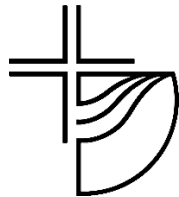


Compelling Vision

Together, as the Church of the Brethren,
we will passionately live and share the radical transformation
and holistic peace of Jesus Christ through relationship-based neighborhood
engagement. To move us forward, we will develop a culture of calling and
equipping disciples who are innovative, adaptable, and fearless.

Bible Study Series

Church of the Brethren



Introduction

The compelling vision conversations affirmed the centrality of God's word in our life together—God's Word as recorded in scripture and God's Word as revealed through Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.

God's Word as recorded in scripture is our written rule for faith and discipleship. However, it is not a static document, but rather, "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12). By the power of the Holy Spirit, as we gather around the Word in the context of community, God still speaks to us.

As we prepare for discussions about the compelling vision at Annual Conference and as your congregation imagines what it might look like to live into the vision, we encourage you to spend time in Bible study and prayer. We have designed this Bible study series to help you do just that. Each of the thirteen studies focuses on a different word or phrase from the compelling vision, inviting us to engage with God's Word with the hope of deepening and enriching our understanding of each word or phrase in particular and the vision as a whole.

Each session has been written by a different writer. This was an intentional choice. Our team of writers reflects the rich theological, geographical, ethnic, and gender diversity of our beloved denomination. Not only does this enrich our collective perspective, but also fosters understanding—a value that has undergirded the entire process of discernment. We are grateful for their willingness to share their gifts in support of this project and hope you will be inspired by their contribution.

In scripture, we are told that God is doing a new thing. "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19a). It is our fervent prayer that these Bible studies—and the compelling vision itself—will inspire greater openness to, awareness of, and focus for that new that God wants to do through us.

Compelling Vision Editorial and Design Team:

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Adapting for Online Use

- If the session suggests dividing participants into small groups, you can either remain in a large group or make use of a break-out room option in your virtual meeting software.
- If the session suggests participants write or draw something and then share it with the group, there are a couple of options. One option is to invite participants to write/draw with paper and pencil and verbally describe it or hold it up to the camera on their computer to share it with the rest of the group. A second option is to invite individuals or small groups to take notes in a word processing system on their computer and then use the “share screen” feature in their virtual meeting software to share it with the rest of the group.
- If the session suggests use of a video, there are a couple of options. If you, or another member of the group, has a very good high-speed connection, you may be able to use the “share screen” feature to watch the video together; however, it is essential to have a high-speed video connection for this to work. Be sure to click the “share computer audio” box in “share screen” so that people can hear the audio. An alternative would be to share the video link and invite participants to watch it in advance of the session.

Other Tips for Leaders

- Feel free to print and distribute or email the first two pages of each session to the group prior to your meeting. Encourage participants to read the scripture texts, the *Reflecting on the Texts* essay, and browse the media suggestions.
- Whether you are meeting in-person or online, gather supplies ahead of time and have videos or other media easily accessible on your computer’s desktop.
- Take care to create a worshipful and welcoming atmosphere for your meeting. Have a volunteer in your room or on your virtual meeting platform to assist you in welcoming people into the meeting space. Light a candle and, if meeting online, encourage participants to light their own candle to symbolize welcoming the light of Christ into your midst.
- Media suggestions can add creativity and relevance to your session. They can enlarge your understanding of the Bible text and prepare you to offer additional experiences to your group. Always use media suggestions as a *beginning point*. Postings may change, and media suggestions come from a variety of sources and perspectives.
- Is your group weary of meeting online? Consider repackaging the Bible study sessions as weekly devotionals that include the *Reflecting on the Texts* essay and several questions from the session. Or use these sessions as a resource for worship and sermon preparation.

Our Writers

Session 1 writer **Brandon R Grady** pastors the Black Rock Church of the Brethren in Pennsylvania. He is a graduate of Bethany Seminary. Brandon is blessed with physical blindness. Adopted from India at age two, Brandon strives to make the most of the lease on life he's been given!

Session 2 writers **Audrey and Tim Hollenberg-Duffey** co-pastor the Oakton Church of the Brethren in Virginia. Both are graduates of Bridgewater College, Bethany Seminary, and the Westminster (MD) COB Nursery. Audrey continues her studies as a DMin student concentrating in Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary.

Session 3 writer **Denise Kettering Lane** serves as the Associate Professor of Brethren Studies and Director of the MA Program at Bethany Seminary. She is a graduate of Ashland University, Candler School of Theology, and The University of Iowa. She also serves on the Brethren Historical Committee and is the editor of *Brethren Life and Thought*.

Session 4 writers **Ilexene and Michaela Alphonse** are a pastoral team in the Atlantic Southeast District. Ilexene pastors Eglise Des Freres Miami, a Haitian multi-language congregation. Michaela pastors Miami First Church of the Brethren, an English-speaking congregation in North Miami.

Session 5 writer **Thomas Dowdy** serves as pastor of Imperial Heights Community Church of the Brethren, Los Angeles, California. A graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary, he serves on the Mission and Ministry Board and Local Community Foundation Boards. He has a passion for peacebuilding and uses his musical talent as a bridge to connect all people towards a beloved community.

Session 6 writer **Gail Erisman Valeta** holds master's degrees in Theology from Bethany Theological Seminary and Conflict Resolution from the University of Denver and serves as affiliate faculty in Conflict Resolution for Regis University. She is the pastor of Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Colorado.

Session 7 writer **Jennifer Quijano West** is a high school Chemistry and Physics teacher and member of the Brooklyn, First Church of the Brethren in New York. Jennifer graduated from Brooklyn College and Bethany Seminary and enjoys working with youth and young adults.

Session 8 writer **Val Kline** serves as pastor of the Pleasant Chapel Church of the Brethren. A graduate of Manchester College and the Education for Shared Ministry program, Val enjoys serving with the district youth cabinet, volunteering at camp, and photography (and posting to social media)!

Session 9 writer **Ryan Cooper** is pastor of Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren in Rockingham County, Virginia. He serves as chair of the Ministerial Leadership Team for Shenandoah District, on Standing Committee, and as Vice-Chair of the Christian Growth Institute executive team, teaching both Old Testament and Biblical Interpretation.

Session 10 writer **Becky Zapata** was born in Mexico. A COVID-19 survivor, she is a wife, mother of two, grandmother of four with a passion for church growth and community engagement. She has completed the SeBAH training and is in the process of ordination with the Church of the Brethren.

Session 11 writer **Andy Hamilton** serves as pastor at Stevens Hill Community Church of the Brethren. Educated at Ashland Theological Seminary (M.Div.) and the University of St. Andrews, Scotland (M.Phil.), he taught as an adjunct instructor at Ashland Theological Seminary for 15 years.

Session 12 writer **Bobbi Dykema** holds a master's degree from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities and a PhD in Art and Religion from the Graduate Theological Union. She pastors First Church of the Brethren in Springfield, Illinois, and serves on the pastoral team of the Living Stream online church.

Session 13 writer **Eric Landram** is pastor of the Litiz Church of the Brethren in Pennsylvania. He is a graduate of Bridgewater College and Bethany Seminary. Eric enjoys good music, being with friends and family, and Wilbur buds.