



Annual Conference 2021

Online, June 30 - July 4

May Newsletter



Getty Images

Want to hear the amazing vocals and keyboards of Josh and Elizabeth Tindall? Or the talented organ skills of Robin Risser Munday in worship? Or the virtual choir from the Stone Church of the Brethren, Huntingdon, PA? All of that and more will be a part of the online Annual Conference worship services!

The Conference theme "God's Adventurous Future" is the focus for worship. God's Adventurous Future invites us forward into a new heaven, a new earth, as a new creation in Christ. Inspired by John (Revelation 21 and 22), the River of Life offers water for the thirsty and the Tree of Life bears fruit for the healing of the world. Indeed, God's future is one of great hope!

Each of the worship services reflects God's Spirit at work in the world. Worship leaders and participants have gathered from the east, west, north and south, as well as from lands beyond our borders. They will be sharing the possibilities of an Adventurous Future together as the Body of Christ in these times. Gabby Rodriguez, Josiah Ludwick, Teshome Molalenge, Kris Hawk, and Eric Bishop are among the worship participants. Worship has been planned by the team of Cindy Laprade Lattimer, Robbie Miller and Mandy North with assistance from Program and Arrangements members Jan King and Emily Shonk Edwards.

The five worship services of Annual Conference this summer will be livestreamed and available to all with no cost. Simply go to www.brethren.org/ac beginning Wednesday night, June 30 to be connected to the livestreamed worship service at 5:00 pm Pacific Time; 6:00 pm Mountain Time; 7:00 pm Central Time, and 8:00 pm Eastern Time. Worship will also be livestreamed on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights as well as on Sunday morning at 7:00 am Pacific Time; 8:00 am Mountain Time; 9:00 am Central Time and 10:00 am Eastern Time.

A recording of each of the one-hour worship services will be available for congregations to use in their own local worship either as a complete service or selecting certain portions of these times of worship.



Compelling Vision for the Church of the Brethren



Four years ago, denominational leadership recognized that we had reached a critical moment in our life together. While individuals and congregations were engaged in faithful ministry, as a denomination, it could be said we were wandering without a sense of unified purpose. Further, we were mired in soul-sapping conflict. Something needed to change.

As a body, we were called into a time of intentional discernment. Like Noah in the ark, Moses before the burning bush, the Israelites in the desert, Mary during her visit with Elizabeth, and Jesus entering the desert following his baptism, we dwelled in a challenging, disorienting, and uncomfortable, yet creative, exciting, and hopeful season of waiting and watching for God's presence and direction.

Compelling Vision Statement

"Together, as the Church of the Brethren, we will passionately live and share the radical transformation and holistic peace of Jesus Christ through relationship-based neighborhood engagement. To move us forward, we will develop a culture of calling and equipping disciples who are innovative, adaptable, and fearless."

There is much in this rich vision to unpack as we look to scripture and theology to further interpret each significant phrase. We encourage everyone to read the full interpretive statement available here: www.brethren.org/ac/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2020/09/compelling-vision.pdf

In preparation for engagement in the process that will continue to unfold at Annual Conference, we encourage people across the church to read the full document, study the scripture passages that undergird the document, engage in the Compelling Vision Bible Study, and reflect on the following questions:

- How does the compelling vision reflect the soul of your congregation? How does it reflect the soul of the Church of the Brethren?
- What are the creative ways your congregation, your district, or the denomination as a whole, might embody this vision?

We also hope everyone will continue to bathe the process in prayer.

Compelling Vision Bible Study

The Compelling Vision Team has developed a 13-session Bible study series around the Compelling Vision available at no cost.

For the entire Compelling Vision Process and to access the Bible Studies go to:

www.brethren.org/ac/compelling-vision

Delegate Briefing Video

A video including important information for all Delegates and other interested persons is available to watch at www.brethren.org/ac2021/business



The Business page also includes information about the two ballots being presented, as well as reports from the agencies of the church.



If you think you might struggle with logging on and navigating the Online AC site, consider asking a friend who is competent on computers to sit with you for the first session!

Registration FAQ's

Shouldn't an Online Annual Conference just be free?

We wish it could! Unfortunately, we have to pay for the online platform we are using, and they are expensive. Annual Conference is a "self-funding unit" of the denomination, so donations you or your church gives to the denomination do not pay for Conference. All expenses related to Annual Conference; salaries, office and warehouse rental, etc., are paid for by registration fees. The good news is that even though there are still registration fees, this year you do not have to pay for travel, a hotel and meals!

Do I have to register if all I want to participate in are the five worship services?

No, you do not need to be registered to participate in worship only.

Why does it cost so much for non-delegates?

As said above, even with online AC, there are still a lot of year-round Annual Conference expenses that need to be covered by registration income. Program and Arrangements Committee made a one-time reduction of the non-delegate fee for this year's online Annual Conference to help make it available for more people, even people who have never attended before. The normal non-delegate registration fee of \$125 is reduced this year to just \$99. That fee entitles you to a Fernando Ortega concert, opportunities to hear Tod Bolsinger and Michael Gorman, participation in Insight Sessions and Networking Groups, and pastors can earn CEU credits.

Why is the delegate fee more than the non-delegate fee?

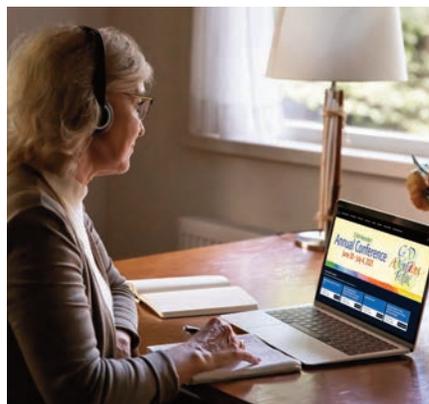
Being a delegate entitles one to certain privileges and responsibilities as they represent their congregation. A delegate gets to vote. This year, delegates will vote on both the 2020 deferred election ballot and the 2021 election ballot and will participate in discernment decisions about the Compelling Vision. The delegate fee is the key way that a congregation helps to make sure we can cover the costs of gathering the larger church family to hold us together as a body of Christ. As a part of the delegate fee, delegates receive a Conference booklet and their congregation receives a complimentary copy of the AC Minutes book.

Watch for next month's newsletter for FAQ's about the Online AC access and navigation!



After you first log on to the Online AC site you will be encouraged to reset the password that we will email you. Your new password needs to be at least 8 characters, include an uppercase and lower case letter, a number and a symbol.

Online AC Training Sessions



Training Sessions showing step by step instructions from how to log on to the Online AC site to how to join an Insight Session will be hosted by Tim Harvey and Carol Elmore, both of the Oak Grove Church of the

Brethren. During these trainings they will be able to answer any questions you have about the site and hopefully calm any fears you may have about navigating an online conference.

Online Dates for Training *In Eastern Time Zone*

Wednesday, June 16	2:00 pm
Thursday, June 17	11:00 am
Monday, June 21	7:00 pm
Tuesday, June 22	4:00 pm
Thursday, June 24	2:00 pm
Saturday, June 26	12:00 noon
Saturday, June 26	4:00 pm

A Zoom link will be included in one of our weekly email blasts that are sent to all who are registered and will also be posted on www.brethren.org/ac2021

To register for Annual Conference go to www.brethren.org/ac

Networking Groups offered at Online AC

Networking Groups are being offered to registered delegates and non-delegates for the online Annual Conference this year in lieu of Meal Events and Exhibits. The groups will be accessed through the Online AC site and provide an opportunity to meet on Zoom to talk about areas of interest. We hope you can join in one or more of these groups.

- A Circle Ever Wider: The Supportive Communities Network
- A Conversation with Bethany Seminary President
- A Map to Mutuality: Doing good for the good of doing it
- Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADN)
- Brethren Chaplains Network - Paging any available chaplain!
- Brethren Mission Fund
- Brethren Revival Fellowship Perspective on The Issues of the Day
- Brethren Revival Fellowship Publishing
- Bridgewater College Networking
- Building Relationships that Change Lives
- BVS and FaithX (formerly Workcamps) Networking
- Camp Swatara Ministry Update
- Climate change changes everything
- Come see what's happening at the Brethren & Mennonite Heritage Center!
- Elizabethtown College alumni and friends
- Fellowship of Brethren Genealogists
- Getting ready for National Youth Conference 2022!
- Give a Girl a Chance
- How to improve your Retirement Plan? Or start one? - IT IS NEVER TOO LATE
- Manchester University Updates and Student Sharing
- McPherson College—Fulfillment through Service
- Moderator's Forum with Tod Bolsinger
- Outdoor Ministries Association - COB Camp Celebration and Awards
- Peace Seminar with Michael Gorman



If you and your spouse are both serving as Delegates we encourage you to each have a computer or tablet to use. If you share a device you will need to log in and out with individual email addresses for each of you to vote at various times.



Keith Hollenberg

- Q&A with Bethany Theological Seminary
- Q&A with Brethren Benefit Trust
- Q&A with Brethren Benefit Trust Staff
- Q&A with Church of the Brethren
- Q&A with Michael Gorman
- Q&A with On Earth Peace
- Q&A with Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee
- Q&A with Program & Arrangements Committee
- Q&A with Tod Bolsinger
- Talkback with the Moderator and General Secretary
- The Modern Seminarian: Following God's Call to Nigeria
- Thriving: Families with LGBTQ+ Members
- University of La Verne "Come have some fun!"
- Women's Caucus - Refreshed at Fifty
- Young Adult meet-up with Moderator-Elect

See the Annual Conference Book for descriptions, dates and times.

To register for Annual Conference go to www.brethren.org/ac

Once you've registered, watch for weekly emails with additional important information!

Questions? Call or email:
847-429-4366 | annualconference@brethren.org



Church of the Brethren