

November 2011
Volume 10, Issue 8

Inside

- Page 2:** Calendar, Prayer Corner
- Page 3:** Attention Woodworkers!, Stewards Update
- Page 4:** DC Location Team Updates
- Page 5:** Nigerian Brethren Peace Work, Brethren Gardener
- Page 6:** AC 2012 Theme Announced, CoB Denominational Layoffs Announced
- Page 7:** Upcoming Courses at the Brethren Academy, NCC Releases Videos on Quality Education for Children

Western Plains District Office

Location- 1600 E. Euclid
Mail- P.O. Box 394
McPherson KS 67460

Office Hours
Mon Closed
Tues 8 am—4pm
Wed-Fri 8 —11:30 am

The answering machine will be on during hours the office is closed.

Phone (620) 241-4240
Email wpcdb@spcglobal.net
Website www.wpcob.org

District Executive Minister
Sonja Griffith

Administrative Assistant
Kendra Flory

The Shepherd's Voice is published for church leaders, ministers, church board and commission chairs, Christian Education directors, youth leaders, and many others. **We encourage your written contributions!** Unless otherwise noted, permission is granted to reprint articles for congregational newsletters and bulletins. Notify the District Office if you would like to receive the newsletter by e-mail or if you know of persons who would like to receive the newsletter.

I WAS JUST THINKING . . .

From our District Executive Minister

As I have traveled down streets in McPherson, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Minn., and everywhere else I have been, I see people for whom I wonder if Jesus Christ means anything. They seem so occupied—busy buying and playing and working and walking to school and watching television and using their ipods and iphones and Androids, and just hanging out. What would heaven mean? They think they have it right here and now. What would Jesus mean? Just a bunch of rules that would limit their ability to have a good time? What would God mean? Perhaps God is simply a distant concept that has no relevance to their days and moments. What would the Holy Spirit mean? Possibly a ghost, a figment of someone's fevered imagination. In short, today's world that promises happiness from what we have, says that hope is just what the next paycheck or test score or thrill ride or movie or serving of ice cream will provide, and convinces us that waiting and self-control and stewardship are outmoded concepts, is what we have facing us. That, dear friends, is daunting. When we talk about transformation and a transformation movement, we are faced with a culture that stares at us as if we are impossibly dull or hopelessly deluded or honestly not even present.

And yet...and yet, we hear a different drummer. We see a reality that is just beyond our physical eyes. We hold a relationship with God and with Jesus Christ that lifts our hearts, helping us move toward a present glory of joy and inner peace and a distant glory beyond what this world can offer. We have eagles' wings that lift us out of sordidness, bitterness, despair into new life. We are privileged with opportunity to respond to the still small Voice that calls us to humble service which links hearts and souls and makes the world just a little bit better.

At the congregation I serve, First Central in Kansas City (and quite possibly like in other congregations), we are revising our constitution to meet today's world. In fact, what we end up with may not even resemble the constitution of the past. As we do this, however, we are being called to name and claim the message of Christ which is timeless, eternal, relevant to every human being and every soul, even if it is shared not only with sanctuary services, but with tweets that call to prayer and joyous email messages that send the summons of Christ to love and serve to a new generation.

The feeling is that we are standing at the beginning of what may be a very significant journey. Speaking to one another of what faith is most deeply within us, what faith we inherited from our fathers and mothers who endured much that this faith would live on past their own lives, will, I think, make that faith live vitally within each of us. And it will show us how to share it with those people who wonder all the things named above.

(continued on p. 2)

Sonja
Sonja Griffith, DEM



District Calendar 2011

- Nov. 6 National Junior High Sunday
Nov. 11-12 Transformation Vision Team Meeting,
Eden Valley Church, St. John, Kan.

2012

- Feb. (TBA) Leadership Training, Great Bend, Kan.
April 13-14 District Men's Retreat,
Great Bend, Kan.
April 14-19 Christian Citizenship Seminar,
New York City & Washington D.C.
Apr. 20-22 District Women's Retreat,
Highlands Presbyterian Camp and
Retreat Center, near Allenspark, Colo.
May 6 National Youth Sunday
May 17-19 New Church Development
Conference, Richmond, Ind.
June 3-9 Junior Camp (MH)
Sr. High Camp (CC)
June 10-16 Jr. High Camp (CC)
Sr. High Camp (MH)
June 17-23 Junior Camp (CC)
Jr. High Camp (MH)
June 18-22 National Young Adult Conference,
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
June 24-28 Pre-Junior Camp (CC)
Pre-Junior Camp (MH)
July 7-11 Annual Conference, St. Louis, Mo.
July 27-29 District Conference, McPherson, Kan.
Oct. 26-28 *The Gathering*



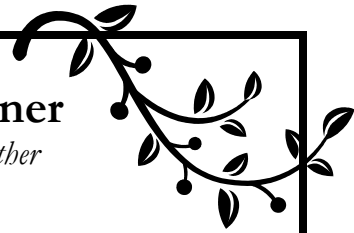
(continued from p. 1)

And we will know that, in the end, nothing can destroy it.

So our word for this time is: Be Not Afraid. Believe that within each human heart, no matter how disinterested and distracted it may seem, there is the voice of God. Believe that there is, in all generations, locked into the marrow of our bones, the deep knowledge that connecting and serving with Jesus Christ and with our brothers and sisters is what gives life meaning and gives our end of life a lovely satisfaction of grace and eternal peace. And we have the assurance (Romans 8:38-39) that we, all of us, cannot be separated from the love of God our Creator in whose image we are created, and that love expressed in and through Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Prayer Corner

*A space for lifting each other
in the Light of God*



Please be in prayer for.....

- **George Eisele** – Area Minister and a member of the Olathe congregation, recently had surgery to remove blood on the brain. He is at St. Luke's Hospital on the Plaza in Kansas City and will be starting a program of physical therapy and rehab.
- **Denominational staff** – Nine positions on the Church of the Brethren denominational staff have been cut as part of balancing the 2012 budget (see p. 6). Please pray for those who were laid off Sept. 28: Judy Keyser, Ken Neher, Joy Willrett, Pierre Covington, Brenda Hayward, Karin Krog, Tim Stauffer, Linda Newman, Katherine Boeger-Knight. Please pray for all denominational staff as they seek to be good stewards during this difficult time of economic uncertainty.

Our Congregations in Western Plains

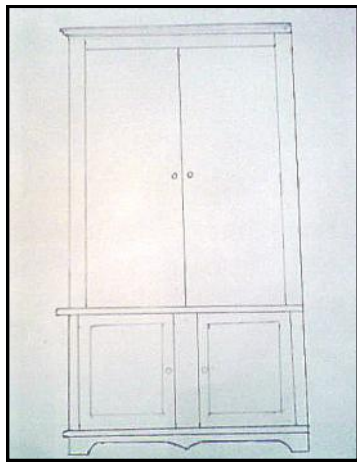
- **Boulder (Colo.) Fellowship** – Pray with us: for those who will be facing challenges of homelessness as the weather turns colder; thanksgiving for service of lay leadership leaving roles, and thanksgiving for new lay leadership stepping into place; that each one's discipleship journey include personal time for reflection, study, prayer and worship; for the Spirit's wisdom and guidance as we seek to clarify mission priorities for this body of Christ in the coming months.
- **Ottawa (Kan.) Community**
- **Salem (Kan.) Community** – Please pray for our community activities and outreach, particularly our annual Bazaar Nov. 19 and our Christmas outreach.
- **Rochester Community** (Topeka, Kan.)

Our Denomination, Our Nation, Our World

- The economic situation as it affects our communities, region, nation, and world
- People and communities affected by natural disasters in the US and around the world
- Peace in Nigeria is an ongoing concern, wisdom in solving tribal tensions
- Our brothers and sisters in Christ in Brazil, Haiti, Dominican Republic, India, Nigeria, and Sudan
- On-going conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq
- Palestinians and Israelis experiencing violence. May hearts be open for a new way.
- Annual Conference Moderator Tim Harvey
- Stan Noffsinger, General Secretary, and all staff working for Annual Conference agencies
- Our elected officials at all levels of government

ATTENTION WOODWORKERS!

Are you looking for a winter service project? Plans have been drawn up for a cabinet to store medical items for Camp Mt. Hermon. Rough sawed oak is available for the building of this cabinet. This will be a larger project approximately 46" wide by 72" tall. If you are interested, please contact David Mishler (cmishler@rainbowtel.net).



For This We Pray

Denominational Prayer Calendar

Week of Nov. 6: Junior High Sunday. This Sunday our times of worship around the denomination will be in the hands of our Junior High youth. As you pray this week lift up these young persons, praying for their daily and hectic lives and that you may be their companion in the life of your congregation. Pray that their vision for what church can be may infuse your community.

Week of Nov. 13: Stewardship Sunday. Rather than giving a percentage of our income, why not give from our abundance? This week prayerfully covenant with a small group to live on a percentage of your weekly food budget and offer the surplus to the ministries of the church.

Week of Nov. 20: Thanksgiving Week. In each of the gospel stories in which Jesus fed a multitude it is said that he lifted the simple food and gave thanks. Many read this today and hear the echoes of the last supper before his death when he also took some bread and a cup and gave thanks. These acts of thanksgiving to God, of Eucharist, are central elements of the Church. This week as we take time with family, prayerfully ask what it looks like to give thanks beyond just Thursday in November.

Week of Nov. 27: First Sunday of Advent. This week we begin the soul work of preparing for the coming of Christ, both in the first century and at his anticipated return. As you decorate the house and meeting house, take time to hear the words of John the Baptist: "Prepare the way of the Lord." Pray that this season of waiting and hope might offer the opportunities for your community of faith to reveal Christ to those around you.

The full version of the prayer calendar can be found at www.brethren.org. Click on "Church Life", then "Spiritual Life and Prayer"

UPDATE FROM THE DISTRICT STEWARDS TEAM

As we look at congregational giving through September, it is running significantly behind what was received last year. At the current rate of self-allocation support, our income will not be sufficient to cover the 2011 budget.

We recognize the economy has put a strain on individual and congregational budgets. Many times when churches need to cut back in their budgets, the outreach items, including support for the District, are often the first to be reduced or eliminated. Please follow-up with your treasurer or Stewards and encourage them to meet your self-allocations. We need your financial support.

We are not asking you to increase your 2010 financial support for the District. All we need you to do is to send the same amount you gave the District last year. Our District is dependent on your financial support to continue the programs supporting your congregations. The many training events, youth programs, camps, peace witness, support for pastors and ministers, new church plants, and even this *Shepherd's Voice* are dependent on your financial and prayer support. If your congregation is having trouble meeting your self-allocation from your church's giving, why not take a special offering or have a fund raising activity above your current offerings for the District?

We also accept contributions directly from individuals. It is a good way for you to help make sure the programs you support or depend on will continue at the current level. Please do not reduce your financial support for your local congregation to send an individual contribution to the District. Your support of your home congregation is important. If you decide to send a contribution directly to the District make it above what you give locally. Send your contributions to the District Office. You can give us your prayers without needing to affect your support for your congregation. Your prayers are just as important as your financial contributions.

Collectively, we are the Church of the Brethren in the Western Plains. Your continued financial and prayer support is essential as we continue the work of Jesus, peacefully, simply, together.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Stewards Chair Les Shenefelt by phone (303-980-1001) or email (lshenefelt@comcast.net).

Peace of Christ,

Stewards Team

Les Shenefelt, chair
David Sampson
Richard Schmalzreid
David Smith
Lauren Worley

DISTRICT CONFERENCE LOCATION TASK TEAM REPORT

The following is the report on the status of the District Conference Location Task Team given by Leslie Frye at the 2011 conference. Please also read the team's October 2011 update (right).

District Conference Location Task Team Report

*Church of the Brethren Western Plains District Conference
August 5, 2011*

Background

The last time district conference was held in Colorado was 2005. At the 2007 District Conference, the delegate body voted to approve a recommendation from the District Conference Planning Committee to suspend for three years a constitutional "suggestion" that had us alternating the location of our annual meeting every other year between the eastern and western areas of the district. In effect, the 2007 delegates voted to keep District Conference in McPherson in 2008, 2009, and 2010.

Subsequently, the District Conference Planning Committee called a "District Conference Location Task Team" comprised of then moderator-elect Leslie Frye and District Conference Planning Committee member Lisa Hazen. They were to help design and implement a process by which a decision about future conference locations could be made. But just as that committee was beginning its work, it made sense to put the district conference location discussion on hold in light of anticipated staffing and district structural and/or by-laws changes coming in 2009 and 2010.

What Now?

Well, those staffing and structure changes have been implemented, the hold has been lifted, and the District Conference Location Task Team is getting ready to resume its work. Members include Leslie Frye, Ed Switzer of the District Conference Planning Committee and Kendra Flory as district staff. Our hope is to bring a recommendation to the 2012 Western Plains District conference, and we invite you to look for information about how you can participate in the Shepherds Voice, or by contacting any one of us.

The focus of our work comes from Article II. A. of the Western Plains District of the Church of the Brethren By-laws, which states: District Conference is a mass meeting to which delegates and other interested persons from the member congregations gather in business sessions and for purposes of worship, education and fellowship.

Here's the question we seek to answer:

"How can the Church of the Brethren Western Plains District choose where to gather in business sessions and for purposes of worship, education and fellowship that is fair, practical, convenient for planners as well as participants, encourages participation from across the district and reflects a wise use of resources?"

DISTRICT CONFERENCE LOCATION TASK TEAM OCTOBER 2011 UPDATE

Within the first few weeks in November the District Conference Location Task Team will be in the process of forming a group of 6-10 people interested in brainstorming ways to answer the question:

"How can the Church of the Brethren Western Plains District choose where to gather in business sessions and for purposes of worship, education and fellowship that is fair, practical, convenient for planners as well as participants, encourages participation from across the district and reflects a wise use of resources?"

The hope is that many different perspectives will be represented, including:

- Different generations
- People with various situations (single, family, retired, having mobility issues)
- Representatives from different geographic locations [urban, rural, Colorado, Kansas (east, central and west), Nebraska]
- Born and bred Brethren, as well as convinced Brethren

To volunteer, suggest names, or for more information contact a member of the task team by **November 10, 2011:**

Kendra Flory
wpdcb@sbcglobal.net 620-241-4240

Leslie Frye
fryeL3j@earthlink.net 620-241-1965

Ed Switzer
ejswitzer@cox.net 620-504-6141

Quotable Quotes

"Serving with Ed [Switzer] as Co-On-Sight Coordinator [for District Conference] is like a working vacation." ~Art Hoch

"Kip [Coulter] is one of those people, when you see him your heart smiles." ~David Mishler

NIGERIAN BRETHREN MAKE PROGRESS ON INTERFAITH PEACE WORK

From Oct. 5 issue of Church of the Brethren Newline

Following is the September update from Nathan and Jennifer Hosler, Church of the Brethren peace and reconciliation workers with Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN--the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). They work at EYN's Kulp Bible College near Mubi in northeastern Nigeria:

Since June 2010, a group of Muslims and Christians have been meeting together as an interfaith peace planning group under the name CAMPI, or Christians and Muslims for Peacebuilding Initiatives. The goal of CAMPI is to bring together peace-minded Muslims and Christians in the Mubi area to plan and implement projects that promote understanding and harmony between the two religious groups.

Preparation on the first project began a year ago, with preparation, hurdles, and obstacles including illness, prohibitive schedules, the elections and subsequent violence in April, and religious observances such as Easter and Ramadan. We are happy to say that that project—an intergroup dialogue and conflict resolution training for imams and pastors—has finally begun.

We arrived back in Nigeria just at the start of Ramadan, the month of fasting that Muslims observe every year as one of five crucial tenets of their faith. Muslims do not eat or drink during daylight hours of Ramadan and also prepare meals to break the fast each evening. Due to this, we held off for the month of August and then quickly gathered the interfaith planning group together after the end of Ramadan.

Our first intergroup dialogue session brought three imams and three pastors together in Mubi on Sept. 10. CAMPI members introduced themselves, as did the imams and pastors. Our Muslim and Christian facilitators re-explained the purpose of the group and the need to increase ties and understanding between religious leaders (this was discussed earlier during the recruitment of the imams and pastors).

Each meeting includes a resource person's mini-tutorial on conflict and peace, followed by group discussion. The Sept. 10 meeting included an overview of conflict and peace, broadly understood. Conflict is a normal part of life and can be either good or bad, depending on how people handle it. Peace is not simply "no violence" but also includes the presence of good relationships, health, and well-being. Peace is food to eat, clean water, health care for all, children attending quality schools, and the ability for people to provide for their families. Peace is diverse groups of people trying to understand each other's similarities and differences, respecting the differences, and living alongside each other cooperatively.

We are encouraged by the discussions and openness present in the first meeting and also in the second, held Sept. 24. Two resource persons (a Christian man and a Muslim woman) presented on Christian and Islamic scriptures for peace. There was engaging dialogue on religious understandings of "Who is our neighbor?" One Christian participant shared how he and his Muslim neighbor share a wall



New additions of books and resources are displayed at the peace library at Kulp Bible College in Nigeria. The peace library has been made possible through the initiative of Nathan and Jennifer Hosler and donations from US Brethren. Photo used by permission

and a well. The Muslim family crosses into his compound every day because of the water available in the Christian household. According to the participant, a visitor to their households would not know whose children are whose because of how the two families intermingle. We are thankful for the openness of participants to share stories such as this.

Kulp Bible College held its first event to mark the International Day of Prayer for Peace on Sept. 21. Three surrounding churches were invited to attend a prayer service hosted by KBC Chapel, which included presentations from the Women's Fellowship (ZME--Zumuntar Matan a Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria) at KBC and the KBC Peace Club. The Peace Club performed a drama that highlighted ongoing conflicts in the world, dramatizing the problem of leaders clinging to power, and terrorist attacks. They illustrated that violence is the wrong way to handle problems and that prayer in addition to action is a necessary ingredient to achieving peace.

In their September newsletter, the Hoslers announced that after two years in Nigeria they plan to return to the US on Dec. 15. They also shared prayer requests for the Interfaith Dialogue Group, for the KBC Peace Club, for their work in Nigeria to finish on strong note, for EYN and its president Samuel D. Dali, and for creative, energetic, and skilled Nigerian staff to join the Peace Program coordinated by Toma H. Ragnjiya.

BRETHREN GARDENER

From Oct. 2011 newsletter of the Garden City Church of the Brethren



We need to prepare our yards for the winter. Keep on cleaning out the spent flowers. Some things can be left for cover and warmth for small animals and birds. Cut the tall ornamental grasses that will come apart and blow around. That will save spring cleaning. I leave some flower pods like Black-eyed Susan so the birds can eat the seeds. When they are finished, I cut the stalks and clean that area. You can leave the leaves as mulch. It will hold moisture and save on water (and that's a good Brethren Thing). Don't clear them all away. We need to put a winterizer on the lawn. Get it and have it ready to apply in October. This will feed through the winter. Keep watering new trees. They could also use some food for winter. There are special things for trees and shrubs. A bag lasts several years.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OFFICERS PROVIDE THEME, PRAYER CALENDAR FOR 2012

From Oct. 5 issue of
Church of the Brethren Newline



Tim Harvey
2012 Moderator

The Annual Conference officers have announced the theme for next year's Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren: "Continuing the Work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together" (Matthew 28:19-20). The Conference will take place in St. Louis, Mo., on July 7-11, 2012.

The officers invite Church of the Brethren members to join them in prayer on Wednesday mornings at 8 a.m. (each in their own time zone) until the start of next year's Conference. The officers have provided an online prayer calendar guide for this time of prayer each week.

"The Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20 stands at an important intersection of New Testament faith," writes moderator Tim Harvey in his theme statement, in part. "Jesus has just completed his earthly ministry, a time when his life and teaching gave evidence of another kingdom among us. This kingdom is hidden from those who will not see, and yet made clearly present through his life and ministry. Jesus taught, healed, felt deep sorrow at the suffering of others, confronted injustice, invited other persons into this kingdom life, and finally was crucified. Three days later, he was raised. And now, perhaps moments before his ascension into Heaven, Jesus gives the disciples this instruction, words that will serve the Brethren as the theme verses for the 2012 Annual Conference: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Matthew 28:19-20, NRSV).

"As 2012 Annual Conference moderator, I look forward to hearing stories of how the Brethren are 'Continuing the Work

of Jesus' in our congregations around the world," Harvey's statement concludes. "Along the way to St. Louis, we will be reminded of the way Brethren of years past continued the work of Jesus in their time. And I will strive to challenge all of us to greater faithfulness. The world needs the testimony of Jesus. Brothers and Sisters, let us dedicate ourselves to 'Continuing the Work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.'"

In addition to the overall theme for the Conference, daily themes and scriptures also have been announced, drawn from the newly identified "Directional Goals" of the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board. "The directional goals have the potential to become the spiritual disciplines of our denomination," Harvey writes, "faith practices that both nurture us in our faith and challenge us to continue the work of Jesus in very specific, disciplined ways."

Daily themes and scriptures are as follows: Saturday, July 7, "International Mission," Philippians 1:3-6; Sunday, July 8, "Brethren Voice," Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 1:79; Monday, July 9, "Congregational Vitality," Hebrews 10:23-25 and 1 Corinthians 12:13-27; Tuesday, July 10, "Service," 1 John 3:16-18; Wednesday, "Church Planting," 1 Corinthians 3:6. [Annual_Conference_Prayer_Guide.pdf](#). General information about the Conference is at www.brethren.org/ac.

Find the moderator's statement, prayer calendar, and general information about Annual Conference at www.brethren.org/ac.

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN ANNOUNCES LAYOFFS FROM DENOMINATIONAL STAFF

Adapted from Sept. 29 issue of Church of the Brethren Newline

Nine positions on the Church of the Brethren denominational staff have been cut as part of balancing the 2012 budget. The layoffs follow a new management structure for staff (see www.brethren.org/orgchart) announced in August by general secretary Stan Noffsinger.

The need to reduce next year's budget was anticipated for some time by staff and board doing financial planning. For two years the Mission and Ministry Board has chosen to use reserves to balance the Core Ministries budget, wanting time to complete a strategic plan before making changes in staffing structure.

In early July, the board approved a 2012 budget parameter that requires reductions of \$638,000 to achieve a balanced budget in the Core Ministries Fund. Contributing factors to the budget gap include the continuing economic recession, declining contributions from congregations and individuals, and increasing costs for health insurance and other expenses.

Three voluntary retirements and two voluntary resignations announced earlier this month also are considered part of the staffing cuts that will help accomplish the budget reduction.

Departing employees are receiving a severance package of three months' full

salary and benefits and access to funds for job search and counseling services. The relatively generous severance package is provided because the former church employees are not eligible for unemployment benefits from the state.

Those laid off Sept. 28 include: Judy Keyser, Ken Neher, Joy Willrett, Pierre Covington, Brenda Hayward, Karin Krog, Tim Stauffer, Linda Newman, and Katherine Boeger-Knight.

As responsibilities are rearranged and in light of the strategic plan, a few new positions will be created in the next few weeks.

Go to www.brethren.org/news for the full article.

Upcoming Courses at the Brethren Academy

*Courses are open to TRIM students,
pastors (earn CEUs), and all interested persons.*

“The Historic Peace Churches Seeking Cultures of Peace”, Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond IN, Instructor: Scott Holland, Bethany Professor of Peace Studies and Cross-Cultural Studies, Jan. 9-13, 2012. *Registration Deadline: Dec. 9, 2011*

“The Spiritual Life of the Congregation”, Online, Instructor: Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, Jan. 30 – Mar. 23, 2012. *Registration Deadline: Jan. 2, 2012*

“Matthew and the Brethren”, Online, Instructor: Susan Jeffers, Feb. 12 – Mar. 23, 2012.
Registration Deadline: Jan. 30, 2012

“Scriptures Important to the Brethren”, Instructor: Susan Jeffers. Long weekend course in Florida, Winter 2012. *Registration Deadline: TBA*

“Seeing Things Through John’s Eyes: A Study of Revelation”, McPherson College, McPherson KS Instructor: Rick Gardner, Bethany Emeritus Professor of New Testament Studies, April 2012, exact date to be determined.
Registration Deadline: TBA

“The Protestant National Church in Germany Today”, a study travel experience to Marburg, Germany with Instructor: Kendall Rogers, Bethany Professor of Historical Studies, May 18-June 3, 2012. Please call the Brethren Academy Office to join the list of those who will be informed of details as they emerge. Estimated approximate cost is \$2000.00 from departure airport (does not include Academy registration fee).
Registration deadline: Dec. 1, 2011

“Defining Set-Apart Ministry within the Bi-vocational Reality” Online, Instructor: Sandra Jenkins, June 6 – Aug. 14, 2012 (one week off for Annual Conference), 2012.
Registration Deadline: May 4, 2012

Registration brochures for these and other training opportunities are available through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership at their website:

*<http://www.bethanyseminary.edu/academy>
or by calling 1-800-287-8822, ext 1824*

NCC RELEASES FOUR ‘WEBISODE’ VIDEOS PROMOTING QUALITY EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN

Equal and quality education for all children is the focus of four brief web videos released in September by the National Council of Churches.

The videos are embedded with a study guide on the Council’s website at <http://www.nccusa.org/elmc/publiceducationwebisodes.html>.

The four films, each six or seven minutes long, feature Dr. Diane Ravitch, education historian at New York University and author of the best selling book, *The Life and Death of the Great American School System*; and Dr. John Jackson, President and CEO of the Schott Foundation for Public Education.

Jackson and Ravitch discuss foundational values that have historically defined society’s commitment to public education but which the Council believes have become controversial: Educational Opportunity for All; Public Schools and the Common Good; Public Schools, Part of the Community or Marketplace?; and Supporting Our Teachers.

The films, created by the NCC’s Committee on Public Education and Literacy were designed to stimulate conversation about issues raised by the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches in a May 18, 2010 Pastoral Letter that was sent to the President, Congress, and the Secretary of Education.

In the letter, the Governing Board declared, “At a moment when childhood poverty is shamefully widespread, when many families are under constant stress, and when schools are often limited by lack of funds or resources, we know that public schools cannot be improved by concentrating on public schools alone... In this context we must address with prayerful determination the issues of race and class, which threaten both public education and democracy in America.”

The Governing Board also questioned test-based accountability as the philosophy that dominates today’s media conversation around public education: “We worry that our society has come to view what is good as what can be measured and compared... As people of faith we do not view our children as products to be tested and managed but instead as unique human beings, created in the image of God, to be nurtured and educated.”

In the short clip that introduces each video, the Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, NCC general secretary, endorses public school justice reform as a priority for the churches.

“Each child has special, sacred gifts that need to be nurtured, and all children are special and precious in God’s eyes,” Kinnamon declares, “which means that a system in which some children have access to excellent instruction while others don’t is simply unacceptable.”

Jan Resseger of the United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries, chair of the Council’s Committee on Public Education and Literacy, said she “looks to the four short films as a comfortable context for church study groups to confront what have become heated issues and to read and reconsider last year’s NCC Pastoral Letter in the context of the values the videos explore.”



Church of the Brethren
Western Plains District Office
PO Box 394
McPherson KS 67460

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
NON-PROFIT
PERMIT No. 71
MCPHERSON, KS
67460


for your help!

The Form B (which requests names and mailing addresses for congregational positions such as board chair, treasurer, deacon contact, youth contacts, etc.) was mailed to all congregations on October 3. The due date for this form to be returned to the Yearbook office is **December 31, 2011**.

Please send this in. Every report form is important to both the District and the denomination. Please be careful to include complete addresses and phone numbers where requested. Email addresses are helpful, if available. If you have a question about the report form, please don't hesitate to call the District Office (620-241-4240) and ask.

Again, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!



Dec/Jan Newsletter
Submission Deadline:
November 22

Women of Western Plains!

Mark your calendars
and begin planning
to attend the next
District Women's Retreat!

April 20 - 22

Highlands Presbyterian
Camp and Retreat Center
in Allenspark, Colo.

*Brochures will be available
at local churches soon!*