

WESTERN PLAINS DISTRICT CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN  
**THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE**

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**Take Up YOUR Cross!**

With all our talk about “discipleship” it is possible to miss something very important—namely, the *meaning* of discipleship! In biblical times association with Jesus became increasingly dangerous, especially as the growing crowds listening to Jesus began to look more and more like anti-Roman revolutionaries. So in those days talk about the threat of execution on a Roman cross made sense. But today...?

In the world most of us twenty-first century disciples know, few face the threat of government inspired execution. Actually, many will think of following Christ as a church member as a *benefit*. This is a “Christian” country, after all, and so you can’t be a *real* American without being a Christian. Far from threatening death, Christian discipleship can even seem more a way to escape both literal and figurative death.

The illusion that the most satisfying goal in life is to escape death is enticing. From the beginning some have been attracted to Christ, thinking that he offers a way to avoid “crosses.” To follow Jesus should mean wealth and power and glory and even a way to escape mortality itself. Who wouldn’t want that *benefit*?

The reality of such devotion, however, is that the preservation and improvement of one’s own life is still the number one concern. That, Jesus says, is not what makes a genuine disciple. And what does?

Three things: a genuine disciple must first dethrone self. We must set aside the deadly myopia that puts “me” at the center of the universe. Second, we must take up our own cross. That has several implications for us. First, our discipleship does not mean escaping the struggles and sorrows of life. We follow a crucified Savior! It is not accurate to say that Christ fought bravely against death as long as he was able. Instead, Christ poured out his life for the sake of others. Second, discipleship means taking responsibility for the work of Christ. Christ once announced to a little group of terrified disciples that he was sending those disciples out with the very mission with which God had sent him. Accepting the work of Christ as one’s own is taking up your own Cross. And third, in addition to dethroning self and taking personal responsibility for continuing the work of Christ, disciples continue to learn from Jesus, imitating him, becoming more like Christ as his Spirit continues to permeate all of life.

“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” *Matthew 16:24 NRSV*

Robert W. Dell

## Camp Leader Training

Ministry of Reconciliation trainer [Rick Polhamus](#) will be offering conflict transformation training to Church of the Brethren camp leaders during **Regional Youth Conference** on **Saturday morning, April 18, 2009** in the **McPherson Church of the Brethren social room**, with topics including conflict analysis, communication skills, and mediation. The workshop will begin at 8:45 am and end at 11:45 am. Camp leaders who have attended this training in the past have consistently commented that the skills they learned not only proved helpful in working with the children at camp, but also for getting along with each other as colleagues!

This 3-hour workshop is open and free to all past, present and potential camp leaders (staff, trustees,

managers, commission members, directors, adult counselors, junior counselors (who aren't attending RYC), cooks, etc.), regardless of whether they are attending any other part of Regional Youth Conference. In addition, it is being offered at a time when the Youth attending RYC will be engaged in an activity that allows their Youth group (and district) leaders to be free for this training.

This training opportunity is being brought to Western Plains District through a grant from On Earth Peace and Ministry of Reconciliation, and it is sponsored by the Outdoor Ministries Commission (OMC). If you plan to attend the workshop, please email Andy Ullom (Chair of OMC) at [ulloma@mcpherson.edu](mailto:ulloma@mcpherson.edu).

## Camp Mt. Hermon Fundraiser

Greetings to the churches of the Western Plains District! Last spring the trustees for Camp Mt. Hermon had their annual spring meeting, in this meeting several things were brought to our attention concerning the camp and its upkeep. We are fortunate, in our district, to have two church camps for our youth to attend, Camp Colorado and Camp Mt. Hermon.

As we are in the midst of a transformational movement in our district, let us not forget the important role these camps play in the development of our youth, in whom lies the future of our church and heritage. In the past, Camp Mt. Hermon has received funds from another church group who has rented the campground on an annual basis. This church has recently been able to build their own such campground which affects Camp Mt. Hermon through a loss in revenue. In an effort to bring in more such renters, as well as maintaining the existing buildings and grounds, the trustees have decided to set a fundraising goal of \$35,000. We know this is a lot of money to ask for especially during the rough economic time we now find ourselves in. But if you see the kids at these camps...what they are learning about our Lord and His people, the ideas they are forming together for our denominations future, it is well worth the extra effort to continue making it possible for them to attend a Brethren summer church camp.

Over the past few years, we have all become familiar with the term "miraculous expectation", so we have set the goal and we leave the rest up to God. We are confident in expecting miracles to happen! If anyone would like to make a contribution please send it to the district office at: P.O. Box 394 McPherson, Ks. 67460. Please write Camp Mt. Hermon fundraiser on memo line. For more information and a full copy of this letter please go to [www.campmthermon.org](http://www.campmthermon.org)

-- Joanna Smith, for Camp Mt. Hermon Trustees

## April is Child Abuse Awareness Month

*"Child abuse prevention is good for the Church as well as the Children."*

From the 1991 Child Abuse Prevention Handbook



Children depend upon adults...

Children learn from adults...

Children teach adults...

Children are a gift from God.

Children and adults need each other.

From the 1986 Conditions of Childhood statement

During April and throughout the year, the Caring Ministries of the Church of the Brethren encourages all individuals and congregations to play a role in making your community a better place for families. By ensuring that parents and caregivers have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to care for their children, we can help prevent child abuse and neglect by strengthening families and communities. A variety of resources are available at [www.brethren.org/childprotection](http://www.brethren.org/childprotection) and click on resources. You may also call the Caring Ministries office at (800) 323-8039 for paper versions of the resources.

## Transformed by Jesus to Make Disciples

### *“Miraculous Expectation”*

In the last newsletter I started a series of three articles to describe my underlying belief system for our Western Plains District transformation movement. The first stated a theological concept of the Bible as salvation history. God is present in all experiences loving, creating new life, and drawing us into relationship. This is letting God be God. Our role is miraculous expectation. We are called to look for and expect to see how God is revealing God's self to us and through us.

Let's consider the two words: miraculous expectation. The theological definition of miracle is signs, wonders, and actions from God intended to deepen our faith and strengthen our relationship with God. We are inclined to think of miraculous as God's action that circumvents natural processes to bring about healing or goodness to help us. I'm sure God wants to do this sometimes even by circumventing natural processes. The part of experience of which we sometimes lose sight is that God's purpose with a miracle is to bring us to God and strengthen a loving relationship with God.

The other word, expectation is just that. We look for, wait for; we anticipate God's miraculous presence and action in all of life. Then when we see it we are filled with joy and gratitude. We celebrate what we see.

This does not mean that we do not participate with God in loving and enabling new life, because we do. We serve God and God's purposes alongside God. At the same time, however, we recognize it is God's action that is really at work. The heart of our participation is expectation, miraculous expectation. It is experiencing love that is healing, life changing. All love is from God.

God uses promises and signs to call us to miraculous expectation. There are many promises throughout the Bible. My favorite is John 15:5, *“I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit.”* Or as Eugene Peterson says, *“the harvest is abundant.”* As we hear the promises we are automatically drawn to looking for signs of God's abundant life.

Signs come in all forms, shapes, and sizes. Usually they come with surprise, delight, joy, and gratitude. During the past five or so years of the district transformation movement we have seen signs of God all over the place. We see changes happening in the lives of individuals and congregations. The spirit of the district is more joyful and hopeful than it was before. With no special emphasis on ministerial recruitment 18 persons, with the support of their congregations, requested either being licensed or ordained in Western Plains during 2007 and 2008. More are stepping forth in 2009. With no special appeal and in hard economic times congregational giving to the district budget increased 9.98% in 2008. There is a noticeable improvement in the spirit of unity among our pastors when they are together. There is growth in congregational life and rapid numerical growth in some.

These are significant, but just a few of the signs of God's presence and action calling us to miraculous expectation which is our role in letting God be God.

Ken Holderread  
District Co-Executive/Minister

### **Congratulations!**

...to Chris Stover-Brown whose licensing ceremony was held March 15 at First Church of the Brethren in Wichita (Kan.)

... Congratulations to Nathan Frantz, overall senior winner of the Regional Science Fair. In addition to cash awards, medals and scholarships he will travel to the International Science Fair in Reno, Nevada. He also received Army and Navy award medals for his work. Nathan is a member of our district board and the son of Ken and Paula Frantz.

## From Congregations ...

Holmesville: We have initiated two study groups on Biblical Finance. We have been blessed as four individuals from our fellowship have taken leadership training from Crown.org. Crown is a non-denominational group that emphasizes biblical principles in personal finance. We are hopeful that two individuals from our fellowship will complete a training course on Financial Coaching. As our economy turns downward the need of others will increase. We are addressing two questions: How do we handle what God has given us? How will we be able to meet the needs of our fellowship and community? We are pleased to have around 20 people involved in this study. The study involves homework plus two-hour sessions weekly for a ten-week period. If anyone is interested in our progress get in touch with us. Holmesville Church of the Brethren 402-228-0373 or 402-696-4439.

Quinter hosted "Grow in Giving," a workshop led by Carol Bowman, a gifted, spirited leader and stewardship consultant with the denominational Mission and Ministry Board. Bowman shared how all can be engaged in this life Jesus came to give. She brought needed and welcome and meaningful understanding to help individuals see giving as more than an accessory to Sunday morning worship but as integral and essential to our lives as followers of Jesus as experience the joy of giving time, talents, and substance.

Community (Hutchinson) will celebrate an Early Christian meal on Good Friday, April. They will gather as a group of Christ's followers in a time of sorrow, doubt, reflection, worship, questioning and mourning. Some of Jesus' followers will recall their experiences with Jesus and share their feelings in word and song.



## The Challenges of Change: Growing the Role of Deacons

*Our world is changing, as are the needs of those to whom we minister as deacons. Plan to attend this training session for:*

Community • Worship • Support • Shared learning

### WHEN AND WHERE:

Saturday, June 6  
10:00AM – 4:00PM

Garden City  
Church of the Brethren  
Garden City, KS

Cost is \$10 per person,  
which includes lunch.

### KEYNOTE PRESENTATION:

Calling or Conundrum  
--  
The Role of Deacons

### WORKSHOPS:

Deacon Spirituality  
  
The Art of Listening

To register please contact the Garden City COB:

[gccob@att.net](mailto:gccob@att.net)  
620-276-7391

Registration deadline: May 29

## Disaster Update

New Orleans Blitz Build: It has been more than three years since the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Katrina were felt along the Gulf Coast, yet the catastrophe lingers. As public awareness diminishes, thousands of residents remain frustrated and unable to return to their homes.

Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) has joined with Church World Service and nine other CWS member denominations in rebuilding a single neighborhood in eastern New Orleans in an upcoming Blitz Build. The goal of the 4-week ecumenical effort, from April 20 to May 16, is to rebuild at least 12 homes, reclaim hope, and raise awareness of the continued need in the region.

In laying the groundwork for this event, BDM has taken one of the lead roles by committing additional staff and volunteer time to prepare homes prior to the blitz, taking on additional responsibilities and management during the blitz, and providing up to \$25,000 for construction materials and project support.

BDM volunteers already assigned to the Chalmette, La. recovery project will have an opportunity to participate in the blitz; therefore, additional volunteers are not being recruited for this event.

### Chalmette, Louisiana Katrina Recovery

We're still chipping away at the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina 3 1/2 years ago. Chalmette is in St. Bernard Parish, where this mega-disaster caused the levee failures that inundated homes throughout the parish with 6-20 feet of water. Over 200 parish residents lost their lives, and 100% percent of the homes were officially declared "uninhabitable." BDM volunteers have repaired over 90 homes since January 2007.

*--Jane Yount, Brethren Disaster Ministries  
www.brethren-disasterministries.org*

### Church World Service Kits Needed

Church World Service Kits are in great demand! According to the Material Resources program at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor. Low inventory levels of Church World Service (CWS) Kits has prompted an appeal for Hygiene Kits, Baby Kits, School Kits, and Emergency Clean-up Buckets.

Go to [www.churchworldservice.org/kits](http://www.churchworldservice.org/kits) for instructions to assemble, pack, and ship kits, or call 800.297.1516. Kits may be sent to Church World Service, Brethren Service Center Annex, 601 Main St, PO Box 188, New Windsor, MD 21776.

## Mystery Photo

This photo of an earlier Church of the Brethren congregation was found in the files at the McPherson museum. Can anyone identify what congregation this was?



## Pastors' Corner...

### Spiritual Formation

"Spiritual formation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others."

-M. Robert Mulholland

Who or what shapes your life? Friends? Family? Work? Success? Entertainment? Food? Tradition? Faithfulness? Christ? Money? Lack of money? Fear? Love? Joy? Justice? Faith?

We are constantly shaped by the events, experiences, images, desires, and cultural values which swirl through our lives. From the moment of our birth, our lives are being shaped and formed by a milieu of voices. Mulholland writes, "Life is, by its very nature, spiritual formation. The question is not whether to undertake spiritual formation; the question is what kind of spiritual formation we are engaged in. Are we being increasingly conformed to the world, or are we being increasingly conformed to the image of Christ?"

As disciples of Christ, may we choose the shaping force of our lives and our life together to be the Jesus of the gospels. May we seek to be formed through the life and teaching, death and resurrection of Christ. May we pursue a "...process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others."

Lisa Hazen, Pastor  
First Church of the Brethren (Wichita)

## Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to Sandee Kitzel on the death of her father, Samuel "S.G." Hoover, in Plattsburg, Missouri, on March 1. In addition her uncle, Ray M. Shepherd, died March 2 in Fort Scott, Kansas. Sandee is an ordained minister in Western Plains District serving as an Area Minister and also coordinating the district TRIM program. Please keep Sandee and Larry and her extended family in your prayers.

Connie S. Andes died on March 2 at the Kansas City (Mo.) Hospice House. She served as executive of the General Services Commission for the Church of the Brethren General Board from July 1984 through August 1988. Prior to that she was director of admissions, alumni director, and associate director of development at McPherson (Kan.) College, beginning in 1979. She was married to Leroy C. Weddle from 1963-1982.

### Continuing Education for Pastors

*"Paradoxes of Congregational Conflict: Pastoral Leadership in Interpersonal Peacemaking"* is the title of this year's pre-Conference Ministers' Association continuing education event which takes place June 25-26 in San Diego, CA. Celia Cook-Huffman, professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Juniata College. Register online at [www.brethren.org/sustaining](http://www.brethren.org/sustaining). Registrations are due by June 10.

### Sierra Song & Story Fest

*"Even the Stars are Singing!"* is the theme for this year's Song & Story Fest on July 3-9 at Camp Peaceful Pines, Dardanelle, CA. A family camp featuring Brethren musicians and storytellers on the sunny slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains! For details contact Ken Kline Smeltzer at 814.466.6491 or email: [bksmeltz@comcast.net](mailto:bksmeltz@comcast.net). Register online at <http://www.onearthpeace.org/programs/special/song-story-fest/registration.html>.

### Position Openings

The Church of the Brethren seeks an executive director of the Conference Office, to fill a fulltime staff position located at the Church of the Brethren Offices in Elgin, IL. The starting date is August 31, with training at the Annual Conference from June 21-July 1. Applications will be received from March 15-April 15. Interview will take place in May. Send inquiries to Office of Human Resources, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin IL 60120-1694; [kkrog\\_gb@brethren.org](mailto:kkrog_gb@brethren.org) or 800.323.8039 ext. 258.

## Prayers for Lybrook Community Ministries

The Lybrook Vision Committee is pleased and excited by the steps that are being taken to bring renewal to the Lybrook Mission! New hopes are being identified. All the things named above are happening and being used. So we ask for that one more vital and basic thing—your prayers during this year of 2009 (and beyond)! You will find prayer suggestions each month that the *Shepherd's Voice* is published. Please put these prayers on your list during your time of prayer each day. (And please do not neglect the other prayer needs of the district and its new church plant in Denver, its ministries and churches and camps and all its needs!) For Lybrook, however, we fervently ask you to pray as follows:

April: For the resident directors, Dave and Maria Huber that they will feel the support and warm care of the people of the Western Plains District.

*Sonja Griffith for the Lybrook Vision Committee*

## 2009 National Older Adult Conference (NOAC) Lake Junaluska, NC, Sept. 7-11

We are excited about taking a bus to the NOAC conference again this year. Over thirty have already indicated they are interested in going and we are looking forward to filling a bus from the Plains region.

Last year we had every seat full on the bus.

Information about transportation:

1. Bus will start in McPherson at the Cedars Wellness Center, Sunday morning, Sept. 6 at 6:30 am.
2. Cost for the trip will be \$230 per person (double occupancy) if we have 50 bus riders and \$275 for 40 persons riding the bus. (We will hope for no fuel surcharge). Cost includes the bus and two nights in motels - one going and one on the way home.
3. First night in Paducah, Kentucky, at the Pear Tree Inn. Rooms have been reserved for our group. Restaurants are close by and breakfast will be included in the cost.
4. Return from NOAC on Friday Sept. 11 after the morning session. Night at the Quality Inn in Mt. Vernon, Illinois. Breakfast provided at the motel. Home Sat. Sept. 12.
5. A deposit of \$50 will be due June 1 to David Fruth. Make checks payable to David Fruth. Final payment of \$180 (that is what we are planning for) will be payable by August 1.

If you want to reserve a space on the bus or you have questions contact:

David Fruth, 1116 Darlow Ct., McPherson, KS 67460  
[davebonnie@cox.net](mailto:davebonnie@cox.net) 620-245-0674

or Ed Switzer, 1115 Darlow Ct., McPherson, KS 67460  
[ejswitzer@cox.net](mailto:ejswitzer@cox.net) 620-504-6141

## Denominational Position Changes

Janis Pyle, Coordinator of Mission Connections for Global Mission Partnerships, completed her term of service with the Church of the Brethren on February 16. The coordinator position has been eliminated as part of a re-evaluation of the needs of Global Mission Partnerships. Janis served as Coordinator of Mission Connections since Nov. 15, 2001.

Nancy F. Knepper, coordinator of District Ministry for the Church of the Brethren's Ministry Office, has completed her term of service with the denomination on February 17. The position of coordinator of District Ministry has been eliminated as part of a re-evaluation of the needs of the Ministry Office. Nancy began her service for the denomination in 1989 as director of Outdoor Ministries and moved to the coordinator of District Ministry position in 1997.

Joan McGrath, human resources coordinator at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., completed her term of service with the Church of the Brethren on March 26. She has served in the position for two years, since March 6, 2007.

Wolfgang Spreen, program assistant for Buildings and Grounds at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., is completing his term of service as of March 9. The position has been eliminated as part of a re-evaluation of the needs of the center. Spreen began employment at the Brethren Service Center on July 14, 2003.

## District Calendar

### 2009

April 4	Executive Committee Conference Call	9:30 a.m.
April 12	Easter	
April 18	Camp Leader Training, McPherson Church of the Brethren	8:45 – 11:45 a.m.
April 17-19	Regional Youth Conference, McPherson College	
April 23-26	Cross Cultural Consultation & Celebration	
April 24-25	Search Committee (24) and District Board (25), McPherson, Kan.	
April 25-30	Christian Citizenship Seminar	
April 26-29	District Executive Professional Growth	
May 3	National Youth Sunday	
May 5	Ethics Training for pastors; Rochester church, Topeka, Kan.	10 am-3:30 pm
May 11-14	District Executives West meet in Kansas City <b>Office Closed</b>	
May 23-25	Young Adult Conference, Camp Swatara (Penn.)	
May 31-June 6	Senior High Camp (CC) Junior High Camp (MH)	
June 7-13	Junior Camp (CC) Senior High Camp (MH)	
June 11-14	Brethren Academy course “Distinctive Marks of the Brethren,” McPherson, KS	
June 14-20	Junior High Camp (CC) Junior Camp (MH)	
June 17	Ethics Training for Pastors, Bethel church, Arriba, Colo.,	10 am-3:30 pm
June 19-21	National Junior High Conference, Harrisonburg, Va.	
June 21-25	Pre-Junior Camp (MH & CC)	
June 26-28	“Come Along with Me” Camp (MH)	
June 26-30	Annual Conference, San Diego, Calif. <b>Office closed</b>	
July 13-16	TRIM & EFSM Orientation, Richmond, Ind.	
July 30-31	Executive Committee (30) & District Board (31), McPherson, Kan.	
July 31-Aug. 2	District Conference, McPherson, Kan.	
Aug. 7-9	Senior High Weekend (MH)	
Aug. 22	Ethics Training for Pastors, Location TBA,	10 am-3:30 pm
Sept. 7-11	National Older Adult Conference, Lake Junaluska, N.C.	
Sept. 18-19	District Board Retreat	
Oct. 12-14	Pastor/Leader Training, Great Bend (tentative)	
Oct. 23-25	Gathering V, Webster Conference Center, Salina, Kan.	
November 1	National Junior High Sunday	
Nov. 6-7	Executive Committee (6) & District Board (7)	

### Future Dates

Oct. 22-24, 2010	Gathering VI
Oct. 21-23, 2011	Gathering VII (tentative date)

The Shepherd's Voice is published for church leaders, ministers, church board chairs, Christian Education directors, Youth Leaders, church commission chairs, and many others. We encourage your contributions. Deadlines are noted below. Unless otherwise noted, permission is granted to reprint articles for congregational newsletters and bulletins. If you know someone in the above categories who is not receiving the newsletter, let us know.

## Church of the Brethren Western Plains

District Office  
P.O. Box 394  
McPherson, KS 67460

Located in Beegly Hall  
McPherson College campus  
1600 E. Euclid

Mon 8:30am-3:30pm (Closed 12-1)  
Tues 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
Wed Closed  
Thurs 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
Fri 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

The answering machine will be on during hours when the office is closed.

Phone: (620) 241-4240  
Email: [wpcdb@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wpcdb@sbcglobal.net)  
Web:  
[www.westernplainschurchofthebrethren.org](http://www.westernplainschurchofthebrethren.org)

District Executive Ministers  
Ken & Elsie Holderread  
Home: (620) 241-6930  
Home: [elsioken@sbcglobal.net](mailto:elsioken@sbcglobal.net)

Please send all articles and address changes to the District Office.

If you wish to submit articles to the Shepherd's Voice, please read the following:

### **Next newsletter deadline: On or before April 15<sup>th</sup>**

- Articles should be sent to the district office: [wpcdb@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wpcdb@sbcglobal.net)
- Articles should be no longer than 400 words. Please allow space for any submitted pictures. Note: Pictures will not be returned so make sure to send copies only.
- Information received after the 15<sup>th</sup> will be included in the next newsletter.
- If multiple copies of the same article are submitted, the last copy will be used and the others discarded.
- Outdated information will be discarded.

Space is limited so some articles may not be published.

The newsletter will be published the following months with combined months noted: Feb, March, April, May, June/July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec/Jan.

Current Distribution: 392  
Plus 141 via email