



---

## Reflections from the Interim District Executive Minister Team

It is with a mix of emotions that in late June the Interim District Executive Minister (DEM) Team will conclude our almost two years of service. The four of us have brought to this ministry a wealth of experience, wisdom, and dedication to the Church of the Brethren, the Mid-Atlantic District, and the churches and members of our beloved denomination and District.

Throughout our time as the Interim DEM Team, we have navigated the challenges of resourcing the congregations in a period when leadership candidates were scarce. Helping to bring clarity to churches in the midst of misinformation has resulted in a stronger posture for the Mid-Atlantic family of churches. Although we have experienced four churches that chose to withdraw from the denomination, the District has not seen the mass exodus that some districts have experienced. Sadly, we have also seen the closure of the Myersville Church due to declining membership. We celebrate with the Myersville folks their long and meaningful ministry.

As interim staff, we were professionally assisted in our work by Jo Ann Landon. Serving as the Administrative Assistant, Jo Ann has provided essential information, guidance, and help in our navigating the many facets of our work. From the very beginning, our Interim DEM Team has worked to establish relationships with the congregations assigned to each team member. Over the course of the two-year period, we were blessed to meet new people, assist with leadership development, and work in collaboration with the District Leadership Team and Ministry and Task Teams who are all dedicated to the wider and thriving ministries of the Mid-Atlantic District.

As we depart from this work and return to our "Retired" status, we do so by extending our heartfelt and prayerful best wishes for the churches, staff, and members of the Mid-Atlantic District of the Church of the Brethren. Godspeed!

*Eddie Edmonds, Kim McDowell, Joe Detrick, and Gretchen Zience, Interim District Executive Minister Team*

---

## Ethics Training Update

Every five years all ordained and commissioned ministers within the denomination have their ministry credentials re-certified by their respective district commissions (or the Calling and Credentialing Ministry Team for the Mid-Atlantic District). A part of this re-certification process requires ministers to participate in ethics training during this current five-year ordination review cycle.

Our first session was held at Frederick with thirty persons in attendance. The second session for May 11 was canceled due to low enrollment. The third in-person session will be held at the Oakton (VA) COB on September 28. These sessions are being led by Joe Detrick, one of our Interim District Executive Ministers. Registration forms have been sent to all District ministers. As noted, [these are requirements for recertification](#). It includes retired ministers who are, in some way, functioning in a ministerial capacity (interim ministry, pulpit supply, performing wedding ceremonies, etc.).

New to this five-year recertification cycle is the inclusion of licensed ministers. All licensed ministers serving in approved ministry settings are required to have completed the *101 Level Ethics Training*. Licensed ministers currently serving in pastoral leadership positions are encouraged to complete the *201 Advanced Level Ethics Training*. This advanced level is a timely learning unit that will incorporate newly generated material related to artificial intelligence (AI), social media and the church, and a multidimension look at the ethics of intercultural ministry.

While sharpening one's professional ethical skills, an additional benefit to ministers and congregations is that it will increase one's awareness of pastor/congregation boundaries, dual relationships, ethical vulnerability, and ethical resilience. The sessions include small group discussion around biblical passages related to ethical conduct along with case studies. An "added value" is the opportunity to engage with other Brethren pastors, forge collegial relationships, and continue to discover important qualities and core ethical/biblical values of the Church of the Brethren. We look forward to engaging and stimulating discussions!

*Joe Detrick, Kim McDowell, Eddie Edmonds, Interim DEM Team Members*

---

## **New Parking Lot Perspectives at Westminster and Downsville**

Sometimes it takes someone to raise a question that makes us stand back and look with a fresh perspective.

Years ago, the Westminster COB purchased property near the church to use as a parking lot. Due to circumstances at that time, signs were posted that said, "Private Property, No Trespassing." Last November, a parishioner questioned how that language supports our desire to be "Jesus in the Neighborhood." Within 4 weeks, the Leadership Team addressed the concern; new language, sufficient for any needs, was created; and the sign was replaced with "Property of the Westminster Church of the Brethren." No restrictions on availability to the neighborhood.

A simple change of language, sharing a very different message, is definitely in keeping with who we strive to be. This has served as a reminder that old habits/patterns benefit from a new look. May we always be looking with new eyes.

*Jan Flora, District Communications Ministry Team*

At the Downsville COB, they have also made some changes to their parking lot. It has been expanded to include a hitching post for those who arrive on horseback for any of their services. Pete and Will Wright supplied and installed the post. Not many modern churches can "boast" they have a hitching post or that members arrive by horseback, wagon, or buggy. But at Downsville, they have had families arrive in all of those forms of transportation. (The hitching post is shown in the picture to the left of the church sign.)



*Wilkie Nunn, Pastor, Downsville COB*

---

## **Meat-Canning Project Report**

This spring, team members for the Meat Canning Project gathered in Ephrata, PA, to assemble 9,725 cans of food for those in need.

Roger Turner of the Gettysburg Manassas Church of the Brethren is the project coordinator, a role he has held for more than four years. The project is a collaborative effort supported by the Southern District of Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic District. This year marks the project's 46th year of operation.

Over the course of four days, 139 volunteers worked in two shifts. From a supply of nine tons of chicken, workers placed about two pounds of meat into each can. A 100-year-old machine applied the lids, and the sealed containers

were then placed in a pressure cooker for two hours. The following day, after the cans had cooled, labels were added by hand, and the cans were packed in boxes for distribution. Properly sealed, the food in the cans has a shelf life of about three years.

One-third of the cans will go to the Southern District, one-third will go to the Mid-Atlantic District, and one-third will go to Brethren Disaster Ministries.

To contribute to the project, send your donation to either the Southern District or Mid-Atlantic District, indicating it is for the Meat Canning Project.

To learn more about the canning process, you can view a video by Brethren Voices on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7H7K2t81gFY>.

*John Fleming, District Communications Ministry Team*

## **Mid-Atlantic District—Jesus in the Neighborhood**

---

The Mid-Atlantic District churches continue to share inspiring stories about how they are living out the denomination's call to be and to see Jesus in the Neighborhood. *The Journey* has shared several of these stories with our churches in the past and here are two more. Please continue to send your stories to the District office—we love to hear about the creative and inspiring ways you are reaching out to your neighbors!

### ***Nokesville Church of the Brethren—Music and Dessert Event***

Right after Valentine's day, Nokesville COB hosted a "Music and Dessert" event that brought together the community for an evening of fellowship, sweet indulgence, and soulful music. The evening featured an array of oldies, gospel, and praise music, setting the perfect ambiance for the gathering. They welcomed an exceptional line-up of talented musicians from across multiple districts, including the captivating vocalist Natasha Beaumont from Mount Wilson COB, the talented pianist David Myers from Nokesville, and the dynamic duo Tyler Boland and Ryan Blizzard from Spring Creek COB on bass and drums. Their performances touched hearts and uplifted spirits, making it a truly memorable night. Church members generously provided a diverse assortment of delicious desserts that were as big a hit as the music. The "Music and Dessert" event was a testament to the power of community and music, reinforcing our bonds and creating lasting memories. Nokesville COB extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined us and contributed to the success of this special evening.



and praise music, setting the perfect ambiance for the gathering. They welcomed an exceptional line-up of talented musicians from across multiple districts, including the captivating vocalist Natasha Beaumont from Mount Wilson COB, the talented pianist David Myers from Nokesville, and the dynamic duo Tyler Boland and Ryan Blizzard from Spring Creek COB on bass and drums. Their performances touched hearts and uplifted spirits, making it a truly memorable night. Church members generously provided a diverse assortment of delicious desserts that were as big a hit as the music. The "Music and Dessert" event was a testament to the power of community and music, reinforcing our bonds and creating lasting memories. Nokesville COB extends heartfelt thanks to

everyone who joined us and contributed to the success of this special evening.

*Erin Olinger, District Communications Ministry Team*

### ***Oakton Church of the Brethren—Tutoring Program***

In 2018, the Oakton COB began a free tutoring program called Oakton Partners in Learning (OPIL). It was spearheaded by the Education Committee, but was strongly supported by the congregation as well as other committees. OPIL was a result of a Faith in Action Grant from the denomination to meet a need in the Oakton community, along with funds allocated by the Oakton congregation. Volunteers support all aspects of the program.

OPIL has been an overwhelming success! During COVID, the program quickly adapted to virtual tutoring, a free service that was highly valued by the pupils while public schools were also adapting to virtual classes.

The program meets on Monday nights for one-on-one tutoring as well as an Adult English Conversation class and the French Club that meets via Zoom. OPIL is thriving and meets a crucial need in competitive Fairfax County for 20 to 25 pupils, most of whom are English learners. Beyond meeting an educational goal, the program has established cross-cultural friendships that might be its greatest gift.

*Gretchen Zience, District Communications Ministry Team*

## Reflections from a First-Time Disaster Response Volunteer

---



Last fall, I attended my first Brethren Disaster Ministry (BDM) Response trip. Our team of 12 volunteers associated with Westminster COB drove in a large van to Eastern Kentucky where we met up with four other team members. The flooding had occurred in 2022 but many of the residents were still reeling from the experience. Some continued to be displaced in temporary trailers or were living in a home still needing basic repairs. There was a long list of repairs to keep everyone engaged for the week. My jobs included painting door trim, insulating an outside porch that had been converted to an inside laundry room, rewiring outlets, securing nails/screws on a renovated deck and a porch railing, caulking a shower, sweeping/cleaning up, making sure that power tools were charged and accounted for, and helping others where needed. I came on this trip with energy but considered myself pretty much “unskilled”; I quickly learned to be productive and useful by other patient and experienced BDMers who guided me to do each job correctly and safely. I was very thankful for that attention and care. We stayed at a nearby host church that provided us a basic, but comfortable, space for sleeping, meal preparation, tables for eating together, and an evening social/gathering area. The BDM volunteers and organizers provided the fresh and filling meals and necessary equipment to have the right tool for the job!

I loved the camaraderie of the group, the spirit of energy, and the desire to help others that permeated each job site. That is not to say that our energy was limitless; we did sleep well after a good day’s work! The prayers and sharing at each meal, debriefing time, and interesting conversations and humor were a joy to be a part of. I was also thankful that I could make life a little easier, safer, and more comfortable for those whose lives had been turned upside down. My work week was filled with “God moments,” and I was very grateful for the mild, almost rain-free, work week. I was thankful, too, for the chance to sign up for next fall’s trip as a little less of an “unskilled worker.”

*Louise H. Scalzi, District Communications Ministry Team*

### **Brethren Faith in Action Fund Grants**

---

As mentioned in the April 22 Church of the Brethren Newline, the Brethren Faith in Action Fund (BFIA) has aided seven congregations with grants in the first weeks of 2024. The fund provides grants using money generated by the sale of the upper campus of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, MD.

In the Mid-Atlantic District, \$5,000 has been granted to Meadow Branch COB in Westminster, MD to seal and cover the fellowship hall with new flooring. The current flooring is asbestos tiles that are more than 50 years old. Because the floor has begun peeling and chipping, this is a growing health concern. Outreach activities and events taking place in the fellowship hall include a weekly food pantry, “Girl Talk” meetings and youth activities, dinner and movie nights, and recovery groups, among others.

To find out more about this grant program, go to [www.brethren.org/faith-in-action](http://www.brethren.org/faith-in-action).

## Congregational Openings, Placements, Updates

---

Bethany – Profile circulating, Jerry Fike interim

Broadfording – Chris Mohler, placed as pastor

Dranesville – Search Committee formed, Joey Moss interim

Easton – Jody Gunn, placed as pastor

Fellowship –Brad Wibbing interim

Frederick – Searching for Family & Youth Pastor

Grossnickle – Sandi Rogers, interim

Harmony – Profile circulating, pulpit supply

Thurmont – Profile circulating, Leon Yoder interim

Welty – Profile circulating, pulpit supply

Woodbridge – Charlotte Bear, interim

## Upcoming District Events

---

### May

May 11—Camp Mardela Yard Sale, 8 a.m.-12 p.m.

May 15—Annual Conference Quilting Bee, deadline for congregations to submit a quilt block

May 19—Blessing of the Bikes, following the 10:30 a.m. Worship Service at Bush Creek COB

### June

June 2—Camp Mardela Appreciation Day

June 10, Annual Conference advance registration closes; Grand Rapids, MI;

July 3-July 7



*The District office sends out flyers to all churches that describe many of these upcoming events. Check with your church office or contact the District if you would like additional information (aamad@brethren.org).*

Mid-Atlantic District  
Church of the Brethren

19 Bond Street

Westminster, Maryland 21157

443-960-3052

Kim McDowell, Joe Detrick, Eddie Edmonds

Interim District Executive Minister Team

[Mcdowell.interimDEMAD@gmail.com](mailto:Mcdowell.interimDEMAD@gmail.com)

[Detrick.interimDEMAD@gmail.com](mailto:Detrick.interimDEMAD@gmail.com)

[Edmonds.interimDEMAD@gmail.com](mailto:Edmonds.interimDEMAD@gmail.com)

Jo Ann Landon, Administrative Assistant

[aamad@brethren.org](mailto:aamad@brethren.org)

Please submit items for *The JOURNEY* newsletter to Jo Ann Landon in the District Office.

**Permission is granted by the  
Mid-Atlantic District to reproduce and distribute  
information from this newsletter.**

