



Northern Plains District
Church of the Brethren



District News & Announcements

August 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 **August 25th** for inclusion in next month's newsletter to Hannah Button-Harrison, Interim Director of Communications, communications@nplains.org.*

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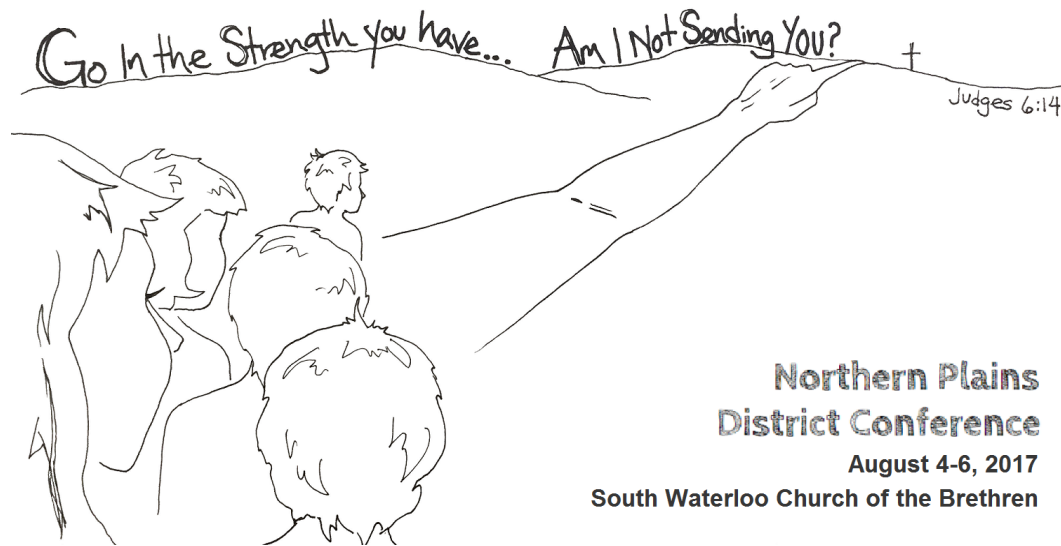
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Banner photo: South Waterloo's Ice Cream Social at a local park, held the third Wednesday of every month for the church and the community. Pictured: Hinsene Roba and JJ Inyani. Photo by Barb Miller. Send in your photos for future newsletters! Email communications@nplains.org.

1. District Conference: August 4-6 2017, South Waterloo COB

Hannah Button-Harrison, Interim Director of Communications

communications@nplains.org



Get ready for District Conference this weekend!

Please go to www.nplains.org/dc for any last minute registering or to access the full District Conference schedule. Hope to see you there!

Witness Commission Service Projects 2017

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).

2. Church Development and Renewal Retreat: August 25-26

Lucinda Douglas, nightowl21@q.com

LaDonna Brunk, labrunk@heartofiowa.net

In late August the Church Development and Renewal Committee (CDRC) will gather at Camp Pine Lake for a Friday evening and all day Saturday retreat focusing on prayer, reflection, sharing and discernment on the past, present and future of new church planting and church renewal in Northern Plains District. In addition to committee members, any others in the district with an interest or passion for church planting or church renewal are invited and welcome to come.

The retreat starts Friday, August 25 with supper at 5:30 p.m. followed at 6:30 by devotions and singing, then review and reflection on church planting and renewal in our district. Friday night lodging is available at Camp Pine Lake.

Saturday, August 26, will start with breakfast at 8:00 a.m. followed by devotions and singing at 9:00 a.m., then our topics for reflection and discussion. Lunch will be served at noon and the retreat will conclude by 5:00 p.m. Saturday topics will include getting a clear, up-to-date picture and assessment of the condition and needs of our district and churches, exploring Church of the Brethren core values and practices using the three-wheels tool developed by CDRC, brainstorming next steps, and reviewing materials on "listening, discovering, and partnering" presented at the October 2016 "Needs of our Neighbors" workshop led by Mary Jane Button-Harrison.

For more information on this CDRC retreat, contact Lucinda Douglas, nightowl21@q.com, 712-204-8950.

Please RSVP for the retreat by contacting LaDonna Brunk, labrunk@heartofiowa.net, 319-382-6063.

Church Development and Renewal Committee Members include LaDonna Brunk, Sarah Mason, Betty Kingery, Doyle Harper, Barbara Wise Lewczak, Natalie Bellis (Nurture), Chris Gottshall (Stewards), Penny James (Witness), Kathy Mack (Hands of Christ), Kim Hill Smith (Common Spirit), Lucinda Douglas (Living Peace), Tim Button-Harrison (District Executive).

3. Continuing Education Opportunities

Lois Grove, Peace COB

Ventures

The first offering in the 2017-2018 Ventures in Christian Discipleship series will be Saturday, September 16th, from 9:00-12:00 (CST). The presenter will be Dr. Kirk MacGregor, assistant professor of philosophy and religion at McPherson College. The topic: "Welcoming Muslims: Understanding the differences between 98% of the world's Muslims, Islamists, and Jihadists." CEUs are available and for more details and to register, please visit www.mcpherson.edu/ventures.

Springs of Living Water Academy in Church Renewal

Registration NOW OPEN for Foundations Class - Fall 2017

and Implementation of a Plan - Winter/Spring 2018

The Springs of Living Water Academy for pastors and ministers offers courses over the phone in church renewal using spiritual disciplines, servant leadership and a path for renewal for a church.

Level 1: Fall 2017 - Foundations for Christ-centered Church Renewal

CLASS DATES -September 12, October 3 & 24, November 14, December 5, 2017

CLASS TIMES –Tuesdays 8:00 - 10:00 AM ET CEU

Level 2: Winter/Spring 2018 - Implementation of a Christ-Centered, Servant-Led Renewal Plan

CLASS DATES – February 6 & 27, March 20, April 10, May 1, 2018

CLASS TIMES – Tuesdays 8:00 - 10:00 AM ET CEU

Instructor: Dr. David S. Young, Musa Mambula from Nigeria a guest. Participants call 800 number

Due to class size for discussion, enlisting a team, preparation for class, please register for Foundations by August 15, 2017; for Implementation Course, please register by January 9, 2018.

Contact David Young at 717-615-4515 or the following:

www.churchrenewalservant.org

davidyoung@churchrenewalservant.org

Springs Academy for the Saints (sometimes called Laity)

Registration NOW OPEN for Springs Academy for the Saints

This Academy will introduce the Saints to a spiritually-rooted, servant-led path to renewal of the church, and help them fulfill their calling as the priesthood of all believers. Through this telephone conference call for each session, lively discussion is anticipated as we grow together.

The classes are scheduled for Sunday afternoons from 4:00 to 6:00 PM, ET over the phone on the following dates: September 17, October 8, October 29, November 19, and December 10, 2017.

Instructor: Dr. David S. Young with potential guests. Participants call an 800 number and give a code.

This Academy will use the years of experience David and Joan Young have in renewing one's personal faith, and of the corporate body. Just like the pastor's academy, where the saints walk along, pastors will walk along with participants.

Special guests are Elwood Hipkins, a BVS'er under Dan West, setting his course as a Christian farmer. Also, Musa Adziba Mambula from Nigeria will teach on Christian discipling and understanding the concepts and conditions for today's church.

To Register: Contact David and Joan Young at davidyoung@churchrenewalservant.org, or by calling 717-615-4515. A Springs Certificate of Achievement will be awarded to the Saints in training.

An early registration discount is available until August 15, 2017, and early registrants receive a free CD of Anna Mow on her anointing. The registration deadline is August 31, 2017. An outline of the sessions will be provided following registration.

4. In Our Prayers

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

Janis Pyle, member of the district conference planning committee and former coordinator for mission connections for the denomination, was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. She was given a good prognosis with treatment. Please pray for courage and grace as she begins this journey with four months of chemotherapy. She can be reached at janispyle@yahoo.com or 1028 Shagbark Drive #15, Nevada, IA 50201.

Jack Meyers (1947-2017) - Please pray for the family and congregation of Jack Meyers. Jack died on July 27. He was a leader in the Hammond Avenue Brethren Church (Waterloo, IA), serving as the congregation's Board Chair and Moderator and in numerous other roles through the years. Jack was a strong supporter of Camp Pine Lake and through his business, Meyers Nursery, Jack helped to improve the camp with numerous landscaping and tree planting projects. His funeral service will be Wednesday, August 2, 10:30 a.m. at Hammond Avenue Brethren Church. Visitation is 2-8 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 1, at Locke Funeral Home, with the family present from 4 to 8 p.m., and for an hour before services at the church.

5. Ways for Congregations to Support our Ministers

Beth Cage, PCABC

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Committee gave an insight session at Annual Conference. Following is a handout that was given as some suggestions for ways for congregations to support their pastors. Feel free to use any of these, to make them fit for your congregation and for you. Give praise liberally and criticism sparingly, just a smile can make someone feel you care.

Let's talk about tools you can use to support your pastor:

1. Prayer-not random prayer but deliberate, sustaining prayer...with notes to him/her that prayer is on-going on his/her behalf.
2. Have a worship service where the pastor is a member of the congregation...so s/he can be filled.
3. Develop a Pastoral Support Committee.
4. Protect a pastor's time of study and sermon prep.
5. Invest in their continuing education...seminars, workshops etc.
6. Give them resources for growth and development...books, webinars, gift certificates for materials etc.
7. Honor their days off.

8. Be respectful of their time...phone calls during office hours etc.
9. Offer a sabbatical for renewal. It's in the pastoral handbook. Talk with the District Executive about this opportunity.
10. Be a friend and listen! Both the pastor and their spouse need a confidential friend too!
11. Defend him/her when criticized-never publically criticize or complain about the pastor.
12. If you have a concern or complaint...share it with them honestly and confidentially.
13. Let him/her use your time share or vacation home/cabin for a get-away.
14. Smile during the sermons!!!
15. Ask how you can pray for him/her.
16. Put flowers in the church in their honor.
17. Take personal responsibility to create excitement and enthusiasm.
18. Find out what books, periodicals, music s/he likes and make a surprise order.
19. If the church doesn't have clerical support, offer to help...fold bulletins, answer phone, work on newsletters etc.
20. Clean the car while s/he as office hours...what a wonderful surprise!
21. Gift certificates to a bookstore or coffee shop.
22. Volunteer to do odd jobs around their house especially when they go away for Annual Conference or on vacation.
23. Send fruit or flowers-for no reason except you appreciate them!
24. Use your special talents for blessing your pastor i.e. sewing, woodwork, painting etc.
25. Have the whole church sign a huge card...it can bring a lasting reminder of the unity of the church body and their appreciation for the pastor's service.
26. Make/provide T-shirts for the pastor and family. Have all the children make one, wear it and present one to the pastor. Be creative!
27. Allow the pastor to share his/her vision for the church.
28. Set aside a week and bombard them with texts, emails, tweets from members of the congregation showing appreciation messages.
29. Provide a tie or scarf of the month for your pastor.
30. Remember birthdays, anniversaries and holidays...with cards or a call.
31. Tell your pastor THANK YOU...not just when you leave the worship service on Sunday.
32. Develop a calendar or list of ideas for the congregation to adopt or sign up for:
 - Thank you notes or thinking of you notes assigned to classes or individuals so they are on-going throughout the year

- Pastor and spouse appreciation day-plan a big celebration!
- Take the family out to lunch or dinner
- Babysit for young families so Mom and Dad have time together
- Give them a “night out” with gift certificates to eat, movie or local activity
- Offer to do things around the house (great for youth activity) like mow, trim, prune etc.
- Send a cartoon or thought ...by any convenient mode i.e. email, text, note etc.
- Be a friend...do things with him/her...walk, have coffee, craft projects, sports etc.
- Make an (unexpected) meal or dessert and take to them
- Have Children’s Department draw pictures with a note of appreciation
- Write an article in the church newsletter about how you appreciate the pastor

Build up, stretch beyond, climb to new heights. Be the church God desires. Encourage and support your Pastor. 1 Thessalonians 5: 12-13 says:

Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

May you work for the glory of God, and the good of your neighbor by encouraging your pastor and church leadership. We challenge you to be creative, think outside the box, try something new and share your ideas with us. We’d love to hear how you have encouraged and supported your pastor and their family.

6. Work Camp Reflection: Baltimore, Maryland

Beth Cage, Lewiston COB

Three girls from the Northern Plains District and 2 adult advisors attended a work camp in Baltimore Maryland. It was a 16-hour drive to get there, but we made it with minimal problems. The workcamp joined with the Baltimore County Christian Workcamp program, which is an ecumenical group, that partner with social services in Baltimore County to provide assistance to those families in need. This week long project tries to help as many people as possible as much as they can.



Our Church of the Brethren group of Junior High aged kids and advisers were split into 4 different work groups. Each group had two adults and 4 kids and we were sent out into the city to assess, work and help. One of our groups was sent to cut down a backyard full of bamboo. Emma was in that group and she will tell you to NEVER plant bamboo. The second group was sent to install carpet in a home, and the two advisers (who had never laid carpet before), successfully got the job done with the help of their team. The third group was sent to a home that had a rusty chain link fence, so they spent some time scraping the rust and peeling paint before they repainted the fence. They also were able to finish their project. The fourth group was sent to a home of a family that had had a smoker in it for 40 years. We needed to scrub the walls and remove the nicotine before priming the



walls and getting ready for the finish painting. At the end of the work time, each group had developed a feeling of empathy and respect for the family that they worked for, and had heard some of their story. Each group worked very hard, which was even more grueling because it was very hot and humid. The kids did a great job of doing what they were asked to do and not complaining when it was hard. Each person felt a sense of accomplishment in completing his or her task.

At the beginning and ending of each day, we had a time for devotions. Each group took turns leading a section of devotions. It was a good way to center our thoughts and to focus on the theme of the week, which is Say Hello. We spent some time looking at ways that God says hello to us, as in music, nature, friends and more; ways that we say hello to God, by praying,

serving, listening; and ways that we say hello to ourselves and to others and to the world. It was a good opportunity to say hello to others when we were doing our photo scavenger hunt, because we all had on our Say Hello t-shirts and people were just reading them and saying "Hello" to us. It was kind of funny to have these strangers saying hello, but after a minute, we caught on to what was happening and made more of an effort to smile be friendly. After the baseball game, one of the boys decided to "high five" anyone he passed on the street. One more way to say hello. Ephesians 4:29 says "Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you."



When we finished work, we had a recreation day, which we spent at a nature center, doing a two-mile (uphill) hike. We then heading to the Inner Harbor for a photo scavenger hunt, looking for Baltimore landmarks. After that, we went to an Oriole's baseball game and enjoyed watching them win. Overall, the work camp was fun, went by fast and was a great way to meet new friends and to help others at the same time. Thanks for your support of our youth as they find their voices and live lives of service.

7. News from the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Taskforce

Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, Dave Kerkove, Sarah Mason, Paul Shaver, Carol Wise (chair)

The five of us were called this past February to:

1. Undertake an evaluation of the factors that may have contributed to the two separate charges of clergy child sexual abuse in the Northern Plains District since 2011.
2. Make recommendations to the Northern Plains District Board to encourage care for the well-being of the victim(s), families, perpetrator(s), congregation, Northern Plains District, and local communities.
3. Develop resources and referral sources.
4. Recommend concise procedures for the handling of sexual abuse charges and/or concerns raised regarding potential abuse.
5. Develop training for Northern Plains District pastors, leadership, and members to increase understanding of the prevalence of child sexual abuse, recognize potential red flags, and strengthen child protection policies and practices within congregations.

Our task force has met twice using Zoom video conferencing. We will have a table at District Conference devoted to sharing resources with district pastors, leadership, and members. All congregations who have a Child and Youth Protection Policy are encouraged to bring a copy of their policy to District Conference for our resource table. Congregations who do not have a Child and Youth Protection Policy will be encouraged to take sample Child and Youth Protection policies and a list of additional resources home to congregational leadership teams/church boards.

Task force members live in four of the five district clusters, and we have committed to meet with congregations, pastors, and/or stewardship teams to offer resources and share opportunities to promote healthy and safe relationships across the generations within and beyond our congregations. You may contact us at:

rpgingrich@yahoo.com; davekerkove@gmail.com; levsarmason@gmail.com; revpaul.iverstercob@gmail.com; cwise.bmc@gmail.com

Additionally, a “Healthy and Safe Relationships” training event for district pastors, leadership, and members is being planned for November 10-11, 2017 at Camp Pine Lake. Details about this educational opportunity will appear in upcoming district newsletters.

8. Holiness in our Midst - On Pets

Janis Pyle

Note: Holiness in Our Midst: Sharing Our Stories to Encourage and Heal is a monthly on-line feature created by Janis Pyle to facilitate sharing of our personal experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and spiritual practices with one another, especially through stories. Barriers are broken down when we begin to see all persons, even those with whom we disagree ideologically, as sacred and constantly attended to by a loving Creator. Each column is accompanied by a "story circle" prompt and study guides for personal and group reflection. To share your stories, contact Hannah Button-Harrison at communications@nplains.org. Janis Pyle can be reached at janispyle@yahoo.com.

SESSION LVIV: ON PETS

Do you have a pet story? When I think about a special relationship with a pet, Thomas T. (for "The") Cat comes to mind. His whole hyphenated name was: Thomas-The-Cat-Who-Taught-Me-A Cat-Curmudgeon-To-At-Least-Appreciate-All-Cats. His nickname was "Tommy."

In 1988, Thomas T. Cat had already taken up residence on the family farm when I moved there from downtown Chicago to care for my grandmother and Sadie, a lovely woman who had always lived with my grandparents as a companion. I had always been indifferent to cats (dogs, too!) until he positioned himself, politely and thoughtfully, along my path. When I went outside to do chores or walk the fields, he never left my side. He was probably a housecat who got lost. For certain, he wasn't like the skittish barn cats, who caught mice and lived in the outbuildings. He thought he was a puppy dog. He was, in fact, so docile and trusting that I told people that we probably could play "catch" with him; I was sure he would just role up in a ball, cooperate and think it fun. (We never tried this, nor wanted to, but you get the picture.) As a person prone to ponder, I often needed to sit on the farmhouse porch steps to just think. Then he would drape his rusty-orange and white body over my knee, and sit there for an hour with his face five inches from mine. He insisted on eye contact. He liked stories, too. So, I would tell him things out loud: how I sometimes missed such things as jazz and deep-dish pizza. How I was uncertain about my family's future after grandma passed away and the farm was sold. How I was ever so worried about how I would make a living when my work here was complete. How crazy different my farm life was from my city life. (I had lived in Chicago for more than 12 years.) He was non-judgmental and kind, the best kind of Listener. His role was caregiver/companion to me, as I tended to my grandmother during her last days. Gradually, I understood how persons could get all worked up over pets. "Tommy' loves you," my grandmother said. She was right. He looked out for me, and I gladly returned the favor.

One autumn day, a hunter trespassed on the farm, and his dogs attacked Thomas T. Cat. Sadie screamed, "Tommy got pounced!" Sure enough, he lay bleeding and whimpering, making a little bed for himself in the

ferns on the north side of the farmhouse. He let me sponge him off. I wrapped him in old towels. I cooked (flavored) oatmeal for him, brought him milk three times a day, and nursed him back to health. He made a good comeback, but he was no longer able to follow me around. Still, he found me whenever I needed to talk about what was really on my mind.

It was Thomas T. Cat who stopped me from making a mistake that would have had family repercussions for generations. A few months after he was hurt, I spent a week in Chicago, walking in Lincoln Park, enjoying the lakefront, eating out at my old haunts. The pull to go back to the sweet familiarity of Chicago was so great that my friends and I began thinking of ways that I could curtail my family farm time, somehow graciously making an early exit. Back in Iowa, my plans became clearer. One morning I went on a walk toward the fields specifically to plan my get-away, to plot how to tell my grandmother that I could no longer sustain my full-time caregiver role. I was just starting down the lane, when I heard a loud, "MEOW!" Thomas T. Cat had followed me. He indicated to me, Lassie-like, that I should turn around and follow him, so I did. I swear that what I witnessed next is true. He stopped at the clearing next to the back door. He had herded all of cats on the farmstead in one spot, many I had never seen. It was as if they were posing for a family portrait. They were in four groupings, each with a mother and father, and their kittens. Perhaps 20 cats, in all. Thomas took his place with his "family." They (and I) stood stock still for perhaps two or three minutes, facing each other. It was one of the holiest moments of my life. I ran upstairs to get my camera, but they had scattered by the time I came back down. Thomas T. Cat had made his point. His message: What will happen to me, to us, if you go to Chicago? Who will feed us? Who will care for us? Your caring has extended beyond your family to the animal Kingdom. Your reach extends beyond what you can see right now. Please stay. Epilogue: Thomas won the day. I never mentioned the subject of leaving with my family or this "happening." I went back into the house that day and said, "Maybe we need to put out a little more cat food each night." I stayed the caregiving course for three more years. After my grandmother died and the family farm was sold, I cared for Sadie in my home until she passed away.

STORY CIRCLE PROMPT: Do you have a pet story? Share about a special relationship with a pet.

FOR PERSONAL/JOURNAL REFLECTION:

1. Read the above reflection.
2. Write a reflection on a special relationship with a pet. How did the animal come into your life? How was your life changed?

FOR GROUP STUDY:

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

Calendar of Events

2017

- **August 4-6** - [2017 District Conference](#), South Waterloo Church of the Brethren
- **August 25-26** - Church Development and Renewal Committee Retreat, Camp Pine Lake
- **August 31** - Waterloo Area Brethren Pastors, Friendship Village, noon
- **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
- **September 23** - [Immigration Symposium](#), Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland, IA
- **October 1** - West/Central Iowa Cluster Love Feast, 4:00 p.m.
- **October 8** - West/Central Iowa Cluster Pulpit Exchange
- **October 8-11** - SE IACircuit Ride - Preacher: [Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm](#)
- **October 14-15** - Prairie City 100 Years Celebration
- **October 22-26** - Annual Retreat of Western District Executives
- **November 3-4** - District Board Meeting, location TBD
- **November 5** - [National Junior High Sunday](#)
- **November 10-11** - District Workshop on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, Camp Pine Lake

District Staff & Leadership

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Cluster Ministers:

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

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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)

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

Dave Kerkove

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

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