

# PRESBYTERY CONNECTION

A Bi-Weekly Newsletter of the Presbyteries of North Central Iowa and Prospect Hill  
June 25, 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](mailto: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](http://www.presbynciowa.org)

[www.prospecthillpresby.org](http://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](#).

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## Presbytery Office Information

The Presbytery Office will be closed:

The afternoon of Thursday, June 25  
Friday, June 26  
Wednesday, July 1  
Friday, July 3  
Tuesday, July 14  
Wednesday, July 15



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

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## On-Line Worship Services



Churches are being creative in ways to continue to worship when we can't be physically present together. A list of on-line and other alternative worship services is posted on the [North Central Iowa](#) and [Prospect Hill](#) websites under a tab titled "Find Your Local On-Line Worship." You may also click [here](#) to be connected directly to that page on North Central Iowa's website, and [here](#) to be connected directly to that page on Prospect Hill's website.

## Prayers of the Presbytery of North Central Iowa

Week of June 28	Pray for our ministry in the nation
Week of July 5	First Presbyterian Church, Boone – Rev. Jim DuBois, Moderator
Week of July 12	First Presbyterian Church, Lakota – CRE Kent Madison
Week of July 19	Pray for other Minister members of North Central Iowa – Rev. Le Anne Clausen de Montes Rev. Barbara Huisman
Week of July 26	Lakeshore Center at Okoboji – Harry Gabe, Associate Director Cassie Gabe, Associate Director

## Prayers of the Presbytery of Prospect Hill

Week of June 28	First Presbyterian Church, Alta – Rev. Denise Parrello
Week of July 5	Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, Carnarvon – CRE Lue Baker
Week of July 12	United Presbyterian Church, Auburn – Rev. Rikki Sorensen
Week of July 19	United Presbyterian Church, Denison – Rev. Jennifer Olson
Week of July 26	Lakeshore Center at Okoboji – Harry Gabe, Associate Director Cassie Gabe, Associate Director

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## Additional Prayer Concerns

Please pray for the Tri-Presbytery Search Committee as they read resumes received for the three new Executive positions.

Rev. Gary Catterson, co-pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Grundy Center and First Presbyterian Church in Reinbeck, has started rehab after heart surgery. He thanks everyone for the prayers.

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 the churches in both presbyteries and throughout the nation.

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## 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 City  
First Presbyterian Church, Lake Park  
Community Presbyterian Church, Lawton  
First Presbyterian Church, Odebolt  
First Presbyterian Church, Sioux City  
Lakeside Presbyterian Church, Storm Lake  
First Presbyterian Church, South Sioux City

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## Poor Richard's Almanac

by Richard Francis, Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Prospect Hill



I've been working my way through John Calvin's commentary on the Gospel of John,<sup>1</sup> and in his reflections on John 6:26 I came to the passage below. John 6 is the account of the feeding of the 5,000, the only miraculous event recorded in all four Gospels.

John tells us that after Jesus had fed the 5,000, he "realized that [the crowds] were about to come and take him by force to make him king," so "he withdrew again to the mountain by himself." (John 6:15). The disciples having gone on ahead in a boat were having a hard time with the wind and the waves when Jesus came to them, walking on the water. "Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going." (John 6:21). The crowds, not finding Jesus where they expected him to be, went looking for him, and when they found him, asked, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus, characteristically, doesn't answer the question directly, but goes to the heart of the spiritual issue involved: "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves." (John 6:26). And that brings me to Calvin's comments:

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<sup>1</sup> I know, I know.

Christ does not reply to the question put to him, which would have been fitted to show to them his power in having come thither by a miracle. But, on the contrary, he chides them for throwing themselves forward without consideration; for they were not acquainted with the true and proper reason of what he did, because *they sought in Christ something else than Christ himself.* (p.239, my emphasis)

We are always tempted to follow Jesus, not because he calls us, but because we see him as means to an end. That “end,” that goal, might be excellent in itself—personal salvation, personal happiness, the preservation of society, the reform of society—but if we don’t put Jesus first we are liable to make the goal the really important thing and relegate Jesus to the position of “only important because he helps me achieve my/our goal.”

Even the Church, understood as the institution with which the followers of Jesus incorporate themselves, is not an end in itself. The institutional church is a means to the end of being faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, and when that institution as we have known it ceases to enable us to faithfully follow Jesus it needs to change or go away so that something more faithful can take its place.

It feels just as strange to me to write that as it does to you to read it. I am a Presbyterian by baptism, upbringing, and choice. Going to a non-Presbyterian seminary made me that much more Presbyterian as I saw the alternatives—many of them good, just not right for me. But I’ve always known that if I had to make a choice between being Presbyterian and being a faithful disciple, I would pray for the courage to do the latter.

The institutional church was changing before our current crisis, and it will go on changing. It will have to change if it wants to remain faithful. In that context, Calvin’s words later on in the same commentary may be encouraging. Commenting on Jesus’ words in John 6:39—“this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day”—Calvin writes,

This promise is highly necessary for us, who miserably groan under so great weakness of the flesh, of which every one of us is sufficiently aware; and at every moment, indeed, the salvation of the whole world might be ruined, were it not that believers, supported by the hand of Christ, advance boldly to the day of resurrection. Let this, therefore, be fixed in our minds, that Christ has stretched out his hand to us, that he may not desert us in the midst of the course, but that, relying on his goodness, we may boldly raise our eyes to the last day.

Amen to that.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. H. ...". To the left of the signature is a small, simple drawing of a heart.

Rev. Brad Braley, who is currently serving First Presbyterian Church in Cedar Falls, Iowa will retire the end of June 2020. The retirement celebration that was scheduled for June 14 has been canceled due to COVID-19.

Cards may be sent to Rev. Braley at: 1205 Parkway  
Cedar Falls, IA 50613



Kathy and I would like to thank the presbytery for the beautiful floral arrangement we received on our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Even though we couldn't celebrate the way we had planned, you helped make our day special. Don't forget – the party is next year!

~Richard Francis



*You Are Cordially Invited*  
*to the*  
*Commissioning of*  
*Diane Wilson*  
*to*  
*First Presbyterian Church, Woden*

*Date: July 19, 2020*

*Time: 3:00 p.m.*

*Location: First Presbyterian Church  
22 Bush Ave.  
Woden, Iowa*

*\*\*A reception will be held outside after the commissioning service, under strict COVID-19 restrictions\*\**



One of our pastors has reported that members of their church are getting emails supposedly from them requesting gift cards for “women in the church who have cancer.” The pastor did not send the email and is in the process of letting the congregation know, but because this particular scam goes around from time to time, we are alerting you that you may receive one of these bogus emails purporting to come from your pastor or even a member of the presbytery staff. If so, keep these things in mind:



1. Your pastor (or presbytery staff member) will never solicit donations this way, either for the church or for themselves. (Sometimes the email will claim that the pastor is stuck in a foreign country and needs help getting home.)
2. You can always call your pastor or the presbytery and ask if an email is genuine.
3. If you do receive such an email, let your pastor or the presbytery know. Your email program may let you report an email like this as a “phishing scam” and it may help others to do that.
4. Jesus said, “See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

Rev. Richard Francis, States Clerk  
Presbytery of Prospect Hill

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## Reflections

The Rev. Dr. Cambria Kaltwasser, a Minister member of the Presbytery of Prospect Hill who teaches at Northwestern University in Orange City, has written a biblical/theological/pastoral reflection on our corporate and individual response to the COVID-19 pandemic. You can read it here:

<https://reformedjournal.com/the-life-you-save-may-not-be-your-own-loving-our-distance-neighbors-in-a-time-of-pandemic/>

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## News from the Synod of Lakes and Prairies

Our training for **Commissioned Pastors, The Academy**, is alive and well. We have a number of new students joining us in July and are still open for more. If you are interested, please visit our website about the program: <https://engagingleaders.org/the-academy/> Due to the cancellation of Synod School, the summer classes are moving to Lakeshore Center the week of July 27. The summer classes are Reformed Theology and Old Testament. They would be terrific continuing education opportunities for anyone who is already a Commissioned Pastor. [Click here for the flyer.](#)

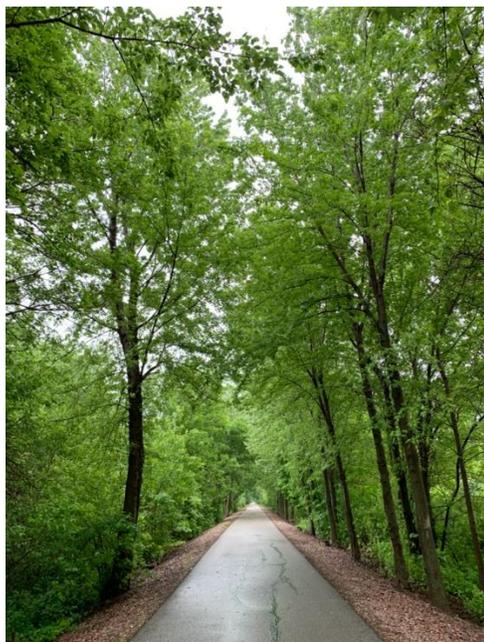
In October, we will be offering **The Art of Transitional Ministry Training** the week of October 12 at Christ the King Retreat Center (pandemic decline willing). If we can't have it in person, we will offer it online. You know the leaders – SanDawna Ashley, Jeff Japinga, Rachel Yates and Deb DeMeester. We have redesigned the program to be an experiential training that will equip those considering Interim Ministry as a call as well as those seeking skills/tools to lead in times of transition (such as the changes 2020 has brought to church life). [Click here for the flyer.](#)

One of the strategic priorities for the Synod is to develop a **coaching network**. We have a sub-committee at work developing this in collaboration with Laurie Ferguson. We have budgeted to help train 2-3 people from each presbytery in a way that would qualify them to become a Certified Coach. The curriculum will begin this fall and conclude in the fall of 2021. Each coach will be asked to give some free and/or reduced time to coach others in the Synod. The hope is that in an established vetted network, pastors and

congregations who would benefit from coaching can be served – not necessarily by those in their own presbytery (although they could if that is what they wanted). Please [click here](#) for more information and an application.

The **2020 Racial Ethnic Student Scholarship** application is offered by the Committee on Racial Ethnic Ministries of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. Completed applications are due September 30, 2020 and must include an official transcript and financial aid statement. Please [click here](#) for more information.

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**June 2, 2020 Update**  
**Tri-Presbyteries Search Committee**  
**from Ken Rummer, Committee Moderator**

Your search committee continues on the trail of a new leadership team for our three presbyteries.

We can report that we have reached a marker on the path.

June 1 was the deadline for submission of answers to our supplemental questions by those who expressed interest in one or more of the three executive positions we are seeking to fill.

Now those resumes and PIFs, along with the answers to supplemental questions, come to our committee for reading and evaluation.

The Committee plans to meet by ZOOM on June 23 to discuss our individual assessments and to decide together which candidates to move forward into the reference-checking phase of the process.

We ask for your continued prayers for our committee, for the candidates, and for God's guidance as we continue on this path.

## Grants Available from Synod of Lakes and Prairies

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies has three new distinct grant programs to alleviate the threat of the coronavirus pandemic on church and camp ministries across the Synod. The Synod has created procedures and funds for pandemic support grants in three areas:

1. Church staffing and ministry support for churches whose vitality would be threatened by disruption to staffing and ministry programs,
2. Church staffing and ministry support in historically marginalized communities to churches which serve the poor and oppressed, and
3. Camp staffing and programs, particularly as they seek to maintain programs staffed by college students.

It is important to be aware that the program is designed with two application deadlines in each category and that the allocated grants would not exceed \$10,000 or one month of average operating costs. Presbyteries would apply for the funds on behalf of the ministry. The program materials in [this packet](#) provide a more complete description.

For additional information, please contact Jim Koon, [jkoon@lakesandprairies.org](mailto:jkoon@lakesandprairies.org).

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## Recorded Worship Services Available



Rev. Richard Francis, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Prospect Hill, has prepared a third worship service video to be used as needed. You may access the three video services: [video 1](#), [video 2](#) and [video 3](#).

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MATTHEW 25

## 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](#).

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## 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](http://www.stewardshipkaleidoscope.org).

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### 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](http://www.presbynciowa.org) and [www.prospecthillpresby.org](http://www.prospecthillpresby.org)). You may also click [here](#) for the recording of June 16 and [here](#) for the June 23 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.

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### 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/](https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/what_we_do/build-community/churchwide-gathering/)

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## 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](mailto:harmonhusky@gmail.com). To support Shawn financially: [www.theantiochpartners.org/giving](http://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](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/iowafaitheaders/>