

Together

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Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Church of the Brethren

Answering God's Call to Simple Living



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Brethren have, since our beginning, felt that simple living was an integral part of living a life of faith. Over 20 years ago the question of guidance on this was raised at Annual Conference. The 1996 Annual Conference Statement on Simple Life begins this way: "Jesus Christ gathers us as a community blessed with faith, with love for God and each other, and with hope in the coming reign of Christ which reorders our lives now. Simplicity is the Way of Jesus, God's gift to us. The New Testament and the Holy Spirit's guidance have led the Brethren to practice this plain way." The statement goes on to say that "The Way of Jesus is one of devotion to God...is one of integrating inward faith and outward expressions of daily living...is one of community."



So we as Brethren have wrestled with answering God's call to simple living from the beginning. In an ever changing and complex world, living simply becomes increasingly more challenging. Technological advances, which in many ways make life more simple, also make life more complex. Smart phones, smart cars, smart computers do many tasks for us, yet require us to learn how to operate them. More and more activities demand our time and attention. More and more choices at the grocery store force us to make decisions on what is best to purchase. More and more options for entertainment and enrichment can compound confusion and stress as we seek to relax.

Part of the cycle of life God created for us was the inclusion of Sabbath, not as a rule, but for our own well-being. God knew that we would need a built in time for rest and restoration. Even in the midst of this complex world in which we live, it is critical for us to pause for these Sabbath moments and times. When life becomes stressful, take a moment to stop, to recall God's goodness and grace, to clear your mind and listen for God's assurance of the Spirit's presence. Learn to clear your mind before going to bed so that restful and rejuvenating sleep prepares you for the next day. Build time into your schedule to relax and refresh with family and friends, whether that be an hour in the park, or a simple meal, or even a day or more in retreat and vacation. Learn to listen to your body and your soul when rest is required, learn to listen to God's gift of community for restoration and re-creation, learn to take a moment when God's Spirit calls you to a calm and peaceful place for renewal and refreshment.

Simple living is more than making good choices, it is living in the "way of Jesus," with deliberate care for our relationship with God, our love and care for each other, our concern for the well-being of God's creation, and our love and care for ourselves as we live as God's people in our complex world. May each and all who read this sense God's call to simple living and truly live "peacefully, simply, together."

Handwritten signature of Dave Shetler.

Dave Shetler,
District Executive Minister

Being Brethren . . .

By Burt Wolf

In these times, being a member of the Church of the Brethren is something many people are choosing to disregard. I am glad to say that I am proud of our heritage and of our basic beliefs and practices. I believe we have a unique perspective on living out our faith in Jesus.

I was recently at Bethany Theological Seminary for a conference on faith and science. Every time I came or went from the conference, I saw a beautiful bronze statue of Jesus washing Peter's feet. No matter what words were shared in the various meetings, each time I came and went, I received a sermon through that reminder of the profound meaning of the footwashing service.

Our practice of observing the Love Feast and communion says so much to me about what it means to be Brethren. We share a fellowship meal with one another and wash one another's feet. We break the bread and share the cup together. While we come into our relationship with Jesus as individuals, we invariably come into a community of faith that shares a common focus on serving Christ by serving others.

Our history is rich in the various ways we have sought to live out our faith through service.

Throughout the years these ministries have included refugee resettlement, Brethren Volunteer Service, Church World Service (school and hygiene kits, cleanup buckets), Brethren Disaster Ministry, Heifer Project, and a host of local and other district/denominational ministries.

Our values of:

- living as a people of the book
- practicing simplicity in life and worship
- emphasizing ministries of service, peace, and justice

help to give us a distinctive focus on our Christian discipleship. Our Brethren tagline of "Living simply, peacefully, & together" is compelling to me, and I believe it will be for others if we practice it sincerely.



Located next to the entrance to Nicarry Chapel, inside the east entry doors of Bethany Seminary this sculpture entitled, "Divine Servant" was created by Max Greiner Jr. It was given to Bethany by Larry and Nancy Ulrich on October 30, 1994, the same fall that Bethany opened its doors in Richmond.

Photo by Ted Foster.

Another Way of Living . . .

“In the New Testament, the word “brethren” describes a community of men and women who chose another way of living: the way of Jesus. The Church of the Brethren, begun three centuries ago in Germany, still draws people who want to continue Jesus’ work of faithfulness and loving service.”—from www.brethren.org, our denominational website

In the Southern Ohio/Kentucky District, congregations are choosing another way of living in various ways. On these pages we are spotlighting stories of congregations who have trusted in God’s provision and those who are allowing God to use them to provide for others.

Harris Creek

by Gloria Dell

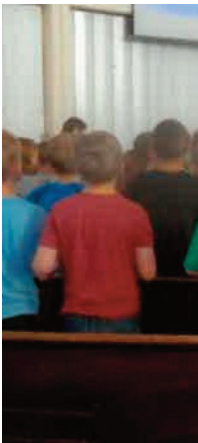
“What a quaint little church” might be the comment heard from people passing by the Harris Creek Church of the Brethren. This little brick church is nestled among tall trees on Route 721 and Horatio/Harris Creek Road, just outside Bradford, Ohio. It was the “mother church” of the Oakland and Bradford congregations.

Our congregation is small, with about 15 regular attendees, yet we faithfully support the ministry of the Church of the Brethren through gifts and prayers. Our members are actively involved in district ministries like Brethren Disaster Ministries, the Brethren Retirement Community, and Camping and Retreat Ministries. Our current pastor, Phillip Dell, serves on the Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Board.

Harris Creek members help others in the community. We respond to outreach needs as they come up, helping individuals in need. When the local resource center gives out a call due to a shortage of food, we gladly respond with donations. We are also involved with the Bradford Area Community of Churches (BAAC), which ministers to the people of the Bradford area. One member gathers community information from all the churches, civic organizations, and the local school, sharing it through a monthly newsletter.



Our worship services would be considered very traditional with lively singing of hymns and clear, strong biblical preaching. We have been told we are a friendly church and we love to have visitors. We anticipate learning more about ourselves as a church and discovering our possibilities in ministry from the results of our recent Church Survey. We are thankful for the opportunity to share about Harris Creek Church of the Brethren.



Covington

by Ann Stackhouse

Covington, Ohio's first Church of the Brethren, was built in 1869. Today, the Covington Church is alive with God's spirit and is a place where ministry is happening throughout the week. The Covington Outreach Association is housed in our building. Ten churches in the Covington area contribute volunteers and resources. The C.O.A's core mission is a food pantry. Additional programs that C.O.A. offers include Back 2 School, and Christmas and Food Support for School Children. Our church also houses the Miami County Preschool. We enjoy having them in our building and always look forward to their artwork. In addition, the church is known for hosting Lenten Luncheons, Annual Home Alone Lunch, and a Chicken & Noodle and Apple Dumplings fundraiser.

Covington Church of the Brethren is very active in the wider world and in our community. Our members have helped families deal with disasters, traveled to other areas to help in various ways, put together kits, helped clean up after the tornadoes in Dayton, and donated money. We work with other churches on worship services, activities, programs and meals in our community. One of the largest is Vacation Bible School. The Vacation Bible School is always a week full of fun activities for children, preschool through 5th grade. We have many Junior High and High School helpers along with many adults.

Covington Church of the Brethren continues to be the hands and feet of Jesus, remembering and keeping our humble beginnings while trying to do his work in the world.



By Tim and Katie Heishman

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Scriptures to Consider

9. **Drive less, and carpool, bike, or walk more.** Every time we drive a car, it emits greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. Unfortunately it's nearly impossible to get around in our country without a car, unless you live in a big city. While we might not be able to sell the car and be 100% green with our transportation, we can carpool and combine trips to save gas. For shorter trips, we can also bike or walk.
10. **Conserve water.** One way to use less water is to take shorter showers. You can also turn the water off while you're soaping up. And for watering your garden, flower beds, or yard, collect water in rain barrels. Perhaps most importantly, we must recognize that individual actions alone cannot stop or reverse climate change. Fifty years ago, it might have been reasonable to suggest that collective action could stop it. Today, scientists only give us about ten years to make changes that will keep the global temperature from rising above a threshold that allows us to avoid the worst effects of climate change towards the end of the century. This doesn't mean the ten ideas above don't matter. But also we need to demand that our elected representatives take bold action to slow, stop, and reverse climate change. Officials in both parties have the power and must work together to solve this crisis. No matter your party affiliation, call your representatives often and urge them to take action on climate change. And don't be afraid to share why this is a moral issue and how your faith in Jesus inspires you to take action.

1. Climate change impacts the most vulnerable people in our world first and hardest. The poor, persons of color, and those in developing nations are often excluded from decision making bodies. As a result, they often do not have the economic resources to adapt to changing climate patterns or the political power to protect themselves. As Christians we are called to Love God and Love our Neighbor, as we read in **Matthew 22:34-40**. How will we live out this calling as our climate changes?
2. **Genesis 3:19** says, "For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return" (NLT). God created nature to have a sustainable rhythm. What does it mean that we now make things, notably plastic, that never return to dust? What would God think of the trash and pollution we spread across God's beautiful world?
3. In **Matthew 6:19-34**, Jesus invites us to live a life completely dependent on God. When we trust God completely, we don't need so many possessions and our need to accumulate decreases. This is not only healthier for us but also for God's planet.

Tim and Katie Heishman are pastors of our Prince of Peace Congregation. They share: "Both of us grew up in the Church of the Brethren and we were taught about the value of simple living from a young age. Jesus' life and teachings are the main example for us and the reason why we choose to try to live simply. Our family members model practical ways to live simply. David Radcliff and New Community Project have been an inspiration to us. And the relationships we have developed with persons in impoverished communities in the U.S. and in other countries continue to remind us that we can do with less so that others can have more. Living simply is a difficult and complex journey but it is the right journey because it is the one Jesus has invited us to."



Modern Day Parables: Lessons Learned from Nature

by Steve Stone

Jesus was a gifted storyteller. He made observations about agriculture, nature, or everyday life and turned them into spiritual lessons. You may want to try the same thing.

Practice sharing the spiritual lessons that come to you after making an observation. Everyday life becomes an opportunity to better understand God. The following is an example of a modern day parable.

The Growth Rings of a Tree.

When you slice a tree you can observe its growth rings. The growth rings tell us both the age of the tree and something about the history of its growing seasons. During a drought year the growth rings are close together; when there are ample amounts of sun and rain the growth rings are far apart and more wood is grown.

Maybe we can create our own records of growth. On the first of each year, we could write a paragraph or a page about our lives over the past year. In bad years, we are diagnosed with a deadly disease, have our home destroyed by earthquake or fire, experience the breakup of our marriage, lose a loved one through death, lose a desirable job, or flunk out of school.

We need medical treatment, need therapy, or grieve the loss of school, job or a loved one. We backslide, pull into ourselves, and get depressed.

In good years, however, we develop new relationships, start a new job, embark on a new degree, graduate a school program, are in good physical shape, or complete an apprenticeship. We experience rapid growth of our mind and emotions, maybe even our bodies. A yearly written record of these events can reveal growth or lack thereof.



Together

Together is a bi-annual publication of the Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Church of the Brethren. Thank you to all who have contributed to this publication. The theme for our next magazine is "Christ's Ambassadors". Submissions of original artwork, poetry, as well as stories of ways we work together or ways your church fulfills our mission of being Jesus' hands and feet in your community are always welcome. All submissions are subject to approval and editing by the Together editorial staff. Authors of original articles will be given the opportunity to preview before article is published.

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