



We are a sharing, loving fellowship of Christian believers, rooted in biblical faith, that actively seeks and celebrates God. We desire to praise, love and serve with all our hearts in our faith community and to reach out to our neighbors, continuing the work of Jesus peacefully, simply, together.

In God we find the source of all our joy. Hallelujah!

August 2020

Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren

Vol. 45, No. 8

From our Pastor...

For my pastor's page this month, I'd like to share a few words that originally came from a pastoral colleague named Josh Brown. I read his words recently and they really resonated with me, especially during this pandemic. I hope they will give you some insight into what it's like to be your pastor.

As Your Pastor...

I will let you down.

I won't be able to answer all of your questions.

I won't get mad about everything you are mad about.

I will miscommunicate.

I will forget things that are important to you.

Also,

I will care for you deeply.

I will pray for you often.

I will allow your opinion of me to matter more than it should.

I will lose sleep over you.

I will be deeply troubled by your criticism.

I will be frustrated when you reflect Christ or his Church poorly.

I will wonder if I'm reflecting Christ and his Church well.

I will do everything in my power to be there for you.

I will listen to you and hear you.

I will prepare and preach God's word with all my might every week.

I will obey Jesus, sometimes you may not like that.

God called me to you, to love you, and to lead you. It's a privilege and an honor.

I will never take it lightly.

Thank you for trusting me to be your pastor, today and every day.

In gratitude,
Pastor Lauren



...those limited or confined for health reasons: **Cathy Banks, Faith Eikenberry, Marcheta Pletcher.**

We also uphold these members, friends and family members of our congregation who have prayer concerns:

**Judy Brooks
Bill Lemon
Rochelle Lovelace**

District Prayer Calendar – August

- Aug. 2 Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren
- Aug. 9 Principe de Paz Iglesia de los Hermanos (Santa Ana)
- Aug. 16 San Diego Church of the Brethren
- Aug. 23 Glendale Church of the Brethren
- Aug. 30 Cristo Genesis Iglesia de los Hermanos (Los Angeles)

Please correct your Directory:

Graham Lovelace (cell phone only please)
909-230-2377



Birthdays & Anniversaries This Month!

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

- 3) Gary Deal
- 12) Marcheta Pletcher
- 15) Brittany Herndon
- 23) Twila Pruitt
- 30) Hannah Mundy

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

- 5) John & Janet Short 2012

***Virtual* Annual Walk for the Hungry and Homeless**

It's almost time for the annual Walk for the Hungry and Homeless! But how do we do it when we need to practice social distancing? We have a Virtual walk instead! So what is a virtual walk? I'm glad you asked. All you need to do is walk/run/skip/hop/bike for 5 km anywhere. How far is 5 km? Just a little more than 3 miles. What is the date for the walk? Any time from September 12 to September 20. That's 19 days! All you have to do is walk/run/skip/hop/bike for a total of 3.1 miles over 19 days! You don't even have to do it all on the same day. Just as long as your total over the 19 days is at least 3.1 miles.

Sponsoring people is a little different. If you know someone who is walking /running /skipping /hopping/biking, you could give them checks made out to "Inland Valley Hope Partners," and they will send them to the Inland Valley Hope Partners. If you want a sponsor sheet, just email me at sandereller@gmail.com, and I'll email you one.

But if you're going to write a check to the IVHP, instead of giving it to the walker, you could also just send it to IVHP, at 1753 N. Park Ave., Pomona CA 91773. As long as IVHP gets the money, it's all good. See you (virtually) on the walk!

~~Sander Eller

August Commission Zoom Meetings

Executive Committee – Thurs., Aug. 6, 1:00 p.m.

Service & Outreach: Wed., Aug 12, 4:00 p.m.

Stewards: Wed., Aug. 12, 6:00 p.m.

Music & Worship: Thurs., Aug. 13, 11:00 a.m.



Gene Hipskind 1941 to 2020

Reverend Gene Hipskind, 78, passed away peacefully in his sleep in his home from complications due to health issues on July 11th. Gene was born in Wenatchee, Washington to Glenn and Frances Hipskind in 1941. Gene would say you would know for sure if you were from Washington by how you said it, "Washington" or "Worshington". His sense of humor was something that always started or ended a conversation. His jokes weren't all funny but there never seemed to be a shortage. His daughter Joy had a special relationship with Gene and understood his humor. They had grown into a habit of saying "joke?" When things were stressful, before saying something silly to break the tension. Gene's ability to look at life with humor and calm made him into a role model and leader for many.

Gene graduated from Bridgeport High School, where he found his calling to join the church at a young age. He attended the University of La Verne, where he met Linda, his love and partner for life. They married in June of 1965, immediately after their graduation, and moved to Illinois where he studied at the Bethany School of Theology and received his Masters of Divinity in 1968. Gene's ministry called him to churches in Oregon, California, Indiana, Idaho, and Ohio. His last calling was as the Pacific Southwest District Executive for the Church of the Brethren. He celebrated 50 years of ordination in 2018.

The Church and teaching was a constant in his life and he considered himself a lifelong learner. After retirement Gene was often sought out for his counsel and he continued to preach whenever the opportunity arose. He was a member of the Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren in Pomona, California and in Boise he attended Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship.

He loved the outdoors and riding his bike. Together Gene and Linda spent a lifetime seeing all that nature had to offer. Including multiple trips to many beaches, Pismo Beach being one of their favorites. Riding their bikes on the Hiawatha Trail was one of their favorite biking adventures.

Gene also had a passion for classical music. He was a season pass holder for the Boise Philharmonic and before he was restricted by health he sang in the Boise Philharmonic Master Chorale. He spent many years singing with Linda in the Master Chorale and in other Chorale groups depending on where they lived. One of his fondest memories and accomplishments was performing with Opera Idaho in "Die Fledermaus".

He especially loved spending time with his family. Gene rarely missed his grandkids sporting events and musical concerts when they were young and he enjoyed talking with them and sharing stories as they grew into young adults. He felt blessed to be accepted into the extended family of his son in law Jason. Joy's sister-in-law Tonia, her husband Brian and their daughters Gabrielle and Miranda, always welcomed him into their home and treated him with warmth and love. Joy's father in-law Terry considered Gene a friend and together they have acted as pillars of strength during difficult times and shared in celebration during good times.

Gene is preceded in death by his father and mother Glenn and Frances and his wife Linda. He is survived by his daughter Joy (Jason) Shaffer Boise, Id, granddaughter Arielle Shaffer (Britain Winkelman) Eagle, Id, grandson Alex Shaffer (Shannon Murray) Eugene, Or, granddaughter Lindsey Shaffer Boise, Id, son Kirk (Spokane) multiple cousins and aunts and uncles in Washington and Texas states.

Services will be announced at a later date due to the current safety concerns for gathering and travel. Announcements will be communicated through the Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship and Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren newsletters. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Heifer Project International or locally to the Boise Philharmonic Master Chorale.

**TRAIL THOUGHTS
TREKKING TOWARD GOD'S
ADVENTUROUS FUTURE
A QUARTERLY PASTORAL LETTER FROM
PAUL MUNDEY, MODERATOR, CHURCH
OF THE BRETHREN**

SUMMER 2020 - GOSPEL

**GREETINGS IN THE STRONG NAME OF
JESUS!**

It's no secret; the Church is often conflicted and polarized. But why? In part, it's because we differ in our understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

For some, the Gospel is primarily Good News concerning life after death; for others, it is primarily Good News concerning life after birth. The Gospel, however, is both, as Jesus prays: "Thy Kingdom come [O God] on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10 RSV; emphasis added).

The Gospel's archenemy is sin, for sin sabotages the prospect of life—either life after death or birth. Thus, adjacent to Jesus' call to Kingdom life today/tomorrow is a summons to address ungodly thought/action—sin. Forgive us our debts and trespasses (Matthew 6:12). We need to reckon with sin, acknowledging its severity, for any thought/behavior rebellious to God (e.g., sin) is deadly, poisoning every system of life. John Piper itemizes the atrocity. Sin is: "The glory of God not honored. The holiness of God not revered. The greatness of God not admired. The power of God not praised. The truth of God not sought. The wisdom of God not esteemed. The beauty of God not treasured. The goodness of God not savored. The faithfulness of God not trusted. The promises of God not believed. The commandments of God not obeyed. The justice of God not respected. The wrath of God not feared. The grace of God not cherished. The presence of God not prized. The person of God not loved." 1

But here's the rub: sin is not only individual but systemic, not only personal but societal. Thus, as we "preach the Gospel," the Gospel is not only Good News for sinners, but those "sinned against,"

specifically, those sinned against by principalities and powers foreign to God. Systemic expressions of inequity such as racism loom large, blighting individuals and networks, sinning against vast numbers of persons and, in turn, the holiness, greatness, power, truth, wisdom, beauty, goodness, faithfulness, promises, commandments, justice, and person of God.

For some, connecting the Gospel to systemic sin is problematic, equal to affirming the social gospel movement of the early 20th century. That brings concern, for, as Elise Daniel points out, the social gospel movement inferred that "... God's Kingdom is built by us." But as Daniel goes on to note: "It's not. Every part of the Kingdom, from its establishment to its construction and eventual consummation, is carried out by Christ. [Yes, Christ uses] us...in this endeavor...[but] we aren't building the Kingdom. God is building it and using us." It's a subtle distinction.

Central to the Gospel's advancement, then, is costly participation in Christ. Imperative to such bonding is dying to anything that captivates us other than the Savior. Paul portrays such surrender graphically: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20 NIV). Michael Gorman clarifies Paul's intent: as we're crucified with Christ, we meld with Christ, receiving "...God's gracious act of [deliverance] from the power of Sin and [restoration] to right covenant relationship with himself, the righteous/just God, through the Messiah's faithful, loving death and resurrection, giving [us] new life..."

As Gorman infers, restoration of relationship is central to the Gospel. Restoration to God is paramount, but biblically, restoration is also to occur with self, significant others, and all of Creation. For the goal of the Gospel, as made vivid in Revelation, is the restoration of all of life—New Creation. "I saw Heaven and earth new-created...Look! I'm making everything new" (Revelation 21:1,5 MSG). "Then the Angel showed me Water-of-Life River, crystal bright. It flowed

from the Throne of God and the Lamb...The Tree of Life was planted on each side of the River...The leaves of the Tree are for healing the nations. Never again will anything be cursed...His servants will offer God service—worshiping...their foreheads mirroring God. Never again will there be any night...The shining of God...is all the light anyone needs. And they will rule with him age after age after age" (Revelation 22:1-5 MSG).

It is God's vision of everything new—the healing of self, relationships, church, nations, creation, flowing from God and the Lamb (Jesus)—that we're to anticipate, contribute to, and preach. Such a synergy of health is the Gospel of Jesus, in all its fullness, destined to transform all of life.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Alyosha notes the attraction of persons to an elder in the monastery Alyosha is frequenting. Alyosha did not "...wonder why they loved him so, why they fell down before him and wept with emotion merely at seeing his face. Oh! he understood that for the humble soul of the Russian peasant worn out by grief and toil, and still more by the everlasting injustice and everlasting sin, his own and the world's, it was the greatest need and comfort to find some one or something holy to fall down before and worship. 'Among us [Alyosha reflects] there is sin, injustice, and temptation, but yet, somewhere on earth, there is someone holy and exalted. He has the truth; he knows the truth; so it is not dead upon the earth; so it will come one day to us, too, and rule over all the earth according to the promise...' [And so, Alyosha concludes, the elder] 'carries in his heart the secret of renewal for all: that power which will, at last, establish truth on the earth, and all men will be holy and love one another, and there will be no more rich nor poor, no exalted nor humbled, but all will be as the children of God, the true Kingdom of Christ will come.' That was the dream in Alyosha's heart" as well.

I pray that dream is in our heart also. For Alyosha's dream is the Savior's dream, the very heart of Jesus---and in turn, the heart of the Gospel---that we're to proclaim, boldly, in Jesus' holy name!

With expectation,
Paul Munday, Moderator, Church of the Brethren

Moderator's Town Hall
Faith, Science, and COVID-19, Part Two
Thursday, August 13
7 p.m. Eastern

Annual Conference Moderator Paul Munday is excited to announce another Moderator's Town Hall on Thursday, August 13th, 2020 at 7 PM EDT. The topic will be "Faith, Science, and COVID-19, Part Two."

A special focus will be the current reality of the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on the reopening of churches.

Dr. Kathryn Jacobsen, Professor in the Department of Global and Community Health at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, will once again be joining Paul to continue answering your questions and bring us the latest information about the COVID-19 crisis. Dr. Jacobsen is a specialist in infectious disease epidemiology and global health who has consulted with a number of organizations during this pandemic. She is also a member of the Oakton Church of the Brethren, Oakton, Virginia, valuing her connection to faith and the Church of the Brethren.

To register for the town hall, please visit: tinyurl.com/modtownhallaug2020

You are encouraged to sign up early, as the event is limited to the first 500 registrants.

Questions about registering for this event can be emailed to cobmoderators townhall@gmail.com. Questions related to COVID-19, etc., are to be submitted the night of the event.

Giving to denominational ministries falls behind

As of the end of April, giving to Church of the Brethren denominational ministries had fallen short of giving during the same months in 2019. The shortfall was significant, amounting to more than \$320,000.

Congregational giving for the first four months of 2020 totaled \$816,761, falling short of last year by \$220,031. Individual giving totaled \$306,961, behind by \$103,568.

The **core ministries fund**, which supports many fundamental areas of work and is considered crucial to denominational program, saw giving fall \$113,000 behind last year at the same time. Congregational giving totaled \$520,096, behind by \$93,036, and individual giving fell behind by \$20,087.

The **Emergency Disaster Fund** also

received less in donations as of April, totaling \$259,747 but down \$111,071 from 2019.

Donations to the **Global Food Initiative** totaled \$36,690 as of April, down \$12,663 from 2019.

The denomination's self-funding ministries also lost income because of the pandemic. As of April, **Brethren Press's** curriculum sales were down and gross sales were under budget by almost \$40,000. The **Annual Conference Office**, following the cancellation of the 2020 Conference, was in process of refunding registration fees and anticipated a significant deficit. **Material Resources** stopped operating for a time at the start of the pandemic and saw a significant decline in income, resulting in a net deficit of \$72,161 as of April.

EDF directs grants to congregations for COVID-19 work

Brethren Disaster Ministries has directed a first round of grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund to congregations doing pandemic-related humanitarian work, among other grants.

The COVID-19 Pandemic Grants program began in late April. Fourteen grants totaling \$58,100 were given to congregations across the US. An allocation of \$75,000 has been made for a second round.

Other grants:

- \$65,000 finances Brethren Disaster Ministries tornado rebuilding in the area of Dayton, Ohio.
- \$20,000 supports the coronavirus response of Church World Service.
- \$10,000 has been given to Bittersweet Ministries for feeding programs in Mexico.
- \$8,000 supports the Rwandan Church of the Brethren aid for vulnerable families.



On Earth Peace joins SCN, Leadership Team responds

During the **On Earth Peace** board meetings held April 2-4 via Zoom, it announced a decision to join the Supportive Communities Network (SCN) of the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests. The April meetings also included conversation about strategic directions and the On Earth Peace commitment to anti-racism.

The Church of the Brethren Leadership Team responded May 18 with a statement noting the decision to join SCN raised policy questions. "Although On Earth Peace is a separately incorporated agency and can therefore make decisions apart from the discernment of Annual Conference, On Earth Peace's decision to join the Supportive Communities Network conflicts with On Earth Peace's official agreement to serve as an Annual Conference agency," the statement said, in part.

"When an Annual Conference agency

joins a special interest group that promotes and acts outside the agreements discerned by Annual Conference . . . it places itself over and against the decisions of the Annual Conference and no longer represents the whole of the church. . . . The Leadership Team believes that On Earth Peace's decision is of sufficient consequence to require On Earth Peace to enter into intentional, serious, prayerful engagement with the Standing Committee and the delegate body of Annual Conference. The Leadership Team believes an outcome of that engagement should be a determination of On Earth Peace's Annual Conference agency status."

The Leadership Team includes general secretary David A. Steele; Annual Conference moderator Paul Munday, moderator-elect David Sollenberger, secretary James M. Beckwith; and Cynthia S. Sanders representing the Council of District Executives.

Seminary and academy celebrate graduates

Thirteen graduates of Bethany Seminary received diplomas this year. Bethany canceled in-person commencement but each graduate received a box with their diploma and celebratory gifts. Graduates also received a video greeting and personalized blessing from president Jeff Carter and dean Steve Schweitzer.



The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership announced that 10 students completed their ministry training program. The six receiving certificates from Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano de la Iglesia de Los Hermanos represent the first graduating class from SeBAH-COB. All academy graduates will receive certificates during celebrations in their districts.

Bethany's graduates:

Master of Divinity: John Andrew Fillmore, Caldwell, Idaho, with honors in Biblical Studies, Ministry Studies, and Theological Studies; Susan K. Liller, New Carlisle, Ohio, with honors in Ministry Studies; Thomas Michael McMullin, Minburn, Iowa; Katherine Lynn Polzin, Defiance, Ohio, with honors in Ministry Studies; Raul Gregorio Rivera Arroyo, Vega Baja, P.R., and Kettering, Ohio; Jack Richard Roegner, Richmond, Ind.; M. Elizabeth Ullery Swenson, Olympia, Wash.

Master of Arts: Duane Edwin Crumrine, Martinsburg, Pa.; Paul Bala Samura, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination: Eric William Bader, Columbia, Mo.; Amy Beth Lutes, Nashville, Tenn.; Joanna Davidson Smith, McPherson, Kan.; Rachel Elizabeth Ulrich, Richmond, Ind.

The academy graduates:

Training in Ministry: Robert Eugene Hollenberg, Northern Indiana District; Kristie D. Prejean, Southern Plains District; Ernest B. Shoemaker, Virgina District; Mike Trott, Mid-Atlantic District

SeBAH-COB: Mayra Calix, Atlantic Northeast District; Nertha Castro, Atlantic Northeast District; Egda Franco, Atlantic Northeast District; Arlyn Morales, Atlantic Northeast District; Aida Sanchez, Atlantic Southeast District; Rebeca Zapata, Pacific Southwest District

Personnel notes

Jeanne Davies started June 1 as executive director of the Anabaptist Disabilities Network, following Eldon Stoltzfus' resignation for health reasons. Davies had been the ADN program director. An ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, she has been pastor of Parables Community, West Dundee, Ill.

Pauline Liu began May 18 as orientation assistant for Brethren Volunteer Service, working for three months to help with summer orientation. She is a former BVS volunteer and a master's degree student at Northern Arizona University.

BVS orientation goes virtual

Brethren Volunteer Service has transitioned summer orientation to a virtual event on July 26–Aug. 7. Instead of the usual three-week, in-person orientation, Unit 325 will have a two-week virtual orientation while volunteers are quarantined after arriving at their projects. BVS staff will work ahead of orientation to help volunteers discern their project placements.

Retirement communities suffer COVID-19 outbreaks

At least three Church of the Brethren-related retirement communities have suffered COVID-19 outbreaks as of mid-June:

Brethren Village in Lititz, Pa., had an outbreak among residents and staff in April and early May. On May 7, the community reported the final death in the outbreak that claimed seven lives among residents in skilled nursing memory support. A total of 13 residents and 11 staff contracted the disease. In online statements the community expressed

sympathy to families who lost loved ones, and to the staff who cared for residents "as they would their own family."

Peter Becker Community in Harleysville, Pa., dealt with an outbreak that started April 21, when a first case was diagnosed in a staff member in skilled nursing. The outbreak affected 39 residents and 10 staff, and several residents died. The last death was reported May 26. Expressing sympathy to the families of those who died, the community reported stringent protocols including

placing affected staff in quarantine at home, notifying public health officials, following procedures recommended by the CDC, establishing an isolation wing for residents with COVID-19, and twice testing all residents in skilled nursing.

Cross Keys Village in New Oxford, Pa., started testing all residents and staff in its Health Care Center on May 18. As of May 22, three residents and six staff tested positive but none showed symptoms. The community announced it would continue testing as needed.

