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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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It Takes Time

The artist Georgia O'Keefe was best known for her magnified paintings of nature and, in particular, her sensuous paintings of flowers. One has to wonder how someone could paint such large beautiful flowers as if you could stand next to her paintings and smell the fragrance of each flower variety. O'Keefe described her success as a painter by saying, "In a way, nobody sees a flower, really, it is so small, we haven't time- and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time."

And paying attention to God takes time...really, it does. And how many of us take the time to pay attention to God in our lives? We are probably more inclined to pay attention to our smart phones. According to a recent study by Mobile Mindset, smart phone owners check their phones at least every hour and a large share check their phones in bed or in the bathroom. Most people look at their smart phones 150 times per day; that's equivalent to once every six-and-a-half minutes. When driving, 24% admit to checking their phones while 9% admit to checking their phones during a worship service. I bet you didn't see that last statistic coming?

The older I get, the more inclined I am to believe that seeing God requires our undivided attention. At times, seeing God requires me to take little side trips and unexpected detours. This is why I am constantly drawn to the Old Testament accounts of Jacob's life. His life seems to have been filled with detours and side trips. He grew up in a dysfunctional family that no soap opera could fully capture. His lying, stealing and cheating caused his brother, Easu, to be so angry that he was willing to kill Jacob. Subsequently, Jacob's only solution was to run away. And, at some point on his journey, Jacob awakens to utter the words, "Surely God is in this place and I did not recognize it."

A common experience for many of us is to awaken to the presence of God that was not recognized before that moment. Jacob assumed that he would someday receive his blessing. "Good for him," you say. "I am not Jacob and I don't particularly feel blessed." And you are right, of course. Few of us truly feel blessed. To be blessed would require us to stop long enough to really look at our surroundings. Maybe that is why Jacob left his family and all of his earthly possessions behind. At some level Jacob knew that if he truly wanted to meet God, he had to temporarily take away all of the people and things that distracted him.

I admire Jacob for doing it. I can barely walk outside my house without my cell phone in my hands. But the hand of God is all around us. Please allow me to tell you this brief story. Not too long ago when I was waiting to board a plane, a blind man with a long walking cane was slowly meandering through the

terminal. Occasionally the cane would bounce off a chair or a person's suitcase. The place was crowded and not very many seats were available. Then I saw a much younger person ask the man if he wanted his seat. I won't begin to describe the obvious outward differences between the two people. I continued to watch as they walked to the Southwest counter. Then with great care, the younger man gave his arm to help guide the blind man to his seat.

When I was allowed to board the plane and just before I walked down the jet way, I looked back at the blind man and younger person. They were laughing and apparently having a great conversation. When I turned away, I thought I could smell the scent of fresh flowers.

Don Booz

District Executive Minister



'Pineapple Bud', 1939 from Wikipedia
Georgia O'Keefe

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

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

February 2013 - Volume 21, Number 2

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Can You Downsize Staff Without Destroying Your Congregation?

Downsizing hurts not only the person who loses a job but their family, other employees, and even bosses who have a deep, compassionate spirit. When you add the element of a congregation, downsizing also hurts the personal and professional support groups of the staff person. It also damages the health and well-being of the congregation because it can wound the church's image and witness in its community context.

Why Does Staff Downsizing Happen?

When your congregational budget becomes a straitjacket, one issue that you will likely consider is the possibility of downsizing staff. The two most common reasons for staff downsizing are *economic necessity and a decline in church participation* (membership and/or worship attendance). A few other reasons may also prompt a staff reduction: a new pastor drives a major new strategy that requires a different staffing pattern than the current one, a major shift in the congregation's context necessitates a shift in its mission, or a conflict leads to change that affects staffing priorities.

Staff downsizing happens when other attempts to balance the congregation's budget are already in place or have failed. In general, cuts have already been made in missions and programs. Routine and preventative maintenance on buildings have already been delayed. Even with these preventative measures to avoid downsizing, the effects are still far-reaching. Because a congregation is an emotional system, what impacts one part often affects the whole system. When churches downsize staff, the system itself is susceptible to being wounded or even destroyed. For *initiators* of a staff downsizing strategy the emotional loss may be low. For *defenders* of downsized staff persons the emotional loss may be high.

One difficulty is understanding the motives that influential people and groups in a congregation have for downsizing specific staff persons. Typically, the staff person that they want to downsize is one who is not their favorite and is therefore, to them, expendable.

Staff persons who are the favorite of influential people and groups are often untouchable. Their support groups see no rationale for downsizing them.

Whether based on strategic principles or spiritual discernment, it is unfortunate that staff reductions are almost always based on subjective perceptions, the personality of staff persons, and the size and passion of their support groups. Further, the life and ministry approach of affected staff members influences their personal openness to downsizing efforts. This has a direct impact on whether they go quietly or seek to disrupt the fellowship of the congregation.

What Questions Arise When Downsizing?

Different people will have different questions about what's important when downsizing staff members. Some will focus on questions that interrogate what is best for the current financial and organizational structure of the church such as How vital is the role of individual staff members to the ministry and fellowship of the congregation? Others will focus on how the downsizing will affect



WE NEED TO COME UP WITH A BETTER
PROCESS FOR DOWNSIZING CHURCH STAFF.

each staff member and will ask questions such as What is going on in the staff member's personal life that may be negatively affected by downsizing?

When your congregation has assembled the group that will be involved in the decision-making process, it will be important to let everyone know that neither of these approaches is incorrect. A healthy balance of those who are focused on what is best for the congregation as a whole and those who are focused on the impact on each individual staff member is most helpful. When discernment groups are formed (see step 1 below), leadership will want to have members in each group who represent both perspectives.

Warning! A lot of questions are not legal criteria for who is downsized. Please consult with legal and human resource professionals.

Why Not Use the Business World Approach?

Downsizing in congregations—because they are an interconnected and complex spiritual organism and not an organization of separate individuals—needs to be done differently than it is in corporations. In organizations, secrecy, surprise, and swiftness are often the tools of the process. Legal and human resource advisors may recommend this methodology.

In the congregational organism, openness, trust, and healthy transition are the tools of the process. When a congregation must downsize staff, a process for reducing staff must be designed; shared with the staff first, then with the congregation; and voted on as needed or required by church policies. Everyone knows what process is being followed and the steps involved in the process. This approach of open process will foster a sense of trust among congregational staff and members. It creates a healthy environment that can build a foundation for a healthy transition even in this time of stress.

Is There a Healthy Approach to Downsizing?

Yes. A healthy strategy involves seven steps and takes up to 120 days. Here are some details.

Step 1—Build a climate for making tough decisions. Begin and lead 100 days of discernment that involves dialogue and prayer triplets. Divide the willing congregational participants into groups of three people with various perspectives on church life and ministry. In addition to prayers for the church, conversations should include open discernment dialogues and brainstorming innovative ideas for staffing the congregation. Steps 2–6 are enacted during these 100 days.

Step 2—Develop multiple scenarios for future staff. Continue the open discernment dialogue and prayer around multiple scenarios for the future staffing of

the congregation. A consideration of three possible strategies works well and can help focus the dialogue at this stage.

Step 3—Choose a pathway. After prayer and dialogue, focus on one scenario as the strategic frame-work for future staffing. Using a consensus method, have open discernment dialogue around the chosen pathway and how it can best benefit everyone affected by the staff downsizing. Only if discernment is still unclear should the congregation vote on which pathway to use.

Step 4—Formally develop the chosen pathway. Church leaders need to write a downsizing plan that takes into account the church as an organism and the new and emerging emotional and spiritual climate. Continue having open discernment dialogue around the downsizing plan.

Step 5—Implement the chosen pathway. At this point, church leaders take downsizing actions. Although it may be tough, the process followed to this point should have prepared the congregation for what is happening. Open discernment dialogue around downsizing actions will be very important at this step as well.

Step 6—Transition to the new reality. The staff reductions and transitions to new positions have happened. Begin to talk and act on the new reality. Having open discernment dialogue around these forward actions continues to be important at this step.

Step 7—Craft prevention processes. Plan for future staffing processes that are not likely to produce the kind of downsizing crisis the church has just experienced. Commit to a staffing plan that is flexible and agile. Have a job performance and relationship covenant with each staff person.

The Bottom Line

The staff persons being downsized, the staff persons remaining, and the leadership of the congregation are at all times persons of worth created in the image of God to live and to love. Expressions of unconditional love are always in order. The Golden Rule always applies.

About the Writer: George Bullard serves as a congregational and denominational leadership coach with The Columbia Partnership (www.TheColumbiaPartnership.org).

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Pre-District Conference History & Polity Workshop

www.pswdcob.org/events/ministers

November 7 – 8, 2013

Thursday through Friday afternoon

History and Polity of the Church of the Brethren

Pastor Jim Benedict

This workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to examine Brethren beginnings. Jim will lead three sessions on Church of the Brethren History and Polity.

District Conference 2013

November 8-10, 2013

Registration goes live this Summer

at the

Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, AZ

www.pswdcob.org/distconf



This year, the Pacific Southwest District will gather in Phoenix for our fiftieth annual District Conference. Please join us as we celebrate the history and accomplishments of the Church of the Brethren across the District and the world. Be with us also as we dedicate ourselves to sustaining and reviving the Church, insuring that we will continue to be a shining light of the Faith, truly the City on the Hill.

Moderator Jim LeFever

District Conference Highlights

- Women’s Fellowship Luncheon on Friday
- Business & Insight sessions on Saturday
- Consecrate our licensed ministers
- Hear Bethany Seminary’s new president Jeff Carter on Sunday morning

Walk the Labyrinth by day or night



District Conference Registration:

Delegate	Adult	Youth / Jr High / Child	Activity Fee: Jr High / Youth
\$80 Registration	\$60 Registration	\$30 Registration	Activity Fee of \$30 <i>includes meals on Saturday and Sunday</i>

Housing & Meals: This chart will help you estimate your expenses. Meals are included in the room cost for those staying on site at the Franciscan Renewal Center. For those staying in a hotel there is a \$35 per day onsite fee that includes 3 meals.

	1 night	Room contains	3 Meals Fri./Saturday	3 Meals Sat./Sunday	2 night total
Franciscan Single	\$132	Single bed	<i>included with room</i>	<i>included with room</i>	\$264
Franciscan Double	\$99 ea.	2 double beds	<i>included with room</i>	<i>included with room</i>	\$198

These hotels have a shuttle van to Franciscan Renewal Center, ask about availability.

Hampton Inn	\$84	1 king / 2 queens	\$35 per person	\$35 per person	\$238
Residence Inn Marriott	\$119	1 king / 2 queens	\$35 per person	\$35 per person	\$308

PSWD Youth . . .

Dawna Welch, PSWD Youth Advisor
Youth@pswdcob.org



What an adventure it has been to work with the 2012/2013 Youth Cabinet! This diverse group of 6 youth, ranging in ages from 12 to 16 and from 6 different congregations became fast friends from their first meeting last fall. Since that time they planned and implemented a fabulous 2012 District Conference experience, organized themselves by calling Mollie Montgomery of Bakersfield CoB and Michael Terry of Live Oak CoB as Chair and Vice Chair and conferencing regularly by telephone to keep in touch and plan one last event.

With genuine eagerness to bring the youth of the district together and a sincere desire to serve the Church of the Brethren this Youth Cabinet will sponsor:

PSWD Youth Rally, April 19-21, 2013

Modesto, Empire and Waterford, California

Perception / Connection / Direction

Proverbs 11:14

Without good direction, people lose their way;
 the more wise counsel you follow,
 the better your chances



Activities will include bible study, worship,
 participation in the CROP Walk, group games
 and team building exercises!

Questions? Call or email Dawna Welch
 909-267-5477 youth@pswdcob.org

Watch the district *Youth Blog* for new information on these events to be posted. The newest post is at the top.

www.pswdcob.org/youth

New Youth Cabinet Process ???

Is there a youth in your congregation who has demonstrated leadership skills and is ready to serve the district? *Talk with them now about applying next month.*

- May ~ Applications for the 2013/2014 Youth Cabinet will be available in May, including instructions for completing the document and deadlines for submission.
- July ~ 2013/2014 Youth Cabinet will be announced
- August/September ~ The 2013/2014 Youth Cabinet will meet to plan Youth activities for the 2013 District Conference in Phoenix, Arizona!

National Jr. High Conference

www.brethren.org/yya/njhc

Our own Dawna Welch is one of this year's conference planners. Photos from 2011 are posted on the brethren.org site. After the June 14-16, 2013 event at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College there will be new photos and videos. I hope you will see some of your own youth.

Joe Vecchio

Pastor / Spouse Retreat

May 13 – 17, 2013

www.pswdcob.org/events/pastors

Attendance is limited – Register before April 29, 2013



14 Pastors / Chaplains and 3 Spouses Enjoyed the 2012 Retreat

Help your pastor sign up before the end of April. This five day retreat is at the Serra Retreat Center in Malibu, California, located 45 minutes from the airport.

Stephen & Kathy Reid will lead daily devotions from the Psalms. Christian Yoga Instructor and Occupational Therapist Lorelei Woerner-Eisner will lead the daily Prayerful Movement & Meditation, plus a workshop on Body Awareness and Preaching.

Sponsored by the district Ministry Commission for the subsidized cost of \$50 per person.



Annual Conference Early Childhood Services

June 29 – July 3

There is a need for some additional volunteers to assist with Early Childhood Services at Annual Conference this summer in Charlotte. If you will be attending Conference and would be able to volunteer some of your time for this, please contact conference assistant Jon Kobel at JKobel@brethren.org or fill out the online volunteer form at www.brethren.org/ac/registration/volunteer.html

Your help is greatly appreciated.

Bible Visits Exhibit

at Annual Conference in North Carolina

One of the exhibits at Annual Conference in Charlotte, NC, this summer will highlight the Bible. It will also offer children, youth and adults the opportunity to share their love for God's Word by submitting poems, choruses or hymns they have created about the Bible. These will be put on display at the Bible Visits exhibit which will share how and why the Bible came to us and how it is being shared around the world today. You can access more information about this exhibit on the Annual Conference website www.brethren.org/ac (*Information Packet | Additional Conference Event Information | Exhibits | Bible Visits*).

All items to be put on display must be submitted **by June 1st to:**

Bible Visits
c/o Al Huston
6210 Townsend Lane
Waxhaw, NC 28173



Papyrus Fragment from Event Flyer

A.C. Delegate Discount

Automatically – No Application Needed

After your delegate has checked in at Delegate Registration in Charlotte, your church name will be added to the list we are sending to the Finance Office to mail a **\$150 check**. It will come to you following Annual Conference.

A.C. Quilting Bee 2013

Postmark Quilt Squares by May 15, 2013

The flyer with directions is on the Annual Conference website www.brethren.org/ac (*Information Packet | Additional Conference Event Information | Exhibits | AACB Quilting*).

Quilt block size **must be precise:** 8.5 x 8.5 with the design 8 x 8.

Use your own creativity to make your design. **Important:** Identify your block with your congregation's name, state, and/or district. This makes the quilts more valuable! (Second blocks from your congregation need not be identified.)



Quilt tops are assembled before conference. No blocks can be accepted at conference for this year's quilts. All blocks delivered at conference will be considered for 2014 quilts and wall hangings. **Auction proceeds of conference quilts will benefit projects to alleviate hunger.**

Ministerial Polity Change

Delegates will consider a substantial revision to the Church of the Brethren polity dealing with licensed and ordained ministers, and their training.

The 26 page PDF of "Revision to Ministerial Leadership Polity" is on the Annual Conference website www.brethren.org/ac (right side: *2013 Conference Business Items | Unfinished Business | Revision to Ministerial Leadership Polity*).

Extensive background information is available at: www.brethren.org/ministryoffice (left side: *Ministerial leadership polity revision*).



New Arizona Pastors

Be sure to welcome:

- Tucson: Pastor Bob Morris started January 15
 - Circle of Peace: Pastor Jeremy Ashworth starts July 1
-
-

Pray for our Disaster Team

May 5-18

Lindy Frantz, PSWD Disaster Relief Coordinator
LFrantz667@aol.com

Remember our 10 volunteers and the families they will be assisting during this two week work trip. Background from our national *Brethren Disaster Ministries* web site:

www.brethren.org/bdm/projects/holton-in-tornado.html

Holton, Indiana Tornado Recovery



Photo by Gene Romano/FEMA

Henryville, Ind. House destroyed by March 2-3, 2012 tornado outbreak.

Southeastern Indiana was hit by an outbreak of 16 tornadoes on March 2-3, 2012. The storm that plowed through the small town of Holton destroyed nearly 20 homes and damaged dozens of others. The local long-term recovery group, which started to

rebuild new homes last year, has called upon Brethren Disaster Ministries for assistance in building the final five homes.

Our PSWD Team will bring their own cook and be housed at the Hopewell Baptist Church, sleeping on mattresses on the floor. The famous BDM shower trailer will be on site. Travel expenses are covered by the PSWD *Ministry Investment Plan*, passed by church delegates last November at District Conference.

National Work Camp

Hosted at **Circle of Peace** in Peoria, AZ

July 22-28 (25 participants)

www.brethren.org/workcamps

We will spend our week in sunny Arizona just outside of Phoenix working with various organizations that help the local community. Our home for the week, **Circle of Peace Church of the Brethren**, is deeply rooted in the area's history and has a strong commitment to serving its local and global neighbors. We will also take some time to explore the beauty of the red rocks of Sedona. As you explore being deeply rooted in your faith, allow your living to spill over into thanksgiving through service, play, and worship in the beautiful Arizona desert.

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

Save \$ on Summer Camp

Our Camps have early registration discounts.
See their web sites and registration forms!



Camp La Verne

6,900 feet above San Bernardino, CA

909-524-8581 or 909-524-8438

www.camplaverne.org

Schedule

- July 7-13, 2013 – Sr High Camp (grades 9-12)
- July 21-27, 2013 – Jr High Camp (grades 6-8)
- July 28-Aug. 3, 2013 – Junior Camp (grades 3-5)



Camp Peaceful Pines

6,500 feet on Sonora Pass in the Sierras

www.camppeacefulpines.org

209-521-1525

Schedule

- June 14-16, 2013 – Men's Retreat Camp
- July 4-7, 2013 – Women's Retreat Camp
- July 14-19, 2013 – (to run concurrently)
Junior Camp – Jr High Camp – Youth Camp
- July 19-26, 2013 – Family Camp
- July 26-31, 2013 – Discovery Camp
- August 10-11, 2013 – Beginners Camp
- August 16-18, 2013 – Married Couples Weekend

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- ✓ **A monthly email version** that contains current events. The email has an unsubscribe link at the bottom. We expect that all of our board members and credentialed ministers will enjoy this and support us in prayer.
- ✓ **A quarterly paper copy** through the post office that has highlights of the email version and items of broad interest. After a few issues we will remove those who have not “renewed” their free subscription.
- ✓ *Based on time spent in content creation, mailing / printing costs, email subscription software / service fees, etc., PSWD spends about \$10 each for the 1,400 people worshipping in a district church each Sunday.*

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