

# Together

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Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Church of the Brethren

# To Boldly Go



Innovative, Adaptable, Fearless

# Innovative, Adaptable, Fearless . . .

For science fiction fans, the phrase, “to boldly go” immediately brings up images of Star Trek. The Enterprise explored “strange new worlds,” and sought out “new life and new civilizations,” in its journeys through space. There were wondrous discoveries, scary situations, and new friends, all as values were extolled and challenged. Some sort of moral lesson was shared as each episode, movie, or book played out.



So what does it mean for the church “to boldly go”? The Church of the Brethren is developing a compelling vision which will be voted on at this year’s Annual Conference. In its proposed form, it states, “Together, as the Church of the Brethren, we will passionately live and share the radical transformation and holistic peace of Jesus Christ through relationship-based neighborhood engagement. To move us forward, we will develop a culture of calling and equipping disciples who are innovative, adaptable, and fearless.” To live with passion, to share the peace of Jesus, to engage the neighborhoods where we live and serve, and to develop and equip disciples all require that we boldly go.

It is rather easy for us to live in the place where we have been, hoping that people from the community will simply come to our church buildings because they exist. But the call of Jesus is to go, to share, and to be engaged in meaningful relationships with our neighborhoods. To boldly go means that we will find wondrous discoveries, face scary situations, and make new friends as we share the love and grace of God.

As our world and our neighborhoods continue to evolve, we must be innovative in how we share the good news of God’s grace in Jesus. The good news does not change, but the way we share it must change to effectively communicate that grace. We must learn to adapt how we relate to the culture. We must be fearless in going to share the holistic peace of Jesus. As faithful followers of Jesus, may we boldly go into our neighborhoods, our communities, and our world to share the message of God’s love.

Dave Shetler,  
District Executive Minister

# A Place to Lay His Head

By Mary Sue Helstern Rosenberger, January 2019

*And Jesus said, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'*" Matthew 8:20  
God Incarnate still searches our world for a place to lay his head.

But the Creator of the Universe cannot rest  
in halls of government,  
nor in aisles of cathedrals,  
the Pentagon has no place,  
and shopping malls and social media  
offer nothing to refresh a tired traveler.

But could Jesus find a place to lay his head  
in public housing projects in Chicago?  
In the silent coalfields of Appalachia?  
Among the unemployed in the mid-West's "rust belt"?  
With native Americans on reservations of broken promises?  
Living in limbo with "the Dreamers," without papers  
in the only homeland they know?  
Waiting with immigrants in Mexico for a chance  
to stand before an immigration judge?  
Perhaps he could.

But we know that Jesus could find a place to lay down his head  
wherever kindness is shown,  
justice is upheld,  
respect is expressed,  
help is given,  
goodness is affirmed,  
truth is told,  
humility is practiced,  
and human hearts turn God-ward.  
There he could rest, cushioned on a pillow of praise!



*MarySue Helstern Rosenberger, registered nurse, author, ordained minister, and chaplain, spent her childhood years in the Brookville Church of the Brethren. In Brethren Volunteer Service she served as a nurse at a hospital operated by the Vietnamese Protestant Church in Nha Trang, Vietnam from 1966 until 1967. She married Bruce Rosenberger in 1968 and they are the parents of two sons, Luke (Julie) of Boerne, Texas, and Joel of Athens, Ohio. They have one granddaughter, Leah Rosenberger of Austin. Mary Sue passed away on October 11, 2020.*

The Church of the Brethren is developing a compelling vision which will be voted on at this year's Annual Conference. In its proposed form, it states, ***"Together, as the Church of the Brethren, we will passionately live and share the radical transformation and holistic peace of Jesus Christ through relationship-based neighborhood engagement. To move us forward, we will develop a culture of calling and equipping disciples who are innovative, adaptable, and fearless."*** —From Dave Shetler's article, page 2 of this issue of *Together*. Many of are already living this vision out in our congregations and in our individual lives. Following is a look at how our Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren is . . .

# Jesus in the Neighborhood

*By Timothy Heishman, Co-pastor Prince of Peace CoB*

The Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren (PoP) was founded in 1956 and, soon afterwards, constructed a church building in suburban Kettering. The church was originally surrounded by farmland, but that quickly changed. Kettering experienced rapid growth in the following decades. In recent years, our community has started to slowly change because longtime residents have aged and people of different cultures have moved in.

Prince of Peace currently has several outreach programs. One ministry we are particularly proud of is

our annual Vacation Bible School program. Each summer, VBS draws dozens of children from the surrounding community. We have also enjoyed developing relationships with our community through our fall garage sale, serving meals at the Ronald McDonald House, and holding some small meetings in a park as a way to be out in the community. In late 2019, we launched a new ministry called "the Blessing Box." The box is filled with food and other items and is accessible 24/7.

Over the next few years, our church board has committed to focus on three goals. We want to develop better relationships with our neighbors, with other churches and agencies in the community, and through technology. We hope to live out the Church of the Brethren Compelling Vision Statement, which calls us to share Jesus' message through "relationship-based neighborhood engagement." This will call us out of our comfort zones and into new ministries. We are excited for Jesus to lead us in new ways.



# Boldly Go!

By Steve Schweitzer

“Space. The final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship *Enterprise*. It’s continuing mission: to explore strange new worlds; to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no one has gone before!”

These words, spoken by Captain Jean-Luc Picard, begin the opening title sequence for *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Very similar words are, of course, spoken by a previous captain of the *Enterprise*, James Kirk. They frame the mission of Starfleet’s flagship as one of exploration into the unknown. Whether in Picard’s 24th century or the earlier missions of *The Original Series* crew, *Star Trek* emphasizes the growth of humanity beyond its worst tendencies toward greed, violence, and selfishness. The series idealizes a utopian vision for humanity, largely as a result of scientific advancement and the values of the United Federation of Planets. It is also repeatedly demonstrated that this reality comes at the price of self-sacrifice, as a result of acting because the “needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few,” and the belief that service to something bigger than oneself is always worth what it costs to do what is right and what is just. Across the *Star Trek* franchise, in 13 films and 9 TV and animated series, we see what it looks like to “boldly go” despite the risks.

One of my favorite *Star Trek* films, *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, exemplifies this point. Kirk must overcome his hatred of the Klingons in order to be a catalyst for the chance at peace between the Federation and the Klingon Empire. He realizes that he must be the one to act, to take the step of faith, in order to allow the Federation to take that next risky move. At one point, Kirk states, “Peace is worth a few personal risks.” He and his crew “boldly go” in taking actions that risk their own safety in order to help bring the galaxy into the “Undiscovered Country” of the future. Of course, other elements plot to prevent this from happening, because as

Kirk bluntly states, “People can be very frightened of change.” Fear can be paralyzing and prevent moving forward into the uncertainty of the future. Fear must be overcome, and the risk must be taken.

These values that Kirk and his crew demonstrate are explicit in the words of Captain Christopher Pike, who must remember who he is in the face a terrible revelation: “You’re a Starfleet captain. You believe in service, sacrifice, compassion, and love.” (*Star Trek: Discovery*, “Through the Valley of Shadows,” Season 2, Episode 12). The entire series of *Voyager* revolves around Captain Kathryn Janeway struggling to bring her crew back home from some 70 light years away, while maintaining these same principles, even when it would be tempting and perhaps expedient to abandon them. She must take the risk of “boldly” remaining faithful in the context of crisis while creatively thinking of solutions and new possibilities in uncharted space.

As we think about the future of the Church, the uncertainty of our world, and the many struggles that we see and experience in our present, I take some inspiration from these *Star Trek* examples. But more so, I see models from Scripture, such as the early Christians in the Book of Acts (4:13, 29-31) who “boldly” proclaim the Gospel in the face of threats from the religious and political power structures. Our willingness to risk, to “boldly go,” is based on our belief in Jesus, who empowers us through the Spirit to live out the principles of the Gospel. Because Jesus has promised to be with us “always, to the end of the age,” we can confidently “boldly go” into this world as followers of Christ (Matthew 28:20).

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# Blessings

*By Daniel Fullen, Pastor Olivet CoB*

As a young pastor, I remember going with a group of others to visit a man in the hospital on a Sunday afternoon. We sang hymns, read scripture, prayed together, and anointed the one whom we were visiting. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed his roommate who was all alone, a tear running down his cheek, as we ministered. He too had been blessed. Several years have since passed, but still today, I am reminded that there is power in blessing. Pandemic...social injustice...political unrest...world-wide turmoil...today, people are in need of blessings. We have reached out to pastors in our district, asking for blessings. Be blessed!

## And now, as followers of Jesus

Boldly go into God's future,  
Loving mercy,  
Establishing justice,  
And creating peace in Christ's name,  
by the power of the Holy Spirit, Amen.  
—By Tara Hornbacker, Interim Pastor New Carlisle CoB

## A Poetic Blessing for the Innovative Prayer Covering

Blessed be, O God,  
the fearless innovation of Mattie Cunningham Dolby\*  
head covered with Brethren prayer fashion  
conformed to traditional Brethren style  
first Black female Manchester College graduate  
first Black Brethren woman preacher  
Greek scholar  
gentle courage against racism  
“go worship with your own kind”  
she served elsewhere, boldly prayer covered  
the Ohio Springfield Church of the Brethren is dead.  
Blessed be, O God  
the fearless innovation of women today  
heads covered in COVID fashion  
a prayer covering of the lower jaw and the nose  
conformed in love for their neighbors' good  
making granddaughters and nieces proud in  
hitting the right combination of keys for online worship  
knitting prayer shawls  
prayer covering strings behind their ears, they serve  
the church survives and thrives. Hallelujah.  
—By Irv Heishman, Pastor West Charleston CoB



[www.facebook.com/GoshenCityCoB/photos/martha-mattie-cunningham-dolby-was-the-first-female-african-american-student-at-/10158059602559275/](https://www.facebook.com/GoshenCityCoB/photos/martha-mattie-cunningham-dolby-was-the-first-female-african-american-student-at-/10158059602559275/)

\*for more information see  
[www.nmanchesterhistory.org/schools-cunningham.html](http://www.nmanchesterhistory.org/schools-cunningham.html)

## A Blessing in a Time of Pandemic

This Blessing appears  
As our country mourns  
Half a million deaths to Covid-19.  
Half a million burials.  
Half a million empty places at the table.  
Half a million beloved individuals.

This Blessing sees  
The breadth of our pandemic loss:  
Jobs stripped away and businesses closed,  
Unpaid bills and eviction notices,  
Food Pantry lines, hunger, and unemployment claims,  
School children divided into those with resources and  
those without basic needs,  
Health care inadequacies, and those who live on the edge.

This Blessing holds with compassion our lives turned askew –  
From the earth-quaking change to the simple inconvenience.  
It understands our resistance when restriction hampers  
freedom.  
It knows our stubborn independence.  
It pulls us along through discomfort and fear, beckoning  
us to come,  
And whispering into our ears, “The needs of many  
outweigh the needs of one.”

Then, this Blessing rises up, looking with tenderness into  
our eyes.  
It rises like the mythic Phoenix from the ashes of sadness,  
exhaustion, division, and loss,  
Knowing that we have reached into the core of our  
creativity, beauty, and strength,  
Charting myriad paths with resourcefulness and enterprise.

This Blessing cannot count the ways that we have shared  
Worship, pastoral care, and missional ministries;  
Devotions, Bible studies, meetings, and phone calls;  
Anointings, communion, weddings, and funerals  
With Innovation, Adaptation, and Fearlessness  
In the face of what might have devastated us.

This Blessing recognizes our resilience.  
It celebrates our vision.  
It knows our faith, and that we can say, “we’ve given it  
all we’ve got, Lord.”  
And if we cannot say it, still it knows – oh, it knows that  
we are trying!  
Most of all, it knows the abundant love we have for one  
another.

So, this Blessing blankets us,  
With the warmth of the Spirit’s breath, giving us peace;  
With the anointed touch of Jesus, making us whole;  
With the dreams of God, filling us with passion and  
imagination.

And as One, we breathe, “Make it so.”  
For we know, now, that we can boldly go where no one  
has gone before,  
Exploring new worlds,  
Seeking new life in Christ,  
And facing impossible possibilities with God.  
Amen.

—By Paula Ziegler Ulrich, Associate Pastor Oakland CoB

## A Blessing for whatever you may be facing this season

In many ways, what a mess of a year.  
Each season it seems more trying than the last.  
Struggles abound. Detours complicate. Uncertainties confound. Unmet expectations exasperate.  
And yet we hold to something more powerful than the workings of this world.  
The movement of the Spirit that binds us together despite our separation.  
The love of Christ that draws us to himself and subsequently draws us toward one another.  
In the face of fear and doubt and trouble we lean not to our own understanding.  
But rather, we rely on the power and presence of the Spirit to create blessed community where there is loneliness,  
connection where there is hopelessness, and peace where there is strife.  
May we enter into sacred spaces, be it our sanctuaries, our living rooms, or the cathedral of the night sky.  
May we revel in the authority of the Spirit while we gather in Jesus’ name.  
And may God, who-is-in-control, usher us through these difficult and disorienting days.  
Until the day we can pick from the Tree of Life... the fruit that blooms for each season in turn. May it be so.  
Amen.

—By Trent Smith, Pastor Happy Corner CoB

# Nothing Ever Happens That Couldn't Be Worse

*By Fred Bernhart, Interim Pastor Brookville CoB*

When I was a boy, my mother taught me: "From the time you're born till you ride the hearse, nothing ever happens that couldn't be worse." That is true of wearing masks.

We have spent the last year wearing face masks. Many people complain that it is useless and unnecessary. However, each circumstance we encounter (wearing masks, socially distancing, limiting group sizes, etc.) provides the possibility of creating new ways to practice ministry. The emerging virtual worship and Zoom gatherings are a few examples.

As Christians, we are called to be innovative, adaptable, and fearless; regardless of our circumstances. The Apostle Paul endured imprisonments, encountered beatings and lashes, and was stoned. He experienced hardships, sleepless nights, thirst, hunger, and cold. In each of these circumstances, Paul "counted it a privilege to serve Christ." He found a way to continue his ministry.

Because of Christ, we have hope. We have hope, even in a world beset by a pandemic. We have hope, even in a country torn into screaming political factions. We have hope, even at a time when racism divides us. We have hope in Christ, even as our "outer nature is wasting away."

I will always remember that "...nothing ever happens that couldn't be worse," because, in all circumstances, my faith in Christ propels me to find ways that are innovative and adaptable.



## 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 "Move in Our Midst". 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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