

Office of the Bishop

It has been my honor to serve the United Brethren in Christ since appointed as Interim Bishop in 2015. At that moment in time, the Church responded to the unprecedented circumstances of our Bishop's resignation by placing its trust in me — an untested leader with an undefined vision for the denomination.

Two Daily Prayers

Entering this unique biennial season, I incorporated two prayers into my daily routine. The first prayer, *Come Holy Spirit*, reminded me that I must depend on the Lord for discernment, wisdom, and understanding. The other prayer, *Lord, allow me to see the UB Church for all she is*, set my attitude to receive from the Lord's hand each and every conversation, challenging situation, and victory.

The Lord answered both prayers often.

One Guiding Verse

With an undefined vision, I set out to encourage the United Brethren National Office team and our Executive Leadership Team to seek the Holy Spirit for wisdom, guidance, and strategic direction. John 3:8 became our rallying verse:

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

The *Wind* did blow, and vision came with it.

One Clear and Compelling Focus

Time and again, I found the cliché true: *God not only calls the equipped, but He also equips the called.* I began imagining and praying that the *Wind* of the Holy Spirit would carry the United Brethren in Christ into a new season of fruitfulness where our existing churches become stronger and we are successful at starting new ones.

Strengthen and start. That's what it is all about.

Lots of Gratitude

I've always found Saint Paul's attitude of gratitude worth emulating—specifically, as highlighted in Philip-
pians 1:3, "I thank my God every time I remember you." I lead collaboratively. Therefore, lots of people have played a role in helping the UBIC gain any momentum that we perceive to have at this time.

When I think of the United Brethren in Christ Church, I thank the Lord for the many words of encouragement, supportive prayers, and genuine trust and goodwill.

When I think of our Executive Leadership Team, I thank God for their devotion to Christ, their humble relating, and wise counsel in matters of strategic leadership.

When I think of our cluster leaders, I thank God for their willingness to lead alongside me and, at times, in my place.

When I think of my family, I thank God for their love and support. My wife, Lisa, and our sons, Jordan and Quinn, know me best. They know when I'm soaring with confidence and vision. They also know when I am taxed to the limit. I am grateful for their encouragement.

When I think of the United Brethren National Office team, I thank God for their "work produced by faith, labor prompted by love, endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 1:3). Our stated purpose at the UBNO is to "serve the United Brethren churches, pastors, missionaries, and the broader evangelical community." These team members get up every day to serve those who are making Jesus known and loved in their neighborhoods and among the nations. It keeps us busy. It makes us grateful. It prompts our prayers.



Todd H. Fetters
Interim Bishop

250TH
ANNIVERSARY
JULY 12-15, 2017
LANCASTER, PA

Three Enduring Commitments / Three Inspiring Realities

My anticipation of the 250th anniversary of the United Brethren in Christ brought motivation to understand who we are and where the Holy Spirit wants to take us. I read and reflected on UB history. As a result, my heart and my mind resonated with the figures and events of our earliest days when it seemed that the UBIC had a white-hot passion for Jesus, a genuine love for one another, and a complete reliance on the Holy Spirit for the spread of our Gospel movement.

Our movement focused on three commitments: the Gospel, Unity, and Mission. When these commitments were lived out under the superintending power of the Holy Spirit, three realities resulted. Our churches were spiritually alive in Christ, relationally connected to one another, and missionally engaged in the world.

These commitments are enduring. These realities are inspiring.

I believe the United Brethren in Christ has triumphed when we have embraced these commitments and nurtured these realities. Therefore, it is back to the future for us. This historic national conference is set around these themes. The stage will be set for us to learn from our past and springboard us into a future of fruitful ministry.

Clergy & Church Financial Health Opportunity

The UBIC is a longtime member of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Its stated goal is to “honor God by connecting and representing evangelicals in the United States.” The NAE contacted me in the fall of 2015 to invite the UBIC to be one of three pilot denominations in their multi-year initiative to address economic challenges facing pastors. NAE’s initiative was spurred on by a Lilly grant awarded to them earlier in 2015.

The NAE hired Brian Kluth as the project director for this initiative. Brian is a well-respected writer and speaker on generous giving. He serves as our coordinator and coach as we endeavor to design our unique program. I asked Rev. Gary Dilley to be our point person. In collaboration with the Executive Leadership Team, Gary and I assembled a Financial Health Team that includes Rev. Tom Datema (Zanesville UB, Zanesville, Ind.), Mrs. Janis Creason (Devonshire UB, Harrisburg, Pa.), and Rev. Joe Leighton (Salem Chapel UB, Junction City, Ohio).

Brian and Gary will share more about this exciting initiative at National Conference during our business session. I am also excited that Brian will present a workshop at National Conference entitled, “Creating a Culture of Financial Health and Generosity in Your Home and Church.”

Human Sexuality Task Force

The Human Sexuality Task Force was authorized by the 2015 US National Conference, and its members were appointed by the Executive Leadership Team by the end of 2015. They embraced their task conscientiously and with humility. Luke Fetters, an ordained UB minister and former missionary who is professor of Ministry and Mission at Huntington University, chaired the task force.

The task force did not water down or liberalize the United Brethren traditional and historic views on sexuality. Rather, they tried to apply our views to the many expressions of sexuality that we confront in today’s society, and how we should respond as individuals and as churches. Their approach was not to condemn, but to point down paths of grace and redemption.

I appreciate the work of the task force in wrestling with very difficult and often confusing issues on behalf of the US National Conference.

UB Global

“UB Global” has replaced “Global Ministries” as the name of our missions arm. That change was made this spring. It connects “United Brethren” to the name, and removes confusion with other organizations that use the name “Global Ministries.”

UB Global serves as the international arm of the United Brethren in Christ in the United States and Canada. A Joint Ministry Agreement established in 2001 stipulates the parameters of that relationship. The UB Global Leadership Team (GLT) consists of representatives from both countries.

At the last GLT meeting, a governance model was adopted. A key feature of the governance model requires the UB Global director to report directly to the governance board, which is the GLT. Additionally, the governance documents state that the bishops of both the United States and Canada, along with the GLT

chairperson (not to be the UB Global director), serve as the Executive Committee.

Director of National Ministries

Dr. Mike Dittman officially joined the UBNO team on April 1, 2016. I was thrilled that Mike confirmed the Lord's calling to the UBIC. Mike was no stranger to us. While I served as National Ministries director, Mike was a strategic partner who helped me with training and encouraging our cluster leaders.

As a 30-year ministry veteran in church planting, church renewal, and leadership development, Mike brings a wealth of experience to the role of National Ministries director. But beyond that, he brings a heart for God that I desire for all of our churches and the pastors who serve them. Mike and I share a partnership that seeks to define and execute the vision of strengthening existing churches and starting new ones under the superintending power of the Holy Spirit.

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Strengthening Existing Churches

Strong churches are disciple-making communities, led by spiritually vibrant teams that are spiritually alive in Christ, relationally connected to one another, and missionally engaged in their neighborhoods and among the nations. If I were to sum up my approach during these past two years, I would use the word “engagement.” I sought to engage our pastors and churches through a variety of means, functions, and messaging.

Engagement through Expanding the Role of the Cluster Leader

I relied heavily on our cluster leaders. These dedicated pastors willingly take on additional responsibilities to facilitate six meetings per year, process local church licenses, liaison between the bishop and the pastors and churches, serve on stationing teams, etc. They perform an essential role in the authority structure of the denomination. Truly, we are better together. It's been said before, but never truer than of the relationship between the bishop's office and the cluster leader.

Engagement through Expanding the Role of the Executive Leadership Team Members

The dedicated men and women who served on the ELT these past two years have played a very important role. Their duties have gone beyond the four scheduled meetings. They've been called on to assist in their regions as representatives. This has strengthened relationships and has been a valuable way of utilizing the gifts and abilities of these amazing people.

Engaging through Stationing Teams and Processes

I was engaged with 27 churches in the stationing process. That astonishing (to me) number represents 15% of our churches. A couple churches remain open. Several more openings are anticipated due to a growing number of pastors nearing retirement.

The stationing process is an important transition that allows the bishop and cluster leader the opportunity to serve a local church with collaborative leadership. Together, the bishop, cluster leader, and local church leadership have the opportunity to build trust in each other and in the Lord as we seek and anticipate His provision.

Engaging through Envisioning and Messaging

Once I grasped what strong existing or new churches looked like, it was time to share that picture with others. Strong churches are committed to the Gospel, Unity, and Mission. Strong churches nurture the realities of being spiritually alive in Christ, relationally connected to one another, and missionally engaged in the world.

Mike Dittman and Jeff Bleijerveld joined me on trips to Pennsylvania, Kansas, and Illinois to communicate these themes in what we called the “Neighborhoods & Nations Tour.” We had a blast getting to know UB folks and sharing this vision for strong churches. We were honored that Dr. Jody Bowser and his team at King Street Church (Chambersburg, Pa.) built their entire year of preaching around these themes.

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Starting New Churches

Church planting is essential for making disciples and expanding the Kingdom of God. The UBIC will need faith to see fruitfulness. Our trust must be in the Lord. Our reliance must be upon his Spirit. The divine track record in church planting and development is legendary. Two words sum up my investment in this initiative—prayer and collaboration.

Prayer for Starting New Churches

Pentecost (Acts 2) teaches us that the Holy Spirit birthed the churches. Prayer is essential for us to get on board with the movement of the Holy Spirit. In addition to regular personal prayer, I've been encouraged in those moments when I've prayed with pastors, local church leaders, cluster leaders, and other groups for the Lord to start a new wave of church planting in the UBIC.

Collaborative Discussion for Starting New Churches

Five leaders gathered with me in January 2016 for a day-long discussion about church planting. We identified UB efforts in the past ten years and considered roadblocks to overcome as well as and “on ramps” for successful church planting. The ELT discussed church planting extensively during two of its four meetings. I am optimistic about the growing interest of pastors and ELT members who vocalize their desire to see us start new churches.

An Emerging Strategy for Starting New Churches

Through much prayer, conversation, and collaborative discussion, Mike Dittman has developed a strategic starting point for us that involves the synergy of churches, clusters, and cohorts. His report lays this vision out clearly. Please read it. I'm excited about this cooperative strategy and eager to employ it.

Licensing & Stationing

Ordinations

Ordinations conducted since National Conference 2015

October 18, 2015. Matenneh Abu, Mt. Zion United African Church (Philadelphia, Pa.).

November 15, 2015. Todd Greenman, senior pastor of Morroco (Temperance, Mich.).

August 23, 2016. Teddy Fairchild, senior pastor of Eagle Quest (Columbia City, Ind.). Conducted at New Hope UB church in Huntington, Ind.

August 28, 2016. Eldon Grubb, senior pastor of Pleasant Valley (Lake Odessa, Mich.).

October 2, 2016. Travis Ambrose, senior pastor of New Hope (Camden, Mich.).

October 9, 2016. Doug Sandman, senior pastor of Pleasant Hill (Greencastle, Pa.). Conducted at Prince Street UB church (Shippensburg, Pa.).

October 15, 2016. Todd Frederick, now pastor of Pathway Community Church (Jackson, Mich.). Conducted at Sunfield UB church in Sunfield, Mich.

June 4, 2017. David Dakin at Jerusalem Chapel (Churchville, Va.).

Ordinations that were re-instated or transferred

September 27, 2015. Scott Graham, senior pastor of Good Shepherd (Greenfield, Ohio). Transferred from the Assemblies of God.

May 20, 2016. Paul Burrus, senior pastor of Corunna UB church (Corunna, Ind.). Transferred from the Churches of God.

September 11, 2016. Scott Budde, senior pastor of Mt. Carmel (Fulks Run, Va.). Transferred from the Wesleyan Church.

November 1, 2016. Jody Bowser, senior pastor of King Street Church (Chambersburg, Pa.). Transferred from American Baptist Churches of the West.

March 14, 2017. Mike Dittman, transferred from The Chapel in University Park (Akron, Ohio).

May 23, 2017. David Kisamore, re-issue of ordination from United Brethren church, effective in one year.

June 21, 2017. Stephen Flint, ordination transfer from the Free Methodist Church, effective in one year.

Ordinations that have been approved for National Conference 2017 and beyond

- July 15, 2017.* Jeff Dice, associate pastor of Brown Corners UB church (Clare, Mich.).
July 15, 2017. Stuart Johns, senior pastor of Idaville UB church (Gardners, Pa.).
July 15, 2017. Mike Burtnett, associate pastor of Youth & Outreach at Franklin UB (New Albany, Ohio).
July 15, 2017. Matt Kennedy, senior pastor of Dillman UB church (Warren, Ind.).
July 15, 2017. John Shadle, pastor of Middle School Ministries at King Street (Chambersburg, Pa.).
July 15, 2017. Brent Liechty, senior pastor of Mongul UB church (Shippensburg, Pa.).
July 15, 2017. Jason Haupert, from Eagle Quest (Columbia City, Ind.).
July 15, 2017. Gener Lascase, Salem Haitian Church (Chambersburg, Pa.).
July 15, 2017. David Grove, Ebenezer UB church (Greencastle, Pa.).
August 20, 2017. Andrew Atkins, senior pastor of Monticello UB church (Spencerville, Ohio).

Other Ministerial Licenses

Provisional Licenses Granted

- February 2, 2016.* Julie Priestley, Connections director at Fowlerville UB church (Fowlerville, Mich.).
June 12, 2016. Jim Olinger, Connections pastor at Hillsdale UB church (Hillsdale, Mich.).
July 5, 2016. Mitchell Moyer, associate pastor of Youth at Brown Corners (Clare, Mich.).
September 4, 2016. Holly Lutton, associate pastor of Youth & Connections at College Park Church (Huntington, Ind.).
December 19, 2016. Brandon Groff, Student Pastor at Fowlerville UB church (Fowlerville, Mich.).

National Conference Licenses Granted

- August 12, 2015.* Nicholas Walborn, Student Ministries pastor at New Hope Community (Bryan, Ohio).
January 1, 2016. Adam Will, senior pastor of Mount Hermon (Pomeroy, Ohio).
January 1, 2016. David Souers, senior pastor of New Horizons (Rockford, Ohio).
January 1, 2016. Jason Haupert, volunteer at Eagle Quest (Columbia City, Ind.).
July 21, 2016. Mark Self, senior pastor of Trinity UB church (Fostoria, Ohio).
October 14, 2016. Christopher Little V, while on staff at Mt. Pleasant Church (Chambersburg, Pa.).
October 27, 2016. Mark Jones, associate pastor of Cochranon Community Church (Cochranon, Pa.).
November 15, 2016. Jeff Lawson, senior pastor of Hopewell UB church (Auburn, Ind.).
June 13, 2017. Jim Olinger, Connections pastor at Hillsdale UB church (Hillsdale, Mich.).

Specialized Ministries Licenses Granted

- December 12, 2015.* Elliott Ripley, Youth Pastor, Monroe UB (Monroe, Ind.).
January 1, 2016. Nathan Hann, Pastor of Contemporary Worship at King Street (Chambersburg, Pa.).
January 1, 2016. C.J. Clymer, while on staff at elem3nt (Blissfield, Mich.) and Adrian (Adrian, Mich.).
March 15, 2016. Mark Burkett, at Pleasant Hill UB church (Greencastle, Pa.).
June 3, 2016. Marvin McNew, Worship & Communications Pastor at The Well (Huntington, Ind.).
July 5, 2016. Alan “Chip” Stottlemeyer, Youth Director at Ebenezer UB church (Greencastle, Pa.).
November 21, 2016. Kent Haines, while on staff at Cochranon Community Church (Cochranon, Pa.).
May 2, 2017. Julie Priestley, Connections Director at Fowlerville UB church (Fowlerville, Mich.).

Ministerial Assignments

Senior Pastor, Lead Pastor, or Solo Pastor Appointments

- September 20, 2015.* Dan VanArsdalen, Kunkle UB church (Kunkle, Ohio).
November 1, 2015. Jody Bowser, King Street Church (Chambersburg, Pa.).
October 1, 2015. David Jarvis, Liberty UB church (Stockport, Ohio).
October 4, 2015. Ed Gebert, Victory Chapel (Celina, Ohio).
January 1, 2016. Ken Thompson, South Scipio (Harlan, Ind.).
February 5, 2016. Noel Bates, New Life (Chanute, Kansas).
February 7, 2016. Richard Schock, Sabetha UB church (Sabetha, Kansas).
April 1, 2016. Roxton Spear, Kilpatrick UB church (Woodland, Mich.).
May 1, 2016. Cyle Young, Heart O’ the Lakes Church (Brooklyn, Mich.).

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July 3, 2016. Kevin Whitacre, Anchor Community Church (Fort Wayne, Ind.).
July 24, 2016. Amos Rawley, New Hope Church (Huntington, Ind.).
July 25, 2016. Jeff Lawson, Hopewell UB church (Auburn, Ind.).
July 31, 2016. Teddy Fairchild, interim, Eagle Quest Church (Columbia City, Ind.).
August 1, 2016. Ray Seilhamer, interim, Mount Pleasant Church (Chambersburg, Pa.).
August 15, 2016. Brent Liechty, Mongul UB church (Shippensburg, Pa.).
August 22, 2016. Daniel Pratt, Bethany Evangelical (Carlisle, Pa.).
August 22, 2016. Brad Riddle, Atlantic Avenue (Franklin, Pa.).
November 9, 2016. Bill Wheeler, Mt. Pleasant (Angola, Ind.).
January 15, 2017. Paul Dunbar, Franklinton UB church (Franklinton, Pa.).
January 15, 2017. Wesley Skiles, Olive Branch (Lakeville, Ind.).
February 1, 2017. Todd Frederick, Pathway Community (Jackson, Mich.).
March 1, 2017. Joshua Denoir, supply, Claytonville UB church (Claytonville, Ill.).
March 5, 2017. Darrel Bosworth, interim, McCallum UB church (Delton, Mich.).
May 28, 2017. John Christophel, Mt. Olivet (Mt. Solon, Va.).
June 20, 2017. Richard Thorp, interim, New Beginnings (Montpelier, Ohio).
June 20, 2017. David Kisamore, Mill Chapel (Reedsville, W. Va.).
July 10, 2017. Dan Maas, First UB church (Findlay, Ohio).

Other Transitions

Retirement of Ordained Ministers

July 31, 2015. Gary Gates, senior pastor, South Scipio UB church (Harlan, Ind.).
August 31, 2015. Ron Evans, senior pastor, Kunkle UB church (Kunkle, Ohio).
May 15, 2016. John Erwin, senior pastor, Hopewell UB church (Auburn, Ind.).
July 31, 2016. Devon Strine, senior pastor, Mt. Pleasant UB church (Angola, Ind.).
August 28, 2016. Gary Small, senior pastor, Atlantic Avenue UB church (Franklin, Pa.).
January 8, 2017. Charlie Milliken, senior pastor, Franklinton UB church (Franklinton, Pa.).
January 29, 2017. Marshall Woods, senior pastor, Mill Chapel (Reedsville, W.V.).
January 29, 2017. Ron Watterly, senior pastor, McCallum UB church (Delton, Mich.).

Ministerial Deaths

June 22, 2015. Burton Lange, Chambersburg, Pa. (retired).
July 3, 2015. Robert Staup, Angola, Ind. (retired).
July 10, 2015. Emmett Cox, Huntington, Ind. (retired).
January 1, 2016. Don Bender, Waynesboro, Pa. (retired).
January 3, 2016. Paul Cairl, Findlay, Ohio (retired).
April 3, 2016. Edmund Burkey, Adrian, Mich. (retired).
April 19, 2016. Chris Little, lead pastor at Mt. Pleasant Church in Chambersburg, Pa.
September 29, 2016. Franklin J. Strine, Huntington, Ind. (retired).
October 17, 2016. Charles Simmons, Stockport, Ohio (retired).

Churches that Closed

Bethel UB (New Castle, Pa.) closed on 12/31/15.
 Munson UB (Morenci, Mich.) closed on 12/31/15.
 NorthPointe Church (Lewis Center, Ohio) closed on 2/25/17.

Trust God More!

Throughout these past two years, I have typically ended my emails and letters with three words and an exclamation mark — *Trust God More!* The salutation serves to remind, not admonish. Time and time again, I found the Lord to be faithful. He can be trusted in each and every circumstance that we face. May you find everything you need from the Lord as you...*trust God more!*