

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!

February 2026

Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren

Vol. 53 No. 02

From Pastor Julie

Psalm 82:3

Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute.

Leviticus 25:35

If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you, you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens.

Proverbs 31:9

Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Isaiah 25:4

For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,

Luke 3:11

In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise."

Luke 6:20-21

Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

It is not too light a comment to say that the entire Bible, old and new, instructs us to care for our poor, shelter the widow, feed the alien, and defend the oppressed. Over and over and over, it tells us.

The Pomona Valley Spiritual Leaders for Justice were asked by the Day Laborer Center to help with a vigil this last week. Ramiro Pacheo, a Pomona

resident and day laborer has been detained since November 13th, suffering from ill health and not given the medication he needed during detainment. Ramiro, who has no criminal record, was suffering from pneumonia at the time of his detention and is a long-time member of the Pomona Economic Opportunity Center.

In response, community members, faith leaders, immigrant and labor rights advocates, and allies gathered for a pray-in and vigil to demand Ramiro's immediate release and to denounce the racial profiling and targeting of immigrant workers in Pomona.

We had singers, and the mayor and 2 council members spoke, alongside Ramiro's daughter.

It was my honor to participate in this sacred work.

Three new outlets covered the vigil. Here is one of them:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiHRjg1Uqg>

Yours in service to Him,

Pastor Julie Wheeler



those limited or confined for health reasons: **Cathy Banks.**

We also uphold these members, friends and family members of our congregation who have prayer concerns: **Bill Lemon & Messiah Brim.**

PFCOB STEWARDSHIP INFORMATION Through December 2025

2025 Annual Budget	\$232,522.00
Total Budget Income thru Dec.	\$163,714.34
Giving 2025	\$80,800.50
Interest & Other Income	\$82,913.84
Total Budget Expense thru Dec.	-\$230,835.48
Budget Balance thru Dec.	\$(67,121.14)
Dec. Special Non-Budget Offerings	
Inland Valley Hope Partners Beta	\$110.00
Capital Fund	\$500.00
Newcomer Access Center	\$50.00
Girl Scouts	\$50.00
ICE Out of Pomona	\$50.00
Christmas Card Tree, Kind One (Amaya)	\$165.00

Upcoming Meetings

Church Board:

Thursday, February 19, 6:30 pm

Executive Committee:

As Needed

Music & Worship:

Tuesday, February 10, 6:30 pm

Service & Outreach:

Tuesday, February 17, 9:30 am

Stewards:

Tuesday, February 03, 3:00 pm

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

Every Wednesday at 8:00 am. **Breakfast Fellowship Group** in the Hillcrest Dining Room. Contact Mary Hines, 909-418-4654 for details.

Healed and Whole

On the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month **Healed & Whole** meets for Dinner & Bible Study at Julie and Dennis' house, 845 Hillcrest Dr. Pomona, at 7:00 pm.

Prayers 4 Pomona

Join us for a public vigil held in Pomona. **Prayers 4 Pomona** meets every Friday on the corner of Garey & Mission at 4:30 pm. For more information, please contact Pastor Julie, 909-720-9832.

Pastor Julie's Vacation

February 11 - 13

oh God you know our anxious thoughts
our frightened imaginings
our small strength.

bring light, bring clarity
show us what we really can know.

empower the truth-tellers
guard and embolden those on the front lines.

blessed are we who can invoke calm
upon trembling hearts.

blessed are we with agency
to go before
with love that moves faster than light.



Birthdays

Connie Good on the 5th.

Karin Herndon on the 9th.

Frank Ness on the 10th.

Laurie McKellip on the 14th.

Spencer Smith on the 14th.

Wanda Lacy on the 18th.

Franklin Hemsworth on the 21st.

Jan Spicer on the 24th.

Anniversaries

Julie Wheeler & Dennis Wallstrom on the 11th.

If you would like to be included in the Birthdays & Anniversaries, please send an email to office@mypomonachurch.org with the information you wish to include.

Giving Emphasis for February

Thank you for your continued response in our effort to support the local food bank. Our food emphasis for February is **Soup for the Souper Bowl**. Soup warms you from the inside out and stretches ingredients to feed more people. Soup is a fundamental part of most cultures serving as a medicine, a symbol of care, and a way to honor tradition. Flour and other basic baking ingredients can help stock a pantry and create many food options. For all canned food please provide pop-top cans if possible. As always, staple items, including spices, baking items like flour baking soda, yeast, socks and feminine products are always needed and welcome.

Thank you for your continued support.



Monetary Giving for February in Heifer International



For more than 80 years, Heifer International has worked with people all around the world to end hunger and poverty and care for the Earth. They believe that the road to ending poverty begins by empowering farmers to earn a living income. Which requires connecting them to thriving marketplaces and key players in local economies. In partnership with public and private organizations, they provide capital, technology and other critical resources necessary for small-scale farmers to succeed.

Heifer International's work focuses on work and income, climate and environment, food security, health, and women and inclusion. They help implement these foci by helping to create farmer-centered solutions that foster more productive, inclusive and sustainable food systems and more resilient rural communities. Heifer International is currently working in 19 countries and 1 million households, with over 9 million people trained and participating. Heifer has assisted over 52 million households since its inception in 1944. For more information, please visit their website, www.Heifer.org.

Written by Laura Lovelace using Heifer International's website.

“Dress A Girl”



"Dress-a-Girl," is a program where folks come together to cut & sew dresses for orphaned girls in other countries. The dress may be the only new item of clothing they have ever owned. This would be a good time to invite people who would like to learn to sew as well. All levels of skill are encouraged to attend. This is a wonderful opportunity to create community and friendship with the folks from St. Paul's.

Upcoming Sewing Dates

February 7th, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

March 7th, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

April 4th, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Banner articles are due by February 20th

The *Banner* is published by the Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren
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Services & Activities

Sunday Worship
10:00 a.m. in the St. Paul's Parish Hall

Sunday School
Elementary Children 9:15 am

Bible Study on Google Meet
Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m.

Fellowship Breakfast Group
Wednesdays, 8:00 a.m.

Healed & Whole Bible Study
2nd & 4th Wednesdays 7:00 p.m.

Julie Wheeler	Pastor
Rudy Amaya	Children/Youth Ministry Cor.
Janet Short	Moderator
Laura Lovelace	Admin. Assistant

In loving memory of Norma Lovelace

Norma Sue (Snell, Barber) Lovelace, beloved wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, teacher, musician, and friend, passed away peacefully on December 5th, 2025, at the age of 68. She was born on March 13th, 1957, in Fresno, California, to Wayne and Verna Snell. Norma grew up in a loving home alongside her siblings, Rebecka (Snell) Labson and Edwin Snell.

Norma is survived by her siblings and her husband, Charles Lovelace; her children, Christopher Barber and his wife, Kathryn (Katie), who live in Virginia; Ariana Welker and her husband, James, who live in Idaho; and Katrina Lovelace, who lives in California. Also surviving are her cherished grandchildren, Richard (Rocky), Kathryn (Grace), Elizabeth (Joy), and Xavier (Xay) Barber, who live in Virginia, and Audrey Welker who lives in Idaho. Her spirit also lives on through many extended family members, friends, former colleagues, and students whose lives she has touched.

Norma possessed a lifelong passion for family, music, faith, and education. As a member of a very musical family, she wrote songs from a young age, sang, and played the piano and guitar. Norma especially loved performing with her father, husband, children, and grandchildren. She used her musical gifts in all aspects of her life to bring joy and encouragement to everyone around her.

Norma's deep faith helped shape her entire life. She held an unshakable conviction that God is Love and sought to embody that love with joy and music in every relationship she formed.

She graduated from Bullard High School in Fresno and then from the University of La Verne with a double major in Music and Religion. In addition to her talents in piano and guitar, Norma also performed as a soloist and played the organ for her final recital at La Verne College.

While attending college, Norma met her first husband, Richard Barber Jr. They welcomed their son, Christopher Barber, in 1984. Norma and Richard were married for five years when Richard tragically passed away in February 1985 following an automobile accident. With the support of family and friends, she carried this loss with courage, faith, and grace.

In 1986, Norma married Charles "Chuck" Lovelace, who lovingly adopted Christopher as his own. They welcomed two daughters, Ariana (Lovelace) Welker in 1987 and Katrina Lovelace in 1992. Together, Norma and Charles built a life marked by love, partnership, hospitality, and service. They remained deeply devoted to one another throughout nearly 40 years of marriage.

Norma's early teaching career began at the adult school at Lanterman Developmental Center in Pomona, California. After marrying Charles and starting their family, they relocated to Tulare, California, where Norma embraced her calling as an educator. She spent several meaningful years teaching third through sixth grade in Earlimart, California. Her students adored her, calling her Mrs. Lovely. Norma is remembered by many as the most fun, caring, and inspiring teacher they ever had.

After teaching in the classroom, Norma became a full-time mentor for new teachers in the Earlimart School District. During this time, she continued to deepen her expertise and earned her Masters in Educational Management from the University of La Verne in 2004.

Norma later served as the IMPACT Intern Program Coordinator at the Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE). In this role, she organized the various aspects of TCOE's teacher preparation program for intern teachers. She also became the California Teaching Performance Assessment (CalTPA) Coordinator. She gave workshops for school districts, trained instructors and supervisors, developed curriculum and training materials, as well as working directly with intern teachers. One of her goals was to help interns understand that this long and complicated assessment process was designed to ensure that new teachers were using research-based best practices in their teaching and not just jumping through a series of hoops. Many of the teachers she worked with have expressed profound gratitude for the wisdom, guidance, and joy she shared with them. Norma excelled in these roles and cherished the opportunity to prepare educators who would go on to influence future generations of students.

Though she retired from TCOE in 2018, her passion for teaching never diminished. Norma continued her contribution to education by working as a Lead Assessor for Pearson which involved training new assessors, creating training documents, and scoring CalTPA assessments.

Norma next worked for Point Loma Nazarene University as a consultant to help their intern teaching program align itself with the current state expectations/guidelines. She provided training and instruction materials, worked with instructors, supervisors, and intern teachers. She only left her career as an educator when her health required it at the end of 2024.

Norma was an extraordinary teacher, a gifted musician, and a profoundly loving and joyful human being. Those who knew her often said she was the most loving, accepting, and positive person they had ever met. Norma made it a goal to bring joy and warmth to all those she encountered and had the rare ability to make everyone feel valued and seen. She poured all of her love into the relationships she developed, and her friends and family felt and reciprocated her devotion.

Her legacy of love, faith, family, music, and education will be carried on by all who were blessed to know her.

There will be 2 Celebration of Life Services held for Norma.

Saturday, January 31, 2026 at the Hillcrest Meeting Hall
2705 Mountain View Drive LaVerne, CA 91750 at 2:00 PM
and

Sunday, February 1, 2026 at the Tulare Senior Center in the Louis Rich Room,
201 North F Street Tulare, CA 93274 at 2:00 PM.

Phyllis Naomi Kulp Eller - 1931-1926

Phyllis Eller passed away on January 13, 2026, after a fall at her independent living apartment at Hillcrest and brief stay at Woods Convalescent Care. She had turned 95 less than two weeks before.

Phyllis Naomi Kulp was born on January 2, 1931; her parents, C. Rudolf "Rudy" and Mary Jane raised Phyllis and her older brothers, Harold and Paul, on a dairy farm outside of Pottstown, PA. She attended Juniata College, and earned a degree in home economics. She taught Jr. High students in PA until she met Vernard Eller on a Brethren history tour. Phyllis and Vernard were married on July 7, 1955, lived in Elgin, IL, and then moved to Berkeley, CA, for Vernard's post-graduate studies. In 1958 they moved to La Verne, CA, for Vernard to take a faculty position at then La Verne College. In 1959 they bought a house on Third Street where they raised three children, Sander, Enten (Mary Alice Burd) and Rosanna (Tim McFadden). Phyllis had five grandchildren and nine great grandchildren. Phyllis cared for Vernard at home during his decline with Alzheimer's until his death in 2007. She lived in the house on Third Street with Sander until 2021, when she moved to Hillcrest.

Phyllis was involved in her children's school activities and Parent Teacher organizations. She enjoyed sewing, and later quilting, and camping in the family VW bus on the way to Church of the Brethren Annual Conferences and to visit family in PA and Wenatchee, WA. She attended the Fellowship Church of the Brethren, where she taught Sunday School and wrote and directed Christmas plays for children. When the Fellowship Church merged with the Pomona Church of the Brethren in 1980, she continued to teach, lead worship and congregational singing, sing in the choir, and attend a weekly Bible study. She was chair of the service and outreach commission until the end of 2025.

Phyllis was a proponent for health, the environment, and sustainability. She swam—outdoors—for nine months of the year into her late 80's; she was a certified master gardener; she recycled newspapers, aluminum cans, and gray water. She was a distinctive combination of frugality and generosity. She loved to pick other people's fruit. Persimmons were her favorite, but she happily



collected oranges, grapefruit, figs, avocados, apricots, and windfall apples to make apple butter, jelly, or baked good to share with her neighbors and friends.

Phyllis was a Pennsylvania transplant who flourished in California and thrived on her activities and Brethren connections. She will be remembered for her dedication to church and family, her independence and curiosity, and her tasty contributions to every potluck and family gathering she attended.

Phyllis donated her body to the USC Anatomical Gift program. Her final resting place will be the East Coventry Mennonite Cemetery in Pennsylvania, where she and Vernard will join her parents.

A Celebration of Life service will be held on Saturday, February 14, 2026 at 2:00pm PST at the Hillcrest Meeting House (2705 Mountain View Drive, La Verne, CA). For those not able to attend in person, the service will be streamed live online and recorded--see <http://tiny.cc/Phyllis-Eller-Service>. Pastor Julie Wheeler will officiate. Memorial donations may be made to the Pomona Fellowship Church of the Brethren, 242 E. Alvarado Street, Pomona CA 91767.



A satellite image of Hurricane Melissa

Church aids partners in hurricane's path

Hurricane Melissa caused extensive damage in Haiti, Jamaica, and Cuba in October. Brethren Disaster Ministries worked with local partners and Global Church of the Brethren Communion members to coordinate an initial response.

In Haiti, church leaders assessed the storm's impact. Unify Christian Church of the Brethren in Miami, Fla., collected donations of food and hygiene items.

In Jamaica, Brethren Disaster Ministries paid the cost to ship donations collected through Church of the Brethren pastor Dennis Webb and the Caribbean-American Family Network.

In Cuba, a \$5,000 Emergency Disaster Fund grant provided initial relief to a group of pastors and congregations connected to the Church of the Brethren in Venezuela.

Longer-term response plans will focus on needs in Haiti.

Mission and Ministry Board approves budget for 2026

The Mission and Ministry Board held a special meeting by Zoom on Nov. 24 to approve the 2026 budget for the denominational ministries. The board approved a total budget for all denominational ministries of \$7,913,780 income and \$7,954,240 expense, with an anticipated net expense of \$40,460. For the Core Ministries, the board approved a budget of \$5,453,000 income and \$5,453,260 expense.

The decision represented a reduction of \$102,000 in anticipated net expenses in Core Ministries since October, when the board had approved a parameter of \$5,555,000. Treasurer Ed Woolf explained that staff worked to make additional reductions to lower anticipated expenses. He noted that in 2026, 56 percent of income will come from internal sources such as quasi-endowments, savings, and investments, as a trend of decreasing giving from congregations is expected to continue.

Surveys reveal hopes for children's faith

Surveys carried out by Brethren Press and Mennomedia through Shine Everywhere and a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. gathered information from congregations in Shine's publishing partner denominations—the Church of the Brethren, Mennonite Church USA, and Mennonite Church Canada—as well as Shine customers from other denominations. Shine received 264 responses from congregations and 254 from families, with an additional 62 responses to more in-depth "Families Growing Faith" mini surveys.

Results revealed that these families "place a high-priority on regular church attendance and are looking for ways to increase faith-related engagement with their children outside of church."

Nearly 85 percent of parents reported being "very confident" or "confident" in providing faith-forming experiences to their children at home. Parents want resources that are easily accessible and simple to use while representing diverse cultures and experiences. Challenges included a struggle with conflicting priori-

ties and feeling overwhelmed by the pressure of nurturing faith development at home, despite recognizing its importance.

Primary concerns from congregations included a decline in engagement among youth and children, the struggle to maintain enough volunteers, and inconsistent attendance. More than 40 percent of churches report their attendance has declined over the last 5 years, with most having an average worship attendance of 100 or fewer.

One of the highest priorities for congregational leaders and families is a deep sense of belonging. There is a drive to promote intergenerational relationships through worship practices, extend a sense of community beyond worship, and provide an environment in which children find mentors and friends who share similar faith values.



Shine is creating resources in response. A cohort of 18 congregations for 2025-2026 is receiving at-home faith formation resources to distribute to families. In turn, they will provide feedback for the next round of resources. Find out more at <https://shineeverywhere.com>.

New initiative will focus on rural areas, small towns

Through the Part-time Pastor; Full-time Church connections in the Ministry Office, a partnership with Ashland Seminary has resulted in a grant of almost \$1 million as a “pass-through partner” within the Rural and Small Town Initiative funded by Lilly Endowment Inc.

The Church of the Brethren’s Rural and Small Town Initiative program will be housed in Discipleship and Leadership Formation, with oversight by executive director Nate Polzin and staffing by Richard Wehrle. This new grant is geared to both pastors and congregations.

Part-time Pastor; Full-time Church continues in the Ministry Office with oversight by director Nancy Sollenberger Heishman and staffing by Ryan Braught. It is entering a sustainability phase, having received a Lilly sustainability grant.

Personnel

Ryan Braught began Nov. 17 as an independent contractor to manage Part-time Pastor; Full-time Church for the Ministry Office. He has been a “circuit rider” for the program since 2003. He is a multi-vocational minister and pastor of Veritas Church of the Brethren in Lancaster, Pa.

Aly Heckeroth began Oct. 13 as FaithX assistant coordinator, serving at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. She is in her second year of Brethren Volunteer Service, having served for a year at Highland Park Elementary in Roanoke, Va. She is a member of Messiah Church of the Brethren in Kansas City, Mo.

Bethany Kasten began Nov. 3 as part-time office assistant for Discipleship and Leadership Formation at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. She previously was a senior paralegal at Bott and Associates, Ltd. in Rolling Meadows, Ill.

Greg Davidson Laszakovits began Jan. 1 as interim district executive minister for

Northern Plains District. He lives in Elizabethtown, Pa., and will serve half-time in a hybrid working style and will travel as needed. He has pastored Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren for 15 years and also has been an interim pastor. He served the denomination as director of the former Washington Office (now the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy) and as mission coordinator of Igreja da Irmandade-Brasil (the Church of the Brethren in Brazil). He owns and operates GDL Insight, which offers coaching, training, and consulting services.

Don Mitchell has begun in the newly created role of director of Intercultural Ministries for Atlantic Northeast District. He had been director of Church Development for the district since August 2006.

Sarah R. Radcliff began Nov. 17 as manager of Brethren Press operations, with responsibility for the functions of customer service and shipping at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. She has more

than 13 years of experience in managing projects and processes, with previous experience at JPMorgan Chase and Thermo Fisher Scientific. She has studied at the University of Notre Dame and at Judson University. She and her family attend Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, where she has been church office administrator.

Michael Scalzi retired Dec. 31 after three years as program assistant for Children’s Disaster Services. He worked with CDS since Nov. 9, 2022. His contributions included work connecting with volunteers and maintaining volunteer and program information. He is a member of Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren.

Richard Wehrle on Nov. 17 began as program manager for the new Rural and Small Towns Initiative in Discipleship and Leadership Formation, after having been program manager for Part-time Pastor; Full-time Church.

District executive joins delegation to Palestine

Andy Hamilton, district executive minister of Southeastern District, traveled to Palestine Nov. 9-17, with a delegation from Churches for Middle East Peace.

“The delegation was briefed concerning the ongoing genocide and ethnic cleansing in Gaza and visited with Palestinian communities in the West Bank that have experienced ongoing threats of violence from Israeli settlers,” he reported.

The delegation met with officials from the World Council of Churches accompaniment program and participated in a gathering at Bethlehem Bible College where Palestinian Christian leaders presented the 2025 Kairos 2 document “A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide.”



Post this page

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SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
1 Cow Bell CBM 11:30am	2	3 Stewards 3:00pm Google Meets Bible Study 7:30pm	4 Fellowship Breakfast 8:00am	5	6 Prayer Vigil 4:30pm	7 Dress-a-Girl 9:00am
8 Revelation by Tom Hostetler	9	10 Music & Worship 6:30pm Google Meets Bible Study 7:30pm	11 Pastor Julie on Vacation Fellowship Breakfast 8:00am Healed & Whole 7:00pm	12 Pastor Julie on Vacation	13 Pastor Julie on Vacation Prayer Vigil 4:30pm	14 Phyllis Eller's Celebration of Life 2:00pm Hillcrest Meeting Hall
15 Pastor Julie Preaching Deacons 11:30am	16	17 Service & Outreach 9:30am Google Meets Bible Study 7:30pm	18 Ash Wednesday Fellowship Breakfast 8:00am	19	20 Prayer Vigil 4:30pm	21 Church Workday 9:00am
22 Lent: The Good News is... So Good it Catches Us by Surprise	23	24 Google Meets Bible Study 7:30pm	25 Fellowship Breakfast 8:00am Healed & Whole 7:00pm	26	27 Prayer Vigil 4:30pm	28