



Northern Plains District
Church of the Brethren



District News & Announcements

February 2018

*"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 **February 22nd** for inclusion in next month's newsletter to Hannah Button-Harrison, Director of Communications, communications@nplains.org.*

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Banner photo: Birds walk on a frozen Lake Winona, near the Lewiston Church of the Brethren. Photo by Jess Hoffert. Send in your photos for future newsletters! Email communications@nplains.org.

1. 2018 District Directory

Hannah Button-Harrison, Director of Communications

communications@nplains.org

Our district directory has been updated for 2018! Paper copies will be distributed to district leadership following the board meeting this weekend. Everyone else can access the directory by clicking [here](#) or by visiting the resources page on the district website (nplains.org/resources). For privacy reasons, this version does not include the individual contact index. If you would like the full version, please contact Tim Button-Harrison (de@nplains.org).

2. Michael Himlie Talks About His Work in Palestine: Feb. 1-18

Michael Himlie, from Harmony, Minnesota, works with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), in Palestine & Israel. CPT is an interfaith organization working in conflict and war zones around the world, committed to building partnerships to transform violence and oppression. Michael graduated from Manchester University in May 2017, majoring in peace studies, with particular interest in philosophy, theology, interpersonal mediation, and nonviolent intervention in Middle Eastern war zones, with a focus on Israel's occupation of Palestine. Through photography and stories, Michael will share of his experiences working in Palestine, what life under military occupation looks like, the beauties that prevail despite, and how we, as the silent majority can contribute to an end of the occupation.



Michael will be speaking throughout February, 2018 at the following places:



Thursday February 1st 7 P.M. at the Northeast Iowa Peace & Justice Center, Decorah, IA

Sunday February 4th during the 9:00 AM. church service and 10:00 A.M. Adult Forum at the Greenfield Lutheran Church, Harmony, MN

Sunday February 11th - Wednesday February 14th in North Manchester, Indiana – contact mhimliecpt@gmail.com if you would like more information about this portion of Michael's engagements.

Sunday February 18th 2:30 PM at the Unitarian Universalist church in Rochester, MN

Further inquiries can be sent via email, at:
mhimliecpt@gmail.com

3. February Ventures Course: Feb. 10

Kendra Flory, McPherson College

floryk@mcperson.edu

"How the Bible Came to Be the Bible"

The next course offering from the Ventures in Christian Discipleship program at McPherson (Kan.) College will explore "How the Bible Came to Be the Bible." The Christian Bible is a living document with a rich and spirited history. Our course will trace the Bible's development from its early beginnings as a loose collection of shared texts and resources to its formal adoption as canon at the ecumenical councils of the late 4th century AD. We will observe the way the Christian scriptures merged with the developing Hebrew canon and will follow its on-going transformation through the Latin Vulgate to the Luther Bible and beyond.

The class will be held online **Saturday, February 10** at 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. CST and taught by Carol A. Scheppard. Carol is immediate past moderator of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference and a professor at Bridgewater (Va.) College.

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

4. Regional Youth Conference and National Youth Conference

Natalie Bellis, Ankeny COB

DN-Bellis11@hotmail.com

RYC

Regional Youth Conference will be held at McPherson College on March 2-4. The theme is "Free To Forgive", drawing from Ephesians 4:31-32. The date is coming up fast, so please let Natalie Bellis know as soon as possible if you're planning on attending. We would like to know so we can plan on transportation.



Check out the facebook event [here](#).

NYC

National Youth Conference is also coming up this year! The dates are July 21st-26th and the theme is "Bound Together, Clothed in Christ". Registration opens Jan.18. Please let Natalie know at least an idea on how many are planning on going from your church.

More information can be found on the NYC website, [here](#).



5. Ministers' Professional Growth Event: April 15-17

All Ministers (Ordained, Licensed, Lay, Cluster) in the Northern Plains District (and beyond) are invited to a time of retreat and refreshment at Camp Pine Lake, April 15-17, 2018. This event, being planned by the Ministers' Professional Growth Committee, will include time for worship, study, rest, recreation, and fellowship. The theme this year is: Beyond Sunday School: Re-Imagining Faith Formation. Jesus commissioned his disciples to go, make, and teach disciples (Matthew 28:19-20a). The church's educational ministry plays an essential role in its efforts to fulfill the Great Commission, facilitating the lifelong trans/formation in faith. However, we must think beyond Sunday school, expanding our understanding of educational ministry. Over the course of our time together, we will consider the importance of educational ministry or intentional faith formation; reflect on the impacts of the societal and congregational contexts in which we engage in this ministry; look at "story" and "practice" as key components in trans/forming faith; explore the commonalities and particularities of learners across the lifespan (with some focused time related to ministry with children); and explore new approaches for faith formation that are responsive to the realities of the 21st century. Leadership will be provided by our own Rhonda Pittman Gingrich. Rhonda brings a wealth of educational and vocational experience related to faith formation ministry and has a passion for nurturing the spiritual lives of children.

The schedule and registration details are still being finalized. More information will be sent directly to district ministers in the near future. Scholarships are available for those who do not have access to professional growth funds from their congregation. Please save the date and plan to join with your brothers and sisters in ministry for this time of Sabbath renewal.

6. Women's Retreat at Camp Pine Lake: April 19-21

LaDonna Brunk, Ivester COB

labrunk@heartofiowa.net

Women: Save these dates on your calendar for the upcoming spring version of "Women's Retreat at Camp Pine Lake" . **Thursday April 19 thru Saturday April 21** has been confirmed with the Camp. The Brunk and Beck Brunk men are going to be in charge of the kitchen which will both be a treat and free up women to participate in quilting and other activities. More details to come. If you have questions or you want to volunteer for some aspect of the gathering, contact LaDonna Brunk.

7. Witness Commission Projects

Diane Sittig, Witness Commission Chair

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The District Witness Commission will be sponsoring several service projects for 2018. Two of the projects will be T-shirt diapers for Haiti and Hygiene Kits to be disbursed by Church World Service.

Hygiene Kits include:

- 1 hand towel (approx 15" x 28" to 16" x 32")
- 1 washcloth
- 1 wide-tooth comb (removed from pkg)
- 1 fingernail or toenail clipper (removed from pkg)
- 1 bath size bar of soap in the original pkg
- 1 toothbrush in the pkg
- 10 standard size Band-Aids
- All need to fit inside a gallon ziploc bag.

Thanks so much for your generosity!!

We will collect these at District Conference at South Waterloo in August.

8. Message from the Moderator

Marilyn Koehler, 2018 District Conference Moderator

marilyn_k@eaglecom.net

Strength and blessings to all who work outside in the cold weather; a special blessing for farmers, policemen, utility and city workers, and others who travel daily in the cold. Winter reminds us of the Apostle Paul's words, 'Press on'.

May you include Philippians in your devotional reading during these winter months. Each time I read the Gospel, Paul's devotion to God and his longing for all Christians to *'know Christ and the power of his resurrection'* becomes more clear. Paul rejoices: in their sharing of the gospel; their prayers for him; in God's work in the church at Philippi; and the love for him shown in offering support for Paul's needs. We also rejoice that the Gospel is being shared so many ways across the district, in the church at large, and in mission projects.

As the District Conference Planning Committee met, I rejoiced at the progress the Committee had made. Each one reported their activities and what they would be doing in the next few months. Ida Van Westen does an excellent job of keeping us on track.

Please keep the Planning Committee in your prayers as we continue the work to make 2018 District Conference a blessing to delegates, presenters, youth and all participants. We ask for your prayer support and encouragement in the months between now and August. Please send any ideas or suggestions you may have to make the conference better. Blessings to all.



9. Holiness in our Midst - On Fun Facts

Janis Pyle

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A fun fact about myself is that I inhale Amish novels, at the rate of about 10 per month, year after year. Yes, there are that many out there. Authors keep writing them in single volumes, compilations of novellas and series.

Aren't they all the same with minor changes in locations and circumstances? Well, yes and no. Most are coming-of-age stories of young women faced with the choice of living out in the English world with its myriad temptation and marrying within their familiar and comfortable (but limited) community life. Each character, though, has a twist that complicates the choice: like a controlling family (Will the father stop the marriage?), a hidden ailment (Will he still love her if he finds out she can't bear a child?) or a yearning for higher education (Will she have to forgo her interest in becoming a veterinarian to stay in the community?).

Most are easy reads, but quite well written. Descriptions of Pennsylvania Dutch meals make my mouth water. Recipes are often included. Between the lines, authors infuse their favorite sayings ("The good stuff lies on the other side of fear.") and philosophies of life ("We are all just people in training." Shelley Shepard Gray), which I find quite applicable to my own. If you think you might like to enter deep into the joys and heartaches of Amish families, here is a list of authors to start with: Wanda Brunstetter, Amy Clipston, Jerry S. Eicher, Shelley Shepard Gray, Beverly Lewis, Beth Wiseman and Cindy Woodsmall.

10. Leadership Development Musings

Barbara Wise Lewczak, Minister of Leadership Development

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Laura Leighton-Harris, Minister of Leadership Development

ontheshortside@hotmail.com | 712-322-1872

I recently participated in the **A Place of Refuge: Ministry in an Urban Context** Immersion Experience Centered at City of Refuge Ministries in Atlanta, Georgia. This was an experience that I cannot begin to explain. Since my return I have been working on the required reflection paper and as I have been doing this unpacking and debriefing I could not help but notice the themes of Leadership. Below are just a few of my thoughts that I pray you find helpful as you think about leadership in your context.

They may be a bit disjointed but Laura and I would like to hear from you all about your 2018 Leadership musing and perhaps these reflections will peak your creative thoughts and musings.

Those of us in Church leadership are called to be teaching, modeling, mentoring... Discipleship, this was a recurring theme. What does this mean in your setting?

One of the required readings; *Radical Discipleship: a Liturgical Politics of the Gospel*, Jennifer M. McBride really resonated with me.

Below is a portion of the promo for the book from Amazon:

Christians must become disciples of, not simply believers in, Jesus. Discipleship is radical as Christians take seriously the Jesus of the Gospels.

A definition for Discipleship shared during the class:

Discipleship-Culturing the skills and the Character of Christ in his followers through practices at the intersection of Word, world, and worship. We need to switch from Religion to Discipleship. I do not know anything more important for us as leaders than to teach, model, mentor...Discipleship.

So Brothers and Sisters of NPD; where is Discipleship occurring in your context where you are planted at the "intersection of Word, world, and worship? Please let us hear from you.

As always please be in touch, Laura and Barbara

11. Jess Hoffert's California Adventures

Jess Hoffert, former communications director for the Northern Plains District, is spending 6 months in southern California and writing about his experiences on his blog "Bridges of Orange County" - www.orangebridges.com

Making connections with the housed and homeless

It's been a full week. Not busy per se, but full of new encounters and surroundings. On Tuesday, I traveled to LaVerne (about 45 minutes north of Santa Ana) to meet with Mar Spencer, the youth leader of the LaVerne Church of the Brethren. We discussed ways in which Príncipe de Paz and the LaVerne congregation can collaborate and forge new relationships, specifically through youth activities and fundraisers for this summer's National Youth Conference in Fort Collins, Colorado. It was an exciting meeting marked with a "Yes, let's try that" approach as opposed to a "That will never work" response. I've gotta say, to be the coordinator of new programs and events between enthusiastic, positive leaders at both congregations is exhilarating and freeing. My dreams of bringing Southern California Brethren congregations closer together has—so far—been easy to turn into a reality thanks to the support of the leadership at these churches. I'll share more about these programs in a later post. Read the rest of the article at www.orangebridges.com

12. A Message from the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Task Force

Dear Friends,

On January 12, Randy Johnson, former pastor at Dallas Center COB, agreed to a plea bargain regarding child sexual abuse charges, thus avoiding a trial. Sentencing is scheduled for early March.

As a District Task Force charged with heightening our awareness of, and response to, child sexual abuse, we grieve the reality of harm done to the child victim, to other family members, to the Dallas Center congregation, their community, and to the wider Church of the Brethren. We recognize that this erodes trust in the integrity of all pastors, making their difficult work even harder. It affects how people view the Church of the Brethren, and may reinforce negative feelings towards all communities of faith and their leaders. Finally, situations like this often trigger painful memories for survivors, reopening past wounds of abuse and betrayal.

We cannot change what has happened. However, we can use this as an opportunity to recommit ourselves to the wellbeing of children and vulnerable people among us. We can work harder to make our buildings and programs safer and better designed for prevention and care. We can train our pastors, education workers, counselors, parents, and all church members to recognize potential problems and initiate helpful interventions. We can deepen our understanding about Biblical and theological resources that challenge abusive power. We can believe children when they tell us of harm, and reach out with care to those who carry burdens of past abuse.

Many pastors in our district participated in our appeal to preach about child abuse in January. If your congregation missed this, the month of April, with its focus upon child abuse awareness and prevention, offers another opportunity for this emphasis. Our plan as a Task Force is to gather and make these sermons available as a resource and collective act of accountability, education, and hope.

In anticipation of a safer, more aware and just church, we offer this prayer:

Gracious and Loving God,

We come to you with heavy hearts for the harm that has been committed, trust betrayed and vulnerability violated. We pray for all of those whose lives have been diminished by the pain of abuse; may they find peace in your presence, and courage to face each day with dignity and strength.

In this time of challenge, we give thanks for systems of justice and law that seek accountability and protection of the most vulnerable among us. Guide us, we pray, as we seek to do our part to be trustworthy communities of compassion, reconciliation, and safety.

We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus, who understands and heals. Amen.

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Task Force

Rhonda Pittman Gingrich | Dave Kerkove | Sarah Mason | Paul Shaver | Carol Wise

13. Ryan Bingman Helps Rebuild in Puerto Rico

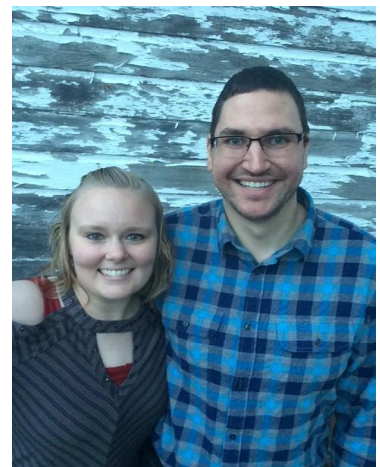
Ryan Bingman of Grundy Center and son of Jim and Rhonda Bingman of the Ankeny congregation is in Puerto Rico along with a friend to help with building projects. They are working in the del Cano Martin Pena District of San Juan helping to install a new roof for a family that they will meet before they leave. They were able to coordinate work through Collaboration of Puerto Rico. Please keep them in your prayers.



14. Hammond Avenue Church Calls New Pastor: Dan Mauslein

Tim Button-Harrison, District Executive
de@nplains.org

On December 10, 2017, Hammond Avenue Brethren Church (Waterloo, IA) called Dane Mauslein as their new pastor. He is from Nebraska and Kansas, is married to Caitlin, and recently graduated from Ashland Theological Seminary in Ohio with an M.Div. degree. Dane and Caitlin arrived in Waterloo January 20, he officially starts February 11, and his installation service is February 18 during worship followed by a Soup for the Soul meal. Tim Button-Harrison, Church of the Brethren District Executive, will preach the installation sermon, and Lee Compson of the Brethren Church will lead the installation. District folks are encouraged to attend the installation serve and/or send notes of welcome and support to Dane and Caitlin Mauslein, 1614 Hammond Avenue, Waterloo, IA 50702 or dane.mauslein@gmail.com.



Last year Hammond Avenue's Pastor Larry McKinney announced his plans to retire. He began his ministry with Hammond Avenue in April 2012 and the congregation held a special celebration of his ministry on January 21. Notes of appreciation for his ministry and involvement in the district may be sent to Larry and Linda McKinney, 2209 Cypress, Cedar Falls, IA 50613 or lmckinney@cfu.net.

Dane Mauslein shares the following on his background, work and education.

"I was born in Falls City, Nebraska and was raised in Hiawatha, Kansas. Growing up, I attended Falls City First Brethren Church. In May of 2009, I graduated with my Associate of Arts degree from Highland Community College (HCC) in Highland, Kansas. While there, I was an academic tutor and also a member of the Academic Excellence Challenge team. I was also a member HCC's Track and Field team. After graduating from HCC, I continued my education at Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas. My time at Washburn was quite fruitful. I was an AmeriCorps volunteer at a community-based resource organization, known as Let's Help, Inc. I served people pursuing their general education degree and helped in several other areas. Also, I was able to complete an addiction counseling internship of over 700 hours with Valeo Recovery Center of Topeka, Kansas.

"I graduated from Washburn University with a Bachelor of Applied Science in Human Services with an emphasis in Addiction Counseling, Summa Cum Laude. Prior to graduating I was licensed within the State of Kansas as an addiction counselor. Most important of all my wife, Caitlin, and I met during our time at Washburn, as Caitlin was also studying to be a nurse. Upon graduating in December of 2011, I moved to Norton, Kansas to work as a Licensed Addiction Counselor for Valley Hope, a nationally-recognized residential addiction treatment program.

Calendar of Events

2018

- **February 2** - Executive Committee, Stover Mem. COB
- **February 3** - District Board, Ankeny COB
- **February 15** - Waterloo Area Ministers, Golden China, noon
- **February 10** - Camp Pine Lake Board, South Waterloo COB, 10 am
- **February 13** - West-Central IA Brethren Pastors, Stover Mem. COB, 10 am
- **February 18** – Installation of Pastor Dane Mauslein, Hammond Ave. COB
- **March 2-4** - Regional Youth Conference, McPherson College
- **March 8** - West-Central IA Brethren Pastors, Panora COB, 10 am
- **March 19** – District Conference Planning Committee, Conference Call, 7 pm
- **March 24** - Clean Up Day, Camp Pine Lake, 8 am - 3 pm
- **April 9-12** - Council of DEs, Professional Growth Event, Bethany Seminary
- **April 10** - West-Central IA Brethren Pastors, Peace COB, 10 am
- **April 12-13** - Council of DEs, Executive Committee, Greenville, OH
- **April 15** - Pulpit Exchange in West-Central IA Cluster
- **April 15-17** - Minister's Professional Growth Event, Camp Pine Lake
- **April 19-21** - District Women's Retreat, Camp Pine Lake
- **April 22** – Pulpit Exchange in SE Iowa Cluster
- **April 27** - Executive Committee, Hillcrest Baptist Brethren, Fredricksburg, IA
- **April 28** - District Board, Greene Church of the Brethren
- **April 29** - Music Festival, Stover Memorial COB, 4 pm
- **May 8** - West-Central IA Brethren Pastors, Panther Creek COB, 10 am
- **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
- **October 1-4** – Western District Executives Annual Retreat
- **October 14-17** – Circuit Ride in SE Iowa Cluster, Jay Wittmeyer preaching
- **November 2** – Executive Committee Meeting, location tbd
- **November 3** – District Board Meeting, location tbd

District Staff & Leadership

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Gordon Hoffert, Chair of Camp Pine Lake Joint Committee

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Doug Riggs, Camp Pine Lake Director

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Cluster Ministers:

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

Diane Mason

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Tim Peter

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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)

Rhonda Pittman Gingrich

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Roger Peckover

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

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

Lucinda Douglas

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