

WEST MARVA DISTRICT MEMO

MAY 2023

384 Dennett Road
Oakland, MD 21550
301-334-9270

Brenda Harvey, Administrative Assistant (301-616-1367)
www.westmarvachurches.org



WITH DEEPEST SYMPATHY



John Rogers Fike, 93, of Mtn. Lake Park, entered into his eternal reward on Monday, April 17, 2023, at Dennett Road Manor. Born on March 5, 1930, in Eglon, WV, he was the son of the late John T. and Olivia (Rogers) Fike.

He graduated from Bridgewater College in Virginia. He was licensed to the ministry in 1956 and, in 1962, was ordained in the Church of the Brethren. Pastor Fike served the Lord and his congregants throughout several churches in West Virginia, Virginia, Indiana, and Maryland. He was a lifelong member of the Maple Spring Church of the Brethren in Eglon. He was also involved in FFA and served as WV State Vice President and then President in the late 1940's through 1950. During that time, he also served as National Vice President. In addition to spending time with his family, he enjoyed hunting and fishing.

Rogers served as a District Executive Minister in West Marva District from 1969 to 1977, and served as Interim District Executive Minister several times.

He is survived by his wife of 71 years, Elizabeth (Beachy) Fike; his children, Cynthia Fyne, Rodney Fike, Carl Fike, Jeffrey Fike, Andrew Fike, Lisa McIntee, and Matthew Fike; seventeen grandchildren; and twenty-five great grandchildren.



Reverend John Earl Walker, 83, of Rawlings, MD, went home to be with his Heavenly Father on Sunday, March 5, 2023 at WVU Medicine Potomac Valley Hospital in Keyser, WV.

Born on August 11, 1939 in Cumberland, MD, he was a son of the late Earl Wesley and Minnie Agnes (Moreland) Walker. He also was preceded in death by his brother, Robert Wesley Walker.

John's greatest joy was his calling to serve the Lord in 1983. He served as pastor for the Locust Grove Church of the Brethren, Bismarck, loving and faithfully serving his congregation for over 37 years.

Surviving his wife of 62 years, Ruth Eilen (Campbell) Walker; his son, Clinton Earl Walker; his daughters, Lori Lynn Evans and husband Wade and Lisa Louise Harris and husband Ken; his grandchildren, Sarah, John and Wendy and his great grandchildren, Mason, Aliya, Jacob and Lucas.

John taught us to love the Lord, to love one another and to enjoy life with laughter, humor and faith.

God is With U

Several times in Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1 & 2 Chronicles God says to be strong and courageous.

Joshua 1:9 also goes on to tell us not to be afraid or discouraged because the Lord our God will be with us wherever we go. That means *everywhere*! There is no place we can go that God is not there. There is no situation in which God is not present. He is always there even if we forget that he is. He is walking with us; or sometimes even carrying us through every event in our lives.

Years ago my daughter was planning a year-long service trip to a small village in Africa. As she was preparing someone asked her if she was scared to be going so far away by herself. (This was before everyone had a cell phone.) Her response was to say that God would be with her there the same as if she were here. She believed it when God said he would be with her wherever she went.

Do you believe it? Do I believe it? Do we doubt sometimes that God is in our midst? We have chaos in the world and unrest most anywhere we go. How can God be in this? God is perfect, we are human, and we need to have faith that God's words are true.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. **Joshua 1:9**

God commanded it so I will believe it. God is with me!

Anna Skeweris
Interim Leadership Team Member\

Brethren Disaster Ministries

The BDM is going strong this year in what they do the best and that is helping out victims of disasters.

Currently their focus is in the state of Kentucky: Western Kentucky with tornado victims in Dawson Springs. They are currently in the rebuild process of new homes. Eastern Kentucky with flood victims.

The schedule for the remaining year is 95% full.

The BDM will have a new focus for the year 2024 and it comes out in July. I am planning on having a work team from the West Marva District to assist in the coming year 2024.

The Morgantown COB has supplied a place for traveling members to stay overnight and also fed them breakfast before traveling on into Kentucky.

We are currently in contact with churches in the district to have a contact person within their congregation for the BDM and local disasters.

The Brethren Disaster Ministries will be holding a conference May 14-17 in Petersburg, PA which I will be attending.

Respectfully submitted,
Denny Skeweris
West Marva District Disaster Director

**WEST MARVA DISTRICT
CONCERT IN THE PARK
CREEKSIDE PARK
WESTERNPORT MD**

**RAIN LOCATION:
WESTERNPORT CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN**

**JULY 29 2023
1 PM**

**FREE-WILL OFFERING BENEFITTING:
BRETHREN DISASTER RELIEF
UKRAINE HUMANITARIAN FUND
SAMARITAN'S PURSE**

**PARADISE
IN THE
VALLEY**

**WORSHIP AND PRAISE
IN THE PARK WITH US**

The Spiritual Growth Committee is putting together a district-wide worship in the park to be held in Westernport.

Our goal is to have different groups from our district provide music. We already have a few groups from other churches in the Westernport area that want to join us. It will be July 29 @ 1 PM

If you have any groups from your church that want to perform, please contact Allie:

allie.crowe.07@gmail.com

A free-will offering will be distributed between Brethren Disaster Relief, Samaritan's Purse, and Ukraine Humanitarian Relief

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENT: Oak Grove Church of the Brethren will host a "Wild West Round-up" Bible School July 10th through the 14th, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm each evening. An opportunity to sport those boots, hats, and western wear! Fun for all ages, from zero to 100, there is a place for everyone! Children will have craft, Bible time and everyone can enjoy a snack with time to fellowship. There will be an adult Bible study as well. Come join us for time in God's word and fun in the Wild West!

HISTORY OF GORTNER UNION CHURCH

The Gortner Union Church is nearing its hundredth year as a place for the people of the community to come together to worship. The property where the church stands was given to the church by David J. and Catherine Slabach. The church was originally used by five denominations from the Gortner community: Mennonites, German Baptist (now Church of the Brethren), United Brethren, Lutheran and Methodist Episcopal. The deed was made to the original trustees: D.J. Slabach, John H. Sanders, Peter P. Gortner, Frederick Gortner and Katie Arnold.

The present building was dedicated on October 16, 1898 with a morning, afternoon and evening service.

Revival meetings have been held regularly since shortly after the founding of the church, the first being held in 1899..

The forerunner of our present Ladies Aide, a ladies sewing circle, was first organized in the 1930's by Lina Ressler. At one time there was a Mennonite Circle and a Brethren Aide. Each had their own organization and program, even though the same ladies attended both. It's interesting to note that the biggest difference in the two was in the way the luncheon was served at their meetings. At the Brethren meetings they had a sit-down carry-in dish meal, while on the Mennonite meeting days they brought brown bag lunches.

In the summer of 1934, the first summer Bible school was organized by M. B. Miller and S. G. Shetler. For a number of years, the Bible School served the entire community and was very well attended, sometimes passing 200 in enrollment.

The building was moved to its present location in 1936. The basement of the building was added at that time. This move made it easier to enter the building and added more room, which was needed because of the large Bible School attendance.

During the last several years, the building has again been improved with an addition that included indoor toilets, a vestibule, more Sunday School rooms, a room for the Ladies Aide, a kitchen, new siding and new windows.

Over the years, due to improved transportation, making it easier to travel to other churches of one's denomination, the attendance at Gortner has declined. The building is now being used by only two remaining denominations, the Mennonite and Brethren, who hold joint services and share a pastor.

Some may marvel at the fact that various denominations have worked so well with no major conflicts over the years, but the members at Gortner attribute this to their common love of God and their desire to worship and serve Him.

Submitted by Betty Elliott, member of the Gortner Union Church

So God Made A Father

By Mae Patterson

And God looked down on all He had made and said, "Now, I need a caretaker."
So, God made a father.

God said, "I need someone to take children fishing and play catch in the backyard. It must be someone who is tough enough to run a chainsaw and wield a machete and yet, gentle enough to join his little girl and her dolls for tea." "I need someone to bring the car around when it's raining, so everyone else can stay dry. Someone who will keep jumper cables in his truck, just in case he needs to help a stranger. I need someone to notice practical things, like how the tread on the tires is wearing and if the weather stripping around the front door needs replacing, for no one else will."



“Yes, he will struggle to find his socks and keys. But I’ll help him find time for the important things, like tumbling with the kids in the den floor, or saying ‘I’m proud of you, son,’ or giving Mama a hug.”

So God made a father.

God thought, “I need someone to provide for the family. Someone who will get up early and stay up late and never complain. I need someone who’s willing to make unpopular decisions and stand by them. Someone to provide authority and discipline, as well as love.”

“I need someone who listens more than he talks. Who will stand by his family through laughter and tears, tornadoes and snowstorms, good times and bad. **Someone who will love his kids and love their mother even more.**”

“I need someone who is willing to carve the Thanksgiving turkey, for no one else seems to want the job.”

“I’ll make someone who’s not afraid to go into Grandma’s dark cellar, or to check on what goes bump in the night, or to remove the dead mouse from the mousetrap. Someone who will yank a child back from the path of a speeding car and who will keep a wary eye on strangers.”

“I’ll give him broad shoulders, broad enough to carry a little child around town and broad enough to pull more than his fair share.”

So God made a father.

God said, “I need someone who’s strong enough to open a tightly sealed jelly jar and someone who’s tall enough to place the angel on top of the Christmas tree. And yet, I need someone who is gracious enough to let his son fish the best fishing hole or to let his daughter win at least one hand of gin rummy.”

“Yes, I need someone who is willing to work the second-shift, or take second-best, or play second fiddle, so that his family can have it better than he did.”

“I need someone who’s *willing* . . . willing to man up and provide the love, support and strength his family will so desperately need.”

So, God made a father.

He is the first hero a little child will ever know.

His influence lasts much longer than his life.

The Lord created fathers to be a living, breathing display of who He is: a protector, a provider and a leader. And while some earthly fathers fail, many strive to live out God’s plan for fatherhood, even though it’s a pretty tall order.

Consider what God asks fathers to do:

- Provide for their families (1 Tim. 5:8)
- Love sacrificially (Eph. 5:25-33)
- Teach their children about the Lord (Eph. 6:4)
- Encourage their children (Col. 3:21)
- Talk about God’s word, often (Deut. 6:6-9)
- Appreciate their children (Ps. 127:3-5)
- Guide their families in serving the Lord (Josh. 24:15)
- Set a good example (Prov. 20:7)
- Love their children enough to discipline them (Prov. 13:24; 19:18)
- Lead their families as Christ leads the church (Eph. 5:23)

BRETHREN BITS

With a look at some of our churches, we honor those who established and were active in the growth of our West Marva meeting places. It is fun to explore their origins and share “their stories” in this new series.

Again, we continue to be grateful to Dr. Emmert Bittinger for the extensive research in preparing the “Allegheny Passage” our most valuable historical tool which I continue to use for learning and sharing about the history of West Marva’s churches.

The South Branch Church Old Pine Church submitted by Betty Bane Dzubba

Patterson Creek with headwaters in Hardy County meanders toward the Potomac River. That may not seem to be a world shaking thought. It was the development of towns such as Keyser and the advent of the B & O Railroad which reached Keyser (in 1852) from Baltimore on its way westward that truly had a great effect on the development of the Brethren families during the early years of 1800 into this area.

Dr. Bittinger explains that George Washington did not precisely identify the location of the earliest German settlements in his diaries but he was aware of the Germans coming as early settlers.

It may come as a surprise the Governor of Virginia encouraged the German settlers beyond the Shenandoah Valley. He hoped for a buffer zone. If the Germans came and began putting down roots, settling and growing crops, building log homes, this would encourage more settlers and thus push the Indians who were inciting warfare on this frontier.

The Pine branch of the Beaver Run congregation became a separate organization in 1879. This group of worshippers used the “old/ Bittinger calls it “ancient” Pine”

We learn in Dr. Bittinger’s Allegheny Passage the “Pine Meeting House” is one of the oldest church buildings still standing in Hampshire and surrounding counties. The exact date of when it was built is unknown.

It was designed to serve those who wanted to worship living in the Mill Creek and adjacent hillsides and the not so distant Patterson Creek mountain communities.

The Dunkers of the lower half of Mill Creek were located much closer to Beaver Run which is approximately ten miles away.

The Pine Church, now a weatherboarded, original log 30 x 30 feet square structure has survived since the late 1700’s. It is located near the border of Hampshire and Hardy Counties. In Allegheny Passage, we read the date of 1814 was suggested. Others conjured it possibly could date back as far as 1792.

Are you surprised to learn the Pine Church walls were logs? These walls were “remarkably” true and plumb, but also sealed both inside and outside thus protecting the fine log workmanship. The building is thirty by thirty feet square in shape with a single entrance in front.

Opposite the door is a low platform—according to Dr. Bittinger it is unknown if the platform is original. The floor is pine and the church is a true treasure that has been on this spot much longer than most churches have been in existence. Until 1968 this weather boarded building was unpainted. At that time some donations within the community were collected in an effort to preserve this church

The deed transferring ownership refers to 1838 for this transaction. Within the deed are words ...”for the promotion of piety and morality and for the further consideration of one dollar in hand paid...and for the erection of a church or House of Public Worship for the used and convenience of ministers and others of the Christian denomination...”

This according to Dr. Bittinger offers the idea...a church may have already been standing on the land.... Also, to consider from the wording of this deed... The phrase... that the land was being donated “for the erection thereon of a church” would indicate a church was to yet be built...

Dr. Bittinger mentions in the wording of the deed, the use of the church was not intended to be limited to the Brethren. Hampshire and Hardy counties had already established a tradition of using “union meeting houses.” Genealogists will know in early settlements, the congregations often waited for a “circuit rider” on

horseback to come into a community without a permanent “preacher.

Our famous Brethren Elder John Kline rode his favorite horse from his home in Virginia over the hills to bring the gospel and encourage churches that became the West Marva District. In pioneer settlements everyone in a general area worshipped together.

Some families connected to the Pine Church for many years include Arnold, Bowman, Barnhouse, Biser, Fleming, Friedly, High, Kelley, Roderick, Leatherman, Ludwick, Rinker, Purgitt, Shoemaker and Whiteman.

Keep in mind the German settlement on Mill Creek and upper Patterson Creek was already a half century old by 1800. We may not be aware of this, but George Washington in his Diary was knowledgeable of the Germanic community. The Maryland and Pennsylvanian communities were indeed mindful of this “frontier.”

Spring Music Program and Covered Dish Dinner

You are invited to a special evening covered dish dinner and musical program at the Bear Creek Church of the Brethren, Sunday, May 28, 5:00 pm meal, 6:00 pm musical program. Bring a dish to share at 5:00 and plan to stay for the musical quartet OneFamily, beginning at 6:00 pm. If you are unable to come for the meal, feel free to join us for the musical program only. OneFamily from Waynesboro, Virginia is a Christian band and quartet made up of an actual family. The members consist of two sisters and their husbands, sometimes joined by any of their five children from the two families. They share a love for music, performing, and ministering to others. The older band members faith began in an old country church signing the traditional hymns, yet today some go to more contemporary churches. Many of their original songs talk about family, hymns, and the old country church. This program will feature some patriotic numbers as well, in conjunction with the Memorial Day weekend. OneFamily provided musical program for Bear Creek last year. We look forward to this celebration together! The Bear Creek Church of the Brethren is located at 1088 Brethren Church Road, Accident, MD. We look forward to your joining us for this special evening of food, fellowship, and music. For further information, you may contact Jennifer Kreighbaum, 301-501-7245.



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL AT BEAR CREEK CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

The Bear Creek Church is announcing their Vacation Bible School, “Bug Safari—Where Kids Catch the Buzz About God’s Love.” VBS will be held June 19-22 from 6:15 to 8:15 p.m. All Middle School and younger are invited to attend.

FREE DAY CAMP AT WESTERNPORT CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

FREE DAY CAMP- It's time to register for the Free Day Camp at Westernport Church of the Brethren. The awesome team from Buffalo Valley COB will be back in Westernport to provide the children and youth with an amazing week. Dates for Day Camp are Mon-Friday July 10-14th. It is free and open to children and youth who have completed kindergarten through completed 7th grade. Forms will be coming home from Westernport Elementary School next week. If your child does not attend Westernport Elementary School but wishes to attend Day Camp, please call 301-359-9333 so a form can be mailed to you. Children who register prior to June 10th and attend the week of Day Camp will be given a free t-shirt.

A TRIBUTE TO MOTHERS!

I want to remind you what a mother is. A mother is a woman in your life, whether your biological mom, step-mom, aunt, grandmother, foster mom, teacher, coach, etc. who has been a caregiver and unconditional love giver, housekeeper, cooker, baker, chauffer, psychologist, doctor and discipliner. They are the ones who bear the burden of everything good and bad as the days grow on. They are the ones who might get left behind as they do so much it sometimes gets unnoticed. A mother is someone who makes you laugh, cuddles you when you are sick or feeling down, who dances with you when your favorite song comes on the radio or sings randomly when you say something that reminds her of a song. A mother teaches you and guides you to be a decent human being in the world, even when it means holding you accountable in ways the world tends to shrug off as “youthful indiscretions.” A mother welcomes all women into the lives of her children because she knows how important the role of a woman is. A mother is more than just the person that has birthed you. All women on Mother’s Day deserve to be celebrated.

Submitted by Allie Crowe, District Spiritual Growth Team Leader

**Church of the Brethren
West Marva District Office
384 Dennett Road
Oakland, MD 21550
May 2023**

IN GOD WE TRUST

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 25 - District Pulpit Exchange

June 27, 6:00 - District Executive Committee Meeting

July 4 - 8 - Annual Conference, Cincinnati, OH

July 15, 8:30 AM - District Board, Beaver Run Church

July 29 - Worship in the Park, Westernport area

August 17 & 18 - Women's Camp at Camp Galilee

September 15 & 16 - District Conference, Moorefield Church

