

Together

April 2019 • Issue 3

Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Church of the Brethren

A collage of various items on a table, including a sandwich, a white cup, a coffee cup, sunglasses, a map, and a bowl of soup. The items are arranged in a way that suggests a meal or a gathering. The text "Be present at our table" is overlaid on the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

Be
present
at our
table

Present at Table

So much of our life happens around table. Basic nourishment for our bodies occurs as we gather around the table for breakfast, lunch and dinner. We widen that circle as friends, neighbors, guests, and extended family are invited to share a meal, not only for



Ted Foster

*District Conference
tables at Salem CoB.*

the physical nourishment, but also for the connections of relationship. Husbands and wives come to the table to consider family finances or to discuss major life decisions. Families and friends might meet at the table to share in a game or to simply have conversation while partaking in some refreshment. Those in school along with members of their family sit at table for homework and learning.

Even church life often happens at table. Deep fellowship occurs as we bring our favorite dishes to share for a special event or simply to be together. One of our most meaningful ordinances as Brethren happens as we come to the table to partake of love feast, to care for one another and be cared for in the symbol of

servanthood, to break bread and share the cup as we remember the amazing love of Jesus. We celebrate life and love around the table.

Many of the accounts of encounters of people with Jesus happened at table. Jesus accepted the invitation to be at table with the Pharisee, Zacchaeus prepared lunch at table for Jesus, the woman anointed his head, washed his feet with her tears as he reclined at table, Mary and Martha listened as he shared words of life.

What all these times have in common, whether we are always aware or not, is the presence of God. God indeed is present at our table; in the breaking of bread, in the conversation, in the laughter and the tears, in the relationships, and in the symbols and expressions of life itself. We would do well to make a conscious effort to remind ourselves that as we come to the table, God sits with us in the midst of pain and the exuberance of joy, in the struggle to find our way and in the celebration of a goal reached. To be aware of God's presence allows us to find comfort, to experience peace, to know love, to live life in its fullness. So as you come to the table today and every day, sing in your heart "be present at our table, Lord" and celebrate God with us in each and every moment.

Dave Shetler,
District Executive Minister

Be Present at Our Table, Lord

Written by Barbara Menke



John Sgro

Sunday, April 14

John 12:1-2. These verses describe a celebration in Jesus' honor. Imagine Lazarus telling his story of being dead and then alive again. Imagine the tears, laughter, and gratitude as this story of God's grace is shared. Are you having lunch with a friend? Are you planning a family dinner? What story of God's grace will you tell? *Be present at our table, Lord, where stories of life-giving grace are told.*

Monday, April 15

John 12:20-22. On their way to the Passover feast, some Greeks ask the disciples if they can see Jesus. God-fearing Greeks worshiped with the Jews in Jerusalem, but were given limited access to the temple's most sacred spaces. In Jesus there is an end to organizing worship around who is excluded. All of Jesus' disciples can say, "Come with us. You can see Jesus, too." *Be present at our table, Lord, where all people are included.*

Tuesday, April 16

John 14:1-27. At their final supper, Jesus teaches his disciples new understandings about connecting. Jesus explains, "My beloved disciples, I am leaving AND I will be with you. I come from God, I am in God, and I am going to God. You can be connected, too." Jesus invites disciples into deep soul space. *Be present at our table, Lord, in the place You have prepared for us.*

Wednesday, April 17

Luke 14:15-24. The Biblical host prepares dinner. The host invites those in the street and even those outside of town, including the blind and the lame. In the blizzard of 1977, my family was stuck in a rural farmhouse without power. We were rescued by snowmobilers who gave us a ride to a neighbor with electricity. Though strangers, we were welcomed with life-giving hospitality. *Be present at our table, Lord, where strangers are shown hospitality.*

Thursday, April 18

John 13:21-30. Jesus offers bread to Judas, who takes it and leaves the dinner with plans to betray Jesus. The children in my Sunday School class say, "Why did Jesus let Judas go? Can't Jesus make Judas stay or make him understand? He should have punched Judas in the face!" Jesus' loving response to betrayal is hard to understand and amazing to witness. *Be present at our table, Lord, where even a betrayer can be fed.*

Friday, April 19

John 19:28-30. Death comes. When my son died unexpectedly, people were so kind to us. One couple delivered chicken soup along with words of compassion. A friend took a walk with me before the funeral which helped me get through the day. Cards and phone calls came. The comfort of those kindnesses lingers to this day. *Be present at our table, Lord, where kindness is given to ease suffering.*

Saturday, April 20

John 16:33. Negative financial news can trigger anxiety. A health scare can trigger worries. Reports of violence can trigger fears. Yet Jesus promised peace from God. God whispers to us, "You are my beloved children. I will never leave you or forsake you." God's presence turns down the volume of our worries. *Be present at our table, Lord, where we receive your peace though we live in a chaotic world.*

Sunday, April 21

John 21:1-14. The resurrected Jesus is serving breakfast to the disciples on the beach. He meets their need for food. His love for them continues. Jesus is with them and for them. How blessed we are by his presence at our tables and in our lives, always and forever. *Be present at our table, Lord, where we can reconnect with You.*

You are the body of Christ . . . If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

—I Corinthians 12:26-27

We rejoice.with Cedar Grove!

Submitted by Bill Moore, Vision Team Chair

The heritage of Cedar Grove is rich beyond measure. One hundred twenty-five years ago, eleven members of the Price's Creek Church of the Brethren decided to build a new church in our current location. Its name was influenced by a grove of cedar trees on an adjoining lot. The meeting house was dedicated on July 29, 1894. Since then, many additions have expanded our building.

We meet together each Sunday to sing His praise. Community and fellowship are at the core of our being. Members from farms and small towns come together to share their faith in the midst of God's great bounty. The beautiful fellowship found here is a result of generations of parents who have passed down their love of God and Nation.

The church today is diverse and active in its witness.



We are quick to respond to needs in our community. We constantly try to discern how we might best be the hands and feet of Jesus to those within and outside our walls. Our prayer is that Cedar Grove will continue to set an example, teach the Bible, and B.R.I.D.G.E. people to Christ and Christlikeness.

. . .with Circleville!

Written by

This small congregation was started in Circleville, Ohio, in 1912. Although only a small handful of families worship now on Sunday mornings, the church has always supported District-wide activities, such as the Brethren Retirement Community and the Southern Ohio camp, and other projects as needs arise. However, the most known outreach is the famous Circleville pumpkin cookie and bread sale.

The Circleville Pumpkin Show was recently proclaimed the largest street fair in the country, with thousands of sightseers every October. In the center of it all, the Circleville Church of the Brethren has a booth where they sell homemade pumpkin bread and cookies.

The entire congregation contributes in some manner to this endeavor and the proceeds are distributed by the Women's Fellowship. Members bake thousands of cookies and hundreds of loaves of bread. People come back year after year and purchase large quantities of these morsels. All of these are sold out by the end of the Show.

The church also has a long history of devotion to the teachings of Jesus Christ and His compassionate



relationship to people of all kinds. They are an open congregation, always holding out hope that others will join them for services on any Sunday morning. Members are steadfast in the Brethren traditions of Love Feast, baptism, and anointing. Over the years, this zeal for service has produced several individuals that have moved on to seminary and pastoral roles in other churches.

Pastor Roger observed that "we rejoice in our relationship with other Christian ministries and look forward to continued growth in both Spirit and community. Although small, our collective heart is big and open to welcome all who come in faith of Jesus Christ."

...Living Peace!

Written by MarySue H. Rosenberger



Living Peace Church of the Brethren is an informal congregation in Northwest Columbus. All members share in worship and leadership as Living Peace does not have a designated pastor. Congregational decisions are made by consensus, not vote.

Situated on eight acres, our church house is surrounded by suburbia on all sides. Many creatures find homes in the cultivated natural prairie in front of the church house. We have space for youth sports. The woodland behind the church house is a quiet and

contemplative retreat for church members, guests, and community residents.

Living Peace partners with the Columbus Salvation Army to help provide meals to women affected by human trafficking. Periodically the congregation gathers after worship to prepare a meal for fifteen to forty women. The following Tuesday, volunteers from the congregation serve the meal they have prepared.

Our members work together to provide a ministry of hospitality. We regularly host one-day retreats. Last year, we provided food and overnight accommodations to youth on their way to NYC, a cross country bicycle touring group, and a Kingian nonviolence training event.

The major event each year is making peanut brittle together. In 2018, over 300 pounds were prepared with sales netting a \$1350.00 profit. All proceeds from sales at District Conference are given right back to support the District's annual budget. The remainder of the funds raised are used to support the various ministries of Living Peace.

Some years ago, a member was quoted as saying "Living Peace is where I love to be for friendship, singing, sophisticated Bible study, and participating in church events, including eating meals together." The entire little congregation would say "Amen" to that!

Community Table

Written by Jenny Wood, Community Table, Inc.

About ten years ago, a group of folks from the Englewood/Clayton area got together and asked the question, “What can we do to help the neediest in the community?” We knew there was a food pantry and that many churches were doing good things, but we wondered how we could come together to do better. Where were the gaps? What was missing?

Out of that meeting, Community Table, Inc. was formed. Representatives gathered from several churches in the area (including Happy Corner Church of the Brethren), the YMCA, and Northmont City Schools. We created a governing board. We made lists of what services existed in the community and what was lacking. We filled a whiteboard with ideas and, in narrowing them down, we focused on families and children.

- Front Porch - Teams of two volunteers rotate management of a hotline, responding to requests for help. These requests might be for assistance with rent or utilities, or something completely different. Teams are trained to communicate with callers and analyze the best way to help, which can include a personal visit. They focus on financial and emotional assistance and help callers sign up for programs or services so that independence can be achieved.
- Back to School Fair - Northmont City School District is in a community of five separate municipalities. Approximately 36% of its approximately 5000 students are on free or reduced lunch plans. Families with limited means can fill out an application form to receive school supplies for their children. Throughout the spring and summer, supplies are gathered based on very specific lists. The Sunday before the school year begins, the Fair takes place at Happy Corner. Many volunteers come together to make it a great day for the children. The excitement is palpable! Students are given a brand-new book bag and they “shop” for

the supplies on the specific list for their specific school and grade level. No child is turned away.

- Backpack Food Friends (BFF) - The BFF program provides kid-friendly food and snacks for children who show signs of hunger at school. These students are provided with a bag on Friday afternoon to sustain them for the weekend. The program started three years ago with about 30 children receiving bags. We now serve over 100 children every Friday during the school year.
- Christmas Store - The Christmas Store assists families in giving their children a magical Christmas. Families fill out applications and are contacted for appointment times over the course of the first week of December. Parents or grandparents come in and “shop” for three gifts for each child in the home. Every child also receives a coat, gloves, scarf, hat, and socks, as well as stocking stuffers. There are gently used Christmas decorations and household goods available to the families as well. Volunteers onsite help people shop and wrap each gift before they leave.

We are constantly amazed at the blessings: donations of time, talent, and treasure that come to us and guide us.







Wendy Noffsinger Erbaugh

One Meal at a Time

Written by Wendy Noffsinger Erbaugh

Plates circle around
a solitary candle.
Light touches each face.

We pause. Silence falls.
We breathe the stillness deeply,
lifting prayers of thanks.

Amen. Food is shared.
We trade stories of our days,
sheltered in the light.

Family is built
gathered around the table,
one meal at a time.

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 "God Provides". 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.

If you would like to receive this publication, send mailing information to PO Box 785 Greenville, OH 45331, or email to sodcob@brethren.org. Articles can be submitted to the same address. Although the publication is being mailed free of charge, donations can be made to the District at PO Box 785 Greenville, OH 45331. Copyright © 2018

Editorial staff: Mary Boone, John Sgro, Wendy Noffsinger Erbaugh, Miriam Erbaugh, Ted Foster, Susan Fitze, Julie Brewer, Dave Shetler (District Executive). Photos by Ted Foster. Design by Debbie Noffsinger Design.