



Reflecting news and views

The Reflector

a publication of the Illinois/Wisconsin District of the Church of the Brethren

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District Executive: Kevin Kessler

From the Moderator, Lisa Fike

At the close of District Conference in November of 2010, I issued an invitation to all of us. That invitation was to read John 15:5 at least once a day. I have spent many hours contemplating the words of this passage. I especially like the way Eugene Peterson has paraphrased, in the "Message" he writes: "I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation is intimate and organic, the harvest is sure and abundant."

Jesus reminds us that when we hold fast to Him as the Vine together we can accomplish awesome things. To take that another step when each and every one of us is connected to the Vine the harvest will be abundant.

When I contemplate these words I find myself in awe of the possibilities.

Special Response Listening Session

A portion of the business this year at Annual Conference was to continue the Special Response process begun a year earlier. All of the districts of the Church are conducting listening sessions regarding the Statement of Confession and Commitment and the Query from Northern Indiana regarding Same Sex Covenantal Relationships. You are invited to participate in one of these sessions to be held here at the **Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, IL on Sunday, January 16 at 3:00 P.M.** If you missed the earlier session at York Center, this is a chance to share your feelings and convictions as well as have your voice heard regarding these very important issues. Summaries of the session will be forwarded to Standing Committee for consideration as they make their recommendation to the 2011 Annual Conference in Grand Rapids. Let your voice be heard. After the group break-out sessions, please join us for a special chili meal provided by members of the church. Vegetarian and meat options will be available, to continue our time together with table fellowship and tasty food.

Need more information? Contact Ed Garrison, Standing Committee Delegate (815) 734-4565 or by email

I have chosen phrase: "joined with me and I with you" as our district theme for 2011.

Also at district conference I also mentioned that I would like each church to create a banner measuring 12 inches by 15 inches. The theme for your banner may be taken from anywhere in John 15: 1-17. (There's a lot of good stuff there.) Please include your congregation/fellowship name; also include a means of hanging the banner. At the close of district conference 2011 we will distribute the banners to a sister congregation, in other words you will not go home with the banner you brought.

I am looking forward to this year working together as God's branches and the awesome possibilities that brings.

Additional Special Response Listening Session

You are invited to participate in one of these sessions to be held at the **Decatur Church of the Brethren on Sunday, January 23 at 2:30 P.M.** Let your voice be heard. After the group break-out sessions, please join us for a light supper provided by members of the church.

Prepare by reading the 1983 paper on Human Sexuality, the Special Response Process Timeline, the 2009 paper "Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues," the 2009 Statement of Confession and Commitment by Standing Committee, and the 2009 Query from Northern Indiana on Language of Same Sex Covenantal Relationships.

Check out resources at www.brethren.org

1. Click on Annual Conference (under "Links" in blue)
2. New window will open - click on Special Response (upper right)
3. Click on the resource you want.

D.E. Contributions

by Kevin Kessler, District Executive



Delegates at the 2010 District Conference were encouraged to respond to 5 questions they received on a 4x6 card in their delegate packets. Only four cards were returned with responses. Nevertheless, the information received is helpful in providing a glimpse of what our district's hopes, dreams, and concerns are for the district. It

seems important to share these responses publicly. As well, I hope to, over the course of this year, contribute articles in this newsletter based on the responses we received. If I know of resources and books that seem helpful, I'll offer those. I will also share about ways I see leadership in the district giving emphasis to any of these responses. Hopefully, I will be able to offer reflections of what congregations are doing relative to the 5 questions. In this article, I'll simply share with you the responses we received and then next month begin unpacking the responses. By the way, delegates and non-delegates alike, if you would still like to respond to the question, please do.

What do you hope to see happen in the IL/WI District in the next 3-5 years?

(1) Growth of current churches and new churches in all areas; (2) Strengthen new churches that are coming into being; (3) Work with existing churches to grow spiritually and in numbers; (4) To complete the process of establishing goals and strategies to accomplish our vision; (5) To move forward making great progress in the 5 key result areas we have; (6) Renewed emphasis on support of variety church planting and church health processes

What do you currently see happening that excites you?

(1) Growth in inner-city churches; (2) Planting new churches; (3) Open discussion at district meeting; (4) My church is scheduled for deacon training early

2011—excited about that; (5) Also, work in Rockford—great!; (6) I am very excited about what is happening in Rockford; (7) I am excited by what I see happening at Mt. Morris; (8) I am excited the LT and NCDT are working together to achieve a common purpose; (9) Direction of NCDB re-organization away from a few personal agendas and to be sub-group of LT

What is your greatest concern?

(1) Decrease in church membership and attendance in smaller churches in the whole district; (2) Declining numbers in existing churches; (3) I am very concerned that I do not see our churches reaching out to influence their communities for Christ; (4) That we have forgotten how to call people out to set-apart ministry and been distracted from Brethren basics of no force in religion and the peace position and simple community acts

What would you like to share with the District Leaders?

(1) We need to do more to attract youth and younger people to our churches. Make some changes and modernize to attract this group. Help!; (2) Help our churches to grow /strengthen programs; (3) My encouragement to be bold and make the tough decisions to bring about the changes needed to move forward in the mission; (4) Hold on to Jesus and press on

For what can the Leadership Team and New Church Development Team be in prayer for your congregation and its leaders?

(1) Loss of members and attendance at services. We need God's help in these areas. Pray for us now!; (2) How to reach out to others; (3) Best practices in our committees; (4) How to grow spiritually; (5) Please pray that my congregation, Neighborhood COB, will join in the mission of church planting and that it will become outward focused in every area of ministry; (6) Our continued growth and community influence, both physical and spiritual

GREAT HARVEST CHURCH PLANTING

2011 Harvest Happenings



Church Planter = Missionary New Church Start = Mission Project

Is the above formula how you equate church planting in your mind or is it a fresh idea? I guess it was my assumption that everyone understood church planting in these terms but a few weeks ago I realized that this may not be the case and perhaps the reason we, as a district, have been unsuccessful in raising support for our church planting projects (or mission points, as I prefer to call them) is because we do not identify the work of local missions with the role of the traditional missionary.

Dictionary.com defines the term a missionary as:

1. a person sent by a church into an area to carry on evangelism or other activities, as educational or hospital work.
2. a person strongly in favor of a program, set of principles, etc., who attempts to persuade or convert others.
3. a person who is sent on a mission.

Certainly this definition seems to fit the work to which we call our planters.

We are pretty much all familiar with how the call to missions works. When someone is called to a particular mission field, the first thing they do is begin the process of gathering support for the work. They will spend several months visiting churches, individuals, friends and family, sharing their hopes for the new community they will serve. They have a vision for a preferred future for the community and they share that vision with others, many of whom will join in the ministry by providing prayer, financial and other forms of support.

Recently, someone approached me puzzled because they had received a phone call from one of our church planters seeking financial support for their mission. This person seemed very surprised that they would be asked to contribute financially to support the planter in their work. I shared with them that it is a part of the ministry of the planter, to invite others to become a part of their "team" to spread the gospel to those who have yet to be reached.

Missions are not the closest thing to the heart of God but are indeed the heart of God, and to invite someone to participate in a way that will make an impact for Christ is a special privilege. Church planters working in their field of ministry are giving God's people an opportunity to fulfill their stewardship responsibilities. Someone once said "the missionary becomes the link between the church and the lost world and any Christian worth his salt would want to encourage that kind of person."

It is necessary for missionaries to gather support for their work because they are generally ministering to individuals who have not heard the good news and once they do, will take time to understand the principle of giving and of supporting those who are ministering to them. For some reason that is not a hard concept to understand when we are sending someone to India to share the gospel, but when we are sending someone to Rockford or Aurora, it is harder to embrace.

The support of church planters in their field of mission whether it is across the seas, on another continent or within our own region is the responsibility of fellow Christian brothers and sisters. It is the responsibility of our churches and the individuals within them. The Church of the Brethren New Church Development Handbook is very clear that church planting is mission and that the district is the focal point for support, both spiritual and financial for new missions. This has been true since the district structure was first envisioned in 1858.

David Shumate writes “The district is a mission organization possessing a prescribed territory, which presents opportunities for mission. As a mission agency the district redirects resources from its general constituency (the congregations and their membership) to particular areas of mission and ministry (such as new church development).” Chapter 11 page 3.

Shumate also makes it clear that a line item in the District budget “should not be the sole source of district assistance to emerging churches.” Special mission funding efforts will be required including:

- The development of a coalition of district stake holders willing to envision the future and to commit themselves to providing the leadership for underwriting the vision.
- The calling of an individual or team with professional fundraising experience whose expertise will be essential in engaging the resources of the district constituency;
- The articulation of the overall vision of the mid-term district future in positive terms and the use of current, appropriate technology in sharing the vision; and
- The recognition that competent personal contacts with individual givers and congregational units are vitally important to the success of the funding effort.

While financial partnership is essential to the planter/missionary it is not the only source of support that is needed. Supporters can show their friendship and care for the missionary in a variety of ways, such as;

- providing ongoing prayer support
- writing notes of encouragement
- sending holiday cards
- provide presence in worship and other events
- provide volunteer labor (accounting and tax preparation, video or media presentations, web design, printing, janitorial, etc.)

One vital way that you can help is by encouraging the interest of others who may have the means to provide support for a mission project. If a monthly financial commitment or one time gift is not something that you are able to manage at this time, perhaps you can introduce the idea to someone who has the ability to do so but needs some encouragement.

There were people who caught the vision of the Kingdom that Jesus came to proclaim and joined him in the ministry by supporting him and the disciples by serving them and by providing for their financial needs. Luke 8:1-3

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

It seems clear to me that when we join with those who continue Jesus work of spreading the good news, like these women we are supporting Jesus.

With your help the equation is complete.

Church Planter + YOU = Mission Accomplished

NCDT and LT Restructuring Moving Forward

The action taken at this year's district conference to dissolve the **New Church Development Team** and move it under the umbrella of the District **Leadership Team** is being worked on by the **District Visioning Team**. Members of this team are Anna Lee Hisey Pierson, Jim Lehman, Dawn Blackman, Vernon Showalter, Lynda DeVore and Kevin Kessler. Meeting via a conference call on December 20, the team dove into their work by naming legal documents that need to be gathered and reviewed. Included in the list of named documents are determination letters for 501(c)(3) status, constitutions and bylaws, budgets, and staff position descriptions. These documents will help to ensure that important legalities are not overlooked as we move forward. Legal counsel will be consulted as an additional measure in maintaining legal authenticity throughout this process.

This process is in its infancy and to offer details about a new structure would be premature. However, the visioning team agrees that an evolving new structure will need to maintain church planting as a high priority in the district. Furthermore, there is a call for congregational revitalization to occur or at least be resourced in some fashion in the district. Adding this component to the new structure will be given strong consideration.

Another component being considered in this process is district staffing. To carry on the momentum of church planting and adding the revitalization component infers a need to have staff that is experienced and trained in the church planting and revitalization arenas. The visioning team will give serious consideration to the staffing question and, based on the staffing options determined, will offer proposals for funding staff positions adequately.

The Visioning Team is excited to be involved in this transition process. They welcome input and questions. Feel free to communicate with them at any time.

Way of Christ Schedule for Illinois-Wisconsin: Spring 2011 Way of Christ weekends

Men's Weekend

March 3-6 led by Jim Weaver

Women's Weekend

March 10-13 led by Dominique Beck

The Way of Christ is a three day event hosted by Brethren and Mennonite believers where participants share in a vibrant portrait of the grace filled life Jesus lived and taught. It is a time where the hope of Christ is celebrated, the believer's purpose in life named, the love of God in Jesus proclaimed.

Purpose: In today's world, does our faith permeate all areas of our lives? Can it be sustained in our living? Can it grow there? Can it transform the hearts of the people with whom we share our lives? Is it relevant for this time? Those in the Way of Christ movement think so!

The Way of Christ movement does not propose a new type of spirituality. It reinforces a simple intentional one through which the believer's grace-filled life may, in a natural loving way, be lived and shared with others.

Who should attend? Believers! Believers:

- who know their spiritual lives need strengthening;
- who strive to be credible in prayer, study, and sharing their faith;
- who understand being Christian involves responsibility;
- who seek both the spiritual foundation and moral reserve to purposefully live their lives;
- who follow Jesus in an on-going manner in their daily living.

In other words, if you have a strong faith and still seek to grow in your relationship to God and enable others to do the same, you are probably just the person to attend! Contact us to make arrangements to be part of a weekend.

*Dan Rusmisl, Adjunct Faculty, Religion Department,
University of Dubuque*

Freeport Church of the Brethren Deacon Training



Saturday, March 19, 2011

9:00AM – 3:00PM

(Registration begins at 8:30)

Freeport Church of the Brethren

777 West Pleasant Street

(Pleasant Street & West Avenue)

Freeport, Illinois 61032

Leadership: Donna Kline, Director of Denominational Deacon Ministries

Registration: Please submit the form below, along with payment. Cost is \$15 per person.

Deadline: Monday, March 14, 2011

Freeport Church of the Brethren Deacon Training Saturday, March 19, 2011

Person(s) registering: _____

Telephone: _____

Congregation: _____

Workshops:

- The Art of Listening
- Support in Times of Grief and Loss
- Deacons and Pastors: The Pastoral Care Team

Mail this form and your registration fee (\$15 per person, which includes lunch) to:

Freeport Church of the Brethren

Attention: Wendy Boettner

777 West Pleasant Street

Freeport, Illinois 61032

Make checks payable to "Freeport Church of the Brethren"

Ministers desiring .5 CEU credits should also include a separate check in the amount of \$10, payable to "Brethren Academy".

Registration deadline: Monday, March 14, 2011

Attention Licensed and Ordained Ministers
CEU opportunity within the District
Brought to you by the
Ministry Leadership Development Team

Celtic Spirituality

February 12, 2011
Dixon Church Of The Brethren
8:00am-4:30pm

This will be an interactive presentation with opportunity for expanding horizons, exploring new ideas and sharing and fellowshiping with Brothers and Sisters throughout the district.

What is required to participate?

1. We invite you to purchase and read two books that will be discussed and contents of each incorporated into the presentation.
2. Attend the 1 day seminar Feb. 12, 2011. (CEU's will be presented at the end of that day's activities.)

1.0 CEU's Awarded for Participation

Notes regarding the seminar.

The Books: Christ of the Celts By J. Phillip Newell; The Celtic Way of Evangelism, By George Hunter

Please purchase and READ these books before the seminar as their content is to be discussed as a portion of the day's events.

Coffee, tea and breakfast refreshments will be available at 8:00am.

There will be a 1 hour break for lunch at which time you may leave the premises.

No lunch will be provided. Drinks will be available if you wish to pack a lunch.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact the presenters: Anthony DiMarco, Ginny Haney, John Sgro
Kathleen Brinkmeier, Lisa Fike

Registration for Celtic Spirituality Seminar to be held Feb. 12, 2011 at the Dixon Church of the Brethren

Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ Congregation: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

I do wish to receive CEU's for participation _____ I do not wish to receive CEU's for participation _____

Please return this form to: Beth Carpentier at the Illinois/Wisconsin District Office by January 20th.

Peace Retreats with On Earth Peace



How are your youth responding to violence in their schools, families, and communities? Many youth face or witness bullying every day, how is your youth programming equipping them to follow Jesus by advocating for justice?

On Earth Peace is continuing their Peace Retreats program, offering retreats to junior and senior high youth. Peace Retreats are a time for youth to develop skills as peacemakers, while creating a closer connection amongst each other and with God. Youth will have a chance to dive into scripture, while collectively exploring how God's message of peace is applicable in our everyday lives. Depending on your congregations wants, themes can vary from engaging current issues like bullying to conflict resolution and peacemaking in our everyday life. Youth will have times to worship and fellowship together, work in small groups, use their creativity, and have fun. To schedule a retreat or to ask further questions e-mail peaceretreats@onearthpeace.org. Or to learn more visit the On Earth Peace website at onearthpeace.org.

Church Organ seeks good Home

The Peoria Church has an extra Baldwin Model 45C2 organ that would like a good home. When we purchased our present facility it already contained an organ so our original organ became redundant. It is a 2 manual, 61 notes, 25 pedals, 23 stops and 3 control levers, Baldwin organ. The serial number is 45C2-11739-C5. Any church or individual interested should call 309-682-3980 or E-mail mail@peoriabrethren.org. Free to a good home.



2010-2011 Calendar

JANUARY

- 1New Year's Day
- 8Program & Arrangements, Springfield
- 15 ..Leadership Team - Peoria
- 16 ..Listening Session, Highland Ave. CoB
- 17 ..Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 23 ..Listening Session, Decatur CoB

FEBRUARY

- 14 ..St. Valentine's Day
- 21 ..President's Day
- 26 ..Leadership Team

MARCH

- 9Ash Wednesday
- 12 ..Camp Emmanuel Board Meeting
- 13 ..Daylight Savings Time Begins

APRIL

- 9Leadership Team
- 16 ..Program & Arrangements
- 16 ..Camp Emmanuel Work Day
- 16-22....Camp Emmanuel Work Week
- 17 ..Palm Sunday
- 19 ..Passover
- 22 ..Good Friday
- 24 ..Easter

MAY

- 7Camp Emmanuel Counselors in Training
- 8Mother's Day
- 13-15....Camp Emmanuel Young Adult Camp
- 14 ..Leadership Team
- 27-30...Emmaus Family Camp
- 30 ..Memorial Day

JUNE

- 3-5....Camp Emmanuel Women's Camp
- 5-11....Camp Emmanuel Youth Camp
- 12-18....Camp Emmanuel Jr. High Camp
- 19 ..Father's Day
- 21 ..First Day of Summer
- 25-26...Elementary Camp I - Emmaus

JULY

- 1-6Annual Conference, Grand Rapids, MI
- 8-9....Camp Emmanuel Pre-Jr. Camp
- 10- 16...Sr. High Camp - Emmaus
- 10- 16...Camp Emmanuel Jr. Camp
- 17-23...Jr. High Camp - Emmaus
- 23 ..Leadership Team
- 24-29...Elementary III Camp - Emmaus

AUGUST

- 2-5...Elementary II Camp - Emmaus
- 5-7...Women's Camp - Emmaus
- 12-14....Camp Emmanuel Men's Camp
- 14 ..Camp Emmanuel Board Meeting
- 20 ..Program and Arrangements

SEPTEMBER

- 5Labor Day
- 2-5Family Camp Emmanuel
- 2-5Family Camp Emmaus
- 11 ..Grandparent's Day
- 17 ..Leadership Team
- 29 ..Rosh Hashanah

OCTOBER

- 8Yom Kippur
- 8Program & Arrangements
- 10 ..Columbus Day
- 15 ..Leadership Team
- 22 ..Camp Emmanuel Fall Work Day

NOVEMBER

- 4-6District Conference, Lake Williamson
- 6Daylight Savings Time Ends
- 12 ..Camp Emmanuel Board Meeting
- 18-19...Leadership Team Retreat
- 24 ..Thanksgiving

DECEMBER

- 21 ..Hanukkah
- 25 ..Christmas
- 26 ..Kwanzaa