

Moderator Musings October 2021

Welcome to the October 2021 edition of **Moderator Musings**...I have spent much of my life in the communication world, and believe that right now communication is not at a good place either within our world, or within our church. There's a lot we don't know and much of what we think we know is sometimes wrong or distorted. So, this is my attempt to share things that I come across only because the church has, for whatever reason, called me to the position of Moderator. Don't get too smug. You may be next.

I will share what we used to call - growing up in the Annville (PA) congregation in Atlantic NE district - "joys and concerns". It's a smattering of things which I would like us to hold in prayer. Maybe it's Moderator Dave's prayer list. Maybe it's things that keep me from being able to fall asleep at night, or maybe things that help me know that the Church of the Brethren is doing something right. (a.k.a. being faithful)

Here's my list:

- I give prayerful thanks that the vast majority of the church has understood that the process of affirming the Compelling Vision at our virtual Annual Conference was NOT a matter of voting yes or no in the traditional Robert's Rules of Order process. Instead, it was a process of gauging the level of affirmation for that vision statement, a statement created by over 2 years of input by our members. I'm grateful for the number of delegates who found the statement to be something that would help them in their ministry in their home congregations. I suspect that many who voted against it did so because they wanted a statement of beliefs and doctrine, rather than a vision statement for how we implement that which we believe. Those are two different things. Just my observation. I don't really believe that those who voted no don't want to "passionately live and share the radical transformation and holistic peace of Jesus Christ through relationship-based neighborhood engagement." I suspect we all want to do that. And for that I rejoice.
- I give thanks to God for the number of congregations that already have been and **ARE being** Jesus in their neighborhoods. Look for forthcoming Musings to share examples. One that I can't wait that long to share: Ephrata (ATL NE) arranged for members of their congregation to hold a series of neighborhood block parties to introduce their church to their neighborhoods. Talk about "neighborhood engagement"!!



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- A concern that needs prayer: I continue to hear misperceptions and misimpressions about Church of the Brethren positions on issues that impact both the church and our world – allegations that we support things like abortion, racism, violence, hatred...the things that are filling up the news cycles on secular media. If you question where the Church of the Brethren stands on an issue, please consult Brethren.org. It is the PRIMARY source of information about all things Church of the Brethren. The PRIMARY source is NOT social media- Facebook, Twitter, personal blogs, Instagram, or any of the other places where we go when we want to know something. Newline and the news items on the home page of Brethren.org do a great job of providing regular updates on what Brethren are doing- responding to the Haitian earthquake with a \$50,000 grant from our Emergency Disaster Fund, spiritual enrichment events such as the National Older Adult Conference, the recent church planting conference called New and Renew, and ways to support congregations that are working at understanding racial issues in both church and society.

And if you dig deep enough into the Moderator's page for Annual Conference 2022, you will find on the website, a series of questions and answers that evolved from last year's Moderator's Q and A Sessions, held in many of our districts. During those on-line sessions, a wide range of concerns and questions were shared with Annual Conference leadership. Many of the answers to those questions have been compiled and posted on the Moderator's page of the 2022 Annual Conference website. That set of Q and A's can be found by clicking on this link: <https://www.brethren.org/ac2021/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2021/03/State-of-the-Church-FAQs.pdf>

My prayer is centered in the theme that has been chosen for next year's Annual Conference – Embracing one another, as Christ embraces us. Part of the process of embracing each other is to lovingly communicate issues that we feel we need to discuss, but to do it directly. That's the formula outlined in the Gospel of Matthew, in chapter 18, verses 15-17. If we feel like we have an issue between our brother or sister, Jesus instructs us to go to that person and share the concern. I consider that to be part of the act of embracing – showing that we care enough to relate to one another, to hear each other's story and to share ours. I would like to find a way for Brethren to do that on a regular, more structured basis, and will keep you informed as that dream evolves.

Finally, something that I DID actually see on Facebook that was helpful and applicable to all of us in denominational leadership. It was a statement to the effect that, if you're praying for us, please keep it up. It's working. We DO feel the prayers of those who are praying for us, as we seek to be faithful to God's call for the Church of the Brethren. And I have it on good authority that the Annual Conference leadership is also praying for all of you. As I have hinted in some of my other presentations, we are a diverse group of followers of Christ. But by recognizing that Christ embraced us by his sacrifice on the cross LONG before we had our act together, we can honestly embrace each other, as we continue this journey. I welcome your feedback, observations and your own musings, joys, or concerns. And remember:

The musings of Moderator Dave are his opinions and observations only, and do not necessarily reflect the views of other denominational Leadership Team members, or anyone else connected

with the Annual Conference, or for that matter, the Federal Reserve Board, the Food and Drug Administration, the National Transportation and Safety Board, or any other organized or unorganized organizations. They are also void where prohibited, except where not prohibited.