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Fear not . . .

A message from your District Executive Minister

As I travel from place to place I hear lots of fears being expressed about the church. Some of the fears are appropriate and realistic given our current state of affairs. However, other fears are a little silly and totally unfounded. Out of curiosity I looked up what kinds of phobias are being used by our membership today. An abbreviated list includes:

Atelophobia— Fear of being touched... for those who don't like hugs at church or shaking hands to greet others.

Ochophobia— Fear of vehicles... for people who don't want to drive to church.

Sitiophobia— Fear of food or eating... for those who want to avoid potlucks.

Xenophobia— Fear of strangers... for those who avoid welcoming visitors to their church.

Arithmophobia— Fear of numbers... for people who really don't want to know about stewardship, tithing and/or the church budget.

Atelophobia— Fear of imperfection... for people who can't forgive others when they are less than perfect.

Decidophobia— Fear of making decisions... for people who need a reason to avoid church council meetings plus District Conference or Annual Conference.

Logophobia— Fear of words... for people who need an excuse to turn down the invitation to serve as the next church clerk.

Cathisophobia— Fear of sitting... for people who want to avoid serving on church boards.

Hadephobia— Fear of hell... for preachers as a last ditch effort for getting people to attend church.

Homilophobia— Fear of sermons... for people who need a full proof excuse for not attending church.

Metathesiophobia— Fear of changes... not a spoken fear but it is something pastors observe quite often.

Ecclesiophobia— Fear of church... if all the above does not work, this one will help keep people from attending church.

In 2012, may God give us the wisdom and strength to drop our phobias and to continue sharing the Good News of Jesus' birth to everyone we meet.

Don Booz



THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Co-editors: Herb Miller, Lyle E. Schaller, Cynthia Woolever – www.TheParishPaper.com

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How to Manage Change Resistance

Why do church leaders so often underestimate resistance to change—even when the status quo is not working and the change promises to deliver big benefits?

Dysfunctional Church Culture

Newcomers often fail to see that a dysfunctional behavior pattern—deeply rooted in the congregation's traditions—often locks the status quo in place. Examples:

1. *Inward Focus.* Some congregations, especially those historically prominent in their communities, suffer from undiagnosed IDD (Insight Deficit Disorder). Their many successes during past years block the core lay-leadership groups from looking outward for new ideas.

2. *Complacent Arrogance.* Other congregations gradually become disconnected from changing realities in their communities and young-adult families. Thus, they fail to see and address contemporary ministry needs.

3. *Diffuse Accountability.* In churches with large boards and powerful committee chairs, the decision-making systems often kill most of the creative ideas at conception.

Other Change-Resistance Causes

A list of other, more-specific, barriers to change would include the following:

1. Fear of making a damaging mistake
2. Fear of changing a method that has worked well
3. Fear of losing familiar habit patterns or relationships
4. Fear of discarding a cherished value
5. Fear of an uncertain future
6. Fear of trying to learn a new skill
7. Fear of losing financial support from parishioners
8. Painful past experiences with change efforts
9. Power-needy leaders who “want to do it my way”
10. Denominational norms make the change feel wrong

Change-Resistance Tips

Practical ways to reduce the stress that often accompanies change efforts:

1. Remember that people make changes when their survival anxiety becomes high enough to counterbalance the anxiety they feel when contemplating a change.

2. Many people feel that the word *change* condemns “the way we’ve always done it.” Therefore, replace that word with “fine-tune,” “update,” “refine,” and “continue in the direction we’ve been heading for several years.”

3. If possible, avoid actively killing a cherished tradition. Try to *add* to present ministries instead of deleting one of them. Let sacred cows die a natural death.

4. Avoid (a) making major changes via newsletter pronouncements and memos, (b) letting stressful situations pressure you to make instant decisions, and (c) Lone-Ranger actions instead of developing a consensus.

5. If the proposed change is substantial, such as altering worship times, adding a Saturday night worship service, or introducing an unfamiliar worship-music style, appoint a special task force to study the matter and make recommendations. Compared to a standing committee, a special task force tends to (a) view the proposal from a new perspective, (b) think more creatively, and (c) produce a better product.

6. In some instances, set up a pilot program. Testing a new method for one year “to see how well it works” runs minimum risk. Pick pilot projects that church members perceive as (a) important to maintaining one of our congregation's historic ministries, (b) a dramatic way to attack an old challenge with a new technique, and (c) something we can test in a brief time span.



“I fear if we add another service to handle the overflow, it will effect attendance at our main worship service.”

7. In some instances, measure and report performance differently. Examples: the number of first-time worship visitors each month, the percentage of regular attendees who started attending during the last five years, or the percentage of members above age sixty-five compared to the percentage below age twenty-five.

8. Say that making the proposed change will be a challenging task but is theologically important. Preaching and teaching on issues related to the proposed change helps move parishioners' perspectives beyond "what our pastor wants us to do" to "what God wants us to do."

9. In some cases, consult with an outside expert. Creative innovation often occurs when someone helps church leaders view reality from a new perspective.

10. Begin discussing the change months before it would take effect, so people have time to revise their thinking.

11. Present change proposals openly and comprehensively. Allow time for questions and clarifications. The greater the participant involvement, the greater the likelihood of acceptance.

12. In the initial presentation of your proposed change, review the pros and cons of other options already considered and rejected. Frankly acknowledge any potential losses and pain the change could produce. This lets people know that you have thoughtfully considered the tradeoffs—and takes the steam out of detractors eager to point out "the reason that won't work in our church."

13. If prudence or organizational rules require that you take a vote, never do that during the meeting in which you initially introduce the possible change.

14. Rarely do more than 5 to 10 percent of people initially view a new idea as desirable. At the other end of the spectrum, 5 to 10 percent of people strongly resist a potential innovation the first time they hear about it. (Both groups consist of people who feel they should take immediate, aggressive action for or against a new idea as soon as they hear it.) Don't disregard these needs:

- Most of the 80 to 90 percent of initially passive people, who do not care that much one way or the other, need time to discuss and ponder the idea—so that they develop sufficient passion to unite with the 5 to 10 percent who immediately favor it.
- Most of the 5 to 10 percent who initially oppose the idea need time to rethink it so they can move from resistance to passive acceptance or enthusiasm.

15. Conflict is an essential part of every change process—and moves people toward acceptance. Provide appropriate times and places for "concerns" and objections to freely bubble up.

16. When people criticize your proposal, you may feel personally attacked. But their objections are more often an attack on your leadership role (anyone else occupying that role would receive the same criticism).

Understanding criticism for what it is—*anxiety because the change affects people's lives—prevents negative reactions from undermining your emotional stability and sense of self-worth.*

17. Respond coolly to what feels like a personal attack, especially when the criticism comes from people you care about. When you take change-resistance personally, you aid and abet a common way of taking leaders out of action: making yourself the issue.

18. Discuss the proposed change in all groups that the change would affect. The more significant the change, the longer you must work at coalition building.

19. During group discussions, ask people to list positives and negatives related to the proposed change.

20. Encourage people to speak honestly about potential flaws in your strategy or initiative. Without that input, your overconfidence about the idea can lead to (a) intellectual arrogance, (b) a grandiose sense of self-importance, (c) self-deception that sees only the factors that confirm your opinion, and (d) disastrous missteps.

21. Increase your communication with core leadership people. For example, during the period when the change takes effect, have coffee once a week with the staff member or layperson who (a) must lead the change or (b) is dedicated to seeing the initiative fail.

22. Tell the staff in kind but firm ways the importance of cooperating and the consequences of failure to do so.

23. Expect to give the same explanation speech—in which you outline the reasons why this change is beneficial—at least six times during several weeks or months. Some people are so busy rejecting the idea the first time you present it that they cannot hear, or remember, anything positive from that explanation.

24. Close to the implementation stage, ask people to throw in suggestions for how to accomplish this change as smoothly as possible.

25. When implementation is approximately 75 percent completed, don't be surprised when a few people—from whom you have heard no resistance until now—become quite vocal in their objections. Remember to ...

- Smile and say that you understand how they feel.
- Remind them which church group or groups decided this change is a good idea, and why.
- Resist their effort to (a) suck you into their doomsday emotion and (b) get you to rescue them from their anxiety by blocking the proposed change.

The Bottom Line

Ninety-five percent of resisters eventually say with pride how glad they are that "we made that change."

Five percent of resisters will never like the change, no matter how logically anyone explains the reasons, and they will continue to loudly denounce it in their individual conversations and in church groups.

Love them anyway.

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Empire Youth Respond

F.R.O.G. (Fully Reliant On God)
is led by **Joel & Susan Price**.

In December's *Empire CoB News*, the *F.R.O.G.s* wrote:

We (the Empire Youth) would like to express our deep appreciation and heartfelt thanks for your abundant support enabling us to go to District Conference! . . . for all the hot dogs you ate, all the calendars and Christmas cards you bought, and all the Root Beer floats you drank! Here are a few of F.R.O.G.'s weekend highlights!

The District Conference theme was "Together We're Better." **Karen Walters**, from **Papago Buttes CoB** in Scottsdale Arizona, was our moderator. Her theme is based on Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, Slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." During conference, your youth worked on activities dealing with team building and how we can accomplish more, when we work together. The entire weekend was led by **District Youth Advisor Dawna Welch**.



Príncipe de Paz Youth Group Photo by Erick Flores

The youth of **Príncipe de Paz CoB** performed a drama entitled, "Everything" by Lifehouse, that includes many of the temptations and struggles youth encounter today. It focuses on one girl's struggle with greed, jealousy, self-esteem, peer pressure, body image, eating disorders, alcohol, depression, and suicide. The skit is performed as if your life is a dance and you have to decide "who" you will dance with. Throughout, Jesus is there leading her as she is

constantly pulled and tempted. At the highest point of intensity, when she has to choose life or death, she realizes that Jesus is *Everything* she needs! He is the One that she can call on to help her, protect her, guide her, and hold her. She chooses to dance with Jesus and all the temptations fall down and are powerless! As Jesus and the girl dance, the song rises, "He's all I want, He's all I need, He's *Everything* to me!" This skit really made an impact on us!

Our favorite activity was the hour at Sky High Trampolines on Saturday. The gym sized room was full of trampolines on the floor and walls, with a foam pit to jump into. **James** enjoyed flipping from the side wall trampolines and watching **Kelly** get stuck in the foam pit. Don't worry, he happily helped get her out! **Bailey** especially enjoyed Sky High's trampoline dodge ball, and won two of the three games! **Jake** and **Shelby** really liked Sky High as well!



Jumping at Sky High Photo by Dawna Welch

Highlights included riding 844 miles together in the van, stopping to eat five times, being together at the hotel, meeting lots of neat people, listening to music and singing together, playing games, and getting to know each other a lot better. **Jake** met another boy named **Jake** who looks like his twin. They had a lot in common, even the same injuries and scars! **Sam** enjoyed spending time with the youth and putting together a 3D puzzle in his class. **Joel** and **Susan** enjoyed being involved in the business and visiting with everybody. Seeing 25 youth and 5 kids at conference was awesome! The feeling of family and togetherness touched all of us! **Shelby** summed it all up saying, "Alone, we are just a small light, but together our light grows!"

Thank you incredibly!

The Empire Brethren F.R.O.G. Youth



Gathered in the District Conference Youth Room after Friday Worship.

Merged photos by Pastor John Jackson



Left to right: District Executive Don Booz commissioning the Youth Cabinet, Maya Davis, Tuesday Thornton, Mollie Montgomery, Kyle Carothers, Michael Terry, Rehana Franklin, Robert Burke, Senna Akpovi, and District Youth Advisor Dawna Welch. Photo by Joe Vecchio

Youth . . .

Dawna Welch, PSWD Youth Advisor
Youth@pswdcob.org



Our District Conference youth activities involved 26 youth. Thank you to all who helped make this a real success: La Verne CoB for giving us a place to sleep and meet on Friday and Saturday nights, La Verne University for our showers, the Empire, F.R.O.G. Youth group for their excellent local church view of the youth activities (page 4), and the 6 church advisors who participated in everything!

In addition to all our fun time, Youth participated in the larger conference during worship and business. Answering Moderator Karen Walters call for ushers, youth were volunteer ushers for the Friday evening service.



Left to right: Tuesday Thornton, Israel Rosas, Robbie Burk, Ethan Stroger, Head Usher Paul Wilkinson. Photo by Pastor John Jackson



Registration Table (left to right) Maya Davis, Tuesday Thornton, Mollie Montgomery Photo by Don Booz

The 2011/12 Youth Cabinet is a working group that helped with registration on Friday and planned this

year’s conference youth activities. A cabinet highlight was their commissioning service led by District Executive Don Booz before all the conference delegates during Saturday’s business session (see photo above).

The Youth Cabinet meets again in January to plan the next event and opportunity for PSWD Youth to be together. **Stay tuned!**

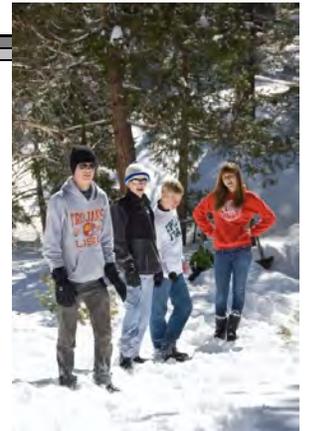
Camp La Verne Winter Camp February 18-20, 2012

www.camploverne.org
 has the details and
 registration forms

See the 10 minute video
 from the last camp at:

www.youtube.com

search on “Camp La Verne 2011”



WOW: Weekend of Wonders May 18-20, 2012

Attendance is limited to 25 participants

The 2012 “District Women’s Retreat” is being held at the Evergreen Conference Center (ECCO) in Oakhurst, California, just a half hour south of the entrance to Yosemite. Come experience God’s creation in the beauty of Yosemite National Forest.



The cost is \$180 per person. All rooms are double occupancy. Bring a Friend! Women have already registered to beat the April 30, 2012 registration deadline. Flyers and registration forms are available at:

www.pswdcob.org/events/wow

Pastor / Spouse Retreat

June 4-7, 2012

www.pswdcob.org/events/pastors

Attendance is limited to 25 participants

Brochures were mailed to all PSWD ministers serving as pastor, chaplain or on the district board, and they have begun to register. The retreat is at the Serra Retreat Center in Malibu, California.

Our morning movement and meditation time will include the skills of Lorelei Woerner-Eisner, wellness instructor and occupational therapist. Freetime in the Malibu area will round out the retreat.



All of our ministers and their spouses serving as pastor, chaplain or on the district board are invited at the minimal registration fee of \$25. Register soon as we expect the event to be filled before 4/26/12 deadline.

District Conference

Photos

www.pswdcob.org/galleries



All Ministers Workshop

March 26-28, 2012

www.pswdcob.org/events/ministers

Attendance is limited to 50 participants

Brochures were mailed to all PSWD ministers, and they have begun to register. The workshop is at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Stephen & Kathy Reid will present "Song and a Prayer: Hebrew Poetry to English Readers in an Age of Anxiety." Examine ministry in this age of anxiety in light of the poetry of the Bible. Discover how the issues of power and vulnerability contribute to our ministry contexts.



All of our ministers and their spouses are invited at the minimal registration fee of \$25. Register soon as we expect the event to be filled before 2/24/12 deadline.

Polity Change in July 2012

Annual Conference will vote on a new version of the Ministerial Leadership paper

www.brethren.org/ministryoffice/polity-revision.html

On this webpage, you'll find a draft of the new paper on Ministerial Leadership Polity in the Church of the Brethren, as well as resources of explanation and interpretation for this paper. This paper is still in progress. Denominational polity is approved and adopted by the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. This draft will come before Annual Conference for a first read in 2012, to be voted on in 2013. Until Annual Conference approves a new polity document on ministerial leadership, the Church of the Brethren follows polity laid out in the paper on Ministerial Leadership adopted by Annual Conference in 1999.

Calling and sustaining leadership for the church are the responsibilities of the whole church. Individuals, congregations, districts and the denomination work together to call forth leaders for our life together. Our hope in making this

draft widely available is that we might read, study, and consider all that it includes - together.

In the beginning months of 2012, each district will be hosting a listening and information session for its District Ministry Commission, facilitated by Office of Ministry staff and representatives to the Ministry Advisory Council. Information about those sessions will be available soon.

District Conference

Business Wrap-Up

Copies of the following documents are at
www.pswdcob.org/distconf

Minutes of Prior Year, 2010

- Delegates approved the prior minutes.

Ministry Investment Plan 2012

- Delegates passed the Ministry Investment Plan.

Process for Responding to Congregational Disagreements with Annual Conference and/or District Conference Decisions

- Delegates passed the Process for Responding.

Recommendation for Bella Vista Name Change

- Delegates approved the name change to Restoration – Los Angeles.

Recommendation for District Conference Date and Locations

- Delegates adopted the Recommendation

Query: Annual Conference Elections

- Delegates passed the query
- It was received by the Annual Conference Office on November 21, 2011.

District Conference Election Wrap-Up

Positions beginning 11/13/2011

- Moderator-Elect
 - Jim LeFever (Glendale)
- Nominating Committee
 - John Price (Empire)
- Program Committee, District Conference
 - Berkley Davis (Pomona Fellowship)
- Standing Committee Representative, Annual Conference
 - Marlin Heckman (La Verne)
- Standing Committee Alternate, Annual Conference
 - Don Shankster (Papago Buttes)
- District Board of Administration:
 - At-Large
 - Richard Downhour (Papago Buttes)
 - Phyllis Eller (Pomona Fellowship)
 - Elizabeth Rowan (Pasadena)
 - Mike Wolfsen (La Verne)
 - Northern California Representation
 - Norman Johnson (Waterford)
 - Southern California West Representation
 - John Jackson (Glendale)
 - Youth & Young Adult Representatives
 - Paige Butzlaff (La Verne)
 - Nohemi Flores (Cristo Sion/Pomona Fellowship)
 - Julie Park (Glendale)
- Brethren Hillcrest Homes Board Nominees
 - Steven F. Johnson (La Verne)

Web Links of Interest

For newsletters and personal learning

- 2012 Church of the Brethren Yearbook is now available on CD from Brethren Press.
 - www.brethrenpress.com Search on "yearbook"
- Early delegate registration for the 2012 Annual Conference in St. Louis, MO, opens Monday, January 2, 2012. The early registration fee is \$285 per delegate. The rate increases to \$310 on February 23. www.brethren.org/ac will enable churches to pay either by credit card or by sending a check.
- Webcasts, sometimes "live" and at the page top, and recorded at the page bottom:
 - www.brethren.org/webcasts
- District Conference Wrap-Up from November 11-13, 2011 can be found here:
 - www.pswdcob.org/distconf

New Life

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This poem is by Ann Weems. She is the wife of a Presbyterian minister and lost her son to murder the day after his 21st birthday. Her poem speaks to how some of us feel this time of year. Remember that you are not alone this time of year or ever.

Yesterday's Pain

In the godforsaken, obscene quicksand of life,
there is a deafening alleluia
rising from the souls of those who weep,
and of those who weep with those who weep.
If you watch, you will see
the hand of God
putting the stars back in their skies
one by one
Yesterday's Pain
Some of us walk in Advent
tethered to our unresolved yesterdays
the pain still stabbing
the hurt still throbbing.
It's not that we don't know better;
it's just that we can't stand up anymore by ourselves.
On the way of Bethlehem, will you give us a hand?

Not celebrate?

Your burden is too great to bear?
Your loneliness is intensified during this Christmas season?
Your tears have no end?
Not celebrate?
You should lead the celebration!
You should run through the streets
to ring the bells and sing the loudest!
You should fling the tinsel on the tree,
and open your house to your neighbors,
and call them in to dance!
For it is you above all others who know the joy of Advent.
It is unto you that a Savior is born this day,
One who comes to lift your burden from your shoulders,
One who comes to wipe the tears from your eyes.
You are not alone,
for He is born this day to you.

From *Kneeling in Jerusalem*

May God fill your life with Hope, Peace and Joy!
Don Booz, Dawna Welch, Joe Vecchio, Brenda Pérez