

Together

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Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Church of the Brethren



Julie Brewer

God Provides

My God will satisfy every need . . .



Marcia and I were recently privileged to be present at a children's play/musical called Aladdin Jr. in which our grandson played one of the parts. The story is based on the old story of Aladdin when he discovers a magic lamp which, when rubbed, brings out a genie who grants three wishes. It's a delightful story of decision and morals as the main character learns and grows through his experience of making wishes and promises, dealing with desires as well as what is best for himself and those for whom he cares.

Some seem to view God's provision as a magic lamp, with God just waiting for us to rub the lamp in some magical way so that our wants and wishes will be granted. But this is not what is meant when the phrase "God provides" is uttered. God doesn't promise to give us what we want — only what we need.

We live in a culture of excess in which nothing seems adequate except the next new thing. We want the latest and the greatest, whether we're looking for clothes or cell phones, cars or computers. "God provides" doesn't mean we are going to get, or even that we deserve, all the things we want.

Like Aladdin, we need to learn about what is best for us and for those we love. We do that by listening to God's Spirit; listening, really listening, to our family, friends, and neighbors (as Jesus has defined them, in other words, all people); and responding out of the abundance God has already given. Aladdin realized that what his love interest really needed, and even what he needed, was already in front of him: already provided, as it were.

So, may we become more aware of God's presence around us, and more aware of what God is providing for us. Rather than patience, God may be providing opportunities for us to be patient. Rather than providing stuff we really don't need, God may be providing us the ability to meet our need through our work, through our obedience, through those God has given us to love and care for. Our District Conference theme verse is Philippians 4:19 which reads, "And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (NRSV) This verse does not describe a magical genie, but rather a generous and gracious God who loves us and cares for us. May we celebrate that our God provides!

Dave Shetler,
District Executive Minister

Cover image by Julie Brewer
"She watched the sure collapse of her design"
(2017) Silkscreen & watercolor collage 64" x 136"

Who are we? From where have we come? Where are we going?

Devotions

*Shared by Jen Scarr, District Board
Chair at a Special Board Meeting –
January 5th, 2019*

Read Matthew 2:1-12

The Wise Ones journeyed across borders and boundaries, through threat and danger to fall with joy at the feet of the Christ Child, offering gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh.

These gifts tell us something about Jesus, whether the Wise Ones knew it or not.

Some interpreters say that the Gold represents Jesus' royalty, that people all over the world pledge loyalty to him over any other government or institution.



Jesus...the King of Kings, who he is.

These same interpreters say that Frankincense represents Jesus' divinity... that he came from God to be among us.

Jesus...the Son of God, where he came from.

And these interpreters conclude by saying the gift of Myrrh is an odd gift to give a child... for it represents suffering and death. Myrrh is often used to prepare a body for burial. So this represents the suffering Jesus will have to endure.

Jesus...the suffering servant, where he is going.

The gifts of the Wise Ones mapped out who Jesus was, where he came from, and where he is going.

As we consider the season before us.... what gifts do you bring that might help us remember who we are, where we come from, and invite us to see where we are going?

Christ Child, we lay down these gifts today.

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.

West Milton!

by PJ Arndts

The West Milton Church of the Brethren is situated in a small community without industry or manufacturing jobs. Like other congregations our children moved elsewhere to find employment and raise families so we have steadily declined in attendance. After several years of agonizing about how to get more people to come to worship, we discerned that Jesus was calling us to move beyond our walls and carry his message to our community. Recently, Pastor Ty Pyles challenged us to define the needs of the communities in which our congregation is located. From that challenge has come both expansion of ministries and creation of others.

The community is invited to go through our Clothes Closet each Saturday morning. We offer clean, gently used clothing at no cost and do not accept money for it. We have had our closet for over 10 years. We encourage anyone in the community to donate clothing items. We have many people who will routinely shop with us; we have had an opportunity to engage in frequent conversations with people. We often offer prayer supports. Two community members have dedicated countless hours to organizing the donations for us. This partnership has yielded in a sustaining mission to our community.

We collaborate with the daycare in our building to meet the needs of children aged 6 weeks through 5th grade. The majority of our children attending school qualify for the free/reduced lunch program. The daycare provides snacks but the families are required to provide breakfast and lunch for their children because we do not have a commercial kitchen. Many families struggle to provide food for their children each day. As we thought about the weekends and had concern for supporting the families, we became a donation partner with Panera

Bread. Now we can offer bread for our families to supplement their home meals and what they can provide for their children during the week. We also can make bread products available to our Clothes Closet families. Additionally, we receive enough donations each week to support the Potsdam Church of the Brethren's ministry to neighborhood children as well as the Happy Corner Church of the Brethren's ministry which provides a Monday evening meal for their community.

We realized that there were individuals and families who might find it difficult to ask for assistance in feeding their family. We placed a food cabinet with nonperishable items on our porch. It is available to them at any time. It contains a variety of items that have been donated initially by members of the congregation. Now, not only do individuals take items anonymously, but they also donate anonymously. We call it our blessing box mainly because we feel blessed to be able to share with others as we have been blessed by Christ in our midst.



Painter Creek!

by Carol DeMaio

In rural eastern Darke County the first Brush Creek/Ludlow/Painter Creek congregation used a log cabin built in 1840 a mile south of our current location. Outgrowing that building the church built the first frame building at the corner of Pittsburg Gettysburg Rd and SR 571 in 1871. Then in 1906 a new church was erected, and eight years later two furnaces, a basement, classrooms and kitchen were added. We became an independent congregation on Feb. 7, 1914. Our congregation is a caring family with ties back to those early years as we serve the community.

We are reminded that with God nothing is impossible. Our previous pastor had announced his retirement and with a four month window to find another part-time pastor we faced a task that seemed impossible for our very small country church. As we



worked with the District Executive, Pastor Phil Reynolds answered the call to fill the pulpit one Sunday. We asked him to come back the next Sunday, and the next, and the next.... Then we realized that God had his hand in this! He affirmed the worth of Pastor Phil and supplied us with a pastor. God is letting us journey together toward justice and mercy through Jesus. God is letting Pastor Phil fulfill his calling. What a Mighty God we serve!

Constance!

by Shirley Peeno and Pastor Sandy Jenkins

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; The old has gone, the new is here! All is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

—2 Corinthians 5:17-18

The Constance Church of the Brethren in Hebron, Kentucky fully trusts God Almighty. We have seen the light of answered prayers, the movement of the Spirit, and Christ's love alive in his people. In September of 2018 the congregation decided to vacate the church building on the banks of the Ohio River. Shifting hillsides pushed the foundation far enough to threaten safety. Inside walls continued to separate, and the air conditioning/ heating system stopped working. Water leaks and mold also became an issue. A water snake even slithered up the church aisle one Sunday. The obstacles were overwhelming. God was telling us it was time to go.

While each person grieved the loss of the beloved building, God began blessing us in unimaginable ways. Hebron Lutheran Church offered us two rooms where we could meet, beginning November 4, 2018. We placed the building and property for sale, and - against all odds- within a week, it was sold. Prayers and support abound



from our Hebron neighborhood and the SOKCOB District. We began to learn what Paul said, *"The old has gone, the new is here!"*

We at Constance are refocused. We are living into our mission and redefining what Constance Church of the Brethren is called to do for the community. We have walked through the wilderness and by the grace of God are healing from our loss. We are ready for God's new calling. Our future is bright with the light of Christ. Our mission continues:

"Called to live as disciples, hallowing the time, gathering the people, probing the word, breaking the bread, repairing the world, continuing the work of Jesus Christ, simply, peacefully, together."

We ask for continued prayers. God is so good and does provide. Our faith and hope continues to blossom.

God provides . . .

. . . for Disaster ministry

by Burt and Helen Wolf

Southern Ohio/Kentucky Brethren Disaster Ministries has been the recipient of God's providential Grace on many occasions — often in ways that we can little anticipate or even imagine. Such is the case with the new 15 occupant mini-bus that Southern Ohio/Kentucky BDM will soon receive. Neither our BDM board nor our volunteers at the monthly meeting were envisioning such an enhancement for our travel. The new vehicle will be a blessing for those riding long distances to designated work sites. It seems that God has worked through the vision of others who have come to believe in and give support to this ministry. In addition to giving thanks to benevolent people, we are giving thanks to a benevolent and generous God.



Photo submitted by Burt Wolf

New transportation to work projects coming soon, thanks to generous donations.



Volunteers cleaning up after Memorial Day tornadoes



... for Camping and Retreat Ministry

by Karen Dillon

Many images come to mind when one contemplates just how God provides for His people. Sometimes a great financial goal is met or a miraculous healing occurs.

People look for fireworks, brass bands, parties, cheering, dancing in the streets in witness to the wonders God provides. Not all of God's provisions are so boisterously announced. Sometimes God provides in simple, quiet, overlooked ways we almost take for granted.

The Camping and Retreat Ministries of Southern Ohio/Kentucky is an uncomplicated example of God providing for His people through experiences, gatherings, and relationship building in camps and retreats created to serve our district.

God provides by inspiring individuals to accept leadership roles. Volunteer leaders of the Camping and Retreat Ministries Committee have crafted a strong, year-round program inviting all ages to

engage in seeking God's wisdom. These leaders have a heart for this service and faith to accomplish all of the sometimes tedious tasks and details of events, cheerfully ensuring the success of each gathering. As these people work together, others observe their joy and God's love and are drawn to join in and become part of the building of God's kingdom on earth. God's love is evident through their work.

God provides generous churches. Congregations offer financial support for campers, sometimes

paying half or even all of camp expenses for any who wish to attend. Some churches even offer their buildings and grounds for camps and retreats to be held on their sites. Churches have further supported

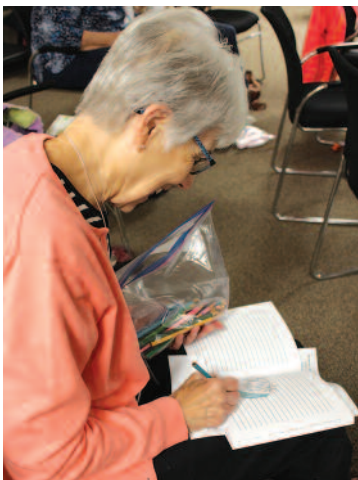
the programs by sending their own pastors as deans, counselors, workshop leaders, specialists, Bible study teachers, and kitchen workers.

Some congregations, who may not have campers or participants, send funds to cover expenses for people they may never meet. God's love is evident in generous churches.

God provides in mundane ways. Many times items went on sale just as they were needed. Chicken, hot dogs, cheese, milk, and eggs had lower prices during summer camp. Coloring journals dropped from \$12 to \$2, just in time for Women's Retreat. Intergenerational Service Camp was able to help a camp volunteer with some yardwork. She said the camp was an answer to prayer, while she was an answer to prayer giving the campers meaningful work. God's love is evident in the details of camp.

God provides in surprising ways. A counselor, who had connections and knew of outside programs, was able to provide flying lessons and an opportunity to actually go flying during camp with no cost for the flights. New people we didn't know about volunteered at the last minute to help with counseling just before we welcomed campers. A public swimming pool allowed a camper to be baptized at camp with the help of two pastors. God's love extends in many directions.

Does God really provide for the Camping and Retreat Ministries? Yes! God has provided and is providing in countless ways to strengthen His ministries on earth. It is up to all of us to recognize and credit God for the many gifts and opportunities He places in our hands. As we receive these gifts, large or small, we must be responsible in using them to our greatest ability and God's glory.



Pictures submitted by volunteers of the Camping and Retreat Ministry

God provides for me pockets of joy in my ordinary garments of work and play.

How does God provide?

responses from the
SOKDCOB Board

God provides plenty of help to pack a 2,000 sq ft warehouse in 2 weeks and move it in about 6 hours.

God provides in ways we don't always see or appreciate.

God does provide. Sometimes just not in the way we had hoped for. We may pray for something and he doesn't answer us in the way we think he should. We need to remember that God knows what we need better than we do.

God provides by opening the right doors when the timing was right, so that it was obviously God and not my doing.

God has given me a heart to reach out to others, and in the process of blessing others, He blesses my family with all that we need: food in our fridge and gas in the car from unexpected sources!

The Spirit gives me peace, allowing for transformation to happen, which provides strength in times of uncertainty.

God provides the delight I see in my son's eyes every day.

God provides me strength to help others.

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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 "Living Simply". 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

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