



Western Nebraska District

December/January
2025/2026

From the DS:

Raise Your Ebenezer

The second verse of an old song found in our hymnal shares these words:

Here I raise mine Ebenezer;
hither by thy help I'm come;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger,
interposed his precious blood.

Ebenezer is a strange word. Chances are, for many of us, when we encounter the word Ebenezer, especially in the season approaching Christmas, our minds think of Ebenezer Scrooge. Long before Charles Dickens wrote about old Ebenezer in "A Christmas Carol." In scripture, Ebenezer referred to a large stone which was placed as a marker to denote God's help provided to a people in need. Following a great deliverance for the people of Israel we find these words in 1 Samuel 7:12, "Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah, and named it Ebenezer; for he said, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.'"

Ebenezer means literally "Stone of Help." To raise an Ebenezer is to make a mark calling attention to God's help, deliverance, or blessing given to us. In this season, our Ebenezer might be our recounting of the many blessings that God has showered down upon us as individuals and as a church in this last year. Our Ebenezer is a proclaiming of the work of salvation given to us through Jesus Christ that has brought power to our lives.

I think that is why Dickens chose the name Ebenezer for Scrooge. As Scrooge encountered the living presence of the Almighty in "A Christmas Carol" he was transformed and became a living Ebenezer of God's glory for others. As we encounter the living Christ in the world around us and in the manger of Christmas it is my prayer that you will become a living Ebenezer of God's glory for others as well. Raise your Ebenezer as a witness to the power of Jesus Christ.

Grace and Peace,



Admin Assistant's Corner

Mission Share remittance deadline

IMPORTANT!

The final day that the Conference will accept 2025 Mission Share remittance checks/ACH payments will be **JANUARY 9, 2026**. This is not a “mailed by or postmarked” date...the funds must have arrived at the Conference office by January 9th to count towards 2025 Mission Shares. There are no exceptions.

USPS has been taking 3-4 weeks for mail delivery in some cases so if your church is planning to submit a payment towards the end of the year or first of next year, it is recommended that they reach out to gpar@greatplainsumc.org for an ACH form to process a one-time payment of their final 2025 remittance.

Statistical Tables will open the first week in January. More information will be provided, via email, toward the end of December. You may want to start thinking about selecting who will be gathering and entering the data.



Laity Summit 2026 expanding to three nights: March 23-24, 26

The 2026 Laity Summit Planning Committee is thrilled to announce next year’s Great Plains Laity Summit, coming March 23, 24, and 26, 2026 – and this time, we’re bringing the Spirit straight into your evenings!

That’s right – the Summit will now take place from 6 to 8:30 p.m. CT each night, making it easier than ever for laity across Kansas and Nebraska to join in, whether from home or together in community.

We’re inviting churches across the Great Plains to host watch parties – gather your congregation, small groups, or leadership teams to experience the Summit together. Picture sanctuaries and fellowship halls filled with laughter, prayer, music, and renewed purpose as laity connect across the miles in one shared Spirit.

Next year’s Laity Summit will feature inspiring worship, dynamic speakers, and powerful impact sessions designed to equip and empower laity for ministry in every setting. These engaging sessions will help you turn inspiration into action, connect with other passionate laypeople, and discover new ways to make a real difference in your church and community.

Whether you’re a Lay Leader, a Lay Servant, or just beginning to explore your call, this is your opportunity to grow in faith, deepen your discipleship, and discover how God is calling you to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously.

Stay tuned for more details, impact session topics, and registration information coming soon in GPconnect and across the Great Plains Conference!

-- The 2026 Laity Summit Planning Committee



DIGNITY, HONESTY, HUMILITY, & MERCY: FOUR PILLARS OF FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP

Keynote Lecture and Community Conversation
with the Rt. Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde,
Bishop of Washington



11 DECEMBER 2025
DOORS OPEN 6:30 PM
EVENT BEGINS AT 7:00 PM



REGISTER TODAY
WITH THE QR CODE

CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY
MIKE AND JOSIE HARPER CENTER AUDITORIUM
602 N 20TH ST, OMAHA, NE 68178

Sponsored By: Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska and its Balancing the Scales, and Racial Reconciliation Ministries. More information on each at dioneb.org.

The Right Reverend Mariann Edgar Budde, Bishop of Washington (DC), will give a keynote address on Thursday, December 11th. This event is hosted by the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska and its Balancing the Scales and Racial Reconciliation & Sacred Ground Ministries. There will be a chance for audience Q&A from pre-registered questions and audience participation that evening.

Dignity, Honesty, Humility, and Mercy: Four Pillars of Faithful Leadership
An evening with Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde
Thursday, Dec 11th, 7 pm at the Mike and Josie Harper Auditorium (Omaha)

Bishop Budde is a best-selling author with over a decade of experience as the bishop of the Episcopal Church's diocese around our nation's capital, and she will convene a diverse audience for reflections and conversation on these four pillars, and how they serve to establish faithful leadership and discipleship. The event is free and open to the public at Creighton University's Mike and Josie Harper Auditorium (602 N 20th Street, Omaha, NE 68178), with registration on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Link: <https://alliance.wufoo.com/forms/z1l1khtrOq7tx97/>.

Local Church Leadership Training Set For Jan. 20-22



The Great Plains Conference has announced its annual Local Church Leadership Training, scheduled for 7-8:30 p.m. CT (6-7:30 p.m. MT) Jan. 20-22.

The three-night virtual event will offer focused training for leaders serving on Administrative Boards/Church Councils, Finance Committees, Staff-Parish Relations Committees (SPRC), Boards of Trustees, Lay Leadership/Nominations, and churches using a One-Board/Simplified Structure model.

Conference leaders are encouraging congregations to host local watch parties, noting that gathering leadership teams in the same room promotes collaboration, shared learning, and a stronger sense of purpose for the year ahead. Churches have increasingly used this model, and organizers hope even more congregations will participate together this year.

The event is especially recommended for first-time committee members, who will receive clear guidance about their roles and responsibilities as they begin serving in 2026. Returning leaders, pastors, and anyone seeking a deeper understanding of local church structure are also invited to attend.

Registration information and session links will be released soon through the conference website.



Dates to Note:

December

5: Admin Asst is out of the office

24-25: Office Closed for Christmas Holiday

26: Admin Asst is out of the office

January

1: Office Closed for New Year Holiday

2: Admin Asst is out of the office



DECEMBER							2025
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
28	29	30	31				

january

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Save the Date:

May 27-30, 2026: Annual Conference - in Kearney, NE

October 26-28, 2026: Orders & Fellowship @ Church of the Resurrection

District Office hours:

Monday - Friday

8 am - 4 pm MT/ 9 am- 5 pm CT

Quick Links:

[Western NE Dist Facebook Page](#)

[Western Nebraska District Website](#)

The [Great Plains UMMen Leadership Team](#) maintains a webpage <https://www.greatplainsumc.org/ummen> and publishes an electronic newsletter six times per year. To receive the e-newsletter with information and encouragement, please subscribe by providing your name, email address, city and state to Doug Kallesen, Editor, at dkallesen@neb.rr.com.

Praying for these Churches

December 7 – Hershey (Mark Baldwin)

December 14 – Sutherland (Mark Baldwin)

December 21 - Paxton (Mark Baldwin)

December 28 - Elm Creek/Overton/Williamsburg
(Venedith Vargas)

January 4 - Lexington (Elmer Armijo)

January 11- Wilcox (Candance Miller)

January 18 – Oxford (Albert Longe)

January 25 – Alliance (Priscilla Kaimathiri)