

June, 2020
Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Newsletter
Printable Version



A New View of Summer Camp by Karen Dillon, CRM Director

Everyone knows what camp should look like. Many books and movies have camp as the setting for their stories. Kids pack a bag, grab a sleeping bag, and head off to a tent or cabin in the woods to meet a counselor and other campers. They enjoy the activities like swimming, hiking, sharing meals, doing crafts, sitting around a campfire, and generally having lots of fun. That was the camping idea until this year. Now with the Corona Virus lurking everywhere, is just isn't safe for us to have camp.

Or is there another possibility? Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Church of the Brethren is having camp this summer. The format is entirely new. Instead of setting up our tents or cabins, we are setting up our computers and phones to have camp through the magic of ZOOM. It is going to be a virtual camp.

Many committed and creative volunteers from all over the District have come together through Zoom to plan for this summer's camps. They will be the counselors and leaders for the different camps using the summer curriculum called "This Is Our Prayer."

The camps will be divided into four groups by age and have a set day and time:

- Pre K - 2nd grade on Mondays, 10:00 - 11:00 am
- 3rd - 5th grade on Tuesdays, 10:00 - 11:00 am
- 6th - 8th grade on Wednesdays, 10:00 - 11:00 am
- 9th - 12th grade on Thursdays, 4:00 - 5:30 pm
- Family Camp on Fridays, 7:00 - 8:00 pm

Camps will last about an hour or a little more, once a week for eight weeks in June and July.

If you are asking yourself what will we be doing in this virtual camp, we will be having most of the same activities at traditional camp. No, we won't go swimming or sit around a crackling campfire, or hike into the wilderness. We will be having Bible stories, singing together, making crafts, doing service projects, meeting new friends, and learning about prayer. When we are not in camp, there will be lots of suggestions of things to do at home, inside and outside, that will keep campers active and safe.

Registration is very important. The campers need to be registered to receive the link by email for joining the zoom camp meeting. We are preparing bags for each camper containing the supplies for crafts and activities. In the camper's free time, there will be additional ideas to review, expand, and challenge their thinking and creativity. Outdoor games and explorations will also be included. Some discussion starters for campers to ask their families at mealtime will be sent in the packets inside the bags. To know where to deliver these bags, we must have the camper's address. That's why registration is so important.

Camp registration will CLOSE on June 4. Camp begins on June 8.

Registration forms can be found on the district website at sodcob.org

Returning to Worship

These are difficult and unprecedented days. The unfolding situation surrounding CoViD-19 has become increasingly divisive and sensitive as various faith communities discern when and how to resume gathering in-person once more. We recognize that not all leaders of our congregations or members of our congregations are of the same mind in this matter. We are all eager to meet together in our sanctuaries again, to gather around the scriptures and see one another in person instead of on a screen. This desire is strong. We also have a strong desire to protect the lives of all our people and provide healthy practices toward that end. As we all struggle to know the most faithful way forward, may we continue to assign one another the best intentions in our words and actions, defaulting always to empathy and grace. Let us remember that God is present everywhere and is ever present, drawing near to us to guide us all toward compassionate and faithful living.

As promised last month, your District Board gathered this past Saturday to consider the situation and update our previous recommendation. After consulting statements made by the National Council of Churches, the Center for Disease Control, and the Ohio Department of Health (all can be found online), we recommend the following:

Your Southern Ohio/Kentucky District Board recommends that our churches continue to love one another from afar through the month of June. The Board will gather via Zoom again to reassess the situation on June 20th and update this recommendation at that time.

Should your congregation decide it is necessary to gather in-person, the Board offers the following recommended practices as outlined by the Center for Disease Control and Ohio Department of Health. Again, all of these can be found on our district website. These practices will help lower the risk of infection for an indoor, in-person gathering.

Continue to offer worship services virtually for those who choose not to come and extend grace for that choice. It is important to keep all in our congregations connected!

- ◆ Refrain from congregational singing.
- ◆ Wear masks in the building at all times.
- ◆ Use consistent sanitizing practices for commonly touched surfaces before and after each gathering.
- ◆ Minimize contact with objects by having one person open doors for everyone and not distributing bulletins and newsletters on paper.
- ◆ Maintain a physical distance of 6 feet at all times.
- ◆ Encourage congregants to check temperatures before coming to church, those with a temperature below 96.5 or above 100 should remain home. (This is based on the practice currently underway at the Brethren Retirement Community.)
- ◆ If you or a family member are not feeling well, remain home and participate online.

For further discussion on this topic and to aid in your discernment, the Board encourages all our pastors and lay leadership to attend a Virtual Town Hall hosted by Annual Conference Moderator Paul Munday on June 4, 2020, at 7 p.m. EST on "Faith, Science, and COVID-19" featuring Dr. Kathryn Jacobsen, a member of Oakton Church of the Brethren in Vienna, Virginia. She is a professor of epidemiology and global health at George Mason University. Dr. Jacobsen frequently provides health and medical commentary for print and television media. Registration is online at brethren.org.

We trust that all our pastors and lay leadership are doing their best to keep their communities healthy, united, and connected for such a time as this.

**** Continued ****

Denominational Virtual Choir Moving Forward

Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Moderator Paul Munday has announced plans for a denominational virtual choir. A webpage will be available shortly, with resources that will allow persons from across the church to add their voice to a mass Church of the Brethren choir. Three hymns are projected to be a part of the overall project: "Blessed Assurance," "I See A New World Coming," and "Move In Our Midst."

Assisting Munday with this project are Moderator-Elect David Sollenberger and Enten Eller, who coordinated the recent denomination-wide Love Feast. A proactive timeline is underway to encourage participation and energy toward this vision.

Commenting on the vision of a denominational virtual choir, Paul Munday noted: "As we continue to explore new ways to connect with each other during the ongoing pandemic, the possibility of a denominational virtual choir holds great promise. Throughout history, song has united people of faith during times of crisis. I anticipate that uniting the Church of the Brethren in song virtually will accomplish a similar outcome."

A number of other faith communities, including the Episcopal Church, have initiated similar projects.

In addition to a denominational choir, plans continue for other virtual events during the week of July 1-5, 2020, when the 2020 Grand Rapids Annual Conference was to be held. Additional details on those events will be released shortly.

Persons who want to be on the mailing list for the denominational virtual choir to receive updates and the link to the project webpage, when available, are encouraged to email their contact information to: cobvirtual-choir2020@gmail.com

Southern Ohio/Kentucky Disaster Ministries Updates

PPE Gowns for BRC - Thank you to all who responded to the need for PPE gowns for BRC. The word was passed widely, and we now have sufficient sewers to make the gowns. Some have received supplies and are already sewing. Others are waiting to receive kits when more fabric arrives. Thanks again to the district for quickly responding to this need!

Sewers Needed for Cloth Masks - Sewers are needed to make cloth masks for BRC and for BDM rebuilding sites. Kits have been assembled with pre-cut fabric, elastic, and instructions. Each kit is for 30 masks. Contact Barb Brower at barbbrower51@yahoo.com. Arrangements can be made to pick up the kits or to have them delivered.

Youth Trip to the Brethren Service Center - Pastor Tony Price from Cedar Grove COB and youth and adults from the District were looking forward to a trip to the Brethren Service Center. Tony and others decided that there were too many variables to manage to be totally confident that they could travel without someone being exposed to COVID-19. Therefore, the June youth trip is cancelled. Hopefully it will be re-scheduled for next summer.

Volunteer! BDM Site in Dayton - The current timeline schedules a rebuilding site for tornado recovery to be set up in July in Dayton. Not knowing how open or closed things will be, BDM is developing a new model for the initial phase of this project. Due to the uncertainty of travel between states and Montgomery County Health Department housing/meal regulations, BDM is counting on local volunteers to be the workers during the initial phase. There will not be any overnight lodging or meals provided during July.

In the first phase of the Dayton site, rebuilding will begin on a smaller scale than usual. The number of volunteers and the type of skills needed will vary from week to week. Rather than putting out an open call for volunteers in July, we are being asked to create a "Wait List". This list will identify volunteers, their skills, and their availability. From that list, leadership will be able to call no more than 8-10 people for a week (Monday - Friday) at a time. During this start up stage, it will be important for volunteers to be available for a full week. This process should be more productive for getting things started, matching the workers' skills with the work that needs to be done. Volunteers of all skill levels are encouraged to apply.

**** Continued ****

At this point in time, we need to develop the “Wait List” for volunteers available during July for phase one. To apply to volunteer, contact Burt Wolf (SouthernOhioBDM@gmail.com, 937-287-5902). We will then send you the Volunteer Registration and Release Form and the COVID-19 Safety Guidelines Form. These forms will need to be completed, signed, and returned with what weeks during July 13-31 you are available to volunteer. We must have these forms returned before you can be asked to volunteer.

There will be additional opportunities to volunteer as the project moves forward. Later, volunteers will be able to serve for less than a week at a time. Help will also be needed in the kitchen as an assistant cook and to help with the cleaning that is necessary in following COVID-19 protocol. We look forward to many in the S. Ohio/KY District helping with this new BDM site.

Prayer Needs

The Church of the Brethren is called to a time of prayer and fasting

By David Steele, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren

Few events have dramatically altered global social, political, and economic realities the way the COVID-19 virus has in just a matter of weeks. To date, over a half a million cases of the virus have been documented around the world. Each country in which the Church of the Brethren has a presence has been affected. In some communities the virus has forced people to shelter at home and in others it has compounded existing needs.

I recognize that this is a time of anxiety and even fear. Yet, as persons of faith in Jesus Christ we know that death no longer holds us captive, for we are people of Christ’s resurrection.

The Psalm reminds us that though the world quakes, seas roar, and the nations rage, God is our refuge and God is our strength (Psalm 46).

I invite us to join together as a church in fasting and prayer each Friday in April. By fasting we seek to gather together spiritually before our ever-present God. We do not seek to make statements to our leaders, nor to be noticed by others, but only to center our hearts in the refuge of God’s peace. By praying we intercede for our communities that compassion may flourish, that health and safety may reign, and that the peace of Christ will surround the world.

May our prayer together be an offering to our God, and through us may God heal the nations.

- As the situation with the coronavirus affects persons, families, and travel, may we remember those affected by this outbreak. There are many changing directives, regulations and recommendations affecting our country and way of life, may we remember all those adjusting to this changing world. As some reopening is occurring, may our prayers be for keeping everyone as safe as possible.

- We rejoice with Susan Liller as she is a recent graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary with a M.Div. Susan has begun work with the Eastg Dayton Fellowship (a joint ministry of the Church of the Brethren and the Brethren In Christ) as an associate pastor.

- May we lift John Edwards, retired pastor, in our prayers this week as John will undergo a surgical procedure Thursday to correct double vision.

- May we lift Kirt Chronister, son of Jim and Karen Chronister, who suffered a stroke and is in a process of recovery and rehabilitation.

- The Constance congregation continues to discern space needs, although temporarily on hold during the pandemic. Our prayers for these sisters and brothers during this time of transition are appreciated.

- May we continue to lift Mary Sue Rosenberger, as she continues to deal with various health issues. MarySue Rosenberger has been receiving care from Hospice since April 2019 because of Pulmonary Fibrosis which had been first diagnosed in the fall of 2017. I spoke with Mary Sue and Bruce recently and they expressed their appreciation for the love and support.

- Rob Raker, former pastor, continues to deal with the heart condition that has plagued him for some time now. He is hoping for a new procedure which may alleviate some of the issues he has been facing. Doctors continue to work with Rob as these heart struggles continue. Rob appreciates our prayers.

**** Continued ****

- May we remember those congregations in pastoral transition - Mark Lancaster is serving as interim at Good Shepherd; Fred Bernhard is serving as interim pastor at Brookville during this time of transition; their profile is now posted and the search team will be meeting by Zoom this week. White Cottage has entered an agreement with a neighboring congregation to supply pastoral services during a time of transition and discernment. Tara Hornbacker is serving as interim at New Carlisle, their search team has completed their profile. Mel Smith, pastor at Charleston, has retired. May we offer our prayers of love and support for the members of the Bear Creek congregation as they seek new church homes.

- May we remember the possibility of a new church starts in various locations in our district as well as the urban ministry team for revitalizing some of our urban churches.

- There are many issues and situations continuing to face us as we minister in our respective locations, including those who are serving in interim situations and others who are in discernment regarding placement or are considering a move. There are others facing health issues, please keep these situations in prayer.

Please contact me if you know of prayer situations of which I should be aware. May we lift each other in prayer as we work to continue the work of Jesus, peacefully, simply, together.