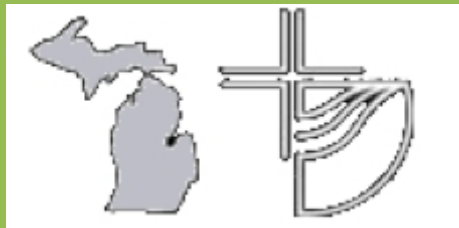


# The Brethren Bugle

Michigan District Church of the Brethren Monthly Newsletter



November 2015

## Contact Us:

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# Letter from the Editor

Hello Brethren!

I hope this Bugle reaches you well. If there are others in your church who are interested in receiving this monthly newsletter, please send me their information and they will be added to the mailing list.

An update from Gallery one:1, the painting fundraiser we brought to you at District Conference. We have raised upwards of \$1200 and have several groups looking to host us in the future. We would love to extend the offer to YOU and your churches or even you and your friends to paint with us and continue to raise funds for Nigeria. A flyer is included in this issue of the Brethren Bugle on some items you may be curious about regarding our fundraiser.

For some unknown reasons, I cannot insert the latest Nigera update in this newsletter, so I have attached it with this for you to view. Please continue to be in prayer for our precious Nigerian brothers and sisters. God is bigger.

This issue is light on event invitations but has some important updates and messages, please take time to read the letters included.

Please join me in celebration of these recent baptisms and new memberships in our district:

Common Spirit welcomes Scot Miller, Amy Gardine and Cyprian Gardine as members October 25

The Church in Drive baptizes 3 members of Standing in the Gap November 7, 14, & 21: Ryan Schroeder, Bailey Brown and Kaitlyn Leger

-Emily

# Common Spirit Update

Common Spirit Church of the Brethren met for their fall council meeting Sunday October 18 and adopted a church Constitution and Bylaws. This was the final item for us to complete before requesting to become a full congregation. Here are a few things that folks in the district might not know about us. :

- \* We have been meeting on a regular basis since the fall of 2011.
- \* We have a sufficient number of families committed to carrying out our ministries. We currently have 16 members and 3 associate members, and we have maintained an average attendance of between 25-30 people for over a year. This has been an exciting challenge as we seek to maintain a house church model.
- \* We have held membership classes for those who have become members, and use the Church of the Brethren Shine curriculum for our children's and adult study time. We regularly use the Church of the Brethren Hymnals for corporate singing.
- \* We have filed all forms and reports to the Michigan District, the denomination, and to District Conference every year as required.
- \* We have sent delegates to Annual Conference and District Conference every year since we were given fellowship status.
- \* Our members have been active in the wider church by serving as camp deans and camp staff, on camp board, on the district leadership team and in other district and denominational level positions, such as Standing Committee, Annual Conference and Children's Disaster Services volunteers, and more. Our members have attended Annual Conference, District Conference, NOAC, NYC, Powerhouse and Song and Story Fest. We have 2 young adults attending Manchester University. One young adult served this summer as a Ministry Summer Service intern. We have called two members to the Set Apart Ministry: Randall Westfall and Roya Stern.
- \* We have a moderator (Beth DuBois) from outside our fellowship to help provide oversight.
- \* We have elected officials: a treasurer (Lisa Kinsey Callaway), a board chair (John Willoughby) and a secretary (Michele Kennedy).
- \* We have been holding regular quarterly church council meetings.
- \* We use the plural non-salaried ministry model as described by the Brethren Revival Fellowship (<http://brfwitness.freesevers.com/Articles/1975v10n2.htm>). Our leadership team consists of two members: Joanna Willoughby and Roya Stern.
- \* We have adopted an annual budget beginning in 2015 and submitted it with our district conference report. Our budget shows that we are financially independent (we have been financially independent from our inception), and that we contribute financially to the Michigan District, the Church of the Brethren denomination, and Camp Brethren Heights.

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\* We have adopted a constitution and bylaws, using the Church of the Brethren Polity Manual as our guide.

\* We have no paid positions.

\* We own no property.

We are committed to being a Church of the Brethren in the greater Grand Rapids area. We are also committed to remaining a house church with a non-salaried ministerial team. As such, if we grow significantly more in size we will have to consider adopting a satellite or sister-church model. We hope to be confirmed for congregation status at District Conference in 2016.

As always, we'd like to extend an open invitation to join us for worship on the second and fourth Sundays at 4 p.m. Our location changes so feel free to contact [commonspiritgr@gmail.com](mailto:commonspiritgr@gmail.com) to get directions. We also have planned many "off Sunday" activities.

Joanna Willoughby

District Office Staff,

Greetings from Annual Conference! Below is a small article we would like to request to have put in your November and/or December district newsletter to congregations. We are making a change in delegate registration starting next year in that there will be no 'early' delegate registration period any longer. Delegates and non-delegates alike will begin registering on the same day when registration opens in February each year. (This will also apply to district Standing Committee delegates.) What has been the 'early' discounted registration fee will now become the advance registration fee with no mid-period fee increase. There will still be a fee increase for those who wait to register onsite.

We hope this comes as good news to congregations and we would like to start getting the word out since I know many plan to get their registration done right away in January to save money. Now they will no longer have to do that. If you or anyone have any questions about this please feel free to email or call me. Thanks so much!

From the Annual Conference Office

There will be a change starting this coming year for congregations registering delegates for Annual Conference. Both delegate and non-delegate registrations will open on the same day, Wednesday, February 17, 2016. There will be no "early" delegate registration beginning in January as in the past. A letter with more registration details and information will be sent directly to all congregations in December. Anyone with questions can contact the Conference Office at [annualconference@brethren.org](mailto:annualconference@brethren.org) or by calling 800-323-8039, ext. 365.

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November 4, 2015

Greetings brothers and sisters of the Michigan District. Grace and peace to you through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I am writing this open letter to all believers within the Michigan District out a very deep concern that grieves my heart and soul. I have been in ministry in the Michigan District for almost 39 years. I came to the Brethren from another denomination and the doctrine of the Church of the Brethren spoke joy to my heart and spirit. I remember the "good old days" of worship in the big barn tabernacle at St. Louis; the Christian Education Meetings at various churches; sectional gatherings; meeting to share how we might improve our witness and support each other, and the rich fellowship of District Conference. Very special times that we no longer have.

I have a deep concern as we seem to be separating ourselves. We are called to minister peacefully, simply, together.

The Michigan District is considered by many to be the most theologically diverse district in the denomination. This can be negative or positive. It can be a negative if we consider our way to be THE way and we separate ourselves, or it can be positive if we truly seek to listen to, and understand one another.

I believe everyone, on both sides of every issue, truly believe that they are following Christ and the way that He has revealed to them. Unfortunately it seems that we have come to the place where we have difficulty seeing people. We seem to see one another as a label. Conservative, liberal, progressive, rightwinger and a few others. When people are labeled assumptions are made about them based on the label, and we don't see the person, we see the label.

Some of our diversity may be over things that are a matter of conscience. "Shall we wash feet double or single mode?" Scripture doesn't give specific instruction as to one or the other so we can bear with one another in love in which ever mode we choose.

There are other areas of our diversity that strike to the very core of what we believe and they are more difficult to deal with. However, we must make every effort to know the person behind the label and truly seek to understand the basis of the position he or she has taken. It may not change the position we have taken, however we will have a much better understanding of one another and our relationships and conversations with one another will be less acrimonious.

I care very deeply about the Michigan District, as I'm sure many of you do. I pray that we will come to the place where we know each other as individuals and not as a label. We must take every opportunity to worship, fellowship, and pray together so that we can see one another beyond the "labels." There is a retreat

coming for ministers and their families January 10-12 in Traverse City and I urge pastors to come and get to really know some of the people behind the labels.

I believe Brethren Revival Fellowship has a lesson for us. I know some agree with the doctrine they teach and others do not. However the lesson they have for us today isn't in the doctrine they teach, it's in the position they have taken. They remain an active part of the Church of the Brethren and seek to share their faith and be an influence for their understanding of Scripture. I believe we are called to maintain the unity of the District and continue to be an influence for our understanding of Scripture, no matter which side of the issues we are on. If we separate ourselves, or remain a part and don't participate, we do a disservice to Christ who called us. He has called us to be an active part of His church and while we may not always agree, and sometimes disagree over very core beliefs, He call us to follow the commandment he gave to us in John 13:34-35, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* (NKJ) This is the total of our witness to the world. Can the love of Christ in us cause us to love one another in our differences?

Separation, or refusal to participate, will only damage the witness and effectiveness of the Michigan District. I cannot believe that the Spirit of Christ would call anyone to do anything that would have a negative impact upon the unity and witness of Christ's Church.

Right or wrong, Jesus loves us. We must continue to love one another as He has loved us, and with love and respect for each other seek to serve Him. Reasoning together, seeking the mind of Christ, maintaining the unity of His Church.

May the peace of Christ, and the fellowship of His Spirit, fill your hearts and minds.

Shalom,

Pastor Bill Raymor  
Beaverton Church of the Brethren

# 2015 Calendar of Events

## November

18-Program & Arrangements Meeting

## December

5-Ministry Team Meeting

12- Women's Christmas Luncheon, Drayton Plains CoB @ White Lake Oaks Banquet Center,  
11am-2:30pm

\$20 preregistered (12 and under \$12), \$25/\$15 at door  
Silent auction, craft sale, bake sale

## January

9-Program & Arrangements Meeting

10-12 Pastor Retreat

15-18 Senior High Rally

24-28 CODE Meeting

30- New Church Development & Renewal Team Meeting

If you have an event or update you'd like listed in the Brethren Bugle, please email Emily at [brethrenbugle@gmail.com](mailto:brethrenbugle@gmail.com) with the information.