, rural and urban, geographic location, theological perspectives, and skill sets.
2. The Nominating Committee meets in early January to prepare a *ballot* of four names for each position. That ballot is distributed only to the current Standing Committee members (those who served at the previous Annual Conference), who keep that ballot confidential. The Standing Committee's vote reduces the ballot to two nominees per position. This is the tentative final ballot that will be presented at the Annual Conference. It is announced to the denomination at large in February (*AC Minutes 2001*).
3. Anyone *making a nomination from the floor* of Annual Conference is required, before presenting the name of a nominee, to offer a rationale for why the existing ballot for a particular position is inadequate. The Annual Conference delegates will be asked to vote on whether to accept a new nomination based on the presented rationale. If a majority of delegates vote to approve, the person may then present the name of an additional nominee. If the motion fails, the intended nomination shall not be presented nor named (*AC Minutes 2023*). If/when a nomination is allowed, biographical information and written consent by the nominee must be submitted to the Annual Conference secretary immediately for publication and distribution (*AC Minutes 1979*).
4. Each year the Nominating Committee explains the *goals*, needs, and procedures of our election process to the Standing Committee and the delegate body. Delegates are reminded to work towards a balance of age/gender/ethnic representation (*AC Minutes 2001*) – see the *Call to Accountability* report at [www.brethren.org/nominations](http://www.brethren.org/nominations). Standing Committee's 1983 "Call to Accountability of Representation on Annual Conference Ballots" also authorized Nominating Committee to use at-large categories in the structure of ballots to correct any imbalances of representation.
5. Congregations, districts, and agencies are called to do quality *leadership development*, giving leadership experience to a wide variety of persons to prepare them for possible denominational leadership, in particular to identify and call forth ethnic/minority leadership. All nominees for denominational leadership are encouraged to have participated in at least one *intercultural experience* in the past five years (*AC Minutes 2001 and 2007*).