



District News & Announcements

November 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 **November 24th** for inclusion in next month's newsletter to Hannah Button-Harrison, Director of Communications, communications@nplains.org.*

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Banner photo: Women from the district hold up their colorful quilts made during the Women's Retreat. Photo by Barbara Wise Lewczak. Send in your photos for future newsletters! Email communications@nplains.org.

1. Healthy and Safe Congregations Training

November 10-11, 2017 at Camp Pine Lake

Registration is still available for the Creating Safe Congregations training on November 10-11 at Camp Pine Lake. The District Board has very generously agreed to underwrite the costs of this training for all attendees, including registration, lodging at the camp, meals and transportation. We are delighted to have Kathy Reid as the presenter. Kathy, who is ordained in the Church of the Brethren, brings years of experience and competency in this area.

The training will be comprised of three sessions:

Session I – Definitions and Research – the prevalence of violence within families, dynamics of power and control, warning signs of abuse, how to identify potential abusers.

Session II – Prevention Policies and Practices – what to do if we suspect abuse, reporting laws, confidentiality, best practices for congregations.

Session III – After the Incident – caring for the church community, harmful beliefs, being proactive, spiritual crisis care for survivors.

You may register for the training online [here](#).

Or you may download a mail in form [here](#).

CEU credits for pastors will be available for \$10, with checks made out to Brethren Academy. Those who prefer a hotel may stay at their own cost at the Americaninn in Grundy Center, Iowa.

The training will begin with dinner at 6:00 on Friday evening and end at 4:30 on Saturday afternoon. Pastors, church board members, Christian education workers, youth advisors and concerned adults, are all encouraged to participate in this important training. Please register today!

2. Ventures Course on Welcoming Transformation: Nov. 11

Kendra Flory, McPherson College

The next course offering from the “Ventures in Christian Discipleship” program at McPherson (Kan.) College will be “Welcome to Transformation.” Immigrants, refugees, and people of color all have a role in revitalizing communities of faith. This course will explore how setting aside various forms of privilege and power makes room for life-giving transformation and growth in the faith community. The class will be held online Saturday, November 11 at 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. CST and taught by Beth Gunzel, Community Engagement Coordinator in Chicago for Heifer International, and Irvin Heishman, co-pastor of the West Charleston Church of the Brethren, Tipp City, Ohio.

All classes are donation-based and continuing education credit is available for \$10 per course. To learn more about Ventures in Christian Discipleship and to register for courses, visit www.mcpherson.edu/ventures.

3. Ivester Lasagna Meal: Nov. 12

LaDonna Brunk, Ivester COB

Ivester Church will be hosting a lasagna meal at the church Sunday, November 12 from 4-6:30 p.m. Free-will donations will be accepted to assist the youth in attending National Youth Conference in 2018. The menu includes lasagna, French bread, tossed salad, drinks, pumpkin pie and homemade ice-cream. Please save this date on your calendar.

4. In Our Prayers

Tim Button-Harrison, District Executive

de@nplains.org

Hold in prayer Rachel Peter, daughter of Tim and Phyllis Peter. Tim is pastor of Prairie City Church of the Brethren and Rachel is a student and runner at Central College in Pella. What was thought to be a running injury has been diagnosed as an aggressive benign (not cancer) bone tumor known as Giant Cell located at the knee joint on the end of the femur. Rachel is scheduled for surgery in Iowa City on November 7 and will be in recovery the next few months. Notes may be sent to her c/o Tim and Phyllis Peter, 10172 Hwy F70 W, Prairie City, IA 50228, or emailed to ppeter@newton.lib.ia.us (Phyllis' email).

Also hold in prayer our District Moderator, Marilyn Koehler, and her family in the loss of Marilyn's brother, Royce Joiner, who passed away October 5. Obituary:

<http://obituaries.dailyiowegian.com/story/royce-joiner-1934-2017-987727131>

Cards may be sent to Marilyn Koehler, 502 Wall St. Udell, IA 52593, or emailed to marilyn_k@eaglecom.net.

5. Reminder for Church Treasurers

Rhonda Bingman, Financial Secretary

This is just a friendly reminder to Church Treasurers to please send your 2017 allocations to the District Financial Secretary no later than December 15th to allow for mail and deposit time and to ensure they are credited this year. Thank you!

Rhonda Bingman - Financial Secretary

Northern Plains District

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Madrid, IA 50156

6. Message from the Moderator

Marilyn Koehler, 2018 District Conference Moderator

marilyn_k@eaglecom.net

When you're feeling frustrated, we can take comfort in the life of Paul the Apostle. Many times (You and I have had a few this month) life and events get in the way of the ministry and life we plan.

The phrase—Press On-- is taken from Philippians 3.14 and is familiar to you. The Apostle Paul's whole life was about ministry when he wrote Philippians. I find it helpful to also read a section in 2 Corinthians:11.24-27,

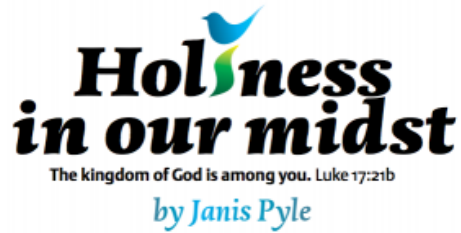
"Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys in danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. And besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches."

The selection enumerates the many times Paul had interruptions in his goal to 'Press On'. The list may sound a bit like what you are feeling (beaten in a figurative sense), particularly about 'sleepless nights, and under daily pressure.' The interruptive events caused Paul anxiety.

We all plan our day, but often at the end of the day a record of the day looks nothing like the plan! What purpose was achieved by the interruptions? As Paul endured and surmounted his troubles, he gave us a model of faith through unplanned events. Through countless interruptions and unplanned events we too can show faith and courage.

Jesus' life was a model of what to do with interruptions and unplanned events; he taught, he healed and blessed, fed the 5000, and answered questions. When we have interruptions and setbacks, we continue to 'Press On' even as Jesus did and later Paul. Have strength for the journey! Press On!





SESSION LXII: ON CAMP

Did you ever come away from a week at camp with significant life experiences or new understandings?

For myself, I can trace back to a week at church camp three new understandings about God and my place in the world. Each one built upon the others. I was 12 the summer that the boys and girls from my church, Highland Park Presbyterian in Des Moines, convened at the YMCA Camp in Boone. My first new understanding was that the world belongs to God not me. That meant: *God invited me into this world; I didn't just happen.* I can trace this learning back to the hymn that was our theme. The words to "This is My Father's World" were printed on signs, line by line, along the main trail. Amid the old-growth beauty of the camp, I believed into my being these words:

*This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world, the birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white, declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;
His hand the wonders wrought.*

My second understanding came at the closing bonfire, in which we gave our whole selves and lives to Jesus. This was preceded by a dramatic ceremonial burning of pieces of paper in which we had written our failures and sins. We were to be given a fresh start in our new lives! Having just come into consciousness about it being God's world, I added the thought: *that I was brought into this scene for purpose.* And I had just asked to be connected to that purpose!

My third understanding came from being given "Quiet Time," something new to me. Our recently-blended family left me sleeping in a bedroom with two sisters. I lived in a crowded house without my own space. At camp, we were asked to go out in the woods and be alone with our Bible and nature and, the counselor said, *to be alone with God!* Before I would learn to hear Him as an "inner voice," I began experiencing Him in the natural world, as I read these words along the trail:

*This is my Father's world: He shines in all that's fair:
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass;
He speaks to me everywhere.*

I took away a lot from church camp. The God who had created the Heavens had invited me to be on Earth. I had asked Him to reveal His purpose and believed He would. And through the practice of Quiet Time, I was convinced He was *know-able* on a personal level. It was heady stuff for a pre-teen! My spiritual formation began there in the woods. It continues (with less sexist language, of course!) but with the same basics at the core that I brought back along with my craft projects and sunburn.

STORY CIRCLE PROMPT: Recall significant life experiences or new understandings from camp.

FOR PERSONAL/JOURNAL REFLECTION:

1. Read the above reflection.
2. Write about what you brought home from a stay at camp. Was it a significant life experience? New understandings? Where was the camp? How old were you? Are you influenced still by camp memories or learnings? How?

FOR GROUP STUDY:

1. Read aloud Session LXII.
2. Ask each person to answer the Story Circle Prompt.

8. Leadership Development Musings

Barbara Wise Lewczak, Minister of Leadership Development

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Laura Leighton-Harris, Minister of Leadership Development

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While at NOAC (National Older Adult Conference) (yes, I qualified this year 😊)

This past September, a phrase from one of our keynote speakers, Missy Buchanan, caught my attention and stuck with me. I thought of a sermon from this phrase and I also had a thought on leadership from this phrase. So, this phrase that so caught my attention and ran through my thoughts during the week was “The Sculptor Saw Something Beautiful”.

On leadership, I got to thinking: How often do we, as the sculptor, i.e. pastor, teacher, mentor, colleagues, etc... see something beautiful in the actions and/or ministry of another individual? How often, then, upon seeing something beautiful, do we work with them in the shaping, the sculpting, of their ministry?

Jeremiah 29:11 came to mind as I rolled this phrase around in my head and notes; this passage says to us “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”.

Just as a sculptor picks up a lump of clay or a paintbrush and begins to work, they already see something beautiful and they set their hands to sculpt, shape, or paint and they help to bring that beauty out by that clay or canvas feeling the encouragement to take form. Jesus does the same with us, he looks at us and already sees something beautiful and he says as he guides (sculpts) encourages (shapes) “For I know the plans I have

for you,” plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”. And we too feel and hear that encouragement to bring out the beauty in ourselves and in others.

Barbara & I invite you to recall and reflect on those who saw and continue to see something beautiful in you and how that has or does shape you in your life’s journey. Also, reflect on how you can see something beautiful in someone else and how you can encourage them in bringing that beauty out. So, please feel free to share your thoughts with us as we would enjoy hearing from you.

Blessings on our journey,

Laura & Barbara

9. Northern Plains COB Women's Retreat

LaDonna Brunk, Ivester COB

labrunk@heartofiowa.net

In the words of one of the participants: "Camp Pine Lake was beautiful with the trees showing their fall colors. It was lovely to be at the sisterly event. It was safe and secure. I learned new things and found it uplifting and joyful to be part of the group. Talking, worshiping, and working together to do good things for the community and our neighbors around the world. Making quilts and comfort to pass on to anyone that needs it. The time went by so quickly our time seemed over just after it began.

Thank you to all who helped put it together and participated. Let's do it again!!"

To add to that beautiful individual response, here are a few facts. Twenty-four women were involved, some briefly and others for the entire two day event. Participation involved:

- cooking and serving for the group,
- preparation ahead of the weekend such as cutting, sewing and tying to have items ready for the group to work on,
- learning new skills (a good portion of the group were beginning quilters),
- bringing some donations of materials,
- designing quilt tops
- ironing
- tying knots to hold the two or three layers together
- measuring, cutting and pinning layers together
- worship and discussion time
- crocheting items to share
- sewing and more sewing, with machines brought by participants

We met some new friends and renewed old friendships. Ages ranged from the 20's to the 80's. What a blessing for this diversity.



By the middle of the second day, and after hearing about the Welcome Center project in Eldora, (kits that include a blanket will be carried in the cars of local police officers and county highway patrol officers to share with children in crisis situations) a discussion led the group to decide that they wanted similar events planned for both spring and fall next year. Participants talked about possibly working on projects in their own churches. It was also suggested that perhaps quilt tying could be an activity during the upcoming district conference. Twenty quilts were completed by the end of the retreat. Thirteen of the small and middle sizes were to be delivered to Eldora. The larger quilts will be shipped to Church World Service at a later date. And quilts in various stages of completion are ready for the next event.

It was rewarding for the planners to see the excitement and joy that grew out of this event. The dream that was the vision for this event was definitely realized.

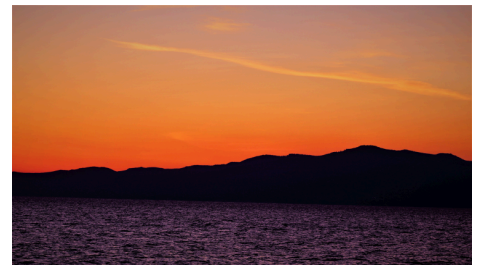
Thanks to the nurture and witness commissions of the district board for your support!

10. Human Rights on the Edge - "Into the Night Sea"

Micheal Himlie, Christian Peacemaker Teams

(Michael Himlie is a Northern Plains young adult from Harmony, MN)

I am wrapping up my time on Lesvos Team with CPT Europe, and will fly to Macedonia, to spend a few days with a friend, having some personal time, and preparing for work in Palestine. I will explore a bit of Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania. While on team in Lesvos, I have been working at PIKPA, a non-governmental ran refugee camp for refugees classified as “vulnerable”. This includes families with young children, pregnant women, disabled refugees, refugees of the LGBTQ+ community, etc. At PIKPA I have been working in the kindergarten, with children ages 2-14, who are either not old enough for public Greek school, or who do not yet have their shots and vaccinations. The other routine part of my schedule on Lesvos is Night Watch, where I and other trained volunteers monitor vessels in the Aegean Sea between the coasts of Turkey and Lesvos. We monitor a variety of government ran coast guards who often perform illegal push backs of refugee boats who have successfully made it to Greek waters, or who are otherwise searching for and harassing refugees trying to cross, making the trip very dangerous for them. We also monitor for refugee boats themselves, awaiting their arrival to the Greek coast, where we provide first aid medical care, water, blankets, and try to lessen the violent tendencies of the military and police who arrive to take the refugees by bus to Moria Refugee Camp, a place that is far more like a prison.



Read Michael's reflection about being on Night Watch titled "Into the Night Sea."

<https://cptmediterranean.wordpress.com/2017/10/25/into-the-night-sea/>

11. Bethany and EYN Form Educational Partnership

Bethany Theological Seminary and EkklesiyarYan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) have entered into an historic relationship, the first of its kind between the Seminary and a Church of the Brethren group outside the United States. At the 2016 Annual Conference, Bethany president Jeff Carter and EYN president Joel Billi signed a Memorandum of Understanding which outlined a new intercontinental online education program. Conceived as a way to facilitate theological study at Bethany for EYN members, the program is a joint effort between the Seminary and EYN.



The first graduate academic program at Bethany made available to EYN students through the partnership will be the Certificate of Achievement in Theological Studies (CATS), requiring one course each in biblical, historical, theological, ministry, and peace studies and one elective. To be eligible for study at Bethany, international students must pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). To help students prepare for the TOEFL, Bethany is

arranging the offering of an intensive English language course in the fall of 2017. Students are required to take this course and a study course for TOEFL testing. Global Perspectives on Scripture: 1 Corinthians, currently scheduled for January 2018.

Reflecting the importance of collaboration in this new partnership, this first course will be taught by both Dan Ulrich, Wieand Professor of New Testament Studies at Bethany, and Pandang Yamsat, chief executive director of the Center for Value and Attitudinal Reawakening. A New Testament scholar, Yamsat recently retired from the faculty of the Theological College of Northern Nigeria. The two met at Bethany early in May to begin planning the course.

"I am especially delighted that Dr. Yamsat took time to visit Bethany during a brief personal visit to the United States and to begin planning for our January course," says Ulrich. "Our planning sessions were very productive: we were able to finalize the course objectives, outline the work needed to meet those objectives, and develop a rough schedule for each class session. We have developed a strong working relationship, and I am confident that we can model the kind of intercultural interpretation we hope our students will learn."

Key to the program's success will be a new technology center at the Boulder Hill Compound in Jos, Nigeria, where EYN students will take all their classes online. Plans for the facility call for two large flat-panel screens and multiple cameras and microphones, similar to the technology now available in one of Bethany's classrooms. Students on campus at Bethany, students in Jos, and faculty in both locations will share the live

classroom, able to see and hear each other in real time. Course content may also be offered through recorded class sessions, and faculty and students will communicate by e-mail and texts.

Construction began on the technology center in mid-July 2017. Documentation of the process is available on Bethany's website at www.bethanyseminary.edu/eynpartner. Click on View Gallery to see photos of the work progression.

While the center will belong to EYN, Bethany is assuming responsibility for raising funds to cover the construction cost of \$150,000. Mark Lancaster, executive director of institutional advancement, and Musa Mambula, Bethany's international scholar in residence, have taken the lead in this effort, meeting with Church of the Brethren members across the denomination to make them aware of this opportunity for involvement in an empowering mission with EYN. To date approximately \$136,000 has been raised. Due to the fluctuation of the Nigerian currency, at least \$16,000 is still needed to meet the original goal. An additional \$50,000 needs to be raised to cover the costs of desks, computers, an upgrade in the campus electrical system, the internet connection, and compensation for Nigerian professors to teach the intensive English course. Ongoing support for this bold adventure in faith is also needed as program costs will continue from year to year.

As the program develops, Bethany plans to offer accessible courses in theological and historical studies, ministry studies, and peace studies. Developed or adapted in conversation with Nigerian church leaders, these courses will be designed to encourage mutual learning on topics of interest to students in Nigeria as well as America. Courses will be offered in intensive formats so that students can complete them during a short stay in Jos.

It is hoped that this innovative program will create a pathway for more EYN students to enroll as degree students and study on campus at Bethany. Courses taken for the CATS can be transferred directly into the master of divinity or master of arts program at Bethany. As EYN moves from a state of crisis to one of greater independence after enduring widespread violence and destruction at the hands of Boko Haram, this educational partnership can help strengthen the leadership, mission, and ministry of a resilient and growing denomination.

Musa Mambula and Mark Lancaster are always willing to speak with individuals and congregations about how God has moved the Seminary to embrace this unique partnership with EYN. Contact Mark with questions about the program or how to support this holy effort: lancama@bethanyseminary.edu, 765-983-1805 (work), or 510-809-6721 (cell).



Calendar of Events

2017

- **October 29-November 4** - Disaster Ministries Work Trip
- **November 3** - Executive Committee Meeting, Ottumwa COB/Bethany Baptist
- **November 4** - District Board Meeting, Ottumwa COB/Bethany Baptist
- **November 5** - [National Junior High Sunday](#)
- **November 7** - West/Central Iowa Pastors Meeting, Panther Creek COB, 10:00
- **November 9** - Church Development and Renewal, Conference Call, 8:30 p.m.
- **November 10-11** - District Workshop on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, Camp Pine Lake, [Printable Form](#) [Online Form](#)
- **November 12** - Ivester Lasagna Meal, 4pm
- **November 13** - District Conference Planning, Conference Call, 7:30 p.m.
- **December 12** - West/Central Iowa Pastors, 10:00
- **December 14** - Waterloo Area Pastors, Golden China, 12:00

2018

- **January 20-26** - Winter Meeting of Council of District Executives
- **February 2** - Executive Committee, Stover Mem. COB
- **February 3** - District Board, Ankeny COB
- **April 9-12** - Council of District Executives Professional Growth, Bethany Seminary
- **April 27** - Executive Committee, location tbd
- **April 28** - District Board, location tbd
- **June 11-15** - Day Camp, Hammond Avenue Church
- **June 22-23** - Primary Overnight Camp, Camp Pine Lake
- **July 1-4** - Summer Meeting of Council of District Executives
- **July 4-8** - [Church of the Brethren Annual Conference](#), Cincinnati, Ohio
- **July 10-14** - Sr. Youth Camp, Camp Pine Lake
- **July 15-19** - Jr. Youth Camp, Camp Pine Lake
- **July 21-26** - [National Youth Conference](#), Fort Collins, CO
- **July 29-August 2** - Middler Camp, Camp Pine Lake
- **August 3-5** - District Conference, South Waterloo COB
- **September 1-3** - All Ages Camp, Camp Pine Lake

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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)

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