

## 2024 District Conference Report

Greetings!

I'm Mary Boone and I'm the Director of Communications for the district. Thirteen years ago, when I accepted the call to this position, I was tasked with developing a cost effective, efficient communications strategy. At that time, we developed a website. We also began using electronic means of communication including an electronic monthly newsletter that is emailed to almost 1000 households. Email is much more cost effective, since we no longer need to purchase and maintain a copier, pay for ink, paper and postage. The newsletter is filled with information of what is happening in district ministries, including Disaster Ministries updates, Camping and Retreat Ministries Updates, and news from the District Board and other district commissions and task teams. It also includes news of events from our congregations, updates about pastoral changes within the district and prayer needs. If you are not receiving this newsletter and would like to, I encourage you to email your request to be added to our data base to the district email. If you would like to submit information to be included in the newsletter, the deadline is the 15th of the month preceding.

I also produce a monthly bulletin insert which is emailed to church offices with the intention that the local church office will assist us by printing these off and inserting them into your church bulletin or newsletter. There is also access to a printable newsletter which can be printed off and shared if desired.

However, we found that there was still a need for some written communication. So we began publishing a magazine entitled "Together". Our goal is to share our stories, whether as a congregation or as individuals within the congregation. Each of our congregations has their unique strengths, and struggles. We hope you are enjoying as we introduce us to each other. This magazine is delivered anyone whose address is in our data base. It comes to you twice a year and is found in the center of the "Messenger" which is published by the Church of the Brethren. We try to include inspirational articles, stories from our congregations, original artwork, poet-

ry, or other writings, etc. The goal is to keep this publication timely but timeless. You won't find events or announcements in this publication, unless it is an event that a congregation has held that served a positive purpose in their ministry and it could possibly be used in another congregational setting. I brought samples of past issues of "Together" for you to look at if you are not currently receiving it. If you are on our mailing list, you will receive the most recent issue in the next few days. We welcome you to submit articles, artwork, poetry to be published. If you would like to receive this mailing, or submit something for publication, or have a suggestion for future themes or articles, please email your submission/suggestion/request to the district email address. This is a somewhat expensive means of communication and in the upcoming year, I will be working with the Communications Commission to make a decision about whether it is still serving a meaningful purpose. We welcome your comments or suggestions.

This year I have also worked alongside the Communications Commission and David Sullenbarger to produce a video which you will be seeing later today.

Lastly, I want to talk a bit about the district website. [Www.sodcob.org](http://www.sodcob.org).

If you have never been on our site, I encourage you to check it out. On the website is where every piece of communication lives. Any link that you receive in any other communication from the district is linked back to the website. Many times, I hear the comment that things are hard to find on the website. It is a challenge to organize all of the information that needs to live here. What may seem like a logical place for something to me, may not make sense at all to someone else. I thought it may be helpful for me to take you on a short tour of our site. If you have your cell phone with you, you may want to get it out and pull the site up on your phone.

(Open to home page)

When building the website, I've tried to organize it around the tagline of

“working together . . . Empowering disciples” and particularly around the empowering portion. Thus, “Empowering Congregations” “Empowering Leadership”, “Empowering District Ministries”.

**1. Home page** I want to make any information as available to you as possible with as few clicks as possible. Three links in upper right—these will change depending on what is happening in the life of the district. I try to use these 3 buttons to link you to what I feel like most folks who are coming to the website will be looking for.

However, these three links do not show up if you are viewing the website on your cell phone. So, you will need to scroll down just a little bit and you will see several gray tabs, or buttons. The same three links that are at the top of the page, are also in this list of buttons.

## **2. Main links across the top: Empowering Congregations**

Pastoral Placement— Important for congregations who are in pastoral transition. All of these pages are password protected.

—List of Congregations and contact information

## **3. Empowering Leadership**

District Board—open . Information for upcoming board meeting including date and location. All board meetings are open to anyone who would like to attend. You can find details of where and when here.

SOKD Documents—In the interest of transparency, all board meeting minutes are archived here

Each of the Board Commissions are in this section— Here is where you would look for CEU opportunities if you are a pastor, grant applications, resources for church growth, etc.

District Conference and Annual Conference are also under this tab.

## **4. Empowering District Ministries—“Working Together”**

District Directory—open to show what is there — we no longer print a di-

rectory, but I do create a list of contact information for churches and leadership, all licensed and ordained individuals in the district, and the district board and staff.

Camping and Retreat Ministries

Disaster Ministries

News and Updates—open — all newsletters and bulleting inserts are archived here.

## **District Calendar**

Added to my daily tasks is a trip to the post office in Greenville to collect and drop off mail. I then pass along any messages, record donations, respond to the donations, make bank deposits, and report deposits to the district treasurer.

In addition to these daily, weekly, and monthly responsibilities, I also attend commission meetings and take notes and publish minutes for some of the commissions. I'm especially active with the Resource Development Commission in preparing and mailing appeal letters, and other tasks that promote communication of our district story and the stories of our congregations.

I also communicate various information with the denomination. In the Church of the Brethren, the district is given the authority and responsibility for credentialing ministers. Part of that responsibility includes notifying the office of ministry of any pastoral changes including change of address, change of ministry location, change of ministry status such as retired, chaplaincy, pastor of a church, etc.

Staff contact information can be found on the district website. I try to reply to all messages in a timely manner. I will say that if you email me or call me outside of regular office hours of 9 AM-5 PM or over a weekend, I will respond the following day or on Monday morning. While I enjoy working from home, I need to put boundaries around my time or I find myself working 24-7.

In the upcoming year, as always, we will look at ways we can improve. I am always open to suggestions, concerns, ideas etc. I would be glad to answer any questions . . .

