



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!

February 2022

Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren

Vol. 48, No. 2

From Our Pastor...

Recently, Jason and I watched the new Netflix movie “Don’t Look Up,” an apocalyptic story starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence. (Admittedly, we took several nights to get through the whole movie because we have an infant and we’re tired!) The movie is a political satire about a pair of scientists who discover a comet on a direct path to strike the Earth in 6 months. They try to warn the United States president (played by Meryl Streep), who doesn’t take the threat seriously, and then eventually they go on media tour to warn the rest of the world. Unfortunately half the world doesn’t believe them, essentially calling it “fake news.”

I won’t spoil the movie for you, but one scene in particular stuck with me. Towards the end of the story, many of the main characters are gathered together for a dinner at one of the scientist’s homes. The scene is rife with anxiety and fear about the comet. In a moment of quiet inspiration, the characters decide to start sharing things they are grateful for. One of the scientists wonders if they should say amen; they aren’t a very religious family, he explains, so he’s not sure how it works. The boyfriend of one of the characters quietly responds, “I’ve got this,” and begins to pray.

“Dearest Father and Almighty Creator,” he prays, “we ask for your grace tonight, despite our pride; your forgiveness, despite our doubt. Most of all, Lord, we ask for your love to soothe us through these dark times. May we face whatever is to come in your divine will with courage and open hearts of acceptance.”

What a beautiful prayer, we thought, both for the movie and for our times today. While the film was intended to be a commentary on the looming threat of climate change (and its unfortunate politicization), this prayer is one that also speaks to us today, in the midst of this ongoing global pandemic. This prayer asks for simple things that are truly all we need to survive turbulent times, and whether the filmmakers intended to or not, the elements of this prayer are based soundly in scripture.

Lord, we ask for grace, despite our pride, our selfishness, our impatience. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

We ask for forgiveness, despite our doubt, our apathy (1 John 1:9)

Above all things, we ask for love to comfort us when we are afraid. (1 John 4:18)

Help us to face what is to come with courage. (Joshua 1:9)

Help us to face what is to come with openness. (Philippians 4:6-8)

This is my prayer for our congregation during our season of discernment and this ongoing pandemic. May God hear our prayers for grace, forgiveness, and love.

With you,
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 – February

Feb. 6 Centro Ágape en Acción (Los Banos) congregation
Feb. 13 San Diego Church of the Brethren
Feb. 20 Church of the Living Savior (McFarland)
Feb. 27 Restoration LA congregation

PFCOB STEWARDSHIP INFORMATION Through December 2021

2021 Annual Budget	\$220,891.00
Giving '21	\$102,481.71
Interest & Other Income '21	\$25,279.29
Total Budget Income thru Dec.	\$127,761.00
Total Budget Expense thru Dec.	\$(158,834.88)
Plus Budget overage from 2020	\$4,224.32
Budget Balance thru December	\$(26,849.56)
December Special Non-Budget Offerings	
Capital Fund	\$95.00
Inland Valley Hope Partners Beta	\$205.00
Newcomers' Access Center	\$209.00
Messenger Fund	\$54.00
Adopt-a-Family	\$100.00
Women's Fellowship	\$25.00

Camp La Verne Banquet Update:

Due to the surge in COVID numbers, the Camp Banquet has been postponed until April 9, 2022.



BIRTHDAYS

- 5) Connie Good
- 9) Karin Herndon
- 10) Frank Ness
- 14) Laurie McKellip
Spencer Smith
- 17) Jason Cohen
- 18) Wanda Lacy
- 21) Franklin Hemsworth
- 24) Jan Spicer

ANNIVERSARIES

(none)

Worship Update

On Thursday January 13, the Executive Committee of our church voted to affirm a recommendation from our Music & Worship Commission to suspend in-person worship services and move all services back to Zoom until COVID cases are lower. COVID-19 cases are at an all-time high in our area and around the country, and the exponential rise of the Omicron variant cases, combined with new Hillcrest and LA County restrictions, informed this decision. We acknowledge that this is very difficult for everyone to move back to all virtual gatherings, but we are not willing to put anyone at risk during this time, especially our oldest and youngest church members. Please continue to wear your masks (N95 or KN95 if possible), avoid large group gatherings, and remember Jesus' command to care for the least of these (Matthew 25:40). Thank you for your patience and please pray for our church leadership as we once again pivot and make difficult decisions to keep our community safe.

Pastor Lauren Seganos Cohen
& Janet Short, Moderator
on behalf of Executive Committee

Upcoming Zoom Meetings

Service & Outreach, Tuesday, February 8,
10:00 a.m.
Music & Worship, Wednesday, February 9,
11:00 a.m.
Congregational Business Meeting, Sunday,
February 13, after Zoom worship
Executive Committee, Thursday, February 17,
6:30 p.m.
Stewards, Tuesday, March 8, 6:30 p.m.
Church Board, Thursday, March 17, 6:00
(early time to meet with Ian Bishop
from Ameriprise)
Banner articles are due on February 20

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

From Service and Outreach

One of the most successful programs addressing poverty and food insecurity started by the Church of the Brethren has been Heifer International. It has been so successful that there are projects on every continent in the world except Antarctica. There have even been projects in the United States.

The goal of HI is to eradicate hunger in the world by providing those in need with the means to supply their own food. This is done by providing a “starter” of protein-rich food which is usually some animal, support and training in its care, and sharing offspring.

We are partners in this effort through our church budget. If you are interested in learning more, check with any member of Service & Outreach.

~~~Phyllis Eller  
Service & Outreach Commission



### **Volunteer Opportunity**

Back in November, several members of our church volunteered with the Newcomers Access Center, a local organization that helps to resettle immigrants and refugees. A new group of Afghan refugees is arriving in our area and the NAC is once again providing new shoes to these families. Our congregation has been asked to return to help measure feet to fit these new shoes.

The date is Monday, February 21 (Presidents' Day, the schools are closed). The time will likely be between 9:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. You can volunteer for a 1 or 2 hour shift anytime that day.

If you are interested, please contact Pastor Lauren. You will need to fill out a volunteer application on the NAC website in advance. To learn more about the Newcomers Access Center, visit <https://www.newcomersaccesscenter.org/>.

~~~Pastor Lauren





Faith's Role in Love

In *It's Okay Not to Be Okay*, Christian author Sheila Walsh looks at the all-encompassing love that Jesus expects of his followers. He commands us to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27, ESV).

But we can't love that way without faith, Walsh writes. “I'm not living by faith if I have an answer to everything. If I understand everything God does or doesn't do, then all I need to love him with is my mind. We're called to love him with more.” That “more,” she explains, involves these paradoxes: “We love with all our heart, even when it's broken. We love with our soul, even when our humanity wrestles against our situation. We love with our strength, even when it's almost gone. We love with our mind, even when we don't understand.”

Even if God's purposes and plans don't make sense here on earth, we can heed this advice from the great preacher Charles Spurgeon: “When we cannot trace [God's] hand, we must trust his heart.”

~~~from The Newsletter Newsletter

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### 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 20<sup>th</sup> of each month.



Craig Thompson



## Brethren Disaster Ministries completes Dayton project, continues hurricane rebuilding

**B**rethren Disaster Ministries has completed its tornado rebuilding project in Dayton, Ohio. Grants of \$10,000 from the Greater Dayton Disaster Relief Fund and \$5,000 from the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster covered some of the costs.

A Hurricane Florence rebuilding project in Pamlico County, N.C., continues through April with support from an Emergency Disaster Fund grant of \$52,000.

### More grants

- \$30,000 from the EDF for the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development's winter weather aid for Syrians who are displaced within Syria and in Lebanon.
- \$25,000 from the EDF to the Congolese Brethren in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, for repairing 23 damaged homes and building 31 new homes following the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo.
- \$5,000 from the EDF for a shipment of hygiene kits to displaced people in Yemen in partnership with Corus, the new umbrella for merged programs of Lutheran World Relief and IMA World Health.
- \$5,000 from the Brethren Faith in Action Fund (BFIA) to East Dayton (Ohio) Fellowship for signage to promote outreach ministries.
- \$4,697.17 from the BFIA to Lorida (Fla.) Iglesia de los Hermanos for outreach and worship ministries.
- \$763.72 from the BFIA to Ellisforde (Wash.) Church of the Brethren for audio/video and computer equipment for online worship.

## On Earth Peace ends executive position

**At its board meeting Oct. 7-9**, the board of On Earth Peace discussed challenges of staffing with a growing cohort of interns and a persistent structural deficit.

After careful consideration, including two hours of racial caucusing to explore how internalized racial superiority and inferiority play into decisions, the board decided to eliminate the position of executive director as of the end of 2021 while continuing to fully support expansion of the internship program. During an interim period in 2022, executive responsibilities will be distributed among staff, board, and interns.

The board also updated bylaws, with a reduction of the size of the board from 15 to 12 as the most significant change.



## The Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee

*met last October: (top row, from left) Bob McMinn, Deb Oskin, Art Fourman; (bottom) Gene Hagenberger, Dan Rudy, Nancy Sollenberger Heishman. The group worked on the 5-year review of pastoral compensation and benefits to be presented to Annual Conference, updated the "Guidelines for Pastors' Salary and Benefits," reviewed and recommended changes to the "Guidelines for Continuing Education," and received an update from a former member of the committee, Ray Flagg, who is helping develop a "Pastoral Compensation Calculator" for a new "Integrated Annual Ministry Agreement."*



## Bethany Seminary board affirms anti-racism efforts

**B**ethany Seminary's board has made a statement in support of the seminary's work to pursue racial justice. The school in 2019 created a framework designed to intentionally confront racial hierarchy, implicit bias, and systemic racism, growing out of a strategic vision goal "to promote cultural, racial, and theological diversity throughout the institution."

The board of trustees statement:

*"As Children of God, we join with others to pursue the path of righteousness in the midst of social turmoil. We humbly and fully commit ourselves as members of the Bethany Theological Seminary Board of Trustees to stand against all forms of racism, discrimination, bias, privilege, abusive power, colonialism, and racial hierarchy. We recognize these insidious elements are pervasive on individual, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels. We also grieve the ugly and harmful mental, physical, spiritual, educational, social, economic, ecological, and societal effects these foundations impose upon our human family.*

*"To this end, we are dedicated to eliminating all such structures in this Seminary and working to uphold justice, equity, diversity, interconnectedness, and accessibility. In doing so, we fully acknowledge and accept that this journey will require us as individuals and as a collective Board to be faithfully and consistently committed to seeking God's will in the ways and spirit of Jesus, Our Lord and Savior. We also understand that our work will be challenging, uncomfortable, and painful but, in doing so, remain resolved that all facets of our Bethany learning community—including this Board—will become transformed into new and greater instruments through our efforts to fulfill the Seminary's mission so that the world flourishes. It is in this spirit that we call upon our entire Bethany family to join us as we, together, strive to address this vital charge.*

*"It is our hope and prayer for God to act in and through us as we intentionally work to fulfill this important and necessary calling. With humble hearts, may we always be reminded that sincere dedication to hope, continued learning, self-examination, and evaluation will be integral to our efforts, and that there is no ending to this journey. And, with Jesus as our example and inspiration, may our efforts as a Board contribute in positive ways that bring about a new and beloved community at Bethany Theological Seminary."*

## Nigeria Crisis Response continues in 2022

The Nigeria Crisis Response budget for 2022 has been set at \$183,000, supported by a grant of \$210,000 from the Church of the Brethren Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF). Plans were made to end this collaboration between the Church of the Brethren and Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) in 2021, but were revised due to ongoing violence in northeast Nigeria.

Working with EYN's Disaster Relief Management, program priorities are repairing homes, peacebuilding and trauma recovery, agriculture, livelihood, education, food and medical and home supplies, and staff engagement.



### National Youth Conference worship and music coordinators

met with Youth and Young Adult Ministries staff: (top row, from left) Erika Clary, NYC coordinator; Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries; Bekah Houff, university pastor at Manchester University in Indiana; (center) Walt Wiltschek, Illinois and Wisconsin District executive; Cindy Laprade Lattimer, co-pastor of Stone Church of the Brethren in Huntingdon, Pa., and co-chaplain at Juniata College; Shawn Flory Replogle, executive director of Organizational Resources for the Church of the Brethren; (bottom) Jacob Crouse, a music leader at the Washington (D.C.) City Church who does audiovisual engineering for the American College of Cardiology. Houff, Lattimer, Replogle, and Wiltschek are worship coordinators, and Crouse is music coordinator.

## Personnel notes

**Jen Jensen** began Dec. 13, as Thriving in Ministry program manager in the Office of Ministry. Her work includes the Part-Time Pastor; Full-Time Church program. Most recently she worked for Kindred Hospice of McPherson, Kan. She was director of Spiritual Life and Service for McPherson College for five years. She is a graduate of the University of Nebraska and plans to complete a master of divinity at Bethany Seminary in May.

**Doug Phillips** retired Dec. 31, as executive director of Brethren Woods, after 39 years in leadership of the camp in Shenandoah District. Originally from Johnstown, Pa., he attended Eastern Mennonite University, completing courses in camping and youth ministries. In 1982, he began as director of Brethren Woods. During his tenure, the facility and programs grew from 2 buildings, a fulltime director, and a part-time staff member, to 30 structures and 6 full-time staff. The district has appointed assistant director Linetta Ballew as acting director.

**Lynn Evans** of Pottstown, Pa., has begun as long-term volunteer office manager at rebuilding sites of Brethren Disaster Ministries.