



Reflecting news and views

The Reflector

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District Executive: Kevin Kessler

From the Moderator, Lisa Fike



Bill and Gloria Gaither sing a song entitled "Resurrection" The words are something like this "Hang out the banner and shout the news, blow the trumpets and horns 'till there is no one that has not heard, we needn't die anymore. I'm here to tell you that Jesus lives and as he lives

so shall we. Dying and fears have past away, swallowed in victory." The second verse invites us to join in a "happy dance" in celebration of the risen King.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, as we celebrate this Easter may we join in the happy dance and show and share our joy. Through the "spring in our step" may others see Christ shining through us. As "we join in the song" may everyone hear Christ on our lips. Come on join the dance! When you think about it, with all the joy Father, Son and Holy Spirit bring us how can we sit still? Happy Resurrection Day! Lisa

Banners For District Conference

Moderator Lisa Fike and the Program and Arrangements Team are asking each fellowship/ church to make a small banner using the conference theme "**Joined with me and I with you**" taken from John 15:5)

Or you can use your church theme or logo. Banners should be finished size 12 inches wide by 15 inches long and should include a means of hanging. They can be made of any material and can be any color. Please include your church name in some manner. These banners will serve as our back drop as we worship and do business. At the close of conference banners will be re-distributed. Each church will receive the banner of a sister church and are encouraged to hold this sister congregation in your prayers throughout the next year.



We please ask that you send the banners to the District Office or give to one of the members of the Program and Arrangements Committee by September 15, 2011.

Freeport Congregation asking for Help

The Freeport Church of the Brethren is asking for the help of the IL/WI district.

36 year old Jason Schnierla, is in the final stages of Kidney failure. To save his life he must have a kidney transplant. He has attempted with little to no success for assistance from the state. He is unable to work because of the fatigue he is experiencing. He has been able to find a hospital in Chicago that will work with him still there are financial concerns. We are hoping that churches and/or individuals will join with us in collecting funds for Jason. We suggest

that each member set aside \$1.00 a day for the 30 days in April. Of course all donations will be appreciated. Donations can be sent to Freeport Church of the Brethren 777 West Pleasant St. Freeport IL 61032 please mark the memo line "Jason"

Jason who has two children ages 7 and 5 is the son of Mike and Paula Schnierla, Mike is Camp Emmaus board chair.

Lisa J. Fike, Pastor and Moderator 815-232-1938



DE Thoughts by Kevin Kessler

I'm continuing, with this article, to address responses that were made to 5 questions presented at District Conference last fall.

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 that we are distracted from Brethren basics of no force in religion and the peace position and simple community acts.

One word in the four responses jumps out at me. That word is distracted. Distractions really do take our attention away from what is important. Something that immediately comes to mind when thinking of distractions is cell phone usage while driving. Laws have been written and implemented as a result of this distraction causing traffic accidents and worst of all fatalities. I will ashamedly admit that I am guilty of occasionally looking at an email or a text on my smartphone while driving. I know I'm distracted when I hear the rumble strips that I'm running over on the shoulder of the road and my dearest companion sitting in the passenger seat saying, "Do you want me to look at that for you?"

Here's the rub. The email or text is important, usually. But is it important enough for me to take my focus off the important task at hand—driving safely? The answer is obvious.

What is the important task at hand for the church, or more specifically, for the IL/WI District? The answer to this question is encased in the responses to the question, What is your greatest concern? Reaching out to the communities in which we live with the influence of Christ and the love of God in ways that allow the Holy Spirit to produce fruit is for me a hallmark of the church's activity. Other ways of saying this might be reaching people for Christ, influencing communities for Christ, winning

people to Christ, as a few examples. The emphasis is to engage our communities in such a way that Christ is revealed in ways that are inviting and affirming. We want to turn people on to ways of being and living that are God-ordained, Christ-centered, and Spirit-filled.

An important aspect of carrying out such influence is that it be done with no force. We offer this influence as an invitation to come and see, for others to experience it for themselves and arrive at their own conclusions. As Paul stated in I Corinthians 3, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." It's not up to us to make sure anyone "gets it." We simply offer ways of peace, simple acts of kindness, cups of cold water, food to the hungry, clothing to the destitute, shelter to the homeless, hope to the hurting, in unconditional Christian love, and then let go and let God.

Granted, unconditional Christian love is hard work and requires exceptional energy. This love is the task at hand and from which we are frequently distracted. Worrying about decline and waning membership is certainly important, but when it becomes the focus, we can be distracted from the task at hand. Allowing social issues, which have important implications, to consume our conversation can certainly distract us from the task at hand. Even emphasizing church growth and multiplication without a clear focus on why it is being done can distract us from the task at hand.

An increased awareness of the distractions can, I have a hunch, go a long way toward helping to re-focus our energies toward the task at hand. As distractions are recognized for what they are—distractions—we can then put them aside so that we are able to navigate more efficiently the way of love, which is of ultimate importance. We might be able to more readily recognize those who navigate the way well and thus feel compelled to call them out to consider set-apart ministry. Or, persons who navigate well may be so filled with enthusiasm they will seek out ways in which they can explore possibilities for set-apart ministry. And, because of navigating the way of love well, others will be safe to accept the love offered and receive blessings for life transformation.

Focus without distractions has great possibilities.

Chicago First Needs a Roof

from First Views Newsletter:



In January 1925 First Church of the Brethren held its first worship service in their current sanctuary. They purchased the church and parsonage from the Presbyterians for \$41,250 then spent an additional \$25,000 remodeling. That was a fair sum in 1925.

A report recently informed the church that the majestic trusses that lift the sanctuary roof have rotted out at the point where they meet the pillars. Structural engineers are being consulted, a fund raising committee is meeting and prayers are being raised for the church to face an estimated \$100,000 costs of repair.

If you are willing to help with this fund you can visit the First Church website at www.firstcob.org or E-mail at firstcob@gmail.com.

Chicago First Church of the Brethren supports many neighborhood programs including tutoring students, a once a month "Math Marathon", a youth Drumming Corps, scholarships, community garden, Spanish services, etc. First Church is a dynamic force in their Chicago neighborhood.

Don't let the roof fall in on this historic Church of the Brethren.

Brethren Provide Grant For Relief

An initial grant of \$25,000 from the Church of the Brethren's **Emergency Disaster Fund** is being given in support of disaster relief work in Japan following the massive earthquake and tsunami that hit the island nation on March 11. The grant will support work by Church World Service (CWS) and local partner organizations.

This initial grant from the Brethren fund will provide emergency relief supplies at evacuation sites where basic food, water, sanitation, electricity, and fuel needs are not being met. CWS is coordinating the response by working with partners such as the Japan Platform and the national Council of Churches in Japan.

(The above information comes from the COB Newsline. Please visit www.brethren.org for more information) Article appeared in the Springfield Cob newsletter "Boulevard News"

Camp Emmanuel News



Camp Emmanuel announces an upcoming **work day and work week**. The work day will be **Saturday, April 16**. It will begin at 8 am. The work will include cleaning the buildings, picking up the grounds, and beginning the rebuilding of the suspension and land bridges. The work week will continue through Friday, April 22. We are invited to come for any part of the week. You can let the camp know which day(s) you are coming by emailing campemmanuel.cob@gmail.com or by telephoning 1-309-328-2291.

Woodland Church of the Brethren



The Woodland Church of the Brethren will present a dramatic cantata called "**Come and See**" on April 17, at 7:00 p.m. Everyone in the District

is welcome to come and hear the message of Easter, the story of our risen Savior. The Woodland Church is located just North of Astoria, Illinois. Pastor Greg Beach and the Congregation extend the hospitality of the Woodland Church to all who wish to be renewed this joyous Easter season.

Disaster Ministries needs School Kits and Clean-up Buckets

from "Bridges"

The current inventory of School Kits and Emergency Clean-up Buckets is too low to meet the expected demand for the upcoming springtime flood season reports Chris Herlinger of Church World Service. They are appealing to all members including the Church of the Brethren to promote these needs to each congregation within the denomination. The efforts of Church members are critical to help meet the requests and replenish the supply.

For information on assembling the kits and buckets go to: www.churchworldservice.org/kits

NOAC Bus to Lake Junaluska



A bus to National Older Adult Conference in Junaluska, North Carolina has been reserved for transport from **Mt. Morris** on **Sunday, September 4, 2011**. The bus will return on **September 10, 2011**. The group will make an overnight stay going and returning. The cost is **\$260.00** for the bus fare including double motel occupancy. For information and registration, please contact: Marvin Thill, 521 Eugene St., Stockton, IL 61085; 815-947-3197; bettyandmarvin@gmail.com

Persons associated with churches in the southern part of the district are welcome to ride on the **Western Plains** bus boarding at **Carbondale**. Call David Fruth for details: 620-245-0674.

For information about NOAC go to www.brethren.org/NOAC or call Kim Ebersole at (800) 323-8039, ext. 30

Maundy Thursday's Love Feasts

Many Brethren Churches will be celebrating the **Holy Ordinance of Love Feast** this month. The simple shared tasks of feet washing, the agape meal and communion renew the covenant that binds us to Christ and together.

"From time to time "other" traditions lift up the importance of the towel and tub, reminding this Brethren pastor what a powerful act it is to do what Jesus did: to kneel and to wash another's feet. Over the years my feet have been washed by brothers and sisters. I, too, have washed the feet of sisters and brothers. What a blessing and challenge this Brethren ordinance has been". (excerpt by Pastor Kres Lipscomb from "Boulevard News")

Pleasant Hill Village - Annual Work Day Planned



Plans for a **Fourth Annual Work Day** at Pleasant Hill Village in Girard have been set for **Saturday May 14th** with a rain date of May 21st. Work begins at 8:00AM but latecomers will find plenty to do as well. Flower beds need cleaning, planting, weeding and mulching and raking rounds out much that requires helpful volunteers.

Please bring gloves and garden trowels to facilitate the work. A light lunch will be provided along with refreshments and fellowship throughout.

Pinecrest Open House Celebration



Pinecrest will be holding an **Open House**, from 2-4 pm on **April 14, 2011** for **Carol A Davis, CEO**, who will be retiring on April, 15, 2011. Please join us in wishing her the very best. Carol served Pinecrest for 7 years and will be greatly missed.



Pleasant Hill Village is a Church of the Brethren ministry

located within the IL/WI District and presents a good opportunity to be involved in Brethren ministry. A tour and history of mission at the Brethren Home of Girard will be offered after lunch.

To all who have assisted in the past, a hearty



Thank-you for your dedication to serve. Please call and let us know how many may be coming – 217-627-2181 ask for Kyle Hood or Paulette Buch-Miller, or email us at phvil@royell.net.

**Annual Conference
July 1 - 6, Grand Rapids**



Logo and theme of the 2011 Annual Conference. Below: A night-time view of Grand Rapids (photo by Gary Syrba courtesy of Experience Grand Rapids).





Great Harvest Church Planting

IL/WI District Church of the Brethren

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. Psalm 127:1,2

The church will never die. It is eternal. We, as part of the church must step forth and share the good news of what God has done for us with everyone and anyone who will listen. There is an urgency in this, for life here on earth is short. This is our commandment: to tell the world about the love of Jesus. Please join us in prayer for those of our district who are sharing in this work through the ministry of church planting.

Samuel Sarpiya

Pray for a move of God in the city of Rockford.

Pray for the new open discussion group, for young adults, that will be held at the YMCA Café.

Pray that the Bible study on spiritual gifts, pray that many gifts will be revealed.

Continue in prayer for the West Middle School after school program.

Pray for resources to continue the work being done in Rockford.

Frances Baxter

Pray for further development of the vision for Aurora during Frances trip to the area this month.

Pray for financial and ministry partners to join with Frances in the mission of planting in Aurora.

Pray for open doors to the connections needed in the Aurora community.

Thank the Lord in advance for the Illinois Teaching Certificate that she will seek to obtain during her visit.

Anibal Vega

Please pray for Anibal Vega as he seeks to understand God's will for him with regards to church planting.

O loving, sovereign God, whose reign extends around the globe, we rejoice in your greatness; we give thanks for your unending goodness. In all the corners of the earth you are faithfully building your church. We give thanks for the vast embrace of your love, for the multicolored church you are creating. Grant, O God, that we may truly be one church with one baptism, one hope, in one Lord Jesus Christ, to the end of the age, to the praise of God's glory. Amen.

Thank you for your prayers,

The Planters and Team of New Church Development

2011 Yearly Reports Received

Church Name	Form A	Form B	Statistical Report	Congregational Outreach
Allison Prairie		Y		
Batavia, New Beginnings				
Canton		Y	Y	Y
Cerro Gordo		Y	Y	Y
Champaign			Y	Y
Cherry Grove		Y	Y	
Chicago First				Y
Decatur		Y	Y	Y
Dixon		Y	Y	
Douglas Park		Y	Y	
Franklin Grove		Y		Y
Freeport		Y	Y	Y
Girard		Y	Y	Y
Highland Avenue		Y	Y	Y
Hurricane Creek		Y		Y
Lanark				
La Place		Y	Y	Y
Martin Creek				
Milledgeville		y	Y	
Mt. Morris			Y	Y
Naperville		Y		Y
Neighborhood		Y	Y	Y
Oak Grove		Y		
Oakley Brick				
Panther Creek				
Peoria		Y	Y	Y
Polo		Y	Y	Y
Rock Community Church		Y		
Rockford First		Y		
Romine				
Springfield		Y	Y	Y
Stanley		Y		Y
Virden		Y		
Walnut Grove				
West Branch		Y	Y	Y
Woodland		Y	Y	Y
Yellow Creek		Y	Y	
York Center		Y	Y	Y

The above reports are requested every year from each District congregation so that we can not only report activity from the District to the Brotherhood but allow the District to monitor progress of our Ministries. With the information the District can better respond with assistance.

2011 Calendar

APRIL

- 2 ...Gifts Discernment & Call Comm. Meeting
- 9 ...Leadership Team - Peoria
- 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

- 1National Youth Sunday
- 5National Day of Prayer
- 7 ...Camp Emmanuel Counselors in Training
- 8Mother's Day
- 13-15....Camp Emmanuel Young Adult Camp
- 14 ..Leadership Team - Franklin Grove
- 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
- 17 ..Nat'l. Jr. High Conf, Elizabethtown College
- 19 ..Father's Day
- 21 ..First Day of Summer
- 25-26...Elementary Camp I - Emmaus

JULY

- 2-6Annual 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 - Peoria
- 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
- 5NOAC, Lake Junaluska
- 2-5Family Camp Emmanuel
- 2-5Family Camp Emmaus
- 11 ..Grandparent's Day
- 17 ..Leadership Team - Dixon
- 21 ..International Day of Peace
- 29 ..Rosh Hashanah

OCTOBER

- 2World Communion Sunday
- 8Yom Kippur
- 8Program & Arrangements
- 10 ..Columbus Day
- 15 ..Leadership Team - Peoria
- 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 - Emmaus
- 24 ..Thanksgiving
- 27 ..First Sunday of Advent

DECEMBER

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

Regional Youth Conference

The **2011 Powerhouse regional youth conference** will take place at Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.) Nov. 12-13. Jeff Carter, pastor of Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren, will be our keynote speaker for the weekend. Other details will be developed in the months ahead, but for now please mark your calendars and plan to join us! For questions, contact the Manchester College Campus Ministry office at wjwiltschek@manchester.edu. Walt Wiltschek; MC Campus Ministry, 260-982-5243



Oak Grove Church of the Brethren Visits Creation Museum