

## **District News & Announcements**

### **July 2017**

"District News and Announcements" is a monthly e-newsletter for members and friends of the Church of the Brethren in the Northern Plains District. District Leaders, Commissions, Committees, and those doing special ministries share information on programs and activities. Local churches share news and invitations. Send submissions by <u>July 25th</u> for inclusion in next month's newsletter to Hannah Button-Harrison, Interim Director of Communications, <u>communications@nplains.org</u>.

## In this issue

- 1. Reflections on the Migrant Trail Walk
- 2. In Our Prayers: Doyle Harper
- 3. FRB Regional Meeting July 22nd
- 4. Church Updates: Ivester
- 5. Church Updates: Lewiston
- 6. District Conference Announcements
- 7. "Why do communications emails display the wrong name?"
- 8. YAC Reflection
- 9. Holiness in our Midst

#### Quick info

<u>Calendar of Events</u> | <u>District Staff & Leadership Contacts</u> | <u>Documents & Resources</u>

Banner photo: A float celebrating Ivester's 150th Anniversary. Photo by Paul Shaver. Send in your photos for future newsletters! Email communications@nplains.org.

### 1. Walking the Migrant Trail

#### **Lucinda Douglas, Living Peace Church**

It was hot. It was dry. It was dusty. The wind was blowing. I was tired. I didn't want to walk any more. It was only the third day. My mind kept wandering toward cold, cool water with ice cubes. Wait, I had water, lots of water, but it wasn't very cold. Someone yelled "car;" we all moved over to the right of the road. Then I heard, "okay," and we all moved back over to the white line on the road. We kept walking. Someone yelled "hydrate," and I heard "hydrate" all along the line, reminding us to drink water to keep hydrated. Someone yelled "border patrol," and a green-striped white pick-up going way too fast rolled by us, then another and then one pulling ATV's, then a dog unit went by us on the road. We heard "okay," and we all moved back over to the white line. Where were all those border patrol people going? They must be looking for someone. Then I saw a helicopter. Yep, they are looking for someone. I said a silent prayer. When are we going to have a water stop, a full stop? Oh for some nice cold ice cream. Oops, better not think of ice cream! Then we heard "Lillian Ramirez Garcia" and we all shouted "Presente", "Mendoza Estrada", "Presente", "Desconcido", "Presente", "Fancisco Renee Garcia Torres", "Presente`", "Desconcida", and we all shouted "Presente," on down the line until we shouted out all the names on the little white crosses we carried. We finally came to a water stop, a full stop. Oh joy! Rest for a few minutes, drink some more Gatorade, and eat a snack. I can take my shoes off and check my feet. No blisters! Good! I checked in with my "pee" partner, and she checked in with me. "Are you peeing?" "Yes, lots" came the answer for both of us. Good, that means you are keeping hydrated.

I talked with others about what I saw as I walked. I talked about the beauty of the sunrise, beauty of the cacti, the beauty in the desert and the mountains to the North. I thought about how hot the desert is during the day and how cold the desert is at night. I was amazed at the temperature variances. I marveled at how hard this was for me. It was so hard walking in the desert, feeling hot and hoping for another breeze. It was the kind of heat that saps your energy and makes you feel so tired. I thought about the fact that I had water. I had food. I had a tent. I had companionship. I had someone to look after me and ask about my welfare. I had a support team for when I felt too hot to walk, I could ride. I thought about those who come walking through this inhospitable desert without all of those safety measures and wondered how do they make it through? How does anyone walk through this desert land without much food or water? The desert doesn't discriminate. If you get a blister, this can cripple you. If you get a heat rash or suffer heat exhaustion, you die. If you run out of water, you die.

Why did I want to take this walk? I wondered that so many times. Yet, I did know why I wanted to take this hot, dry, dusty, walk in the desert. I wanted to remember and highlight those who attempt this walk through the desert and die trying. The names we shouted out that were written on the little white crosses were the names of human remains who had been identified and who had died trying to cross the desert. The desconsidos and desconsidas were male and female remains that could not be identified. We walked to remember and lift up

those who have died. The Sonoran desert is one of our forgotten and unrecognized national cemeteries. It is so sad and shameful. Over seven thousand human remains have been recovered along the border and in the desert in the U.S.A. since the military build-up in 1994.

While we were walking our group was contacted by the group No Mas Muertes/No More Deaths to ask if four volunteers could come to help search for a young man who was lost in the desert. Four of our group, who had experience walking in the desert and who could speak Spanish, volunteered, as did the lawyer. We continued walking while those five went to search for the young man. The young man had a cell phone and was able to call for help. No More Deaths have good electronic equipment and GPS which they used to try to locate this person. While we walked we prayed for the ones searching for him and we prayed for the young man. We prayed that the outcome would be good. We arrived at our stop for the day, and we hadn't heard anything. Finally, word came back that the young man had been found and the outcome was good. The young man was alive and given water and food. I don't know if he needed medical attention or what happened after he was found, but we rejoiced to know that he had been found alive. It was a relief for those who went searching and for those of us who continued to walk. We celebrated with the five who went to look for this young man that evening when we gathered for our talent show. In contrast to this joyful end, we learned at the beginning of the week that there was a mother and child who was lost in the desert. We thought about them the whole week, wondering if they had been found either alive or dead.

On our last day, we walked into a camp that was known as "Hell Camp". It was known as Hell camp because we had to camp on gravel and broken glass. It had been a long, hot walk that day and to arrive at the camp with gravel and broken glass was rather disheartening, to say the least. We put up our shade tents. We chose where we would either put up our tents or sleep out in the open. My mind reminded me that I wanted ice cream and a cool shower! After lunch, I heard a shout: "The shaved ice is here!" Someone who supported our walk brought out a Tucson treat of shaved ice. There was strawberry and mango shaved ice! Oh how yummy on such a hot day. Later while we were having our team group meeting, in drove an ice cream truck! Wait....ice cream truck? Here? Yes, ice cream truck. We were told we could each select an ice cream treat from the ice cream truck, given to us free of charge! Wow! I had been wanting ice cream all week! What a cool treat. I heard another shout. "The water truck is here. Come and get cooled off from the hose." Yes, an impromptu shower! I was so full of shaved ice and ice cream from the ice cream truck, I could barely eat supper. I borrowed a tarp and slept out in the open that last night and it wasn't so bad. I woke up thinking, I will be home tomorrow!

What a journey! I couldn't help but wonder what happened to the mother and child who were lost in the desert. We hadn't heard if they had been found. We think they died. We grieved for them during our blessing service on our last day of the walk. A prayer was said for those still out in the desert walking, making an attempt for a new life in a new land. A bittersweet ending to an amazing walk in the desert. I learned so much about walking in the desert. It was probably the hardest thing I've ever done besides birthing my babies. Would I do it again? Maybe!

You might be wondering why people continue to come when the journey is so hard and uncertain. They come for many and complicated reasons. They are coming from many countries; they flee from countries of war, persecution, and death. They come because climate change is threatening their way of living. They come because they want to re-unite with family. They come from South and Central America as well as Mexico and other countries farther away. Our border polices are inhumane and deadly. Our immigration polices need to be revised to reflect the changes that are happening in the greater world. The United States has meddled in many countries, leaving things in disarray and causing migration and fleeing.

What can you do, you ask? You can educate yourself on the issues surrounding immigration. You can call for better legislation on immigration polices. You can learn about the hardships of the refugees and immigrants. You can get involved in your local community. You can write your Senators and Congress people. The people who attempt to come to the U.S.A are people with hopes and dreams just like you and me.

I'll close with a Prayer for the Migrant which we prayed together in the morning before we started our walk for the day:

Loving Creator, full of love and mercy, I want to ask you for my Migrant brothers and sisters. Have pity on them and protect them, as they suffer mistreatments and humiliations on their journeys, are labeled as dangerous and marginalized for being foreigners. Make them be respected and valued for their dignity. Touch with Your goodness the many that see them pass. Care for their families until they return to their homes, not with broken hearts but rather with hopes fulfilled. Let it be.

## 2. In Our Prayers: Doyle Harper

**Tim Button-Harrison, District Executive** 

#### de@nplains.org

Please keep Doyle Harper of Iowa City in your prayers. On May 31st, Doyle began radiation therapy at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester for chordoma, a rare form of cancer, located in his spine. His wife, Karen, reports that the daily treatments are going well and should be completed by July 12. Doyle and Karen are active members of Northern Plains District and host the Iowa City Brethren Fellowship. Cards may be sent to Doyle Harper, Room 306, Hope Lodge, 411 2nd Street NW, Rochester, MN 55901

## 3. FRB Regional Meeting - July 22nd

Volunteers from Foods Resource Bank's Seeds of Hope Growing Project are hosting an inspirational meeting on July 22 at Ewalu Camp and Retreat Center in Strawberry Point, IA. The public is invited to attend to learn how they can help create lasting solutions to world hunger. The event kicks off at 10:30 am with a welcome reception followed by lunch featuring guest speakers from Haiti, Margot DeGreef and Rony Janvier, who have been instrumental in providing support to FRB's Haiti Northwest program through Church World Service. DeGreef and Janvier will share how lives and communities have been transformed through agricultural programs funded by FRB. This funding is made possible by "Growing Projects" – community-based fundraising efforts that often involve growing and selling a crop or livestock. Profits from these projects are donated to FRB to support programs that teach people in vulnerable communities around the world how to grow their own food.

"Agricultural development is proven to be one of the most effective, long-term solutions to world hunger," says FRB CEO Marv Baldwin. "We encourage communities in the U.S. to get involved in helping people provide for themselves. Iowans are among our most active and generous volunteers." Adds Ewalu Camp Executive Director Clark Baldwin, "I have been involved in an FRB Growing Project for xx years. It is one of the most rewarding experiences to join friends and neighbors to create a project that ultimately helps the world's hungry turn their lives around." In addition to learning how to help reduce world hunger, attendees will have the opportunity learn how they can get involved in or start their own Growing Project. Hiking and camp tours can be enjoyed after the meeting. To register for the event, contact Foods Resource Bank 888-276-4FRB or visit our website: foodsresourcebank.org/event

#### **Event Fast Facts**

Seeds of Hope Inspirational Meeting Saturday, July 22, 2017 10:30 am – 3:00 pm Camp Ewalu, Strawberry Point, IA

Open to the public

Admission free (donations/free-will offerings graciously accepted)

To register contact: Foods Resource Bank toll free 888-276-4FRB or visit our website:

## foodsresourcebank.org/event

#### **FRB Fast Facts**

- Foods Resource Bank has raised more than \$47M since it was founded in 1999. Of that total, more than \$6.7M has been raised by Iowans, mostly through community projects.
- In FRB's first 15 years more than 1,000,000 people were supported around the world to become food secure. Iowans have helps support more than 140,000 of those people through the dollars they have raised for FRB.

- Number of FRB community projects in Iowa: 46
- Estimated number of lowa farmers volunteering for FRB: 150+
- Estimated number of lowa volunteers engaged: 1000+

### 4. Church Updates: Ivester

Paul Shaver, Ivester COB



The Ivester Church observed the Lenten Season with a series of videos from Fr. John Dear. Those gathered on Wednesday evenings enjoyed a soup meal followed by the video series on Living NonViolence available through the Pace e Bene YouTube channel. This was followed by a series of questions pulled from the videos. In connection with this video series, those attending were also encouraged to color the "Stations of the Cross" illustrations from Illustrated Children's Ministry. In turn, these posters were used for "Good Friday" as Stations of the Cross with reflections on each illustration.



The Ivester Church replaced a 20+ year old Peace Pole at the front of the Meeting House in a special service the week prior to their 150th Anniversary Celebration! The Peace Pole has four placards in English, Korean, Spanish and Arabic. They say, "May Peace Prevail On Earth." The directions of the signs point North, South, East and West and represent sending out peace in every direction. But the part we sometimes forget is the dimension pointing to the ground and to the sky. Representative of sending praise for the peace given and the peace we receive when we return to the soil. May God's peace be revealed in you and through you, as we share the peace of Christ with all! Blessings!



The Ivester Church celebrated 150 years of serving God and the community! It was a blessed weekend filled with songs, food, fellowship, meeting new and greeting old faces, as well as a fascinating look back through the lens of a cemetery walk. Sunday's Celebration included taking in seven new members by transfer of letter at worship that morning! The afternoon was wrapped up with cake and ice cream following a tree planting ceremony! May God continue to bless the community through the folks at Ivester and the larger community they represent!

## 5. Church Updates: Lewiston

**Gordon Hoffert, Lewiston COB** 

#### The Parable Patch: A special relationship with the Father

Jesus modeled an intimate way to speak with and relate to His Father. "Abba" (Daddy) was the way he addressed God. This was Jesus telling us he had a special relationship with God, the Father. And of course He did. But Jesus was also showing his followers that the Almighty God was not a dis-

tant, impersonal figure. Nor do we need to go through elaborate rituals and practices to communicate with Him. God is near. God is accessible. And connecting with God is simply a matter of turning to Him.

As a teenager, Joyce Peckover worked at the Dairy Queen in her home town of Quinter, Kansas. A new manager had arrived who was also new to town. One evening when both the manager and Joyce were working, Joyce's father, Jay, walked in to order a cone as he often did. Joyce took the order with a perfunctory hello but without addressing him as dad. As she turned to fill the order, it occurred to her that the manager didn't know who this man at the counter was. So she hatched an impromptu prank.

Employees were trained to use a scale to align the weight of each cone with its price. As she was about to hand the cone to her father, Joyce said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I put too much ice cream on the cone." She drew the cone back, took a large bite off the top, and gave it to Jay. "Here you are." Her father accepted the cone as if it were business as usual at the Dairy Queen.

The manager had been looking on. "When he saw what I did," Joyce recounted, "he cried out and almost jumped over the counter to grab the cone out of my dad's hand. That's when I introduced him to the local Brethren pastor, my dad." The manager had a good sense of humor. Joyce retained her job. The special relationship we have with our parenting God offers us freedom to truly be ourselves in His presence. God's unconditional love liberates us to live fully in God's magnificent creation. It's a status that passes all understanding.

### Join us for a FREE meal on August 16, 2017

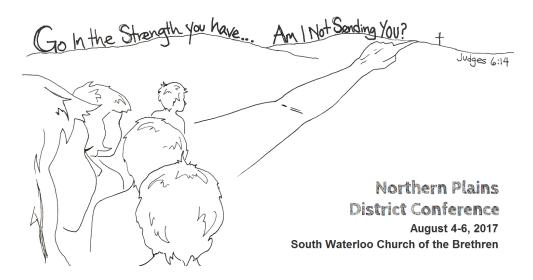
Come one, come all! You and your family and friends are invited to a FREE community meal at the Lewiston Community Center on August 16, 2017 from 5:00 - 7:00pm. Everyone is welcome as we encourage family and community togetherness. Gather your loved ones and dine with us. Cliff and his helpers from the Rec Cafe will be catering the meal in grand style. There will be games and activities for the children.

If you are wondering why we offer this meal and don't take donations, the Lewiston Church of the Brethren wants to share the light and blessings God has given to us with the community. We rejoice in the friends and family members who share their lives with us and support and nurture us. We are called to share our blessings with those around us and nurture and support our community as a whole.

Come and join us and other members in your community as we sit down and enjoy a meal together. Invite your friends and anyone else that would enjoy a good meal and fellowship.

#### **6. District Conference Announcements**

Hannah Button-Harrison, Interim Director of Communications



#### DISTRICT CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

The schedule is up! Please go to www.nplains.org/dc to access the full District Conference schedule.

#### REGISTRATION

Registration is now available for District Conference! You can register and pay online or download a printable registration packet to send in. Please go to <a href="https://www.nplains.org/dc">www.nplains.org/dc</a> to register! <a href="mailto:Early registration deadline is">Early registration deadline is</a> JULY 12TH.

#### DISTRICT WITNESS COMMISSION SERVICE PROJECTS 2017

Please consider giving—"Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." Mt 25:40

- 1. T-shirt diapers for Haiti. Donations may be brought to District Conference.
- 2. House of Hope in Waterloo is a 2 year transitional program for single women with children. Donations may be brought to District Conference of:

diapers, wipes, pull-ups, formula, toilet paper, paper towels, garbage bags, laundry detergent, dish detergent, multi-purpose cleaner, mops, brooms, laundry baskets, bleach, batteries, light bulbs, toiletries.

- 3. School Kits for Church World Service. Donations may be brought to District Conference of:
- blunt scissors (round tip), three 70-count bound notebooks, one 12" ruler, one hand-held pencil sharpener, one large eraser (no pencil cap erasers), six new unsharpened pencils with erasers, one box of 24 crayons, one 12" x 14" to 14" x 17" finished size cotton or lightweight canvas bag (solid color) with cloth handles (no reusable shopping bags, backpacks or bags with logos).
- 4. We would like to encourage cash donations to agencies that support refugees (e.g. Nigerian Crisis Fund or Church World Service).

#### Witness Commission—

Diane Sittig, chair 319-230-9554 sittigdiane@gmail.com
Doris Covalt
Diane Nolt
Penny James
Michelle Leonard
Caleb Peter

## 7. "Why do communications emails display the wrong name?"

#### Hannah Button-Harrison, Interim Director of Communications

#### communications@nplains.org

Hello all, I have received feedback from many people about my display name showing up as Brian Gumm instead of Hannah Button-Harrison, despite the fact that I have changed the name in all of my email settings. If this happens to you, it is most likely a problem that needs to be fixed within your own email application. If you manually added communications@nplains.org to your contact list or address book with Brian's name, it will stay that way unless you manually change it. Please send me an email if you have any questions or encounter any problems while trying this fix!

#### 8. YAC Reflection

#### Thomas McMullin, Panther Creek COB

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Northern Plains District and Panther Creek Church of the Brethren for allowing myself and others to attend Young Adult Conference (YAC) at Camp Harmony virtually free. We are so blessed to have the love and support from the district and individual congregations to go and experience denominational events.

My time at YAC was great, even though the weather was cool and rainy. We were able to hear some great messages from Wendy McFadden, Dennis Lohr, Monica Rice, and Emmet Eldred. We also had the opportunity to sing some songs and have a skit night, which is something our camp settings are known for. We also had some free time where we were able to do whatever we wanted, which was great time to explore the lake near by. Finally, we were blessed to have the General Secretary, David Steele, stop by for a listening session in which he asked us for questions and listened for what the young people of the denomination had to say.

YAC is an amazing way to meet and reconnect with other young adults and leaders from across the denomination. It is very neat, and fascinating, to listen to everyone's thoughts and beliefs on life and the church. Everyone has a gift to be exhibited and to be a witness to God and his work. This conference reaffirmed that to me, and I hope for the others as well: Our denomination in a good place. We are right where we need to be by witnessing to God's call and being the light in this crazy world.

Finally, attending this conference has made me consider being a part of the planning committee. I will need to decide soon, but I feel God is calling for me to step into more of a leadership role in the denomination. This is even more evident as I will be attending Bethany Theological Seminary in the fall.

Again, thank you to the Northern Plains District and Panther Creek for allowing us to experience a great denominational event like YAC.

#### 9. Holiness in our Midst - On Cities

#### **Janis Pyle**

What is your favorite city? Mine would have to be Chicago, where I spent 14 years on the Near North Side in the Seventies and Eighties. I lived where the action was in a time of spiritual renewal. Six blocks to downtown. One block to Oak Street Beach. Four blocks to my church home, Fourth Presbyterian Church, across from the Hancock Building on Michigan Avenue. Twelve blocks to Lincoln Park. Something in my secret soul was satisfied by the sweep of skyscrapers along the horizon, the multi-lingual diversity of the neighborhoods, and the constant wind blowing sweet with the sounds of street jazz musicians. Where else but Lincoln Park Zoo could I shiver and sing Christmas carols to the animals and then warm up over hot chocolate at the Lion House? I often visit Chicago in my imagination: its tasty restaurants, world-class museums, architectural landmarks, and musical venues, especially the Old Town School of Folk Music. I go for long walks, hearing the waves off Lake Michigan mixed with the honking of horns on nearby Lake Shore Drive, and delight in the magnificent ever-changing cityscapes.

It strengthens me whenever I remember how such deep religious and ethnic differences enhanced rather than divided us there. It was in Chicago that I learned from social justice leaders about how to be with persons in poverty as equals. Jeremiah 29:7 (NIV) reads: "Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." While I was in exile, I tasted true community, along with the heavenly flavors of Uno's (deep dish) Pizza! I'm more prepared to persevere in these trying political times because of my years in this good city.

STORY CIRCLE PROMPT: What city are you drawn to? Why?

#### FOR PERSONAL/JOURNAL REFLECTION:

- 1. Read the above reflection.
- 2. Write a reflection on a city you like to visit. Why is it special to you?

#### FOR GROUP STUDY:

- Read aloud Session LVIII.
- 2. Ask each person to answer the Story Circle Prompt.

## **Calendar of Events**

#### 2017

- June 9-11 National Junior High Conference, Elizabethtown, PA
- June 12-16 Day Camp, South Waterloo CoB, Waterloo, IA
- June 17-18 Ivester Church of the Brethren 150 year Celebration Weekend
- June 28-July 2 2017 Annual Conference, Grand Rapids, MI
- July 2-9 District Executive in Arizona as part of spouse's clergy renewal project
- July 10-15 Jr. High Youth Camp, Camp Pine Lake, Eldora, IA
- July 17-22 Sr. High Youth Camp, Camp Pine Lake, Eldora, IA
- July 23-27 Middler Camp, Camp Pine Lake, Eldora, IA
- August 4-6 2017 District Conference, South Waterloo Church of the Brethren
- September 2-4 All Ages Camp, Camp Pine Lake, Eldora, IA
- September 4-8 National Older Adult Conference, Lake Junaluska, NC
- September 21-October 13 BVS Orientation at Camp Pine Lake
- October 8-11 SE IACircuit Ride Preacher: <u>Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm</u>
- October 22-26 Annual Retreat of Western District Executives
- November 3-4 District Board Meeting, location TBD
- November 5 <u>National Junior High Sunday</u>

### **District Staff & Leadership**

#### **Tim Button-Harrison, District Executive**

1211 Clark Ave, Ames, IA 50010

(641) 485-5604 | de@nplains.org

#### Hannah Button-Harrison, Interim Director of Communications

(515) 460-5365 | communications@nplains.org

#### Ida Van Westen, District Conference Support

(507) 478-4552 | dc-support@nplains.org

## Laura Leighton-Harris

**TRIM Coordinator** 

Co-Minister of Leadership Development

(402) 595-0716 ontheshortside@hotmail.com

#### Barbara Lewczak

Camp Pine Lake Program Director/Pastor

Co-Minister of Leadership Development

(515) 240-0060 | bwlewczak@minburncomm.net

#### Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, Moderator, 2016 District Conference

(612) 926-9460 | rpgingrich@yahoo.com

#### David Whitten, Moderator-Elect, 2016 District Conference

(319) 610-2274 | pastordavewaterloo@mchsi.com

#### **Beth Cage, District Board President**

(507) 932-5598 | marble@hbcsc.net

#### Kim Sittig, Chair of Camp Pine Lake Joint Committee

(319) 610-4285 | mssittig@gmail.com

#### **Rhonda Bingman, Financial Secretary**

820 Raven Lane Madrid, IA 50156

(515) 795-3274 | jbingman@mchsi.com

#### **Cluster Ministers:**

## AREA 1: ENGLISH RIVER, LIBERTYVILLE, MONROE COUNTY, IOWA CITY, FAIRVIEW, OTTUMWA, PRAIRIE CITY

Diane Mason

(641) 895-7661 | rdmason@netins.net

#### Tim Peter

(515) 994-2518 | peter.timothy@gmail.com

# AREA 2: IOWA RIVER, SOUTH WATERLOO, IVESTER, ROBINS, CEDAR RAPIDS, HAMMOND AVENUE, FREDERICKSBURG, GREENE, TOLEDO

(currently discerning new cluster ministers)

# AREA 3: LEWISTON, ROOT RIVER, HANDS OF CHRIST (ROCHESTER), OPEN CIRCLE (BURNSVILLE), COMMON SPIRIT (MINNEAPOLIS)

Rhonda Pittman Gingrich

(612) 926-9460 | rpgingrich@yahoo.com

#### Roger Peckover

(507) 458-2517 | peckover@luminet.net

# AREA 4: PANORA, PANTHER CREEK, DALLAS CENTER, BEAVER, ANKENY, STOVER, PEACE (COUNCIL BLUFFS), SALEM

Dave Kerkove

(515) 993-3466 | davekerkove@gmail.com

#### Barbara Wise Lewczak

(515) 240-0060 | bwlewczak@minburncomm.net

# AREA 5: WORTHINGTON, SHELDON, LIVING PEACE (SIOUX CITY), BIG SKY (FROID, MT) Lucinda Douglas

(712) 204-8950 | nightowl21@q.com

#### Ida Van Westen

(507) 478-4552 | sivanwesten@gmail.com