

**ATLANTIC NORTHEAST DISTRICT
CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
48th DISTRICT CONFERENCE MINUTES**

October 7, 2017

**Elizabethtown College, Leffler Chapel & Performance Center
Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania**

The 48th recorded District Conference, of the Atlantic Northeast District of the Church of the Brethren, was held at the Leffler Chapel and Performance Center, on the campus of Elizabethtown College on Saturday, October 7, 2017. The morning was sunny and unseasonably warm for October. At 7am, the Leffler Chapel lobby was bustling with energetic, enthusiastic and dedicated Christians. Friendly and helpful volunteers from the Host Church, Hanoverdale, were busy welcoming each guest and making sure everyone was well organized for the day.

The morning began with a Continental Breakfast in the M&M Mars Room in Leffler Chapel, and walk-in registration continued in the lobby. Pastor Kevin King, from Hanoverdale, led a Bible study on the Conference theme “Transformed Into His Image”, from Romans 12:1-2. Outreach was in action, as hundreds of hurricane buckets and supplies were collected to help Church World Service. District displays, from each of the five Commissions, were available in the McCormick Gallery. The displays showcased all of the good things that Church Development and Evangelism, Ministry, Nurture, Witness and Outreach, and Stewardship are doing for our District.

The morning session began at 8:15 with gathering music provided by the New Beginnings Worship Team. As 60, out of 76, congregations gathered for the day, Brothers and Sisters from all over the ANE District came together to be “Transformed Into His Image.” Moderator, Glenn Martin, welcomed everyone and began with prayer. Glenn welcomed the non-delegates, delegates, first-time delegates, staff, District Board and special guests. At 8:30am, the conference agenda, as listed on pages 6-8 and 11-14 of the conference booklet, was unanimously accepted by the delegates.

Following the introductions and adoption of the agenda, Glenn Martin encouraged everyone to extend an arm, hold a prayerful hand, and pray together in small groups of two or three closest people. This encouraged a warm atmosphere and joyful tone for the day.

Randy Yoder, Interim District Executive, educated the group, reminded everyone of the sacred promise made to the Church of the Brethren, and encouraged people to become “Transformed Into His Image” by renewing a covenant with God. He said:

Covenant in the Bible is a binding agreement with God and a person or a people. There is the Covenant with Abraham, Moses and David. And in the Book of Exodus, there is the Covenant with Israel.

In Exodus 24:1-8, God has initiated a covenant with Israel through Moses. This text is the sealing of the Covenant where the Israelite's promise, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." God has chosen the Israelites to be His people, and promised Israel that He would be their God.

Our journey, as a District, is undergirded by the promise as the Church of the Brethren in the Atlantic Northeast District, to do the work together that embodies the values of loyalty, peace, love and service to Jesus Christ.

Today we will tell the story of our attempt to be faithful to the covenant we have made with God and each other to follow Jesus. Our story will bring joy and thanksgiving; and for sure won't be perfect, but it is our expression of our commitment to do the work of Jesus together.

Our gathering and story-telling will bring us to the point of renewing our covenant for another year. A covenant that is not renewed becomes stale and easily forgotten.

The reports for the morning business session began promptly at 8:55am.

I. Reports

- A. Elizabethtown College Report** - Bonnie Martin, Director of Church Relations –Bonnie welcomed everyone on behalf of Elizabethtown College. She then introduced Christin Debursa, from Indian Creek Church of the Brethren. Christin is concentrating on Anabaptist and Pietist studies. She gave her outlook on her experience as a Church of the Brethren member and student.
- B. District Board Chair** – Pete Kontra – With God's help, so much greatness is happening in the District. This has been a year of transition, beginning with the retirement of Craig Smith, and working with Randy Yoder, as Interim District Executive. Pete mentioned some of the challenges that the District faced this year, including the possible Midway separation, and the Search Committee's efforts to find a new District Executive. Pete thanked the District Office staff: Krista, Kelly and Christine for all they have done throughout the year.

C. **Interim District Executive** - Randy Yoder – Randy expressed gratitude for the District Staff and was gracious for their support over the past few months. He mentioned that he learned a lot, and is very much looking forward to his time left at the ANE District. Randy said he prays daily for the District Ministry and Staff. Randy expressed the importance of the New Testament, and encouraged all Brethren Brothers and Sisters to take it seriously and live by it. He encouraged to build the gemeinschaft of the Brethren community.

D. **Commission Reports** – Moderator Glenn Martin introduced each of the Commission Directors. Each Director shared a report about what their commissions have been working on throughout the year.

Commission on Church Development & Evangelism - Don Mitchell – Don explained how the commission is constantly seeking out ways to guide congregations, encourage projects, and be the example for fellowships. Don’s commission has been working hard to boost church plants in order to reach lost souls. The commission is constantly seeking out ways to help Brethren Brothers and Sisters find Christ, grow in Him and share the good news with those around them.

“Last year, two of our ANE fellowships were down to a handful of members and worshippers, possibly facing closure: Lirio De Los Valles, in Lebanon and Renacer Leola, now Un Nuevo Renacer, worshiping in Mountville. Prayer, new leadership, vitality and faith has changed both churches and they are experiencing spiritual and numeric growth!”

Dear Past, thank you for your lessons.

Dear Future, they're ready.

Dear God, they thank you for another chance.

Commission on Ministry - Randy Yoder – Randy expressed the importance of strong congregational leadership, and the fact that it is a vital ministry of the church. He spoke about three critical highlights and needs:

1. Credentialing for Ministry
2. Training for Ministry
3. Licensing renewal

Randy also recognized all of the ordained and licensed ministers in attendance.

Among its many responsibilities, the District Ministry Commission is responsible to manage all ministerial and credentialing matters for the District, among which include annual licensing renewals, credentialing interviews and services, and pastoral installation services. Our District currently has 54 licensed ministers, 242 ordained ministers and 6 candidates pursuing licensed ministry. It is our joy to celebrate with all the ministry

happenings in our District this year: 6 newly licensed ministers, 4 newly ordained ministers, and 6 newly placed pastors.

Commission on Nurture - Jess Ross – Jess explained that the focus for the Nurture Commission over the coming year is to minister and grow in the knowledge of Christ. The Nurture commission currently offers training, scholarships, and support for building church leaders and church growth. The Nurture Commission is there to encourage and equip members of the Brethren congregations, so that they have the necessary tools for becoming successful and strong.

“The Nurture Commission is here for you and your congregation! From youth events, to Women’s Fellowship, to lay leadership events, scholarships, resources and more, we have numerous avenues through which we can help you and your church GROW! Let us know how we can be there for you, to facilitate, support and advocate for the spiritual, emotional, physical and relational health and vitality of your congregation!”

Commission on Witness & Outreach - Mary Etta Reinhart – Mary Etta explained, “At District Conference, the Witness and Outreach Commission shared all the outreach opportunities that are available in our ANE District. This includes our ongoing ANE District Disaster Response efforts, which support the work of Brethren Disaster Ministries and our Church 2 Church “community building”. This is a ministry outreach opportunity that allows churches, with needs, to partner with churches who are interested in a service project. Our ANE District also offers financial partnerships and support among ANE congregations, with our ANE District Disaster Benevolence Fund. This fund supports ANE congregations dealing with situations involving significant loss. We also have our ANE District Barnabas Fund, which supports and encourages ministry in our urban congregations.”

Commission on Stewardship - Kay Weaver - The Stewardship Commission is working on equipping, empowering, and encouraging congregations in the District to give back. The ANE District works together for the growth and encouragement of each other, in all aspects of church growth. The Commission is working to build meaningful rapport and clearly communicate the needs, with members of the ANE district. Kay mentioned all written means of communication, including Facebook, “The Parking Lot” and “ANE Today”, that are mailed and emailed. The Stewardship Commission stressed that all of the ministries in the ANE District need the financial support from each and every congregation.

“In 2016, 16 ANE Congregations (20% of our congregations) gave 67% of ANE’s congregational contributions received, and 17 Congregations (or 22%) did not contribute anything. We are family networking together to share the Gospel. ANE NEEDS YOU AND ALL ANE MEMBERS TO SUPPORT THESE MINISTRIES. REMEMBER THIS - All of these ministries and more, are only possible through the financial support of each ANE congregation!”

E. Financial Report - Ray Flagg - Treasurer

The 2018 Ministry Investment Plan was presented in the amount of \$632,287, and a motion was passed to accept the 2018 MIP. The Fair Share Goal per member of \$55, and the Challenge Goal of \$60 dollars per member was presented and passed.

F. 2018 Slate of Nominees - Joan Hershey – The presentation of the Slate began with a PowerPoint. Joan Hershey named each individual and the position they were recommended for. Joan explained that the Gifts Discernment Team works throughout the year to prayerfully determine whom would be best to serve the Lord and the ANE District Board. The Slate ballot was distributed by the ushers. As one body, a prayer was said for the candidates, and then the ushers collected the ballots. They were tallied in the Green room and the announcement about the results, was planned for the afternoon Clerk’s report.

A short break was taken, and the congregation sang hymns before the morning reports continued.

G. Camp Swatara - Joel and Linetta Ballew – 2016 was a year of pruning due to losing several full-time staff members. However, the new eyes, ears, hands and hearts have been a blessings. 2017 is a year of branching out and connecting through Christ. Connected through Christ, as the growing branches continue to guide everyone on to growth for different projects. They’ve already started working on next year’s theme. It will be ‘Tell the story’ with 75 years of Camp Swatara. They announced a year of activities is planned, and encouraged the attendees to stay tuned to the announcements that are forth coming.

H. Standing Committee - Belita Mitchell – Shared her report from the June 25-28, 2017 Annual Conference in Grand Rapids, MI. Next year’s Annual Conference will be held in Cincinnati, OH.

I. Brethren Disaster Relief Auction - Evelyn Dehmey – The total money distributed in 2016 was \$372,078. A request for disaster buckets was made, yet it was announced that supplies for buckets are limited at this time and should become available soon.

J. Youth Presentation – The Youth presentation was captivating. It was marvelous to listen to teenagers tell the story about Christ has been so instrumental in their life, and they feel called to become “Transformed Into His Image”. They shared testimonials, led the group in song, and showed an audiovisual clip announcing they are planning to attend NYC, National Youth Conference, in Colorado.

K. Announcements and Prayer – Glenn Martin and Christine Dugan – Glenn thanked Hanoverdale for serving as the Host Church. He also thanked the Program and

Arrangements Committee and Gifts Discernment Team for their hard work and steadfast efforts over the past year. Glenn mentioned that 440 buckets were collected to help the victims of the recent devastating hurricanes. All buckets will be donated and replenish the supply for Church World Service.

Christine explained how to get to the Brossman Student Center for lunch. She also mentioned that bus transportation, provided by Brethren Village, was available for those needing assistance getting across campus. Another announcement was made that the Youth Cabinet would be available to assist those needing help at lunch.

Glenn Martin led the group in prayer before lunch.

LUNCH- A buffet lunch was served in the Brossman Student Center. It included roast beef, stuffed chicken, fish, soups, salads, sandwiches and an assortment of desserts. The hour and a half break gave ample time for fellowship to prosper.

- L. Sub-committee Report on Midway** – Pete Kontra - Pete gave thanks to God and the members of the Sub-committee. He explained that the sub-committee carefully and prayerfully took time to process and take action, about the separation announcement made by Midway Church. The committee was committed and determined to honor God during this process. Pete rhetorically asked, “How do we honor God, while listening to each other, and following church polity?” Pete announced that Midway planned to separate from the Church of Brethren, but they decided to cancel their vote to separate. At this time, no future date has been set for the vote. He urged the group to continue to pray for the both the Church of the Brethren and Midway, as everyone moves through the process.

- M. District Executive Search Committee Report** - Misty Wintsch –Misty began by noting that members of the Search Committee committed great time and energy to call the new District Executive. With great excitement, Misty announced Pete Kontra, as ANE’s new District Executive. Pete will begin in January 2018. Misty turned the microphone over to Pete, as he addressed the District Conference attendees.

Pete’s message was about praying together, for one another, as the body of Christ. He expressed, “We are in a spiritual battle and not one of flesh and blood. Jesus humbled himself to death in order to show His love for us. There is nothing here that can harm us and we are free to love as Christ loves. When you are on your knees in prayer listen to the words and heartfelt messages of other Brothers and Sisters. How do we strengthen our church leadership? We must seek the face of Christ together. How do we share with our congregation, and share thoughts and focus points throughout the district? How do we lift our young leadership to become the leaders of our congregations and districts?”

Pete's message was compelling, uplifting and unifying. He set a positive and encouraging tone for his upcoming undertaking.

N. COBYS Family Services – Mark Cunningham and Don Fitzkee – As usual, COBYS report was humorous and entertaining. The Mark and Don show was all about clichés that explained that COBYS is experiencing growing pains with space and finances.

O. Annual Conference Reportable Agencies – A combined DVD was shared to show the work and impact that the four annual conference reportable agencies: Bethany Theological Seminary, Brethren Benefit Trust, On Earth Peace and Mission and Ministry Board.

Brethren Benefit Trust – Nevin Dulabaum, President

Nevin explained that it has long been a concern of the ministers, not having retirement funds. He explained that BBT works with the employees of the Church of the Brethren, and to have strong retirement plan. He encouraged people to use them as a resource for future planning.

On Earth Peace – Marie Brenner Rhoades

Marie shared that On Earth Peace has been working hard to promote peace and their social justice ministries. She invited each congregation to come learn more about justice, peace, reconciliation and non-violence through a program or dialogue session.

P. Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center – Karen Hodges – SVMC used a PowerPoint presentation to show pictures of the numerous events and classes that they offered in 2016. Karen was pleased to announce that Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center will be celebrating their 25th anniversary in 2018.

Q. Action on all Reports – A motion was passed to accept reports given at District Conference.

R. Clerk's Report and Slate Presentation Report – Sarah Clugston

Bible Study – 34 present

Saturday morning attendance – 273

Saturday afternoon attendance - 270

Delegates: 181 present out of 192 registered (total possible delegates: 279)

Congregations & Fellowships: 60 present out of 61 registered (total possible: 76)

174 slates were returned, and 163 of them were affirmed. The 2018 Slate was positively approved. The candidates that will serve over the next 1-3 years include the following:

Moderator Elect

- Brian Berkey (2 year term – 2019)

Program & Arrangements Committee

- Laura Meiser (Lancaster South) (3 year term – 2020)

Gifts Discernment Team

- Heather Landram (Lancaster North) (3 year term – 2020)
- Sandra Brubaker (Lancaster South) (3 year term – 2020)
- Bob Kettering (Lancaster North) (3 year term – 2020)
- Bethany Hoffer (ANE West) (3 year term – 2020)

Standing Committee

- Kim Ream (Lancaster North) (3 year term – 2020)

Alternate Standing Committee

- Belita Mitchell (ANE West) (1 year term – 2018)

District Board Chair

- Jeff Glisson (2 year term – 2019)

Church Development and Evangelism Commission

- Scott Haldeman (Lancaster North) (3 year term – 2020)
- Andrew Hamilton (Lancaster South) (3 year term – 2020)

Ministry Commission

- Liz Bidgood Enders (ANE West) (3 year term – 2020)
- Randy Hosler (Lancaster South) (3 year term – 2020)

Nurture Commission

- Joyce Schnupp (Lancaster North) (3 year term – 2020)
- Douglas Enck (ANE East) (3 year term – 2020)

Stewardship Commission

- Michael Shupp (Lancaster North) (3 year term – 2020)
- John Miller (ANE East) (3 year term – 2020)

Witness and Outreach Commission

- James Nolt (Lancaster South) (3 year term – 2020)

Camp Swatara

- Barry Garman
- Daryl Myer
- Michael Shearer

COBYS Family Services

- Suzanne Schaudel
- Wilbur Rohrer
- Robert Wintsch

- S. **Covenant Renewal and Lighting Ceremony** – Randy Yoder – Randy helped the congregation transform from the afternoon business session to the worship service. Assisted by Glenn Martin, the whole body prayed together. The read and response helped to involve those in attendance and served to strengthen the CoB Covenant.

Moderator: We are invited to express our love for God and one another as we renew our covenant as the Atlantic Northeast District of the Church of the Brethren.

People: We are God's Church of the Brethren.

Moderator: We are called to go forth as witnesses and servants of Jesus Christ.

People: We do so as Congregations who hold in trust ministry for the Church of the Brethren.

Moderator: Together, we are invited in covenant to continue the work of Jesus—peacefully and simply.

People: We promise to agree to be the Atlantic Northeast District faithfully striving to fulfill the Good News, seeking to be faithful children of God, and loving and caring for the well-being of each of our congregations.

The lights became dim, and the congregation sealed the covenant in song. As one body, Brothers and Sisters sang, "Take My Life". As the verses went on, the lights became brighter, symbolizing a brighter future ahead.

- T. **Afternoon Worship Service** – A beautiful worship serviced concluded the day. Glenn Martin welcomed the 230 attendees to the worship service. As one whole Church, Brothers and Sisters gathered in song and prayer. The service began with music from a combined Choir, from both Florin and West Green Tree. An offering was taken up for the Nigerian Crisis Home Rebuilding. Pam Reist gave an excellent testimonial about the ways our offerings are helping in Nigeria. The congregation gave a generous offering of \$2694.20. The message of the service was delivered by Dr. Musa Mambula, International Scholar in Residence at Bethany Seminary. The title of his message was "Transformed into the Mind of Christ". Allen Hansell, a 50 year Minister Posthumously, was recognized for his years of service to the Church of the Brethren and the ANE District.

Beautiful words of encouragement and wisdom were expressed by Moderator Glenn Martin as he consecrated and transferred leadership to the newly appointed Moderator, Misty Wintsch. Misty willingly accepted the towel and basin, signifying her role as Moderator through District Conference, on October 6, 2018.

These minutes submitted by,
Sarah Clugston, District Clerk