

Reflecting news and views

The Reflector

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District Executive: Kevin Kessler

DE Ponderings by Kevin Kessler, District Executive



At District Conference, I shared that I am experiencing a shift in my approach to the work I do as District Executive. While still giving attention to vision, my attentiveness in that direction will be less and I will turn my focus more toward God's activity among

us. In being more attuned to what God is doing in our midst, I see my role as more of an encourager, encouraging all of us to join with the activity of God already happening rather than trying to shape a vision that may or may not include God.

This approach will require effort in having greater awareness of the district's environment and surroundings. A helpful tool in assessing the environment is the S.W.O.T. method (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), which I've only begun to employ.

I shared some preliminary considerations about our district's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, which I will reiterate here in writing, providing easier access to my thoughts.

1. **Strengths** – We have many, but one that we know, we just too frequently fail to name is this: *our congregations are vital ministry outlets*. And it doesn't matter the size of the congregation. Listen to and read about what congregations are *doing* in our district. **We've got to quit lamenting what we aren't doing or can't any longer do and really focus on what we are doing and what we can do.** And then celebrate...and offer thanks.

Another strength we have is relationships. Person to person. Congregation to congregation. Pastor to people and vice versa. Let's think of ways we can network effectively to become stronger than we are individually. Technology and social networking, used properly, can help us do this well.

2. **Weaknesses** – As with strengths, we have several weaknesses, but one that I'm becoming aware of more and more is *leadership*. We don't lack leadership in the district. We don't lack leaders in the district. What's lacking is knowing who the leaders are AND not recognizing in ourselves what leadership gifts and skills we have AND not helping others find their leadership abilities. This translates into difficulty finding leaders for important tasks and ministries in our congregations, our district, and denomination. I encourage us to become more observant and work at recognizing and calling out leadership gifts in others. And I encourage us to listen when others speak to us of the giftedness they see in us.

3. **Opportunities** – Opportunities abound for us to be witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a world where violence and corruption and hatred seem culturally acceptable, we who are people of peace and service have a *grand opportunity* to let our communities in which we live and the world in which we exist see our true colors of being non-violent, non-anxious, non-fearful, loving, generous, kind, merciful, and gracious. Rather than seeing things like racism, bigotry, bullying, hazing, etc. as difficulties to avoid, what difference can we make if we see these difficulties as opportunities to let our colors shine?

4. **Threats** – We sometimes and in some settings look at what is beyond us as a greater threat. One that comes to mind is programmatic or mega-churches. Sometimes they enter our communities and we lose members or it becomes increasingly difficult to evangelize and invite and integrate new people into our faith communities. But what if we changed our focus from the outside threats and focus on one internal threat that may have more significance. This internal threat is *timidity, or lack of confidence to be who we are, or practicing*

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humility to our detriment. We have a tremendous faith to offer to others...a faith established on Jesus Christ expressed through peacemaking, and serving, and caring, and hospitality, and grace, and justice, and the list goes on. Jesus calls upon us to not hide this light, but to be like a city set upon a hill. If we are timid, or lack confidence, or think that humility means we should be seen but not heard, we play into an internal threat, one whereby we shut ourselves off to the world around us. If, instead, we boldly, confidently, without reservation let the light of peace, service, care, hospitality, etc, etc, shine forth from our lives, we overcome the internal threat, and, I believe, we overcome the so called external threats of competition.

I will continue exploring our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as I pay attention to the stories abounding in our district. And I'll continue to share in future newsletters, reports, and other means what I'm hearing, seeing, and experiencing.

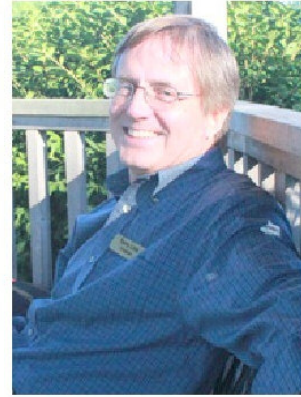
Coordinators of NYC 2014 issue challenge for Brethren youth to exceed capacity at host university.



What if so many people registered for National Youth Conference (NYC) that Colorado State University ran out of room to house everyone? That's the challenge NYC coordinators Katie Cummings, Tim Heishman, and Sarah Neher are issuing to Brethren youth and to the denomination as a whole.

Read the full story at
www.brethren.org/news/2013/coordinators-of-nyc-2014-issue-challenge.html

Ordination of Chaplain Terry Link



First Church of the Brethren
2115 Yale Blvd.
Springfield, Illinois

Sunday, December 1st
10:30 a.m.

Potluck & Refreshments following ordination
All are welcome to come!

Ordination at Springfield

First Church of the Brethren, Springfield, with great joy, wishes to announce that Terry Link will be ordained on Sunday, December 1. The ordination will be a part of morning worship. The service begins at 10:30 am. A potluck meal and time of fellowship will follow. Sisters and brothers from the district are invited to the service, as well as to be in prayer for our brother, Terry. Terry Link is chaplain at Pleasant Hill Village in Girard.

Leadership Team meets at Neighborhood Church



Neighborhood Church of the Brethren hosted the Leadership Team October 12. Those present were voting members: Bob Champlin, Chm., Jim Lehman, Asst. Chm., Bill Pocklington, and Mandy Rahn. Ex-officio members; Kevin Kessler, DE, Gordon Heid, Treasurer, Mark Flory Steruy, Moderator, Gil Crosby, Secretary. Visitors; Pat Heid, David Barnett and Pat Crosby.

Chairman, Bob Champlin, opened with devotions based on Romans 15:7, Welcome each other into the Church as Christ welcomed you. The meeting was begun with prayer.

Gordon reported on the financial health of the District proclaiming our finances in good shape at the present time. Our investments are doing well adding to District income. Gordon also complemented Beth Carpentier on the great job she is doing backing up records and providing information to the Treasurer.

Kevin's report showed us how busy he has been travelling the District, attending Annual Conf., meeting with Ministry Teams, being co-chairman of the Illinois Conference of Churches capped off with his extensive reading program. One item of business concerning the District Executive was for the LT to

approve a housing allowance of \$6,000 for 2014 and future years.

A query came from the Virden Congregation, represented by Pastor David Barnett, stemming from the presence of the gay speaker at the 2012 District Conference worship service held at Virden. The query asks if the polity of the church allows displays at Annual Conference, including the wearing of adversarial clothing (both black and rainbow) and implied consent of a Gay liestyle. After a lot of discussion on the query a vote was taken resulting in a tie vote. The query was returned to Virden who can present it at another LT meeting if desired. Pastor David and the Virden congregation were commended for doing an excellent job in writing the query knowing the feelings of the congregation and people in general on the subject.

Ordinations were approved for Josh Brockway of the Congregational Life Ministry Team in Elgin and Michael McKeever an Assoc. Professor at Judson University and teacher at Bethany.

Continuing discussion on the Douglas Park congregation led the Team to recommend to District Conference that the Douglas Park Congregation be dissolved. An attorney has been hired to help with residents of the apartments arrears in rent. Pastor Herman Ware concludes his service November 31. The new Properties and Management Team began work to assess what is needed to sell the property.

Bob Champlin and Bill Pocklington have completed their terms and leave the Leadership Team this year. The LT thanked them both for their service and contributions to the District for the past 6 years. We wish them God Speed and good wishes.

The next Leadership Team meeting will be held as a retreat at Camp Emmaus on November 15 - 16. We will be welcoming the new Moderator Elect, Dana McNeil, LT members Vicki Matheny, Ray Cleer and re-welcoming Purvi Satvedi. to the Leadership Team.

District Conference at Mt. Morris Church of the Brethren.



The theme is RENEW - The District Conference of Illinois-Wisconsin opened Friday evening at the Mt. Morris Church. Registration began at 5:30 PM with the Silent Auction and Exhibits beginning at 6:00 PM. A new format for Conference this year consisted of a 2 day session ending Saturday Evening.

The people were called to the Sanctuary with a 20 minute Hymn singing. The service began with a beautiful flute trip preparing the audience for Worship. Jonathan Shively, Executive Director for Congregational Life Ministries brought the evening message. Along

the lines of the theme, RENEW, Jonathan told the story of Henry and Olive, one who wondered if Church was alive and one who had given up. He told us RENEW is a total make over and to be focused on God. We should join those who have surrendered their lives to God.



In keeping with Brethren and District Conference tradition the Youth served ice cream in the Fellowship Hall. All donations going to the Youth in anticipation of their trip to National Youth Conference next year.

Saturday morning, after the congregation served a Continental Breakfast, the business meeting was called to order by Moderator, Mark Flory Steury. Moderator Elect, Stan Rodabaugh and Secretary, Bill Williams completed the table conducting business. Commissioning of the Delegates and the Minutes from 2012 were approved. The slate of Delegates was presented by the Gifts and Discernment Committee. The slate was approved.



The business sessions went smoothly with Ministry Teams, Brethren Homes, and Camps reporting progress from the preceding year. One sad item of business this year was the dissolving of the Douglas Park Congregation. Several people recalled memories of Douglas Park including Pastor Shirley Patracek.



Lunch was hosted by Pinecrest Grove in their community center. They also gave tours of their new housing development to interested people.

After the business session concluded the newly elected team members were Commissioned. The New Moderator, Stan Rodabaugh and Moderator Elect, Dana McNeil were consecrated with a laying on of hands.



After all the official business was concluded the announcing of the winners of the Silent Auction was met with anticipation of eager bidders. After the Silent Auction Pastor Rick Koch led in the live auction.

Sister Esther Frey spoke on Renewal in her 95.5 years, plus 3 days.

The Conference closed Saturday evening after a great time of fellowship, business and Brethren hospitality.



Cynthia Taylor



SEPTEMBER 09, 2013 3:54 PM

MINONK – The Rev. Cynthia Taylor, 65, died Sunday, Sept. 8, 2013, at Northwestern Hospital in Chicago following a battle with cancer.

She was born July 23, 1948, in Peoria, the daughter of Howard and Alice Stimpert Builta.

Survivors include her mother of Minonk; twin brother, Steve (Maureen McGrath) Builta, Malta; one sister-in-law, Claudia Builta, Palatine; two nephews, Jeff (Claudia Cristancho) Builta, Norcross, Ga., and Andrew (Erin Langenstien) Builta, St. Louis, Mo.; two nieces, Kelly (Patrick) Sanders, Champaign and Lindsey (John) Eichholz, Harvard; one great-nephew, John Eichholz; four great-nieces, Natalie Builta, Caitlyn Sanders, Anabel Sanders and Makenzee Eichholz.

She was preceded in death by her father, Howard P. Builta, and one brother, Howard C. Builta.

Cynthia graduated from Minonk-Dana-Rutland High School in 1966 and Illinois State University, Normal. She began employment in the restaurant division of Marshall Fields & Hampshire Specialty Products. A change in her career path led her to study at the Church of the Brethren Seminary. After she completed coursework, she served parishes in Champaign, Tower Hill, Virden and Ottumwa, Iowa. Cynthia was a member of the P.E.O. Her joyful spirit will be missed by all that knew her.

Services will be Thursday at 11 a.m. at St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Minonk with the Rev. Ed Sinclair officiating. Visitation will be Wednesday from 5 to 7 p.m. at Ruestman-Harris Funeral Home in Minonk. Burial will follow the service in Minonk Township Cemetery, Minonk.

Memorials may be made to the church or to Heritage Health in Minonk.

2013 Calendar

On Earth as it is in Heaven
Stories from the Garden

"The LORD will bring about justice and praise in every nation on earth, like flowers blooming in a garden."
 Isaiah 61:10-11

POWERHOUSE
2013

A regional conference for Church of the Brethren Midwest youth
Nov. 16-17

Keynote speakers:
Audrey and Tim Hollenberg-Duffey

NEW LOCATION!
 Camp Alexander Mack
 Milford, Indiana

Watch for more details in early fall.
www.manchester.edu/powerhouse

Manchester University

It's time for the fourth year of **Powerhouse, the regional youth conference for youth in the Midwest.** This year the conference will try out a new site, going to

Camp Alexander Mack in Milford, Ind., **Nov. 16-17.** We hope you can join us for this exciting weekend! Opportunities will also be available to visit and tour the Manchester University campus (about 45-50 minutes from Camp Mack) before or after the conference.

At www.manchester.edu/powerhouse, you will find a variety of information and forms needed for each participant to register. All forms must be completed for participants to attend. Forms should be downloaded, printed, and mailed to the university when completed; make enough copies so that each participant has one copy of each form.

Cost this year will be \$65 for youth, \$60 for advisors (for extenuating circumstances, please contact us). With our new location, everyone will have a bed to sleep in, and the camp will be preparing our meals.

The keynote speakers for our three worship times will be Audrey and Tim Hollenberg-Duffey, students at Bethany Theological Seminary. They will lead us in an exploration of our theme, "**On Earth As It Is in Heaven: Stories from the Garden.**" We want it to be a weekend full of energy and inspiration!

If your group is coming from a distance and needs a place to stay in the area Friday night, please contact us and we can help you make arrangements at Manchester University or with congregations in the area. Please be in prayer for this event and, encourage your youth and advisors to attend.

November

- 1-2Ill.-Wisc. District Conf., Mt. Morris
- 3National Junior High Sunday
Daylight Savings Time Ends
- 9Leaf Raking at Camp Emmaus
- 11Veteran's Day
- 15-16 ..Leadership Team Retreat, Camp Emmanuel, Mt. Morris, IL
- 24Christ the King Sunday
- 27Hanukah Begins
- 28Thanksgiving

December

- 1First Sunday of Advent
World Aids Day
- 8Second Sunday of Advent
- 15Third Sunday of Advent
- 21First day of Winter
- 22Fourth Sunday of Advent
- 25CHRISTMAS DAY
- 31New Year's Eve

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Camp Emmanuel Schedule 2014

- Camp Opening - Saturday April 12
- Camp Work Week - April 13 - 19
- Women's Camp - May 30 - June 1
- Youth Camp - June 8 - 14
- Junior High Camp - June 15 - 21
- Junior Camp - June 22 - 28
- Pre-Junior Camp - June 26 - 28
- Men's Camp August 8 - 10
- Family Camp - August 29 - Sept. 1
- 10 Annual Fish Fry - Sept. 20
- Camp Closing - October 25