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"Childhood Faith"

A message from your District Executive Minister

According to a 2007 survey, roughly half of Americans have left their childhood faith in which they were raised to adopt another faith or no faith at all. In a similar survey, 48% of Californians and 51% of Arizonians say that religion is important to them.

In a recent USA newspaper, there was an article on the recent Baylor University survey that describes 9 out of 10 Americans believing in God. However, we apparently believe in four different Gods.

1. 28% of Americans believe in an Authoritative God who judges our behavior;
2. 22% believe in a Benevolent God who is present in our lives;
3. 21% believe in a Critical God who judges us in the afterlife; and
4. 24% believe in a Distant God who rarely acts in our lives.

I sometimes think that it takes a tragedy or a crisis or an extremely stressful life situation before we can open our eyes to see God in our midst. But the good news is that God doesn't limit post resurrection appearances to only those who have a strong faith.

It has been my experience that the Risen Christ walks with all of us who are asleep, who are blind and unable to see. The Risen Christ walks with all of us who are ready to give up. And the Risen Christ walks with all of us who do not know what the scriptures mean.

Most of us are aware that a major part of my job is to help pastoral search committees to find the best possible pastor for their congregation. Some time ago, I was working with a Church of the Brethren search committee on the east coast. This is what one of the members said to the pastoral candidate for why they would want to pastor at that particular church,

"Before I met with the search committee, I really didn't know much about the church except that it is a small congregation and that they are nice people. I am probably the oddest duck in the church. My views are totally outside the majority of this church yet I know they still love me and we get along."

Amazing, isn't it . . . how easy it is to allow Jesus to walk with us even when we don't agree that we are all headed in the same direction.

Don Booz

All Ministers Workshop featured a labyrinth walk lit by Phoenix stars above and candles below. The district provided three days of fellowship, learning and worship to enrich our ministers.



Photo by Dn Booz

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

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

November 2010 - Volume 18, Number 11

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What Are the Big-Picture Trends in Congregations?

Old First Church's beloved senior pastor retired in 2002. An interim pastor served the congregation for the next two years, but many long-term members disliked his leadership style and left. The church called a new pastor in 2005, someone whose gifts and vision more closely matched the congregation's core values. Six months later, the associate pastor resigned because of her husband's job transfer to another state.

But during those three years of rollercoaster change, the congregation paid off its building debt for the remodeled educational wing. Then, over the next five years, the church expanded many aspects of its ministry. An immigrant group began holding services in its building. Several teams of adults and youth traveled to areas of the state devastated by floods and aided in the rebuilding.

The staff and members feel that—despite their congregation's major internal changes and a severe national economic downturn—their church is building a positive future on its strong ministries.

Question: Are the rapid changes at Old First Church normal? Does change move at that speed in all churches?

What Changed between 2001 and Today?

Research reveals that during the past eight years, congregations across the United States experienced rapid change in seven major ways.¹

1. Increasing Use of Electronic Technology: In one of their biggest changes since 2001, U.S. churches embraced the Internet as a way to enhance their mission. In 2001 only 43 percent of U.S. congregations had established a Web site; by 2008 that figure almost doubled—to 77 percent.

Congregations use their Web sites as electronic billboards to help people in the community know about their services and programs. Their Web sites also help regular attendees know what is going on in the congregation. For example, 83 percent of congregations with Web sites post a calendar highlighting upcoming events. More than one-half of those Web sites list volunteer needs or service opportunities. One-half post sermons—in text, audio, or video formats. Others post newsletters (52 percent). A small percentage (one church in ten) allow worshippers to make financial contributions online.

Seventy-four percent of congregations also use E-mail to stay in touch with their people. Most of those churches

use E-mail to disseminate information (96 percent) and to publicize events (84 percent). E-mail also enables churches to inform their members about the joys and concerns of other worshippers, help them engage in ministries, offer opportunities to register for events, solicit feedback, and send out devotional messages.

2. Increasing Diversification in Worship: A majority of attendees still prefer traditional hymns, but the percentage of worshippers favoring traditional music dropped from 61 percent in 2001 to 56 percent today. Just 45 percent of worshippers ages twenty-five to forty-four prefer traditional hymns—which predicts a continued decline in traditional-hymn preference in the future.

Several changes suggest less formality in worship. Compared to 2001, fewer of today's congregations regularly include singing by a choir or soloist, Communion or the Lord's Supper, the use of hymnals or hymnbooks, and a printed bulletin or worship-service outline in their largest worship service. More churches include a special time for children, silent prayer or meditation, and the use of visual projection equipment on a regular basis.



OUR CHURCH SEEMS TO BE IN A PERIOD OF RAPID CHANGE...
WE SWITCHED FROM FORMAL TO CASUAL DRESS,
FROM HYMNS TO PRAISE MUSIC,
AND FROM NEWSLETTERS TO EMAILS...
ALL DURING THIS MORNING'S WORSHIP SERVICE.

3. Increase in Caring Ministries: The involvement of worshipers in activities and programs that serve members and neighbors has increased. The largest increase is in services for children and youth—such as job training, literacy programs, scouting, and sports. In 2001, three in ten congregations provided such programs; today, more than one-half do.

Health-related services grew at about the same pace. In 2001, three in ten churches sponsored blood drives, health screenings, or health-education programs; today, one-half of congregations provide those types of health-related services.

Two other areas widened almost as much: emergency relief activities—including food, meals, clothing, or other assistance for people in crisis; and cultural activities such as music and arts programs.

4. Decreasing Size and Financial Strength: Many news stories report a growth in the number of and size of megachurches. However, on average, congregations are smaller today than they were in 2001. While four in ten congregations averaged 100 or fewer worshipers in 2001, today six in ten congregations fall into that small-church category.

The total financial income that congregations receive today is greater than in 2001, even when adjusted for inflation. The median size annual budget for congregations nearly doubled—from \$121,000 in 2001 to \$226,000 today. But the operating expenses climbed as well. More money flows into the typical congregation than before, but more money is expended.

In 2001, one-half of congregations described themselves as having “a stable financial base,” while one in three told of “an increasing financial base.” Today, the percentage of congregations deemed financially stable remains about the same. But far fewer congregations—just 12 percent—say that they are blessed with an increasing financial base, and almost one in three face a declining financial base.

5. More Older Worshipers: Today’s worshipers are older, on average, than the general U.S. population.

But perhaps more important—the average age of worshipers is older now than in 2001: The average age of worshipers increased from fifty in 2001 to fifty-three today. Almost seven in ten worshipers are now forty-four years of age or older, up from six in ten worshipers of that age in 2001.

6. More Educated Worshipers: Among worshipers who are age twenty-five or more, the percentage of college-educated worshipers increased from 38 percent in 2001 to 47 percent today.

7. Less-Frequent Attendance: Fewer of today’s worshipers report attending services on a weekly basis. In 2001, 83 percent came to worship services “usually every week” or “more than once a week.” That number has dropped to 76 percent.

Question: Looking at those seven changes what ideas might strengthen our congregation’s future?

What Did Not Change since 2001?

Despite several significant changes among U.S. congregations, a portrait of worshipers across the country exhibits stability in the following ways.

1. Unchanged Demographics: The gender ratio, the marital-status profile, and the household composition of worshipers remain unchanged.

2. Participating Non-Members: In 2001 about 11 percent of worshipers who actively participated in their congregations were neither (a) members nor (b) in the process of joining. Some 2001 experts predicted a big increase in that percentage but it didn’t happen. Today, about 12 percent of worshipers are non-members.

Yet differences between younger and older worshipers indicate that the percentage of participating nonmembers could grow in the future: Currently, one in ten worshipers in the forty-five or older age range are active participants but not church members. Twice as many younger worshipers (18 percent) are active participants but are not church members.

3. Congregational Involvement: Other than a decrease in weekly worship attendance, little change has occurred in the ways worshipers involve themselves in church activities. In both 2001 and today, about four in ten worshipers hold leadership roles in their congregations; about four in ten worshipers participate in the congregation’s small groups; and almost one-half give at least 5 percent of their income to the congregation.

Question: Looking at those three signs of stability, what ideas might strengthen our congregation’s future?

What Is Our Congregation’s Handprint?

In 1940, four teenage boys discovered prehistoric art in caves near Lascaux in southwestern France. Anthropologists believe the paintings are about 16,000 years old and think early people used the cave as a kind of church.

When the boys hoisted their lanterns in the dark cavern, they saw more than 2,000 animals decorating the cave’s walls. Among the images left by the artists are their own handprints, which they made by tracing around their own fingers.

Just as early artists left a record, what handprint do we expect our congregation to leave behind in worshipers’ lives?

As we trace around our congregation’s profile, what long-lasting impact do we see our congregation making in our neighborhood, region, and world?

¹Findings drawn from *A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations* (2nd Edition) by Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

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A New University of La Verne Chaplain

I am pleased to announce the selection of Rev. Zandra Wagoner, PhD as our University of La Verne Chaplain. Zandra brings many talents to this position. She is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren and holds a Ph.D in Religious Studies. She also is well acquainted with the university community through her previous work in both the Dean's and Provost's Office.

As the [University Chaplain](#) she will function as the interfaith religious leader for the University, and will guide a new vision for a comprehensive interfaith office of religious and spiritual life, furthering the University's commitment to diversity, the development of global citizens, and the education of whole persons. The Interfaith Chaplain will develop programming to support a broad range of religious traditions, foster spiritual well-being and development, promote and advance respect for multi-faith and multi-religious environments, and connect faith and spiritual practices with intellectual inquiry and core values. She will oversee the Interfaith Chapel and establish an Office of Religious and Spiritual Life as a place to explore diversity, personal and social responsibility, justice, peace, service, and to provide opportunities for worship, ritual, meditation, reflection, and spiritual and intellectual growth.



Zandra will be transitioning out of her role as Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and will begin her new responsibilities on April 1, 2011. We are pleased that Zandra has taken on the challenge of revitalizing this important function at the University and welcome Zandra into this new role.

by Julia Wheeler <JWheeler@laverne.edu>

2012 Grant & Loan Applications

The revised form for 2012 Grant and Loan Applications with all supporting documents are due in the district office by April 30, 2011 for consideration by the Grant Review Committee (GRC) for 2012. Revised report forms for churches receiving grants are due quarterly during 2011. Be sure and use the new versions:

www.pswdcob.org/churches/grants



An excerpt from Chip Arn's recent email newsletter to PSWD Side-Door participants:

Dear friends . . .

I have been researching Church of the Brethren congregations around the country with side-door ministries, and was excited to find a variety of creative ministries . . . begun by church members who turned their passion into purpose. Check out the examples below; perhaps you know about some of these churches.



- **Castine Church of the Brethren** (Arcanum, OH) has a new side-door ministry for seniors called "BLESS Ministry." BLESS is an acronym for Blessing and Loving Every Single Senior. This new ministry provides activities and spiritual growth opportunities for the senior adults (55+ yrs.) in their community.
- **Middlebury Church of the Brethren** (Middlebury, IN) started "The Clothes Closet" to address the basic needs of the poor and those who have lost their jobs in the community. "Carrie Boyer began the project. Don & Berneita Smucker and Bob & Nancy Hawkins offered their buildings free of charge to help make this new ministry happen. Many in the church contributed time, money, clothing and toys to this new ministry." (This quote is from the pastor's sermon in January, 2010 about what the church has achieved in the past year, and what they hope/pray to achieve in the coming year.)
- **Bradford Church of the Brethren** (Bradford, OH) has a puppet ministry started by several members in the church, which also involves non-members. Another sidedoor into the church is "First Place Weight Loss," which meets Saturday mornings at 7:45 a.m. The church's motto is: "Pointing and connecting people to Jesus Christ."
- **Ephrata Church of the Brethren** (Ephrata, PA) encourages all members who have an idea for starting a new ministry (side-door) to contact the church office. They dedicate an entire page on their website to starting new ministries.
- **Frederick Church of the Brethren** (Frederick, MD) has a number of sports-related side-doors to which they intentionally invite non-members:
 - Softball — The church has a softball team in the Frederick Christian Softball League, and is currently searching for a co-ed league to start a second team.
 - Bowling — For years the church has had a group bowling night on Wednesday evenings, to which members often bring friends.
 - Golf — Golf outings are held on a regular basis, open to members and non-members.
 - Running/Walking Club — meets Saturdays at 8:00 - 9:15 a.m. for a hike to various places of interest.

District Conference 2010 Wrap-Up

Newly Elected Positions for 2011

- **Moderator-Elect**
 - Jack Storne (Live Oak)
- **Nominating Committee**
 - Richard Hart (Pomona Fellowship)
- **Program Committee, District Conference**
 - Brenda Isaacs (Bakersfield)
- **District Board of Administration**
 - At-Large
 - Lois Frantz (Empire)
 - James Isaacs (Bakersfield)
 - Marye Martinez (Modesto)
 - Sam Spire (Circle of Peace)
 - Southern California East Representation
 - Reba Herder (La Verne)
 - Southern California West Representation
 - Don Fancher (South Bay)
 - Youth & Young Adult Representatives
 - Paige Butzlaff (La Verne)
 - Christopher Bache (La Verne)
 - Nohemi Flores (Cristo Sion)
- **Camp La Verne Trustee Nominees**
 - Chris Hartzell (Bakersfield)
- **Brethren Hillcrest Homes Board Nominees**
 - Jack Meek (La Verne)
 - Mike Wolfsen (La Verne)

Delegates passed the

Resolution for a Call to Stewardship Education.

Delegates passed the query, Guidance for Responding to the Changing of Earth's Climate. It was received by the Annual Conference Office on November 16.

District Conference asked the Policy Board to call a Task Team to study the **“Process for Responding to Congregational Disagreements with Annual Conference and/or District Conference Decisions.”** This was done at the 1/8/2011 meeting of the Policy Board.

Task Team members: Linda Davis (Church of the Living Savior, McFarland), Doris Dunham (Bakersfield), Jeanine Ewert (Modesto), Lois Frantz (Empire), Sara Haldeman-Scarr (San Diego), Reba Herder (La Verne), Tom Hostetler (La Verne), **Ex-Officio:** Board Chair, Moderator, District Executive Minister

Young Adult Conference

YAC 2011

Camp Inspiration Hills

near Burbank, Ohio

May 28 - 30, 2011

www.brethren.org/YAC



Photo by Matt McKimmy

Plan now to attend Young Adult Conference 2011! This weekend event full of worship, fellowship, singing, and playing is for young adults, ages 18 - 35.

2011 InterCultural Consultation & Celebration



Church of the Brethren
InterCultural
Consultation

Thursday - Saturday
April 28-30, 2011

www.brethren.org/intercultural
www.facebook.com/interculturalcob

Come join the consultation for classes, fellowship, music, great food, and new friends from around the world. Hope you can join the celebration this Spring in North Carolina, midway between Knoxville and Charlotte.

Rubén DeOleo

RdeOleo@brethren.org

Garden Gleanings

The Pomona Fellowship garden mirrors the work at several of our district congregations

Adapted from an article by Phyllis Eller

Our community garden has an official name: El Jardín Comunitario. The Presidente is Nohemi Flores and the Superintendente are Francisco y Martín Villegas. Liaison members from Pomona Fellowship are Jerry Davis and Phyllis Eller. The first season included corn, tomatoes, squash, peppers, cantaloupe, beets, zinnias, onions and more. Plans are underway for the coming season after a successful harvest and Garden Celebration.





Preachers Workshop

Saturday, June 4, 2011 — 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
www.pswdcob.org/events/preachers-workshop

Register online now.

This all day workshop is intended to be a “refresher class” for some as well as an “introduction to preaching” for others. The purpose of the class is to give helpful information about how to reduce the sermon preparation time while improving the art and craft of preaching. Don Booz will help preachers have a better understanding of how to move from the text to the pulpit.

Location: Pomona Fellowship — Lunch is included.

Church of the Brethren Polity, Practice and Belief Class

Saturday, June 18, 2011 — 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
www.pswdcob.org/events/history-polity

Register online now.

On June 18, Don Booz and John Jackson will teach a required class for all licensed ministers on the Church of the Brethren History, Polity and Ordinances. Local church ministers, church board chairs and moderators from non-Brethren settings are also asked to attend.

Presenters: Don Booz and John Jackson

Location: Hillcrest, Galen Walker Board Room
Lunch is included.



NOAC: National Older Adult Conf.

September 5 - 9, 2011 — Lake Junaluska, North Carolina
www.brethren.org/NOAC — *Register online now.*

Passion and Purpose in a Changing World: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:2 NRSV



Photo courtesy of Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center

Courtesy of Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center

The passion and purpose at the heart of the National Older Adult Conference reflects the desire of older adults to be aware of, involved in, and connected to the dynamic world in which we live.

Join us at NOAC in 2011!

Share your passion through laughter and fellowship.

Expand your purpose as we worship and pray.

Consider how you can more fully participate
in our changing world.

Pastors Retreat

May 16-19, 2011

Monday evening through Thursday noon
www.pswdcob.org/events/pastors-retreat
 On-line registration is now open. Due by April 1st.



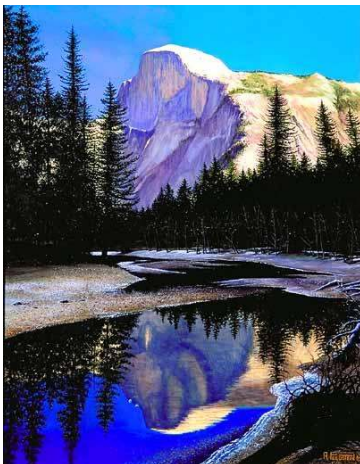
The “Pastors Retreat” is being held at the Evergreen Conference Center in Oakhurst, California (ECCO). This Catholic retreat center is located just a half hour south of the entrance to Yosemite.

This retreat is open to all our Brethren ministers who are serving as employed pastors to our churches, chaplains, plus ministers serving on the policy board, and their spouses.

The goal of this retreat is totally on spirituality and healthy renewal. Clergy today are facing enormous pressures and many face increased health risks given the stress of the times we live in. In PSWD we have a responsibility to care for these women and men who have answered God’s call and who serve our churches and our faith institutions. We want this time to be an opportunity where we can show our appreciation with a retreat that is filled with uplifting opportunities, unifying fellowship, spirituality, and Christ centered.



On Wednesday we will be spending the entire day at the Yosemite Valley Floor. A bus will be provided for those without transportation.



The only cost to the Pastors/Chaplains will be a minimal registration fee of \$25 and the cost of transportation. Additional scholarship money may be available to help those needing help with transportation costs.

Special Response Process

The Pacific Southwest District along with 22 other Church of the Brethren Districts participated in “hearings” designed by the Standing Committee Special Response Committee. There has been some confusion about what happens from this point forward. Below is an outline of how the “hearings” information will be processed in preparation for Annual Conference:

What will happen after March 1 and before the 2011 Annual Conference:

- The Forms Reception Committee will read and study the Facilitator Report Forms submitted by Standing Committee members from the district hearings and the e-mail responses submitted by those unable to attend a hearing. (Please note that since the purpose of the Special Response Process is to facilitate conversation, the Facilitator Report Forms from district hearings are weighted more heavily than individual correspondence via postal mail, e-mail, or the Annual Conference sponsored e-mail link. Also, all input to the Forms Reception Committee is confidential information and will not be shared publicly.)
- After reading and studying all the input from district hearings, letters, and individual e-mail responses, Forms Reception Committee will prepare for Standing Committee a quantitative and qualitative report summarizing the input and noting common themes. They will not provide specific recommendations to Standing Committee.
- The Officers of Annual Conference will provide copies of the report from the Forms Reception Committee to Standing Committee along with other information in preparation for their meeting in Grand Rapids prior to Annual Conference.

What will happen at the 2011 Annual Conference:

- In Grand Rapids, Standing Committee will discuss the report from Forms Reception Committee and then prepare recommendations to answer the 2 business items: Query: Language on Same Sex Covenantal Relationships; and A Statement of Confession & Commitment. Please note that these are the 2 business items directly addressed by the Special Response Process (See 2009 Annual Conference minutes, pp. 241 and 244-5).
- 2011 Annual Conference delegates will receive the recommendations from Standing Committee and process them according to the outline in the 2009 Annual Conference Minutes: A Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues (see 2009 AC minutes, pp. 234-6 for details of the outline).
- These resources are still available at:
www.cobannualconference.org/special_response_resource.html

New Life

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Training District Ministers:

In the Church of the Brethren “*every member is a minister,*” but a few are called to set-apart ordained ministry. Those exploring this call have rigorous academic training, some in masters studies programs at the seminary, some with college level TRIM (TRaining In Ministry) or SeBAH (Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano). **Jim Martinz (Modesto)** 209-523-0449 <TRIM@pswdcob.org > coordinates TRIM & SeBAH for our district.

Seven students from **Príncipe de Paz (Santa Ana)** and **Cristo Sion (Pomona)** took part in SeBAH orientation March 6-12. At the TRIM orientation, March 24-27 on the Bethany Seminary campus in Indiana, **Pastor Jody Romero (Bella Vista)** will become part of this certificate level training program with **Susan Price (Empire), Karen Walters (Papago Buttes), Pastor Ann Weaver (Waterford)** and **Dawna Welch, Children & Young Families Ministries (La Verne)**.

TRIM and SeBAH-CoB programs are offered through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, a ministry training partnership of the Church of the Brethren and Bethany Theological Seminary. SeBAH-CoB is a partnership between the Mennonite Education Agency and the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.



Our first SeBAH orientation met daily at Pomona Fellowship. (left to right) Richard & Becky Zapapta (Príncipe de Paz), Instructor Rafael Barahona, David Flores Jr, David Flores Sr, Nohemi Flores, Rita Flores (Cristo Sion) (not pictured: Mercedes Zapata). In the right photo, Rafael helps the class with reference materials in preparation for future on-line computer classes.

Photo by Joe Vecchio