

The Shepherd's VOICE

I WAS JUST THINKING . . .

From our District Executive Minister



The little girl was a refugee from Russia. She had come with her parents to find religious, as well as political, freedom. And the family settled in a small, Midwestern town. Not too many people knew much about a Jewish girl and her family from Russia. As people are wont to do, the other children made fun of her, teased her, taunted her because she was "different." Then the teacher made an assignment for all the children. She gave each of them an old fashioned clothespin, and asked them to make a clothespin Pilgrim doll. When the little girl took her clothespin home, she and her mother looked up what "Pilgrim" meant—"people who come from another country to a new place to find freedom." With great eagerness, her mother took over the project, and when she was done, she had created a Pilgrim that mirrored the pilgrims that their family represented—a babushka doll, festive and beautiful! And with the babushka doll in hand, the girl was able to tell her story and the teasing stopped! Former "enemies" were friends!

I heard this story on the radio when children's books about Thanksgiving were being reviewed. Sadly, I missed the name and author. However, I was touched by the intent of the story. As I heard the tale, it was meant to teach us the importance of listening. It was meant to teach us the sadness of making assumptions and/or thinking we already know people. Additionally, it was meant to teach us how fundamental connection is in our lives. And just maybe, it was meant to remind us, at this Thanksgiving, that something we should give thanks for, sing glad songs for, develop a treasuring attitude for, is to be grateful for one another and our differences as well as our similarities.

At times, people, even Christian people, fear that, if they interact with people of difference, whether it be language, culture, skin color, abilities and disabilities, and especially theologies and faith traditions, they will be tainted. Yet, as Jesus tells us, the taint is in our hearts and is what comes out of us. If our faith is solid, if our joy in Jesus is deeply rooted, if our hope is eternal, if our peace cannot be dislodged, and if our love and grace are modeled after our beloved Christ, then what have we to fear? As Romans 8:38-39 tells us, nothing can "separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So let us make rich and ennobling connections with people who make Pilgrim dolls and babushka dolls, with people who might have seemed to be different or to be "enemies" until we hear their stories, with people whose language we can barely understand, with people who see life and faith differently than we do, with people who have something to teach us and people we have some

Continued on p. 8

Sonja
Sonja Griffith, DEM



Nov/Dec 2013

Volume 12, Issue 6

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Next deadline: Jan. 15

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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.

District Calendar 2014

Jan. 3	NYC registration opens! (see p. 3, 7)
Feb. 3-5	Leadership Training, Great Bend, Kan., Heartland Center for Spirituality
Feb. 7-9	Jr. High Rally, Hutchinson Community Church of the Brethren (p. 6)
March	KonXions Trainings for Congregational Visitors (see p. 8)
Mar. 28-30	Regional Youth Conference, McPherson College (p. 7)
Apr 4-6	Women's Retreat. Crosswind Center, Hesston, Kan.
Apr. 11-12	(Tentative date) Men's Retreat, Heartland Center for Spirituality, Great Bend, Kan.
June TBA	Summer camp at Colorado and Mt. Hermon!
July 19-24	National Youth Conference, Fort Collins, Colo.
July 25-27	District Conference, McPherson, Kan.
Sept. 26-28	Family Camp (MH) – Celebrating Mt. Hermon's 70th birthday!
Oct. 24-26	Gathering



MEN'S RETREAT TENTATIVE

A tentative date for the District Men's Retreat has been set for April 11-12. It will be held at the Heartland Center for Spirituality in Great Bend, Kan. Please save this date and watch for further details!

MINISTERIAL UPDATES

Anita Christian, member of the Hutchinson (Kan.) Community congregation was ordained on Nov. 17. **Paul Cesare**, member of First Central congregation in Kansas City, was licensed to ministry Dec. 15. **Dylan Dell-Haro**, pastor of the Rochester Community church in Topeka, Kan. will be ordained to ministry on Jan. 12.

Congratulations, prayers and blessings in all your ministries!

The Prayer Corner

A space for lifting each other in the Light of God



Please be in prayer for.....

- **New BVSers** – Pray for Sarah Ullom-Minnich and Becky Snell, of the McPherson congregation, who are volunteering at projects in Chicago and Belfast, N. Ireland. (see p. 5)
- **Judy Mills Reimer** – Judy passed away Nov. 13. She was a former General Secretary of the Church of the Brethren, Annual Conference moderator, and pastor. Please keep the Reimer family in prayer.
- **Byron Frantz** – Byron passed away Nov. 4. He and his wife Eula were long-time founding members of the N. Colorado (now "Peace Community") Church of the Brethren in Windsor. More recently they have been members of the Haxtun (Colo.) congregation. Please keep in prayer Eula and their children and families: Pam Barnes, Diane Ditmars, David Frantz, Ken Frantz, and Kathryn Whitacre.
- **Don McAllister** – Don passed away Nov. 4. He was a long-time member of the Eden Valley congregation. Please pray for his wife Lynda and family.
- **Colorado Flooding** – Please continue to be in prayer for those affected by the flooding in Colorado, particularly Boulder Fellowship. (see p.4)
- **Pastoral Searches** – Please keep in prayer the Garden City and Wichita congregations, which are in the midst of pastoral searches.

Our Congregations in Western Plains

- **Bethel** (Carleton, Neb.) – Prayers for: Pastor Jim, who is recovering from hip replacement surgery and is doing well; Gary Brinegar, who is recovering from lung cancer surgery and is doing well; Our country and its leaders; His Church – for the opportunity to share, the courage that we will, words and actions of wisdom when we do.
- **Lone Star** (Lawrence, Kan.) – We are in the process of restructuring our leadership structure. Please pray for a clear leading of Holy Spirit as we work together to organize ourselves for what God has called us to at Lone Star. Pray for open hearts and ears to hear what God is saying to us about our purpose and mission. Please pray for revival of hearts and homes in our church and community.
- **Newton** (Kan.) – Prayers as they organize in early January for another year of faithful witness and service and as they prepare for their KonXion visit.
- **Paint Creek** (Redfield, Kan.) – R.T. "Chub" and Helen Bolling, pastors at the Paint Creek congregation, lost their home to a fire Dec. 5. They lived in this home for 50 years and lost everything. Please keep them in your prayers.
- **Scott Valley** (Westphalia, Kan.) – Our older adults are needing God's healing of physical difficulties so we will be able to continue ministry in the Scott Valley community. We have a good children's program. Pray that inactive folks in the Scott Valley area will feel the need to come and worship with us.

(Prayers cont. p. 3)

Prayer Corner, cont.

Our Denomination, Our Nation, Our World

- Those affected by recent tornadoes in Illinois/Indiana (p.7)
- Recent devastation in the Philippines, as the result of Typhoon Haiyan (p.7)
- Our Church of the Brethren brothers and sisters in Brazil, Haiti, Dominican Republic, India, Nigeria, Spain, and Sudan
- Annual Conference Moderator Nancy Heishman; General Secretary Stan Noffsinger; and all Annual Conference agency staff

THANKS FOR YOUR FORMS!

Form B has been mailed from the Yearbook office in Elgin to all congregations. This form requests mailing addresses for such positions as board chair, treasurer, deacon contact, youth workers, etc. and will be due in the Yearbook office by **Dec. 31, 2013**.

Congregational Outreach Forms were due in early December. If you haven't yet mailed this in to the respective organizations indicated on the form, we'll still take them! ☺

The Statistical Form, which requests membership, attendance, ministerial, and financial information for 2013, will be mailed to each congregation in early January with a due date of March 17, 2014.

Form A, which requests each church's contact, ministerial, and disability information, will be mailed by April 1 with a due date of May 15, 2014.

Thanks so much for your help!

NYC 2014 & 5,000 YOUTH CHALLENGE!



Next July, thousands of Brethren youth from across the country will gather in Ft. Collins, Colo. for a life changing experience called National Youth Conference (NYC). It only comes around every four years, so mark your calendars for July 19-24, 2014!

The week of NYC includes worship twice a day, small groups, workshops, service projects, recreation, hiking in the Rocky Mountains, and more! More information about the week's activities is available on the NYC website:

www.brethren.org/NYC

Some youth groups travel to Colorado by plane, but many congregations work with their district office to coordinate bus transportation. Contact your district office to see what options are available.

Online registration opens online January 3 at 7 pm (central time) at www.brethren.org/nyc. The registration fee is \$450. A non-refundable deposit of \$225 must be paid at the time of registration, with the balance due by April 30. All youth who have completed ninth grade through one year of college (at the time of NYC) are eligible to attend.

Please be aware of special opportunities for your involvement at NYC, including the Youth Music Contest and the Youth Speech Contest. Entries are due February 16, 2014. All youth are encouraged to send in entries.

For more information, please visit www.brethren.org/NYC. Contact the NYC Office with any questions at cobyouth@brethren.org or call our office at (800) 323-8039, x 363.

NYC "5,000 Challenge"!

What if so many people registered for National Youth Conference 2014 that Colorado State University ran out of room to house everyone? Typical attendance at NYC has been around 3,000 in recent history, but CSU is able to house up to 5,000. The National Youth Conference Coordinators are challenging the denomination to fill up all 5,000 beds. It may sound like a challenge, but if every participant just brought a friend along, it would happen! Or if everyone who reads this article tried to get one youth to attend NYC, it would happen!

There is a great story in the Gospels about Jesus feeding 5,000 people. Jesus said to his disciples, "You give them something to eat." And the disciples responded, "We only have five loaves and two fish." But where the disciples saw an obstacle, Jesus saw an opportunity.

Particularly at this significant moment in the life and history of the Church of the Brethren, we need every youth to be at NYC 2014. Now is the time to bring the next generation together, to hear Christ's call, and be blessed for the journey together.

More Info!

Go to p.7 to learn about:

- District NYC Bus
- "Host" Video for NYC
- NYC Contests
- Regional Youth Conference
- District Youth Cabinet

NYC Checklist

- Jan. 3:** Online registration opens at 7pm central (www.brethren.org/nyc)
- Mar. 16:** District Bus registration is due. (p. 7)
- Apr. 30:** NYC Registration full payment is due.

Church of the Brethren in Western Plains

Mission & Service



Hello Friends in mission and service! We would love to hear what your congregations are doing to share Christ's love and peace with others! To share your stories of mission and service with our Brothers and Sisters of Western Plains, please contact Dale and Beverly Minnich, District Mission and Service Advocates: dale@minnichnet.org · beverly@minnichnet.org

Prayers, donations for Philippines, Midwest, Colorado

Brethren Disaster Ministries Update:

We recently have witnessed two devastating disasters within days of each other. First, Typhoon Haiyan hammered the Philippine islands on Nov. 8, causing extreme destruction and loss of life. Brethren Disaster Ministries is intent on organizing a response that will focus Brethren resources on the areas of greatest need by working with partners already active in the Philippines and Vietnam. An initial grant of \$35,000 already is being sent to support emergency operations and life saving support. Their goal is to raise at least \$500,000 to expand this initial work into the long-term rebuilding of homes and lives. Links to learn more can be found at www.brethren.org/bdm.

Days later, an outbreak of severe storms and powerful tornadoes struck the Midwest on Sunday, Nov. 17. BDM is beginning response activities in the state of Illinois. Below is a related article that has been posted through the Church of the Brethren Newline. <http://www.brethren.org/news/>

Please keep these and all disaster survivors lifted up in prayer and consider giving financially.

How to Give:

- Online donations for Typhoon Haiyan can be made at www.brethren.org/typhoonaid.
- Online donations for the US Tornadoes can be made at www.brethren.org/edf. You will be able to earmark your donation here if you wish.

Donations by check can be made payable to the Emergency Disaster Fund and earmarked on the memo line for the Philippine Typhoon or the US Tornadoes. Mail checks to Emergency Disaster Fund, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

Flooding update from Colorado

This update comes from Western Plains ordained minister Karen Cox, who is pastor of the Boulder Mennonite Church/Boulder Fellowship. She sent this update on Nov. 14.

It was referred to as a 1,000 year flood. Rains fell in parts of the state of Colorado for a week starting Sept. 9. Eight flood related deaths occurred; 1,500 homes were destroyed; 19,000 homes were damaged. Roads and bridges were washed out. Schools were closed. Businesses were brought to a halt. Outside resources came in for rescue and recovery. The Boulder Mennonite Church (BMC) community (average Sunday attendance of 70) was not exempt from impacts of flooding.

Two homes of members saw 6-8 feet of flood waters in their basements, leaving mud and, in one case, sewage; repairs included trashing most contents, stripping those finished spaces down to studs, treating for mold, and starting over. Another half dozen or so members' homes had several inches of water in living spaces; carpets/flooring and some drywall needed replacing. Church members, friends, and family members have pitched in to help along the way, offering labor, cheer, rooms and food. Several members who live in the mountains are still waiting for their usual roads to be re-opened.

The Boulder Mennonite Church building has flood damage as well. It is a two story building with a full basement. The basement includes 7 classrooms/office rooms, 2 multi-stall bath rooms, a multi-stall shower room, 3 large closets/storage spaces, furnace room, kitchen, and community hall. In spite of the best efforts of several members pumping and sweeping water towards drains during the rainfall, an inch or so of water sat on the entire floor. The water came in through a south corner/wall of the building. A large dumpster in the parking lot is overflowing with ruined carpet, padding, flooring, and drywall that have been removed from the building. Replacing damages has begun.

In the meantime, the congregation is coping with the disruptions. Some nursery toys and books have been relocated to the upstairs library for nursery care during worship.

Prayers cont. on p. 5

Western Plains BVS volunteers start projects in Chicago, Belfast

Sarah Ullom-Minnich of Moundridge, Kan. and Becky Snell of McPherson, Kan., have recently undertaken Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) assignments with Su Casa Catholic Worker in Chicago, Ill. and Quaker Cottage in Belfast, Northern Ireland, respectively.

Sarah's Project: Su Casa is a transitional residence that aims to help homeless Hispanic families move toward independence. Its efforts are directed toward doing things with people rather than for them. During a stay at Su Casa, residents address the underlying causes related to their homelessness and work to overcome the obstacles preventing their integration into independent community living. Su Casa is a Catholic Worker Community committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle while working among those in need. The ministry is threefold: providing hospitality and a healing environment, partnering with neighbors to make the community a better place in which to live, and engaging in educational and social action activities concerning social justice issues.



BVSers Sarah Ullom-Minnich (top) and Becky Snell, of the McPherson congregation. Photo and article courtesy Brethren Volunteer Service

Sarah is a 2013 graduate of Moundridge (Kan.) High School. There, she was an active member of the Debate Team, the Forensics Team and the Spanish Club. She was a National Merit Semi-Finalist. She is an avid reader and enjoys playing the guitar and singing. Sarah is a member of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren.

Becky's Project: Quaker Cottage is a cross-community family support center situated on the side of Black Mountain, overlooking West Belfast. It is a special day center that provides care and support for families referred by social services. Typically the families have experienced some form of trauma in their lives or have difficulty coping with day to day living. All live in areas most affected by the conflict in Northern Ireland. Quaker Cottage aims to provide an environment where increased self-esteem, greater family understanding and cooperation, improved social and life skills, and enhanced development of mutual understanding and respect are actively promoted. Becky will be principally be involved working with children, using a very individualized model of child care.

Becky graduated in 2011 from Central Michigan with a Masters in Music Education. There she was a graduate assistant and an assistant conductor for a women's chorus and a vocal jazz ensemble. Since graduating, Becky went on to be an adjunct professor of voice and choir at Central Christian College, and the director of choirs at her home congregations of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren. Becky has also spent many summers as a counselor and director for Camp Colorado, in Sedalia, Colo.

Sarah and Becky can be reached through the BVS office at 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin IL 60120.

Sarah's and Becky's assignments followed their respective orientations (Summer Unit #301, Fall Unit #303) at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. where groups of volunteers came together from all over the United States and Germany. For three weeks, they lived together as a community and studied topics of nonviolence, human rights, poverty, and simple living. They also gained first-hand volunteer experience working with local organizations in New Windsor, Harrisburg, Pa., and New Oxford, Pa. Orientation builds community spirit among participants through personal sharing, fellowship and increased knowledge of the world.

Sarah and Becky are taking part in a long standing tradition of ministry through service. BVS, established in 1948, works at advocating justice, peacemaking, serving human needs, and caring for creation. Approximately 84 current BVSers serve in the U.S. and abroad working with various peace and social/economic justice organizations. In exchange for their work, volunteers receive room, board and a small monthly stipend from their project. Brethren Volunteer Service, a program of the Church of the Brethren, is open to any person 18 years or older interested in service through a Christian program.

Prayers, cont. – Christian Ed classes are meeting in various upstairs locations, even using different corners of the sanctuary. The pastor's office is doubling as a pre-school classroom. A group that was renting a downstairs room weekly has been meeting in a home, but will soon resume meetings in the upstairs sanctuary. Some rentals have been turned away until repairs are complete. And another congregation in town has temporarily taken over the once a week homeless sleep-in that usually happens in the building.

One estimate for repairs was as high as \$95,000. Working at keeping costs as low as possible, the work could get done for under \$25,000 (with lots of donated professional and volunteer labor, and with some patient waiting as the work takes longer to accomplish).

Your prayers and care are greatly appreciated. BMC Deacons have also invited donations to help with flood relief. Deacons will oversee distribution of these funds. Funds will be shared between church building repairs, grants made to members who have suffered damage, and support of wider community flood relief. Donations can be made to Boulder Mennonite Church ("Flood Relief" in memo line of check) and mailed to 3910 Table Mesa Drive, Boulder CO 80305. Or go to bouldermennonite.org and click "DONATE" to make a credit card or PayPal contribution (under "Add Special Instructions" note "Flood Relief").

NEW JR. HIGH MINISTRY COORDINATORS



The District's Congregational Resourcing Team is pleased to introduce Philip and Nicole Sampson as our new Junior High Ministry Coordinators! Both are members of the Community Church of the Brethren in Hutchinson, Kan., and Nicole is a member of its leadership team.

Philip grew up in the Hutchinson congregation and attended Hutchison Community College for welding. He is currently employed at Hospira in McPherson.

Nicole came to Hutchinson in 2004 as a Brethren Volunteer Service worker. She worked at Friendship Day Care, which was affiliated with the Hutchinson congregation at the time. She grew up in Pennsylvania and attended the New Enterprise Church of the Brethren. She graduated from McPherson College in 2010 and graduated with her Master's degree from Saint Francis University in Pennsylvania in 2013. Nicole is working as an occupational therapist. Nicole and Philip have been married and living McPherson

since 2008 and are expecting their first child in April!

Nicole shares, "Philip and I are very excited and looking forward to meeting all of the Junior High Youth of the district! Our hope is to have fun as a group, develop lasting relationships, grow together in faith, and share the message and love of God through words, service, and action. Our first get-together will be the Junior High Youth Rally in February. Hope to see you there!"

The Congregational Resourcing Team is delighted that the Western Plains District has strong district level programs for both the Junior High and Senior High youth. We are pleased to welcome Philip and Nicole to their important leadership assignments. Remember, watch for the announcement for the Junior High Rally, to be held February 7-9 at the Community Church of the Brethren in Hutchinson!

FEBRUARY LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR PASTORS, LAY CHURCH LEADERS

Transformation is a rainbow! There are the highs of the presence of the Spirit—color them red or orange or yellow. Color the new life and excitement of the Spirit green. The blues are the ongoing, everyday small miracles and evidences of love that Christ and the Holy Spirit provide. The Transformation Training Team has something to offer, now, that is deep purple—the royal and regal privilege of serving the people of God and being led by the Spirit!

Each five years, pastors in the Church of the Brethren have the royal purple opportunity and privilege and challenge and yes, mandate, to be reminded of the ethics that guide them in their sacred calling. And what better time and place than the Pastor/Leader Training at Great Bend, Kansas! Pastors can fulfill their requirement and call, and congregational leaders can understand that call. Indeed, congregational leaders and ministers will also have the opportunity to think about the ethics that congregations, as the body of Christ, are called to follow.

All of this can happen in a pleasant and quiet and prayer-filled setting at the **Heartland Center in Great Bend on February 3-5, 2014**. This training can be a true retreat time, also filled with worship and inspiration and group spiritual direction. The Transformation Training Team is looking forward to having a record attendance at this royal purple event!

Lois Fruth Grove will lead the sessions, from the Faith/Trust Institute, which are called "Healthy Boundaries." This title is taken from the fact that each cell in our body has a boundary. Even as each cell interacts with other cells, it has

a need for its own healthy boundaries. Without healthy boundaries, each cell cannot do its own task. With healthy boundaries, each cell becomes a vital part of the whole. So it is that following ethical principles is like being a cell with healthy boundaries. And that is true for persons and congregations. So this training will lead pastors

and congregational leaders (yes, we welcome and encourage these leaders) to check their own boundaries and strengthen them with healing and wholeness! Each participant will have a workbook with which to learn the material and remember it. The Western Plains District will provide the workbooks, as well as lodging and meals. Further details of schedule will be forthcoming very soon.

We, the Transformation Training Team (Bob Dell, chair, Dale Minnich, and Sonja Griffith) are eager to make this part of the rainbow of transformation available to each and every minister and congregational leader in Western Plains. Please come!

Workshop Details

Date: February 3-5, 2014

Location: Heartland Center for Spirituality, Great Bend, Kansas

Focus: "Healthy Boundaries", led by Lois Fruth Grove from the Faith Trust Institute

Watch for more details coming soon!

NEWS YOUTH CAN USE!

and their advisors!

NYC 2014 District Bus!

National Youth Conference 2014 in Fort Collins, Colo. is not far away (July 19-24). Registration is even closer! (Jan. 3, 7 PM CST) **It is not too early to begin thinking "how am I going to get to NYC?!"**



A bus for Western Plains District Youth has been chartered! It will be no more than \$130 per person, round trip. The more full the bus, the less the cost! Reservations can be made up until **Sunday, March 16**. Reservations and a payment check (made out to "Western Plains District", memo line: NYC bus) received by this date will be considered "guaranteed." After March 16, reservations can be made as space is available on the bus (or buses...maybe we'll need more than one!).

For more information, to make a reservation, or to send payment check, contact District Youth Coordinator, Shawn Flory Replogle:

620-755-6869 (call or text);
sfrcob@gmail.com; on Facebook; or
221 N Walnut, McPherson, KS 67460

See you on the bus!

NYC Contests

For 2014 NYC there are both a Youth Speech and a Youth Music Contest. Entries are due by **February 16**. More info can be found at: <http://www.brethren.org/yya/nyc/forms.html>.

District Youth Cabinet

Did you know the Western Plains District has a Youth Cabinet? It's true!

About a year ago the Cabinet was formed to help plan things like District Conference youth activities, District Fall Youth Retreat schedule at the Gathering, and even some help with RYC. Next year we're planning on using more technology to be involved even more!

Currently the Cabinet is made up of Zadie Smith (Mont Ida, sophomore), Grant Tuttle (Holmesville, senior), Rebecca Ullom-Minnich (junior, McPherson), and Kerrick van Asselt (senior, McPherson), Jennifer Jensen (adult advisor) and Shawn Flory Replogle (District Youth Coordinator).

With two seniors preparing to "move on", the District Youth Cabinet is looking for some folks to participate in this way! Have an interest in helping plan some district-wide youth activities? Know a youth or adult who would serve well in this way? Make a suggestion or nomination to Shawn Flory Replogle, 620-755-6869 (cell or text).

"Host" Video for NYC

As the "host district" of National Youth Conference (in Colorado), Western Plains District Youth are making a short video to be played near the beginning of worship on the first night of National Youth Conference. Some writing of the video is already underway. Filming will begin during Regional Youth Conference at the end of March.

Want to help? Great! Contact a member of the District Youth Cabinet, or Shawn Flory Replogle, 620-755-6869 (cell or text).

Regional Youth Conference

RYC will be **March 28-30** on the campus of McPherson College. The theme is a variation of the NYC theme: "Called by God: Preparing for the Journey Together".

The main presenters for RYC will be Jacob and Jerry Crouse. Jacob was the 2010 NYC Youth Theme Song Contest winner and a member of last year's Youth Peace Travel Team. Jerry is Jacob's dad, and a member of the pastoral team at the Warrensburg (Mo.) Church of the Brethren. The RYC Planning Team - made up entirely of McPherson College students - is excited to have the Crouse's coming!

More information available soon.

Seeing Through Our Own Eyes

At the Gathering this year, Cody Flory Robertson, of the Wichita First congregation, led a workshop on Contemplative Photography for the Junior High youth.

They spent some time learning about contemplative photography and spent more time experiencing contemplative photography—experiencing and contemplating the world around them and capturing that with their cameras.

Cody has started a new blog on contemplative photography. Visit his blog to learn more about the practice. He is currently working on a post about his experience with the Jr. High youth at the Gathering. Take a look! Visit:

seeingthroughourowneyes.blogspot.com



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KONXION IS COMING!

Congregations from Western Plains (and a couple from neighboring districts) are hard at work right now considering their invitation to participate in a congregational visit exchange planned for this Spring. Participating congregations will be paired and each will prepare to receive a visit from several members of their partner congregation. In turn each will call 2-5 persons to represent their church as a visit team to their assigned partner. Conversations about the invitations have been lively and we look forward to a series of stimulating and affirming visits – and a chance to build a new relationship with another congregation. Training sessions for visitors are planned in four regional locations in March.

Congregations are asked to indicate their interest in participation and to provide the names of the persons called to serve as visitors by February 1. Please be in touch with the District Office or Dale Minnich, the KonXion design team chair (dale@minnichnet.org) to indicate a response or to ask for any needed additional information.

Newsletter Submission Deadline:
January 15



*Merry Christmas &
A Blessed New Year!*

"I Was Just Thinking" continued from p. 1

teaching to give to, and through the KonXion program, with people who share our denomination but live in difference places. Perhaps, when we learn the great Thanksgiving that goes out to the glory of our God and to all our neighbors for their good and ours, whoever and wherever, the reign of our Lord will be nearer than we can imagine! Happy Thanksgiving, Holy and Sacred Christmas to one and all.