

Jesus in the Neighborhood—First Church of the Brethren in Baltimore

First Church of the Brethren in Baltimore had a problem. The church needed to find a replacement for Pastor Elliot J. Rice, who left in early 2022. Perhaps even more concerning, the church was feeling the challenges of a dwindling congregation.

Not far away, Pastor Keith Carter had a problem, too. He was leading a Baptist congregation in Maryland that had a healthy membership but lacked a permanent church home.

During First Baltimore’s search process, Carter guest preached at First Baltimore and made an immediate impression. Soon thereafter, in late summer 2022, Carter was hired as pastor at First Baltimore. But he didn’t come alone—he brought members of his congregation with him, blending the two groups, and declaring, “We are now Brethren.”

Pastor Carter quickly got to work. He visited church members who had fallen ill and began organizing a path forward for the church. He personally helped make repairs to the ceiling in the fellowship center, and he repaired and repainted the church sign outside so well that one parishioner initially thought it had been replaced entirely. Carter also served Mother’s Day breakfast for the entire congregation.



In the two years since Carter’s arrival, the church has been reinvigorated. Church organizations are active and growing. Sunday school attendance and youth ministry have gotten stronger. Services have a robust music program with a choir and musicians, and church fellowship has improved. The church has expanded its community outreach, hosting an Easter Egg hunt for neighborhood children and supporting a local United Methodist church’s effort to serve those in need. Attendance at Love Feast was so large, the church had to modify its plans for the foot-washing ceremony.

With these changes and hope for the future, a revitalized First Baltimore has much to be thankful for.

John Fleming, District Communications Ministry Team

District Moderator Previews October 11 and 12 Conference

Our District Conference theme for this fall is “Not Against Flesh and Blood,” which comes from our theme verse: Ephesians 6:12. This verse reminds us that our struggle is not with one another, or even other humans at all, but with the spiritual forces and systems of wickedness and injustice.



Calvin Park

Our conference logo, designed by Brandi Puzonia from the Brownsville congregation, contains a variety of rich symbols from our heritage as well as the broader context of our theme Scripture. The dove is a symbol of peace but also of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The stance of the dove evokes the shape of a heart, reminding us of God’s love for us and God’s command to love one another. In front of the dove is the shield of faith (Eph. 6:16). The dove stands atop an open Bible, a reminder for us as Brethren that the New Testament is our rule of faith. Finally, a broken arrow lies before the dove. Arrows commonly symbolize military strength and power—in short, violence—but here the arrow is broken, reminding us that, since our fight is not against flesh and blood, we must relinquish our weapons (physical and otherwise) and relate to one another in peace.



With our conference theme in mind, when we meet in October we will open business with a service of feet washing and will close our conference by celebrating communion together. Regarding communion, your Program & Arrangements committee has a request. We recognize that each of our congregations makes their communion bread a little differently, and we want to celebrate this beautiful variety. We hope to celebrate communion at District Conference using bread from several of our congregations. If your congregation would be willing to share a small amount of your communion bread with us for district conference, please contact Jo Ann in the District office to let us know.

Calvin Park, District Moderator

A Chat with Doug Veal, New District Executive Minister

On June 25, Doug Veal became Mid-Atlantic’s District Executive Minister (DEM). After 2 ½ days in office, Doug made time to meet with me just before leaving for Annual Conference. Later in our conversation when he mentioned wanting to make connections and be accessible, it clearly rang true.

Doug received his BA in Philosophy and Religion, with a minor in Peace Studies from Bridgewater College. He earned a Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree at Bethany Theological Seminary and later successfully completed Clinical Pastoral Education, Level I at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, VA.

Throughout his ministry, including four pastorates, Doug has been involved at the District level. Very early in his journey, David Shumate, DEM, Virginia District, engaged him to join the District’s church development team; he served 6 years on that team, some of which as Chair. In that position he was also a member of the Executive Committee and Board. This and other activities enabled Doug to see people coming together, working across theological lines, accomplishing important work, supporting pastors and new church development.



Doug's interest in District work, knowing people and hearing good things about MAD, led him to follow the call to this new position; a call to District work he had felt over several years. Doug exudes enthusiasm when he speaks of MAD's emphasis on church planting and revitalization of existing churches.

When asked about his hopes for his time as DEM, Doug shared that in his first year, he wants to get out, meeting people, pastors, and congregations and interacting with the District's Leadership Team and Ministry Teams. Building relationships between congregations and the District is important to him. He also feels there is much to be gained from congregations sharing what they are doing and working together on projects of mutual interest. Doug circled back to Church Planting and Revitalization, stressing they are two different things with similarities.

On a personal level, Doug wants to develop a better appreciation of the depth and breadth of theological understandings in the District and how they reflect the denomination. As we talked, a strong relational piece came through repeatedly. Doug wants to be accessible and welcomes any of us to be in touch. A cautionary word is that he may not respond immediately but he will respond.

So, how does Doug relax and have fun? He lives with his wife, Tasha, and their Boston Terrier, Maggy—named for actress Maggie Smith. They are settling into a new home/community and Doug mentioned proudly that 5-year-old Maggy handled the move quite well. Doug enjoys golf although he says he plays it "badly." He loves sports and watches Euro soccer, especially German, the Green Bay Packers (an influence from his mom), and Indy formula car racing. He and Tasha love reading and got their library cards before their new drivers' licenses.

There is so much more that could have been covered in our chat. However, it was day #3 and I was grateful to snag time with Doug. Lots is left for you to talk about as you get to know him. I left our time together having experienced Doug's warmth, enthusiasm, commitment to the COB and the District, and his sense of humor. I look forward to more times with him and I hope you will, too.

Jan Flora, District Communications Ministry Team

Jesus in the Neighborhood—Westminster Church of the Brethren



The invitations had been hand-delivered to the door knobs of more than 200 residences in the Westminster COB neighborhood. A satellite picture of the neighborhood had been used to separate the neighborhood into distribution groups (thanks to one high tech committee member!). Yard signs were printed for pushing into the ground at the four corners of the church property. The eight members of the ice cream social committee had completed the preparatory work to get the social into motion. Before realizing it, during the several months of planning, the small two-hour "ice cream social" had evolved into more of a festival!

Name tags were printed to help our guests connect with each other, popcorn poppers were rented, and grills and grillers for cooking hotdogs were secured. Face painters and musicians had volunteered from the congregation to contribute their talents. In the early afternoon, before the event began, the microphone system for entertainers was set up by one of our church sound technicians, and free gifts were set out on a table for guests to take. Two four-square game boards were measured and drawn carefully with chalk onto the pavement next to the lanes of the three

corn-hole tosses. Chairs and light-weight tables were set around the lawn and driveway for our guests' comfort. Finally, the soft ice cream truck arrived to serve free ice cream to our neighbors.

Our churchyard was ready for a neighborhood gathering and it happened! We welcomed many guests for a fun intergenerational afternoon together—playing games, laughing, eating, and listening to music. It was a joy to hear bursts of laughter and see children and adults enjoying the challenge of eating their ice cream cones before the heat melted them away. It was wonderful seeing so many of our church members working together and sharing stories with our neighbors and friends. Together we served more than 120 ice cream cones and painted several butterflies and flowers on the faces of eager, excited children.

If one stood back and watched the activity from afar, one could see God's love coursing through the group in the energy, enthusiasm, and conversations being shared—Jesus walked among our group on that hot Saturday afternoon in June and it was good.

Louise Scalzi, District Communications Ministry Team

Mid-Atlantic District Camp Highlights for Summer 2024

The Mid-Atlantic District is blessed to have two wonderful camps that, year after year, provide summer camping opportunities for our young people—Shepherd's Spring is located in Sharpsburg, MD and Camp Mardela is located in Denton, MD.



Camp Mardela is a Church of the Brethren camp founded in 1948. They state on their website that they were founded "...to be a space for children and adults to retreat into nature and learn more about themselves, the world around them, and God." They host winter and summer camping programs, rental groups, and community and fundraising events throughout the year.

Their summer program began in June with many camping opportunities for various age groups through early September. In addition to camps for grades 1 and 2, and 3 and 4 in July, Camp Mardela has a very exciting camp coming up July 19 and 20 called "Me & You" camp. This will be a great opportunity for PreK–1st grade campers and parents to get a taste of summer camp during a short but fun-filled weekend.

Mardela has lots of fun activities planned, so be sure to register by **Sunday, July 14**. For more information about Camp Mardela, visit their website at [WELCOME | Camp Mardela | Denton, Maryland](#).



Shepherd's Spring states, "We are a retreat center, summer camp, and outdoor classroom through our Global Village where we strive to engage the world, inspire hope, and cultivate lifelong learning." They are located 1.5 hours west of Washington, DC and have been hosting guests since 1990. They have simple, comfortable facilities on 220 acres in rural Maryland. Camps run from June 16 until July 30 and include a variety of camping opportunities: Global Citizen camp (July 14-19), Classic Overnight Camp (held in June), Adventure Camp (July 21-26), and Family & Grand Camp (July 14-16 and July 28-30). For those ages 7–12 who are not quite ready for the full overnight experience, there is a Day Camp that runs from July 22 to 26.

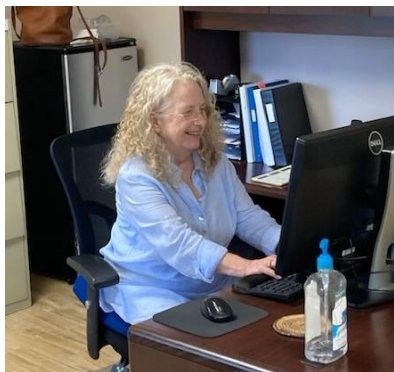
Shepherd's Spring's mission is: "We shall seek to engage the world with the reality of the risen Jesus so as to inspire hope and cultivate lifelong learning." To learn more about them, visit their website at [Retreat Center | Shepherd's Spring | Sharpsburg \(shepherdsspring.org\)](#).

Gretchen Zience, District Communications Ministry Team
Mid-Atlantic District

Mid-Atlantic District Office Move Completed

The Mid-Atlantic Office has moved...to a new floor, not a new building. They have moved from the basement office of the Westminster Church of the Brethren to a new second floor space. The space is newly renovated with most of the work performed by the WCOB Fixing, Assisting, Building Brethren (FABB) group, which was formed by the church many years ago and with a generous monetary donation. The front office, well equipped with wi-fi tech necessities, outlets, office essentials, and notebooks, is newly painted and welcoming for future visitors and our new District Executive Minister (DEM), Doug Veal.

The consensus of those with whom I spoke is that this new office space in the WCOB building will continue to offer a good central location for all the Mid-Atlantic churches. It has disability access, air conditioning and fans, plenty of parking spaces, large conference rooms, and a full kitchen and dining area available for special events when needed. The new DEM's office is well appointed with original shelves cleaned and emptied, chairs, a large desk, a couch, and a space ready to welcome guests for appointments and doing the work of a DEM. It felt like "a good place to call home," was the expression used by one to describe it.



The day I stopped in to visit I was met by the DEM's administrative assistant, Jo Ann Landon, who was working at her computer. She paused her work to speak with me about how pleased she was with the District's new office space and the improvements that had been made. As we spoke, the windows were open revealing a saturated blue sky, and I could hear the sounds of children laughing and playing in the WCOB



Head Start area playground below. This was indeed a new office that reflected the vibrancy of our denomination, the excitement of welcoming a new DEM, and the preparedness to organize and help set the course for the upcoming years as the new Mid-Atlantic District home.

Louise Scalzi, District Communications Ministry Team

Congregational Openings, Placements, Updates

Bethany – Profile circulating, Jerry Fike interim
Dranesville – Profile circulating, Joey Moss interim
Fellowship –Brad Wibbing interim
Frederick – Searching for Family & Youth Pastor
Grossnickle – Sandi Rogers, interim
Harmony – Profile circulating, pulpit supply
Thurmont – Profile circulating, Leon Yoder interim
Welty – Profile circulating, pulpit supply
Woodbridge – Charlotte Bear, interim

Upcoming District Events

July

July 19—District Blood Drive, Union Bridge COB, noon–5:00 pm

July 27—Leadership Team meeting, District office and virtual, 9:30 am–3:00 pm

August

Aug. 1—District Conference registration opens

September

Sept. 15—55th Annual Dunker Service

Sept. 27 to 28—Children’s Disaster Ministries Training, Frederick COB

The District office sends out flyers to all churches that describe many of these upcoming events. Check with your church office or contact the District if you would like additional information (aamad@brethren.org).

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Please submit items for *The JOURNEY* newsletter to Jo Ann Landon in the District Office.

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