

PRESBYTERY CONNECTION

A Bi-Weekly Newsletter of the Presbyteries of North Central Iowa and Prospect Hill
June 11, 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](#).

Change in Presbytery Office Hours



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

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 14	Pray for honorably retired pastors in the Presbytery of North Central Iowa (not currently serving churches) – Rev. Bruce Baillie, Rev. John Bates, Rev. Fran Beyea, Rev. Susan Cluts, Rev. Doug Darnold, Rev. Dan Emmert, Rev. Jerry Evelsizer, Rev. Dr. Paul Fischer, Rev. John Hanna, Rev. Richard Harken, Rev. Wesley Harker, Rev. Jack Mauldin, Rev. Harold P. Martin, Rev. Marian “Pete” McCart, Rev. Larry Mitchell, Rev. Gordon Moen, Rev. Charles E. Orr, Rev. John Osborn, Rev. Mark Pell, Rev. Robert Roof, Rev. Mary Wilber, Rev. Dr. S. Glenn Wilson and Rev. Cathy Young
Week of June 21	Pray for the General Assembly meeting virtually June 26-27
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

Prayers of the Presbytery of Prospect Hill

Week of June 14	United Presbyterian Church, Vail – Rev. Robert Cook
Week of June 21	Pray for the General Assembly meeting virtually June 26-27
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

Additional Prayer Concerns

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

Rev. Al Polito of Bethany Presbyterian Church in Grundy Center is doing well after his second heart ablation. He thanks everyone for the prayers.

Rev. Denise Group, HR, sends heart-felt thanks for all the prayers. She is doing well and will be preaching this coming Sunday.

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.

Additional Prayer Concerns, continued

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.

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

Poor Richard's Almanac

by Richard Francis, Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Prospect Hill



As we try to follow the news, it's easy to get overwhelmed. For some time now, the COVID-19 pandemic has dominated the reporting, the analysis, and the conversation: how serious is it, how many cases are there today, is the government doing enough, is the government doing too much, what should we do about public worship, and on and on and on.

Then a black man named George Floyd was murdered by a white policeman, and the news shifted. Protests, some violent (or at least with violence occurring during the protests) sprang up all over the country, from cities to small towns. Leaders in the African-American community explained to anyone who listened that it wasn't just about George Floyd or any of the other blacks who had experienced violence at the hands of police. It was about something called "systemic racism" that is an integral part of our society, they said, and until we address that and change that, nothing else will really change.

Not surprisingly, many whites pushed back against that charge of systemic racism. I'm not a racist, we said. We know that there are racists, we know that there is racism in some places and maybe even some institutions, but I'm not part of that.

And that brings me to the Prayer of Confession.

The order of worship found in our *Book of Common Worship* going back at least to 1946, the oldest copy I have on my shelf, includes a corporate Prayer of Confession near the beginning of the service, and most of our churches continue that practice.

But from time to time, we get push back on that as well. We might have asked the congregation to pray these words—"We have turned from our neighbors, and refused to bear the burdens of others. We have ignored the pain of the world, and passed by the hungry, the poor, and the oppressed"—only to be told, "That doesn't apply to me. I haven't done those things. I haven't turned from my neighbors, I help several people every week, I volunteer at the food bank and the gospel mission. Why should I confess things I'm not doing?" Even one of my former colleagues refused to include the Prayer of Confession in the order of worship for the church he served, arguing that confession of sins was a private matter between individual Christians and God and didn't belong in a corporate act of worship.

But that's not what the Prayer of Confession is about. *The Companion to the Book of Common Worship* puts it this way:

Frequently, people misunderstand the Prayer of Confession, as though its intention were to enumerate sins specific to individuals. However, in the Prayer of Confession, we trust God's mercy enough to lay before God not only those sins which may belong to us individually and personally, but also the sins and brokenness of the congregation, the church universal, and the world. We do not confess primarily specific acts of omission or commission, but rather the tragic brokenness of our human condition, in which, even without intending to, we are constantly running away from God and our neighbors (for example, Rom. 7:19).¹

The *Companion* notes that the Reformers probably adapted this from the Roman Catholic mass in which the priest begins with a personal confession of sin.

¹ Peter C. Bower, editor, *The Companion to the Book of Common Worship*, p.23

By transferring the prayer of the priest to the whole congregation, the Reformers made the statement that it was the congregation as a whole who celebrated the liturgy, and not the priest alone with the congregation as an audience. John Calvin, in fact, is credited with the introduction of “corporate confession of sin” into Christian worship, for he changed the pronoun from the first person singular (“I”) to the first person plural (“we”), and asked that pastors lead their people in such a prayer as the first act of worship each Lord’s Day.² Thus [the Prayer of Confession] became a confession of the community of faith. (pp.22-23)³

That brings us back to systemic racism. Just as we all share sinful human nature and that human nature expresses itself in flawed institutions, so we who are white share to some extent in systemic racism. It is the sea we swim in. Our role as white Christians is to listen, to educate ourselves, to repent, and to do what we can to dismantle the racist structures we are part of.

It won’t be easy. But very few things that are worthwhile are easy. The good news is that we have a Savior who walks beside us in this journey through this particular valley of the shadow of death, and promises to be with us on the other side.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Richard". To the left of the signature is a decorative flourish consisting of several vertical, wavy lines. Below the signature is a small, simple heart symbol.

² See Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.4.11. Calvin cites the public confession as found in passages like Nehemiah 1:7; 9:1-2, writing, “Nor does it matter if sometimes a few in one congregation be innocent, for when they are members of a feeble and diseased body they ought not to boast of health. Nay, they cannot but contract some contagion and also bear some part of the guilt.”

³ Even though *The Companion to the Book of Common Worship* was written to complement the 1993 edition of *The Book of Common Worship* it remains an excellent resource and is still in print.

Rev. Richard and Kathy Francis will celebrate their 50th Anniversary alone on June 13, 2020. The party will be next year, but if you'd like to drive by and honk, or send a card, their address is: 1826 Martin Ave.
Carroll, IA 51401



Rev. Brad Braley, who is currently serving First Presbyterian Church in Waterloo, 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



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

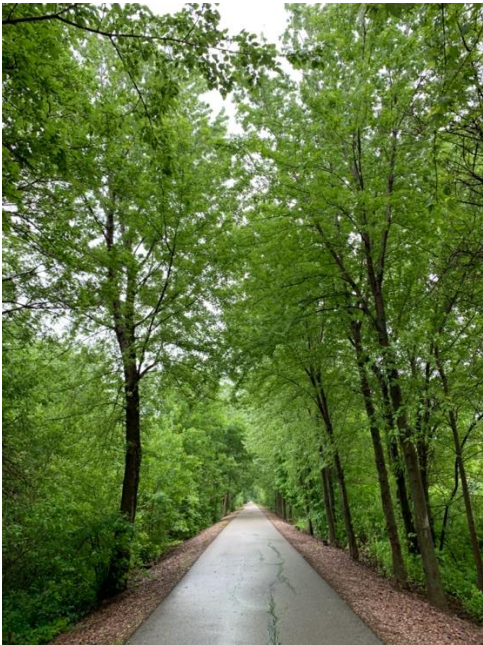
Date: July 19, 2020

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





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.

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!



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 June 2 and [here](#) for the June 9 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/iowafaitheaders/>