

Illinois & Wisconsin District  
of the  
Church of the Brethren  
*District Minister: Jim Yaussy Albright*  
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**District Office**  
1S071 Luther Ave.  
Lombard, IL 60148-4163  
Phone: 630-261-0951  
Fax: 630-261-0956  
Beth Burnette Admin Asst.



*Remember*

**District Conference 2004**

November 5<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup>  
Dixon Church of the Brethren  
215 North Court, Dixon, IL

**“Prepare, God’s People!!” (Eph. 4:11-13)**

Worship Friday Evening, Children and Youth Activities Saturday, Business Sessions Saturday, Spirit’s Harmony Concert at 7:30 PM on Saturday Evening, Sunday School for all ages and Worship Sunday.

Come be a part of YOUR District Meeting.

**BEING CHRIST TO PEOPLE**

(Read Matthew 25:31-46)

In my 29 years of ministry I have worked hard to bring about the changes that would help the Church of the Brethren be ever more faithful to the New Testament vision of the church. I can say to you today that the changes we have accomplished in the Illinois and Wisconsin District have been the most gratifying in all those years. Our district is poised to call out new leadership, to identify and unleash the spiritual gifts among us, to plant more and more new churches, and to join congregation with congregation in unprecedented ways to be a powerful witness to *today’s* world.

The work of this past year has been to deal with all the structural and organizational details required by our new structure, and our new commitment to a balanced budget. All of that has entailed a looking inward. But the most important aspect of that work has been to clear the way for a renewed, more sharply focused vision of ministry. The whole purpose of the transformation we have experienced and are continuing to experience is to help us more effectively accomplish our **mission**. Now it is time to look outward.

That doesn’t mean we don’t have more work to do within our district to make that possible. The changes we have gone through have not been easy, and relationships have been strained over unmet and changing expectations. The shift in my work hours and focus has meant that I have not always been there when you needed me. I regret that, and ask your forgiveness and understanding as we continue to move into a new way of working together. In addition, we find ourselves still confronted by the sense of division that has been a part of our district for so long. The truth is that there are many issues

over which we strongly disagree. We still need to seek a shared understanding what it means to be a district and a community of Brothers and Sisters united in ministry and mission.

I don’t know where that will take us. But I believe that a renewed focus on mission, a renewed commitment to reaching outside of ourselves to minister to our neighbors, can have a powerful unifying effect. I recently spoke with a young pastor who expressed frustration over the tendency of the church to get caught up in internal fighting instead of uniting in reaching out to the world. He believes that is one reason why there are fewer and fewer young people willing to enter the ministry. He listed the needs he is aware of in his own community that are not being met. Then he said something I will not soon forget: **“All I want to do is be Christ to people.”**

I offer that as a powerful definition of mission--and a powerful call to mission. Matthew 25 makes it clear that when we stand before Christ at the Last Judgment he will not care what our district organization looked like, or who won or lost in our arguments over theology. He will want to know whether we gave food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty, whether we welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, cared for the sick, and visited the prisoner. In fact, and we must never forget this, he will make it clear that when we did those things to “one of the least of these,” we did them to Him. And when we failed to do them for one of the least of these, we failed to serve Christ himself, no matter how righteous—or well organized—we thought we were.

Brothers and Sisters, I urge us to make this question a high priority for next year: How can we be Christ to people? Jim

## ILLINOIS/WISCONSIN TRANSITION TEAM:

Greetings from District Transition Team! We continue meeting challenges and understand the new structure in which we are functioning. The following list describes what is happening and falling into place. There are more details to report than are listed below and will be reported at District Conference by the Ministry Teams and the Transition Team.

- **Communication** continues as a priority. The District website, [www.iwdcob.org](http://www.iwdcob.org), contains information about Transition Team meetings, happenings in the district, and links to other sites. A ***District Newsletter*** has also been published thanks to the Peoria congregation. Please share what your congregation is doing that would be of interest to the rest of the district. E-mail your information to Leonard Matheny at [mathelw@mindspring.com](mailto:mathelw@mindspring.com) or Gil Crosby at [crosbygm@juno.com](mailto:crosbygm@juno.com). You can also mail to *First Church of the Brethren, Attn: District Newsletter, 4714 N. Sheridan Rd., Peoria, IL 61614*.
- **Constitution and Bylaws** revision has been completed. Copies have been sent to congregations for distribution to their District Conference delegates. If you have not received the new Constitution, please call or e-mail Kevin Kessler.. Please bring your copy to District Conference. Delegates will vote on the revision.
- **Funding** urgently needs attention. We are contacting congregations concerning the financial situation of the district. We will be contacting individuals to seek additional funding. A goal of \$3,000.00 was set for the District Conference offering. The Program and Arrangements Committee expects to meet conference expenses without using the offering.. The Transition Team is living within their income and has not used reserves for expenses. District Minister Jim Yaussy Albright stated that “the extent of our district ministries will only be limited by the extent of our giving.” That is food for thought and encouragement to think about giving as ministry.
- **A District Deacons Team** was developed to assist the District Minister with some of the responsibilities including but not limited to pastoral placement issues. Because the District Minister’s position is ½ time, the new team will pick up some of the work in order to move forward more quickly. More information will be coming about the team .
- **The District Minister** position description is in place. Because of the transition and determining what this position should be, creating a description was a challenge. The new description provides a framework that the District Minister, Jim Yaussy Albright, and the Transition Team can work with, and establish priorities. While working on this new position description, we decided that Transition Team liaisons may need to be a first line of communication when there are duty and time constraints on the District Minister. If you do not know who your Liaison is you can find it on the District website or contact Kevin Kessler. Congregations are encouraged to contact liaisons with needs or concerns. Liaisons will forward these needs and concerns as necessary.
- **Disaster Response** coordinators in our district are Russ McInnis and Marian Patterson. Russ will recruit work teams for disaster sites and Marian will secure persons to help with child care on site. Questions should be directed to Russ, Marian, or Clareen Dunn, a Transition Team member liaison to the Disaster Response team.
- **District Conference** will be at the Dixon Church of the Brethren, November 5-7. Information packets were mailed in late August for the delegates. Delegates and non-delegates are urged to pre-register.. The conference booklet for the delegates will arrive sometime in October. District Conference Moderator, Ed Garrison, chose the theme “Prepare, God’s People!” based on Ephesians 4:11-13. Brother Garrison has visited 30 congregations this year.

**Remember in prayer:** Transition Team member Wilbur Bowman who had heart valve replacement surgery and is home recovering; Ed Garrison, District Moderator as he plans and leads district conference; Jim Yaussy Albright, District Minister as he continues to provide leadership for our district and the New Church Development Board; all congregations that make up the Illinois/Wisconsin District; the Transition Team as they continue to faithfully serve God as they serve the district who called them into service.

Peace and blessings,

Kevin Kessler

Transition Team chair and liaison

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Editors: Gil Crosby at [crosbygm@juno.com](mailto:crosbygm@juno.com) and Leonard Matheny at [mathelw@mindspring.com](mailto:mathelw@mindspring.com)