

# Heartland Happenings

## Welcome the Johnston Family Back to Omaha

Ryan Johnston is the new church planting catalyst for the Send Network of the North American Mission Board who will be serving in the eastern Nebraska area.

Ryan is an Iowa native having grown up on a hog farm near Jamaica in central Iowa. His wife Deb grew up in Seward and she later moved to Lincoln with her family. They met while they were students at Wayne State College in northeast Nebraska. The Johnstons moved from Canton, Ohio where Ryan was serving as Lead Pastor of The Chapel in North Canton. The Heartland Church Network is providing office space in their building in Omaha. Ryan and his wife Debby have four daughters and new baby boy! Kinsley 12, Addilyn 10, Karis 5, Rilyn 2, and Caleb 3 months.



Along with his BS in History from Wayne State College, Ryan holds a Masters of Divinity from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis and a Doctor of Ministry in Expository Preaching from Union University in Memphis. He wrote his dissertation on congregations transitioning to multiplicational discipleship systems and a missional direction. For the past 17 years Ryan has served in various sized churches championing missions, leadership pipelines, and church planting movements in rural, suburban, and urban contexts. He has served as a church planter, college pastor, missions pastor, executive pastor, and most recently as lead pastor. He has successfully planted churches from the local church that plant churches, implemented pastoral succession plans, and sent missionaries to multiple contexts nationally and globally.

He and his family are committed to being at the frontlines as practitioners of the movement of the gospel in Eastern Nebraska and are excited to be moving back to where it all started for them. As a Church planting catalyst Ryan is available to help you in any way to help you take your next steps as you continue to extend the gospel in your communities. Feel free to reach out to him for any needs you might have as we seek to see every man, woman, and child come to repentance and trust in Jesus across the Heartland Church Network region and beyond.

If you haven't met Ryan yet, drop him a note via e-mail at [rjohnston@namb.net](mailto:rjohnston@namb.net) or give him a call on his cell at 330-575-1731. Then don't forget to add this family to your prayer list.



2100 S. 51<sup>st</sup> St., PO Box 6157  
Omaha, NE 68106

Office: 402.551.0608 Fax: 402.551.1376

**E-Mail Address**

[enbaomaha@gmail.com](mailto:enbaomaha@gmail.com)

**Mark Elliott, DoM**

[mark@heartlandchurchnetwork.org](mailto:mark@heartlandchurchnetwork.org)

**Haley Lester, Admin. Asst. /Bookkeeper**

[haley@heartlandchurchnetwork.org](mailto:haley@heartlandchurchnetwork.org)

**Darrell Cumpton, Properties Manager**

[darrell@heartlandchurchnetwork.org](mailto:darrell@heartlandchurchnetwork.org)  
[darrellcumpston@gmail.com](mailto:darrellcumpston@gmail.com)

**Webpage**

<http://www.heartlandchurchnetwork.org>

Facebook – Heartland Church Network



## Calendar of Events

- JULY**  
22-26 Children's Camp
- AUGUST**  
17 PIVOT Conference
- SEPTEMBER**  
19 Ministry Safe Event  
23-29 Viola Webb Week of Prayer  
25 See You At The Pole
- OCTOBER**  
29 Annual Meeting
- NOVEMBER**  
1-2 KNCSB Abide Conference  
10 Disaster Relief Appreciation Sunday

The HCN Calendar can be found at the following link on the

HCN webpage:

<http://www.heartlandchurchnetwork.com/calendar.html>

"I know, Lord, that a man's way of life is not his own; no one who walks determines his own steps." –Jer. 10:23



**Mark Elliott, DoM**

**Haley Lester, Admin Assistant /Bookkeeper**

**Darrell Cumpton, Facilities Manager**

## 2019 PIVOT Conference coming August 17th

The third annual HCN Pivot Conference will be hosted at the HCN office on Saturday, August 17 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This year’s theme is from Isaiah 43:19 “Behold, I am doing a new thing!” The conference is specifically designed to equip, encourage, and engage leaders and pastors from smaller membership churches, but is open to all!

Pastor Andy Addis from CrossPoint Church in Hutchinson, KS will be our keynote speaker. Andy is a pastor, leader, motivational speaker, trainer, and author; however, he notes that most importantly he is a Christian, husband, and father.

### Breakout conferences this year are as follows:

- Powerful Persuasive Presentations, led by Dr. Ralph Lassiter. This session will help you improve your communication effectiveness.
- Making Your Church a Safe Place, led by Dr. Steve Hicks. This session will help you understand the need and resources available to make your church a safer environment in our chaotic culture.
- Engaging Your Community, led by Rev. Ricky Rohrig Sr. & Rick Lechner. This session will let you hear what churches and ministries are doing to reach out to their communities.
- Church Treasurer Training, led by Mark Elliott & John Mark Hansen. This will help treasurers, budget committee members, and pastors understand how to be better stewards of the financial resources God is providing their church.
- Upping Your Computer Graphics Game, led by Mike Gunter. This session will provide information and skill enhancement for improving the quality of your church publications and web-based communications.
- 411 Leaders for Today’s Church, led by Dr. Ralph Lassiter & Mark Elliott. This session will highlight the current practices and biblical basis for church leadership.
- Hospitality – Balancing Home and Ministry, led by Haley Lester. This session will help women find ways to balance busy schedules to maximize their Kingdom impact.
- Life in America as an Immigrant Family, led by Liubov Onishchuk & Sara Gwek. This session is designed for women but men are welcome. It will help individuals understand the challenges faced by immigrant families and help churches see ways they can assist families and language churches as they respond to the ongoing immigration issues in America.

To assist in meal and resource preparation, we would appreciate it if you would RSVP the HCN office by August 10<sup>th</sup> on the number coming from your church.



**PIVOT 2019**  
 “Fresh Perspective”

## Block Party Trailers Updated

Heartland Church Network’s Associational Mission Strategist Mark Elliott describes a block party trailer (BPT) as the most used and abused piece of equipment he has ever seen. Large churches, small churches, and church planters use it often. The trailer was in such demand that a second very basic unit was set up in Lincoln with the support of Southview Church—thank you Pastor Aaron Householder. We have also discovered that when one set of volunteers unload the trailer and another set of tired volunteers put things back in the trailer, sometimes in the dark, there is no telling what the trailer will look like when it is returned. It does require a significant amount of grace and patience to keep it functioning—obviously nothing like God has to go through with us!

Since HCN put together its first BPT, we have gone through several changes. The first change actually involved swapping trailers with our Disaster Relief mud-out unit. Our original trailer was too heavy for most vehicles and it created a logistical challenge and a safety problem for most of our churches. Our current Omaha based trailer is lighter and easier to handle. That change meant we had to simplify what was on the trailer, so several of the games were removed and are available for checkout, but not actually on the basic trailer.

The most recent change was that three new bounce houses were purchased. They are of the larger obstacle course variety. One is on the trailer in Omaha, one on Southview’s trailer in Lincoln, and one on the former Northeast Association trailer in Norfolk which was purchased by them. All three trailers have two bounce houses, popcorn machines with supplies, snow cone machines with snow cone cups, and other basic equipment. Reservations for the Omaha based trailer are made through the HCN office at 402-551-0608. Reservations for the Lincoln based trailer are made by calling Southview Church at 402-423-5062. Reservations for the trailer in Norfolk are made through Northern Heights Baptist Church at 402-371-6253.

We are regularly reminded that the block party trailers are a wonderful tool that God continues to use to connect our churches and planters with their communities. It provides a friendly environment where conversations can take place for the purpose of developing relationship bridges over which the gospel can be shared in a natural manner. Pray that God will continue to use this tool to bring Him glory.

### Heartland Bible Institute

#### Certificate Classes

Allison Miller will continue in the footsteps of Dr. Larry Allen and teach the certificate classes. If you have any questions about these classes you can contact Allison at 308-547-2486 or e-mail him at [am02000@wiindstream.net](mailto:am02000@wiindstream.net). The Fall Schedule is below:

Aug 26	Genesis Week 1	Oct 21	Romans Week 1
Sept 9	Genesis Week 2	Nov 4	Romans Week 2
Sept 23	Genesis Week 3	Nov 18	Romans Week 3
Oct 7	Genesis Week 4	Dec 2	Romans Week 4

## Serving in the Heart of the 2019 Flood Recovery continued

Through family connections, Pastor Aaron Householder of Southview Baptist in Lincoln coordinated a weekend trip to Valley to assist flood victims. Westside’s Prayer and Missions Pastor Jeff Medina helped to coordinate several teams as they responded to church members and their neighbors who were in need.

Then the equipment and volunteers began to roll into our area from other states. Quickly Command Centers were set up in Fremont and Bellevue, and then later in Glenwood after the waters finally began to recede along the Missouri River. Oklahoma Southern Baptists set up their command unit, shower trailer, and feeding equipment at LifeSpring Church in Bellevue. Thank you to Pastor Steve Holdaway, Pastor Steve Hicks, and Sherri Vossen (who became the volunteer liaison between the church and out of state team members). Stop and think about the impact on the day-to-day and week-to-week activities on a church’s life when suddenly volunteers from out of state are eating and sleeping in the church building! And again it wasn’t for a night or two—it was for weeks! A HUGE thanks to Oklahoma SBC volunteers and LifeSpring volunteers who worked beside them to coordinate, cook, do mudout, and maintain the shower and laundry equipment.

Missouri Southern Baptists led the way when a command center was set up in Fremont. They set up on the parking lot of the Fremont mall where command, feeding, shower, and laundry units were deployed. Initially volunteers slept in a vacant mall unit and later they transitioned to bunking and feeding at the First Presbyterian Church building. As the weeks went on and flood waters moved down-stream into Missouri, they passed the baton the North Carolina volunteers. They did mudout projects in Fremont, Valley, Waterloo, and the surrounding areas. Also providing an assist with all the work was Westside Fremont led by their Campus Pastor Mike Wenig and Pastor Cody Gallatin and Alive Bible Church.

The command center in Glenwood, Iowa was the last to be established. The rise and fall of the Missouri River and the opening and closing of I-29 and Missouri River bridges kept things “interesting!” Even more critical has been the levee breaches that flooded Pacific Junction, Hamburg, and Percival where many homes had water up to the roofline for weeks. Pray for homeowners as they work with FEMA and local officials and decide what the future will be for their property. There are still several “open” projects in the area for mudout and sanitation teams (volunteers who do high-pressure washing and spray home with disinfectant).

The foregoing is a BRIEF summary of all that has happened in the months since the flooding began. The best numbers we have indicate that close to 700 Southern Baptist volunteers (one day high of 270) completed over 550 jobs (mudout/sanitation). There is ongoing work being done by Northern Heights in Boyd and Knox Counties and “open” projects are still available in the Fremont, Pacific Junction, and Hamburg areas. THEN comes the challenge of rebuilding—so far ALL the efforts have been on flood cleanup.

Continue to pray for Darrell and Kathy Cumpton as they coordinate SBC response. Pray for the families that have been displaced. And praise God for all the hundreds of volunteers from Nebraska and Iowa as well as the hundreds of volunteers and resources that came from other states.



## Equipping Saints Across Heartland Church Network

Several articles in this issue of Heartland Happenings highlight some of the exciting ways that HCN, its churches, and leaders are “equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.” One article talks about the accredited classes HCN is able to offer through the Contextualized Leadership Development segment of our Heartland Center for Continuing Education. These are classes that can be transferred towards a bachelor’s degree at Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City. Another article talks about the informal (certificate available if desired) side of our continuing education efforts. A third article talks about a certificate class that Westside and HCN are co-sponsoring through the Riley Center at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, TX. We will be highlighting Colegio Bautista Latinoamericano in Norfolk in our next issue.

### Heartland Center for Continuing Education

#### Accredited Classes

Spring 2019 classes included *New Testament I* taught by Dr. Jeff Medina, Westside Church’s Prayer and Missions Pastor, and it was held at Westside Church. Six students completed the class with passing grades and several additional students audited the course. The second spring class was the “Doctrine of the Church” with co-teachers Dr. Ralph Lassiter, Pastor of Mt. Moriah Missionary Baptist Church in Omaha, and Mark Elliott, HCN’s Associational Missions Strategist, and it was held at the HCN office. Fourteen students completed the course with passing grades.

With the completion of the spring semester, we have six students who have earned either their first or second certificate (each certificate is made up of four 3-hour classes). Students who will receive their Pastoral Ministries Certificate are Kevin Hess, Jason Hutchinson, Jeffery Stoneking, and Rich Rudd. Two students will receive their Biblical Studies Certificate: LaRae Denny and Arthur Perina.

HCN is excited to announce that starting in Fall 2019, we will be able to offer classes through live, on-line, interactive video. To prepare for that opportunity, we did a major upgrade to HCN’s conference room. One phase was the addition of the necessary technology pieces: two 50” flat screens, camera, microphone, and the needed software. Mike Gunter, a Freeway Ministries Intern, is helping us with tech-support and got everything up and running. We performed a test run by linking Darrell Cumpton, who was sitting in Omaha, into a pastors meeting in Norfolk to discuss Disaster Response issues. The second phase was a fresh coat of paint started by a mission team from Potosi SBC in Missouri. Painting was completed thanks to a mission team from Graves Baptist Association in Kentucky who also put a fresh coat of paint on the apartment and hallway and new flooring in the apartment.

Starting this fall, students in Lincoln, Grand Island, Norfolk, Sioux City, and other cities in the Heartland area, will be able to attend classes from the convenience of their own church or in a location with appropriate technology. The ideal situation will be at least two students in each location. That will provide for peer learning and easier interaction during small group activities. For additional information on how to get “plugged in” call Mark Elliott at the HCN office: 402-551-0608.

Please note that Dr. Steve Hicks will be returning to the HCN classroom this fall teaching Introduction to Hermeneutics. The class will be on Tuesday nights from 6-9 p.m. and will be held at the HCN office conference room. The syllabus and enrollment form are available on the HCN website.

See the other two articles at the bottom of pages 4 and 7.



## HCN Hosting MinistrySafe Conference

In recent years issues related to church safety have caused some churches to initiate major changes. It has become a multi-faceted response as churches have experienced challenges from within and from without. The latter has caused many churches to establish safety teams (some teams are even being armed). Some churches are limiting access points by locking specific exterior doors. Others are still wrestling with why, how, and what they need to do.



As challenging as solutions to threats from outside the church are, maybe the greater evil we face is coming from within the local church. Sexual misconduct is a real and growing problem heightened by a culture that seems to sexualize every facet of life. With the help of the Kansas Nebraska Convention, HCN will be hosting Gregory Love, co-founder of MinistrySafe, on Thursday, September 19<sup>th</sup> from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The conference will be at the HCN office and will be streamed live with interactive video connections to other church sites across our region. Check the HCN website for the location of those sites—Southview in Lincoln and Heartland in Sioux City have already agreed to be host locations. A lunch will be served at all locations.

MinistrySafe is a nationally respected organization whose founders, Gregory Love and Kimberlee Norris, are a husband and wife team of lawyers who have specialized in sexual abuse cases. This conference will help your church “build the right kind of fence” to protect the vulnerable within your body. The conference will force you to answer critical questions like: Does my church even have a fence? If it does, will it keep sexual predators out? Stop and think about the various kinds of fences there are. There’s barbed wire, woven wire, chain link, chicken wire, and wooden fences—to name just a few. Each is designed for a unique purpose. The MinistrySafe Conference will help you design the right kind of fence for your church as it addresses five critical areas:

- Sexual Abuse Awareness—yes your church has a problem, and it’s because our culture has a problem!
- Skillful Screening—looking for the right things in the right way.
- Tailored Policies and Procedures—it’s not a plug and play game. Your context is unique.
- Appropriate Background Checks—not all background checks are equal.
- Monitoring and Oversight System in place—in other words, it’s not a one and done process. It will require constant training and diligence.

Yes, a five hour commitment in our microwave, short attention span, busy, hectic culture IS a lot of time! But as churches we are called upon to protect the least among us—the innocent and defenseless. So, mark your calendar today and call the HCN office to let us know how many will be coming from your church so we can be prepared.

---



---

### The 2019 Biblical Counseling Certification Course

#### 50 Students Are Attending

An old cliché goes “the third time is charm,” but the fourth time we offered the Biblical Counseling Certification Course has generated the largest class yet! This is a four session training event hosted and sponsored by Westside Church and co-sponsored by the Heartland Church Network. The response from the new attendees has been the same as previous students, words of deep appreciation and excitement.

Thank you Dr. John Babler for traveling up from Ft. Worth, and thank you Virgil Walker for all the work you have done in coordinating the conferences. Continue to pray for the classes as the third session will be July 25-27 and final session on August 8-10.

## Serving in the Heart of the 2019 Flood Recovery

March 2019 will go down in infamy for many residents of eastern Nebraska and western Iowa. In early March all we were talking about was our long, hard winter! It had been unusually cold and snowy—even historic amounts of snow. By the end of March our minds were focused on the word “flood” and we were using the word “mudout” that most of us had never used nor even heard before. Southern Baptists responded quickly and with great impact. The SBC response in our area was spearheaded by Darrell and Kathy Cumpton, HCN’s Disaster Relief Coordinators.

HCN equipment and volunteers had previously been deployed across the state of Nebraska in response to fires, hail, tornadoes, and localized flooding. In addition Heartland’s Disaster Relief (DR) equipment and volunteers have been deployed to seventeen states and two Caribbean. This time, the task was too great for us to handle alone and Southern Baptist volunteers and equipment came from seventeen states to help us in the task of recovery! In addition hundreds of volunteers from HCN churches, many who had never been involved in Disaster Relief, stepped up, were willing to do on site training, and they were deployed in flood recovery. Mudout is the hardest and nastiest job in the DR world, and we had hundreds step up to the task!

HCN’s mudout, shower and laundry trailers were the first to deploy. The mudout trailer went to the Sioux City area where teams from Heartland Community Baptist Church and Southern Hills Baptist Church worked in the small community of Hornick, Iowa where a tributary of the Little Sioux River flooded most of the town. The water rose quickly and was gone quickly allowing the volunteers to begin while water in other areas was still rising. Forty homes were served by almost forty volunteers.

The HCN shower and laundry trailers were out next to support flood recovery along the Niobrara River caused by the bursting of Spencer Dam. Pastor Matt Gilmore of Northern Heights Baptist Church in Norfolk and Joel Wentworth Coordinator of the Sandhills Network of Churches worked hand-in-hand to begin the response. Pastor Matt led his church to get involved and has made multiple trips himself in spite of the fact that his property was directly impacted by the flood. Teams from Texas were quick to jump in and by the end of their deployment much of the heavy lifting had been done. Some fifty homes were served and volunteers from Northern Heights continue to make the two hour one way trek to small communities in Boyd and Knox Counties along the South Dakota line. The HCN shower trailer is still sitting on Main Street in Bristow as they await the rebuilding of a rural water line which has left many homeowners in the area without running water.

When the waters began to S L O W L Y recede along the Elkhorn and Platte Rivers, Arkansas Southern Baptists brought up a unified command trailer that was setup on the west side of the HCN office building. With the help of funds channeled through the North American Mission Board that came from a Home Depot grant, HCN was able to purchase a set of pallet forks for our skid-steer and two 20’ storage pods that were set on the HCN office property to store disaster relief supplies and equipment. The logistics, coordination, communications, and support of large numbers of volunteers is significant! Where do they sleep? Where do they shower? How do you feed them? How do you make sure they are used effectively—minimal down-time?

While we were coordinating the arrival of teams and equipment from other states, local churches leaped into action. First Baptist Church of Bellevue’s family life center (FLC) became an impromptu shelter for seventy plus Latinos whose trailer homes were flooded. Because the families drove past the church every day to work and to shop, someone stopped by the church office and asked if they could stay for a few nights. Word traveled fast and the FLC was quickly filled. The church installed locking doors and assigned families specific rooms. Between the community and the church meals were provided. The “night or two” turned into several weeks, but the church continued to care for the families. Angel Morales, a Spanish language church planter, was called and he began to minister daily to the families. Thank you Pastor Carl Hubbert and FBC Bellevue for stepping up and stepping out!

*Continued on page 6*