THE VISITOR

NOVEMBER 2026

PUBLISHED BY:
OAK GROVE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

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Deadline for December newsletter is November 15.

Church Secretary Office Hours:
Monday-Friday
9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.



Join us on Sundays
Sunday School-9:45 a.m.
Worship-11:00 a.m.

November Sermons and Scripture

November 1	Wise or Foolish? Matthew 7:21-28 Love Feast following morning worship
November 8	Sermon on the Mount Lessons and Carols
November 15	*Under their own vine and fig tree* Micah 4:1-5 Sharon Norton, Executive Director of Global Missions, preaching
November 22	*Jesus is King!*, Ephesians 1:15-23 Thanksgiving Sunday
November 29	*Hope amid uncertainty*. Mark 13:24–37, Isaiah 64:1–9 First Sunday of Advent



Church News

Prayer concerns since the last Visitor:

...Robert Smith, blood clotting disorder
...Mary Jo Burris, recovering from pneumonia
...Carol Leddy, cardiac issues
...Sylvia Shepherd, chest pains
...Gay Bulach, heart catheterization
...Shelly Haas, kidney stone
...Joyce Bolender, recovering from surgery

Prison Postage Outreach



Right-Pastor Tim with Sheriff Antonio Hash in 2024.

One of our beloved Advent/Christmas offerings is the *Prison Postage* ministry. Each year, the familiar mailbox comes out of storage and takes its place in the vestibule. Oak Grove members faithfully fill it with stamps and Christmas cards for residents at the Roanoke City Adult Detention Center.

We are participating in this ministry again this year, with one small change: The mailbox will be set out on Sunday, November 1 and collections will continue throughout the month of November so that deliveries can be made in early December.

Thank you for your continued generous support of this ministry!

Bridge Builders
"Loving our neighbors as ourselves"
Luke 10:27

You are invited to join the "Bridge Builders of the Roanoke Valley" for an outing to the International Civil Rights Center & Museum (ICRCM) on Saturday, November 7.

Contact Randall Eakin for tickets and information.

The museum is in Greensboro, NC.

Happy Birthday

2- Lois Sowder
3- Connie Bierly
6- Rachel Leddy
8- Jessy Wilson
11- Marshall Brogan
13- Brittany Frantz
13- Mark Harmon
14- Nathan Musselman
17- Rosemary Saul
18- Fred Widdowson
22- Julie Carroll
23- Ron Mooney
24- Doug Craighead
25- Eli Raymond
27- Josephine Keller
27- Elizabeth Johnson
27- Meg Mabus
28- Neal Musselman
28- Matt Simpson

Happy Anniversary

4- Milton and Janet Hartman
12- David and Margie Twigg
24- Mark and Jonna Detweiler

October Outreach

-Four individuals assisted through our Good Samaritan Fund.

-Food for two families through our Food Pantry.

-SHP Bed Builds providing beds.

-Twelve backpacks for Backpack Ministry every Monday.

2026 Virlina District Conference



November 13-14, 2026

Tentative District Conference Schedule

Friday, November 13, 2026 - Split Locations

4:45 - Registration Ministers & Spouses/Friend Dinner at Summerdean COB

5:00 - Dinner begins at Summerdean COB

5:45 - Speaker Beth Jarrett, Pastor of Stauton COB, at Summerdean COB

6:00 - Choir Practice at Peters Creek COB

6:30 - Departure from Summerdean COB to Peters Creek COB

6:30 - Open Registration Peters Creek COB

7:00 - Hymn Sing begins at Peters Creek COB

7:15 - Worship Begins at Peters Creek COB

8:30 - Worship Ending

8:35 - Set-up for Saturday

Saturday, November 14, 2026 - All Day at Peters Creek COB

6:45 - Doors open for Breakfast sponsored by Grace Inside

7:00 - Breakfast

7:45 - Registration opens

8:15 - Worship Begins

8:30 - Business Meeting Begins

12:30 - Break for Lunch

1:15 - Business begins

3:30 - Dismissal

For more information go to:

https://www.virlina.org/district-conference.html

Representing Oak Grove this year at District Conference are:

Tim Harvey, Carol Elmore, Connie Bierly, Jane Grisso and Randall Eakin.

Camp Bethel News







Go to campbethelvirginia.org for more information!



NOVEMBER HAPPENINGS

November 2026 Highlights

1- Love Feast at 12:30 p.m.

5-Commission Meetings beginning at 5:30 p.m.

8-Council Meeting at 12:30 p.m.

13-14-Virlina District Conference

15-All Church Sunday School at 9:45 a.m.

15-Deacons Meeting at 12:30 p.m.

19-Finance Commission Meeting at 5:30 p.m.

26-27-Church office closed for Thanksgiving

29-First Sunday of Advent

Men's Bible Study
Wednesdays
6:00 p.m.



Women's Faith
Study Group
Thursdays
10:00 a.m.

Ladies Prayer Group
Tuesdays at 1:00 p.m.





Virlina District Conference

November 13-14





Happy Thanksgiving!



FaithX

FaithX wraps up summer of service

In summer 2026, FaithX brought together 51 participants from across the Church of the Brethren for trips full of service, faith exploration, and fellowship.

The summer began with 13 adult participants traveling to Northern Ireland to work alongside nonprofit partners within the Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) year-long program. A total of 33 junior high youth and advisors served those in need throughout the United States, including at a therapeutic horse-riding farm near Hershey, Pa., and at community organizations in Winston-Salem, N.C. The summer concluded with the We Are Able trip in which five young adults with intellectual disabilities served in southern Michigan and enjoyed time together at Amigo Camp.

Registration for summer 2027 FaithX opens Jan. 6 at 7 p.m. (Eastern time). Registration is open now for the next Older Adult FaithX experience for ages 50-plus at Camp Ithiel in Florida on Feb. 21-26. Go to www.brethren.org/faithx.

Bethany opens year with strong enrollment

Bethany Theological Seminary this fall welcomed 42 students who are enrolled for the first time at the seminary or are beginning new graduate programs. Nine come from the Church of Brethren and will benefit from the new scholarship that covers the full cost of tuition for qualified students from the denomination.

The seminary expected a total of 117 students to enroll this fall, continuing a strong enrollment trend over the last few years. In May, the seminary awarded 40 master's degrees and certificates—the largest number since at least the 1960s.

Bethany also has begun enrolling undergraduates from Church of the Brethren-related colleges and universities in the UP@Bethany program, funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment. This year, new students from Manchester University are participating.

Loss of Temporary Protected Status affects Brethren

The Deportation Defense Response provided an update following termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians at the end of July.

"Our immigrant neighbors and siblings in Christ continue to face excruciatingly difficult times," said the report. "The Haitian community is being targeted. Haitian Church of the Brethren members in Florida have lost the ability to work, are facing significant hardships and uncertainty, and are living in fear. Aggressive immigration enforcement has hit the Haitian community in Springfield, Ohio, and two pastors in the area have been unjustly incarcerated by ICE. Unjust arrests continue across the country, and our neighbors needlessly suffer in ICE detention. Deportations to unstable countries continue, and families are separated."

Church of the Brethren members affected,as of August:

Detained: in Atlantic Northeast District, one person from Buffalo, N.Y.; in Atlantic Southeast District, four people from Lehigh Acres, Fla.; in Pacific Southwest District, one person from Los Banos, Calif.; in Southern Ohio and Kentucky District, one person from Dayton, Ohio.

Deported: in Atlantic Northeast District, one person from Lancaster, Pa.; in Atlantic Southeast District, one person from Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; in Missouri and Arkansas District, one person from Cabool, Mo.; in Southern Ohio and Kentucky District, two people from Tipp City, Ohio; in Pacific Southwest District, one person from San Diego, Calif., and two people from Las Vegas, Nev.; in Virlina District, three people from Bassett, Va., and three sisters from Christiansburg, Va.

Released: in Atlantic Southeast District, one person from Lehigh Acres, Fla.; in Pacific Southwest District, two people from San Diego, Calif., and one from Las Vegas, Nev.



Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Unit 339 completed orientation on July 27-Aug. 4 at Inspiration Hills Camp in Burbank, Ohio: *(back row, from left)* **Samuel Hupp** of Manchester Church of the Brethren and North Manchester, Ind., to the Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy in Washington, D.C.; **Gillian Thompson** of Carmel, Ind., to Greenhill YMCA in Newcastle, Northern Ireland; **Dominic Nozzarella** of Washington, D.C., to Washington City Church of the Brethren and the Center on Conscience and War; **Kelan McConnell** of La Verne Church of the Brethren and Chino, Calif., to Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center in Little Rock, Ark.; **William Hart** of Kittery, Maine, to Gould Farm in Monterey, Massachusetts; *(middle row, from left)* **Colleen Caylo** of Ossian, Ind., to Greenhill YMCA in Newcastle, Northern Ireland; **Leah Mack** of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren and Elgin, Ill., to the Bernardo Kohler Center in Austin, Texas; **Josethy Perez** of Chicago, Ill., to L'Arche in Ireland; **Dimitri Janko** of Bayern, Germany, to Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center in Little Rock, Ark.; **Nico Ziegler** of Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany, to Camp Stevens in Julian, Calif.; *(front row, from left)* **Miriam Erbaugh** of Manchester Church of the Brethren and North Manchester, Ind., to Greenhill YMCA in Newcastle, Northern Ireland; **Elise Harter** of North Manchester, Ind., to the Shalom Project in Lancaster, Pa.; **Darek Leschber** of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren and Elgin, Ill.

Personnel

Beth Sollenberger retired Sept. 30 as interim director of administration for Atlantic Southeast District, serving since April 1, 2024. She worked from her home in Goshen, Ind., as well as in the district. Highlights of her tenure include the district hosting a Council of District Executives event featuring multicultural ministries, and work with other district and denominational leaders to create the Deportation Defense Response. Her previous leadership roles in the denomination included serving as executive for South/Central Indiana District for nearly 11 years, interim leadership for Michigan District, and as denominational staff in stewardship education and on the former Congregational Life Team.

Jon Lucas Keller resigned on Sept. 11 as Mission Advancement advocate for the Church of the Brethren. He joined the denominational staff on July 28, 2025, working remotely from Maineville, Ohio. He has accepted a position with a nonprofit that will enable him to serve more directly in his community.

John Fillmore has been named director of ministry for the Church of the Brethren, succeeding Nancy Sollenberger Heishman who retired in July. He has pastored Nampa (Idaho) Church of the Brethren since 2011 and has been district executive minister for Idaho and Western Montana District and a "circuit rider" for Part-Time Pastor; Full-Time Church. He holds a bachelor's degree in English from Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa; a master of divinity from Bethany Seminary; and a doctor of ministry from Portland Seminary at George Fox University. Beginning Nov. 2, he will serve fulltime in the Ministry Office, working remotely from Nampa.

Nick Beam has accepted a three-year contract to serve as district executive minister for Southern Ohio and Kentucky District, following a term of interim leadership.

Carolyn Willoughby began Aug. 1 on the interim district executive minister team for Middle Pennsylvania District, succeeding Rebecca Zeek who completed her service July 31. Willoughby is a retired minister currently working part-time in an Alzheimer's unit at Arbutus Park retirement center in Johnstown, Pa. She is a 1992 graduate of Bethany Seminary and previously pastored Farmington Bethel Church of the Brethren.

Rachel Johnson has begun a one-year, part-time role as assistant for Youth and Young Adult Ministries. She completed her term as National Youth Conference coordinator on Aug. 24. Working from her home in Pennsylvania, she will support programing for 2027 events including Christian Citizenship Seminar, National Junior High Conference, and Young Adult Conference, and will support regional youth conferences.

Samuel Hupp has begun as a Brethren Volunteer Service worker at the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy. His work will involve foreign policy research, analysis, and advocacy opposed to the perpetuation of warfare, war profiteering, and state violence. From Manchester Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Ind., he recently graduated from Manchester University with a bachelor's in Philosophy and Peace Studies.

Post this page You are welcome to photocopy these news pages. For more Newsline stories, go to **www.brethren.org/news**

Pastor's Column for November 2026

Our November worship services include several special events:

Sunday, November 1 — All Saints Day with Love Feast and Communion

We are blessed that All Saints Day falls on a Sunday this year. During the 11:00 a.m. worship service, we will include our *Memorial Tribute Video*, remembering both Oak Grove members and members of our extended families who have died in the past year.

Following worship, we will celebrate Love Feast and Communion, continuing our recent tradition of holding fall Love Feast immediately after worship. At the request of the Deacons, we will practice handwashing as a reminder of Jesus' sacrificial service in John 13.

Sunday, November 8 — Lessons and Carols: *The Sermon on the Mount*

This Sunday marks the conclusion of our year-long sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount! To celebrate, we will adapt the *Lessons and Carols* worship service format (often used at Christmastime) with a selection of Scripture readings and musical selections drawn from the Sermon on the Mount.

Sunday, November 15 — Guest Preacher Sharon Norton



We are delighted to welcome Sharon Norton, Executive Director for Global Missions in the Church of the Brethren. **During the Sunday School hour**, Sharon will share updates from Brethren church bodies around the world. She will also preach during our 11:00 a.m. worship service. Her sermon, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree*, is based on Micah 4:1–5.

Sunday, November 22 — Thanksgiving Sunday

Our worship service will follow its usual format, but our choral anthem is a magnificent arrangement of Michael Perry's 1982 hymn, *O God Beyond All Praising*. If you are unfamiliar with this hymn, I encourage you to find a version (or several!) on YouTube and give it a listen. The lyrics are just as magnificent as the musical arrangement.

Sunday, November 29 — The First Sunday of Advent

Advent begins, and we enter the final month of the year. Can you believe the year is almost over?!?!

Pastor Jim

November 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:45 a.m.- Sunday School 11:00 a.m.- Worship 12:30 p.m.- Love Feast	2	3 1:00 p.m.- Ladies Prayer Group	4 10 a.m.- Handbells 6 p.m.-Men's Bible Study 7 p.m.- Choir	5 2 p.m.-Games 5:30 p.m.- Commissions Meeting 6:30 p.m.- Christina Ed.	6	7 Fall Work Day at Camp Bethel
8 9:45 a.m.- Sunday School 11:00 a.m.- Worship 12:30 p.m.- Council Meeting	9	10 1:00 p.m.- Ladies Prayer Group	11 10 a.m.- Handbells 6 p.m.-Men's Bible Study 7 p.m.- Choir	12 10 a.m.- Women's Faith Study Group 2 p.m.-Games	13 Virlina District Conference November 13-14.	14
15 9:45 a.m.- All Church Sunday School 11:00 a.m.- Worship 12:30 p.m.- Deacons Meeting	16 12:30 p.m.- Backpack	17 1:00 p.m.- Ladies Prayer Group	18 10 a.m.- Handbells 6 p.m.-Men's Bible Study 7 p.m.- Choir	19 2 p.m.- Games 5:30 p.m.- Finance Meeting	20	21
22 9:45 a.m.- Sunday School 11:00 a.m.- Worship	23	24 1:00 p.m.- Ladies Prayer Group	25 10 a.m.- Handbells 7 p.m.- Choir	26 	27	28
29 First Sunday in Advent 9:45 a.m.- Sunday School 11:00 a.m.- Worship	30 					

We appreciate all the support and help for another successful Bazaar and Community Festival at Oak Grove October 17, 2026! We raised $ 4069.75!