



## Church of the Brethren

2018 District Conference

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Pacific Southwest District,

I bring you greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ from the Officers of Annual Conference. *“We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1Thessalonians 1:2-3* These words of Paul as he greeted the church in Thessalonica speak well our heartfelt gratitude for you as you labor faithfully in your districts and congregations to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to your communities and into all the world in every place you have felt God’s call to serve.

As we anticipate gathering for the 233<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren in Greensboro, North Carolina our theme is “Proclaim Christ; Reclaim Passion.” I invite us to proclaim the One in whom we live and move and have our being, the One who stands at the center of our life together, Jesus the Christ. As we together proclaim Christ, may we reclaim passion for Him our Teacher, Redeemer, and Lord, returning to our first love as His bride, the church. May we reclaim what is lost in passion for our life together as gathered believers called Church of the Brethren.

We are in a unique time in our life together. In our struggle to find understanding and commonality amid deep disagreements that are dividing us, the Annual Conference 2017 delegates called us to turn our attention toward the discernment of a compelling vision that would help guide our future as the Church of the Brethren. The Leadership Team and Council of District Executives have joined to develop a visioning process unlike any we have had in the past. We began our conversations toward a compelling vision in Cincinnati at our 2018 Annual Conference. Now we continue the work of shaping this vision through conversations that take place across the denomination this fall and winter. I hope each of you will be able to attend an event hosted by your district so that your voice will be part of the process.

*Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together*

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In Greensboro July 3-7, 2019 we will share what was learned through our conversations in districts and at other denominational events. We will then spend much of our time during business sessions in deep conversation with one another as we work toward the conclusion of the compelling vision process.

I believe God's Holy Spirit is doing a new work among us. Let us pray fervently for our church and let us look forward with enthusiastic expectancy to how God will continue to make us and mold us to be His people doing His work in the world.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donita J. Keister". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the text "In Christ,".

Donita J. Keister  
2019 Annual Conference Moderator

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Cor. 5:17-18*