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Together in Ministry Concluding Remarks

It's been an awesome year! Spirit of God Moving ... *week after week, mile after mile, church after church, meeting after meeting* ... at times I couldn't get enough of it! What a wonderful opportunity to serve the sisters and brothers of PSWD! Thank you for allowing me to serve among you this past year. I've traveled from Paradise to Tucson and places in between, enriched by PSWD's cultural diversity, congregational vitality, and welcoming people!

Among the Spirit of God moving moments I have been thankful for this past year are: the words of encouragement and prayer so richly shared within the District; the gifted office staff who diligently work together as a sustaining team representing servant leadership on behalf of the district churches; the willingness of the Executive Board, Policy Board, Commissions, and Committees, to function as a partnership in guiding life-sustaining ministries of the District; the energy and excitement felt by congregations as they move outside their comfort zone and are not afraid to ask: What are God's yearnings for our church? Where is the Spirit of God leading us? Who is my neighbor?; the gift of our District's ministers who have an awesome leadership responsibility; the extra-ordinary, well-crafted *Unity Statement* (2007) along with the vibrant *Mission & Vision Statement* of the District Board (2010), giving your corporate ministry focus and intentionality; the enriching educational opportunities available to ministers-in-training; and the Spirit-led ministry that seeks to serve the present and future age.

As the District transitions to new Executive leadership, welcoming Russ Matteson in January 2015, I offer several "stretch the imagination" challenges based on my observations this past year:



- Continue enquiring on what it means to be a Missional District, asking, "What are God's yearnings for our District?" "Where is God's Spirit leading?"

- Strengthening the "ties that bind" within PSWD from Paradise to Tucson. (Increasing support for one another in a highly relational church family.)

- Reinvesting energy for Church Planting and Church Revitalization (2012 Resolutions).

- Enhancing congregational health, welfare, and accountability through the conscientious study and implementation of the newly revised Congregational Ethics paper.

- Increased emphasis on the calling and training of ministerial leadership.

- Continued exploration of what it means to be a multi-cultural district, asking, "In what ways can PSWD congregations work together to fulfill the Unity Statement and God's vision for a multi-cultural church?"

- Challenge PSWD to take leadership regarding its query to Annual Conference and become a model for conversation and action regarding Climate Change.

Final observation, this District is rich in its diversity yet ever faithful to an identity that accepts one another and reflects God's love for all people. The church continues to be God's instrument of choice to bring hope, healing, and shalom in the world. As servants of Christ, continue to move forward, unwavering in your love and loyalty to Christ and his Church. As faithful witnesses of the Spirit of God moving..., you can do no other! Amen!

Faithfully Yours,

Joe A. Detrick

Interim District Executive Minister

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Editor: Cynthia Woolever – www.TheParishPaper.com

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How to Avoid the Potholes on the Road to Retirement

Gordon, a pastor in his late sixties, ignored all the warning signs. Despite his waning energy, he believed he was the exception to every retirement rule. The congregation's anxiety grew with each passing year and concerned leaders braced for the brewing crisis. Would the pastor have a medical emergency that suddenly suspended or ended his ministry? Would the church's financial and mission vitality outlast the pastor's "treading water" years? Would the congregation eventually confront Pastor Gordon and force him to exit?¹

Big Potholes for Pastors to Avoid

If the pastor, along with the congregation, prepares for the next chapter, they likely will encounter only a few minor bumps. However, six issues repeatedly pose problems along the way.

1—The hasty or unplanned exit. One of the biggest errors is starting retirement planning too late. Pastor Mark took his first step toward retirement planning at age 50. He participated in a denominational workshop that assessed four aspects of his life linked to a healthy retirement: financial concerns, health issues, spiritual life, and call or vocation. Before addressing the latter three aspects, Pastor Mark reviewed his financial retirement package to identify an age when he could realistically retire without undue hardship. His wife took part in the planning—would she retire before, after, or about the same time? Which options would be financially possible for their family?

Once a timeline for the ideal retirement age is in place, a second assessment process begins about five years before retirement. At this point, pastors should be thinking about a number of things:

- What is the status of available retirement funds? Are we as a family still on track with our financial planning?
- Are there indications of future medical problems if some lifestyle issues are not addressed?
- What spiritual practices currently nurture my ministry that I want to carry over into retirement? What kinds of non-church activities, interests, and

friendships are being developed?

- What is my sense of call or vocational discernment now? Where do I feel my energies should be focused in the remaining years of my ministry? Where do my gifts and the church's greatest needs intersect?

Answering these questions and having an understanding of what life after work looks like is important to ease the anxiety that comes with retirement. Pastor Mark took his mentor's advice to think of retirement not as quitting but as "answering a new call, with a different income source."² He investigated volunteer opportunities for the causes he deeply cared about. Always avid travelers, he and his wife discussed the long list of places they still wanted to see. He also looked forward to spending more time with family and friends and supporting them in ways he was unable while he was in full-time ministry.

2—The "I'm indispensable" syndrome. One year before retirement a pastor should start thinking of a date when he or she will lead worship for the last time. Pastor Gordon kept postponing making this determination, even to himself, because of his concern for the church's future. He didn't think the church could afford a full-time pastor after his retirement and worse—the church might close. But his inaction increased those probabilities.



3—*A spouse on the sideline.* Too often a spouse doesn't get to be a part of retirement planning (such as participating in workshops). If the pastor's moves dictated where the family lived, perhaps retirement is a chance for the spouse to set the agenda. Many denominations stipulate that the pastor and spouse join another church immediately upon retirement. This rule can be difficult for the spouse who loses longterm friendships and meaningful church leadership roles. Experience shows that a spouse that remains in the church suffers many awkward moments—hearing all the deserved and undeserved criticism of the new pastor—without being able to respond. In some cases, the family sells their home and relocates to a new community. If the spouse wants to keep working, that option complicates the timing of separation from the church and community.

4—*The lame duck problem.* Generally, lay leaders know the pastor's retirement is coming. In a healthy church, retirement conversations come up in the pastor's annual performance review. Every church situation is different and opinions about "best practices" vary. But the guideline for how far in advance to announce a retirement date is somewhere between three to six months. If the pastor announces earlier than six months, the church stalls because the pastor's ability to lead the flock is compromised.

5—*Unclear communication and boundary issues with the congregation.* The pastor sets the tone for this major transition and his or her attitude is what matters. The pastor should communicate hope and enthusiasm for the church's next chapter. An optimistic message of faith that the congregation will continue to live out their mission in significant ways should come from the pastor. The pastor's retirement gives everyone a time to express thanks for their ministry together and to seek forgiveness for any past conflicts.

One way to insure that everyone gets the retirement news at the same time is a pastoral letter to the congregation (see the NW Synod of Wisconsin Resource Center for an excellent example).³ The pastor is responsible for making clear that the pastoral relationship will end and after the retirement date, he or she can no longer conduct funerals, weddings, and baptisms for former church members.

6—*The grief tsunami.* Despite doing all the right things, Pastor Don was not prepared for the tidal pain that washed over him. Before retirement, his answering machine blinked with multiple messages each day. But in retirement, the machine light read "zero" day after day. He confessed, "That's how I felt."

A pastor forms deep attachments in ministry and officiates at long-time members' funerals. Retirement then opens up a space for "carried grief"—unacknowledged and unmourned loss.⁴ Another part of the emotional response stems from identity loss. Pastors hold the privilege of being an important part of people's lives. One pastor wrote, "My collar says our conversation could be very important. You can trust me to know that now could be the time for the moment of truth."⁵ Those sacred moments and conversations cease to be central to the pastor's daily life.

How the Congregation Can Help

The pastor and governing board meet to discuss concerns and issues related to the transition. In most cases, the governing board appoints a transition team (this is not the same group as the search committee) shortly after a retirement date is announced. The transition team takes charge of reviewing denominational policies, planning a celebration event and appropriate gifts for the retiring pastor (for example, cash in the form of a love offering helps defray moving expenses), assisting the pastor with housing, and updating members about the process. The church benefits if the governing board chair or key lay leader conducts an exit inter-view with the pastor.

Every family believes that they are the exception to the policy that prohibits the retired pastor from officiating at weddings and funerals. When the retiring pastor has baptized their daughter, led her confirmation class, and known the parents for decades, the family naturally wants that pastor to officiate at their daughter's wedding too. Nevertheless, an exception request is always awkward for the retired and current pastor. Simply don't ask.

1. Many thanks to the anonymous pastors and leaders who shared their insights and experiences.
2. Marcia Clark Myers, former director of the Office of Vocation, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
3. http://synodresourcecenter.org/admin/personnel/retirement/0001/transition_and_retirement.html
4. Alan Wolfelt, *Living in the Shadow of the Ghosts of Your Grief* (Fort Collins, CO: Companion Press, 2007), 7.
5. Samuel Wells, "Dressed for the Moment," *Christian Century*, November 26, 2014, 33.

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Soccer & Prayer Our Churches in Pomona



Three Pacific Southwest District Congregations are “teaming up” to present a “**Carnaval del Amor y la Paz**” (*Carnival of Love and Peace*). **Cristo Sion (Pomona)**, **Cristo Genesis (Los Angeles)**, and **Príncipe de Paz (Santa Ana)** are hosting a day of *Carnaval* at the **Pomona Fellowship CoB** whose new soccer field was dedicated last month. This *Carnaval* includes a soccer league between churches, jumping games and activities for kids, food and drinks for a small donation, live music, and a brief message from the Bible. The main goal is to get together as Hispanic churches, and to support Cristo Sion’s outreach efforts in the neighborhood.

Our other district churches are also invited to this day of fellowship. There will be at least 3 soccer teams with 5 players each for the tournament. Games are 30 minutes long and anyone can participate. All we ask for the players is to bring soccer or tennis shoes. There will be a soccer referee as well. Anyone that would like to spend a few hours together having a good time is welcome.

For information on setting up an event like this at your church contact Pastor Richard Zapata 714-747-1400 tozapata@aol.com



Worship in Pink Breast Cancer Awareness Sunday at Imperial Heights

Statistics show that African-American women are more likely to die from breast cancer than all other women. Reasons include lack of health care insurance, distrust of the medical community, not following up on tests, and the belief that mammograms are not needed. Educating the community is key. So on Sunday, October 26, 2014 we held our 2nd annual “Worship in Pink.” Members of Imperial Heights Community Church of the Brethren, joined hands with community organizations Tabahani Book Circle, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc, Sigma Sigma Chapter and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Long Beach Alumnae Chapter to promote Breast Cancer Awareness. We came together to Celebrate Life, Increase Awareness and Inspire Hope.



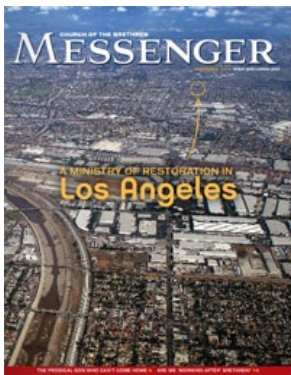
We worshiped in song (All of My Help Comes From The Lord - Ciara Dowdy), Praise Dance (Visions of Praise - In The Mist of it All), Spoken Word (Food4Thot), Preached Word (Pastor Thomas Dowdy), Candle-lighting Ceremony in honor of those diagnosed with, survivors of, and those Resting in Paradise from breast cancer. We heard the testimonies from Imperial Heights’ Bro. Biggs about his mother who died from breast cancer, Myrna Jefferson-Williams celebrating her one year as a survivor and Margo Barry a five year survivor. We fellowshiped with food and increased our awareness with a workshop presented by Denise Lamb (Black Women’s Wellness) on the need to perform self examinations, get clinical exams and mammograms...know your body! Participants received literature, awareness bracelets and healthy goodie bags. In this collective effort we Celebrated Life, Increased Awareness and Inspired Hope. Thanking God for the ability to do what we did! Lord willing we will do it bigger and better next year with “Workout/Worship in Pink!”

For information on setting up an event like this at your church contact Denise Dowdy, 323-754-3998 or church5a@pacbell.net

Restoration LA Reaching out to the City

www.brethren.org/messenger

Messenger magazine is running a series of articles on how Church of the Brethren congregations are reaching the cities around them. November's article (available on the Messenger web site) highlights a PSWD congregation. Jennifer Hosler's article begins...



What is lost can be found.

What is broken can be made whole. What is damaged can be restored. At a Church of the Brethren congregation in East Los Angeles, Calif., the gospel of Jesus is being proclaimed as the gospel of restoration. Restoration Los Angeles (Restoration LA or RLA) Church aims to live out its name, seeking the restoration of its neighborhood, trying to transform a community marred by poverty, alcoholism, and broken families. In the past four years, Restoration LA has also found its own renewal, moving out of decline and finding new life and vision for ministry...

Read about transforming programs like:

- Training & Empowering local leadership.
- Summer school for local elementary students.
- Dignity Closet, a boutique of gently used clothing.
- School year on-site tutor program.
- Footwashing on skid-row with *Los Angeles Christian Health Centers*.

Sharing Brethren values in the neighborhood creates points of relationship. Members and neighbors are transformed.

For information on setting up events like these at your church contact Pastor Jody Romero 323-919-5643 Jody.Romero@att.net



Pastor Jody at the Skid-row Footwashing

PSWD Youth . . .

Dawna Welch, PSWD Youth Advisor
Youth@pswdcob.org



District Conference Youth Event

Thank you 2013/2014 Youth Cabinet for your thoughtful preparation and excellent leadership at District Conference at Hillcrest! The 2014 District Conference saw a record Youth turn out! 32 youth and 4 adult chaperones gathered for fun, fellowship and meaningful worship! We came together from seven different congregations; Empire, Glendale, La Verne, Live Oak, Modesto, Papago Buttes and Príncipe de Paz.



Youth address the delegates during business

Saturday afternoon we had a picnic lunch in the park, played games and jumped in an extreme obstacle course bouncy house. The highlight of the weekend had to be the Youth led worship service on Saturday night. This was a collaborative effort between the 2014/2015 Youth Cabinet who planned the worship and youth District Conference participants, which included the Príncipe de Paz Youth Band and Shalom Dancers. Rudy Amaya (Príncipe de Paz) and Rayna Harrison (La Verne) offered reflections on the Spirit of God's love moving through the Youth community. The worship service culminated in an anointing service that proved to be a powerful example of authentic Youth Ministry.



Saturday's anointing

Coming Soon....

The PSWD Youth Cabinet is planning a youth gathering in Spring 2015. Stay tuned for details!

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

District Conference Business Summary

Positions elected on 11/8/2014 for 2014 / 2015

- Moderator-Elect
 - Richard Zapata (Príncipe de Paz)
- Nominating Committee
 - Jim LeFever (Glendale)
- Standing Committee
 - Marlin Heckman (La Verne)
- Standing Committee Alternate
 - Don Shankster (Papago Buttes)
- District Conference Program Committee
 - Deb Merrifield (Circle of Peace)
 - Peggy Redman (Pomona Fellowship)
- District Board of Administration
- At-Large
 - Roxanne Aguirre (Cornerstone, Reedley)
 - Lillian Hopson (Imperial Heights)
 - Norma Morris (Glendora)
 - Ann Weaver (Waterford)
- Northern California Representative
 - Joel Price (Empire)
- Southern California West Representative
 - Cindy Slaughter (Glendale)
- Youth & Young Adult Representatives
 - Erick Flores (Príncipe de Paz, Santa Ana)
 - Rayna Harrison (La Verne)
 - *vacant*
- Brethren Hillcrest Homes Board Nominees
 - Steve Johnsona (La Verne)

Copies of these items are available at:

www.pswdcob.org/distconf

Complete Business Book, 2014

Large PDF File with 70 pages.

Minutes of Prior Year, 2013

Delegates approved the prior minutes.

Ministry Investment Plan 2015

Delegates passed the Ministry Investment Plan.



Our Year Together ...

Eric Bishop, PSWD Moderator
Moderator@pswdcob.org



District Conference – Nov. 13-15, 2015 “Called to be Just Christians”

Matthew 5:1-12 and 25:33-45

I write this on the eve of awaiting a Grand Jury’s decision in Ferguson, Missouri. As that area, and many parts of the nation wait, there is a growing anticipation of people’s reaction to the decision. People are calling for justice. But the irony is that justice is defined in the eye of the beholder. Regardless of the decision, some of the people will be angry and hurt and claim an injustice has been done.

Being called as the moderator of the Pacific Southwest District of the Church of the Brethren is a humbling honor that comes with a great sense of calling and responsibility. I look forward to being your servant for the coming year and for our ultimate gathering in November 2015.

The theme of this year is “Called to be Just Christians.” I am using Matthew 5:1-12 and 25:33-45. The context for me is that we are called as Christians to do many things, but for me none more important than to protect the innocent and provide justice when and where it is called for and required. More to come on that interpretation. I will be contacting congregations shortly with more information on how to engage me in the next year.

The people of Ferguson, and across the nation and here in PSWD are looking for Justice. But sometimes justice is in the eye of the interpreter. And sometimes Justice is a verb, not a noun. But seeking Justice and living a Just life is something for which we should all strive. Not just in the big events like Ferguson, but also daily, when we see the hungry, or the poor, or the homeless.

Also, please look for the Moderator’s Blog to find out current goings-on with my moderator role. But know that I am excited and scared and honored to be your servant for the year.

Eric Bishop, Moderator
Moderator@pswdcob.org



Consecration of Moderator Eric Bishop and Moderator-Elect Richard Zapata

Pacific Southwest District 2015 Prayer Calendar

www.pswdcob.org/events/prayer-calendar (The web page has links to additional content) Congregations are encouraged to pray for the churches and events listed on the calendar. Begin on Sunday and continue through the week. One way to encourage use of this calendar is to list prayer topics in Sunday bulletins and/or in church newsletters.

January

- January 4– Ministry Commission and our Licensed Ministers in training
 January 11– Bakersfield Church
 January 18– GRC: Grant Review Committee
 January 25– Search process: Congregations & Pastors

February

- February 1– PSWD Youth Cabinet
 February 8– Church of the Living Savior (McFarland)
 February 15– Camp La Verne Winter Camp (Feb. 14-16)
 February 22– District Board, Stewards, Ministry (February 27-28) at Hillcrest

March

- March 1– Circle of Peace Church (Peoria, AZ)
 March 8– Cornerstone Community Church (Reedley)
 March 15– NACC: Credentialing Interviews (20-21)
 March 22– Iglesia de Cristo Sion (Church Plant in Pomona)
 March 29– Glendale Church

April

- April 5– Hillcrest and Casa de Modesto
 April 12– Christian Citizenship Seminar (April 18-23) New York City and Washington, D.C.
 April 19– District Board, Stewards, Ministry (April 24-25) at Hillcrest
 April 26– Empire Church

May

- May 3– National Intercultural Gathering, Harrisburg, PA (May 1-3)
 May 10– District Camps & Campers (Camp La Verne and Camp Peaceful Pines)
 May 17– Iglesia de Cristo Genesis (South Central LA)
 May 24– YAC: Young Adult Conference (May 22-24)
 May 31– Live Oak Church

June

- June 7– PSWD Pastors Retreat, Malibu (June 8-12)
 June 14– CPP District Women's Retreat (June 12-14) Men's Retreat (June 19-21)
 June 21– Glendora Church
 June 28– District Conference Program Committee

July

- July 5– Imperial Heights Church (South Central LA)
 July 12– Annual Conference (July 11-15) Tampa Bay, Florida
 July 19– Laton Church
 July 26– District Board, Stewards, Ministry (July 31 – August 1) at Hillcrest

August

- August 2– La Verne Church
 August 9– National Workcamp in Los Angeles, (August 9-15)
 August 16– Modesto Church
 August 23– New Harvest Community Church (Lindsay)
 August 30– Papago Buttes Church (Scottsdale, AZ)

September

- September 6– NOAC: National Older Adult Conference (Sept. 7-11)
 September 13– Pasadena Church
 September 20– Paradise Church
 September 27– Pomona Fellowship Church

October

- October 4– NACC: Credentialing Interviews (October 9)
 October 11– Mission and Ministry Board & National CoB Ministries
 October 18– Príncipe de Paz Church (Santa Ana)
 October 25– Prince of Peace Church (Sacramento)

November

- November 1– University of La Verne
 November 8– PSWD Pre-District Conference Workshop
 November 15– District Conference (November 13-15) Hillcrest, La Verne, CA
 November 22– Restoration Los Angeles (East LA)
 November 29– San Diego First Church

December

- December 6– South Bay Church (Redondo Beach)
 December 13– Tucson Church
 December 20– Waterford Church
 December 27– The Precious Gift of Jesus!

New Life

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Saturday Worship at District Conference

District Office Hours December 2014

**We will be closed December 25 – January 1
Christmas Day through New Year's Day**

Prior to Christmas, contact secretary Brenda Pérez at secretary@pswdcob.org or 909-392-4054. During the office closure, email or call Joe Detrick with urgent matters at de@pswdcob.org or 909-392-4052.

Welcome our new District Executive Minister

Rejoice with us as we welcome Rev. Russell L. Matteson as our new District Executive Minister. Russ will begin January 16, 2015 at the district office at Hillcrest in La Verne, California. Thank you for your prayers as this exciting announcement is implemented during the coming month.

Marye Martinez,
District Board Chair



Year End Giving

For donations to be credited to the 2014 tax year, checks must be written and the envelope postmarked before 12/31/2014.

Web donations can also be made before year end at: www.pswdcob.org/donate

**Thank you for your financial support of the
programs you read about in *New Life*,
and enjoy in your local congregation.**