



Reflecting news and views

The Reflector

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District Executive: Kevin Kessler

From the Moderator

This is the time of rain showers and plants sprouting everywhere. The season dictates that freezing overnight temperatures fade away as the newness calls for warmth. Ecclesiastes 3: 1 puts this into perspective when it says: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: ... " the season of one's life; the season of the church; the season of Jesus Christ. We are the church and God has given us only a relatively short time to venture through and share his gift. What do we do to grow God's disciples for the life of the Church? How do we reach the lost for Him? Is it always through a certain age group or social class? How do we relate to Jesus in our contacts with others?

Today is always the right time to share our testimony with others. Each day is a fresh start with yesterday only a record of the travels that we cannot do again. We all have been called to "go and tell" our individual story of faith to others. In doing so we plant seeds for Christ just as our farmers plant seeds with the faith they will grow and produce a crop. Our "faith" crop just needs to be planted and prayed over and trusted into God's care. He will make the transformation happen in the individuals with open hearts. The spring-time of their lives will be warm with the newness of their faith and then a new building of testimony occurs.

We must all be disciples for Christ and that calls for positive, loving, caring attitudes that provide fertile soil for the new children of God to receive the same calling by the Holy Spirit that we have experienced. Positive attitudes and uplifting spirits build on God's plan to bring new children into the Kingdom. Churches working together with the same goal can do so much more than those who find themselves in different stages of understanding when it comes to outside issues. Those issues will always try to slow or stop the work of the church in its outreach for new disciples.

For many years I have seen discussion turn us away from God's plan and toward humanity's plan which



causes the season of life to change its course. God seems to take a back seat to what we humans want at times and the harvest become more difficult to complete. Since God has created time and the seasons of our lives, we should lean on Him and seek his will before our own in all matters. Deuteronomy 32: 2 says: Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants. God has always called us to look to him for teaching and the truth of his words. Here we can never go wrong. He speaks of things new because of him and not because of us. He is the springtime for each of us; the newness of life itself. In his Word we find only truth and loving-kindness.

Psalm 40: 3 says: He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord. It is through God's Word that we can be saved and the church will flourish. It is through the Word that we believe and are given new life. The call to each of us is to hold fast to God's Word and not to the issues of society that seek to divide us and cause us to turn away from God. The church depends on believers always turning to God in matters of humanity and not turning to our own selfish ambitions. Our personal testimony, our manner of living our faith, our study of the Word, and our participation in the family of the church all go hand in hand to be God's chosen people.

What, therefore, is our season? With Satan vigorously at work to draw us away from God, our
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DE Ponderings

I am a fan of Calvin and Hobbes, and I follow the comic strip on Twitter. It's how I can get my daily dose of the antics of Calvin and his favorite stuffed (life-like) tiger, Hobbes.

Bill Watterson, creator of the comic strip, is masterful, in my view, of getting at the heart of everyday living and then addressing the associated gamut of emotions that course through our lives. So often when I read one of the comic strips I think how well it reflects what I'm thinking or experiencing at that moment in time.

A recent Watterson contribution shows Calvin standing in the dark with stars twinkling in the sky. The next frame Calvin shouts at the top of his lungs, "I'M SIGNIFICANT!" The next frame shows Calvin again standing in the star studded night. The last frame Calvin says, "Screamed the dust spec."

Many times I have thought about the magnitude of the universe and my size in relation to it. I am just a spec. I am like a grain of sand on a beach that blends in with all the other grains of sand. Or as Calvin proclaims, I'm even smaller than that. I'm just a spec of dust that is barely, if even, visible to the naked eye. What does this really say about my significance?

I also think about my life in comparison to the lives of others. I am only one person among the millions who presently inhabit the earth. I am only one person among the countless who have inhabited the earth. I am known only to a few of this countless number, and in 100 years or 1000 years I will be mostly, possibly completely, forgotten. What does this say about my significance?

So, is Calvin right? Am I, a spec of dust, really significant? Even the Psalmist grappled with this question:

When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
what is humankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?
(Psalm 8:3-4)

Sometimes, simply, the vastness of the universe and our place in it can cause us to ponder our significance. But at other times it's the experiences of life that cause this question to be overwhelming. Moments of fear, times of distress, or the hopelessness of the future are extremes that make the question of significance loom larger than life.

Jesus must have understood how anxiety ratchets up in such moments of life. He spoke to an audience gripped with fear, a people wondering about their worth. Jesus offers encouragement by saying:

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. (Matthew 10:29-30)

In another setting, Jesus speaks to those who are absorbed in worry. Once more he offers reassurance:

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? (Matthew 6:28-30)

In addition to Jesus offering insight about our worth, other biblical writers add helpful understanding as well. The Psalmist in Psalm 139 makes the case that wherever we are or we may go we will always be in the presence of God who loves and cares for all of creation. In Romans 8, the author makes the case that nothing can or will separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So, yes, with these assurances from scripture, we are significant. Granted our significance may not be measurable in comparison to the vastness of the universe or the grand scheme of humanity. But make no mistake, we are, each and every one, significant in the eyes of God, the creator, the One who made us in God's image. Significant? If in doubt, then ponder the words "in God's image." Seriously. You are an image of God. How much more significant can it get?

From the Moderator

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season is right now and continues every day left in our earthly walk. We have a tremendous responsibility to seek God's face in our daily lives. Prayer, study, sharing, and worship will assist us in gaining the strength to grow the church in spite of Satan's pull to draw us away. Psalm 98: 1 says it quite plainly: Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done great things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

God bless.
Pastor Ellis

The Gathering Chicago Launches Pentecost Sunday in Hyde Park

Ever had a dream and watched it manifest?

Pentecost Sunday, May 15 **The Gathering Chicago**, a new Chicago ministry supported by the IL/WI District of the Church of the Brethren will open in Hyde Park, Chicago. A Discernment Dream Team has been gathering in Hyde Park Chicago in prayer, discernment and planning for this emerging beloved community and our opening events are finally here. Members of the Chicago Hyde Park seminary community and others are partnering together with us as this new prayer and service community emerges.

The Gathering Chicago is a gathering community of prayer and Global/Local service that gathers people from across cultures and backgrounds for purposeful prayer for the city and nations, retreat and renewal and to explore deeper discipleship with Jesus.

Friends from around the District and our affiliated churches are welcome to join gathered events from time to time and to partner with us in prayer and service in the city.

The Gathering Chicago opening will feature a special **Love Feast** Dinner Gathering which includes the foot-washing as demonstrated by Jesus in John 13, sharing in Communion and the kinship meal. Pastor Traci Young-Childress of the Butterfly Project is also a special guest.

Mark your calendars and plan to join us for our next **The Gathering Chicago** event on June 26 from 5:00-7:00pm in Hyde Park Chicago.

Are you a Doctor, Nurse Practitioner, RN, LPN, or EMT?

The First Aid Office at Annual Conference in Greensboro is looking for DR.'s, RN's, LPN's and EMT's who would be willing to volunteer a few hours during Annual Conference this summer. Jane Laprade is coordinating the First Aid Office at Annual Conference and would be glad to hear from willing volunteers! Please contact her at: d.laprade@b2xonline.com

Many thanks to you!
Chris Douglas
Director of Conference Office
Church of the Brethren



Email gatheringchicago@gmail.com for more information or to join our mailing list. Connect with us also at facebook.com/TheGatheringChicago.

Thank you for your prayers.
We are together in Christ's service,

Convening Pastor LaDonna Sanders Nkosi
The Gathering Chicago

A first-ever Olympic refugee team has been welcomed by United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki-moon, to compete in the 2016 Olympic Games and receive the Olympic Cup Award on behalf of the UN. The Olympic Games begin in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in August. "For the first time in history, talented athletes who have been forced to flee their homes will get a chance to chase gold," said Ban Ki-moon, who was quoted in media releases about the break-through for the world's growing refugee population. "Their fellow refugees will see outstanding contenders who give hope to all. And the world will see refugees the way they deserve to be seen: as talented, strong and inspiring people." His statement continued: "Refugees want homes, not tents. They want a flag that waves for their rights. And they deserve a world that gives them more than assistance; they deserve a world that is at peace. Let us all be on the team of refugees until there is no need for a refugee team at all." —from *Newsline*

2016 Annual Conference

June 29 – July 3, Koury Convention Center and Sheraton Hotel
Greensboro, NC



Theme: Carry the Light (John 1:1-5)

...in your heart — *Claim it*
...in your church — *Focus it*
...in your community — *Spread it*
...in your world — *Be it*

The next time you see a leaf flutter in a gust of air or a blade of grass bend to the breeze, consider that it is being touched by a power that begins some 93 million miles away. Actually, every living movement on our earth begins with strength driven by the light of the sun. When we walk from one room to the next, we are burning the sunlight that brought the rain and grew the food that nourishes our physical bodies.

Some of that power, from a solar panel for example, is very immediate - about eight minutes old. Some of it, coal for example, has been stored for thousands of years. It is all from the same source.

As Christians we confess that there is one source for our spiritual being; one source for the meaning that powers our mental and emotional existence; one source for Life.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. *John 1:1-5 NRSV*

The Gospel of John opens with this magnificent hymn in tribute to the relationship between word, life and light. They were all present "in the beginning" and they all came to focus in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. They were revealed in a person of history that we remember regularly in the act of communion; a person that we recognize as a source of our salvation; a person who, we confess, lives with us in the Holy Spirit and whose body is alive in our worshipping community of faith.

This is a confession that is, at once, intimate and shared, personal and universal, present and eternal. It is a testimony that is closer than our own name and beyond our most faithful and imaginative comprehension; a testimony that we know Him who was "in the beginning." It is a testimony that a light that is as immediate as the Holy Spirit and as ancient as the texts of the Old Testament powers us. We claim a Light that comes to us across the space of two thousand years and across the space from the beginning of creation; a light that warms us, heals us, comforts us, nourishes us, guides us and grows us.

For this, we rededicate ourselves to "Carry the Light."

Andy Murray, moderator
2016 Annual Conference

Camp Emmaus Schedule

May 27-30, 2016	Memorial Day Weekend Family Camp Director: Sally Medearis	all ages Contact camp about rates
June 29 - July 3	Church of the Brethren Annual Conference @ Greensboro, NC	
July 10-16	Senior High Camp 4pm Sun - 2pm Sat Directors: Sara Garner 630-456-4291 and Aaron Gerdes 815-991-5230	Finished grades 9 - 12 \$250
July 17-20	Elementary II Camp 4pm Sun - 2pm Wed Directors: Amber White 815-988-0631 and Rick Koch 815-499-3012	Finished grades 3 & 4 \$130
July 20-24	Young at Heart Camp Directors: Patrick Benassi & Amanda Gibble	18 and up \$165
July 24-30	Junior High Camp 4pm Sun - 2pm Sat Directors: Jim Miner 847-741-9804 and Cori Miner	Finished grades 7 & 8 \$250
July 31 - August 5	Elementary III Camp 4pm Sun - 2pm Fri Directors: Jim and Elvira Lawdenski 630-640-3759	Finished grades 5 & 6 \$200
August 5-7	Counselor In Training Event works with Elementary I camp Director: Becky Berkeley 815-494-5556	Finished grades 9-12 or older no fee
August 6-7	Elementary I Camp 9am Sat - 10am Sun Director: Jan Dietrich 815-738-2365	Finished grades 1 & 2 \$60 per adult/child pair
August 11-14	Women's Camp Director: Beth Taylor	Women of all ages
September 2-5	Labor Day Weekend Family Camp Director: Ralph Miner	all ages Contact camp about rates
September 16-17	Trail Run Race on the 17th with optional overnight camping	
TBA	Appreciation Dinner	
November 12	Leaf Raking (Rain Date: 11/19)	

Camp Emmanuel Schedule

JUNE 3-5 WOMENS' CAMP

Friday, 4:00 p.m. – Sunday 2:00 p.m.

Director: Connie Ludlum

Email:

Fee: \$60 (\$75 after May 20th)

JUNE 5-11 HIGH SCHOOL CAMP (9th-12th grade)

Friday 6:00 p.m. – Monday 9:00 a.m.

Director: Dana McNeil (309-243-8726)

Email: pastordana@peoriabrethren.org

Fee \$125 (\$140 after May 23rd)

JUNE 12-18 MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMP (6th-8th grade)

Sunday 5:00 p.m. – Saturday 10:00 a.m.

Director: Lynn Jones (217-627-2355)

Email: misslynnmo@yahoo.com

Fee \$125 (\$140 after May 30th)

JUNE 19--25 JUNIOR CAMP (3rd-5th grade)

Sunday 5:00 p.m. – Saturday 10:00 a.m.

Director: Sarah Jennings (217-454-6942)

Email: sjennings7@yahoo.com

Fee \$125 (\$140 after June 6th)

JUNE 23-25 PRE-JUNIOR CAMP (K-2nd grade)

Thursday 1:00 p.m. – Saturday 10:00 a.m.

Director:

Email:

Fee \$60 (\$75 after June 6th)

AUGUST 5-7 MENS' CAMP

Friday 4:00 p.m. – Sunday 2:00 p.m.

Director: Larry Zink

Fee: \$60 (\$75 after July 21st)

SEPTEMBER 2-5 FAMILY CAMP

Directors: Theresa & Andy Fulk

Email:

Fee: Adults \$60 (\$75 after August 15th)

Children 4-12 \$40 (\$55 after August 15th)

Maximum per family \$155 (\$215 after August 15th)

October 14-16 2016 MARRIED COUPLE RETREAT

Friday 4:00p.m. – Sunday 2:00p.m.

Directors Meeting – 3/5/16 1:00 p.m. (Virden)

Board Meetings – 3/5/16 9:00 a.m.(Virden);

8/7/16 (Camp)

11/12/16 (Camp Managers' House) 9:00 a.m.

CIT Training – 3/5/16 1:00 p.m. Virden or

4/16/16 10:00 am – Camp Emmanuel

Camp Spring Opening/Work day 4/2/16--9:00 am;

Work week 4/03-9/16

Fish Fry – September 24, 2016

Camp Fall Work Week & Closing – October 22-29, 2016

2016 Calendar

May

- 1.....Installation of Christina Singh at
Freeport
- 8.....Mother's Day
- 9Online Healthy Boundaries
Training
- 15.....Pentecost Sunday
- 19-21Church Planting Conference,
Richmond, IN

June

- 18.....District Leadership Team meeting
- 19Father's Day
- 27-29Council of District Executives
Summer Meeting
- 29-July 3..Annual Conference

Heritage Bus Tour

My name is Diane Sittig and I am from the South Waterloo Church of the Brethren in Northern Plains District. Our District is having a Heritage Bus Tour August 7-14 of this year. We still have some spots available on the bus and wanted to offer them to your districts. Would you be willing to post something in a newsletter with the information below?

Northern Plains District is opening their Heritage Bus Tour to other Districts!

Date: August 7-14, 2016

Departure and Return Site: Des Moines, Iowa

Cost: \$995.00 per person (for double room)

Contact person:

Diane Sittig
816 W. Orange Rd.
Waterloo, IA 50701
319-230-9554
sittigdiane@gmail.com

The tour will include visits to Camp Mack, Germantown, Ephrata, Antietam, John Kline home, Philadelphia, Sight and Sound production of "Samson", New Windsor service project, and more! Please contact Diane Sittig by June 1 for more details.

Thanks so much!

Diane Sittig