

April, 2021

Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Newsletter
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Reskilling Workshops “Hold-the-Date” Announcement

Presented by Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Climate Justice Task Team

As bearers of God’s image, all people have the responsibility and privilege of caring for God’s creation. Christians in particular should be motivated by Scripture. We ought to love and care for the Earth because it is God’s very good creation, and because we must care for the most vulnerable people on the planet. But we have not done this well. Our day-to-day choices and attitudes are often driven by our culture and lifestyle preferences, not the Bible. The science is clear: because of human activity, we see effects like species extinction and climate change. Lament and repentance are appropriate, but as followers of Jesus we must not despair. We can choose to move forward with “rational hope,” accepting the enormity of the problems we face while taking action with the hope of the Gospel in view. Adapted from Biologos, an online community blog, Dec. 7, 2019.

You are invited to join the District’s Climate Justice Task Team for a series of “Reskilling Workshops” to recapture some of the helpful skills our parents and grandparents used to practice and help save the planet in the process.

Please set aside, Saturday, May 22nd, between 9am and 11:30am, at the “Big Tent” at West Charleston Church of the Brethren, 4817 Ohio Route 202, Tipp City, Ohio. Our goal is to have four sets of reskilling workshops running over this two-hour period. We will have two choices for each hour and have a brief opening and closing worship for the day together. There will be a children’s area for kid’s activities so feel free to bring your little ones.

This event is free and open to the public. Please make sure to wear your mask.

Topics we hope to cover:

- 1) Alternative energy sources and how to adapt them to your home
- 2) Creative ways to generate less waste and use less plastic
- 3) Introduction to sustainable gardening
- 4) Identifying, buying and planting native species for planting at home

Please contact Pastor Mark Lancaster at Good Shepherd Church of the Brethren, should you have questions. Phone: 937 667 3476 or 510 809 6721/ Email: marklancaster116@gmail.com

Nigeria School Bus Appeal

As most of us are aware, with kidnappings on the rise in Nigeria and with an ever-increasing number of girl children being abducted to become child brides for members of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, more precautions are necessary to keep them safe.

You may also be aware that Covid-19 has wreaked devastating havoc on the participation of all Nigerian children, especially girls, in formal education. Parents have often not been able to work and bring in income for many months. Even the little that it might cost to pay for their children to ride public transportation to school is no longer affordable. Even if such public transport could be afforded, it has become more and more dangerous for younger children to take such transportation. A deep concern is that if children fear going to school, the entire society will begin to unravel. And as we all know, when you educate children, especially girls, you change the world for the better. The opposite can also be true. Our lack of support for such education initiatives in places like Nigeria becomes not just benign neglect but active participation in the crippling of entire societies.

Musa Mambula's daughter, the head of school at the TCNN primary school has recently communicated with Pastor Mark Lancaster, Good Shepherd CoB. Musa was an interim pastor for two years in our District and was the provost for a time at TCNN in Jos, which was founded by EYN in Nigeria as a seminary.

They are requesting funds to purchase a bus that would allow them to pick up and return girls and boys to school safely. The total cost of the bus is \$10,500. We are reaching out to you, the congregations in the Southern Ohio/Kentucky District of the Church of the Brethren hoping and praying that we can work together to raise funds. The Good Shepherd Church of the Brethren has particularly committed itself to raising funds for this school bus initiative. The Global Women's Project of the Church of the Brethren has also committed \$500 toward this effort and Brethren World Mission has given \$2500, along with \$700 from our congregation. I hope and pray that you will join us in this effort. An offering of any size that you might consider would be greatly appreciated.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mark Lancaster if you have questions. If you or your congregation would like to participate in this effort, please write your check payable to: Good Shepherd Church of the Brethren and send it to: Pastor Mark Lancaster, 4519 Sweet Potato Ridge Road, Englewood, Ohio 45322. Be sure to write "Nigerian bus appeal" in the memo line.

Christ's Ambassadors Club Invitation to Participate

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

II Corinthians 5:20

Our 2020 virtual District conference theme, Ambassadors for Christ reminded us again who we are and what we are about as a district with first-person videos, inspiring worship, reports that inform the person in the pew, and challenging questions that seek future answers. With the conference theme still ringing in our ears, the Resource and Development Commission of our District Board is inviting you to join us along with the district staff and board and conference delegates in making a direct contribution to "The Ambassadors for Christ Club". This fund was established to help underwrite the varied ministries of our district in 2021.

One of our most important ministries is that of our District Executive. Dave spends countless hours helping congregations and individuals discern their call and finding a way to answer that call. Following is a story of how God used his ministry in the life of Paula Ulrich.

"We never really know where the Spirit-wind will blow us. I thought I was well settled into my ministry at the Brethren Retirement Community. There was so much that I loved! But sometimes the Spirit will not leave us alone. It blows so hard that we find ourselves holding on for dear life! An image that comes to mind when I think about this is of someone (I guess me!) holding on to a tree trunk with my bare hands while a fierce wind blows my entire body off the ground! Even if we let go of the tree, we have no idea where we will tumble, and whether we will be able to right ourselves again once the wind dies down. It's really rather unsettling, and even frightening!

That Spirit-wind began moving in me during the summer of 2019. I resisted, but finally began to talk with our District Executive, Dave Shelter, about it. I completed my ministry profile in October 2019. And while I didn't have a call to another ministry, I realized in January 2020 that it was time for me to prepare to leave.

I planned to stay through the spring choir season and special services, things that were near and dear to my heart. And I was poised to tender my letter of resignation when the coronavirus came along! That was awkward. I decided to wait. I even contemplated staying. But then, again, that relentless, incorrigible Spirit-wind began to blow up! This time, I knew I needed to listen. And Dave's kind guidance and support were invaluable during this process, reassuring me that even during a pandemic, it's okay to respond to the Spirit's unexplainable timing!

I announced my resignation, bringing my ministry to a close at BRC at the end of August. And while I was doing that, leadership of the Oakland congregation began talking to Dave about some of the church's needs that might be met by my gifts! Oakland, too, is in a time of transition with a fabulous part-time interim pastor, Andrew Wright. And especially during this season, there are areas that could use an extra boost of TLC (and that's not "The Learning Channel," but rather "tender loving care"). They wondered whether I might be interested in providing that additional support in pastoral care, as well as focusing on the music ministry of the church.

And so we began a series of conversations, curated by Dave. We talked about the congregation's needs. We talked about what I might offer. The Spirit-wind has uncanny ways. With the Leadership Team's approval, we discerned new possibilities together. A new ministry position, calling me as Associate Pastor, was brought to the congregation on November 15th, and I received the call. And so, this Advent, I am delightfully surprised by and somewhat in awe of the Spirit's timing. I am joining a wonderful team in ministry, comprised of staff and countless, faithful volunteers. As a new adventure begins, this is where I have tumbled; and it turns out that hands were there to catch me all along." Paula Ulrich--Assistant Pastor, Oakland CoB

Continued 

Your participation in our Ambassador's for Christ Club helps support district ministries such as making these pastoral services available. To date, 47 people have given or pledged \$20,355.00 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.

1. 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.
2. 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
3. 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.

2021 Camp Registration is open!

The Camping and Retreat Ministries have opened registration for the summer camp season. Everyone can come to camp from the safety of their homes. No masks are required on the Zoom connections. It will be great to see friends and have an exciting time together learning about God's creation and ways we can build up our communities. There will be Bible study, music, games, activities, crafts, and special surprises at each camp. Camps begin on June 7, 2021 and end the week of July 30, 2021, taking a break the week of Annual Conference.

Pre K to 2nd Grade Camp will meet on Mondays, at 10:00 am. Get ready to investigate light and ways we are the light of the world to others. We will work with water and the shape of our Earth. Exploring seasons and changes in God's world should be interesting. Together we will see how animals and people are a big part of creation. Through our games, study, crafts, and play, camp will help us all feel inspired to care for creation and each other.

3rd to 5th Grade Camp meets on Tuesdays, at 10:00 am. This camp will work on seeing God's light in new ways. How do we use God's living water is a question we will explore. Can campers make a mandala? We will learn about praying with movement when talking with God. Would someone like to learn to make origami animals? Who is a super hero in your life? Questions like this will the spark of discussions and activities. This camp will also help us see ways to serve others in God's creation.

6th to 8th Grade Camp meets Wednesdays, at 10:00 am. Campers will explore ways to find light. Can campers create artwork by spilling outside the lines? Earth and plant connections should capture our thinking. We may learn how to pass a prayer. Can campers be challenged to change? What are things we have in common with animals? Did God give campers gifts? How can campers make life a little cleaner? These questions and others will be tackled as we learn many new ideas and skills at camp.

9th to 12th Grade Camp gets together at 4:00 pm, on Thursdays. We will look at light being an invitation and a counterbalance to darkness. Stewardship of Earth will also be a topic to explore. Maybe we will see if we can form prayers from clay. Can we learn from others through sharing joys and concerns? Campers will have the change to study ecosystems and food-to-plate ideas. Ancient creation stories will present food for thought to this group. Throughout this camp, participants will catch hold of the awe and wonder of God's creation.

College and Careers Camp is our new camp which will meet at 7:00, on Tuesday evenings. This camp is for campers who are out of high school and in the workforce or college. The evenings will give campers a place to discuss God's leading in their lives. Together we will explore how choices we are making impact creation. By gathering together, campers can reflect on daily ups and downs or changes being faced. Self-expression will

be encouraged with water colors, clay, crafts, and creative writing. This new and very special camp will have fun finding the fascinating ways creation is speaking to us.

Family Camp is Friday evenings at 7:00. This intergenerational camp calls all families, no matter the number of people in a family or age. Single people are encouraged to join in the fun and activities. As we gather together, we will have time to discover Jesus as God's light in the world. We'll explore the importance of water in our life and spirits. Our Family Camp will help us recognize what creation may be telling us. Through creative play, we will see how God is with us through all seasons. Some lessons will uncover the ways we are interdependent with creation, and challenge us as caretakers of Earth. Everyone one will have the opportunity to express their own ideas in crafts, activities, and art.

Pieceful Quilting Camp Is Back! August 18 - 21 is all set for our Pieceful Quilting Camp at Bergamo Center. This is the only in-person camp this summer. Bergamo has strict rules including the wearing of face masks, keeping a safe distance apart, and only single sleeping rooms. But we get to be "together" again for quilting camp. The costs have increased due to many factors. It will be \$400, per person which includes three nights lodging, eight meals, and the use of the Darby Room. Pack all those fabrics, sewing machines, needles, and snacks. There will be the customary service project as well as new ideas presented. Don't forget the show-and-tell projects on which you have been working. It might take us two nights to share all the things completed (or started). We will have another wonderful time together. More information will be coming for those who register online.

Southern Ohio/Kentucky Disaster Ministries Updates

Volunteer Opportunities in Dayton – On April 12 the BDM site in Dayton will reopen after pausing for the winter months. Volunteers are needed for April 12-16 and 26-30. There will be crews of four or five volunteers working in Trotwood on a house damaged by the Memorial Day tornadoes. The volunteer housing site will not open until May, when volunteers will come from other districts. S. Ohio/KY BDM also has volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Click here for a flyer with all the 2021 trip dates. To volunteer, call/text Burt Wolf at 937-287-5902 or SouthernOhioBDM@gmail.com.

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, April 24 at 9:00 AM at Greenville COB, 421 Central Avenue. There will be work for non-sewers, preparing school kit items for the assembly this summer. For more information call Barb Brower at 937-336-2442. Click here for a flyer showing all the 2021 Sewing Bee dates and locations.

BDM Meeting – Our next meeting will be April 8 at 7:00 PM, a week later than usual due to Maundy Thursday. We will meet in-person at Happy Corner COB. Please enter at the front door, wear a mask, and keep 6' physical distancing. There will also be a Zoom option.

Mark your Calendar –

August 19 - School Kit Assembly

September 30 - Cleanup Bucket Assembly

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

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

- It is with sadness that I share with you that Bob Cain, former Brethren Retirement Community CEO, passed away early Saturday morning. For over two years Bob has courageously fought esophageal cancer. During his 20 year career at BRC, Bob provided steady leadership as the organization rebuilt after some very difficult times. Our prayers are with Dot, Mike and family for God's peace, comfort and strength for the days ahead. Arrangements are still pending and will be shared when available.

- Larry Lutz, pastor of the Piqua congregation, shares the following prayer concern - "I am asking for prayers for Angela Kesauer. Angela is my niece and had surgery for a cancerous brain tumor a few months ago. A MRI has shown the tumor has returned and she will need another surgery. This has taken a toll on her and my sister Karen and her husband Pete along with Angela. Angela also has a 9 year old disabled daughter who Cathy and I have been helping with so the grandparents can work when both need to be gone at the same time since Angela cannot take care of her daughter by herself at this time."

- 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"

- 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. Some visitations have resumed with protocols in place.

--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. 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 he should be aware. May we lift each other in prayer as we work to continue the work of Jesus, peacefully, simply, together.