

Conference Theme: "Together We're Better"

The scriptural theme I chose for our District Conference is Galatians 3:28: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Or to phrase it simply "Together We're Better." My choice of this theme is the result of lifelong learning. I was born in Indiana but grew up in Arizona. I learned that each geographic area had a different culture and sometimes even a different language. I have a Brethren Navajo sister who lived with my family during high school and college. I always marveled at how she could live with electricity, pool, and city traffic for 9 months and spend the summers in Nageezi with sheep, dirt roads and no running water, or electricity. When I graduated from college with degrees in math and engineering, I learned the male work culture was not yet willing to be invaded by a female. I, a city girl with female siblings, married a rancher/farmer's son and learned about a self-reliant culture. I have two biological sons - one autistic and brain damaged at birth and the other is at the other end of the spectrum. Neither is inferior or superior. Each of them lived in a different culture that I learned competed for special education elementary school funding. I helped raise 6 children and I learned male and female cultures are different. I learned in male culture, a nod was sufficient acknowledgment for a male friend but a long conversation was required for the girl's friends. I teach a Middle Sunday School class at my church and I have learned many things about hair and culture from my African students. Thanks to scholarships from our Pacific Southwest District. I accompanied 9 Anglo,

African-American, Hispanic, Middle Class and Low Income youth from my church to National Youth Conference. Each group had a different culture. Our Brethren youth have a different culture than our Brethren adults. At NYC, I learned that you can use text messages to communicate God's love in worship. At a recent workshop I learned that youth are more comfortable with a peer from a different culture than with older persons from their own culture. What message can be found in that for our church's future? I have learned that we are all created in the image of God and we have a lot to learn from one another. As I have traveled around our district from Live Oak to Tucson, I have learned something about the culture of the geographic area and that the culture of each church is different. We are not the same, but enriched by all. Our different perspectives help our district boards, commissions, committees, and task forces make the best decisions - for all. Our district is like our favorite chili whether con carne or vegetable, we all know our favorite ingredients and spices. All are needed. To run out of any ingredient or spice makes the chili not quite as good. My prayer for our district is that we provide support so each congregation may find a blend of people who respect others and share the love and message of Jesus with their community.

May we be one in Christ!

Together We're Better!



Karen Walters, Moderator



Logo Interpretation

The logo for the 2011 District Conference was designed by Qadir Holloway, an African American youth from the Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren. It is Qadir's artistic interpretation of Galatians 3:28 which is written on the open scroll representing the Bible. These words apply to the entire population of God's world. The Christian fish symbol, Icthus, in Greek, is on the ribbon encircling the world. It was used by Christians during the first few centuries AD to identify themselves as Christians and avoid persecution by drawing a half circle in the sand with a foot and waiting to see if another person was a Christian and completed the fish by drawing another half circle in the sand. If you look closely you will see different and diverse people represented on the earth with different skin colors, genders, even persons who use wheelchairs.

We are all imperfect humans. Imposed over all is the cross on which Jesus was sacrificed so we may all be one in Christ. The red ribbon which drapes across the symbolic cross and around the world represents our Pacific Southwest District of diverse people from around the world who are trying to live as Jesus taught.

Together we are better!