

A Message from ANE District Moderator David Sollenberger

What is the greatest need for the world these days? What is the greatest need for the U.S., the Christian church as a whole, the Church of the Brethren, the individual congregations of which we are a part? I would suggest that the greatest need for all of these is Jesus. He is the one who has the ability to redeem us, the power to teach us, and the capacity to transform our lives, our churches, and our institutions.



So how does any of this happen? Well, when it came to proposing a theme for our 2026 Atlantic Northeast District Conference, I asked that very question. How can we refocus ourselves, our congregations, and our denomination on what could have the greatest impact? What I came up with was simple: fixing our eyes on Jesus.

We live in a world where there are so many distractions, so many things competing for our attention and our loyalty. And unfortunately, like a lot of things, they have seeped into our churches and have taken a foothold in many of our churches.

We have just come through a denominational campaign that encouraged each congregation to be “Jesus in our neighborhoods,” and there are so many inspiring examples of how that is happening. You can think of many and are likely participating in some, but I’ll just name one as an example.

The Annville congregation has reached out to refugees being resettled through Church World Service and are supporting two families that came to this country from Guatemala and El Salvador before the crackdown on both legal and illegal immigration. The families they’re working with happen to be among those that are still legal. I am not aware of why this congregation decided to help, but I suspect it might have had something to do with the words and actions of Jesus.

Matthew 25 quotes Jesus as describing what his followers should do when there is need, and Jesus reinforced the long-standing directive from God to welcome the stranger and the immigrant, reminding the children of God that they too were immigrants.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus might motivate us to turn from the distractions of the world, the distorted interpretation of Christianity that is all around us, even the differences in how our fellow congregations interpret our Brethren understanding of faith. Fixing our eyes on Jesus might lead us to consider our own response to Christ’s call. Fixing our eyes on Jesus might help us instead concentrate on the words and actions of Jesus, the purveyor of our faith, the light of the world, and the ruler of our lives.

“...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” -Hebrews 12:1



Moderator David Sollenberger is a videographer from Annville, Pa., and a member of Mount Wilson Church of the Brethren. He has documented decades of conferences and programs of the denomination, including Annual Conference and National Youth Conference, where he has been a speaker. He is known at National Older Adult Conference for the humorous NOAC News. He has produced numerous documentaries about church ministries and history and has traveled to missions and sister churches in Nigeria and South Sudan, among others. He has served on the former General Board and on the Vision Interpretation and Implementation Committee for the Church of the Brethren Vision Statement 2012-2020. He served as the 2022 Moderator for the Church of the Brethren.