

GPconnect 10/21/15

Apply now for Great Plains summer internships



The Great Plains Conference offers paid internships in the summer for young adults interested in several ministry areas. These internships typically begin in late May and go until early August. Ministry areas with internships are pastoral leadership, church planting, Hispanic ministry, youth ministry, Vacation Bible School leader and Micah Corp, which educates the public on mercy and justice matters. Applications are being

accepted now for internships for the summer of 2016.

Learn more about the internship program at greatplainsumc.org/internships. Fill out an application at greatplainsumc.org/internapply.

Enhanced Find-A-Church features now available



Today's tech-savvy seekers turn to the Internet as their primary source for information. Local United Methodist churches can be prepared with an updated profile on [Find-A-Church](#), now enhanced with easily viewed events, social media and worship information.

New Find-A-Church features include:

- GoogleMap with movable pin to exactly communicate location.
- Links to social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google Plus and Instagram.
- Updateable information about clergy.
- Event listings for ministries in the church, including event-specific social media links; event management and registration functions are coming soon.
- Calendar of information about day-to-day activities.
- Optional link to Rethink Church national [advertising message](#).
- Easier formatting options for custom profile messages.

To make it easier to update your Find-A-Church profile, United Methodist Communications is offering a series of step-by-step tutorial videos which are [available online](#).

There are 7,500 churches that have never updated their Find-A-Church profile, and more than 10,000 churches do not have a website.

United Methodist Communications also offers [web hosting services](#) starting at just \$5 per month.

With 1,000 people visiting Find-A-Church each day, this service is a no-cost opportunity for increased web presence and outreach, helping to open the doors of every local church to the community.

Construction continues around Topeka conference office



Access to the Topeka office of the Great Plains Conference is changing once again due to the road construction project in its neighborhood. Work is complete on Southwest 15th Street, and the building can now be accessed either from the east or west on that street. Southwest Woodhull Street, which runs from the building north to Southwest Huntoon Street, remains closed.

Important email notes for clergy, lay leadership

Please make use of this quick reminder that all clergy in the Great Plains Conference are expected to use their @greatplainsumc.org email accounts. This address is where the conference and district staffs will send emails to pastors.

It is permissible – in fact, recommended – that pastors have more localized email addresses that match either the church’s website URL or a local Internet service provider. [Follow these directions to forward email](#) from your Great Plains account to another account to make checking email easier for you.

Lay leadership, such as Staff-Pastor-Parish Relations Committee chairs, should make sure their email addresses are up to date with their district offices.

Nehawka United Methodist celebrates 125 years of ministry



Nehawka United Methodist Church celebrated its 125th anniversary Sunday, October 18, in Nehawka, Nebraska, in the Missouri River District. Pastor Larry Adams officiated for the celebratory worship service.

Bishop's Round-up Against Hunger announces grant deadline

The Bishop's Round-up Against Hunger invites agencies of the Great Plains Conference that serve the needs of the hungry and poor in their community to apply for grants.

Money donated to the Bishop's Round-up Against Hunger is divided three ways – 40 percent for Haiti, 40 percent for Mexico and 20 percent for local agency grants.

This local agency grant cycle is open until Nov 21. [Print this form](#), complete and mail to the address on the form. No electronic versions will be accepted. You may also bring the completed form to the Bishop's Round-up Against Hunger event Nov. 21 in Lawrence, Kansas.

Global AIDS grant helps Norfolk First UMC's ministry

Submitted by Christin Woockman, Nebraska AIDS Project

Dec. 1 is World AIDS Day. The Great Plains Conference participates in a special offering each December for the United Methodist Global AIDS Fund. This year, this special Sunday falls on Dec. 6. The Great Plains United Methodist Global AIDS Task Force asks all congregations across our conference to participate in this important special offering.

A percentage of this offering stays in Nebraska and Kansas for local AIDS projects. For the past three years, First UMC in Norfolk has been awarded grant funds and has worked with the Norfolk office of the Nebraska AIDS Project to provide assistance to those living with HIV in our communities.

In 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated 1.2 million people are living with HIV in the United States and approximately 50,000 people are newly infected with HIV each year. The Nebraska AIDS Project is a statewide organization working with people living with HIV/AIDS. The Norfolk office covers 20 counties in northeast Nebraska and works with approximately 35 people.

With the grant funds, the Norfolk office has been able to provide assistance with items that aren't available through our programs or through other agencies. We have helped with personal care items, clothing, school supplies, prescription costs and gasoline. Approximately half of the people who work with the Norfolk office have received assistance through this grant.

This year, I provided vouchers for clients to purchase school supplies for their children. A young boy who was able to pick up needed items asked his mom to call because he wanted to thank me for this help.

I also offered a voucher for household needs to a client who couldn't get help anywhere else. When I said this is a little help to purchase some needed items, she corrected me and said "it is never a little help. It is help, and any help is good."

The United Methodist Global AIDS Fund has provided a needed ministry to those living with HIV/AIDS in Nebraska.

The Great Plains UM Global AIDS Fund Task Force has reopened the grant application process for 2015. United Methodist churches are invited to apply for a grant to help in funding of their new or existing HIV AIDS ministries. This can be for activities and/or materials for education, outreach or support.

The application form is available at greatplainsumc.org/globalaidsfund and must be submitted by Dec. 1 to Andrew Brackett at andrewb@nap.org to be considered. Grants also will be available in 2016.

Please contact LeEllen Haynes at leellen.haynes@yahoo.com with questions.

[Learn more.](#)

Perkins professor to deliver lectures at Yale Divinity School



Dr. Alyce M. McKenzie, the Le Van Professor of Preaching and Worship and director of the Center for Preaching Excellence at Perkins School of Theology, will deliver the Lyman Beecher Lectures on preaching from Oct. 21-23 at Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut. The annual event is considered to be the preeminent homiletics lecture series in the United States.

Dr. McKenzie's series of three lectures at Yale – dubbed "Making a Scene in the Pulpit: Vivid Sermons for Visual Listeners" – will focus on the power of small scenes to reconnect people with the saving story at the heart of preaching. Additionally, she will reveal the importance of scenes in the development and delivery of sermons through these three distinct sessions.

- "Scene is the New Story" makes the case that scenes provide the basis for the theory and practice of preaching in the 21st century.
- "The Preacher as "Scene-Maker" offers the biblical sage as the model for preachers' understanding of their identity and work.
- "The Scenic Sermon" sets out the core strategy of scenic preaching: inviting listeners into scenes and pointing them toward the larger story of God's forgiving, transforming relationship with humankind.

Nebraska United Methodist Foundation raising funds for camps



Faith. Friendship. Leadership. Worship. Play.
Community. Laughter. Prayer. Creation. Growth.
Love. Fun.

These are the words parents use to describe their experiences at Camps Comeca, Fontanelle and Norwesca as children and youth. These parents are sending their own children to our camps today, giving them a strong foundation in their faith on which to stand.

The Nebraska United Methodist Foundation is happy to report that our efforts to support our camps in honor of our 50th anniversary celebration continues to go well. We are incredibly grateful for all of the participation to this point. We have raised \$38,550 that will create an endowment for the camps, in other words, a permanent stream of income. Will you help us reach our goal of \$50,000? Our campers need you! Can you imagine a world where church camps did not exist? Can you imagine the void taking the place of all of those inspired through their church camp experience as a child or young adult? In the words of one young camper, "I have found God in the rain, sunshine and rainbows." Won't you help us create a sustainable stream of income to help support our camps for years to come?

[Please consider making a donation](#) or by mailing to our address at: The Nebraska United Methodist Foundation, 100 W. Fletcher Avenue, Ste. 100, Lincoln, NE 68521.

Great West District has ambitious Lay Servant goal



The Great West District is the largest expanse of the geographically large Great Plains Conference. To help with our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, the district has set a goal of having at least one certified lay servant in each of its churches.

[Read how leadership in the district is working toward that goal.](#)
[Learn about Lay Servant Ministries in the Great Plains Conference.](#)

Conference announces Education Partnership grant recipients



The Great Plains Conference has announced recipients for Education Partnership grants for 2015. The matching grants total \$9,500. The money was awarded to 14 churches this year.

“The grant committee was impressed by the commitment of our congregations to their local schools, teachers, and students,” said the Rev. Stephanie Ahlschwede, who chaired the grants committee. “This was backed up by clear evidence of careful planning and a creative spirit designed to leverage existing resources for the greatest

benefit to the community.”

[See which churches received grants.](#)

Learn how to become more welcoming to our communities



Trinity United Methodist Church in Grand Island, Nebraska, and Grace United Methodist Church in Omaha hosted immigration advocacy trainings Oct. 10-11. Bill Mefford, director of civil and human rights for the General Board of Church and Society, facilitated the trainings.

On Oct. 10, participants from Grand Island, Hastings, Alda/Wood River, Madison and Lexington came together to learn about how to become more

welcoming and advocate for better laws treating each human being as a child of God. Sandy Sypherd, the chair of the Great Plains Immigration Rapid Response Team, shared about the Saturday training at Trinity UMC:

“Advocacy means supporting or pleading for a cause. Bill focused on the importance of developing incarnational relationships among the people in congregations and communities that share space with immigrant groups or have outreach programs with immigrants. He challenged us to assess where our congregation is today and where we would expect to be a year from now. He stressed that the changes should be concrete and measurable.”

Some of the ideas that surfaced for changes in churches represented in the training included offering more English Language Learner classes, continuing a community garden or starting one with participants coming

from diverse backgrounds, offering a day of service for immigrants based on what Project Homeless Connect offers to homeless persons, lifting up and celebrating diversity through organizations, prayer vigils and sharing meals that could include dishes from other cultures.

Participants learned that we need to develop personal relationships with people so we're not looking at a group or at "the other" but focusing on the individual. They also learned of the need to move beyond negative labels like "illegal" and "alien" and see each person as a unique child of God.

Bill is hoping to return to Nebraska next year to check on progress.

Ecumenical Advocacy Day 2016: Lift Every Voice!



Submitted by Andrea Paret, Peace with Justice coordinator, Great Plains Conference

Each year, the Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) in Washington, D.C., focus on a different important issue. In the 2016 election year, this national gathering and lobby day addresses solutions to issues of injustice to communities of color and immigrants, voter suppression, and economic exploitation:

As Christians, we believe that leaders and policy makers are called to act and to govern in fairness and with justice for all! Like the persistent widow who demands that the judge hear her plea (Luke 18:1-8), at EAD 2016, we will bring our petitions for justice to Capitol Hill. Like the persistent widow, we will not be silenced.

Come to "Lift Every Voice" on April 15-18, when people of faith will speak truth to power concerning the suppression of political and economic rights and the corporate undermining of the local voice of ordinary people in the United States and around the world. Through prayer, worship, advocacy training, networking and mobilization with other Christians, we will face the reality of racism, class and power impacting politics and policies and advocate for the liberty of "Every Voice!" – all culminating with EAD's Congressional Lobby Day on Capitol Hill.

EAD is co-sponsored by many denominations and organizations, among them the General Board of Church and Society and United Methodist Women. Besides scholarships being offered for young adults through EAD, Peace with Justice Ministries of the Great Plains Conference is making several scholarships available for representatives of our conference to attend and bring back information and action steps to share. If you are interested, please contact Andrea Paret at amparet08@yahoo.com.

[Learn more about "Lift Every Voice."](#)

[See a brochure about the event.](#)

Discuss the role of U.S. Christians in Israeli-Palestinians debate



The Great Plains Holy Land Task Force was formed in response to Resolution #18 "Christians in the Holy Land," which approved during June's annual conference session. The task force is extending an invitation to a luncheon at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 28, at Christ United Methodist Church in Lincoln to hear Dr. Rizek Abusharr, retired as director general of the Jerusalem International YMCA in 2001 after working there for 46 years. Abusharr initiated work with Jewish and Arab youth toward peaceful coexistence in that troubled land.

If you want a box lunch for \$5, please RSVP to the Rev. Lyle Schoen at lschoen@greatplainsumc.org. You also are welcome to bring your own lunch. This luncheon is co-sponsored by Peace with Justice Ministries of the Great Plains Conference.

Other possibilities to hear Dr. Rizek Abusharr speak together with Rabbi Brant Rosen are:

- 7 p.m. Oct. 28 at the University of Nebraska Kearney, Copeland Hall, Room 142, in Kearney, Nebraska.
- Noon Oct. 29 at College of St. Mary, Gross Conference Center in the Hill Macaluso Science Building, in Omaha, Nebraska.

[Learn more about the Lincoln event.](#)

[Learn more about the Kearney and Omaha events.](#)

Classifieds

- [Director of youth ministry sought at Grace Community UMC](#)
- [Aldersgate UMC in Lincoln looking for keyboardist / accompanist](#)
- ["Under Wraps" Advent study available for free](#)

To view these and more classified ads, go to greatplainsumc.org/classifieds.

Newsletters

- Ministry Matters: [Oct. 21, 2015](#)
- Lewis Center for church and Leadership: [Leading Ideas](#)
- General Board of Church and Society: [Faith in Action](#)
- UMC Development Center: [Spiritual Giving](#)
- General Board of Global Ministries: [Global Health](#)
- United Methodist Committee on Relief: [Hotline](#)

Press Clips

Congregations across the Great Plains Conference are making the news in their local newspapers. View our newspaper clipping reports to see if there are stories, ideas and ministry happenings you can learn from to use in your own congregation. Press clips can be found at greatplainsumc.org/inthenews. You can see education partnership ideas at greatplainsumc.org/education.

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To submit a letter to the editor, send it to info@greatplainsumc.org.