

THE HIGHLIGHTS

Western PA District Church of the Brethren

February 2026

A WORD FROM THE DISTRICT MODERATOR

Bad news! Bad news! Bad news!

It's everywhere, isn't it? Every morning when I wake up, I see it on my phone. Shootings, fires, bombings, invasions, micro plastics, cancer, human trafficking, weather disasters, and more frustrating reports out of Washington, D.C. I know there are people doing good in the world, but sometimes the bad news is overwhelming, huh?

God offers the antidote:

GOOD NEWS!

Now, I don't want to sound overly simplistic or naïve here, but really, isn't the cure for bad news – good news?

Zoom back thru time with me to the days of Noah. Genesis 6:5 has this to say about the human condition of those days: "Yahweh saw that great was the wickedness of mankind on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was altogether evil, all the time." Think about that for a minute. Everything that everyone intended was completely wicked, purely evil, all the time. That's some really bad news! Next time you hear someone say that people are now at their worst, remind them of Genesis 6:5. We might be tempted to think that Noah's flood was God's tragic overreaction, but it sounds like He actually did the world a favor. God's image-bearers, the people He'd created to spread His goodness over the earth, had devolved into beings who were nothing but evil, all the time. It's hard to even imagine how terrible that would've been. After the flood, sin continued. It's part of life on earth. It's woven into our broken human DNA. We seem to be unable to escape it. That's more bad news, I know.

The Old Testament is loaded with stories of sinners, trying to achieve salvation. Trying to manufacture righteousness and trying to live up to God's ideal. A few got honorable mention, but even the best ones couldn't get it all right. It's bad news for all of us if even the good guys can't pull it off.

It's so cool how the OT ends in Malachi with the word, "curse," but when we turn the page, Matthew starts with: "This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah.." Good news!!

The four Gospels tell us about this Jesus, this Messiah – they paint a picture, not just of a great teacher or a good shepherd, but of God-made-flesh. The God-man, Jesus. Good news!! For years, He went about fulfilling prophecies, fulfilling the Law, fulfilling covenants God had made with His people. He gave vision where there was blindness, mobility

to folks who were stuck, and He infused hope and life and the promise of the Kingdom of God into every interaction with men, women, and children. Good news!!

Jesus lived and died and lives again – He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west, and I call that GREAT NEWS!!

Good news, gospel - it's not something we keep to ourselves. The world is on fire, people are hurting, sinsick souls are longing for balm and refreshment in a confusing age. Our job is not to judge, but to tell. Tell of the love of Christ, show the truth of His love by the way we live, and speak of the hope available to anyone who will surrender and believe. Mark 16:15 is clear – we must go and tell – preach the gospel to anyone and everyone.

How will you share **good news!** with others in 2026?

Abby Shaffer, 2026 District Moderator

FROM THE DISTRICT OFFICE

The Highlights deadline for the
March 2026
issue is

February 10, 2026

Please send your information
to tlehman@brethren.org.

DISTRICT STAFF:

District Minister Team

Pete Kaltenbaugh
mdalepastorpete@comcast.net

Ruby Mader
redhatvicar@yahoo.com

Chris Forry
exit10dunkard@hotmail.com

Financial Clerk: Amy Bowman
wpacob@atlanticbb.net

District Secretary: Tina Lehman
tlehman@brethren.org

DISTRICT OFFICE HOURS:

Monday - Thursday**

8:30 am - 3:00 pm

**Closed every Friday

Financial Clerk is in

Tuesday & Thursday
9:00 am to 3:00 pm

CONTACT US:

115 Spring Road
Hollsopple, PA 15935
814-479-2181
Website: www.westernpacob.org

2026 DISTRICT DIRECTORY

The 2026 District Directory is now available. If you have any updates or changes, please send them to me asap so that I can publish them here in the Highlights.

Any questions, please contact me
at tlehman@brethren.org
or 814-479-2181.
Thank you!

Tina

PASTOR COMPENSATION

A friendly reminder to all church leaders: It is important that those in set-apart ministry are fairly compensated for their study and travel time as well as their time in the pulpit. The suggested rate for those in pulpit fills is \$150 plus \$.70 per mile traveled.

Also, as District Ministers, we are willing to suggest speakers as well as fill the pulpit if necessary. If an emergency arises, we will help fill the pulpit on short notice if at all possible.

Thank you,

WPA District Minister Team
Pete Kaltenbaugh
Chris Forry
Ruby Mader

REQUEST FOR DIRECTORIES

It is very helpful to the District Office staff to have updated information from all the churches we serve. If your congregation will be making a new directory for **2026** please send one to:

Western PA District Office
115 Spring Road,
Hollsopple, 15935

Thank you!

NEW DISTRICT OFFICE HOURS

Starting January 1, 2026, the District Office will be open Monday through Thursday each week from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm and will be closed every Friday.

Members of the District Minister Team will continue to keep in-office hours Tuesdays and/or Thursdays each week.

The Financial Clerk will be in the office Tuesdays and Thursdays. The District Administrative Assistant will be in the office Monday through Thursday.

As always, Tina will send out a message if that schedule would change for a particular week. Please note that this will also be listed in the District Calendar each month in the Highlights.

ACROSS THE DISTRICT

WITH SYMPATHY

To the family of Pastor Harrison Smith as he went to be with the Lord on December 15, 2025. Pastor Harrison was living in Kansas with his son at the time of his passing.

PRAYERS FOR HEALTH CONCERNS

Please keep Pastors Homer and Pat Marshall in your prayers after Homer suffered a fall while taking Pat to a rehabilitation center. They are both currently at the Waynesburg Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center, 300 Center Avenue, Waynesburg PA, Room 129.

Please keep District Minister Team member Pastor Chris Forry in your prayers as he is recovering from a fall in December.

*Anyone who does not love
does not know God, because*

God is love.

*In this the love of God
was made manifest among
us, that God sent his
only Son into the world,
so that we might
live through him.*

1 John 4:8-9

LAURENBACH.COM

VIRTUAL SERVICES

Arbutus COB Sunday Services are streamed at 9:00 am <https://arbutuscob.org/>

Freedom Church (Indiana COB) services are on Facebook (Freedom Church Facebook page) and on YouTube (@FreedomChurch-cd9xj)

Geiger COB Sunday Services are on Facebook at 10:30 am <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1709517105945633>

Hostetler COB Sunday Services are on Facebook at 10:30 am <https://www.facebook.com/HostetlerCOBMeyersdalePa>

Meyersdale COB Sunday Services are on Facebook at 10:30 am https://www.facebook.com/people/Meyersdale-Church-Of-The-Brethren/100064412810727/?eav=AfZ_hZTDR0BT2145UoR6btO6zS69_LKf8aq-ZM8IDloOJ_v6FfXuzfhRJn8YR1Nqs9g&ref=py_c&paipv=0

Rummel COB You can listen to podcasts of services on their church website at <https://rummelchurch.com/sermons/>

Salisbury COB Sunday Services are on Facebook at 10:30 am <https://www.facebook.com/Salisbury-Church-of-the-Brethren-211422968870314>

Walnut Grove COB Sunday Services are on Facebook at 10:00 am <https://www.facebook.com/Walnutgrovecob>



SERVING IN THE DISTRICT AND BEYOND

EL HOGAR DE NIÑOS ENMANUEL SHOE PROJECT



Thank you to all the congregations in the WPA District who have faithfully collected and delivered shoes to the District Office for the Shoe Project. Because of that generosity, we currently have a surplus of shoes that need to be delivered to the Westmont COB to be prepared for shipping.

Please see page 5 in the Highlights for full details regarding the shoe project. You will also note that the shoe committee is in desperate need of volunteers to help preparing these shipments and picking up shoes from the District Office. Please contact Marie Camut, 814-266-3010 if you would be willing to serve with the shoe project.

We are asking that you hold on to your shoes for now as we need to work on the shoes we already have. Please call the District Office to see when we will be collecting again. You can also watch the Highlights for updates each month.

Thank you again for generously giving and we look forward to continuing the shoe project in the near future.

ARBUTUS COB PET FOOD PANTRY

The pantry is open the second Saturday of the month from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. To become a new client the only credential needed is proof of your address. This can be any type of ID such as driver's license or a piece of mail with your name and address.

We collect donations of cat and dog food. If you have an open bag of food that is not needed it can be donated to the pantry. The volunteers repackage the food for the clients. These donations can be dropped off at the Arbutus Church of the Brethren 1201 Erickson Drive in Richland.

The first set of doors of the church are open 24/7. Feel free to call: 814-410-3151 if you have any questions about the pantry.

FOOD PANTRIES

Walnut Grove Food Pantry

<https://www.facebook.com/Walnutgrovecob/>

Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

<https://www.pittsburghfoodbank.org/>

Please consider donating food to these or any other groups in our area.



DISTRICT SHOE PROJECT—HELP WANTED

What is the Shoe Project?

The Shoe project was begun as a fund raiser by the Church of the Brethren Home Auxiliary. Funds2Orgs was chosen as a fundraising partner for the Auxiliary because, it was included in the National PTA list of approved fundraising groups, there was no monetary component of the collection process, and no deadline for our organization to meet. The entire project was collecting gently worn shoes, and selling them by the pound to Funds2Orgs.

When the Home was sold and the Auxiliary dissolved, the project continued with the El Hogar de Ninos Enmanuel as the beneficiary. Profit checks are delivered directly to the District Financial Clerk, who forwards the money to El Hogar.

What is Funds2Orgs?

We're a social impact company and a trusted leader in shoe drive fundraising. More than 24,000 schools, non-profits, faith-based organizations, and others have partnered with us to host shoe drive fundraisers that raise revenue with no costs.

Funds2Orgs is focused on 3 key goals:

- Making a local fundraising impact in communities across North America with an engaging community-driven fundraiser.

- Redirecting shoes out of landfills and into the reuse economy through shoe drives.

- Supporting more than 4,000 micro-businesses in developing nations.



Through shoe drive fundraisers, our partners have helped us keep over 37 million pairs of gently worn, used, and new shoes out of landfills.



How the shoe project works:

The shoe project committee, which currently includes Karen Nagavathy, Marie Camut, and April Mackell, begins the process. Contact is

made with Tina at the District Office to begin advertising the project in the monthly District Highlights. Churches are asked to collect gently worn shoes, and if possible rubber band the pairs together. Churches may deliver the shoes to the District Office, committee members, or directly to the Westmont COB by scheduling a drop off through the church secretary, Bonnie Snyder (the Westmont COB generously allows the storage of shoes in their educational wing).

When the total number of pairs approaches 2,500 pairs, the minimum shipment, contact is made with funds2orgs. Our coach, Donna Kobol, sends a start up kit that includes REQUIRED packing bags and rubber bands. The committee packs the shoes in the required bags, 25 pairs per bag, at the Westmont church. When the current collection goal is met, funds2orgs is notified and a contract to sell is completed by a committee member. A date is set for shoe pickup. Volunteers are contacted by the committee to help load the shoes on the assigned date. The driver signs a receipt of the number of bags collected. The bags are delivered to the funds2orgs site in Orlando, FL The bags are weighed, and our profit total is computed. The profit check is sent to the District Office where the District Financial Clerk distributes the funds to the El Hogar de Ninos Enmanuel account.

The Shoe Project Committee:

The role of the committee is to continue to advertise the program, collect shoes and deliver them to the Westmont COB, pack the shipping bags, stay in contact with the coach at funds2orgs, and organize volunteers for the shipping date. Due to illness, our committee has only two people currently able to participate in the program. **New committee members are wanted!** Please contact Marie Camut at 814-266-3010 or Tina at the District Office 814-479-2181 if you are interested.

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE KITS AND BUCKETS

CWS KITS UPDATE

We would like to take this time to thank the congregations in the Western PA District for their generous donations of school, hygiene, and clean up bucket kits over many years.

Church World Service continues to serve communities here and abroad by delivering these kits where they are needed.

The Brethren Service Center in New Windsor Maryland has been where the kits collected from our District have been delivered. To our knowledge, the New Windsor Center is no longer operating in this capacity.

Because of this closure, the District is not able to deliver kits as we’ve done in the past. We currently have a room at the District Office with kits that need to be delivered and are working to get that accomplished as soon as possible. To that end, we ask that your congregations put a hold on bringing kits here to the District Office until further notice.

We have received information from Church World Service that there is a new Mission Central location in PA that will be the location where kits can be delivered. Please see the info in the opposite column.

We are going to ask that this year and for District Conference, please have your individual congregations deliver their own kits or work with other COB churches to collect and deliver kits to this new location in Mechanicsburg, PA.

Thank you again for your generous and faithful giving and most of all your patience as these changes are taking place.

Tina Lehman, District Administrative Assistant

NEW DROP-OFF LOCATION

Mission Central in Mechanicsburg, PA,
is our new **Mid-Atlantic Super Depot**
Opening Date: Monday, January 5, 2026



Mission Central
5 Pleasant View Drive
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050
HOURS: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.
(Closed on weekends and holidays)

You may mail or drop off kits directly at this location. Please plan to arrive by **2:30 p.m.** so our team has time to assist you before closing.

If your delivery fills more than an SUV, please call **717-766-1533** in advance.

Mission Central is closed on holidays. If you have a specific question, please call prior to delivering kits.

AVAILABLE SPEAKERS

ORDAINED

ABRAHAM, FARREL – 4315 Seton Drive, Pittsburgh, 15227-1245 / 412-979-0067 / sharingpearls@comcast.net

BEACHLEY, LINDA—PO Box 723, Davidsville, 15928-0723 / 814-479-4802 / lrbeac@atlanticbb.net

BEACHLEY, RONALD – PO Box 723, Davidsville, 15928-0723 / 814-479-4802 / rondbeachley@gmail.com

BROADWATER, KEVIN—475 Keystone Street, Meyersdale, 15552-6943 / 814-442-5684 / pastorbroadwater@verizon.net

COUGHENOUR, KAITLYN— 785 Red Dog Road, Salisbury, 15558 / 814-521-4649 / shellywithattitude@gmail.com

DERR, AMELIA – 1202 Roberts Street, Nanty Glo, 15943-1325 / 814-749-0262 / iamameliaderr@yahoo.com

KABLER, ERIC—126 Clermont Street, Johnstown 15904-2132 / 814-242-0920 / eric.kabler@kablerthomas.com

LONGWELL, ERIC— 240 Plumcreek Road, Shelocta, 15774-3144 / 724-599-8690 / kb3ttx@gmail.com

MOSORJAK, GARY – 1337 Roxbury Avenue, Johnstown, 15905-1224 / 814-659-5853 / wendel05@aol.com

SIMONSICK, ROBERT—1131 Apple Jack Lane, Greensburg, 15601 / 419-934-1794 / bprabsimon@aol.com

STEIN, ROBERT - PO Box 375, Chalk Hill, 15421-0375 / 724-438-2226 / crid@verizon.net

SWICK, MICHAEL - 4127 Greenville Road, Meyersdale 15552-8518 / 814-634-8158 / preachmike101@comcast.net

WHITED, JAMES—14 Pennsylvania Avenue, Brookville 15825 / 814-592-5714 / jrwhitedsr@gmail.com

LICENSED

SHAULIS, TRAVIS—608 Second Street, Meyersdale, 15552 / 814-442-8626 / tanbadaner@gmail.com

CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center invites you to **SAVE THESE DATES**

Please note SVMC Students:

SVMC will be increasing the cost of ACTS courses starting in the 2026-2027 academic year. As we continue to enhance our use of technology and virtual education, this increase in tuition is necessary to help cover the costs of equipment and technological support. The new cost for each course in the ACTS program will rise by \$15.00, bringing the total to \$285.00.

The Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center will offer several enriching Continuing Education Zoom sessions in 2026 led by Julie Guistwite (bio below). Registration is currently open for the session on January 22. Registration for the other sessions will be available soon. For now, please mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information on these and other events in 2026.

Julie A. Guistwite, PhD, LSW, FT, CSWM Ripple of Light Bereavement Resource Center, LLC Dr. Julie A. Guistwite, LSW is the owner of Ripple of Light Bereavement Resource Center, LLC. She is an Advanced Certified Thanatologist and Certified Social Work Manager with 15 years of practice experience in healthcare settings including palliative care, hospice, and funeral home. Dr. Guistwite holds over 10 years of palliative and end-of-life care educator expertise in academic, continuing education, and community settings. She authored a Master's Level Social Work Certificate in Holistic Bereavement Care and undergraduate level palliative care course. Dr. Guistwite has worked with Penn State's Clinical and Translational Science Institute's Project ECHO. She teaches undergraduate courses in palliative care, end-of-life issues, older adults, and health policy. She developed the first scale to evaluate and refine social workers' expertise in death, dying, and bereavement care. Areas of expertise include spirituality, thanatology, older adults, healthcare equity, and palliative care. She is passionate about improving the well-being of individuals/families through advancing providers' excellence in serious illness, end-of-life, and grief care delivery.

Identifying and Responding to Suicide Risk ([Register Here](#))
January 22, 2026, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm (Zoom)

Registration will be open SOON for the following:

Spiritual Well-Being; Strengthening & Refining:
February 17, 2026 | 9:30 am - 12:30 pm (Zoom)

Congregational Ministry to Members Navigating Divorce Experiences:
June 3, 2026 | 9:30 am - 12:30 pm (Zoom)

Caring for Congregational Members with Chronic Health Conditions:
October 6, 2026 | 9:30 am - 12:30 pm (Zoom)

Supporting Congregational Members with Chronic Health Conditions (this session is designed for laity):
October 29, 2026 | 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm (Zoom)



July 18 – 23 at the [YMCA of the Rockies](#) in Estes Park, [Colorado](#)

National Youth Conference (NYC)

provides young people in high school and the first year of college (or are age equivalent) and their advisors the chance to gather for a week of fellowship, worship, workshops, recreation and more!

Who is eligible to attend?

Youth who have completed ninth grade through one year of college at the time of NYC (or are age equivalent) and their adult advisors are invited to attend. All youth must be accompanied by an adult advisor. Please send at least one advisor for every five youth. If sending female youth, please send a female advisor and if sending male youth, please send a male advisor. All adult advisors must be a minimum of 22 years of age.

What is the theme?

Light within Us, based on Matthew 5:14 – 16.

What is the cost?

Early registration fee (registering in January and February) is \$625 per person. Regular registration (during March and April) is \$650. Late registration (during May and June) is \$675. All registration fees will cover lodging, food, and programming while at NYC. Registration will open January 5th, 2026!

How can I find out more?

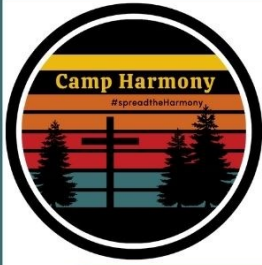
Visit this page regularly! Connect on social media. Contact Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth/Young Adult Ministries, at bullomnaugle@brethren.org or 847-429-4385 with questions.



Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) is accepting applications for the 2026-2027 year. BVS encourages applicants of all ages (18-plus) to put your faith into action and apply for a year of service.

Before embarking on a service year, volunteers first attend an orientation. There are two volunteer orientations planned for next year, both in the Midwest.

For more information, go to:
<https://www.brethren.org/bvs/>



SUMMER CAMP 2026

PROVIDING ADVENTURE & FUN WITH AN ETERNAL PURPOSE.

DAY CAMPS \$110

GRADES K-6, 9AM-4:30PM

Day Camp 1: June 15-19

Day Camp 2: July 6-10

Day Camp 3: July 13-17

Day Camp 4: July 27-31



PRE-K CAMPS \$65

AGES 3-5, 9AM-12PM

Pre-K Camp 1: June 8-12

Pre-K Camp 2: July 13-17

OVERNIGHT CAMPS \$390

OVERNIGHT 1

GRADES 2-12

June 28 - July 3

OVERNIGHT 2

GRADES 2-12

July 19-24

YOUTH ADVENTURE

GRADES 7-12

July 26-31



WILDERNESS CAMPS \$390

Wilderness 1: June 21-26

Grades 2-8

Wilderness 2: July 5-10

Grades 7-12



SIBLING DISCOUNTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE!

REGISTRATION OPENS FEBRUARY 1ST!

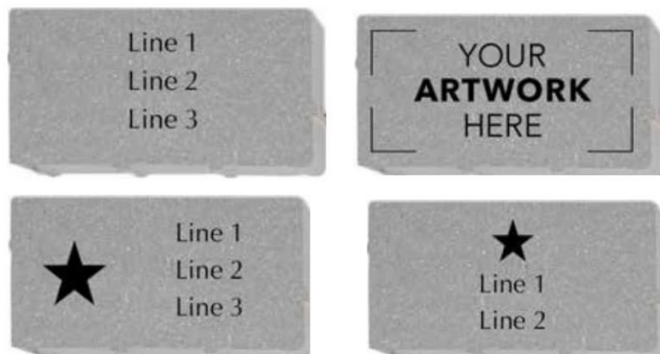
WWW.CAMPHARMONY.ORG



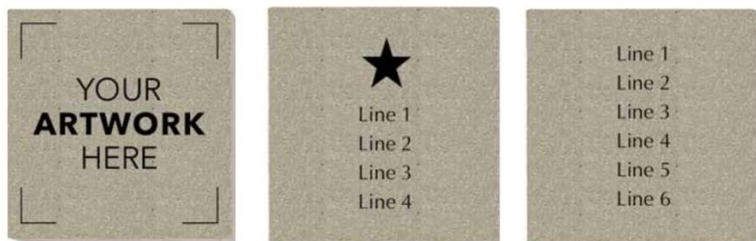
Leave your mark at Camp Harmony!

Camp Harmony is seeking your support in fundraising to continue the pool restoration project. Bricks given through this campaign will create a pathway to the pool and the funds will go to our Camper Scholarship fund.

Brick Options include 4x8 engraved.



Brick Options include 8x8 engraved.



You may individualize a brick for you, your family, your business, your church/organization, honor a loved one, or make a memorial. The bricks are engraved using state of the art laser technology. Every brick engraving is guaranteed for life!

Order Online at www.campharmony.org
Or email Phil@campharmony.org for more info!

WPA DISTRICT CALENDAR FEBRUARY 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6 District Office Closed	7 Clergy Tax Seminar Zoom
8	9	10	11	12 Core Leadership Team Zoom 6:00 pm	13	14 SVMC
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 District Leadership Team 9:00 am District Office
22	23 Office Closed	24	25	26	27	28 SVMC

2026 DISTRICT EVENTS AND MEETINGS

If your congregation, committee, or group would like to have information listed on the District Calendar, please send it in to the District Office by the 10th of each month. Thanks!

FEBRUARY 2026

7 - SVMC Class
12 - Core Leadership Team, 6:00 pm, Zoom
21 - District Leadership Team, 9:00 am, TBA
21 - SVMC Class

MARCH 2026

7 - SVMC Class

APRIL 2026

11 - SVMC Class
25 - SVMC Class

MAY 2026

9 - SVMC Class
14 - Core Leadership Team, 6:00 pm, Zoom
23 - District Leadership Team, 9:00 am, TBA

JUNE 2026

28 - ANNUAL CONFERENCE begins,
Fort Wayne, IN

JULY 2026

2 - ANNUAL CONFERENCE ends,
Fort Wayne, IN
18—National Youth Conference begins
23— National Youth Conference ends

AUGUST 2026

No meetings or events scheduled

SEPTEMBER 2026

10 - Core Leadership Team, 6:00 pm, Zoom
19 - District Leadership Team, 9:00 am, TBA

OCTOBER 2026

NOVEMBER 2026

5 - Core Leadership Team, 6:00 pm, Zoom
14 - District Leadership Team, 9:00 am, TBA

DECEMBER 2026

No meetings or events scheduled

*** District Conference date TBA

Western PA District
Church of the Brethren
115 Spring Road
Hollsopple, PA 15935

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