

District Executive Minister Report
District Board Meeting - May 4, 2019 - Prices Creek Church of the Brethren

“Working Together, Empowering Disciples” is our mission statement as the district; I want to keep that in front of us as we share in ministry. We are in the midst of dealing with congregations wanting to withdraw from the denomination; congregations who are thriving in exploring mission and ministry to their communities; congregations who are trying to hold their own but are struggling. Church life is changing, sometimes we are able to keep up and sometimes the world and culture around us to changing so rapidly we don’t keep up. The core of who we are as God’s people doesn’t change, but how we live that out and how we share good news has to change. I recently read an article referencing a Gallop poll showing that only about half of Americans claim membership in a church or other religious body, down from 69% 20 years ago. Interestingly, Americans are also becoming less involved in social organizations as well. So what does this say to us? To me it only underscores that we need to be building relationships with people, simply inviting them to an existing church building is not enough. As leaders of this district, I encourage us to be aware of the communities around us and how we might “work together” to “empower disciples.”

I continue to meet with congregations either as a preacher or for ongoing relationship contact or for various issues. Since my last full board report in March,

- * worked with Todd Reish to facilitate a conversation with young adults at Oakland as they considered a new their mission statement - “Love God, Love People, Celebrate Life, Pass it Around”.
- * along with other members of the board, met with the leadership of the Bradford congregation regarding their potential withdrawal.
- * shared the morning message with Brookville as interim pastor Fred Bernhard was away.
- * met with the Beech Grove search team.
- * along with some other members of the district, met with representatives of the Brethren Church and the Brethren in Christ regarding working together on urban ministry in Dayton.
- * attended an open house at New Carlisle in honor of their retiring pastor, Andrew Wright.

We currently have several congregations in some stage of pastoral search. Good Shepherd is continuing an interim pastoral services agreement with Carla Gillespie with a meeting later this month regarding moving into the future; Painter Creek is being served by regular pulpit supply by Phil Reynolds as a partnership with Oakland is being explored; Beech Grove is considering interim possibilities and is using pulpit supply for the time being; Fred Bernhard is serving as interim at Brookville; White Cottage is

working on their profile and is using pulpit supply for the time being. Andrew Wright has retired from his pastorate with New Carlisle; Tara Hornbacker is serving as interim. I express appreciation to each of these persons as they assist in ministry in these congregations and we send best wishes to those pastors beginning new ministries. I have had numerous contacts with pastors and other church leaders on a variety of topics related to their ministries and/or role within the district. I've also met with minister's groups as they gather for study and fellowship. John Warner from BRC and I continue our relationship and friendship as we share in ministry together.

My duties on the Council of District Executives are now serving on the Ministry Advisory Committee and maintaining the Counsel's website. The Council continues to be a place for us to support each other in our common work.

I continue to meet with our commissions as often as possible to share in the ongoing work. Our teams continue their fine work of ministering to the pastors and congregations of the district in addition to ministry for the district at large. I deeply appreciate the dedication, energy and commitment of those serving on our commissions, as well as other committees and the board in roles throughout the District. Enhancing our current ministries and exploring new or reimaged ministries is exciting to behold. It is important that we express our appreciation for one another as we serve together. Appreciation is also expressed to our paid and volunteer staff for all their hard work; we have a great team working together for Southern Ohio/Kentucky.

It continues to be an honor and privilege to serve for and with you all in Southern Ohio/Kentucky, even and especially in the midst of these rather uncertain times. Our teamwork in ministry is such an inspiration as we seek to be faithful followers of Jesus. May we be ever mindful that we need to proceed in an attitude of prayer, of openness to God's Spirit and of continuing the journey as the people of God, filled with grace, love and peace. May we be aware of the presence of God as we seek to fulfill the mission God has given us.

Blessings!

Dave Shetler, District Executive Minister
Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Church of the Brethren