

The Banner

We are a sharing, loving fellowship of Christian believers, rooted in biblical faith, that actively seeks and celebrates God. We desire to praise, love and serve with all our hearts in our faith community and to reach out to our neighbors, continuing the work of Jesus peacefully, simply, together.

In God we find the source of all our joy. Hallelujah!

May 2022

Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren

Vol. 48, No. 5

From Our Pastor...

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

Being an “imitator of God” is really a tall order. God—the All-Powerful, the Creator of the Universe, the Miracle-Worker and Forgiver of Sins—we are to imitate this God? Talk about pressure! But thankfully, the writer of Ephesians gives us some clues as to how we can do this. Speaking kindly to one another, resisting bitterness and wrath, and showing forgiveness—these are qualities of God that are certainly within the human capacity to reflect.

However this might seem like an impossible task these days, when the siloes and echo chambers in which we find ourselves teach us to view “the other” not just as a person with a different perspective but as an enemy.

After a 2011 shooting in Tucson, Arizona that killed 6 people and injured 13 others, President Barack Obama, in a speech to the nation, reminded us, “At a time when our discourse has become so sharply polarized—at a time when we are far too eager to lay the blame for all that ails the world at the feet of those who happen to think differently than we do—it’s important for us to pause for a moment and make sure that we’re talking with each other in a way that heals, not in a way that wounds.”

Ephesians 4:29 instructs, “Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.” Are we speaking to one another in ways that bring words of healing, grace, and peace to those around us? Or are we speaking with the intent to wound, to get the last word, to put someone in their place? May God help us put away all malice as we seek to live in love, as Christ loved us.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Lauren



...those limited or confined for health reasons: **Cathy Banks, Faith Eikenberry, Marcheta Pletcher.**

We also uphold these members, friends and family members of our congregation who have prayer concerns:

- Judy Brooks**
- Bill Lemon**
- Rochelle Lovelace**

District Prayer Calendar – May

- May 1 Prince of Peace (Sacramento) (COB & American Baptist)
- May 8 For the Church of the Brethren national staff and the Mission & Ministry Board
- May 15 Glendale Church of the Brethren
- May 22 For the global Church of the Brethren congregations in Nigeria, Spain, Dominican Republic, Haiti, India, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Brazil
- May 29 Camps La Verne and Peaceful Pines, our two camps and the summer of ministry

**PFCOB STEWARDSHIP INFORMATION
Through March 2022**

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| 2022 Annual Budget | \$196,085.00 |
| Giving '22 | \$26,385.00 |
| Interest & Other Income '22 | \$28,412.19 |
| Total Budget Income thru March | \$54,797.19 |
| | |
| Total Budget Expense thru March | \$(47,062.14) |
| | |
| Budget Balance thru March | \$7,735.05 |
| | |
| March Special Non-Budget Offerings | |
| Inland Valley Hope Partners Beta | \$215.00 |
| Capital Fund | \$70.00 |
| Newcomers' Access Center | \$50.00 |
| COB One Great Hour of Sharing | \$125.00 |
| Items Sold | \$200.00 |



BIRTHDAYS

- 6) Jakeh Landrum
- Peggy Redman
- 7) Bill Lemon
- 10) Rochelle Lovelace
- Casey Deal
- 21) Kathy Gilbert
- 22) Cody Smith
- Winter Dellenback
- 28) Samuel McKellip
- Shirley Ness

ANNIVERSARIES

- 22) Paul & Linda Lovelace 1976

May Worship Schedule

As a reminder that we are rotating between in-person and Zoom worship, here is the schedule for upcoming worships:

May 1, in-person at St. Paul's, baby dedication for Baby Leo Cohen, Guest speaker, Russ Matteson. Worship will be followed by a Congregational meeting to discuss a possible new mission project.

May 8, ZOOM worship, followed by our regular Congregational Business Meeting

May 15, in-person at St. Paul's

May 22, ZOOM worship

May 29, ZOOM worship

If you have any questions, please call Acia in the office.

Every Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., **Bible Study** over Google Meet. Contact Sander Eller for details.

Upcoming Zoom Meetings

Congregational Meeting, Sunday, May 1,
following in-person worship

Stewards, Tuesday, May 3, 6:30 p.m.

Congregational Business Meeting, Sunday, May 8,
following Zoom worship

Service & Outreach, Tuesday, May 10, 10:00 a.m.

Music & Worship, Wednesday, May 11, 11:00 a.m.

Executive Committee, Thursday, May 12, 6:30 p.m.

Church Board, Thursday, May 26, 6:30 p.m.

Banner articles are due on May 20

Pastor Lauren's schedule

On May 3-6, Pastor Lauren will be traveling to Chicago to participate in a clergy retreat through Bethany Fellows. Funded by the Disciples of Christ denomination, Bethany Fellows is a mentoring and spiritual leadership ministry for young clergy in their first four years of congregational service. Bethany Fellows serves congregations by assisting newly ordained pastors in their transition from seminary to sustained congregational ministry with a strengthened, healthy pastoral identity.

Through a series of retreats, strategically scheduled every 6 months, a total of 8 retreats over 4 years (40 days!), Fellows build upon their seminary experience and theological education in prayer practices and spiritual disciplines, which sustain the soul for a life-time of parish life. Each retreat experience contains worship, solitude, and multiple learning components tailored to the emerging needs of their congregations. The retreat includes a site visit to cutting-edge congregations that stimulates fresh creativity for at-home ministry. Regular coaching sessions and webinars throughout the year hone their ability to read congregational systems, make appropriate interventions, sustain inner vision, and inspire those around them while discovering effective networking skills.

Pomona Fellowship financially supports Pastor Lauren's participation in this program, and for this she is grateful.

From PFCOB Service and Outreach Commission ...

Each month the Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren Service and Outreach Commission recommends money and food giving opportunities above and beyond regular pledges to our church. For May, 2022, the recommended money opportunity is the Church of the Brethren Pentecost Offering, and the recommended food opportunity is placing canned vegetables and rice in the Inland Valley Hope Partners food wagon at St. Paul's when we meet for Sunday service there.

The Church of the Brethren Pentecost Offering highlights our passion for calling and equipping fearless disciples and leaders, renewing and planting churches, and transforming communities.

Inland Valley Hope Partners brings together faith communities, businesses, individual and community groups, and ensures the empowerment of people in need by providing food, shelter and supportive services.

The *Banner* is published by the
Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren
Office address: 363 S. Park Avenue, Suite #202
Pomona, CA 91766
(909) 629-2548
Email: Office@MyPomonaChurch.org
Website: MyPomonaChurch.org

Services & Activities

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Sunday Worship over Zoom | Sunday, 10:00 a.m. |
| Bible Study over Google Meet | Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. |
| Rev. Lauren Seganos Cohen | Pastor |
| Janet Short | Moderator |
| Acia Jernigan | Admin. Assistant |

The *Banner* is published once a month. Articles and announcements to appear in the next issue of the *Banner* are due in the church office by the 20th of each month.

Pomona Fellowship Welcomes New Member Jessica Decker

On Sunday, April 3, we welcomed Jessica Decker as our newest member. Below is her introduction to us so we can get to know her better.

I was born and raised in the Church of the Brethren. At the time of my birth, my father was serving as the pastor of the Glade Valley Church of the Brethren in Walkersville, Maryland. Eventually, we moved to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where he served as the pastor for the Ridgeway Church of the Brethren. We lived in the parsonage there, and I have many fond childhood memories of the immense property that included a giant garden, a small creek full of crawdads, beautiful daffodils, and a whole softball field. We eventually left that amazing house to move to San Diego, which is where my parents still live. I was baptized at the First Church of the Brethren in San Diego by Pastor Jeff Glass. I first came to know the Pomona Fellowship congregation through my time as a summer service worker from the University of La Verne in the summer of 1996. Even after my summer service term ended, I continued to stay connected to the church thanks to George and Jan Spicer, who graciously adopted me, routinely drove me to church on Sundays, and could always be counted on to bring an extra place setting to any potlucks. Shortly after graduating from ULV, I ended up getting hired as a third grade teacher in Azusa Unified School District just a few weeks before school started. I hadn't had time to find a place to live, so Pastor Jonathan Shively arranged for me to stay in the guest house of the parsonage at Pomona Fellowship (and even spent a few evenings babysitting Ben)! In 2002, I married my college

sweetheart, Andy. We now live in Alta Loma with our two children, Ethan (15) and Avery (12). I am in my 13th year as a professor of education at the University of La Verne. In my free time, I enjoy reading, playing board games with the family, and watching sports (F1 racing, ice hockey, and baseball). I'm so happy to have officially joined the Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren and am looking forward to getting to know everyone better.



Mission and Ministry Board addresses Ukraine

A statement on Ukraine topped the agenda of the Mission and Ministry Board, which met March 11-13 at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., and via Zoom. Carl Fike chaired the meeting, assisted by chair-elect Colin Scott and general secretary David Steele.

The board also heard updates on finances, addressed Brethren Faith in Action Fund guidelines, approved hiring a consultant for a survey related to the Strategic Plan, heard numerous reports, received training on “Active Listening” led by Jay Wittmeyer of the Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Peace Center, and appointed Ben Barlow of Montezuma Church of the Brethren to the Germantown Trust.

The statement on Ukraine called for a time of concerted prayer and action for peacebuilding, renewed commitment to Annual Conference opposition to conventional and nuclear war, committed to aid and advocate for refugees and migrants—regardless of national origin,

and committed to renew efforts to care for those in need in every country involved in the conflict and affected by the global financial disruption. The full statement is online at www.brethren.org.

In 2021 year-end financial reporting the board learned that, at \$48.5 million, the denomination’s total net assets increased \$6.2 million from 2020. The increase is due to investment gains, a large surplus in Core Ministries, an increase in restricted giving, and a significant increase in bequest giving. (All numbers are pre-audit.)

The Core Ministries received congregational giving totaling \$1.6 million, down \$87,000 from 2020 and \$168,000 behind budget. At \$709,000, individual giving to Core Ministries was up \$135,000 from 2020 and \$164,000 ahead of budget—the highest individual giving total since 2009. Expenses were under-spent by \$542,000, with many events either postponed or moved to virtual or hybrid. Core Ministries ended 2021 with

a net surplus of \$214,000, and \$200,000 was set aside for future budget shortfalls. For the first time since 2014, Core Ministries finished with a net asset balance over \$2 million.

Brethren Press received a \$100,000 distribution from the Gahagen Trust for expenses related to children’s curriculum, which along with the shifting of some staff costs to Core Ministries helped the publishing house close out 2021 with a \$118,000 surplus.

Material Resources suffered significant reductions in its primary sources of income, leading to a deficit of \$21,000 for the year and a net asset deficit of \$185,000. The board’s Stewardship of Properties task team is including assessment of the Material Resources program in its consideration of questions about property management.

The Conference Office had lower expenses in 2021 due to a virtual Annual Conference and finished the year with a \$46,000 surplus.



Refugees from Ukraine on the Ukraine-Slovakia border.

Ukraine aid among first grants of 2022

Responding to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Brethren Disaster Ministries in March began working with ecumenical partners to determine best avenues for disaster relief. An Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) grant of \$10,000 was given to CORUS International—former long-time partners IMA World Health and Lutheran World Relief. A grant of \$25,000 to Church World Service was for an initial response through partner organizations working with refugees in Moldova, Romania, and other Balkan countries.

Haiti: An EDF grant of \$220,000 went to long-term programing and new house construction following the 2021 earthquake. This is a joint Brethren Disaster Ministries and Haitian Church of the Brethren response.

Tennessee: An EDF grant of \$30,000 finances the opening of a new Brethren Disaster Ministries rebuilding project for flood recovery in Waverly, Tenn., following catastrophic flash flooding in August 2021.

Maryland: An EDF grant of \$5,000 supports the Somerset County (Md.) Long Term Recovery Group following tidal flooding in the Chesapeake Bay area in October 2021.

Delaware: An EDF grant of \$5,000 supports Wilmington (Del.) Church of the Brethren in long-term recovery efforts following flooding caused by Tropical Storm Ida last August.

Venezuela church is made official

A SIGLEH, the Church of the Brethren denomination in Venezuela, is now official. The denomination was established by a decision of its first annual conference Feb. 21-28. The meeting was held in Colombia because of difficulties within Venezuela.

A large Venezuelan delegation included pastors, delegates, and representatives from seven indigenous groups (Piapoco, Jibi, Yekuana, Wayuu, Sanema, Yavinapi, and Carinna), along with pastors from the USA including Joel Peña of the Mission and Ministry Board, Jeff Boshart as director of the Global Food Initiative, and Eric Miller as co-executive director of Global Mission.

Thirty-three churches totaling some 1,548 members reaffirmed their commitment to ASIGLEH, among them 13 churches of the indigenous groups and 7 new affiliated churches.



Crago Bread and Stover Kulp Water—two new factories opened by *Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria)*—in the city of Mubi in Adamawa State, are named for former Church of the Brethren mission workers. *Stover Kulp Water* is named after one of the founders of the Church of the Brethren Mission in Nigeria in 1923. *Crago Bread* is named after Tom Crago and his wife, the late Janet Crago, who helped create the EYN Pension Office in 2006.



Winners of the speech contest for the 2022 National Youth Conference are (from left) **Hannah Smith** of Brownsville (Md.) Church of the Brethren, a freshman at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College; **Anna Schweitzer** of Cedar Grove Church of the Brethren (New Paris, Ohio), a high school junior living in Indiana; and **Kara Bidgood Enders** of Ridgeway Community Church of the Brethren (Harrisburg, Pa.), a junior in high school.

Personnel notes

David Shumate will retire as Virilina District executive minister on Dec. 31. He has led the district for almost 30 years, since Jan. 1, 1993. He is currently the longest-serving middle judicatory staff person in the Church of the Brethren as well as in Virginia. His service to the denomination has included a term as Annual Conference

moderator and service on numerous committees including three Conference study committees (World Mission Philosophy and Global Church Structure, Vision of Ecumenism for the 21st Century, and Review and Evaluation), the Ministry Advisory Council, Pastoral Compensation and Benefits

Advisory Committee, New Church Development Advisory Committee, and the Council of District Executives, where he has been chair and treasurer. His lifetime commitment to ecumenism has included two terms as president of the Virginia Council of Churches.

Connie Sandman retired from Brethren Benefit Trust

on April 30, after a 40-year career at BBT where she held the record for longest tenured employee. She began at BBT on April 26, 1982.

Joe Vecchio has announced his retirement as administrative assistant for Pacific Southwest District, as of the end of 2022. He has worked on the district staff for 29 years.