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New Life Subscriptions (a \$10 value) are **Free**. New Life, the newsletter of the Pacific Southwest District of the Church of the Brethren, is sent to all of our ministers, church officials, and others who request it.

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... belief ...

belief, noun, be-'l f, : a state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing: something believed; especially: a tenet or body of tenets held by a group: conviction of the truth of some statement or the reality of some being or phenomenon especially when based on examination of evidence.

I have been thinking about “belief” and where it comes from plus how do we know it when we hear a “belief” or see a “belief”? For many years of my life, I believed that if I go out in the cold air without a coat, I would “catch a cold.” I know exactly where that belief came from and, even to this day, I very seldom go out into the cold air without a coat. Do I know why I hold this belief? Mmmmmm? Probably because I believed it when I was five years old and those beliefs are hard to change.

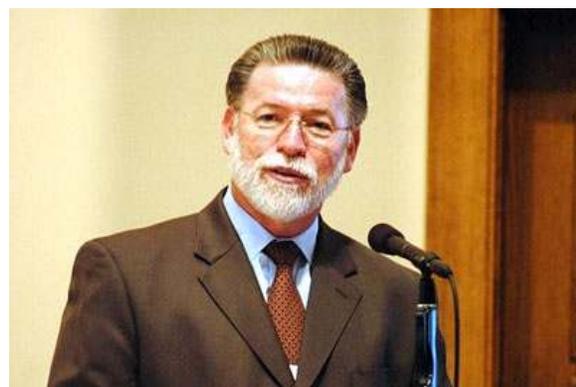
I have been the District Executive for the Pacific Southwest District for five years. I have heard and seen some very interesting beliefs about God and God’s church. I have even heard and seen some beliefs about pastors and how they should or should not do their job. Most recently, I heard a comment about how I “should have” done my job over the past five years.

The interesting thing about beliefs is that many of our beliefs have to do with expectancy. And our beliefs can either be negatively expected or positively expected. People can have a belief that they want to do something or that they need to do something but if they don’t know how to do something, nothing will change. In other words, if you don’t have the right philosophy or if you don’t have the right strategy, you will experience difficulty. A “real” strategy requires us to identify how we need to think in order to be convinced that something is legitimate enough for us to do it.

I think the announcement of my resignation and subsequent retirement affords the district the opportunity to look at what kind of philosophy or strategy is needed for the future. I have done my best! I value my time with the Pacific Southwest District and I will cherish the many positive memories. I will continue to hold the belief that the Pacific Southwest District is a leader in our denomination. I am thankful for the opportunity to be part of God’s journey with you.

Don Booz

District Executive Minister



Don Booz

from www.brethren.org

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Coeditors: Herb Miller and Cynthia Woolever – www.TheParishPaper.com

June 2013 - Volume 21, Number 6

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Making Informed Decisions during Times of Change

Ann asked what seemed like a simple question: “We need more input and information before our committee can make a recommendation. How can we make sure that our decisions are wise and all voices are heard?” Congregations and regional bodies face this challenge when change or diminishing resources call for innovative approaches—such as new staffing configurations or shifting mission priorities. With many people involved—some with strong views and others with little interest or knowledge—how can leaders accurately portray the priorities of all those affected? One-on-one conversations about new policies are impractical in congregations. And when a regional governing body charges a task group with making proposals, the number of potential stakeholders grows even larger. In general, the larger the geography and the greater the number of stakeholders, the more complex the work becomes.

Where Do We Begin?

Obtaining accurate information means evaluating trends and reviewing resources (like budgets and revenues). Beyond that, the task group needs to hear a range of opinions and perspectives. However, some guiding principles for getting to the best-informed recommendation require the task group to answer some basic questions first.

What is our task? Without knowing the question, which serves as a kind of GPS system, the group is likely to find it impossible to arrive at their final destination. What is the need, problem, issue, question, challenge, or opportunity that prompted the formation of the task group in the first place? What purposes would be served by any recommendation the group might make? What do we hope to accomplish? What are our greatest hopes if the church or regional body acts on our recommendations?

What do we need to know (that we don't already know)? The group already knows more than they think they do. Begin by making a list of what the task group or committee already knows. Next, list what additional information would be ideal to know before making a grounded and well-informed proposal.

Who are the stakeholders? What individuals, groups, or organizations will be affected by our recommendations? If possible, list these in order, starting with those most affected and ending with those least likely to be affected (those parties least likely to notice or care). Stakeholders vary in their experiences with the congregation or regional body and in their level of knowledge and commitment. Thus, summing up all perspectives requires different kinds of data gathering strategies.

How do we discover our core values? Organizations—whether governing bodies or congregations—always act on their core values, not on their mission statements. Core values are those beliefs and convictions that determine the actions of the majority of leaders and members. A review of the recent past reveals the way core values operate in a regional body or congregation:

- ! What ministries are funded and where do members give time and energy?
- ! What programs and activities receive the most support?
- ! What assumptions or goals direct policies and planning decisions?



LOOKS LIKE ONE MEMBER FOUND
“STRONGLY DISAGREE” A BIT INADEQUATE
FOR EXPRESSING HIS OPINION

Although core values are partially invisible to members and leaders, they powerfully frame perceptions. Stemming from theology, past experiences, and current context, core values determine what we do and how we do it. Effective data gathering tools uncover actual core values and prevent preferred core values—what people think *ought* to be or *should* be—from creating circular arguments and meaningless proposals.

What Way(s) Should We Gather Information?

Once the basic questions above have been answered, the group needs to determine which information gathering process(es) will build the most support for any final recommendation or action. At the end of the process, all stakeholders should perceive that they had the chance to contribute their views. It is fine if some constituents lack the interest to participate in any process as long as *they* make the decision not to participate rather than concluding that they never had the opportunity.

Most groups decide that they need more than one approach. Just as any building or renovation project calls for multiple tools—saws, hammers, nails, power or hand-held tools—groups need the same multiple-device tactic to investigate the best plan for organizational renovation or change.

Statistics and Trends. One category of information gathering uses numbers, charts, and figures to describe people, budgets, programs, or congregations. These methods are especially effective for illustrating the current state of things and to quantify change. Congregations or regional bodies should track some telling ten-year trends. For example: the number of congregations and total membership; average number of members per congregation; the total and per church number of baptisms and new members; average tenure of pastors; number of churches served by a full-time pastor; overall budget for the regional body; average contribution per worshiper; percentage of budget for staff, programs, or other expenses; programs and average number of participants; and number and kinds of people active in leadership roles.

Surveys. Questionnaires can be mailed, distributed during worship services, given out at meetings (such as church boards, regional meetings, or events), or set up online. (Beware: Although online surveys are inexpensive, they tend to yield very low response rates.) Survey questions can either be close-ended, where all the responses are provided (for example, a statement followed by “Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?”) or open-ended, where the person

answering the survey gives a written response. For example, “What are some of the best things you see happening in your congregation right now?”

One example of an in-worship survey designed to help congregations discover their core values is on this website: www.TheParishPaper.com/free-resources. Another easy-to-use worship survey reveals a church’s current strengths and ways to build on those strengths (at www.USCongregations.org/survey).

Interviews. Other methods bring balance to the picture painted by numbers and figures. Capturing stories or recounting experiences make up the essence of this avenue. For example, regional bodies can conduct short phone interviews with all (or a sample of) pastors, committee chairs, leaders in similar regions, or national denominational staff. In a congregational setting, consider doing ten-minute phone interviews with Sunday school teachers, committee members, or other sets of members.

Focus groups. Structured group interviews give additional rich insights if the task group identifies small affinity groups (such as pastors who serve in small churches, pastors new to the region, or recently ordained pastors). Carefully designed questions, prepared in advance, generate good insights. For example: “Tell us about an occasion in the past year when you had contact with a regional staff member. What brought you together and what was an outcome of that contact? What’s an important challenge that your congregation faces? How has the regional staff helped you tackle that challenge?”

In a congregational setting, focus groups prove effective with similar individuals such as new members, young mothers, or retired members.

Final Destination: A Successful Recommendation

After compiling what they’ve learned, the task group draws on this knowledge to make an informed proposal. Good decision-making procedures include obtaining input from all stakeholders, permitting all opinions to be discussed in a respectful and open way, allowing the appropriate committees and ministries to reflect on proposals and offer feedback, and constructing a plan to evaluate the recommendation’s effectiveness in the future.

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“A Church with Roots – A Church with Wings”

District Conference Worship

November 8-10, 2013

at the

Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, AZ

www.pswdcob.org/distconf/reg/worship

Friday Evening

Worship – 6:45pm

Gathering Music – 7:00

Worship in the church

Speaker: Moderator Jim LeFever



Jim LeFever
Moderator

Saturday Evening

Worship – 7:15pm

Gathering Music – 7:30

Worship in the church

Speaker: A variety of persons from the district will share in leadership this evening. Join us for a celebration of the ministries we share in as congregations in our district today, rooted in our heritage and values started long ago. Look forward to a creative worship weaving music, narrative, video interviews and reflections and more, eventually leading us toward what questions or issues we might consider engaging in the future as God's people.

Sunday Morning

Worship – 9:45am

Gathering Music – 10:00

Worship outside at Altar Ramada

Speaker: Jeff Carter, President, Bethany Theological Seminary

- ! Consecration of Licensed Ministers
- ! Recognition of ordination anniversaries
- ! Installation of Leadership for 2014



Jeff Carter, President
Bethany Theological Seminary

Insight Sessions at District Conference

www.pswdcob.org/distconf/reg/insight

Divide the possibilities among your church's attendees so you can return to your congregation with a wide range of experience and information. The Insight Sessions will cover some business items, church ministry opportunities, and personal / congregational spiritual growth. During online registration you choose which Insight Sessions you will attend.

Saturday, mid Business Session (10:15-10:45 am)

- ! Business Item: Ministry Investment Plan (MIP)
- ! Central Evangelical
- ! Grant Church Highlights
- ! Steady Thinking in Changing Times (Bethany Seminary)

Saturday, followup to Business Session (3:45-4:45 pm)

- ! Vital Ministry Journey with Stan Dueck (VMJ)
- ! Greening your Church
- ! Called to Love: Bullying and the Church (On Earth Peace)
- ! Your Church as a Small Business (Brethren Benefit Trust)

Saturday, followup to Business Session (5:00-6:00 pm)

- ! Being Brethren ... Today (Kirsten Storne-Piazza)
- ! Faith, Family, and Finances (Brethren Benefit Trust)
- ! “Living Peace Church” – Does our congregation want to be one? How do we do it? (On Earth Peace)
- ! National Youth Conference 2014 (NYC)

Vital Ministry Journey (VMJ)

Receive initial training for your congregation on Saturday afternoon after business concludes. Stan Dueck will lead this special insight session. Read more about VMJ on our web page: www.pswdcob.org/VMJ



What makes a
congregation “vital”?

www.brethren.org/VMJ

Frequently Asked Questions NYC: National Youth Conference

National: www.brethren.org/nyc

District: www.pswdcob.org/nyc

Q: When is NYC and where is it?

A: July 19-24, 2014 in Fort Collins, CO on the Colorado State University Campus. Conference begins with registration Saturday at noon and ends on Thursday at noon.



Q: Are there PSWD plans?

A: Yes, the Pacific Southwest District NYC planning team of **Dawna Welch**, (District Youth Advisor), **Janet Ober** (La Verne) **Becky Zapata** (Principe de Paz) and **Russ Matteson** (Modesto) just had their first meeting. Watch for details at www.pswdcob.org/nyc

Q: How do I get there?

A: No problem! The Pacific Southwest District is arranging transportation for PSWD youth to travel together. Watch our website for updates www.pswdcob.org/nyc

Q: What is the age restriction for youth?

A: Youth who have completed ninth grade through one year of college (at the time of NYC) are eligible to attend.

Q: What happens at NYC?

A: There is always something to do at NYC, worship, hiking, service projects, sports, workshops, devotions, bible study. But what often happens at this once in a lifetime event are life changing, personal and spiritual growth experiences that bond Brethren youth forever!

Q: What's the theme and who are the leaders?

A: "Called by Christ, blessed for the journey together," based on Ephesians 4:1-7. This theme was selected by the National Youth Cabinet who were drawn to the Scripture because of its strong message of calling and unity present in the text.

Q: How much is registration and when does it open?

A: Registration is \$450. A non-refundable deposit of \$225 is due at the time of registration which begins January 3. The balance is due by April 30.

Q: Sounds great. But how do I afford it?

A: **Fundraisers! Fundraisers! Fundraisers!** Hey, nearly nothing in life is free so the district compiled a great list of fundraising ideas, from the wild and questionable to the trusty and reliable. Check them out: www.pswdcob.org/nyc

Q: Is there any scholarship money?

A: The National office has a scholarship fund. Inquiries are considered on a case-by-case basis. For more information, please write to cobyouth@brethren.org or call 847-429-4385.

PSWD Youth . . .

Dawna Welch, PSWD Youth Advisor
Youth@pswdcob.org



Calling All PSWD-CoB Youth!

Hey there, friends. District Conference, 2013 in Scottsdale, Arizona will be here before you know it and your Youth Cabinet has planned some awesome activities for you. For example, you will not want to miss the outdoor movie, and special bonfire worship featuring a S'mores communion service!

In addition to fun, worship, meals and overnight accommodations for ALL youth grades 6-12 at Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren, Tracy Primozich of Bethany Seminary will offer a special youth only insight session "Disconnect & Connect." We will be exploring all the ways that technology/entertainment/etc. inundate our lives on a regular basis, in good and not so good ways. Through the spiritual practices of Lectio Divina and Examen we will seek to discover ways that we can slow down, pay attention and more intentionally 'disconnect' from the world in order to 'connect' to God!

So continue to save your pennies, "mow those lawns", "wash those cars" whatever it takes to get you to conference, DO IT! Because it's gonna ROCK! And it would not be the same without YOU!

Youth Schedule Highlights

www.pswdcob.org/distconf/reg/youth

Friday, November 8th

- 11:00 am - 5:30 pm Registration/Check-In
- 6:45 pm - Gather in Palm Court for Worship with Youth
- 8:00 pm - Ice Cream Social in Palm Court
- 8:45 pm - Ice Breakers in Sister Luca Room
- 10:00 pm - Head to Papago Buttes CoB for "lights out"

Saturday, November 9th

- 9:00 am - Business Session Youth Cabinet Consecration
- 10:00 am - Partner Crafts
- 1:00 pm - Theme/Bible Study in Quiet Room
- 2:00 pm - Capture the Flag/Free Time
- 3:00 pm - "Disconnect & Connect" Special Youth Insight Session with Tracy Primozich
- 4:30 pm - Labyrinth Meditation
- 6:45 pm - Worship
- 8:30 pm - Bonfire/S'mores Communion
- 9:00 pm - Outdoor Spiritual Cinema Circle and NYC Promotional video
- 10:00 pm - Travel to Papago Buttes CoB for "lights out"

Sunday, November 10th

- 8:00 am - Breakfast & pack-up
- 10:00 am - Closing Worship
- 11:30 am - Closing Conference Lunch
- 12:30 pm - Farewell, Auf Wiedersehen, Goodbye!

Personal Devotion Options at District Conference

www.pswdcob.org/distconf/reg/devotions

Friday Evening Devotions at 9:30pm

(1) Candlelight Prayer Walk

End your night with evening devotions, joining us out back at the lovely Franciscan Renewal Center Labyrinth, an ancient tool used for prayer. For centuries, the Labyrinth has been used to invite persons to walking prayer, encouraging them to carry questions or name concerns as they slowly walked in to the center, and release them there to God before then prayerfully walking out. Pastor John Jackson, Glendale COB leading.

(2) Praying the Scriptures (Español & English)

Lectio Divina, which means "Divine Reading," is an ancient Christian practice that invites us to hear a scripture passage three times, taking time to be silent between each reading to listen for words, phrases and invitations God may be offering us to contemplate. Erin Matteson, PSWD Moderator-Elect / Pastor of Modesto COB and Becky Zapata, Pastor of Principe de Paz leading. This will be offered in English and Spanish.

Saturday Morning Devotions at 7:00am

(1) Sunrise Labyrinth Walk

Join us out back at the Labyrinth for a quiet, prayerful walk just before breakfast to begin the day. The Labyrinth is an ancient tool used for prayer that invites one to intentionally walk to the center, and then out, lifting up concerns and releasing them to God. Pastor Erin Matteson, PSWD Moderator-Elect/Pastor of Modesto COB leading.

(2) Praying the Scriptures (Español & English)

Begin your day with quiet reflection on a particular scripture passage with others. Lectio Divina, which means "Divine Reading", is an ancient Christian practice that invites us to hear a scripture passage three times, taking time to be silent between each reading to listen for words, phrases and invitations God may be offering us to contemplate. Sara Haldeman-Scarr, Pastor at San Diego First CoB / Associate-Pastor at Pomona CoB and Nohemi Flores, licensed minister leading. This will be offered in English and Spanish.

The Franciscan Renewal Center is full of possibilities for your times of spiritual renewal and personal devotion.

- ! Meditation & Health Walk, about 1 mile long, around the FRC perimeter
- ! Healing Garden, at the southwest corner of FRC
- ! Cactus Garden, at the north end of FRC
- ! You'll find more as you explore



www.pswdcob.org/events/ministers

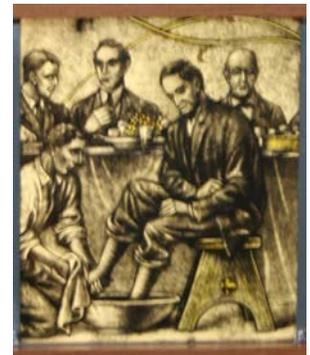
November 7 – 8, 2013

Thursday evening through Friday afternoon

Community Centered Authority: Biblical, Theological and Historical Foundations

www.pswdcob.org/events/ministers

Instructor James Benedict, D. Min., has posted the readings on the event website. The goal of this course is for students to develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the practice of community-centered authority in the life of the church. We will explore the foundations of such an arrangement as they are found in scripture, theology and history, including the history of the Church of the Brethren. We will also discuss some of the implications of community-centered authority for the role of pastors.



Painted window at
Bethany Seminary

Brethren Digital Archive Free Online Resource

Archivists and librarians produced the new Brethren Digital Archive. We know little about the early Brethren. We do not even know the actual date of the first baptisms. In fact, few documents survive from our first century. Important early writings such as those by Virginian Benjamin Bowman (1754-1829) are no longer extant. Now the golden age of Brethren print media has wonderfully come to life in the Brethren Digital Archives, available online in a full-text format without charge at:

www.archive.org/details/brethrendigitalarchives

Read the full Newsline 5/3/2013 story at:

www.brethren.org/news/2013/celebrating-brethren-digital-archive.html

PSWD in Newslines

www.brethren.org/news

Newsline 9/27/2013: Southern California – 2014 Clergy Womens Retreat Logo”Hand in Hand, Heart to Heart: On the Journey Together” is the theme for the Clergy Women’s Retreat January 13-16, 2014, at the Serra Retreat Center in Malibu, Calif., sponsored by the Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry. Leading the retreat will be Melissa Wiginton, vice president for Education Beyond the Walls at Austin Seminary. www.brethren.org/news/2013/clergy-womens-retreat-is-planned-for-2014.html

Newsline 9/20/2013: Modesto Church of the Brethren will host a Solar Fair on Sept. 28. The free event “will give residents and small business owners a chance to learn what generating with the sun is all about,” said an announcement in the “Modesto Bee” newspaper. “Attendees can meet with solar installers and get information on financing, federal tax credits, and incentives. People who have placed systems on their roofs will talk about the experience. The church will show off its own panels.” The fair is sponsored by www.SolarEverywhere.org see also www.modbee.com/2013/09/16/2924834/solar-power-in-modesto-will-shine.html

Newsline 9/13/2013: The Bittersweet Gospel Band, a group of Brethren musicians, will tour from October 26 to November 1 in Virginia, Ohio, and Indiana. Worship concerts feature musicians from across the country, including **Gilbert Romero of Los Angeles, California**. The band will also show its new music video “Jesus in the Line.” Find out more at Bittersweetgospelband.blogspot.com

Newsline 8/23/2013: The final group of pastors in the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence-Advanced Foundations of Church Leadership program of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership completed their two-year training ... **Roland Johnson (Live Oak), Mary Fleming (Sacramento)** ... “This completes the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence initiative funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.,” reports the academy. The Sustaining Ministerial Excellence Advanced Seminar will begin in 2014, funded by Wieand grants from the Church of the Brethren and Bethany Seminary.

Newsline 8/30/2013: Glendora CoB held a memorial service for two homeless men who were stabbed to death Aug. 15 at a car wash near the church where both were spending their nights. John “Little John” Welch was a member of the church, and his friend Warren Blagrove was hoping to join as well, according to the “San Gabriel Valley Tribune.” www.sgvtribune.com/general-news/20130828/memorial-planned-for-two-men-killed-in-glendora-stabbing

Newsline 8/23/2013: New Community Project is turning 10. Described by founder **David Radcliff (Circle of Peace, AZ)** as “a Christian nonprofit organization with Brethren affinities,” the project was founded in August 2003, and over the past decade has sponsored dozens of Learning Tours involving some 500 Church of the Brethren members to places as diverse as South Sudan, the Arctic, the Ecuadorian Amazon, Burma, and Nepal. The project also has sent over \$600,000 to its partners in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America to support girls’ education, women’s development, and forest preservation, and has established a Sustainable Living Homestead in Harrisonburg, Va. The New Community Project now includes a network of some 10,000 people across the US and internationally. www.newcommunityproject.org

Newsline 9/26/2013: The 2014 Annual Conference takes place in Columbus, Ohio, on July 2-6, 2014, a Wednesday through Sunday schedule. The list of preachers and worship leaders has been announced. Preaching on Saturday morning, July 5, 2014: **Erin Matteson, co-pastor of Modesto (Calif.) Church of the Brethren in Pacific Southwest District**. www.brethren.org/news/2013/preachers-are-announced-for-annual-conference-2014.html

Newsline 3/7/2013: The On Earth Peace program to teach nonviolence and Christian peacemaking to youth, called Agape-Satyagraha, is now active at six sites across the country including **Modesto CoB**. Reports Marie Benner-Rhoades “Agape-Satyagraha Leadership Training helps junior and senior high youth learn to deal with conflict without using violence by presenting concepts and skills training ...” www.brethren.org/news/2013/agape-satyagraha-program-now.html

New Life

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Meet the 2013 / 2014 Youth Cabinet

The new Youth Cabinet is a small, energetic, productive group, very capable and up to the challenge of planning youth activities for the 2013 District Conference in Arizona!



Leilah Floyd - Glendale; Rayna Harrison - La Verne
Jake Hoover - La Verne; Mollie Montgomery - Bakersfield

In early September this Youth Cabinet traveled to The Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona, where District Conference will be held November 8-10, 2013. They were immediately struck by the sacred gathering spaces offered at the center, including a labyrinth and circular chapel, which will be incorporated into the activities they planned for youth during District Conference.

In order to include both contemplative and energetic activities, this thoughtful group embarked on a study of the District Moderator's theme, "A Church with Roots, A Church with Wings" and mapped out how that theme would influence all activities planned for Youth during conference. The theme also influenced a t-shirt designed for youth participants and cabinet members. Highlights of the schedule for youth attendees can be found inside on page [5](#) and at www.pswdcob.org/distconf/reg

We ended our visit to Arizona Sunday morning with fellowship time at the Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren and a visit with Pastor Don Shankster. I sincerely hope you will take the time to introduce yourself to these young leaders. I believe they will be the future of our district!

Dawna Welch, PSWD Youth Advisor
Youth@pswdcob.org 909-267-5477

District Conference Registration Closes 10/19/13

www.pswdcob.org/distconf/reg

During registration, delegates will be asked to enter their home address. Those living at least 250 miles from the Franciscan Renewal Center, will be offered a **\$100 rebate** toward their travel expenses. The checks will be mailed to attendees in mid November after District Conference.