



**WEST MARVA DISTRICT
DECEMBER 2016 MEMO
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

NOT ONLY CHRISTMAS DAY

***Lord, this is my prayer
Not only on Christmas Day
But until I see You face to face
May I live my life this way:***

***Just like the baby Jesus
I ever hope to be,
Resting in Your loving arms
Trusting in your sovereignty.***

***And like the growing Christ child
In wisdom daily learning,
May I ever seek to know You
With my mind and spirit yearning.***

***Like the son so faithful
Let me follow in your light,
Meek and bold, humble and strong
Not afraid to face the night.***

***Nor cowardly to suffer
And stand for truth alone,
Knowing that Your kingdom
Awaits my going home.***

***Not afraid to sacrifice
Though great may be the cost,
Mindful how You rescued me
From broken-hearted loss.***

***Like my risen Savior
The babe, the child, the Son
May my life forever speak
Of who You are and all You've done.***

***So while this world rejoices
And celebrates Your birth,
I treasure You, the greatest gift
Unequaled in Your worth.***

(Author unknown)

We come once again to the season in which we remember and celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus. We frequently get lost in the tinsel, bright lights, shopping for gifts, and the way too many advertisements offering a variety of gift ideas... many of which we wouldn't have considered if we were not being besieged with these never ending commercials.

Perhaps it is just as easy to get lost in some aspects of the narrative of the birth of Jesus. Don't write me off just yet... hear me out, please. Shepherds, Angels, Wise Men, Inn keeper, Christmas cards, singing of carols, pageants, Advent Candles, giving and receiving gifts, etc. are all wonderful activities and opportunities for reflecting on the "reason for the season."

But...

They can become rote routine, a feeling of obligation, a superficial annual "practice." There is a need at this time of year for all of us to "drill down" a bit deeper as we observe once again, the coming of Jesus into our world.

I am frequently reminded of the familiar words we sing each year from *O Little Town of Bethlehem*: "...the hopes and fears of all the years, are met in Thee tonight..."

We are living through times that can be described in the words of Charles Dickens in the opening lines of *A Tale of Two Cities*:

*It was the **best of times**, it was the **worst of times**, it was the **age of wisdom**, it was the **age of foolishness**, it was the **epoch of belief**, it was the **epoch of incredulity**, it was the **season of light**, it was the **season of darkness**, it was the **spring of hope**, it was the **winter of despair**.*

The world into which Jesus came then, and into which He comes now finds all of humanity in the condition that is a combination of "hopes" and "fears."

We are so easily distracted from the reality that we are citizens of a Heavenly Kingdom by the perceived urgencies of issues in the "kingdoms of this world." We allow the angst voiced by those who speak out in the perspective of the secular world to alarm, or encourage us despite the scriptural imperative that we are "in" this world, but not "of" it!

As residents of the United States, we have endured (certainly not "enjoyed") a MOST unusual national election experience for about 18 months. This provided us, along with a variety of other developments, many opportunities to experience "hopes" and "fears."

There are developments in our society, in our communities, in our church relationships, and often even in our families, that create opportunities for "hopes" and "fears."



An excellent exercise that should help us gain a spiritually healthy perspective, is to

1. Reread the Gospels, all four, during the weeks leading up to December 25.
2. Pray daily and be sure to include an "inventory" of "hopes and fears", and a time of listening for the loving voice of God as we pray.
3. **Listen to, or sing, or read the lyrics of the Hallelujah Chorus**, from **Handel's Messiah**:

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
The kingdoms of this world
Is become the kingdom of our Lord,
And of His Christ, and of His Christ;
And He shall reign for ever and ever,
For ever and ever, forever and ever,
King of kings, and Lord of lords,
King of kings, and Lord of lords,
And Lord of lords,
And He shall reign,
And He shall reign forever and ever,
King of kings, forever and ever,
And Lord of lords,
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
And He shall reign forever and ever,
King of kings! and Lord of lords!
And He shall reign forever and ever,
King of kings! and Lord of lords!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Blessings,

Kendal ☺

UPDATE ON KENDAL ELMORE FOLLOWING HIS SURGERY

Kendal is recovering from surgery at his home in Falling Waters, WV. Cards can be sent to him at P. O. Box 344, Falling Waters, WV 25419

SAMARITAN'S PURSE—OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD—BRINGING JOY TO CHILDREN ALL OVER THE WORLD!

Every year millions of children in need around the world receive Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts. With these shoeboxes comes an opportunity for children and their families to hear the Gospel and to experience God's love in a fresh new way.

For many shoebox recipients, their Operation Christmas Child gift is the first present they've ever received. They had never before joyfully unwrapped a package—not on their birthday, Christmas or any other holiday.

Over the years we have heard that many churches in our district collect items and prepare shoeboxes. So this year we thought it would be fun just to see how many churches have participated this year and how many shoeboxes were packed. An e-mail went out across the district asking each church to respond by the end of November. To date we have heard from 20 churches and we are thrilled to announce that 3,099 shoeboxes are on their way to bring a smile to a child somewhere in our world.



This is Anna and her favorite gifts were a doll, pink flip flops and a toothbrush!



This is Emma and her favorite gifts were pink hair clips and a bar of soap.

Some churches have reported that they have fund raisers which enables them to buy the items that will be placed in the shoeboxes. Other churches have reported that their church pays for the entire shipping cost. Many churches collect different items each month and have a 'packing party'.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the following churches who responded to our request for information: Pine Grove, Oak Dale, Mt. Dale, Moorefield, Red Creek, Shiloh, Sugarland, Locust Grove, Maple Spring, Oak Grove, MD, Harman, Oak Park, Brick, Sunnyside, Old Furnace, Gortner, Clifton Mills, Hazelton, Shady Grove and Asher Glade.

The Tearcoat Church decided to send shoeboxes to the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The decision was made after a couple from the church did mission trips to different Indian Reservations and finding so many needy families. The five poorest counties in the US are on Indian Reservations, bringing high unemployment and hopelessness. We believe the shoeboxes will bring joy to boys and girls and God will use them for His glory. A New Testament will be included in each of the 40 boxes. Pray for these children as they receive God's Word.

Brethren Churches Assist Local Union Rescue Mission—Diane May

Often time when you hear the word mission, you think foreign country, and there are plenty of opportunities available and great needs in many countries. Those who are able to go on these trips are blessed and are certainly a blessing to those they assist. But what about those who can't go on foreign missions, or maybe even those who can but who also want a way to help locally. Sadly enough there are mission fields right around the corner from most of our churches. We just need to open our eyes, our minds and our hearts to them.

Today we want to share one of them with you. Union Rescue Mission, located in Cumberland Maryland is a homeless shelter for men, women and children. The people, who find temporarily shelter there, are not just from Cumberland. Folks from as far away as Morgantown, WV and Charles County, Maryland have found a place to sleep and a warm meal at the Rescue Mission. Some are only there for a few nights; others are there much longer as they try to get back on their feet. Woman and children not staying at the URM can get 3 meals a day, clothing, diapers, formula, hygiene items, book bags and school supplies. Union Rescue Mission also has a food pantry that allows them to send boxes of food home for families to eat. They aid with transportation to doctor visits, paying copays on prescriptions, and helping in other day to day needs.

There are 26 beds in the men's section, 3 for handicap individuals; and 26 beds and 4 cribs in the women and children's section. In addition to providing for the physical needs, the Rescue Mission also works to address their spiritual needs. Worship Services are held twice a week which are mandatory for those staying there.

Union Rescue Mission is close to the heart of many Brethren. Below are three projects which were recently completed by Brethren in our district:

BEDS AND BABY SUPPLIES

Since the Rescue Mission is often at capacity they looked at ways to increase the number of beds available. They found that by adding bunk beds in the women and children's section they could increase the capacity by 22 beds.

At the fall Women's Rally, the women decided to give their morning offering for the purchase of bunk beds. A total of \$1,263 was collected. In addition, the women also were asked to bring baby items to the Rally to assist the Rescue Mission in fulfilling these needs. The giving was overwhelming as they provided:

1,283 Diapers	54 Footed Sleepers
2,616 Wipes	7 Crib Sheets
1,235 Ounces of Formula	12 Tubes of Diaper Creams
25 Other clothing	8 Blankets



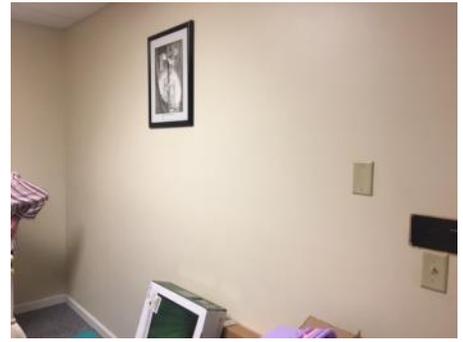
KITCHEN SUPPLIES

Westernport Church of the Brethren goes to the Rescue Mission once a quarter to provide a meal and service for those staying at the mission. Although the food is prepared at the church, utensils were still needed to cut and serve the food. They discovered a significant need for kitchen equipment and supplies. So the members at Westernport Church worked with the members at Pine Grove Church to gather necessary items. During Lent of 2016 members of these two congregations were asked to purchase any kitchen items that they could. Some chose to give money, which allowed for the purchase of higher cost items. Together they were able to

provide: sharp knives for cutting, a very large variety of turners, spatulas, commercial size spoons, and cake servers as well as skillet, toasters, dish clothes, dish towels, and dish soaps among other miscellaneous items.

PLAY ROOM

When David Ziler, (an ordained minister from the Danville Church of the Brethren, now serving as the Director), took over, the team at Westernport who regularly works the mission asked him what they could do to help the children at the mission. David mentioned that their playroom was in need of some toys. The playroom consisted of a room with a bookcase full of books, a small television sitting on a nightstand, hooked to a DVD player on a milk crate and a handful of toys.



Again they joined forces with the Pine Grove congregation asking people to bring in toys for the playroom. Westernport's Women's Fellowship Group agreed to purchase larger items such as wall decorations, a kitchen set, commercial grade kid size table and chairs and a toy rack. One morning while the children were in school,



members from the two churches went to the Rescue Mission and did a complete transition of the room, including a new wall mounted television.

Although they were long gone before the children got home from school that day, we understand that there were many smiles that afternoon as the children found they now had an awesome playroom.



Lives were touched that day. First consisting of those who worked to transform the room and later those who watched the children as they enjoyed playtime. The next time Westernport went back to serve a meal, several of the adults staying at the mission, came up to them and

thanked them, telling them how much they appreciated the difference it made for these children.



There are many more projects that need completed. David Ziler is working on a list which will be placed in a later edition of the Memo. Some of the projects will take funding, some labor, and some a combination of both. For most of us it is hard to imagine having no where to call home, no where to lay our heads down each night, no way of knowing when or where our next meal will be. It's easy to think that these people got themselves into this situation, but that's not always the case. One family was there because the father had significant medical issues and they lost their home because he was

unable to work. Some of the women and children come from abusive homes. Some of them made wrong choices, but who hasn't done the same at some point in life. When you don't have family and friends to help you out, one mistake can make a huge impact on your life. It doesn't really matter how or why they ended up at the rescue mission. What matters is that they too were created in God's image and they need Christian love, not criticism. A little bit of our time can brighten someone else's day while sharing God's love with them. There is a quote that says "People don't care what you know until they know that you care". I think this is true when we try to talk to people about God. We can tell people about God, but it has a much bigger impact when we can help them feel God's love.



BRETHREN BITS from Betty's Desk . . . Locust Grove and their "Tree"

Over the past decade the ladies at Locust Grove have faithfully invited the women of West Marva District to "come up on the mountain" to their attractive church for the "Women's Rally." Often it is on an autumn morning and the natural beauty around Locust Grove reminds us once more of our wonderful, Creator, God our Father. Wednesday, October 12, 2016 was just such a day—beautiful, changing leaves with bright blue sky. As the ladies gathered inside the sanctuary sunlight shone through their stained glass memorial windows and especially the impressive window at the front depicting Jesus on the cross.

Locust Grove began a tradition a few years ago—a rather unique one. When you walk into the sanctuary, there is no way to miss the "Christmas tree" which has become a permanent fixture. Before the Advent Season you may see Easter, valentine, patriotic, or summertime, etc. seasonal themes "decorating" this "eye-catcher."

In October this towering tree near the piano was decorated with various colored leaves, ornaments that remind us "to give thanks" but also golden, and russet silk flowers, to mention a few. We learned there is not a "decorating committee"—rather several of the ladies share in keeping the tree decorated appropriately. The fellowship hall was also very beautifully decorated.



Let's take a closer look at this congregation which has developed from a strong Brethren community.



About two years ago, we took a closer look at the Allegheny church only about five miles from Locust Grove. We are well aware the old Allegheny congregation no longer exists. Allegheny was the "mother church of Locust Grove." Just a reminder, in our distant past, this entire area belonged to the Greenland congregation—before Greenland existed, this region was also part of Beaver Run. That may seem strange, but stop to think how Beaver Run infiltrated all over our district as they established and spread churches.

Emmert Bittinger reveals in *Allegheny Passage* . . . "preaching by Brethren took place quite early at the Bismark community. The first preachers here were likely Samuel Arnold, Thomas Clark and Michael Lyon—followed by the Cosners." Mr. Arnold and Mr. Clark were active at Beaver Run and in planting churches across our areas. . . . " In fact Elder Thomas Clark who lived near Rt. 50 in the Beaver Run area . . . was attracted by the climate,

the productions, the people and the opportunities and in about 1836 moved his family to the Bismark community.

We are so familiar with secular historical buildings and points of interest “referring to George Washington slept here, etc.” In our District, we have our own celebrity to whom we pay homage. Yes, in 1856, Bro. John Kline who traveled from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia into our area spreading the gospel and preaching in isolated communities baptized James W. Abernathy (1823-1905) and his wife. The Abernathy family became staunch workers in the Fairview church—but there are Abernathy connections to Locust Grove as well.

”The principal founders as known today were David A. Cosner (1799-1881) and other Cosner family members.” ... It is known meetings were held in dwellings where preaching was desired, no different from any other beginnings in our communities. If we delve into the genealogy charts of the David Cosner family, we can add many more familiar names to those who gathered to worship there such as ...”Hanlin, Idleman, Rohrbaugh, Aronhalt, Rinker, Hawk, Baker, McDonald, Reel, Moreland, Michaels, Lyon, Abernathy, Clark and Kitzmiller to name a few. “ ... These names are those families who married into the Cosners. Ask anyone who has been a life-long member at Locust Grove—more than likely they belong within this group—one hundred and sixty years after Elder John Kline came here bringing the gospel.

Schools, homes, even barns were used for preaching services. Although a church had not yet been built, the first Sunday School dates back to around 1890, held in a school house but also at the nearby Allegheny Church. According to Allegheny Passage, “the white frame Locust Grove Church was built in 1914” Today, we enter the doors of a facility that has been lovingly improved with additions as needed. For example in 1961 and 1962, and once more in 1976 building improvements were undertaken. The newest addition was completed about twenty years ago. When you approach Locust Grove today, it is no longer a small country church but has become a modern, useful facility with well thought out design for educational purposes with a capacity for large congregational services. It is easy to see it has been built with love and purpose for carrying out the Lord’s work.

Of interest is the fact in 1982 the people of Allegheny Congregation petitioned District Conference to change their name to Locust Grove and this was granted.

What a group of local free ministers came to share the gospel with these families. If we open the pages of Allegheny Passage, we soon see such names such as John Tyler Cosner, who served as minister for fifty years, Earl C. Cosner, Elder in 1929, Zina G. Cosner, and Henry Cosner served faithfully from the 1920’s into the 1940’s.

...”Summer pastors who served have been Owen Stultz, John Sayre, and Clarence Moyers.

The full time pastors list is not lengthy—it includes Levi Ziegler who served 1956-1957, Eugene Matthews, Lowell Richie, Henry H. Cosner, John Moyers and of course John E. Walker who has served since 1982 and is still serving.” (see Allegheny Passage for more information) Bro. John has lived on US Route 220 north of Keyser and faithfully served the good Brethren at Locust Grove for many years despite distance and often wintery weather conditions. He explained that he and Ruth have experienced many blessings in his work at Locust Grove.

Church of the Brethren
West Marva District Office
384 Dennett Road
Oakland, MD 21550
December 2016 Issue

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IN GOD WE TRUST

UPCOMING EVENTS

The District Office will be closed during the Christmas holiday.
The office will be closed December 24, 2016 and will reopen
on January 3, 2017.

January 14 District Board meeting, Knobley Church

