

# WEST MARVA DISTRICT MEMO FEBRUARY 2023

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[www.westmarvachurches.org](http://www.westmarvachurches.org)



## Greetings in 2023!

A new year has begun with a clean slate and many opportunities ahead of us. May you wake each morning with anticipation of what the Lord has in store for you that day.

We are needing to clean up our Memo mailing list. Many of you already receive the Memo electronically. Some of you still receive it by mail, but if you would like to begin receiving it electronically, please let Brenda know by sending her an email address at [WestMarva@brethren.org](mailto:WestMarva@brethren.org)

If you are a member of West Marva District and would like to continue to receive it by mail please contact Brenda at the office (301-616-1367).

If you are not a member of West Marva we will gladly continue to email the Memo to you. Please provide Brenda with an email address.

Also, the Memo is available on the District's Facebook page:  
West Marva District Church of the Brethren

And the District's web page:  
West Marva District Church of the Brethren

Blessings to all.

## Hope and a Future

In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation! (Psalms 5:3)

We are full force into a new year; a year full of new and wonderful possibilities. In Jeremiah 29:11 we are told that God has plans for us, plans to prosper us and not to harm us, but plans to give us a hope and a future. As we encounter uncertainties in our lives we can be assured that God is in control. He sees the whole picture and reveals to us a piece at a time.

West Marva District has encountered some uncertainties with churches leaving the Denomination. God is still in control! He sees all that happens and he wants us to put our trust in him. We need to continue to worship and serve him and he will reward those who are faithful. In Lamentations 3:22-23 we are told that the Lord's love for us is great and his compassions never fail, they are new every morning; and great is his faithfulness.

We also see the Denomination struggling to remain faithful to Biblical truths. It is sad to see how the world enters into the church. In Hebrews 4:14 we are told to hold firmly to the faith we profess; in verse 16 we are told to approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need. In Philippians 4:6 we are told not to be anxious about anything, but in everything, with prayer and petition to make our requests known to God. God sees our struggles and wants to help us. We need to boldly ask in faith believing he will hear and answer. Let's commit to be in prayer for the members of our churches, our pastors, our District, our Denomination. We serve a great and mighty God! Nothing is too difficult for him!

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 15:13

Blessings to you all.  
Anna Skeweris  
Interim District Leadership Team Member

# Schism

A formal division or separation

Why has the lower case 'c' catholic church, the universal church as we know it, failed to actually do what we are called to do?

Folks that are in our faith tradition know that we have a book that outlines our history, starting from the beginning, the literal beginning, through the visions of the end times, whenever the second coming will happen. We have the ability to see how history repeats itself over and over again and yet we enjoy being part of the problem. Yes, I said we ENJOY being part of the problem. Someone is reading this and is getting offended. I'm not sorry about that. I have to say and use the word enjoy. If we didn't enjoy it, we would be disgusted by it and would work to be part of the change, not part of the consistency. History repeating itself is because mankind has refused to really learn and to attempt to do things differently. It falls into the definition of Einstein's parable of quantum insanity: "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."

The Holy Bible, the inspired Word of God, is for us to study, to learn from, and to live out. Here is the problem: Mankind has misused the privilege of having these texts to learn from. Throughout history we see how mankind has decided that ego, power, authority has always taken over how we "practice" our faith tradition. When creation came to be, there were not all of these rules in place by God with how we were supposed to worship Him. The rules that later came into being were man made, the same man made rules that still plague us today.

Man made doctrine has caused a formal division or separation before the word was even used. Our tradition stems from judaic roots. The Old Testament is all about our judaic ancestors! That's right people, everyone's a little bit Jewish. We go from creation of mankind and mankind's first sin to exodus from Eden to weird practices that are not pleasing to God to 316 Judaic law to the coming of the Messiah and shrinking to 2 laws (love the Lord your God and Love your neighbor to the Jesus movement in Judaism to the formation of "the church" to Catholicism to Protestantism to 47,000+ denominations.

The division among believers in our faith tradition comes down to man's interpretation of God's wants on earth. Here is the problem with that: We are creations of God, made in his image, to do his will on earth. We are called by God to live our life according to the teachings of Jesus the Messiah, Yeshua HaMashiach, God incarnate. We are not actually God! Just because we have the ability to read the inspired Word of God doesn't mean we can play God in our actions and reactions within the world.

How many times have you seen, heard, read about different churches that have chosen to split and form a new sect within a denomination due to one singular issue? It is still happening today! The United Methodist Church is facing a split over the topic of the LGBTQ+ community. There has been a new split within the Church of the Brethren around this area because of man's response to one specific topic. Sometimes it isn't just one thing, it is multiple small problems that come to a head and explode. This is a problem! When we, the universal church, allow for man made rules, understandings and practices run how we practice our faith, we already have put God on a back burner. It is because of man's interpretations to topics, practices, rules of rituals, etc, that have caused us to go from being united like our ancestors in the Jesus movement to having so many different sub-groups within the universal church.

Dr. Chris Crain wrote an article about church conflict. Within the article he listed points of conflict:

**Pride:** People often behave with self-centeredness, ego, and pride. When you feel that life is about you, you take things personally.

**Spiritual and Emotional Immaturity:** Maturity helps a person understand that differences in perspective broaden understanding. Mature people learn to disagree without being distressed. Mature people are self-aware and seek to improve their weaknesses. Immature individuals have not learned to avoid disputes over a person's personality or style.

**Change and Inflexibility:** In reality, change is the norm. When policies or priorities change in the church, misunderstandings and stresses are likely to occur. When pastors and church leaders make strategic decisions, an effective process of communicating these new directives and norms is crucial.

**Abuses of Power:** Power is the influence a person has on his or her environment, relationships, or self. Shifts in power may create gains or losses. Power is the ability and means to get things done. Conflict expert Dudley Weeks wrote, "People choose how they use power and whether they allow it to be corrupt. We can use power negatively or positively. The severely damaging seesaw power approach creates the illusion that you are more powerful when you make the other party less powerful."

**Church Politics:** Factions in the church may intentionally or unintentionally engage in political maneuvering and posturing that leads to conflict.

The problem really goes well beyond these on-point thoughts. I have been struggling as a Pastor, Spiritual Caregiver, Disciple, Wife, Mentor, Friend, etc., to figure out why I have been unhappy with my spiritual state. Don't get me wrong, I love my church, I love my job and my calling, I love what I do. Just because I love what I do, I love the folks I serve, and I love the calling I have doesn't mean that something may not be working or may not be effective. I have had an issue for years with the universal church because I have watched the toxicity that is the "organized church" become more and more noticeable and problematic as I have grown older and have studied scripture more and more. The universal church has become primarily a church for church people only. Yes, there are some churches that really do work to be a church for the unchurched: they are the exception, not the norm. Churches are so focused on the people already inside of their walls they do not have the want, desire, willingness, or drive to actually do what we are called to do.

I stated before that we are called to be disciples of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus did not work within awful and false teachings that were in place by the religious leaders of the time. Jesus was a rebel, going against the common rules, practices, teachings of the temple and its leaders. Jesus went to those that were labeled by the temple leaders and Jewish Religious Police and unclean. He cared for those that were the outcast, that didn't know the Word of God, who may never have been exposed to who God truly was. He sat and dined with the sinners and the tax collectors after healing a man on the Sabbath in the house of a Prominent Pharisee. He knew he was being watched by the Pharisees and Sadducees of the time. He knew it was against their regulations to "work" on the Sabbath. He knew it was against Judaic tradition to eat with the people he chose to eat with. He didn't care. He was doing the work of God, not the work of man who thinks they are God on earth. His ministry was not spent name-calling, demonstrating distaste for different groups, alienating people not like him. His ministry was spent loving people for who they were and where they were as he guided them towards where God wanted them to be.

We all need to wake up and think about what we are doing on this earth. We need to take a look with our own denominations and ask why we feel so threatened by other denominations to the point we do not work together anymore. Why is it that our man made cliques have made it so we are not only divided, we are okay and happy with this being so? I'm tired and I know I am not the only one. I am tired of fighting what feels like a losing battle because mankind can't get over themselves. I'm tired of reading how Christians are all hypocrites and that's because in the big picture it is true!

I am reading a book and so much of what I have been battling on a personal level has been validated in many ways with this book. I am not a reader, it isn't a hobby I enjoy. I want to end this blog with a few thoughts from this book. I challenge you to read these and ask yourself if they apply to you as an individual, if they apply to your local church, and what can we do about it?

From the book "Deep and Wide: creating churches unchurched people want to attend" Author: Andy Stanley

"(Town you reside in) doesn't need another church. (town of residence) needs a different kind of church. (town of residence) needs a church where church people are comfortable bringing their unchurched friends, family members, and neighbors. A church where unbelievers can come and hear the life-changing truth that God cares for them, and that Jesus Christ died for their sin. We need to create a church unchurched people would love to attend."

"Churches designed for saved people are full of hypocrites. You pretty much have to be a hypocrite to participate."

"Churches shouldn't do anything that makes it unnecessarily difficult for people who are turning to God."

"God's love is a "regardless" kind of love."

**The above article was submitted by Allie Crowe, chair of the District Spiritual Growth Team and pastor of the Westernport Church**

## **BRETHREN BITS FROM THE DESK OF BETTY DZUBBA**

*Recently I was asked to do some historical articles for upcoming issues of the "MEMO." We will begin with a backward look at some of our earliest Brethren settlers and their communities. 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 Settlement of New Creek** started as early as 1752 according to Dr. Emmert Bittinger in *Allegheny Passage*, which may come as a total surprise to most of you.

Brethren in the New Creek Valley, where today Keyser is found ... and the home of Potomac State College ...really? Indeed yes, several Brethren actually were part of the initial settlers, after the native Americans had used this area as some of their favorite hunting grounds.

The Eckerlin group according to Dr. Bittinger "traversed the New Creek area on their way west to what is now Kingwood in Preston County." The Eckerlin settlement was another old community of Brethren.

Many of you have roots along the South Branch of the Potomac but likely it may come as a surprise that Keyser on the Potomac River is located on the North Branch. The stream New Creek is a tributary of the North Branch. Most people who live and were schooled in Mineral County know the town we call Keyser today, until several years **after** the end of the Civil War, was known during the war years of the 1860's as "New Creek."

When the first settlers came to stake their claims, generally after the late 1750's, where we have Keyser as the county seat of Mineral county was untamed wilderness. As families penetrated the thick forested countryside, following Indian trails—the only available "routes" available in this area overrun by game—food in the wilderness that tempted eager pioneers.

Thanks to Dr. Bittinger's untiring research efforts, the name Christopher Beelor\* is brought to our attention. The Beeler family lived just east of Winchester, Virginia in a more developed section of the "Virginias." His neighbors included Henry Rinker and Jacob Chrisman and others.

Are you familiar with the Ephrata Cloisters? (That may be a topic for another article!) One of Beelor's daughters and a sister lived in the Ephrata Cloisters. This unusual religious group was well known among early Brethren in Pennsylvania.

Christopher Beelor and his first wife Catherina joined the Ephrata Cloisters before 1740. Beelor acquired land in the Winchester area, and with his good connections he acquired a house in Alexandria, Virginia. By 1750 he was interested in new settlements and tempted to acquire land as his business contemporaries were also excited by the westward expansion.

In 1752 he acquired over three hundred acres on New Creek and built a home on the present site of Keyser. By 1757 the Indian raids and attacks on these scattered settlements in this area occurred frequently. Many of those earliest pioneers left their relatively new log cabins in the Keyser area and fled either back to New Jersey or Pennsylvania.

Historic Fort Ashby is the only fort still standing, of many erected along the frontier. Fort Ashby located in the town of the same name is not far from Keyser or Romney. Actually, there was a blockhouse where pioneers sought shelter near Allegheny Front and not far from the stream we know as New Creek. Nothing remains of the blockhouse.

Enjoy . . . and Happy New Year Everyone,  
Betty Bane Dzubba

## **WITH DEEPEST SYMPATHY**

Pastor Louise Nealis, 83, of Swanton, went to be with her Lord and Savior on Tuesday, January 2, 2023. Louise and Bob served at the Danville Church of the Brethren for 13 years and also served the Wiley Ford Church of the Brethren.

Louise will definitely be missed by the women of West Marva. She brought so much joy and laughter to our rallies and especially at the women's camp at Camp Galilee.

Cards can be sent to Bob at 16425 Maryland Highway, Swanton, MD 21561



## CHURCH NEWS:

**Westernport** has had some joy and sadness over the last several weeks. Over the Christmas Season we enjoyed having specialized services that were attended by more than just our church family. Our Blue Christmas service was well attended with the healing power of God being felt for everyone in their specific needs.

As the new year began we lost a dear member of our church who was also a long-time member of our ministry team within the district. Pastor Louise Nealis went to be with the Lord on January 3, 2023. In her honor, I wanted to make sure that her song was put in the memo as a reminder of the many lessons she taught and the power of the faith in Jesus Christ she instilled in many people!

"There's only one way; One way to Heaven; There's only one way; That way is Jesus; In giving His life; The gates He opened; In Jesus believe; Salvation received; There's only one way!"

Our church family continues to offer elementary and youth programs on Wednesday night. Our elementary program is struggling. We put our faith in Jesus that more will come. Our youth program has been a blessing as it consists of more youth from the community than youth from our church. They are coming without being part of our church which always warms my heart.

We continue to hold a Bible study on Sunday evenings. Anyone is welcome to join either in person or via zoom. This is a laid back study. We started this study in the Gospel of Matthew, which we are still in. We read small sections, stopping to have conversation about our understandings, taking time to ask questions if we are struggling to understand, and sharing our life journey when scripture prompts us to do so. Please feel free to join us, the invite is below.

We will be holding a community Easter Egg hunt on April 1st at Creekside Park in Westernport. Festivities will begin at 11 am. There will be two areas for egg hunting. Area 1 will be for the littles (toddlers through 6 year-olds). Area 2 will be for 7-12 year-olds. There will be prizes, activities, food and games for all ages! Please feel free to come and join us!

Allie Crowe is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.  
Topic: Sunday Evening Bible Study 6:30

Meeting ID: 830 0764 3102  
Passcode: 365051  
One tap mobile  
+13017158592,,83007643102#,,,,\*365051# US (Washington DC)  
+16469313860,,83007643102#,,,,\*365051# US

Dial by your location  
+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)  
Meeting ID: 830 0764 3102  
Passcode: 365051

Greetings from **Beaver Run COB**. It has been an interesting and busy last quarter this year. We are standing strong with an average attendance of 40 - 45 each week. Several old friends and families visited over the holidays bringing us many pleasant reunions.

Outreach seems to be our theme keeping us on the go in addition to our regular meetings....

Oct.8th- we held our annual Chili supper and tied in a fall harvest celebration including open kettle/open fire homemade Chili, also Vegetable and Chicken noodle soup with corn bread muffins and sandwiches.. and desserts, takeout was available but most stayed to enjoy the activities on the grounds,,, hayrides , candy jars guessing games, corn hole, old fashion cake walk (12 cakes ) and great music.. Bob Shrout Sr. and Hi Mt Bluegrass took turns singing through out the evening. It was so good to be able to visit with family and friends in the excellent fall weather.

Oct 17th- we held our congregational mtg.  
Oct, 23rd- the was Pastor appreciation Sunday with a luncheon, cake, and gifts... we also held an old fashion "pounding." that turned out to be great fun with some unique gifts..

Nov.5th-we finished packing our shoe boxes and took 61 boxes to the Samaritan's Purse collection center. The Adult fellowship paid for the shipping of the boxes.

Nov19th- we filled 12 boxes of food for local families for Thanksgiving.

Seems we lived at the church in Dec...  
Dec.3rd- we put up a 14 foot huge Christmas tree..

Dec.10th- we held a decorating party for the young & old youth and children. Asking every one to bring an ornament to match our Star theme, followed with supper and a movie, "The Star" an animated story of the birth of Christ and the first Christmas.

Dec.14th- the ladies joined in the kitchen to bake cookies for our Christmas boxes.

Dec.16th-at 5:00pm a small caravan took 17 of us caroling around the countryside visiting 11 homes and ended at Denny's in Keyser for a late supper.

Dec.17th- well, we've been busy all month bringing in groceries, decorating the church, baking, ordering supplies, buying gifts and getting ready for the big day.. at Noon we gathered to fill 28 cookies boxes filled w/ apples, bananas, oranges, cocoa pack, tea, candies, cheese and crackers packs and a dozen plus cookies . each box also contained a 'quilted pocket square' containing a cross inside along with a card and 8 grocery boxes for families.. then came the party.. we had a potluck for our group, devotions, & a gift exchange. then loaded all those boxes up for distribution.

Dec. 24th Christmas eve services were canceled due to weather ( no electric)

Dec 25th- Christmas morning services were held and communion was served.

As we review the last year we want to remember the many we lost and gained their final reward and to keep their families uplifted in prayer..

Looking forward to a new year and what God has in store for us... Thelma Cox

## New Church Construction Continues

The Hanging Rock Church of the Brethren, a small congregation located in rural West Virginia, has started work on a new church building! The congregation, lead by Pastors Bob and Brenda Combs, has held services in a rented space since being formed ten years ago with the help of the West Marva District. The local area has been underserved and the church has developed a loyal congregation, very much involved in the local community. Outreach has included service projects, emergency funds for families, and a gift program that served 92 children this past Christmas. Moving the congregation to its own church building is critical for future growth, and the potential is great. This undertaking is a bold move for the congregation. It is a commitment to long-term service to the community. The risk of commitment is being shared by the congregation and the local community. A local contractor has been generous with his skill and time. Local businesses have also been generous through a favorable bank loan, materials donated or sold at-cost, and the loaning heavy equipment. Church members and friends from the community have already given many hours of voluntary labor. Please go our Facebook page to see photographs of the construction and follow our progress. We would very grateful for any donation to our building fund, and, to God be the glory (Romans 16:27)!



Bob Combs, Pastor

## PASTORAL PLACEMENT UPDATE

**Dan Ludwick** is assisting the Elkins Church of the Brethren as interim pastor. We ask that you pray for Dan, his wife Amy and the Elkins Church and that God will bless their work together.



## District Board Report

The District Board met January 21 at Hanging Rock Church. Pastor Bob Combs welcomed the board and had devotions. The teams chairs of Spiritual Growth, Ministerial Leadership, Mission and Evangelism, and Financial Resources reported on their business items and plans for the year. Other reports were presented by the Leadership Team, various individuals and committees, some who are presenting MEMO articles.

Open district positions were reviewed. Still needed are a Financial Resources Team member, Spiritual Growth Team member, Disaster and Relief Committee member, Assessment Team members, and District Website Administrator. If you have any questions about these positions or know of anyone who may qualify for one of these positions, please contact Linda Sanders, at 301-501-7292 or [dslssanders@verizon.net](mailto:dslssanders@verizon.net).

An update was presented on the revision of the District Executive Minister's job description. As the parsonage has been vacant since the Interim DEM left, the board decided to offer the parsonage portion of the district office for rent. The office continues to be available for use only by the district. A couple different possibilities for renting the parsonage were discussed and are being followed through. The board voted to affirm the withdrawal of two churches, Red Creek (Bethel) and Maple Spring from the denomination and subsequently from the district.

It was reported that both Camp Galilee and Camp Hope removed Church of the Brethren from both their corporations and constitutions. West Marva looks forward to a continued close relationship and support of both camps, but since they are no longer COB camps we are unable to continue doing their background checks.

The leadership team and district commissions want to work more closely with our 38 district churches and would like to know how we may assist you. Please feel free to contact your leadership team with questions, concerns, suggestions, and comments: Linda Sanders, district board chair 301-501-7292, e-mail: [dslssanders@verizon.net](mailto:dslssanders@verizon.net); Anna Skeweris, leadership team member 240-321-1561, e-mail: [annasauder@gmail.com](mailto:annasauder@gmail.com); or Jennifer Kreighbaum, district moderator 301-501-7245, e-mail: [Jkreighbaum335@comcast.net](mailto:Jkreighbaum335@comcast.net).

The next board meeting is scheduled for April 22 at the Westernport Church of the Brethren.

May God bless you, our pastors, church leaders, and church families.

Linda Sanders, District Board Chair

## Ordained Minister - Need CEU's? This message is for you!

One of the biggest questions pastors ask is how they can get CEU's. They know that if they are part-time, they need 2.5 CEU's and if they are full time they need 5. This is a requirement every 5 years. The simple ways to get some CEU's is to attend the District Conference and attend the ethics class that is offered in the district. You get CEU's for the conference once every 5 years. With these two ways, you can obtain a combined 1 CEU. So how do you get the rest?

Simple ways to do this is to read books that relates to things that relates to being a pastor. It can be situations that may happen in the church to building community relations. You can also use professional development classes you may have to do in your everyday job. All you have to do is write a summary of the book, or a summary of the development and how it relates to issues a pastor could face. You can also send in things you have volunteered for such as church camps or other events you may be involved in. If you send these things in the ministerial board will look at it and decide if it counts or not. Another thing that you can do is to take a class that is offered through the reading program.

Looking at doing a free course that can get you 1.5 CEU's? Go to [world-outreach.com/web/lea-sol](http://world-outreach.com/web/lea-sol) and look at the school of leadership program. This is an absolutely free program. There are seven series that have several lessons in each series. To watch all of the videos in the seven series it takes about 12 hours. After watching these video's you just need to write a summary about each series. Seven summaries in all. The best part about this program is it is absolutely free.

These are just some examples that you can do to earn CEU's. Should you want to take advantage of these opportunities, once you write the summaries you can send them to [jellifritz@k12.wv.us](mailto:jellifritz@k12.wv.us) The summaries will be read and passed on to the other members of the ministerial board for their approval. If you have other ideas for earning CEU's, please use the email to send the suggestions.

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

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## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**Dates for Executive Committee meetings:**

April 4, 2023 at 7:00 pm District Office  
June 27, 2023 at 7:00 pm District Office  
October 3, 2023 at 7:00 pm District Office

**Dates for West Marva Board meetings:**

April 22, 2023 at 8:30 am - Westernport Church of the Brethren  
July 15, 2023 at 8:30 am - To be announced  
October 21, 2023 at 8:30 am - New Hanging Rock Church building



**NEW TREASURER AT CAMP HOPE:**

**Elizabeth Tinchler  
173 Laurel Mountain Road  
Belington, WV 26250  
304-614-1231  
tincher\_liz@yahoo.com**