

PRESBYTERY CONNECTION

A Bi-Weekly Newsletter of the Presbyteries of North Central Iowa and Prospect Hill
May 28, 2020

The Presbytery Connection is a bi-weekly joint newsletter for the Presbyteries of North Central Iowa and Prospect Hill. If you would like to contribute to the Presbytery Connection, please contact Jeannie Stolee in the Presbytery office at 319-233-1747 or northiowapresby@gmail.com

If you know of someone who would enjoy receiving this communication, please email or call Jeannie.

Please consider making copies of this newsletter for your Session and running several copies to make available to your congregation.

www.presbynciowa.org

www.prospecthillpresby.org

To see North Central Iowa's calendar of events, please click [here](#).

To see Prospect Hill's calendar of events, please click [here](#).

Prospect Hill Presbytery Meeting June 6, 2020

To comply with continued social distancing, Prospect Hill's June 6 Presbytery Meeting will be held via Zoom. The meeting will be open at 9:00 a.m. to give everyone time to get logged on and registered before the 9:30 call to order and worship. To register it is asked that each person attending the meeting enter their name and church in the chat box.

Not familiar with Zoom or feel like you need practice? We've got you covered! There will be a practice Zoom meeting on Thursday, June 4, at 7:00 p.m.

The link to the meetings has been emailed to all churches, pastors and clerks of session with the call to the meeting. The meeting link will be emailed again early the week of June 1.

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Jeannie in the Presbytery office at 319-233-1747 or northiowapresby@gmail.com.

Additional Prayer Concerns

Please keep Rev. Al Polito of Bethany Presbyterian Church in Grundy Center in your prayers as he recovers from a heart ablation on May 28. Things went well and he will hopefully go home May 29.

Please keep Rev. Denise Group, HR, in your prayers as she recovers from surgery last week to clear her brain shunt. She has been recuperating at her sister's and will return to her apartment May 29.

Please keep Rev. Gary Catterson, co-pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Grundy Center and First Presbyterian Church in Reinbeck, in your prayers as he recovers from heart surgery where they replaced a valve and did two bypasses. He is recovering well.

Please pray for Rev. Mark Rabideau of the Greater Greene County Presbyterian Ministries as he deals with health concerns.

Please continue to pray for Josh Ullom, son of Rev. Dr. Dave and Judy Ullom of First Presbyterian Church in Estherville. Josh goes for chemo every two weeks. Please pray for effectiveness to destroy cancer, and to improve the severe nausea he has experienced.

Please continue to remember Doug O'Bannon, son of CRE Shari O'Bannon, in your prayers as he continues to battle a liver disease and all the symptoms that come with it.

Please pray for our state, nation and the world as we deal with the COVID-19 situation. Keep in prayer those families whose schedules have been upended and livelihood affected, small businesses who may not survive, those who have been afflicted with the coronavirus and the medical personnel as they do their best to take care of everyone. Please also pray for all of the churches in both presbyteries and throughout the nation.

Churches in Transition

Please pray for the following churches that are in transition:

Presbytery of North Central Iowa

First Presbyterian Church, Ackley
First Presbyterian Church, Boone
First Presbyterian Church, Greene
First Presbyterian Church, Grundy Center
First Presbyterian Church, Jesup
First Presbyterian Church, Reinbeck
Eden Presbyterian Church, Rudd

Presbytery of Prospect Hill

Elliott Creek Presbyterian Church, Bronson
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Ida Grove
First Presbyterian Church, Lake Park
Community Presbyterian Church, Lawton
First Presbyterian Church, Odebolt
Lakeside Presbyterian Church, Storm Lake
First Presbyterian Church, South Sioux City

Change in Presbytery Hours



Beginning the week of May 25, the Presbytery will close at noon on Fridays through September 4, 2020.

Synod School Canceled



The following is copied from the Synod's Facebook page:

Late last week the Synod School Committee came to the difficult decision to cancel Synod School for 2020 as we know it due to the pandemic. This is not something we wanted to do but because of our care for each other, our deep desire not to be a source of illness for anyone, and the inability to truly be together as we ordinarily are – singing heartily, laughing together, sharing meals in close proximity, and more – we feel as if this was what we have to do.

Recognizing that we cannot replicate the Synod School experience online, we are not going to try to do so. BUT we are working to put together some special opportunities for a simpler Synod School online for the week of July 27. We are looking at opportunities for worship, learning, fellowship and fun and will have a better sense of what this looks like by early June. At that point you will receive an email with information about how to participate in the pieces that stir your interest. We certainly won't have you or your children in front of a screen for 12 hours/day!! Stay tuned for more information.

In the meantime, I am working on refunding any fees you paid for Synod School. What we offer virtually will be at no cost to the participants.

Thank you for understanding! Mark your calendars for July 25-30, 2021! We will be graced with the presence of Jill Duffield, editor of Presbyterian Outlook, as our convocation speaker and Samuel Son, manager of diversity and reconciliation at the Presbyterian Mission Agency, as our evening worship leader. Bryce Wiebe will return as the youth convocation speaker.

Forms to submit class or teaching proposals for all ages will be on the website next week: www.lakesandprairies.org They are due by September 1, 2020.

Sincerely,

The Synod School Committee – Mac Stanfield, Dean; Dan Voigt, Associate Dean; Pam Prouty, Paul Penn, Meredith Sauer, Marian Hart, Jim Bonewald, Dan Davis, Raymond Meester, and Deb DeMeester, Staff

I Want to Go Back to Church

I want to go back to church.

I want to see my friends and enjoy Ruth's cherry almond coffee cake.

I want to sing a proper bass line, climbing from a low A-flat,

“...open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine!”

I want to be comfortable again in my ignorance of all things coronavirus.

I wish I'd never heard of COVID-19 and ventilators and aerosolized droplets.

I want a hug, dang it.

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then he said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with me.”

And he went a little beyond them, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, “Abba, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; *yet not as I will, but as you will.*” And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Matthew 26: 36-41 NASB

I don't know the mind of Christ, but his words and actions suggest that he would have much rather gone on with his ministry in blissful ignorance of the sacrifice he was called to make. “Abba, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.” But then Jesus puts his prayer in the proper perspective, “...yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Every single church leader who teaches about how to grow & revitalize your church shares the same message, “As soon as your reason for gathering becomes about the personal preferences of the members the mission of God becomes second and the body of Christ becomes less relevant to the Kingdom.”¹ *‘I want’* statements aren't healthy for the ministry.

Our Book of Order confirms that each Session has the authority to provide time and space for worship and it's that sacred space² we yearn for. I know I do. I really do want to go back to church! However, Jesus' ministry wasn't about a space, it was about blessing the 'least of these', loving the marginalized, and saying “I love you” when society said nothing.

Each session should fulfill their calling as spiritual leaders of the congregation in discerning whether or not to move worship back into the church building using prayer, scientific data, familiarity of their flock, knowledge of their worship space, and the question they should *always* be asking, “Why?” If the answer starts with “I want...” or “We want...” consider tacking on “...yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Not to spoil the ending, but Jesus' prayer was answered. God's will was done, the cup was not passed from him, the sacrifice was made, & our eternal lives were saved - at a cost.

Blessings on your discernment,

Rev Ian McMullen - Transitional General Presbyter

P.S. Check the presbytery websites for all the information you thought was going to be in this article. :)

¹ My paraphrase

² **An excerpt from our Book of Order, W-1.0203** Because heaven and earth belong to God, we may worship in any place. God cannot be confined to any one place. The important thing was not the place, but the gathering of Christ's body - the people of God - and the presence of Christ among them in Word and Sacrament. Space that is set apart for worship should encourage community, be accessible to all, and open us to reverence for God. It is not to be an escape from the world, but a place for encountering the God of all creation who gathers us in and sends us out.



Poor Richard's Almanac

by Richard Francis, Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Prospect Hill

I've been on Zoom a lot lately. Not as much as many people, but enough. I've noticed that the focus of my meetings is changing subtly from "Now what?" to "What are we doing to get through this?" In a discussion of the care of pastors and of pastoral self-care, which included a reminder that pastors may need time off even more now than in "normal" times, one leader in another presbytery reported a conversation with a pastor who said something to the effect that as the captain of the ship they needed to stay on the bridge until the crisis was over.

As a former pastor, I can relate to that comparison. I used to hear it said that "the captain always goes down with his ship," meaning that the captain stays on board until everyone else is safe. And the comparison of pastor to ship's captain has some validity: like a pastor, the captain is always looking ahead, checking the charts, updating the weather forecast, being aware of conditions outside and inside the ship; like a pastor, the captain is concerned with the welfare of passengers and crew as well as the ship itself, and so on.

But all comparisons break down if you push them far enough, and this one breaks down at this point: as *the pastor, you are not the captain of the ship. Jesus is the captain*, and you are, at best, First Mate or Chief Petty Officer. Don't believe me? Check the *Book of Order*.

F-1.02 JESUS CHRIST IS HEAD OF THE CHURCH

F-1.0201 The Authority of Christ Almighty God, who raised Jesus Christ from the dead and set him above all rule and authority, has given to him all power in heaven and on earth, not only in this age but also in the age to come.³ God has put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has made Christ Head of the Church, which is his body.⁴ The Church's life and mission are a joyful participation in Christ's ongoing life and work.

Even in the middle of the storm, it's not only possible for you to go below, get some food, crawl into your bunk, and let someone else take the next watch, it's necessary: for your health and well-being and for the health and well-being of the ship. People who are stressed out and short on sleep make mistakes. Take a break: the Captain will stay on the bridge. After all, it's his ship, not yours.

Blessings,

If you need more, here's something else to read: <https://johndobbs.com/the-coming-pastoral-crash/>

³ Ephesians 1:20, 21; Psalm 68:18

⁴ Psalm 2:6; Daniel 7:14; Ephesians 1:22, 23

W.B. Small Trust Scholarship



Dr. W. B. Small was a prominent Waterloo physician who, upon his death in 1930, left his \$70,000 estate for the establishment of a trust that provides seminary scholarships for people with Iowa ties. Now valued at over \$2 Million, the interest is used to select deserving scholarship winners in late June.

Selected students can receive \$2,500 annually for up to three years. The checks are written directly to the students and may be used for seminary related expenses, including tuition, books, gas, child care, etc. Please advise any of your students with Iowa ties who are planning to pursue a Masters of Divinity degree that more information, including the application form, can be found at <http://www.wbsmalltrust.com/>. Please note that the application deadline is June 1, 2020.



Recorded Worship Services Available

Rev. Richard Francis, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Prospect Hill, has prepared two worship service videos to be used as needed. You may access those services [here](#) and [here](#).

Book Give-Away



As Rev. Brad Braley starts clearing out his office in preparation for his upcoming retirement, he has books he would like to share. The books are free and he is willing to work with people to get the books to anyone who wants them. Please click [here](#) for the list of books available. Thank you Rev. Braley!

Presbyterian Association of Musicians Online Worship and Music Conference

As congregations have had to adapt to worshipping differently amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Presbyterian Association of Musicians has had to do the same with their annual Worship and Music Conference. The conference will be held online June 21-26. You can find a daily schedule of course offerings at www.presbymusic.org/2020conference-schedule.

A few items to note:

- ◆ If you register for the conference by May 15th, you will receive a hard copy of their conference book. If you order on or after May 16th, you will receive a PDF of the conference book.
- ◆ All conference information can be found by going to www.presbymusic.org/2020conference. Registration rates are \$175 for PAM members, \$250 for non-members, and \$100 for children/youth.
- ◆ As always, they have program offerings for ALL AGES. Musicians, pastors, Christian educators, congregants, families and volunteers – there's something for everyone!

Please click [here](#) for the informational flyer.

Please Upgrade Your Zoom 5.0 Client

Please begin updating all your clients to Zoom 5.0. After May 30, 2020, all Zoom clients older than version 5.0 will be required to upgrade before joining meetings since enhanced encryption will be fully enabled for all upcoming Zoom meetings. <https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/zoom-v5-0.html>

Download the client directly here: <https://zoom.us/download>

Not performing this update may affect any services churches are holding via Zoom and may also affect participation in Prospect Hill's June 6 Presbytery meeting.



Matthew 25 grants will support vulnerable congregations facing COVID-19.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency president sets aside funds to be administered by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Read about it [here](#).

Stewardship Kaleidoscope

Stewardship Kaleidoscope is scheduled for September 21-23, 2020, in Cincinnati, Ohio. Please click [here](#) for the informational flyer. You may also go to their website: www.stewardshipkaleidoscope.org.

Keeping Informed on the COVID-19 Situation

The Presbyteries continue to hold weekly meetings with the pastors to keep abreast of the ever changing COVID-19 situation and to discuss how pastors and churches can continue to minister to and serve their congregations. The meetings will be recorded and the recordings uploaded to the Events section of each website (www.presbynciowa.org and www.prospecthillpresby.org). You may also click [here](#) for the recording of May 19 and [here](#) for the May 26 recording. It is planned to have these meetings weekly and the recordings will continue to be uploaded to the websites.

The home pages of the [North Central Iowa](#) and the [Prospect Hill](#) websites contain information and links on webinars and other resources on the COVID-19 situation.

Churchwide Gathering of the Presbyterian Women



Presbyterian Women's 2021 Churchwide Gathering will be held August 5–8, 2021 in St. Louis, Missouri!

The theme for the Gathering is “Rejoice in Hope” based on Romans 12:12–13, “Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.”

Please click on this link for more information:

https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/what_we_do/build-community/churchwide-gathering/

Helpful Links

Academy



Deepening faith and
encountering Christ in a
new way

Please click [here](#) for information on The Academy.



Rev. Shawn Harmon was ordained to service as a mission worker with The Antioch Partners, a mission sending agency that works in partnership with Presbyterian churches in the US. You can read more about them here: <https://www.theantiochpartners.org/>. You may contact Shawn directly at: harmonhusky@gmail.com. To support Shawn financially: www.theantiochpartners.org/giving. For online giving select “partner support for partners not listed for security reasons” and type “Harmon, Shawn.”



The Iowa Heart Foundation recommends that Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) be placed wherever people gather. AEDs have become so advanced that almost anyone can use them safely. Click [here](#) for more information.



If you feel as if you're at the end of your rope or the recent floods or low crop prices have left you feeling hopeless, please click [here](#) to find a group or network who may be able to help.



Your Iowa Life – if you or a loved one are facing a problem with alcohol, drugs, gambling, mental health or suicide thoughts, you’re not alone. That is why the Iowa Department of Public Health has created YourLifeIowa.org so Iowans can chat live, text or call and get reliable treatment options and find nearby help. <https://yourlifeiowa.org/>



Farm Crisis Ministry Network - supporting farmers and those who love and care for them, sharing resources for farm families, congregations, and rural communities. <https://www.facebook.com/farmcrisisministry/>



Spectrum Spirituality Project – support resources for families with one or more children who have a sensory, emotional, and/or behavioral disorder; also equip congregations to welcome and serve these families. https://www.facebook.com/pg/spectrumspirit/about/?ref=page_internal



Iowa Faith Leadership Network – to provide a space for faith leaders to develop interfaith and ecumenical relationships, collegiality, and cooperation; to share resources, ask questions, and learn together; to improve our collective ability to minister to the faith communities we serve as well as to better the lives of people in the communities around us. <https://www.facebook.com/iowafaithleaders/>