

PUBLICITY RELEASE FOR BELL (Building and Empowering Lay Leadership)

BUILDING AND EMPOWERING LAY LEADERSHIP (B.E.L.L.) is a new program hosted by the Germantown Church of the Brethren to strengthen lay leaders in congregations with a special focus on urban ministry in culturally diverse areas. The program is a two-year sequence with seven units with instructors who are leaders in their fields.

MISSION STATEMENT: This program will equip and empower lay leaders to serve in their roles in the congregation in providing collaborative leadership in support of the pastor. The program will do this through instruction about the Bible, theology, church history, care for families, church vitality in an urban setting, leadership styles and worship, music and preaching. This program will produce new congregational vitality by empowering lay leaders.

START UP: The program begins this August (2026), with four units during 2026-2027. The remaining three units are scheduled for 2027-2028. The program is open to any lay leaders in Brethren congregations and other congregations. The cost is \$25 for an entire year, and \$50 for the whole program. All instruction sessions start with a Zoom intro meeting with the instructor. About 6 weeks after the intro the learners will meet in person with the instructor from 9am-5pm. **All instruction sessions will be in-person only in Germantown** because of the importance of the urban context for learning.

UNITS, DATES, AND INSTRUCTORS:

YEAR 1:

Unit 1: Introduction to the Bible and Biblical Interpretation. Zoom intro on August 30, 2pm; in-person session on October 3, 9am-5pm. Led by Stephen Breck Reid, Ph.D., former professor of Old Testament and dean at Bethany Theological Seminary.

Unit 2: Intro to Theology, including Anabaptist and Black Theology. Zoom intro on October 25, 2pm; in-person session on December 5, 9am-5pm. Led by Prof. Drew G. I. Hart, Ph.D., professor of theology and ethics at Messiah University and a member at Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren.

Unit 3: Family Life, including insights on family dynamics, substance abuse, incarceration, trauma, and the influence of social media. Zoom intro on February 7, 2027; in-person session on March 13, 2027. Led by Rev. Tom Longenecker, a counselor for substance abuse disorder and former pastor of Brethren and Mennonite congregations.

Unit 4: Urban Church and Church Vitality. Zoom intro on April 4, 2pm; in-person session on May 16, 2027, 9am-5pm. The scheduled leader is Bishop Guy L. Glimp of the Church of God in Christ and a long-time pastor familiar with urban Philadelphia.

YEAR 2:

Unit 5: Church History. Zoom intro on August 29, 2027; in-person session on October 9, 2027, 9am-5pm. Led by Jeff Bach, Ph.D., former professor of Historical and Brethren Studies at Bethany Theological Seminary, Director Emeritus of the Young Center at Elizabethtown College.

Unit 6: Will focus on music, worship, and preaching. Dates and leader are to be determined.

Unit 7: Will review personality styles and gifts in leadership and sense of calling among lay leaders. Dates and leader are to be determined.

For more information and to register, contact:

Richard Kyerematen: email: rich684@cs.com; phone: 215-906-3128 (text is best)

OR: Jeff Bach: email: bachja58@gmail.com; phone: 717-725-8782 (email is best)

Remember: BELL (Building and Empowering Lay Leadership) is more important than that other bell in Philadelphia.