

# Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

August 2009

## PRAYER CONCERNS

Please hold our Chogoria partners in your prayers as they deal with drought and famine.

## AFTER MEETING AND GREETING

By: Steve Minnema, Interim Executive Presbyter

I am very grateful for the many people who turned out on the five occasions in the past month when we gathered in various congregations for a little good food, fellowship and conversation. I also want to say another big “thank you” to the fine folks who hosted us at Bismarck, Towner, Gilby, Casselton and Angus-Tabor. You were all rightly proud of your churches and most gracious in your welcome!

Those of you who attended know that the meetings began, after introductions, with devotion from Ephesians 4:15-17. I suggested that the Presbytery of the Northern Plains is one of those “ligaments” the writer is talking about which, *when it is working properly*, promotes the whole body’s growth in love. Our challenge is to discover what it takes for that to happen.

Your comments in response to the questions I brought begin to suggest some answers and I want to share with you a little of what I heard. I cannot possibly do justice to the full range of ideas that were shared but I want to highlight those that especially got my attention.

First, I asked people to share what they liked about being Presbyterian and, as you might expect, the answers were all over the map. Many said they’d never known anything else; it was home. Others spoke of our doctrinal heritage, our approach to worship or our democratic form of governance. But the most common response came from those who simply said that in their particular congregation they had found a family and that was quite enough.

Second, I asked those present to reflect upon what their congregation might have to teach other congregations. There were lots of ideas here! For instance, one congregation felt that its very positive experience of doing a mission self study was something from which other congregations could profit. Another congregation spoke of how energizing it was for them to be active in their community. But the main point here – always a passion of mine – is that we have much to learn from one another but seldom do we do it.

Third, we explored what our various ministries desire/require from the presbytery. Here, I have three very distinct recollections. First, on several occasions we heard from people who simply said they had no idea what the presbytery does and so had no idea what they could expect. Second, we heard some honest sharing about past occasions when the presbytery’s involvement in a local situation had not been helpful. I found myself apologizing for that history and vowing to help us do better. Then, third, there were several good ideas generated: more continuing education for commissioned lay pastors, help with training for church officers, training for pastor nominating committees and churches in transition, more clarity about the role of the Committee on Ministry liaisons.

Finally, I spoke briefly about the fact that the presbytery is in an interim period in which we are going to discern and plan for the future God has for us. I asked for whatever guidance people had to offer and heard more good suggestions: involve the young people, make sure whatever process is used honors our differences while affirming our unity; presbytery needs to reconnect with both its small churches *and* its larger churches; plan meetings carefully and communicate frequently and clearly.

Clearly, the conversation needs to continue. But this was a good beginning and, once again, I want to thank everyone who made the effort to meet and greet me.

## SPECIAL PRESBYTERY MEETING

**A Special Presbytery Meeting has been called for Wednesday, August 26, 2009 at First Presbyterian Church of Grand Fork starting at 7:00 pm.**

**For more information, see notice of special meeting on page 4 or contact the Presbytery office at 701-772-0783.**

## ***GRACE IN THE STREETS: ATLANTA CHURCH JOINS WITH OTHER GROUPS TO COMBAT CHILD PROSTITUTION***

*by Toni Montgomery, Special to Presbyterian News Service*



Supporters of Street Grace pack an Atlanta hearing room to show support for the rights of exploited women in the city. Photo courtesy of North Avenue Presbyterian Church.

**STATESVILLE, NC**  
— Sometimes we are shocked when we get a good dose of reality, when we see what is really happening around us and realize it's not what we thought it was at all.

This was the case for [North Avenue Presbyterian Church](#) in Atlanta.

In 2003, Atlanta was identified by the FBI as one of 14 U.S. cities with the highest rates of children being used for prostitutes. Mayor Shirley Franklin was surprised, and ordered

a deeper investigation into the problem. The 2005 mayor's report issued as a result identified the corner of North Avenue and Peachtree Street as one of the three in the city that was particularly problematic.

That's the corner that had been home to North Avenue since 1898.

The Rev. Scott Weimer, the pastor of North Avenue, was also quite surprised and disturbed when he saw this news on the front page of the city paper.

"We never saw it," Weimer said. "It was hidden in plain view. It goes on, but we didn't look for it so we didn't even see it."

The designation was enough of a concern that Weimer felt compelled to talk about it with the members of his church. It was a delicate subject, but risk-taking mission and service is one of the core values of North Avenue, so he decided to bring it up in a sermon one Sunday.

"I wasn't sure what kind of response I'd get, but it was immediate and powerful," Weimer said. "Everyone, young and old, asked immediately 'What can we do?' I was stunned and inspired by their response and felt a need to move forward and help them answer that question."

As a diverse urban ministry, North Avenue has a history of engaging in issues of compassionate justice in the city. Weimer calls it their street cred.

"North Avenue is one of our most diverse churches," said Ed Albright, executive presbyter of the [Presbytery of Greater Atlanta](#), of which North

Avenue is a member. "It's an amazing church made up of all sorts of people — rich, poor, immigrants, plus a large campus ministry that brings them a lot of young people, more than most churches."

So, with the response of his congregation in mind, Weimer contacted Concerned Black Clergy, a group he felt would be vital to his efforts and with whom North Avenue has worked before. In conjunction with Concerned Black Clergy, Weimer invited other faith leaders and the mayor to an interfaith summit to decide how to move forward in the work to eliminate child sexual exploitation from the streets of Atlanta.

The groups met several times, and after 250-300 supporters showed up at a midnight prayer vigil, eight churches, including North Avenue, decided it was time to take the next step. The church hired consultants to formulate a plan to move forward.

[Street GRACE](#) (Galvanizing Resources Against Child Exploitation) was the result. Street GRACE is a non-profit network created to assemble the resources of participating churches and other groups to combat child sexual exploitation.

"It's an unusually diverse circle of partners," Weimer said. "It's an unusual interfaith partnership as well as a diverse circle of faith and civic partners, but it emphasizes partnership among others and focuses on the issue and working together."

"We wanted to be able to answer the question 'What can we do to help?' We wanted to be able to give solid options and get people involved," Weimer said.

Street GRACE works in five key areas. It focuses on prayer, acknowledging that the fight is a spiritual battle against an evil. It works for advocacy and teaches volunteers how to tell the story and lobby for change. It works for aftercare by raising money for new centers to help girls removed from the sex trade. Street GRACE also aims to stop the problem before it happens by working in prevention, identifying at-risk neighborhoods and encouraging mentoring programs. In the fifth focus, Street GRACE always looks to raise awareness of the problem.

"We speak at churches, for groups, anywhere we can," said Cheryl DeLuca-Johnson, head of

Continue on next page . . .

Street GRACE. “Awareness is key. Citizens need to know and mobilize local resources.”

DeLuca-Johnson said Street GRACE has signed up some 300 volunteers and is looking to match them with local agencies and non-profits already in place. Street GRACE wants to match the talents and passion of their volunteers with the right groups.

“In the past year we’ve also become involved in state legislation,” she said. “We support bills and initiatives that promote our cause. We judge our success by making sure those making laws know this is important to us.”

Volunteers recently presented members of the state legislature with 300 white carnations, meant to represent the 200-300 girls each month estimated to be victims of sexual exploitation in Atlanta.

Street GRACE also hopes to serve as an example for other cities. Weimer noted that the problem is not unique to Atlanta. He said organizers took time and care to develop the branding and Web site so that it could be used as a model that other cities can follow.

“Everything we do is done with an eye on setting an example,” DeLuca-Johnson said. “We would love to see our efforts duplicated in other cities.”

As for North Avenue, the church remains heavily involved with Street GRACE, hosting the group’s monthly meetings while Weimer serves on the board of directors. Weimer said his congregation has been supportive with both time and money. Many have learned the importance of legislation and laws to protect children and the value of places to go for aftercare and rehabilitation.

While child prostitution is an edgy issue, Weimer is also impressed with the continued enthusiasm of his members. When approached recently by a young mother concerned about the subject coming up during sermons occasionally when her children were present, Weimer asked her and the congregation at large to help him find ways to discuss the issue while not offending anyone. He was surprised when the strongest response came from several older women, a group he most feared would find the subject offensive.

“They told me that we must discuss this problem and that I couldn’t worry that some people might find it disturbing or offensive,” Weimer said. “They told me to press forward and that we cannot bury this problem due to the sensitivities of some people. We must raise awareness, and in order to do that, we must talk about it.”

**Editor’s note:** *This is the latest in a series of stories about congregations engaged in significant outreach and evangelism ministries, reflecting the General Assembly’s commitment to “[Grow Christ’s Church Deep and Wide.](#)” — Jerry L. Van Marter*

## RESOURCES

### **Gospel Stories for Pastors, Teachers, and Parents (Book)**

By: Orval Moren

Every story teller can use a great resource. Gospel Stories for Pastors, Teachers, and Parents is a powerful resource for every pastor who has a sermon time or a 'Three minute lesson' for the children. Teachers and parents will find the book full of helpful ideas in sharing the Gospels, and Christmas through Easter with children of all ages.

### **More Than Glue & Glitter: A Classroom Guide for Volunteer Teachers (Book)**

By: Debbie Trafton O’Neal

Practical, creative activities and basic teaching techniques to help inexperienced and seasoned teachers make class time more effective.

### **Acting Out the Gospels: 40 Five-Minute Plays for Education and Worship**

By: Mary Kathleen Glavich

Each of these ready-made gospel plays can be incorporated into lessons on related topics or used to introduce/involve children in the Liturgy of the Word. They are adaptable to grades 4-8 and include stage directions, background notes, discussion questions, and a prayer activity.

### **Developing Christian Education in the Smaller Church (Book)**

By: Carolyn C. Brown

Small churches have many things going for them -- a family like atmosphere, lively services, and more. But there are problems -- one is starting a viable Christian education program. With relatively few resources at hand, the would-be church school organizer faces a formidable task. At last, here's a book that shows how to overcome the odds. Borrowing from her wide experience with smaller churches, Carolyn C. Brown presents a multitude of original ideas.

To borrow a resource, contact the **Resource Center for Churches** at

info@resourcesforthejourney.org or telephone (888) 293-9901 (toll free). 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/>



# PRESBYTERY OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS

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## PRESBYTERY OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS

### NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING

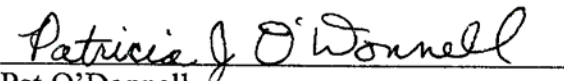
To: **The members of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains**

You are notified that, in accordance with the Form of Government (G-11.0200) and at the request of at least two ministers and two elders from different churches on July 28, 2009, to wit: the Revs. Deanna Reikow (First, Mandan) and Gretchen Graf (First, Grand Forks) and Elders Pat O'Donnell (First, Grand Forks) and Linda Anderson (First, Hallock), a Special Meeting of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains has been called for Wednesday, August 26, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, Grand Forks, North Dakota, for the following purposes:

1. to examine candidate Adam Copeland pursuant to G-14.0482, Examination for Ordination and G-14.0483, Presbytery of Call, for ordination in preparation for his ordination by his presbytery of care, Presbytery of Florida;
2. to request that pursuant to G-14.0483 the Presbytery of Florida ordain candidate Adam Copeland;
3. to give candidate Adam Copeland permission to moderate the session at First Presbyterian Church, Hallock, Minnesota, after his ordination and prior to his installation;
4. to appointment a commission for the purposes of installing the Rev. Deborah Burger to the United Parish at Bottineau, North Dakota;
5. to commission Certified Lay Pastor Casey Chapman to the Bismarck area churches; and
6. to conduct any business which may be properly undertaken as a result of these actions.

Pursuant to G-11.0201 (Book of Order) no other action may be taken at this meeting.

Dated: 8/6/09

  
Pat O'Donnell  
Moderator  
Presbytery of the Northern Plains

## SESSION RECORDS REVIEW SCHEDULE

Each congregation is required to have their rolls and records reviewed by the Session Records Committees. The Session Records Committee has made arrangements for reading opportunities throughout the presbytery as follows:

East:	September 12	Mendenhall Presbyterian Church of East Grand Forks at 1:00 pm
	September 19	Westminster Presbyterian Church of Casselton at 1:00 pm
Central:	August 29	Westminster Presbyterian Ch. of Devils Lake at 1:00 pm
	September 19	United Presbyterian Church of Jamestown at 1:00 pm
West:	September 12	First Presbyterian Church of Minot at 1:00 pm
	September 19	First Presbyterian Church of Mandan at 1:00 pm

Please plan to be at one of these sessions in order that we may have a strong report to Presbytery on October 3. **There will be no other opportunities for reading than these appointed times.** These sessions are supportive and informational for clerks and we welcome moderators as well. Sessions customarily last less than two hours on a Saturday afternoon.

## 2010 MISSION YEARBOOK ORDERS

Let the Presbytery save you money by placing your 2010 Mission Yearbook and 2010 Children's Mission Yearbook order with us for a discounted price.

The Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study inspires thousands of Presbyterians daily as they uphold the mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in intercessory prayer. This everyday practice helps encourage new relationships and enhances those already established between presbyteries and partners overseas.

**Please fill out the following form and return to the Presbytery office by August 26, 2009. We request that you pay with your order. Thanks!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Mission Yearbooks \_\_\_\_\_ X \$ 5.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Children's Yearbooks \_\_\_\_\_ X \$ 6.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

Mail orders to: **Presbytery of the Northern Plains  
5555 South Washington Drive Suite A  
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58201**

## Presbytery's Calendar

Aug 7	Budget & Finance Mtg
Aug 11	Committee on Ministry Mtg
Aug 12	Staff Mtg at VCS
Aug 27	Council Mtg at Red Willow
Aug 29	Session Records Review at First Presbyterian Church of Devils Lake at 1:00 pm
Sept 3	Personnel Mtg
Sept 7	Labor Day – Office Closed
Sept 8	Committee on Ministry CC
Sept 12	Session Records Review at 1:00 pm at the following locations: First Pres. Ch of Minot and Mendenhall Pres Ch of EGF
Sept 17	Transformation Team Mtg
Sept 19	Session Records Review at 1:00 pm at the following locations: Westminster Pres Ch of Casselton, United Pres. Ch. Of Jamestown, and First Pres Ch of Mandan
Oct 2-3	Fall Presbytery Meeting at First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck

CC = Conference Call  
VCS = Video Conferencing Sites

PNP vision statement:

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

Would you like to receive the Light of the Northern Plains electronically? You can by signing up for the paperless edition. It costs nothing. To sign up, simply email [pnpoffice@gmail.com](mailto:pnpoffice@gmail.com) and request to be put on the electronic newsletter list.

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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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