

March, 2021
Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Newsletter
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Christ's Ambassadors Club Invitation to Participate

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

Recently, a new ministry of the Southern Ohio/Kentucky District was born. This task team was formed to look at informing and acting upon racial justice. This Racial Justice Team is currently sponsoring a Lenten series via Zoom. Here is what Jon Keller from our Troy congregation shares about the evolution of his racial bias and his work with the Racial Justice Task Team of the Southern Ohio/Kentucky District.

"Years ago, my daughter Kirstin chose to attend college at the University of Toledo. Although our family gave her a hard time about not attending a Church of the Brethren college, I was excited for the choice she made and the new experiences she was going to have in this urban setting. At the time, I didn't realize how her education and experiences in Toledo were going to challenge me to my core. Kirstin made friends with people of all ethnicities, and even met her now husband, Desmond, a black man, while at UT. When Kirstin and Desmond were friends, I enjoyed joking around with him during visits to campus. But, a few years later, when Desmond asked me if he could marry my daughter, something began to stir deep in my soul that exposed some of the prejudices I held.

"It was not an explicit racism, but an implicit bias, that was ingrained in me by a system in which I grew up. I was always told that racism was wrong, but my environment taught me something else. After a long conversation, I committed with my daughter and son-in-law to walk beside them in full support of their marriage, knowing they would face real challenges in choosing an interracial relationship.

"Little did I know how literal that statement would become on June 1st, 2020 when my daughter asked me to walk with her in a peaceful demonstration in Troy, Ohio after the murder of George Floyd. During this walk and in the days after, I realized the real danger that racism poses to all of our lives, but especially the lives of my son-in-law and two grandchildren.

"Desmond and Kirstin will tell you it took them a long time to find a faith community in which they felt welcome. I am blessed to be in a church that is willing to walk with my daughter, son-in-law, and our family, to learn about racism, and work to bring about racial justice within our own community. Therefore, I would like to thank the District Leadership Team in helping to develop and support the newly-formed District Racial Justice Team." --Pastor Jon Keller, Troy CoB

Your participation in our Ambassador's for Christ Club helps support district ministries such as our Racial Justice Task Team. To date, 45 people have given or pledged \$19,655.00 toward our goal of \$50,000. These are board members, staff and other individuals within our district who wish to see Church of the Brethren congregations in Southern Ohio and Kentucky flourish. Please consider making a pledge, or a donation in one of the following ways.

Go to the district website at www.sodcob.org and click on the “Ambassadors for Christ” link to make a commitment for a future donation.

Donate now by check. Please mark Ambassador's Club on the memo line. Send your check via mail to:

Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Church of the Brethren,
P O Box 785
Greenville, Ohio 45331

Contribute monthly by going to the district website at www.sodcob.org and click on the donate now tab. This will walk you through the process of making a monthly deposit using your credit card.

You also can make a one time donation using your credit card in the same manner.

Either way, with a larger or small gift, you will be helping to give shape to who our district is and what we are about – in providing resources, giving leadership assistance and services to/with congregations and pastors alike. We are in this together, stronger together than we are apart.

Southern Ohio/Kentucky Disaster Ministries Updates

BDM Site Updates/Volunteers – The BDM site in Bayboro, NC was scheduled to close the end of March 2021, but will now remain open an additional month. In April the BDM site in Dayton will also open. Our scheduled volunteer week of April 18-24 in Dayton is full. We are also being asked to fill the same week in Bayboro, NC. Since April is the last month BDM will be in NC, they really need our help. If you are able to travel with us to Bayboro, please contact Burton Wolf at burtw417@yahoo.com or call/text him at 937-287-5902.

Volunteers will also be needed throughout the month of April in Dayton. There will be no overnight housing at that time, and BDM will be using smaller groups. If you are able to help in Dayton during April, let Burton know which days or weeks you will be available. Someone will contact you depending on skills and needs at the time.

Sewing Bee – Come join other sewers making school bags for Church World Service school kits. Bags are pre-cut, so just bring your sewing machine, an extension cord, and a sack lunch. The next Sewing Bee is on Saturday, March 20 at 9:00 AM at Eaton Community Church, 813 Camden Road. For more information call Barb Brower at 937-336-2442. Click here for a flyer showing all the 2021 Sewing Bee dates and locations.

Golf Scramble – Golfers, mark your calendar! On Saturday, August 14, there will be a golf outing at Turtle Creek Golf Course in Greenville. It is a fundraiser sponsored by BDM and Camping and Retreat Ministries of the S. Ohio/KY District. The event will surely look a bit different than those we've held in the past due to COVID. However, we will have the event this year!

Trotwood Church of the Brethren Offers Scholarships

The Trotwood Church of the Brethren has five different scholarships available for students of all ages in the Southern Ohio/Kentucky District. For more information including how to apply for these scholarships, contact the church at office@trotwoodcob.com.

Oakland Church of the Brethren Seeks Youth Ministry Coordinator

The Part Time Youth Ministry Coordinator will take leadership for Oakland youth's discipleship programs so that our youth come to love God, to love people, to celebrate life, and pass it around. This position will require a high-energy, fun-spirited person to develop, direct, and lead Oakland's discipleship programs for youth in grades 7th to 12th. The coordinator will be primary responsible to the following areas: Planning, enacting, and leading youth programs; Calling volunteers to aid in their ministry; Communicating with youth, parents, congregant members, and church leadership. Contact the Oakland Church for a complete profile.

Prayer Needs

A very important way we can be supportive of each other is to lift each other up in prayer.

The 2021 Prayer List for Congregations is posted on the district website (sodcob.org).

The most current information on the church in Nigeria including prayer needs is posted on the denominational website (brethren.org),

- David Balmer, who pastors Flat Creek and Mud Lick congregations in a team with Dwayne Yost, is in a Lexington hospital. David had surgery for a blockage and hopes to return home today, but will need to return for another surgery to resolve another blockage in two weeks. Please be in prayer for David and his wife Betina along with the congregations as David is being treated. David thanks us for the ongoing prayers.

- We continue to lift Bob Cain, retired CEO of the Brethren Retirement Community, as he deals with cancer and is in hospice care

- Staci Peterson, associate pastor at Cincinnati, shares the following concern - "in July 2019, I was diagnosed with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. This is a progressive disease that will continue to get worse. The damage can't be reversed but we can hope to slow its progression. I have been doing well so far with medication to help slow the progression of the disease, pulmonary rehab, and immune suppressants to control my lupus. While the lupus didn't cause the fibrosis, it can make it worse so I have to keep the lupus under control too. I did have to use oxygen for almost a year to help me breathe, but I've improved to the point I don't need it anymore. In the next couple of months, I will be starting the process of testing and evaluation at OSU to see if I'm eligible for a lung transplant. I appreciate prayers for health and guidance with moving forward"

- May we lift those affected by the power and water shortages in Texas as this situation continues.

- There are many reports of medical personnel being pushed beyond limits in caring for those in the hospital and in nursing homes. With news of the vaccine, hope is beginning yet there is still a long way to go before the end of this pandemic. May we lift these persons into the light of God's grace and love as they minister to those who are hurting.

- As a ministry affiliated with the District we have a longstanding and close relationship with the Brethren Retirement Community (BRC). Due to circumstances in the community and regulations, testing continues among residents and staff. Procedures are being conducted to keep our residents and staff safe. There have been a few positive cases and special care is being offered. Some vaccines have been administered.

May we all hold the entire BRC family (residents and their families, staff and their families, BRC Board members and their families) in the light of God's grace, mercy, wisdom, and healing in the coming days.

- As the situation with the coronavirus continues, may we remember those affected by this outbreak. There are many changing directives, regulations and recommendations affecting our country and way of life, may we remember all those adjusting to this changing world.

- May we remember those congregations in pastoral transition - the Constance congregation is exploring a yoked arrangement with Cincinnati with the Cincinnati pastors providing leadership for the next few months. Andrew Wright is serving as interim at Oakland. Donnels Creek is using pulpit supply at this time. Mark Lancaster is serving as interim at Good Shepherd but the congregation has decided to call Mark to the called position, an installation is being planned; Fred Bernhard is serving as interim pastor at Brookville during this time of transition; their profile has been posted. White Cottage has entered an agreement with a neighboring congregation to supply pastoral services during a time of transition and discernment. Tara Hornbacker is serving as interim at New Carlisle.

- There are many issues and situations continuing to face us as we minister in our respective locations, including those who are serving in interim situations and others who are in discernment regarding placement or are considering a move. There are others facing health issues, please keep these situations in prayer.

Please contact Dave if you know of prayer situations of which we should be aware. May we lift each other in prayer as we work to continue the work of Jesus, peacefully, simply, together.