

Pastor:
Tim Harvey

**Minister of Nurture
and Music:**
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**DEADLINE FOR
OCTOBER
SEPTEMBER 15**

**NEWSLETTER
COMMITTEE:**

Rena' Brown
Carolyn Broyles
Nancy Hylton
Josephine Keller
Bryana Lackey
Emily Nelson

**CHURCH OFFICE
SECRETARY HOURS:**
Monday-Friday
9:00-2:00 p.m.

THE VISITOR

SEPTEMBER 2024

Published by:

Oak Grove Church of the Brethren

2138 McVitty Road, SW
Roanoke, VA 24018

September Sermon and Scripture

September 1 *Forgetting what we look like* (James 1:17-27)

September 8 *Stop playing favorites!*
(James 2:1-10, 14-17)

**James:
Keeping it real**

Stewardship Series:

Welcome to The Grove: Food you'll remember forever.

September 15 *The feast of forbidden fruit* (Genesis 2-3)

September 22 *A difficult portion to swallow*
(Luke 14:3-9; Deuteronomy 15:11)

September 29 *Fishing for forgiveness*
(John 21:1-19)

October 6 *Here comes the bride!*
(Revelation 19:6-9)
World Communion Sunday
Pledge Cards Due



Considering church membership? Interested in exploring your faith more deeply? Then the Discipleship 101 class may be for you.

New class begins September 29, 2024 during the Sunday School hour!

Church News

Prayer concerns since the last Visitor:

...*Dawn Thomas*, cancerous place removed

...*Renee Tatum*, medical tests

...*Lowell Foutz*, heart issues

A Baby Shower for
Rebecca Duncan

September 14, 2024
1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.
In the Fellowship Hall

Everyone is welcome!
They are registered at Amazon.
Click [here](#) to see registry.



MONTHLY OUTREACH AUGUST

- Two individuals assisted through our Good Samaritan Fund.
- Food for two families through our Food Pantry.

Happy Birthday

- 1- Trenton Marcum
- 2- David Twigg
- 3- Gavin Robinson
- 3- Tracy Anderson
- 6- Amanda Marcum
- 10- Jennifer Johnson
- 13- Kylie Young
- 28- Stephen Turner
- 30- Zach Harvey

Happy Anniversary

- 19- Dan & Eleanor Brogan
- 20- Stephen & Vicki Turner
- 25- Jim & Marge Montgomery
- 28- Roger & Joan Simpson

Oak Grove Youth
Olympics
September 22, 2024
Green Hill Park
12:30-2:30 p.m.
Join us for some fun!



The two bathrooms in Fellowship Hall are now available to persons of any gender, and new signs have been installed to indicate this change. Having these large, single-stall bathrooms available for anyone facilitates easy access to persons with mobility issues. Stocking and storing appropriate items for the bathrooms is in process.

Bethel Lodge Update

At the May Council Meeting, the congregation voted to continue sponsoring the Bethel Lodge A-Frame at Camp Bethel! Thank you to Mark Harmon, for taking on the task of forming and leading a core team to oversee this project. On Camp Work Day in April, a group of volunteers washed walls, mopped floors, tightened wobbly steps, painted, and removed an old wood stove pipe. It was a busy and rewarding day! Since then, two couches have been acquired to replace worn out pieces. Four side tables have been added, replacing some broken pieces and adding more functionality to the living space. If you would like to be on a contact list for future work, please see Mark Harmon. To make financial contributions to future projects, please use the envelopes in the pews and label it for Bethel Lodge.

Long Term Financial Planning Updates

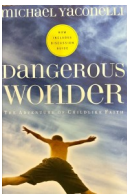
We are so blessed with many generous and thoughtful members! Due to this generosity, the Executive Board has begun long term financial planning for the future viability of our congregation. A collection of funds from special gifts and memorials has been placed in a Money Market Account known as “The Acorn Fund.” Be on the lookout for more information about The Acorn Fund during September as we turn our attention towards Stewardship!



Women’s Faith Study Group

The Women’s Faith Study Group begins again Thursday, September 5, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. at the SML house of Joan Simpson.

After that date, we will meet in the fellowship hall at church on Thursdays from 9:30-11:00 a.m.



Two MUSIC opportunities for YOU

The Oak Grove Ringers (handbell choir) will begin their rehearsals on Tuesday, September 3, 2024 at 5:30 p.m., directed by Sarah Ann Bowman.

Please contact Sarah Ann at bowmont1839@gmail.com if you have interest in sharing your gifts in this fun and important choir! They play about once a month in worship.



The Choir begins their rehearsals on Wednesday, September 4, 2024 at 7:00 p.m., directed by Carol Elmore. Show up!! They'd love to have you sing and share your love of song with them! They sing most Sundays in worship.

If you would like to share your gifts with a solo (vocal or instrument), please let Carol Elmore know! It helps us all see/hear God better when we share music.



SHP

SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE

BUNKS ACROSS AMERICA BUILD

Sept. 14, 2024
8:30 am

Sleep in Heavenly Peace is an organization committed to building, assembling, and delivering bunk beds to children and families in need.

Friday
Pre-cut Lumber
Sign up link



Saturday
Build Day
Sign up link



VOLUNTEERS

- ✓ Anyone 12 and older is eligible to help.
- ✓ No experience necessary!
- ✓ Sleep In Heavenly Peace requests all volunteers sign up in advance of the build day.
- ✓ Volunteers are also needed on Friday Sept. 13 at 3 pm to pre-cut lumber.

Location:

Cave Spring UMC
4505 Hazel Dr. Roanoke, Va



Sponsors:

Oak Grove CoB, Cave Spring UMC,
Laurel Branch CoB, and
Mount Pleasant UMC



Camp Bethel News



Click [here](#) for more info!



Bethel Benefit Day on July 24, 2024 was a **HUGE** success! Over \$60,000 raised to benefit Camp Bethel!



Camp Bethel's 40th annual Brethren Heritage Day Festival

Heritage Day is Saturday, October 5, 2024, from 7:30 a.m. through 2:30 p.m. This festival is **FREE** for **EVERYONE** to attend, and 100% of all sales of food, crafts, and activities benefit the programs and operations of Camp Bethel.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2024 SCHEDULE

5:00-6:00 a.m.: Apple Butter Canning in the Cave Trail Shelter, hot off the kettles.
 7:30 a.m.: Breakfast in the Ark Dining Hall through 9:30 a.m.
 9:00 a.m.: Booths OPEN and Apple Butter available.
 9:15 a.m.: Kids' Fishing open; child 3-12 w/ adult (suggested \$10 donation).
 9:30 a.m.: Kids' Train Rides begin.
 2:30 p.m.: Booths close.

Oak Grove needs volunteers for making cobbles and working the booth. If you are interested, please contact [Rhonda Marcum](#).

Pastor's Column

He's Not a Luddite, But ...

Dr. Russell Haitch, professor of theology and human science, thinks we should all be paying closer attention to the transformational — and potentially calamitous — societal change that artificial intelligence (AI) will bring.

“Generative AI is not just one more technology,” says Haitch. “I join with those experts who think we are entering an unprecedented period. For the first time in history, machines are going to have agency. They will be capable of devising their own plans and carrying them out. Right now, humans are still in control. But we don’t know for how much longer.”

Most new technologies carry both potential benefits and pitfalls, and in this respect Haitch agrees AI is similar, though he claims the stakes are considerably higher.

“It seems reasonable to hope that AI can be used to tackle big problems, such as climate change or curing cancer,” he states. “For example, each year the world’s medical journals publish over a million peer-reviewed articles. Obviously no person could read them all, let alone analyze and synthesize all the data sets. But AI is already incredibly adept at this kind of work.”

Haitch predicts the pitfalls may take longer to see, and they may not be in the places people look first. “Because technology is so tied to money, people tend to focus first on the economic implications, such as the impact on jobs.”

While AI is bound to affect many lines of work—including, he stresses, the jobs of pastors and professors—as a theologian Haitch is most concerned with its overall influence on our relationships with one another and with God. To illustrate this point, he recalls the advent of automobiles and assembly-line production. “These technologies slashed employment opportunities for blacksmiths and farriers at the same time they gave rise to new manufacturing jobs,” he says. “But the larger widespread impact lay in the way that cars drove communities apart. Instead of walking together to church, people drove far and wide to different church or to the beach on Sundays.” He thinks AI promises, or threatens, to bring even more radical changes, “because people are going to be forming closely-bonded relationships *with* machines, not just *through* machines as in the case of the internet and

social media.”

During a recent visit to the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center as a guest lecturer, Haitch found that attitudes of audience members defied stereotypes of younger people being more comfortable with technology than older folks. Some older people welcomed the possibility of assistive technologies like driverless cars. “People expect innovation and seem ready to accept it,” says Haitch. “Experts in technology seem more worried than the general public about the potential dangers of a society that becomes reliant on — or even dominated by — intelligent machines.”

Haitch has often explored how faith relates to science and technology in his scholarly work. His book, *The Eyes of the Heart: Seeing God in an Age of Science* (Fortress, 2021) offers a model for unifying faith and science without sacrificing either Christian convictions or good science. He is currently working on a new book with the working title *Godlike Power: AI and the Future of Faith* (IVP Academic, forthcoming 2025).

Haitch reports AI enthusiasts often use the phrase “Godlike power” to describe AI. They hope to wield this power to human advantage. “But the people in charge of this Godlike power, almost all of them, do not believe in God. God is not real to them,” he points out. “I’m not making an eternal judgment but a here-and-now assessment based on their own words. And history tells us repeatedly how our creative powers, when separated from a relationship of harmony with God, can turn unbelievably destructive.”

One theme of Haitch’s current work is the need for “spiritual sobriety,” which the Eastern Orthodox tradition calls *nepsis* (νήσις) and which derives from New Testament instructions to be attentive, discerning, watchful, and sober-minded.

Haitch observes: “As ‘users’ of technology, we are well aware of its addictive properties. We have already seen how the so-called attention economy of the internet keeps people engaged by promoting polarization. These forces can get much worse with AI.” In response to this latest technological threat, he recommends ancient Christian practices: “Spiritual sobriety is sometimes called ‘bringing the mind into the heart.’ When cultivated through various forms of prayer and fasting, including

Continued next page...

fasting from technology, it can help to free us from a cultural addiction to technology and intoxication with power.”

Another focus of Haitch’s work is the ongoing longing for relationships of intimacy. He refers to the Jewish theologian Martin Buber (1887-1965) whose philosophy focused on the distinction between “I-Thou (or You)” relationships versus “I-It” relationships. “Buber was talking about two different ways of living and being in the world,” Haitch states. “I-It relationships are instrumental. “I-You” relationships tend toward intimacy. I-It relationships are about using and being used, whereas in relationships that tend toward intimacy

we are knowing and being known, seeing and beheld, loving and being loved.”

As he sees it, the longing for “real presence and true intimacy” will persist in the age of AI—though technology in general and AI especially can work to promote a mechanical or instrumental approach to life—and he hopes churches will be communities where people can find this longing fulfilled.

“AI engineers are working tirelessly to make machines more human-like,” says Haitch. “It challenges believers to be more devoted to God’s project of making people more human, according to the pattern of humanity revealed in Jesus Christ.” **w&w**

Article from Wonder and Word Magazine from Bethany Theological Seminary.



VIRLINA PEACE DAY SERVICE

The Virlina District Peace Affairs Committee is sponsoring the annual Prayer for Peace service on September 22, 2024 at First Church of the Brethren. A one-mile prayer walk through the neighborhood surrounding First Church will begin at 3:30 p.m. The prayer service begins at 5:00 pm. Speakers are David Jones, pastor of Williams Memorial Baptist Church and Rita Joyce, President of FEDUP.



***From Camp Bethel
staff!***

Dear Oak Grove COB,
On behalf of the Summer
2024 Staff, we wanted to
thank you so much for taking
part in our staff adoption.
Your efforts, prayers, and
gifts were greatly appreciated.
Thank you for supporting
our hard working staff!
Together In Christ,
Kate Brabham

WrapUp

ROMANS 16:2 (CEB)
WELCOME+
WORTHY
2024 CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Elections and appointments

Annual Conference moderator-elect:
Don Fitzkee of Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren

Program and Arrangements Committee:
Laura Sellers, Happy Corner Church of the Brethren, Clayton, Ohio

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, affirmed: **Andrew Hamilton**, Southeastern District executive

Mission and Ministry Board – Area 4: **Colby Patton**, Wichita (Kan.) First Church of the Brethren; Area 5: **Erik Brummett**, Live Oak (Calif.) Church of the Brethren; affirmed: **Daniel Landon Butler**, Ivester Church of the Brethren, Grundy Center, Iowa; **Edward Cesar-Fincher**, San Diego (Calif.) First Church of the Brethren; **Pete Kontra**, Atlantic Northeast District executive (ex-officio)

Bethany Seminary trustees – representing colleges: **David McFadden**, Manchester Church of the Brethren, North Manchester, Ind.; affirmed: **Patrick Chapman Starkey**, Cloverdale (Va.) Church of the Brethren

Elder Financial Board, affirmed: **Jerry Patterson**, Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren; **Wayne Scott**, Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; **Donna Rhodes**, Stone Church of the Brethren, Huntingdon, Pa.

On Earth Peace Board: **Jennie L Waering**, Roanoke (Va.) Central Church of the Brethren; affirmed: **Priscilla A. Weddle**, Chesapeake, Va.; **Laura L. Hay**, Modesto (Calif.) Church of the Brethren; **Carol Young Lundquist**, Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren, Fort Wayne, Ind.



Moderator Madalyn Metzger (center) at the head table of the 2024 Annual Conference, with moderator-elect Dava Hensley and secretary David Shumate. Shown here, the historic moment at the close of the business when, for the first time, a woman passed the moderator's gavel to another woman. Photo: Glenn Riegel

Delegates handle numerous business items

The delegate body handled numerous business items during the 2024 Annual Conference. Moderator Madalyn Metzger presided over the Conference, assisted by moderator-elect Dava Hensley and secretary David Shumate.

Review and Evaluation Committee: A mandate and an extension of term of service were approved for the next Review and Evaluation Committee. A new Review and Evaluation Committee is called in the fifth year of each decade to evaluate the organizational structure and procedures of the Church of the Brethren. The committee's term was extended from two years to up to four years at the recommendation of the Standing Committee of district delegates, which foresees that in this time in the life of the denomination such evaluation may require more time. The five-member committee, chosen from at-large members of the church, will be elected by Annual Conference in 2025 and will have until 2029 to bring back a report and recommendations.

Query: A New Model of Denominational Structure: The concern of this query, brought by Miami (Fla.) Haitian Church of the Brethren and Atlantic Southeast District, was referred to the Review and Evaluation Committee.

Among other things, it notes “serious conflict and division around issues of human sexuality and biblical authority” and asks how a new model of denominational structure may give hope to those who are contemplating separation from the Church of the Brethren. The query was characterized as speaking on behalf of the multicultural sector of the church. It sparked much discussion at the microphones including appreciation for the focus on “how” and for the Haitian Brethren bringing the query, and anticipation of an opportunity to work in a more structural way toward becoming a truly multicultural denomination. Questions about it included its assumption that inclusiveness with regard to sexuality and ability to be a multicultural church are opposing values. In pre-Conference meetings of Standing Committee, the moderator explained that potential outcomes of the query include districts shifting from being geographically based to being theologically aligned.

Breaking Down Barriers—Increasing Access to Denominational Events: This study committee was granted another year to complete its work, including a feasibility study.

(continued on page 2)

For more: www.brethren.org/news/coverage/ac2024. Order the video Wrap-Up and Sermons at www.brethrenpress.com. The Annual Conference Press Team included Jan Fischer Bachman, Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford, Russ Otto, Donna Parcell, Frank Ramirez, Virginia Rendler, Glenn Riegel, Laura Sellers, Frances Townsend, Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford (editor).

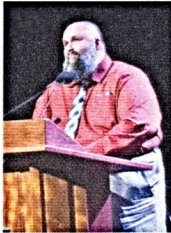


Church of the Brethren Annual Conference 2024 ■ Grand Rapids



Preachers (from left): Moderator Madalyn Metzger, Greg Broyles, Brandon Grady, Leonard Dow, and Cindy Laprade Lattimer.

Photos by Glenn Riegel and Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford



(continued from page 1)

Memorandum of Understanding with Bethany Seminary: This interim measure was approved, updating the seminary’s polity regarding its board of trustees pending approval of a new agency covenant that is being developed.

Polity of On Earth Peace: Approval was given to a temporary revision of the agency’s internal polity as an interim measure until a new agency covenant is finalized. The revision updates bylaws to meet diversity commitments.

Standing with People of Color: This committee is two thirds of the way through its three-year mandate to collaborate and develop materials for congregational, district, and denominational use. It was formed in response to a 2022 query from Southern Ohio and Kentucky District. Annual Conference directed the response to be a collaboration of the district with On Earth Peace and staff of the Church of the Brethren including the director of Intercultural Ministries.

Calling Denominational Leadership: This study committee presented an interim report, shared some of its findings, and received comments and input during the Conference. Issues around the calling of leadership are many and it has become increasingly difficult to get enough nominees for the Conference ballot.

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee recommendations: Two recommendations were approved by the delegates including the annual cost of living adjustment to the minimum cash salary table for pastors, which was set at 3.3

percent for 2025, and revisions to the pastor’s Housing Equity Fund. The latter shifts the fund from a mutual fund account to a qualified church retirement account held by Eder Financial. The savings fund enables pastors living in parsonages to purchase their own homes after leaving the parsonage.

Special Response Process: The Standing Committee, which is tasked with reviewing the Special Response Process intended to help the denomination work through strongly controversial issues, asked the Conference officers to bring names for a task team to carry out the review.

Anniversaries: Anniversary celebrations included the 300th anniversary of Germantown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren as the oldest Brethren congregation in the Americas; the 80th anniversary of Heifer International, which got its start as the Church of the Brethren’s Heifer Project; and the 45th anniversary of the Death Row Support Project.

Receiving the Revelation 7:9 Award from Intercultural Ministries

(from right): Michaela Alphonse, Joshua Brockway, Duane Grady, Matt Guynn, Gilbert Romero, Joe Vecchio (in absentia), with Intercultural Ministries director Founa Augustin Badet.



Photo: Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford

By the numbers

7 churches were welcomed:

- **1 congregation**—Southern Ohio/Kentucky District: **East Dayton (Ohio) Fellowship**
- **1 fellowship**—Atlantic Southeast District: **Jesus Lounge Ministry**, Delray Beach, Fla.
- **5 projects**—Atlantic Northeast District: **Arbor Park Church of the Brethren**, Lancaster, Pa.; **Pacific Southwest District: Iglesia del Salvador Viviente**, McFarland, Calif.; **Virginia District: Monte De Dios**, Eden, N.C., **Monte de Hermon**, Bassett, Va., **The Way**, Roanoke, Va.

1,450 people registered including 410 delegates and 1,040 nondelegates (45 virtual).

\$47,065.36 total received in offerings:

\$16,994.42 for Core Ministries of the Church of the Brethren with a focus on Global Mission and Discipleship and Leadership Formation, \$8,134.35 for the Conference operating budget and \$6,681.35 for programing for children and youth, \$15,255.24 for the Witness to the Host City to Kids’ Food Basket and Sleep in Heavenly Peace—and volunteers also built **30 beds**.

\$10,375 in a Silent Auction for Conference translation and interpretation expenses and operating budget.

\$8,328 in donations: \$1,198 for Conference operations, \$7,130 for Core Ministries.

\$8,200 raised by the Quilt Auction for hunger relief. AACB announced this was their last quilt auction at Annual Conference.

121 units collected by the Blood Drive.

200 or so people were at the vigil sponsored by the Gun Violence Prevention Action Team.



Right: Senior high service project at Camp Brethren Heights.

Photo: Frank Ramirez

Left: Third to fifth grade tied 103 blankets for the Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital.

Photo: Laura Sellers



Photos above by Donna Parcell

September 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:45 a.m.- Sunday School 11:00 a.m.- Worship	2 <i>Church Office Closed</i>	3 5:30 p.m.– Handbells 6 p.m.– Peace & Justice	4 9 a.m.- ESL 6 p.m.– Men’s Bible Study Picnic 7 p.m.– Choir	5 9:30 a.m.-Women’s Faith Study Group at SML 5:30 p.m.– Ev. & Mem. 5:30 p.m.– Missions & Serv. 5:30 pm.-Min. & Worship 6:30 p.m.-Christian Ed.	6	7
8 9:45 a.m.- Sunday School 11:00 a.m.- Worship 12:30 p.m.– Exec. Comm.	9 9 a.m.– Crafts 9 a.m. ESL 12:30 p.m.- Backpack	10 5:30 p.m.– Handbells	11 9 a.m.- ESL 6 p.m.– Men’s Bible Study 7 p.m.– Choir	12 9:30 a.m.– Women’s Faith Study Group 2 p.m.-Games <i>Forum for Brethren Studies at Bridgewater College</i>	13	14 <i>Sleep in Heavenly Peace Bed Build at Cave Spring UMC</i> 1 p.m.–Duncan Baby Shower
15 9:45 a.m.- Sunday School 11:00 a.m.- Worship	16 9 a.m.– Crafts 9 a.m.-ESL	17 5:30 p.m.– Handbells	18 <i>Camp Bethel Golf Tournament</i> 9 a.m.– ESL 11 a.m.– Munch Bunch at Sakura 6 p.m.– Men’s Bible Study 7 p.m.– Choir	19 9:30 a.m.– Women’s Faith Study Group 2 p.m.-Games	20	21 <i>Sleep in Heavenly Peace Bed Build at Roanoke Elks Lodge</i>
22 9:45 a.m.- Annual Conference Wrap-up 11:00 a.m.- Worship 12:30 p.m.- Youth at Green Hill	23 9 a.m.– Crafts 9 a.m.-ESL 12:30 p.m.- Backpack	24 5:30 p.m.– Handbells	25 9 a.m.- ESL 6 p.m.– Men’s Bible Study 7 p.m.– Choir	26 9:30 a.m.- Women’s Faith Study Group 2 p.m.-Games	27	28
29 9:45 a.m.- Sunday School 11:00 a.m.- Worship	30 9 a.m.– Crafts 9 a.m.-ESL	<i>Save the dates:</i> Fall Bazaar and Community Picnic October 19, 2024. Fall Council meeting is Sunday, October 27, 2024.				