

Reflecting news and views

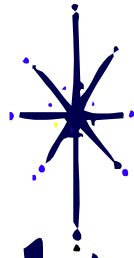
# The Reflector

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

November 2013 / Volume 10 / Issue 7

*District Executive: Kevin Kessler*

Silent  
Night



Merry Christmas from the  
District of Illinois  
Leadership Team:

Kevin Kessler, DE

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Carol Novak Vice Chair

Vicki Matheny

Purvi Satvedi

Ray Cleer

Jim Lehman

Stan Rodabaugh, Moderator

Dana McNeil, Moderator Elect

Gordon Heid, Treasurer

Joel Kline, Standing Committee

Christine Knotts, Financial Secretary

Beth Carpentier, Administrative Asst

Gil Crosby, Secretary

# From the Moderator - Stan Rodabaugh

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,



Will you join me now in pursuing how to live for Christ Jesus and His Kingdom in the coming year? It is my blessing and honor to serve Him and the members of Illinois/Wisconsin District of the Church of the

Brethren as moderator for 2014. Jesus' words in John 15:4 (NIV) challenge us: "Remain in me as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." My chosen theme, "Abide in the Vine/ Abide in My Love," challenges us to be mindful of our personal relationship with our Friend and Savior Jesus, to seek his help as we abide in Him. As He teaches us, all our fruitfulness hinges on our relationship with him. The fruit we bear as we abide in him will be revealed: answered prayer, his joy in us and our joy complete, the capacity to love one another. As we abide in Jesus, the Living Vine, and remain in His love, we will surely bear the fruit of his love, grace and mercy. He goes on to teach us that the fruit produced by those remaining in the Vine is enduring fruit. It doesn't wear out, grow stale or rot!

As I am invited to meet with congregations during this year, I look forward to listening to concerns and sharing time in prayer together. I am also eager to share resources and experiences that have been important in my relationship with our Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the brothers and sisters with whom I sojourn and those still needing to know the Savior. Instead of making a long list of resources and web pages, I suggest beginning with a two books. The first, *Joy Starts Here, The Transformation Zone*, by E. James Wilder, Edward M. Khouri, Chris M. Coursey and Shelia D. Sutton, ISBN 978-1-935629-10-8 has been designed to help congregations, families and schools find life giving connection to Emmanuel – Jesus – the Vine. This connection will culminate in abiding in Jesus' love, thus helping us to grow in our capacity to know and share the peace, joy and love of God that we

experience as we abide in the Vine. The second book, *Forming, A Work of Grace*, by David Takle, ISBN 9780989006903, addresses developing a conversational relationship with Jesus, helping make "abiding in the Vine" a reality in our lives. Both of these books and many more great resources are available at [www.joystartshere.com](http://www.joystartshere.com).

Many in the district are familiar with the **Honduras Mission Project**. I have had the privilege to participate two years and have found the mission to be vitally important to the people we serve. I encourage congregations to invite Bill Hare, coordinator of this work, to come and share about the work there. Bills phone number is 815-734-4268 or mail to Camp Emmaus, P. O. Box 128 - Camp Rd., Mt. Morris, IL 61054

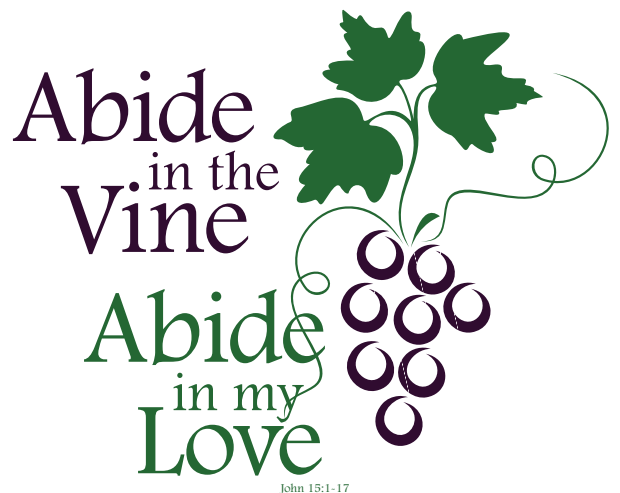
Many Blessings in the New Year!

Pastor Stan Rodabaugh, Moderator, Illinois/ Wisconsin District of the Church of the Brethren

## 2014 District Conference Logo

District Moderator Stan Rodabaugh has introduced the new logo chosen for the 2014 District Conference and the Theme for the Year.

The Logo was designed by Debbie Noffsinger.



ILLINOIS & WISCONSIN DISTRICT CONFERENCE 2014

# DE Ponderings by Kevin Kessler, District Executive



The Hallmark Channel this time of the year provides a preponderance of shows giving viewers a message that Christmas is frequently about finding happiness and fulfilled relationships.

Comparatively speaking, I guess it's better than all the

violence encountered in so much of the other TV programming that comes into our homes. However, I still find Hallmark's depiction of Christmas somewhat skewed. My intent is not to pick on Hallmark but rather allow this popular channel to help me make a point. In my view, much of their programming focuses on people coming from various places in life to a common area that is comfortable and peaceful, absent of the difficulties that have been or are still present in other surroundings. It's the old "home for the holidays" perception of Christmas. It depicts a message of people coming to the meaning of Christmas rather than Christmas reaching out to people. And so for me it is a backward depiction of Christmas.

Christmas, in my humble view, is a time to remember and reflect upon the birth of Jesus. My understanding of this priceless gift is God reaching out to creation which has lost its way rather than this wayward enterprise reaching toward God. I find it difficult to imagine that something stuck in waywardness would have the capacity to reach toward God. I do believe that a creating, all-loving God has the facility to reach toward and touch that which yearns for the holiness it is lacking.

Therefore, a true depiction of Christmas is not that we come from various places to gather in a safe place, but rather we move from our safe places to share the love of God with creation wherever it is broken, lost, wayward.

The Rev. Mack Strange of the Brentwood United Methodist Church, Brentwood, TN, offers a helpful example. Rev. Strange invites and encourages congregations to take their Christmas Eve services off-site, reaching out with the love of God in places the church may be a bit uncomfortable being in. In a Lewis Center for Church Leadership Leading Ideas article, Rev. Strange tells about the year when the congregation he serves took their Christmas Eve service to the local bar, the Wildhorse Saloon. Not

only was the service held in the bar but the manager of the saloon was asked to participate in the event by lighting the Advent Wreath. He did so and afterward commented how meaningful the service was for him and his family. He even suggested that next year the service add a component of helping to feed the homeless who "gather on the banks of the river just a few blocks from the downtown area of Nashville." Rev. Strange summarizes this experience by saying, "The heart of God, in the heart of the manager, was revealed as result of a creative partnership."

Christmas at its best is not drawing people together but rather reaching out to people where they are. As seen in the example above, it has a snowball effect. Just imagine the positive changes we might see in our world when we impart Christmas in this way. It would be in keeping with God's ideal as revealed some 2,000 years ago when God's love came on earth to reach the brokenhearted, downcast, marginalized, and disempowered. Would you agree?

## James E. Renz Pinecrest Memorial Scholarship



The board of Pinecrest Manor recently established a \$1,000.00 scholarship to honor the memory of Jim Renz, a visionary and dedicated 49 year board member who died this past May. The scholarship is to be awarded in the spring to a graduating high school senior from Oregon High School or a student who is a member of any Church of the Brethren congregation within the Northern District of Illinois-Wisconsin. This focuses on a future interest in health care, social work or pastoral care. If interested in learning more about the scholarship please contact Ferol Labash of Pinecrest Manor.

# Along the Paths of Camp Emmaus

After the end of the Saturday business session of District Conference everyone was invited to come to Camp Emmaus for a hot dog roast at the lodge. Board members served food to over 60 folks from around the district and to the youth who were staying there for the weekend.



Leaves were flying at the **annual leaf raking day** at Camp Emmaus on November 8th. More than 30 volunteers from six (6) congregations and board members helped rake and mulch enough leaves to fill three (3) large wagons. The wagons delivered the leaves to a neighboring farm. The Dutchtown congregation brought five (5) youth to help enjoy

the fresh air and fun. Following the raking the board enjoyed a carry in lunch and reorganized for the year ahead.

There is still plenty of wood to purchase for firewood at the camp. Bill Hare (815-734-4268) should be contacted about the wood. Anyone interested in reserving one of the all winter facilities at Camp Emmaus should also contact Bill.



The board members are left to right: Mark Flory Steury, Lisa Fike, Don Hart, Tom Cliine, Mike Schnieria, Sylvia Saunders, Gary Baisden, and Manager Bill Hare. Board members absent from the picture are: Ellis Boughton, Steve Dietrich, and Dianne Swingel.

## 2014 National Youth Conference Illinois/Wisconsin District Bus Trip



Hop on the bus for fun and adventure as the IL/WI District Youth travel **to NYC in Ft Collins, CO!** Join other youth and advisors from exotic far away places like

Canton, Elgin, Freeport, Lombard, Milledgeville, Naperville, and Peoria. The 2014 National Youth Conference theme is **"Called by Christ, blessed for the journey together,"** based on Ephesians 4:1-7.

Relax and have fun while you journey together to what others have referred to as "a once in a lifetime, life changing experience!"

**When:** Buses will leave Illinois in the evening on July 18 and return in the morning on July 25th,

see the registration form for exact times for each location

**Where:** We will have pick up in Central, Northeast, and Northwest locations. Bus pickups and drop offs will occur at Naperville Church of the Brethren, Peoria First Church of the Brethren and Milledgeville Church of the Brethren

**Cost:** \$ 375 (this is the cost of the bus only, and does not include your NYC registration or meals along the way) \$175 deposit are due by April 18. The remaining \$200 balance is due by June 7. This does include the cost of a District NYC T-shirt.

**Reservations:** E-mail [rminer151@earthlink.net](mailto:rminer151@earthlink.net) with basic information (name, address, e-mail, church, and advisor) as soon as possible. Complete the registration form and return to Ralph Miner, 7 South DuBois Avenue; Elgin Illinois 60123 with your deposit by April 18th.

# Views of Vitality Series - Franklin Grove Church of the Brethren



In the northern part of Lee County, IL, is the small, rural community, Franklin Grove, with a population of approximately 1,000 people. Illinois Route 38, part of The Lincoln Highway (the first transcontinental improved highway for automobiles across the United States), runs through this village. Not only is Franklin Grove a point on this famous road, but it also the home of the national headquarters of The Lincoln Highway Association.

Franklin Grove is also home to the Franklin Grove Church of the Brethren, a congregation that has been in existence and committed to faithful and fruitful ministry for 168 years. Like the highway that runs through this town connecting east to west, the Franklin Grove congregation strives to connect people to God by adhering to and living out the denominational tagline, "Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together."

The congregation has tried several approaches for reaching out to people in the community, including having a movie night and bringing in Barbershop singers, both events being opportunities to connect with each other and the neighborhood. Results were less than hoped for, yet the effort to be invitational indicates that the congregation continues to follow God's call upon their lives.

An ongoing community outreach is the annual pancake breakfast. People from the community come to the meetinghouse to enjoy delicious food and at the same time receive a glimpse of the congregation's work ethic. It is no small task to flip pancakes and fry sausage for a community of people, but the Franklin Grove COB folks persevere showing their willingness to give of themselves for others. Besides giving their energy, the congregation gives away the proceeds from the breakfast. The past 2 years,

monies from this event were given to the local public school to assist children in need. The Franklin Grove congregation is quickly gaining a reputation within the school system as a church that cares.

Involvement with the school system continues to evolve. Several members of the congregation are now signed up to help with mentoring elementary school students. A few members will also begin attending the monthly Parent/Teacher Council meetings; and there is conversation taking place about other avenues of involvement and mission with the schools and within the community.

Pastoral leadership for the Franklin Grove congregation is provided by licensed minister Matt Rittle. Matt brings a level of energy and enthusiasm to lead the congregation in becoming more and more missional in body, mind, and spirit, adding a new layer of fruitfulness to the existing attractional model of doing church. Rittle says, "'Attractional ministry' counts success by how many they have attracted. 'Missional ministry' measures success by every seed planted and watered in the lives of those they interact with on a given day...Rather than bring people in to make disciples, we make disciples wherever we are at—every day. Kingdom building becomes our chief concern, for we are all the Bride of Christ together...and we are all deeply loved by a God who pursues intimacy with everyone." (from the *Franklin Grove Monthly Messenger*, Nov/Dec 2013 issue, the Franklin Grove COB newsletter)

The Franklin Grove congregation continues to discern their way forward, striving always to stay on the long road, not of success, but of faithfulness and fruitfulness. They know it's a challenging journey for a small congregation in a small, rural community. But they persevere. And as the Apostle Paul writes: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces **perseverance; perseverance**, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." (Romans 5:1-5, NIV)

# Powerhouse 2013 a Success



More than 70 people took part in Powerhouse 2013, the Church of the Brethren Midwest regional youth conference, held at Camp Mack (Milford, Ind.) for the first time this year. It marked the fourth year for the event since it was restarted in a new fall format.

Audrey and Tim Hollenberg-Duffey, third-year students at Bethany Theological Seminary, served as the main speakers on the theme: "Stories from the Garden: On Earth As It Is In Heaven." Through three worship services they examined stories from the Garden of Eden, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the garden of life in Revelation 22. Using images from Renaissance paintings to olive presses to leaves, they looked at the goodness of God's creation, our need for refinement and "harvesting," and the opportunity to do a new things as part of the "divine potluck" of God's kingdom.

The conference, held Nov. 16-17, also included workshops covering topics such as calling and vocation, Brethren heritage, National Youth Conference, outdoor ministry, organic gardening, "Seagoing Cowboys," and more, as well as an indoor campfire, a presentation of the musical "The Cotton Patch Gospel," good food, and time for recreation.

The conference, for senior high youth and advisors, is planned by Manchester University in cooperation with surrounding districts. The next Powerhouse will take place in November 2014, with details to be determined. Updates will be posted at [www.manchester.edu/powerhouse](http://www.manchester.edu/powerhouse).

Campus Ministry / Religious Life  
604 E. College Ave., North Manchester, IN 46962  
260-982-5243 [www.manchester.edu](http://www.manchester.edu)

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



National Youth Conference in  
Fort Collins, Colorado, July 19 - 24, 2014

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](http://www.brethren.org/news/2013/coordinators-of-nyc-2014-issue-challenge.html)

# Peoria Church Mt. Mission Trip

Thirty six years ago two Jerry's from the Sanner Chapel, south of Decatur, IL., helped form a trip to missions in Eastern Kentucky. They loaded pickup trucks, trailers and vans with clothing, furniture, tools and toys to make a 780 mile trip to a places called Henderson Settlement and Red Bird Mission. The two Jerry's, Jerry Aldridge and Jerry Lillpop, continued their mission and in 1982 made a presentation to the Peoria Church of the Brethren. This year marks the 30th year Peoria has joined the Decatur area Methodists on the trip to Kentucky. The Peoria Church now comprises the majority of people, trucks and vans making the trip.



Terry Grabb and Jerry Lillpop in the photo lead the group every year. We expanded our mission to focus on Children's clothing, diapers, wipes, and other baby needs. This part of the Mission comes from the efforts of Marilyn Harshbarger. The last two trips to Kentucky have been dedicated to Marilyn's husband Jim, a big force in previous trips, who passed away the day before last year's trip.

On our arrival at Henderson Settlement this year we were entertained by the Stone Mountain Blue Grass Band, made up of local musicians.

More and more families depend on the Missions with the closing of many of the coal mines in Eastern



Kentucky. There is little other industry in the region to provide jobs to the local citizens of the area making Missions even more crucial to people living in the rural mountains.

We have already begun to collect items for next year's trip in November to the Missions in Eastern Kentucky

## I Wasn't There

*by Gil Crosby*

I didn't see the bright, Eastern Star  
although I've been to Bethlehem town.  
I haven't seen the sheep on the hillside  
although they still graze all around.

I didn't see any wise men from the east  
riding on their camels as the star shines.  
Though it's said their bones rest today  
in a Cathedral set on the river Rhine.

I didn't hear the cattle lowing in the  
manger that wonderful glorious day.  
But in the country side of old Judea  
cattle still eat their new mown hay.

A donkey carried them to the place  
where they rested for the night.  
I didn't see one but they still carry  
burdens near Bethlehem's site.

There are places where stables  
were used for travelers to stay  
I've not seen them but if you  
look, they are still there today.

The temple of Herod stood tall and  
commanded much of Jerusalem hill;  
You can't see it there any more but  
remnants of its place are here still.

To see, to hear, to be there is to  
believe God's Son was born that day.  
But still I know he lives within us and  
His spirit is here now to show the way

I didn't see the Baby cooing or crying  
lying in a that lowly humble manger bed.  
But I know that he too is still here  
Just like the story in the Bible said.. 12/13

# 2013 Calendar

## December

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

## January

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- 1 .....New Year's Day
- 6 .....Epiphany
- 20 .....Martin Luther King Day

## February

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- 1 .....District Leadership Team Meeting
- 14 .....Valentines Day

## March

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- 2 .....Transfiguration Sunday
- 5 .....Ash Wednesday
- 7 .....World Day of Prayer
- 9 .....First Sunday of Lent (Daylight Savings Time)
- 14 .....Mission & Ministry Board, Elgin

## April

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- 12 .....District Leadership Team Meeting
- 12 .....Camp Emmanuel Opening
- 13-19 Camp Emmanuel Work Week
- 13 .....Palm Sunday
- 17 .....Maundy Thursday
- 18 .....Good Friday
- 20 .....Easter Sunday

## May

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- 1 .....National Day of Prayer
- 4 .....National Youth Sunday
- 11.....Mother's Day
- 23 .....Young Adult Conf, Camp Brethren Woods
- 26 .....Memorial Day
- 29 .....Ascension Day
- 30 .....Ministry Summer Service Orientation, Elgin
- 30-1 ....Women's Camp - Camp Emmanuel

## June

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- 7 .....District Leadership Team Meeting
- 8 .....Pentecost
- 8-14 ....Youth Camp, Camp Emmanuel
- 15 .....Trinity Sunday Father's Day
- 15-21 ..Junior High Camp - Camp Emmanuel
- 21 .....First Day of Summer

## June (cont.)

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- 22-28 ..Junior Camp, Camp Emmanuel
- 26-28 ..Pre-Junior Camp
- 30 .....CODE Meeting, Columbus, Ohio

## July

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- 1 .....Mission & Ministry board, Columbus, Ohio
- 2-6 .....Annual Conference, Columbus, Ohio
- 4 .....Independence Day
- 6-12 ....Song & Story Fest, Camp Inspiration Hills
- 19-24 ..National Youth Conference, Fort Collins, CO

## August

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- 2 .....District Leadership Team Meeting
- 8-10 ....Men's Camp, Camp Emmanuel
- 29-1 ....Family Camp, Camp Emmanuel

## September

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- 1 .....Labor Day
- 7 .....Grandparent's Day
- 8-10 ....Men's Camp, Camp Emmanuel
- 20 .....10th Annual Fish Fry, Camp Emmanuel
- 21 .....Bethany Sunday, Int'l Day of Peace, Mission Offering Emphasis
- 23 .....First Day of Autumn

## October

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- Domestic Violence Awareness Month**
- 5 .....World Communion Sunday
- 11.....District Leadership Team Meeting
- 12 .....Laity Sunday
- 16 .....World Food Day
- 17 .....Mission & Ministry Board, Elgin
- 24 .....World Disarmament Day
- 25 .....Camp Closing, Camp Emmanuel
- 26 .....Reformation Sunday

## November

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- 1 .....All Saints Day
- 2 .....National Jr. High Sunday, Daylight Time Ends
- 9 .....Stewardship Sunday
- 23 .....Christ the King Sunday
- 27 .....Thanksgiving
- 30 .....First Sunday of Advent

## December

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- 7 .....Second Sunday of Advent
- 10 .....Human Rights Day
- 14 .....Third Sunday of Advent
- 21 .....Fourth Sunday of Advent - First Day of Winter
- 24 .....Christmas Eve
- 25 .....Christmas Day
- 31 .....New Year's Eve