



# The Conference Call

Volume 57 Issue 1

March 2010

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## *Calvin's Corner*

*Rev. Calvin Kurtz, Executive Director*

### ***"How Can I Say Thanks?"***

*These few words of the song by Andre Crouch title, "My Tribute," keep ringing in my mind as the word "emeritus" has been added to by title in transitioning toward retirement. As I reflect on the deep sense of call I felt over 15 years ago, I desired to approach the ministry of Christ to the community in a way that unitedly attempts to engage the Church which is Christ's body. Never in my wildest dreams had I thought that the Reading Berks Conference of Churches would be that venue by which God's Holy Spirit would fulfill that vision. RBCC has decades of pioneering history.*

#### *"How Can I Say Thanks?"*

*A little here and a little there amidst seemingly impossible obstacles, doors of opportunity miraculously opened, and through the congregations and God's people, engagements happened, and the ministry of Christ expanded in ways I would not have planned as God's Spirit was manifested among us. Additionally, civic, business leaders, and elected officials have been involved in supporting the conference ministries. Staff, Board and Committee participants have shown evidence of being divinely appointed as provisions from our Father in Heaven.*

#### *"How Can I Say Thanks?"*

*The future holds incredible challenges but awesome opportunities. There are those who carry on a sense of call and vision embracing expanded opportunities for the Reading Berks Conference of Churches and Christ's Bride, the Church, who are his hands and feet to the greater Reading and Berks County community. The RBCC Board has chosen Michael Kaucher as Executive Director to lead in this vision. Let's join in prayer and support for Mike.*

#### *How Can I Say Thanks?"*

*"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Ephesians 3:20,21*

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### ***Our Mission:***

- To foster unity and cooperation among the Christian churches of Reading and Berks County
- To provide witness in the community for shared Christian values
- To promote the ministries to our community in Christ's name
- To assist churches in fulfilling their individual and cooperative missions
- To encourage dialogue among all segments of the religious community

Michael Kaucher, Associate Director



### You're invited

Tremendous opportunities abound as the Body of Christ works together in our community. As I reflect on the task ahead of leading RBCC and following the footsteps of Rev. Kurtz, I realize that our mission has really not changed for 63 years. It's always been about working to unite the church to serve the community. Whether it be fighting organized crime in the early years of RBCC or building and supporting ministry around the county, our mission has always relied on the people of God working together, in service. The deeper thought is that this has been the call on the church since Jesus walked this earth. Jesus knew that we would always be working toward this when he prayed for all of us in the Garden of Gethsemane. This is nothing new. Those that know me, know that God has placed a passion in my heart for unity in the Body of Christ. When we look around, we are

constantly reminded of the challenges we face in this world. We know that this journey through life is full of adventure and challenges as we work toward the goals in our lives. James reminds us to *count it all joy when we fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of our faith produces patience. (James 1:2-3)* We also know that as we work together and put God at the center, we can accomplish great things, while bringing glory to the very God we serve. *Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. (Acts 4: 32-33)* We continue to have this same opportunity. Our witness of working together shows the love of God to the community and brings invitation.

This brings me to my invita-

tion.....You're invited, yes you! I invite those that are not familiar with all that we do to find out more about RBCC. Call us, e-mail us, stop by. We want to get to know you. Please don't be shy; we need each person pursuing a relationship with Christ and faith in God to join us in holy unity. To those that have been faithful supporters of RBCC, I thank you and invite your continued support. You all play an important role as we continually go out in faith, seeking unity, to provide service. As we work together in deeper ways, we will serve the community around us in deeper ways. I believe there is nothing we cannot accomplish as we continually work together. So again, I invite you to play a role in what we do. Your prayers, financial support and talents are needed as we constantly strive to build relationships and serve this community. I look forward to getting to know and work with you and am blessed by this call to serve at RBCC.

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I have two questions for you. First, have you made any New Year's resolutions? Second, are you like me and have already broken them?

When looking at our marriages, instead of setting resolutions and goals, which are easily broken, what about introducing a new concept? What if we set standards for our relationships? This allows us to have a beginning point and then follow through to make actions a habitual part of our relationships. Let's set a standard to make 2010 a "relational year." Let's simplify life and focus on the "important things" in our marriages and families.

Here are ideas you might consider in order to create a tangible framework for your marriage standards in 2010:

**Focus on YOU: Consider yourself and the changes you need to make in your own life.**

1. What bad, annoying habits do you have that bother your spouse? Are you willing to work on changing those habits? (Pick one and start; it takes 21 days to change a habit.)

2. What personal activities take you away from time spent with your spouse or children? Men, are there too many sports events? Ladies, is there too much shopping or too much time spent with your girlfriends?

3. What ways can you change in order to grow emotionally and spiritually? Do you need to strengthen your relationship with God? Do you need a life coach, counselor, or pastor to help you work through unresolved issues in your life?

**KEY: Invest thought, time, and energy in YOU in 2010 that will strengthen your marriage by making yourself a better person spiritually, emotionally, and physically.**

**Marriage & Family Builders, Sandi Kissinger, Director**  
How to Start the New Year Right Without Resolutions



**Focus on YOUR SPOUSE: Evaluate 2009 and the ways you could improve connecting, supporting, and nurturing your mate.** What gifts and abilities does your spouse have that delight you and bring life to your relationship? (These are probably the qualities you were attracted to when you met your spouse and now annoy you at times.) How often do you give compliments expressing how much you appreciate those qualities in your mate? Celebrate your differences.

1. What are ways you can express more often, more clearly your love for your spouse through affection and words? How often do you hug, kiss, or speak loving, kind words to each other? How often do you show acts of kindness to each other by notes, letters, flowers, etc.?

2. What ways do you love and respect your spouse? Women, do you show your husband respect; men, do you show love to your wives unconditionally?

**KEY: With diligence, work on building your spouse's esteem and encouraging him/her to grow to the fullest potential God created for him/her.**

**Focus on YOUR CHILDREN and others: The greatest gift you will ever give your children is a picture of a strong marriage.**

1. What ways do you model a healthy marriage to your children? Do you go out regularly on dates demonstrating to the kids that mom and dad must invest time and energy into their marriage in order for it to be healthy? (If you're divorced, do you give

training to your children about what healthy marriage looks like, providing them a blueprint for their future?)

2. What are your standards as a couple for parenting your children? Is there agreement in your parenting process? Do your children see and understand that the two of you stand unified as parents?

3. What ways do you model *conflict resolution*? Do your children watch you follow a conflict through until there is resolution? Are you teaching them how to resolve their conflicts in life or solving them for your kids?

4. What intentional ways do you communicate as a family? Do you have specific times set aside for communication with each other and also with the kids, such as family nights and family events?

**KEY: Teach your children how to view a healthy relationship by showing them a marriage that is committed to each other and one that demonstrates diligence in creating practical ways to love each other, communicate, and resolve issues.**

In answering the questions above, you create a framework you want to adopt as a family. I encourage you to set aside a time to review your answers and begin to formulate a list of your family's "standards to live by." As you begin to list the standards, implement them one by one. Set periodic meetings to track your progress and watch these standards become daily habits for your marriage. Have a great and healthy 2010!



**Berks County Prison, Chaplain Eileen McKeown, Supervising Chaplain**

In early January, Warden George Wagner alerted us to the fact that the name of our facility will be changed to the Berks County Jail System. This "system" is composed of the jail, housing those requiring secure confinement, and the Community Reentry Center (CRC.) By this coming April, those who are now in the Prerelease Center (PRC) will be housed in the CRC where they will be provided additional opportunities to help them successfully transition back into community. Transitions, necessary as they are, can be somewhat disconcerting. As we move through the process of changing the name of our institution and opening the Reentry Center, dust is kicked up, uncovering a healthy, fresh vision for the future. Creating and adjusting to the many changes, requires a great deal of energy, and some courage, but growth is far more exciting than its opposite – regression! This current move forward leaves behind certain patterns of thinking and doing, and can serve as a great example for our inmates. We encourage them to learn from the past, not live in it. They will be watching to see how staff and volunteers handle the numerous modifications we will all need to make in order to achieve success in this new endeavor. The Reentry Center is a vote of confidence in the inmates (residents) who will live there. It is also a call to take a more decisive step toward their personal growth and success. As we pray for them, we become aware of our own journey into holiness/wholeness. Like them, we try to leave the past behind, and seize the moment that can lead us to transformation. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "Yesterday is history, tomorrow is mystery. And today? Today is a gift. That is why they call it the present."



**Berks County Youth Center & Berks County Family Residential Center**  
**Dave Ludwig, Supervising Chaplain**  
**Who Is Your Neighbor?**

How well do you know your neighbors? Do you know their names? I've shared with you before that I've lived in several states and cities, that means I've had a lot of neighbors. To be honest with you, there were times that I didn't know my neighbors very well. Is that a bad thing? In some ways I believe it was. Let's face it; we live in a fast paced society; it is easy to isolate ourselves. There are times when we need to be alone to relax and rejuvenate ourselves, but there are other times when people need our help.

There is a war in Iraq and Afghanistan; do any of your neighbors have family or friends that have been deployed? There was an earthquake in Haiti, has that affected any of your neighbors? Not long ago, over one hundred people died due to a mudslide in El Salvador, how has that affected your neighbors?

All around us there are tragedies, and even though the tragedies I listed are not taking place in the United States, many times they have an affect on our neighbors.

There are many people in the Berks Family Residential Center that have been affected by tragedies, and here are some ways that you can help them.

First, pray for them. We don't know God's plan for their life, but God has a plan. Pray that they will seek God through prayer to hear his plan, and have a peace about whatever answer he gives them.

Second, make donations. The residents enjoy crochet and knitting, also sewing. If you have yarn, thread or material they can make hats, handbags and other items.

Thirdly, by giving of your time and volunteering. If you are bilingual (Spanish is the predominant language) there may be a place for you to help.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact me at 610-396-0310 (ext. 2380).

Everyone is our neighbor.... So let's work together and be a good neighbor.

<sup>26</sup>"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

<sup>27</sup>He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

<sup>28</sup>"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

Luke 10:26-28 (NIV)




Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,


In Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 Solomon tells us that there is a time for everything, a season for every activity under heaven. For the past 15 years it was the time for Rev. Calvin Kurtz to do every activity under heaven that he could pursue to help the elderly, the sick, the imprisoned, the hungry and whoever else he could find in need. Calvin had a vision and as the Executive Director of the Reading Berks Conference of Churches he passionately pursued that vision.

The ministries he established and the lives he touched speak for themselves. His name and reputation are etched in to the history of our city and county. The season has now come and Calvin has chosen to pass the baton so that a new vision can start to materialize. But he will always be remembered for his lifelong pursuit of "God's Will Be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven." Thank you Calvin.


Gary Seibert, RBCC President


## Bits & Pieces


 **Volunteers Needed**—RBCC coordinates over 600 worship services at Nursing Homes around the county. We are ready to mail the schedules for 2010 and still have several open dates. If you (clergy or laity) are able to provide this service for the elderly of Berks County, please call the RBCC office (610-375-6108). Substitutes are also needed. Thank you in advance!


 **CROP Walk T-shirts**—We have extra shirts left with this year's logo and sponsors. If you were not able to earn a shirt this year by raising \$100, here's a second chance! You may pick one up, for a \$5 donation, at the RBCC Office.


 **Mary's Shelter 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Bowl-a-Thon**, March 21, Berks Lanes, Sinking Spring, 12:30-2:30 or 3:00-5:00 Session, Contact 610-603-8010, Registration Required

 **Berks County VOAD** Community-based Disaster Preparedness & Recovery program Sat, Mar 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010, 9:00am—3:00pm, Bernadine Hall at Alvernia University Main Campus, 400 St. Bernadine St, Reading .

 **Eduard Klassen, Harpist & Speaker** in concert—March 20, 7pm, Hopewell Mennonite Church, 45 S 6th St, Reading, For more info: 610-790-7028

 **Jazz Worship Service**—Featuring song stylists, Dan and Galla, and alto saxophonist, Charlie Schaffr, St. John's United Church of Christ, 257 W. Walnut Street, Kutztown, PA, Sunday, March 21, 2010, 10:00am

 **19th Ann. Fellowship Dinner of Mercy Community Crisis Pregnancy Center** -Fri, Apr 9, Glad Tidings AOG, 1110 Snyder Road, West Lawn. Guest Speaker: Comm. Christian Y. Leinbach. RSVP by Mar 24, 610-369-8813 or bp4life88@dejazzd.com

 **Looking for Employment or Know Some Who Is ?...** Let Josephs People of Berks County help! Join us on 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month from 7-8:30 pm in the St. Catharine of Siena Parish Center, 2427 Perkiomen Avenue, in Mt. Penn. This support group is open to anyone who is unemployed, under-employed, or otherwise seeking new employment. Staffed by volunteers, there are no fees for participation. We offer a variety of support to assist you during your transition to your next job including information on how to help you take care of your family, assistance with preparing resumes, interviewing tips, and networking. All are welcome. If you would like to help volunteer or need more information, please call John Senick (484) 6510498(email: [jsenick@ptd.net](mailto:jsenick@ptd.net)); or Mike Knoll (610) 370-1403.



**"GriefShare"** is a special weekly non-denominational Christian seminar and support group for people who are grieving the death of someone close to them. First Baptist Church of 210 South 5th St., Reading, will sponsor a GriefShare Group on Mondays, 12:30-2:00 p.m. beginning March 1, 2010. Off-street parking is available. Call (610) 375-2211 to register or for more information. There is a website within which you can locate a GriefShare group in your area, using your Zip Code: [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org). There is also a short video clip that previews the program. Our Church's schedule is included there, under "Find a Group."



**Get Jazzed for Jesus**—Featuring Sam Powell, St. James Church, 7<sup>th</sup> and Penn Avenues, West Reading, PA, Sunday, March 28, 2010, 10:40am



**Women's Retreat—Forgiveness: Seeing Through New Eyes**—Apr 23-25—Mariawald Retreat Center, Shillington. \$155. Registration deadline Apr 1. Info: Events section at [www.diakon.org/fls](http://www.diakon.org/fls) or (888) 499-2699



**Lifeline of Berks County Banquet** with guest speaker Lila Rose - April 22, 2010 7:00 pm at the Inn at Reading. Contact Lifeline for Information: (610) 374-8545 - [www.lifelineofberks.org](http://www.lifelineofberks.org)

Join us for the Reading

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# The Conference Call



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## Spring 2010

### Important Dates: Mark Your Calendar!

97th Annual Easter Dawn Service on Mt. Penn—Sunday April 4, 6:30am

National Day of Prayer—Thursday, May 6th

Annual Hymn Sing at Gring's Mill—Sunday, August 1st, 6:00pm

### New Communication Tools & Resources from RBCC!

**E-blast**—a bi-weekly email update on special events and more all over Berks County! To receive this, simply send your email address to [info@readingberkschurches.org](mailto:info@readingberkschurches.org)

**Nexus**—a web-based Youth Connection site—visit the RBCC website at [www.readingberkschurches.org](http://www.readingberkschurches.org) and click on the NEXUS logo for access to local youth programs, events of interest to youth, and fellowship with other youth & youth leaders.

**Resource Connection Hub**—accessed through the RBCC website visitors have access to a myriad of information, from business connections, to resource helps, to networking points of contact.

To get YOUR information on any of these tools, please contact the RBCC Office at 610-375-6108 or [info@readingberkschurches.org](mailto:info@readingberkschurches.org)

Reading Berks Conference of Churches relies on your contributions to continue the work presented through its Mission Statement and evidenced by the witness in these pages. To those who regularly donate so generously, we say thank you! To all, we ask for your support. Please use the enclosed envelope to send your tax deductible donation; any amount is a blessing. And again, we say Thank You!