



The Pastor's Pen . . . November 2026

How Did We Get Here?

(Perspective and Context for Congregational Discernment)

This past Sunday, at our monthly Board Information Session, Marsha Smith shared the Board's plan to present two different Budget proposals at our upcoming Church Council Meeting to be held on Sunday, November 15th. The only difference between the two budgets will be the terms of the compensation package for our Senior Pastor. In case you're wondering, that's me.

Option 1 is a proposed reduction of approximately \$14,000 from the total Senior Pastor compensation that was approved last November for our 2026 budget. In view of this reduction, I would receive an additional two weeks of vacation. **Option 2** is a proposed reduction of about \$30,000 from those same expense lines of our 2026 budget. In that scenario, my employment status would change from full-time to three-quarter time.

Many are wondering what three-quarter time means and what it would look like. The Board and I have committed to answering those questions as best we can within the Church Council information packet that will be available on Sunday, November 1st.

In the meantime, I would like to focus this article on providing some broader perspective and context by addressing some of the factors that have brought us to this point.

The past 20 years

Various factors over the past 20 years have contributed to some of the challenges we currently face as a church family: internal conflicts, large and small; individual and collective decisions, actions, or inactions which--with hindsight-- might be made differently today; cultural, societal, political, demographic, and economic factors (e.g. changes, events, pressures, trends), over which we have little or no control. What's more, we do not all fully agree now on the details of each factor, let alone which factors have contributed most and how. While there are things we can learn from the past, we cannot change it. All we can do is start where we are and do and be the best we possibly can with who we are and where we are and what we have today.

The past 16 months

In July of 2025, our Church Board began to have serious conversations about the trajectories of our aging membership, our giving patterns, and our immediate and long-term financial needs.

These conversations resulted in a member survey last November in which two-thirds of our congregation supported the Board to (1) Make an official request for increased giving as each person was able; (2) Explore grant options for capital and outreach expenses; (3) Start a Capital Campaign to raise funds for known and future capital repairs, replacements, or improvements; and (4) Explore further spending cuts.

The past 10 months

Since the beginning of January, our Board has been working aggressively and tirelessly at those approved initiatives, while also overseeing the ongoing needs and ministries of the church.

The past two months

On August 4th, I was invited to an Executive Session of the Board and asked to lead a conversation about pastoral compensation in relation to my financial needs and my future retirement plans. Here is what I shared.

1. In my assessment, aside from unforeseen changes in our human and financial resources, the only course for sustainability for our congregation beyond the next few years will require bi-vocational pastoral leadership. In other words, I feel that the future of this congregation will likely be tied in part to calling pastoral leadership comprised of a person or persons also substantially employed in another job, partially retired, or married to a partner whose income provides for housing and health insurance needs. This is not a new concept. In fact, more than 70% of the churches in our denomination are being served by some form of part-time pastoral leadership. This change does not mean we are accepting defeat. It can actually be a pathway to stability and growth.
2. In my ideal world, I would love to be part of that transition here at 4th Street. However, regardless of what my own future holds, our church leadership needs to begin thinking now about what it would look like to transition toward bi-vocational pastoral leadership. In my assessment, the question is not IF. The question is only WHEN.

I then presented three different compensation scenarios to consider for our 2027 budget, each with a different degree of reduction in total compensation. I suggested that those three scenarios might also serve as a sort of “sequence” roadmap for transitioning toward bi-vocational pastoral leadership for the future of the 4th Street Church of the Brethren.

Over the following two months, our Board, meeting in Executive Session, narrowed those three options down to two and chose to offer both options in order for the congregation to make the final decision as it relates to the 2027 budget year.

The road ahead

On November 15th, church members gathered for our Church Council Meeting will decide by majority vote the details of our 2027 Budget.

Whatever option is chosen, our Board will move forward, continuing to pursue congregational health, stability, sustainability, impact for good on the community in which we live, and growth. We have some ideas, and we are open to yours. May the Holy Spirit guide us all as we take our next steps on this path, ever seeking to live into our calling as A Family of God, Growing in Christ, Empowered to Serve.

Your partner in this journey,
Pastor Mark



Embracing the Changing Leaves in Our Lives

November 7, 2026

8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Mini-Fellowship Hall

Led by Ann Baker

A time for women to gather for fellowship, reflection, and inspiration as we embrace the season of Autumn. Ann Baker will be leading us in prayer, scripture, and activities to embrace this next season in our lives.

We encourage the ladies of the church to attend and bring a friend! Together we will seek God's guidance for the changing leaves and the promises God has in store for each of us.

This is a free event! There will be an opportunity to share a donation for a ministry in the Chambersburg community.

Sign-up sheets are located in the Narthex and in the BLC Lobby. We would like to have a final count by Tuesday, November 3.

Schedule:

- 8:30 Gather for coffee, tea, muffins, and fellowship
- 9:00 Session begins with breaks throughout
- 12:00 Light lunch will be served ***
- 1:00 Closing prayer

*** If you have diet restrictions, please let us know. We will do our best to accommodate everyone.



The Chambersburg Congregation Church of the Brethren

Annual Council Meeting will be held on

Sunday, November 15, 2026

immediately following worship (10:45 a.m.) in the sanctuary.

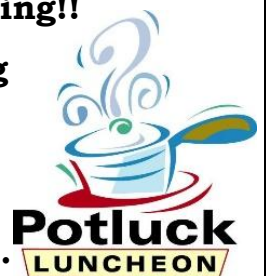
Please plan to attend this very important meeting!!

A potluck lunch will follow council meeting

in the Brethren Life Center.

There will be NO Sunday School

or Contemporary Worship held this Sunday.



4th Street YOUTH GROUP

Real Teens • Real Faith • Real Life

Join Us!

Come hang out,
make friends, grow
in your faith, and be
part of something
bigger!



FAITH +

FRIENDSHIP

SERVICE

Small acts
of kindness
can make a
big difference!

**Together
WE CAN MAKE A
DIFFERENCE!**



Wednesday,
November 4, 2026



5:30 PM -
7:30 PM

We hope to see you there!

CHAMBERSBURG CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

Christmas GIVING TREE

SPREAD HOLIDAY CHEER!

CHOOSE A GIFT TAG AND MAKE A
DIFFERENCE THIS CHRISTMAS.

PICK A TAG FROM OUR GIVING TREE IN
THE BLC LOBBY, PURCHASE A GIFT ON
THEIR WISHLIST, AND BRING IT BACK
WRAPPED BY THE RETURN DATE. YOUR
KINDNESS WILL BRIGHTEN SOMEONE'S
HOLIDAY SEASON!

PLEASE RETURN BY:

DECEMBER 13

THE GIFTS AND TAGS CAN BE PLACED
IN THE BLC LOBBY.

BE AN ANGEL, SHOW YOU CARE
GIVE A GIFT, SPREAD LOVE EVERYWHERE!

QUESTIONS - CONTACT YOUTH DIRECTOR JESSICA MADDEN

4th Street Youth Group

You're Invited to Our

Giving Tree

LESSON & CRAFTS

Be an Angel of Hope

"And do not forget to do good
and to share with others."
Hebrews 13:16



Wednesday, November 18th



5:30 - 7:30 PM



Dinner Provided!

Come learn about the Giving Tree,
enjoy a short lesson, and make
two special crafts!

Let's be the hands and feet
of Jesus this Christmas!



NO YOUTH GROUP

**Wednesday,
November 25**

Please enjoy
Thanksgiving
with your friends
and family.

See everybody
December 2.





SMART COOKIES PRESCHOOL NEWS

Hi Church Family

October has been a wonderful month of learning, laughter, and community at Smart Cookies Preschool.

Field Trip to Stoner's Dairy Farm

Our preschoolers enjoyed a beautiful fall day at Stoner's Dairy Farm, joined by several of our parents. The children loved seeing the animals, learning how milk is made, and exploring the farm. It was a joyful time of hands-on learning and fellowship.

Visit from the Local Fire Department

We were blessed with a special visit from our local firefighters. Our young learners explored the tools used during emergencies, learned how firefighters help keep our community safe, and practiced who to call in an emergency. The children especially loved seeing the firetruck up close.

Preschool Committee at Chambersburg Apple Fest

Our preschool committee hosted a table at Chambersburg Apple Fest, where we greeted many familiar faces and met wonderful new families. It was a joy to share about our preschool, connect with community friends, and bless children with smiles and COOKIES, and warm conversation. We are thankful for Ms. Linda and Tilly the clown and everyone who stopped by and helped make the day meaningful.

Upcoming Events

- Fall Pictures – Coming soon!
- Costumes & Giggles Halloween Party – A fun, friendly celebration for our preschoolers. Costumes, laughter, and sweet memories ahead.

Looking Ahead: November & Feast Season

As we enter November, we prepare for our Sharing Meal with the preschoolers — a time of gratitude, togetherness, and teaching our little ones the joy of giving thanks. We will also begin practicing for our Annual Christmas Program, a cherished tradition where our children share the story of Jesus' birth with songs, smiles, and holiday joy.

Thank you, church family, for your prayers, encouragement, and support. Your partnership helps us nurture a safe, loving, faith-filled environment for our young learners.

Thank you for all your prayers.
All for Him,
Ms. Kobie



Blessing Box Suggestions

(Pretty much anything you would donate to the food pantry)

Non-Perishable Items

- Soups – canned or packets
- Ramen Noodles
- Meats – canned or packets (e.g. Tuna/Vienna sausages/pepperoni)
- Applesauce
- One box meals
- Baby food
- Snacks (e.g. fruit roll ups/granola bars/crackers)
- Boxed macaroni & cheese
- Canned vegetables – all kinds
- Sloppy Joe mix
- Peanut butter – plastic jars
- Rice/Pasta
- Gravy – no jars
- Pancake mix
- Sugar/salt/pepper/flour
- Pet food in cans



*Personal care items: Socks, mittens, gloves, hats, scarves,
(for all ages) during the cold months (hand knitted are always welcome)

*Baby care products, feminine care products, toothbrushes, toothpaste, hand sanitizer, bath soap, deodorant, shampoo

Please avoid perishable items, items in glass, damaged canned goods, items past the use by date, sharps (razors, needles, etc.), chemicals, any used or opened items.

**Place items directly into the Blessing Box.
Do not bring to the church.**



SOUTHERN PENNSYLVANIA
DISTRICT
Church of the Brethren

Create New Testament communities
committed to personal transformation through Jesus Christ

3375 Carlisle Rd Ste A, Gardners PA 17324
Main: 717-778-2264
DE: 717-778-2254
SOPADistrict@brethren.org

September 28, 2026

Pastor Mark Baliles
Chambersburg Church of the Brethren
260 South Fourth Street
Chambersburg, PA 17201

Dear Pastor Mark,

On behalf of the **District Program & Arrangements Committee**, please accept our sincere gratitude and extend our heartfelt thanks to On-site Coordinator Marsha Smith and the many members of Chambersburg congregation whose hard work, dedication, and generous gift of time helped make this year's **District Conference** a meaningful and successful gathering.

Please convey the appreciation of the District staff and conference leadership to your congregation for its efforts in planning, preparing for, and hosting this event. Your hospitality, flexibility, and attention to detail created a welcoming environment that enriched the experience of all who attended.

We also extend our special thanks to those who prepared and served the meals and refreshments throughout the event. We were truly blessed by the many volunteers who shared their gifts of hospitality and service, helping participants feel welcomed, cared for, and encouraged during our time together.

May God continue to bless you, your staff, and the congregation of Chambersburg. As we serve together in Christ's name, may we faithfully be His hands and feet in our communities and throughout the wider church.

With gratitude,

Traci Rabenstein
District Executive Minister

cc: Nicholas Wingert, 2026 Moderator
Leon Yoder, 2026 Moderator-Elect

Traci Rabenstein
District Executive Minister



Thank you for making the district conference at Chambersburg a very pleasant experience! Please tell your “crew” we all really appreciated everything from the food – to the red shirts – to the flowers and especially the snack candy/snacks.

***---In Christ's love,
Gerry Godfrey (Codorus COB)***

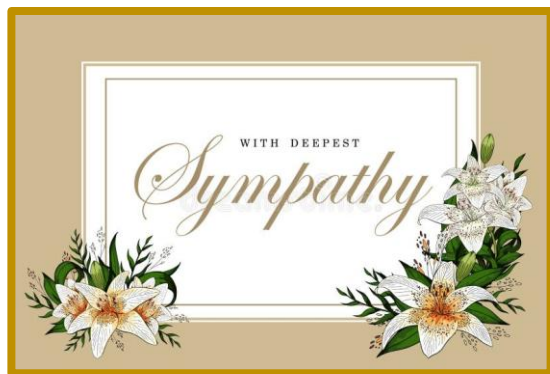
Thanks to all for all the expressions of concern, prayers, phone calls, cards, and visits during the time of my recent hospital stay and recovery. We will always remember and appreciate the Chambersburg congregation and Pastor Mark's visits in the hospital and at home.

---Gene & Mary Hawbaker



Deadline for December Pastor's Pen is Sunday, November 22, 2026

Please submit all information to the church office.



Our Sympathy to:

Joanne Meyers and Family, Gary and Donna Meyers and Family following the death of Joanne's husband and Gary and Donna's brother-in-law, David R. Meyers on Thursday, October 15, 2026.



**VOLUNTEER
BELL RINGERS
NEEDED!**

Ring a bell...help change a life

Salvation Army Red Kettle Project

Missions and Service Commission is sponsoring an opportunity to serve and share with the Salvation Army.

Our congregation will ring the bell for the Red Kettle Project at The Butcher Shoppe on Thursday, December 3, 2026

Sign-up sheet coming soon!

Thank you for your help!



November 19 – Bingo at Stoner's Family Restaurant

December 17 – Games at Stoner's Family Restaurant

Please contact Vivian Fisher if you plan to attend (717) 809-0521.



Books to enjoy in the Library

November

A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23
by W. Phillip Keller

The Memory Keeper's Daughter
by Kim Edwards

Poor Mrs. Riggsby by Kathy Herman

Death Valley in '49 by William Lewis Manly



WHAT: Mid-Week to Go.....

WHEN: Wednesday, November 4th
5:30 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.

WHERE: Chambersburg COB

Meal delivered to your car!
First come-first served basis.

*260 South Fourth Street
Chambersburg, PA 17201
717-264-6957*

*Mid-Week Connection's purpose is connecting
our Brethren family to the community through
fellowship and service.*



**Don't forget to Turn
back your clocks**

Daylight Saving Time will officially end at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, November 1, 2026. Don't forget to turn your clocks back one hour before retiring on Saturday night or you will be an hour early for church in the morning!

MOMENTS OF WORSHIP



Day 1	Psalm 50:14	Day 16	Ephesians 1:16
Day 2	Colossians 4:2	Day 17	1 Chronicles 16:8
Day 3	Ezra 3:11	Day 18	Colossians 1:3
Day 4	Psalm 140:13	Day 19	Jonah 2:9
Day 5	2 Corinthians 4:15	Day 20	Psalm 18:49
Day 6	2 Samuel 22:50	Day 21	James 1:17
Day 7	2 Corinthians 9:15	Day 22	Romans 16:4
Day 8	Psalm 26:6-7	Day 23	Psalm 100:4
Day 9	Daniel 6:10	Day 24	1 Thessalonians 5:18
Day 10	Psalm 136:2	Day 25	Psalm 35:18
Day 11	Psalm 95:2	Day 26	2 Corinthians 2:14
Day 12	Matthew 26:27	Day 27	Revelation 7:12
Day 13	1 Timothy 4:4	Day 28	Psalm 30:4
Day 14	Romans 14:6	Day 29	1 Chronicles 16:34
Day 15	Psalm 69:30	Day 30	Psalm 116:17