

# Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

April 2011

## PRAYER CONCERNS

Please keep everyone in your prayers who is dealing with the widespread flooding concerns in our Presbytery.

Riots and violence in Libya have caused many people to flee the country since February 20. Thousands of people are stranded, trying to cross the border into Tunisia. Please pray for families affected by crisis in Libya and the relief workers in Tunisia.

The people of Japan, the volunteers and advisors and countries who are sending aid following the devastating earthquake, tsunami and radiation concerns.

Please hold our Chogoria partners in your prayers.

Please pray for our congregations in transformation and congregations that are in need of healing.

## WHAT KIND OF TREE ARE YOU?

By: Elder Lorelee Rude, CLP and Moderator of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains

**“Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.” (Psalm 1:1-3)**



At this time of year, even with the anxiety of impending floods, we still eagerly await the tiny green shoots of crocuses poking through the ground and the first signs of green leaves on the trees. Green is my favorite color, partly, I think, because it reminds me of trees.

When we welcomed newly installed officers at a session meeting a few years ago, the pastor suggested we introduce ourselves by telling our name, how long we had been a church member, and what kind of tree we would like to be. He meant it as a joking reference to the obligatory icebreaker question that begins many meetings, as we went around the room every one of us—at first laughingly and then with increasing seriousness—answered the question. The replies were fascinating, running the gamut from aspen to spruce. I said I’d like to be a lilac bush because every spring when the lilacs bloom and the air is heavy with their delicious scent, I’m transported back in time to my grandmother’s yard, where lilacs lining the driveway greeted us when we came to visit.

Technically, I suppose, it was cheating to say I’d be a bush instead of a tree. But I have so many favorite trees; I couldn’t pick just one kind. Each

brings back happy memories: The dramatic stand of black and white birches through which we drove on Sunday afternoons when we took the long way home from church. The maples, clad in fiery autumn hues, reflected in a still lake. The cottonwoods that stood like giant sentinels in our yard, guarding us as we played tag far beneath their branches. The stately pines my parents planted as seedlings, one for each of us children that now dwarf the house we grew up in.

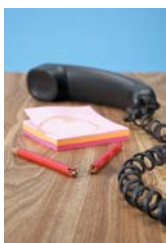
Far better writers than I have been inspired by trees, probably the most familiar being Joyce Kilmer, who penned the famous line, “Poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree.” My favorite verses about trees, though, are those from Psalm 1 quoted above. What a beautiful illustration of Christian character! It reminds me that following the Lord requires time, effort, and discipline. Sometimes it means taking an unpopular stand. To quote another of my favorite poet/philosophers, Kermit the Frog: “It’s not easy being green.” But those who are willing to put God above everything else can depend on the promise of scripture that God will make them strong, fruitful, and full of life.

Now *that’s* the kind of tree I want to be!

## PNP DIRECTORIES ARE NOW AVAILABLE

The Directory (committee and church information) and Manual of Operation (bylaws and policies) is complete and has been emailed/mailed out. If you have requested a copy (or need to) and have not received it, please contact the Presbytery office at 701-772-0783 or email [pnpoffice@gmail.com](mailto:pnpoffice@gmail.com).

The Manual of Operations is published in its entirety and posted on the website and is also available in hard copy form by request. The website version of both the bylaws and policy section are updated as soon as possible when Presbytery action is taken that impacts either section. To download your copy of either section, go to [www.northernplainspresbyter.com](http://www.northernplainspresbyter.com)



## SPECIAL PRESBYTERY MEETING HELD MARCH 19<sup>TH</sup> IN FARGO



*By: Elder Michael Lochow, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains*

The Presbytery of the Northern Plains met in Fargo, ND, on Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup> to vote on the three remaining proposed changes to the Book of Order and The Book of Confessions. Presbytery earlier had voted on the other 14 proposed changes. The remaining changes were whether the Confession of Belhar should be added to The Book of Confessions; whether the current form of government should be replaced by nFOG, a new form of government; and finally whether proposed Amendment 10-A should replace the current G-6.0106b in the Book of Order.

Following pro and con presentations and debate, Presbytery voted in the negative on all of the proposed changes. The Confession of Belhar vote was 22-43-1, nFOG was 23-43-0 and 10-A was 32-34-0. If you are interested in the vote tally for the denomination on proposed amendments to the constitution, go to: <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/ga219-voting-tallies-proposed-amendments/>.

The meeting closed with the Rev. Deanna Reikow playing the role of a “Super Pastor” giving us all a better understanding of the various hats a minister wears.

The next Presbytery meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 20, 2011, at First Presbyterian Church, Mandan, North Dakota.

## FLOOD RESPONSE TASK FORCE UPDATE

*By: the Rev. Gretchen Graf, Flood Response Task Force chair and pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks*

The flood task force has been busy contacting churches and pastors to learn that everyone is all right as water rises. As I write this, we’re watching the Fargo/Moorhead area with a hopeful eye. The task force is in place to act quickly if needed. If there is no large-scale flooding with the spring melt, we’ll turn our attention to the Devils Lake basin and learn from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance what resources we can access to help with long-term flooding there. If there is a serious flood event with evacuations, please be in touch with the presbytery office during office hours, or with Gretchen Graf after hours (218.791.8687). We’ll respond as quickly as possible to requests for assistance and try to connect those who need help with those who can respond.

Moderator Lorelee Rude has appointed a flood task force in February 2011 to be ready in case they are needed in 2011. The members of this team are: Daniel Wolpert (First Presbyterian Church of Crookston), Vicki Rucker (First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck), George O’Neill (First Presbyterian Church of Moorhead), Fred MacGregor (First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks), Kevin Kaufmann (Westminster Presbyterian of Devils Lake) and Chair Gretchen Graf (First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks). Other members of the team may be added later as deemed necessary. The team is also served by staff members Laurie Elhard and Michael Lochow.

## TRANSITIONS IN PNP

*By: Elder Dale Shook, Chair of the Committee on Ministry*



Rev. Adam J. Copeland (picture to the left) begins as the Mission Developer of [The Project F-M](#) in April. Previously, he was Stated Supply Pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Hallock, Minn. The Project F-M is an emerging faith community in Fargo-Moorhead focused on 20- to 30-somethings not currently connected with congregations. It is a joint venture of the ELCA Synods of Eastern North Dakota and Northwest Minnesota. Adam will live in Moorhead with his partner, Megan Thorvilson, who begins rotations with UND medical school. Adam remains a minister member of the PNP where he serves on the Transition Task Force.

Rev. Darrel Cory has left Mayville/Gran Lutheran Parish and is under contract for interim/transitional ministry with Crossroads Rural Ministry of the ELCA. Crossroads consists of Trinity Lutheran Church, Edinburg, and Pembina Hills Lutheran Parish a parish of two congregations that worship together - Garder Lutheran and Vikur Lutheran - as well as a privately supported nursing facility, The Borg Nursing Home. He continues to serve on COM and as chair of the nominating committee for PNP.

Rev. Byron Dealey (ECNA) has left his pastorate with First Presbyterian Church of Langdon. He has no current call to a PCUSA congregation or any other congregation but is searching for a fulfilling ministry in Ohio or Indiana to be closer to family. COM and session are working on transitional plans.

COM is working with transitioning in Watford City, Tri-County Parish, Jamestown, Hallock, Langdon, Moorhead, and Fargo. Please uplift all related pastors and congregations in your prayers.



Rev. Byron Dealey, and he and his wife, Marsha.

## COUNCIL UPDATE

Grace and peace to you in this season of renewal.

Your Council has been hard at work on your behalf and we hope to start a new practice to help you know how. As moderator of the Council, I will be including some kind of article in each newsletter with information that will be helpful to you.


Your council meets about every 8 weeks. Some of our work together is simply understanding and coordinating what various committees and ministry teams are doing across our presbytery. Some of our work is related to finding and coordinating money to help us do the mission to which we feel called, and reporting how we've used that money. Lately, it feels like much of our work has been judicial – no fun for us or for you. As we are able, and according to the prescriptions laid out for us in our polity, we hope to help you understand that part of our work; but for now, it will have to suffice that we are continuing to deal with circumstances as they play out.

Much more interesting is that we are moving ahead with the planning process we began two years ago. At our most recent meeting, we invited the Transition Task Force to join us to discern how best to move forward with plans they were working on and plans the Council had in place. We were aided in this discussion by the presence and facilitation skills of Diana Barber from the Synod office, and I think I speak for both the Council and the Task Force when I say it was good to lay out just how many work products both groups had generated in the last two years! Even better, it was good to begin to shape a strategy for making them known to you, and engaging you in further discernment of what we need to be about as we seek to respond faithfully to God. We are in the process of getting all these work products clearly labeled and put together in such a way that we all know what we have. The Transition Task Force will continue working alongside the Council for now. Look for details about what we've identified and how you can help us with it at the June Presbytery assembly and in future newsletters.

You should also be aware that last November, Council directed the personnel committee to draft a position description for a half-time transitional, executive-type staff person. Personnel reported to Council that this task will be completed and reported to council at their May council meeting.

We are grateful for your prayers for the work we are doing and your patience with our polity, and we invite you to be in touch with questions you have. You may direct those questions for Council to me directly ([cbiller@firstpresfargo.org](mailto:cbiller@firstpresfargo.org)) or 701.371.2809, or through the Presbytery office.

Shalom,  
Cheryl Biller, Council Moderator



**Synod School 2011**

**All My Relatives**

**Why do they keep returning to Synod School?**

- Christian fellowship
- Singing worship and song
- Growth in knowledge and faith
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- Fun for families and singles of all ages

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July 24–29, 2011

Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, Iowa

Discover Synod School!

Go to [www.lakesandpositives.org/school.html](http://www.lakesandpositives.org/school.html)  
or phone 1-800-322-1340, ext. 207.

## RESOURCES

### **The Calling** (DVD)

A behind-the-scenes look at young Americans - Christian, Jewish, Catholic, and Muslim preparing to become the nation's next generation of religious leaders. The Calling follows their transformation from idealistic students into ordained religious professionals. This film explores the forces that are drawing a new generation of young people to serve their communities and their faith.

### **Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived** (Book)

By: Bell, Rob

Rob Bell reveals a secret deep in the heart of millions of Christians: they don't believe what they have been taught are the essential truths of their faith. Out of respect for their tradition, they keep quiet, confiding to a few close friends their doubts and questions about salvation, Jesus, and, of course, God. Is Jesus really the only way into heaven? Is God "good" if God is planning on sending billions of people to eternal torment in hell? Are Christians the only ones who have it "right," and everyone else is just deceived? Bell brings out to the open and faces squarely the questions on everyone's mind: Does it really make sense that God is a loving, kind, compassionate God who wants to know people in a personal way, but if they reject this relationship with Jesus, they will be sent to hell where God will eternally punish them forever? In LOVE WINS, Bell goes to the heart of these issues and argues that the church's traditional understanding of heaven and hell is actually not taught by the Bible. Bell is emphatically not offering a new view of heaven and hell; instead, he closely examines every verse in the Bible on heaven and hell and shows what they really teach. And he discovers that Jesus' most fundamental teaching about heaven and hell is, "Love wins."

### **Yes! A Journal of Positive Futures** (Periodical)

A quarterly magazine invites readers to be part of a global community of change makers. Each issue focuses on a theme, showing the possibilities and practical steps that can lead us all to a more positive future. This issue focuses on animals.

To borrow this or a different resource, contact the **Resource Center for Churches** at (888) 293-9901 (toll free) or [info@resourcesforthejourney.org](mailto:info@resourcesforthejourney.org).

The staff will gladly reserve one of these or another resource for you. The center has books, DVDs, reference works, choir anthems, and even a labyrinth available for loan. For a complete listing of resources, go to: <http://resourcesforthejourney.org/>

## JAPAN RESPONSE CONTINUES



People search display boards for information about missing loved ones. Thousands are still missing. Photo by Takeshi Komino, CWS/ACT.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) is continuing to respond to needs in Japan. Working in cooperation with our partner Church World Service (CWS) and our mission partners in Japan, basic humanitarian needs are being provided. CWS is working with the Japan Platform, a consortium of 32 Japanese non-profits, to provide a coordinated response to the basic needs of those currently living at evacuation sites.

According to the March 30 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) report, approximately 17,000 people are still missing in Japan; more than 11,000 have died; and 173,200 people are still living in more than 2,000 evacuation centers in 17 prefectures, mostly in the north of Japan.

An estimated 190,000 households (492,000 people) remain without electricity. Another 330,000 households (936,000 people) are without gas supplies, and 372,000 households (913,000 people) are still without water.

Many of you are asking how you can help. Complete assessments have just begun. You can help the church in this response and stand in the GAP (Give, Act, and Pray) for those affected by these disasters.

**GIVE:** Faithful members who share their financial blessings through the One Great Hour of Sharing offering are already helping to fund the ongoing work in Japan. Special needs and opportunities have arisen in response to this current crisis, and PDA invites you to share your blessing to designated gifts that will provide the resources needed to assist with immediate, long-term and unmet needs of this and other disasters. Individuals may give through your congregation or by phone at (800) 872-3283. Congregations should send donations through their normal mission giving channels (designated # DR000117).

**ACT.** As you follow the situation in the news, please consider planning a special worship service using some of the resources available on this web site.

Stay informed and share information about the need with others. Sign up to receive [PDA Rapid Information Network](#) (PDA-RIN) email notices to alert you of additional needs.

**PRAY.** Please keep the people of Japan, and other areas affected by the earthquake and tsunami, in your thoughts and prayers.

## SEMINARY OF THE PRAIRIE

Veteran Community Outreach Initiative: Helping Connect Veterans and Families with Services

When: June 3-4, 2011

Where: Red Willow Bible Camp - Binford, ND

Topics: Spiritual Health, Grief Issues, Veterans Services, Care Giving

Seminary on the Prairie is an annual educational event sponsored by Tri-County Ministry. It is open to all clergy, interns/seminarians, and lay workers.

For more information and for the registration form, go to [www.tricountyministry.org](http://www.tricountyministry.org) or call 701-676-2761.

## Presbytery's Calendar

- April 3 & 4 CLP/Clergy Retreat with Donald McKim (see page 2)
- April 8-10 Youth Retreat at Crystal Springs
- April 11 Agenda, Bylaws & Structure (ABS) meeting
- April 19 Committee on Ministry (COM) Meeting
- April 22 Good Friday, Office Closed
- April 24 Easter Sunday
- May 10 Council meeting at United Presbyterian Church of Jmst
- May 20 Committee on Prep. For Ministry (CPM) meeting at United Presbyterian Church of Jmst
- May 30 Memorial Day – office closed
- June 20 Summer Presbytery Meeting at First Presbyterian Church of Mandan
- Sept 24 Fall Presbytery Meeting at Westminster Presbyterian Church of Casselton

CC = Conference Call  
VCS = Video Conferencing Sites

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PNP vision statement:

**“A vibrant, informed, Presbyterian community which nourishes ministry and joins in Christ’s mission.”**

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Copy deadline for the Light is the twenty-fifth of the month. Items may be sent to:

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