

# Together

October 2020 • Issue 6

Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Church of the Brethren

## Christ's Ambassadors





# Friends with God

Although the primary dictionary definition of ambassador is from the political realm, an alternate definition applies more to our District Conference theme, “an authorized messenger or representative.” We are Christ’s ambassadors. His messengers. His representatives. This is no simple assignment; it’s not one to be taken lightly. In all that we say, and all that we do, others see us as representing Jesus.

The Message version says it this way: “We’re Christ’s representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God’s work of making things right between them. We’re speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he’s already a friend with you.” As representatives, we are to enter the work of reconciliation, of helping to make things right between people.

In a world, even in a church, where it seems people are so much at odds with one another, we have the responsibility to share the Good News of Jesus in a way that brings us together. This doesn’t mean that we are all going to agree on everything, but it does mean that we understand and accept that we are all God’s people.

New Testament scholar Richard Hays of the Duke Center for Reconciliation says that we are to utilize “practices that show unity, love, mercy, forgiveness and a self-giving grace that the world could not even dream of apart from Christ.” That

is the work of an ambassador, of an official representative. Rather than being a divisive presence, may we learn to take seriously our role as an ambassador and truly work at the ministry of reconciliation. Now more than ever, our world, our church, and our community need a deep expression of the love of Jesus. May it be so for us who claim to be the representatives of Jesus.



Dave Shetler,  
District Executive Minister

*Beyond the differences of race and ethnicity, we serve as Christ's representatives by helping people rebuild homes and lives.*



Helen Wolf



Helen Wolf

*Volunteers are ambassadors for Christ as they fill Emergency Cleanup Buckets for Church World Service. These will be distributed within our country to those who have experienced flooding.*

# Christ's Ambassadors

*Written by Pastor Sandra Jenkins, District Conference Moderator*

***“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.” —2 Corinthians 5:20***

In this passage, the Apostle Paul encountered challenges in sharing the message of Jesus Christ, but chose to meet them head-on to lead the church far into the future. No matter how we may differ, we have a common mission: to serve our Lord Jesus Christ and lead in His name. If that be our focus, let that be our journey together.

There have always been many creative and wonderful things happening in our district, but we have never seen that more than during this time of pandemic. We see churches meeting online to protect our most vulnerable. We are reaching folks online who might not otherwise walk into our church buildings. We have become overnight experts in participating in and hosting Zoom meetings. Our Camping and Retreat Ministries hosted several camps online this past summer. There are online Bible studies and coffee times with pastors. The creativity of how this has been accomplished is a blessing and an offering to God. We are indeed ambassadors, encountering and meeting the challenges of sharing the message of Jesus Christ.

Through this, I am reminded that the Gospel message endures. God is always doing something new through us and for His church. Because of our care and safety for one another, the 2020 District Conference will be in an online format. This is to ensure the safety and care for one another. I encourage you to look at these worship and worshipful work alternatives as a new way of doing and being the church for such a time as this. I am encouraged by how the Church of the Brethren continues to birth creativity, offers innovation in being in community, and continues with passion as Christ’s ambassadors for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

May God bless each of you, as we journey together.



Photo submitted by Ted Foster

*Kids building with the blocks during free time at 2019 Winter Blast. Winter blast is a weekend camp of fun and fellowship for kids of all ages.*



*Southern Ohio/Kentucky District seamstresses making school bags for Church World Service. Since the pandemic, they have used their gifts for making masks and PPE gowns for the Brethren Retirement Community.*



# 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](http://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.

## Salem

*by Pastor Lee Saylor*

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "ambassador" as "A diplomatic agent of the highest rank...as the resident representative of his or her own government." "Salem," means 'peaceful and complete.' For Salem Church of the Brethren, our desire to be God's ambassadors for peace in our world is foundational as we live into what it means to be a place of welcome.

Our worship services, our Wednesday meals, our work with our sister congregations (Happy Corner, Trotwood, and Lower Miami), and our partnership with the German Baptist Brethren school that meets in our building all reflect Salem's diversity of perspectives that yield long-standing peace.

One of the things that makes Salem unique is that it is not conservative or progressive; it is both. With the Anabaptist and Pietist traditions being our shared foundation, the call to serve and love is stronger than our differences. To serve alongside those whose opinions are different from one another and see them gleefully



*Worship during the pandemic looks a lot different but has opened the door for folks from other parts of the country and world to join in.*

laugh and intentionally care about one another provides hope in a time of division.

Salem Church of the Brethren works towards the peace within and throughout, but it takes work. It requires welcoming one another at the table of Christ, making room for the other to come and dine with us. It means going and inviting others by being ambassadors of God's desire for community and peace.

Blessings to you, Sisters and Brothers in Christ.  
AMEN.



## West Alexandria

*by Pastor Brody Rike*

West Alexandria Church of the Brethren was formed from a slow merge of The Lower Twin Church, Tom's Run Church, and Sugar Hill Church. In 2023, we will mark one hundred years since our current building was dedicated and the congregation was named.

Today, you can join WACOB for a service to see a congregation of multiple demographics and hear us declare our rally cry, "Jesus Is Alive," as we open our worship time together. As we return to regular programming and worship services following

COVID-19, we look forward to re-launching our regular Christian education programs, children's church ministry, monthly free community meals, and special events such as a community pig roast and a parenting conference for families in our community.

Pastor Brody Rike is the current WACOB pastor and has served for over seven years. You can find out more about WACOB and hear our Sunday sermons at [www.westalexcob.org](http://www.westalexcob.org).



*Homecoming Service, September 2019*

# The Far Eastern Brethren of Southern Ohio/Kentucky District

*By Daniel Fullen*

Having grown up in the Circleville congregation, I know what it's like to feel isolated from the larger hub of Brethren. In fact, for a long time, I didn't know there were any other Brethren churches beyond that little white church in Circleville, Ohio. It wasn't until I started exploring a call to ministry that I discovered the western frontier. When I attended the first Explore Your Call at Bethany

Theological Seminary, I became acquainted with a whole host of Brethren friends.

While completing my seminary studies, I lived in the Dayton area and served as the pastor of the Good Shepherd congregation. It was a new feeling to drive past other Brethren churches on a regular basis. I was able to meet with other Brethren pastors for a meal. I also shared in a support group with other Brethren pastors.

A few years back, God brought me home. Today, I serve as a hospice chaplain and preach at the Olivet Church on Sundays. I am also the moderator for the Circleville and White Cottage congregations.

But how do you maintain togetherness among these far eastern Brethren whose churches are separated by great distances?

Soon after moving back to this part of our district,



*It is good to see smiling faces, even when we are not able to be in the same room.*

Bruce Rosenberger, a member of the Living Peace congregation in Columbus, sent out an invite that brought us far eastern Brethren together. Once a month, Bruce, Roger Cruser (pastor at Circleville), Ron Fleming (pastor at White Cottage), and I meet via Zoom. We discuss things happening in our congregations, issues affecting the larger church, and joys and concerns. We encourage each other and pray together. In a day and age where there's so much division, it is good to find a platform that brings people together, whether in body or spirit, or across cyber wavelengths.

I am honored to be a voice for the far eastern Brethren of the Southern Ohio/Kentucky District, which includes Charleston, Circleville, Living Peace, Olivet, and White Cottage. It has long been my vision and hope to see these far eastern Brethren come together. To God be the glory!



# The Q-Tip Principle: Hard Conversation “Do’s and Don’ts”

*By John Kinsel*

Within the church and in our daily lives, there are times when we find ourselves in hard conversations, particularly these days when divisions seem to be highlighted all around us. These tips for navigating difficult conversations all reflect the teachings of Jesus to love and serve others. They also fall in the category of using the “Q-TIP” Principle: Quit Taking It Personally! We can be assertive without giving in to aggressiveness, defensiveness or silent acceptance. When we are able to focus on the other before responding from our own offence, pain or confusion, we can set the stage for potentially meaningful difficult conversations.

1. Someone tells a joke you find offensive.
  - a. Don't say: “That was nasty!”
  - b. Do say: “I find that offensive. Please don't tell those kinds of jokes around me.”
2. Someone criticizes the way you look.
  - a. Don't say: “Well, you're ugly and stupid!”
  - b. Do say: “Well, you're entitled to your opinion.”
3. Someone says something that denigrates the character of someone else that you also don't like.
  - a. Don't reply with your own character assassination.
  - b. do State a fact about the person's actions or thinking that you disagree with and ask, “What do you think we can do to help him/her?”
4. Someone says something that denigrates the character of someone else that you happen to like.
  - a. Don't say, “How can you say that?!”
  - b. Do say: “You know, I don't see them that way. Tell me more about why you feel the way you do about him/her.”
5. Someone verbally attacks you for a belief you hold.
  - a. Don't defensively attack their beliefs in retaliation.
  - b. Do say: Wow. Sounds like you really feel strongly about \_\_\_\_\_. Help me understand why you feel that way.”



6. Someone says something that you perceive to be racist, sexist, ageist, etc.
  - a. Don't say: “You are a racist!”
  - b. Do say: “You know, that really hasn't been my experience. What have you experienced that leads you to say what you said?”
7. Someone says something to you that is personally very offensive and emotionally hurtful to you.
  - a. Don't reply with your own hurtful words. Don't say nothing and just take it and nurse your pain in silence.
  - b. Do say. “Your words are hurtful to me. What have I done to deserve you saying that to me?”
  - c. Do reread Matthew 18 and pray for the strength to follow the guidance there.

# We are ambassadors for Christ

*By Andrew Wright, District Mission Ambassador*

## **Ambassador:** **An important official who works in the world** **representing the Kingdom of Heaven there.**

Cambridge English Dictionary (Adapted)

At our wedding, the pastor asked: “Do you ...” and “Will you ...”

At my baptism, the pastor asked: “Do you ...” and “Will you ...”

At my ordination, the District Executive asked: “Do you ...” and “Will you ...”

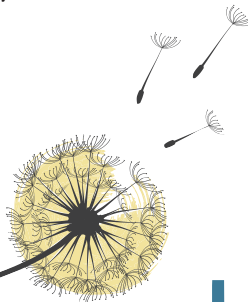
At my naturalization, the judge asked: “Do you ...” and “Will you ...”

Each time, the answers were: “I do” and “I will,” and, by God, I am held to those promises! Why? Because those persons to whom I promised these things require that I am faithful, reliable, and trustworthy.

Every contract we sign, every check we write, and every word to our children and grandchildren is a promise of one kind or another. Every time we greet each other, every worship service, and every Love Feast, we keep our promises and remember our vows. And, by God, I am held to these promises for the same reason.

When I said, “I do..” and “I will ...” at my baptism, I became an ambassador whether I liked it or not. I am a representative of the Kingdom of Heaven in this world. And realizing my role as ambassador gives me certain authority and privilege.

There are times in my vow-life that I have been hurt and misunderstood. There are times when hopes are quashed, and events have not met with my approval. Does that mean I relinquish my responsibility and abandon my calling? May I propose that, because I gave my “I do,” and “I will,” it gives me more reason to participate in my marriage, my church, and even my country!



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—2 Corinthians 5:20

Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Conference 2020

# 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 “To Boldly Go”. 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](mailto: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 © 2020

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