

Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Journal

Greensboro, North Carolina, Saturday—July 2, 2016



David Steele
General
Secretary-
elect

Brother David Steele was introduced at conference as the General Secretary-elect of the Church of the Brethren. He will assume the duties

of that office in September of 2016. When asked about his vision for the church he responded,

“As we step into these new days of our ministries together, I am committed to engage denominational, district executive and agency leadership in a collaborative working model to better attend to the challenges that we face in our Church. While we all have our respective ministries, the church needs us to bring our unique gifts, perspectives and voices together around a common table to work toward a common vision and better serve the needs of the Church of the Brethren.”



**BBT Fitness
Challenge Winners**

(L to R) Tyler Goss,
Karen Stutzman,
Liz Bidgood Enders
and Don Shankster.

By The Numbers—2016

Registrations as of
July 1, 2016 @ 5:00 p.m.

Delegate:	704
Non-Delegate:	1714
Total	2418

Friday Worship Offering \$9,672.45
Attendance 1813
Heifer Auction proceeds over \$7,400.
Online \$ still coming in.



The Journal is a publication of the Annual Conference Office.
Chris Douglas, Director
Eddie Edmonds, Editor

BY FAITH WE ARE SAVED BY WORK WE HEAL AND ARE HEALED

Our joy of salvation begins with accepting the love of Jesus. Our discipleship is continuing the work of Jesus. As Brethren we emphasize the priesthood of each of us and ours is a priesthood of faith in action.

We respond to the needs and pleas of others. We find joy and peace by working together to meet those needs. In Nigeria, we feed the hungry without asking about tribe. In Lybrook we repair homes for families without asking for titles or deeds. We faced the grief in Sandyhook and Orlando. We come to places hit by disaster – manmade and natural – with prayers, with peacemaking, with the work of our hands. This was our witness, is our work, and will be our legacy.



Eddie Edmonds

Our deepest interaction with God’s presence lays in our literal interpretation that faith without works is dead. To be gifted with work is a humble gift. As are our gifts of peace, simplicity and togetherness. Maybe this explains why we are so often unrecognized beyond the lives and communities we touch and why those who we have worked with find us unforgettable. In a world that praises those who praise themselves and loves those loved by the masses, it can seem that the scale of our work is not enough.

But, this is how Jesus worked and healed. This man’s eyes. That woman’s daughter. Stopping these hands from throwing stones. Bread for the hungry. Just a few people witnessing each miracle. Often only a few hearing the parables and seeing the peace he brought. Yet from this, the disciples were made strong and that strength is passed to us. It is our calling to pass it on.

At the Civil Rights Museum yesterday, I heard the story of how four college students inspired a movement that encompassed 75,000 people and ultimately integrated restaurants, train stations, and other public places. They transformed Americans, allowing us to be equals before the eyes of God and before one another. This work is not done. Today, our number is comparable in size. Like a map of the Brethren, the movement had a few close clusters and a few further afield. These people were divided by geography, were intergenerational, and multiracial. Yet because they sat at counters, shoulder to shoulder- because they had faith, because they put their faith in action, because they joined with others in faith and in action- because of that we are able to break bread together across the false divisions. And, we too are called by faith to action that breaks down barriers, fosters reconciliation and prophecies for peace.

As Brethren, our faith, our action is not by celebrity, not by fame, not by wealth. Our action is by faithful work, our God-given talent and ethic of showing up day after day, shoulder to shoulder, hammering swords into ploughshares. In working to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and to be with those imprisoned by fear, by greed, by oppression – we are in fact healed, brought closer to God, and one another.

Samuel Kefas Sarpiya was chosen as moderator-elect. He will serve alongside moderator Carol Scheppard at the 2017 Annual Conference, and will be moderator of the 2018 Conference.

**“Inspiration 2017”
National Older
Adult Conference
Lake Junaluska, North Carolina
September 4-8, 2017**



Paul and Donna Steiner at NOAC 2015

Lake Junaluska, North Carolina will be the site of the Church of the Brethren’s fourteenth National Older Adult Conference (NOAC) to be held September 4-8 2017. Every other year, this state sees 900 Brethren age 50 and up gather for a week of learning, sharing, serving, and enjoying each other and the loveliness of nature. Time and again participants have shared in their evaluations that they come to NOAC for “inspiration”. Picking up on this affirmation, next fall’s conference will be “Inspiration 2017.”

So, here at Annual Conference, you may see people sporting shirts or carrying bags imprinted with the question, “got inspiration?” Stickers, save the date cards, copies of the Messenger wrap-up of the 2015 conference, and free promotional videos are available on the Congregational Life Ministries table in the Church of the Brethren display area.

**Visit us on Facebook at
Church of the Brethren NOAC.**

Journal Editor Retires

It has been said that the only sure thing in life is change. For fourteen years I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve the church as Editor of the Annual Conference Journal. I have enjoyed this time more than mere words can express. It is, however, time for change. This is my last issue as I retire from this assignment. I wish Godspeed to whomever is next.



Brother Eddie Edmonds

**“The Two Americas—One Christian Faith”
Congregational Life and Intercultural Ministries Dinner**

By Frank Ramirez

“Oh, it is your lucky day. You get to sit beside me,” were the words that greeted Brother Wesley Morris as he looked for seat in an airplane. Morris, youth pastor at the Greensboro Beloved Community Center and a chaplain at Harlem Hospital, was puzzled why a nervous looking white woman would greet him, a young African-American minister, with those words?

As it turned out, he learned the woman struggled with air turbulence, and their flight was indeed rocky. She counts on being able to talk to whoever she’s with in order to keep from throwing up. “So we shared small light talk about racism and Black Lives Matter throughout our bumpy ride.”

Morris’ point was that we, all of us, need to go forward together in order to arrive safe and sound at our destination. We need to see you each, and to share our pain, in order to bridge the gap that separates us. That was the point of the title of his talk, “The Pain You Don’t See: Bridging the gap between the Two Americas..” Morris spoke at the Congregational Life and Intercultural Ministries Dinner on Thursday at Annual Conference.

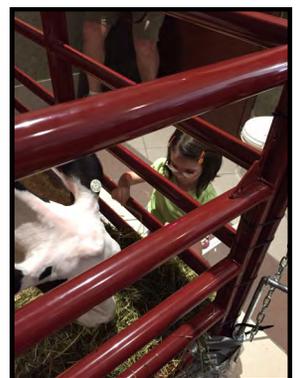
Quoting copiously from the speeches of Martin Luther King, Morris stated that we are still divided into two Americas, one filled with prosperity, freedom, and hope, the other with poverty, daily ugliness, and despair. The solution, he suggested, is centered in our faith.

Morris himself has experienced much of the pain of that other America. “Dealing with pain gives you a certain authority to speak. We are perishing on a lonely island of poverty in an ocean of prosperity.” What keeps him going is “a peace the world cannot give, neither can it take it away.” The voice of nonviolence, Morris suggested, “is addressing pain we do not see.” Reading a book by Brethren author Harold Row confirmed his commitment to MLK’s strategy of peace. “The struggle is difficult. We not only stand for what is easy but what is difficult.” He used these lessons when, as a community organizer, he helped tobacco workers to gain their rights with big tobacco companies. When one of the tobacco executives asked him, “Why don’t you get a real job?” he replied, and went on to cite Micah 6:8, saying: “There is no greater compliment you can give me. There is no greater work than to love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with my God.”

**2016 Annual Conference
Wrap-Up DVD**

The 2016 Annual Conference Wrap-up and Sermons DVDs capture the highlights from Greensboro and can be ordered at the Brethren Press bookstore. While you are there pick up your copy of “The Seagoing Cowboys.” by Peggy Reiff Miller. The cow was a big hit yesterday, especially with the children.

Bookstore Closes Tonight!!!



**Follow Annual Conference Online
www.brethren.org/news/2016/ac**

Plan to follow events at Annual Conference at www.brethren.org/news/2016/ac. This news index page features links to news stories, photo albums, webcasts, worship bulletins and sermons, and more.

Look for a full review of the 2016 Annual Conference in the next regularly scheduled issue of Newline, to appear on July 5.