

Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

February 2008

Prayer Concerns

Please lift up in prayer Blair Moorhead, Young Adult Volunteer from our Presbytery serving a year in Kenya.

Presbytery Office Moving North

At the January 25th Presbytery meeting it was decided that the “physical” Presbytery office will relocate by the end of February into the First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks. The new mailing address for the office is: 5555 South Washington Suite A Grand Forks, ND 58201.



The new office will be in one room and will house Laurie Elhard, Communications Coordinator and the office equipment. The other staff members, (the Rev. Dr. Chuck Traylor, Executive Presbyter; Elder Michael Lochow, Stated Clerk, and Elder Bill Weispfenning, Treasurer) will operate from “virtual” offices, i.e., wherever their telephone and computer happen to be.

The most complex part of having only one person in an office is allowing for individuals to connect to off-site staff members easily. To address this concern, the office will be using a phone system which will allow for individuals to call into the Presbytery office and connect to any staff member they wish. The new phone numbers will be: 701-772-0783 and fax # 701-775-7599. However, the toll free number is still the same at 800-243-3532.

In addition, the whole staff has switched to a different internet service and will no longer be receiving emails through fargocity.com. The staff's new email addresses are:

The Rev. Charles Traylor, Executive Presbyter	exec.presbyter@gmail.com
Elder Michael Lochow, Stated Clerk	sc.pbyn@gmail.com
Elder Bill Weispfenning, Treasurer	pnptreasurer@gmail.com
Laurie Elhard, Communications Coordinator	pnpooffice@gmail.com

The First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks has graciously accepted the Presbytery's request to house a scaled down Presbytery Office. In addition to the office space, First Presbyterian will provide utilities (heat, lights, water) and custodial services at no cost to the Presbytery. For housing the office, First Presbyterian will receive from the Presbytery acknowledgement that the donation of space to the Presbytery is an “in-kind” donation. A monetary amount will be referenced to that donation so that the church will be credited for mission support.

2008 KENYA MISSION TRIP STILL A GO? REGISTRATION DEADLINE EXTENDED



Due to the unsettled political situation in Kenya the Chogoria Partnership Ministry Team will make a final decision by the end of February whether or not to move

forward with the mission trip to Kenya scheduled for July 28 to August 18, 2008.

If you want to be part of this life-changing event, you will need to register by Feb 29, 2008. Brochures with registration information were mailed to each congregation, so check with your own church office or mission group for a copy. You may call the Presbytery office at 701-476-1690 to have a brochure mailed to you or you may check online at www.northernplainspresbytery.com.

Northern Plains Presbytery Contact Info

Address: 5555 South Washington Suite A
Grand Forks, ND 58201
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Fax #: 701-775-7599
E-mail pnpooffice@gmail.com
Website (same) www.northernplainspresbytery.com

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Michael Lochow	sc.pbyn@gmail.com
Bill Weispfenning	pnptreasurer@gmail.com
Laurie Elhard	pnpooffice@gmail.com

Please make changes in your address book.

Most Precious Gift

By: Kaye Novak, reprinted from Walsh County Press



Sharing one's talent is a gift, but it's how the talent is nurtured is the true blessing, Joyce Keil, of Park River, was given a gift of piano music at a young age. "I think I was five years old when I first showed interest," Keil stated. Recalling memories of her childhood, she can just picture the ebony colored upright piano that stood

in her home. "I spent many, many, hours tinkering at the piano," she explained. As she played she discovered Middle C, "I didn't realize at the time what God had in store for me, Keil stressed.

Keil took lessons in the church that she grew up attending when she was around eight or nine years old. "I'd play each lesson by ear," Keil stated. At the end of each lesson her teacher would play the song that she wanted Joyce to practice for the next lesson, "I'd just memorize the song and play it on the piano." As the teacher became aware of the fact that she wasn't actually reading the music, she concentrated on the beat, counting and rhythm. Three months had past and around her eleventh lesson the teacher told her mother, "Ruby, you're wasting your money on lessons for this girl. God's given her a gift, so let her go!"

The next couple of years, Joyce continued to play tunes on the piano, using only the white keys. "I didn't read a note," she said. Getting the beat down, "I played in the keys of F, G and C," she explained. As she practiced, she learned that by using the F, G, and C positions she could play almost any song.

When Joyce was eleven years old, she was approached by the church pianist, Mrs. Berg. She told me, "Joyce Elaine, it's time for you to take over playing piano for church."

That was all it took and it wasn't long that Joyce was playing any song that Mrs. Berg had played and then some.

It wasn't until divine intervention came into play that Joyce incorporated the black keys into repertoire. "I was stated at the piano one day, when I felt this presence put my fingers on the black keys," she stated. As she began playing more music, she called out for her mother to come and questioned her as to what notes and what positions that she was playing. By cross referencing the flats, "my mother was able to show me what keys are to be played," she excitedly

explained. Playing songs with four flats to eight flats, mastering the most difficult pieces with ease without reading a note. "My mother was able to transpose songs for me," she said. It was her Mother's support and confident attitude that kept Joyce playing until she married the Reverend pail Keil and moved away.

It was at a youth camp that she was enticed with the organ. "Curiosity got the best of me," she quipped. One day when she didn't have KP duty, she sat down at the organ, turned it on and looker it over and before long she had mastered the organ as well.

The piano is her all time favorite to play, but she played an accordion until she got married, and her husband, Paul, bought her a Hammond organ. "I figured it our right away," she said.

Keil played for several weddings, "I'd memorize the songs that I didn't know," she said.

Three churches and forty-six year Joyce life has been filled with family, worship and music.

It wasn't until Joyce was having a conversation with her dad that she found out that on her mother's side, her great-aunt Minnie shared a similar gift.

While serving a church in Grand Forks, Joyce had the honor to play piano with Chad Daws. Daws taught music as well as played organ for the church. He too marveled at Joyce's gift and has been insistent that one day she makes a CD of her favorite hymns.

Upon listening and watching Joyce as she tickle the ivories with all of her fingers to make sweet, glorious music with her most precious gift, she is often asked if she plans to make a collection of her favorites. "It's on my to do list," she stated.

Meanwhile, Joyce continues to play piano for the church with Marie Haijcek on the organ, "She says I fill in the cracks," she stated with a smile.

Once a month she shares her piano playing talents with people at the Good Samaritan Center in Park River, where the Keil's minister through song and sharing their deep devoted faith to one another and God.

The Keil's just recently celebrated their 54th wedding anniversary and Pastor Paul is in his eighth year of his short-term temporary supply with the Federated Church in Park River and the Fordville Presbyterian Church. For those of you who are his parishioners, there's no need to worry, it's just a title. "We feel truly blest to be part of this community," Joyce emotionally stressed. Receiving holiday note from people who aren't even a part of the church, "It's been a good assignment," she stated. "Our roots are deep and we feel it."

“Muslims don’t worship God, do they?”

By: *The Rev. Daniel Wolpert, First Presbyterian Church of Crookston*

“Muslims don’t worship God, do they?” This question was recently posed to me by an intelligent, well-meaning, good Christian and human being. What was revealed to me in this query was how little we know about people with whom we have a long and tortured relationship. In a season where we prepare to send cards that declare “Peace on Earth,” it seems to me essential that we begin a truthful and serious educational process about Islam so that we might begin to really ‘love our neighbors’ – something we have been commanded to do by Jesus.

Thus in this letter I want to address just a few very basic facts about Islam as well as attempt to dispel a few myths about that faith that have, unfortunately, been spread by many in this country including, sadly, many who call themselves Christian.

Myth #1: Muslims don’t worship God.

Facts: Muslims worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob just as Christians and Jews do. In fact Muslims have a far better understanding of our faith than we do of theirs because they revere Jesus as a high prophet and great teacher. So, while it is certainly true that we have a different understanding of how the God YHWH (the Hebrew term for God) is revealed and understood, it is NOT true that ‘we worship God and they don’t’. In fact, most Muslims are far more dedicated to prayer than most Christians, given that they take seriously the instruction to pray at a Mosque five times a day. This truth was driven home to me this past summer when I was teaching in Chicago. While a group of us Christians were attending a discussion at a local church, our young Muslim van driver was going to a local mosque to pray!

Myth #2: Islam is a religion of violence and Christianity is a religion of peace.

Facts: BOTH religions teach that peace is the highest spiritual goal and is what God wants for God’s people. Unfortunately, the people who follow these religions are more often than not, warlike and un-peaceful. If we were to keep a scorecard, we as Christians would have a hard time proving our “peacefulness.” As just one example, the wars of the 20th century, perhaps the most deadly century in history, were fought either by Christians or people of non- Western religions.

Myth #3: Islam hates other religions and peoples while the Christian west is tolerant and “enlightened.”

Facts: Throughout history, Muslim governments have been infinitely more tolerant of religious minorities than Christians. All during the Middle Ages and well into the modern era, Jewish, Christian, and Hindu communities flourished all over North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia under Muslim rule, while both Jews and Muslims were being slaughtered in Europe and Russia by Christian governments.

Myth #4: Radical, extreme Islam represents Islam as a whole.

Facts: Radical Islamists no more represent Islam as a whole than the KKK represents Christianity as a whole. Rather these radical movements have sprung up as a direct result of colonization, as well as corrupt and oppressive local governments. Furthermore, history is clear about the reality that extremism can only gain ground in the world when there are many people who are suffering and live without hope. Killing people never stops extremism, however peace and prosperity always does.

Jesus told his followers to not focus so much on the speck in our neighbor’s eye, but rather on the log in our own. We live at a pivotal point in history where, if we really do want Peace on Earth, we must not give in to ignorance and fear, but rather must move forward in love and understanding.

Resources for cultivating spiritual vitality this Lent

by *Sally Vanderwerf*

For Adults:

- *Countering Pharaoh’s Production-Consumption Society Today*, 120 min. DVD with CD-Rom containing printable material, published by Living the Questions (2006). Ideal for Advent and Lent, five sessions: “The Way Out,” “The Decalogue,” “Countering Caesar,” “An Act of Imagination,” and “On Not Doing God Any Favors.”
- *Death and Resurrection of Jesus*, two VHS tapes (approx. 120 min. total) with leader’s guide, published by UCom Productions (2000). Marcus Borg shares his understanding on the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus to the early church in six segments: “What happened on Good Friday?” “What happened at Easter?” “Jesus is Lord,” “Jesus is the Way,” “Jesus as Sacrifice,” and “Jesus, God’s Love Revealed.”

For Children:

- *The Last Supper*, 30 min. VHS tape published by CCC of America (1999). Portrays the apostles entering Jerusalem for Passover, Judas’s betrayal, and celebration of the Last Supper.
- *Veggie Tales: An Easter Carol*, 49 min. DVD published by Big Idea (2004). Cavis and Millward (Bob and Larry) and an angel named Hope must convince Ebenezer Nezzar that Easter is about more than candy, explaining why millions of Christians celebrate Easter.

Please contact Resource Center for Churches at (888) 293-9901 or e-mail: info@resourcesforthejourney.org to check out any of the above resources.

THE BIBLE TOLD US – BUT THE HEAT IS ON

By: John G. Gibbs, SCE for PNP

Reduced to two sound-bytes, the message of Presbyterians for Restoring Creation is this: the Bible told us and tells us to keep the creation “good,” but humanity did and does its own thing, and now there is no scientific doubt that the heat is on, and we humans are largely to blame.

Our PRC Link in the presbytery’s website has information about both matters. *First, about scripture:* “Creation Texts in Scripture – An Introduction” (14 pages); “From Creation-Faith to Ecological Responsibility” (5 pp.); “The Cosmic Scope of Love” (Sermon on Psalm 24; Isaiah 11:1-9; John 3:17 and 21:9-19); “Bonding Church to Creation” (Sermon on Romans 8:18-25, 31, 38f.). Under “Links and Articles” there is also a list of “Resources” for Bible, Theology, and Church (both Presbyterian and ecumenical). Such resources enable anyone to research both Bible and biblical scholarship, and see for her/himself the process of checks and balances that operates in non-sectarian biblical research.

Restoration of creation was and is God’s idea - across centuries and continents. (It was not invented lately by ideologues.) The Bible’s flat-earth local ecology needs only to be applied to our global situation. Then we see the aptness of the old proverb “cleanliness is next to godliness.” That adage applies to presbyteries and churches, not only to hapless little boys and girls. If an ox (or a child!) in trouble was important enough for a person to break the law against work on a Sabbath (Luke 14:5), and if Jubilee included rest for animals and lands as well as for people (Lev. 25), then we have no excuse for continuing to ruin the home God gave us, which is what our fossil-fuel based worldwide economy is doing.

Second, about scientific evidence of adverse human impacts on the creation: That wealth of evidence is summarized in the “Science” and “To Do List” sections of our Resources, and at the Links we provide to other websites: “The Stern Review Report on the Economics of Climate Change” (reported to Her Majesty in England); our own National Academy of Sciences’ analysis of key questions in climate change science; and the group in ND “Prairie Climate Stewardship Network” (which has many reports from local scientists). Please add to those the continuing reports from more than 500 scientists (vetted by some 2,500 more scientists) from around the globe that are available from “The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change” (at www.ipcc.ch).

What about denials of global warming, and objections to the methods used in reports of human causes of climate change? PRC takes that also into account. At our PRC Link on the presbytery’s website check out Sharon Begley’s August, 2007 article for Newsweek, “Global-Warming Deniers – a Well-Oiled Machine.” Begley’s report shows in detail that the fossil-fuel lobby (comprised of reactionary foundations and corporate oil giants) fund opponents of the international scientific consensus. They do so not for science and the common good, but in the service of their own special interests. Ross Gelbspan, The Heat Is On (Perseus Books, 1998 updated) provides another list in Chapter 2. [Other foundations, corporations, and scientists vigorously oppose the fossil-fuel lobby, as Gelbspan shows in Chapter 4; for instance, re-insurers and the insurance industry generally.]

I hope the rumor is false that without reading such materials at our presbytery’s website and in many issues of our newsletter, “Light of the Northern Plains,” some few imagine that Presbyterians for Restoring Creation injects merely partisan concerns into the Church. To the contrary, the “well-oiled machine” that Begley, Gelbspan, and others have found in the world at large appears to have its adherents and influence within the Church. Presbyterians are called, however, out of ideological enslavement into Christ’s freedom (Gal. 5:1). Creation “waits with eager longing” for such a restoration of the Church (Rom. 8:19).

Presbytery’s Calendar

Feb 19	COM meeting by CC Staff Meeting at VCS
Feb 28-29	Council Retreat in Moorhead
March 13	GFAC CC
March 18	COM Meeting by VCS
March 21-24	Holiday - Office Closed

CC = Conference Call
VCS = Video Conferencing Sites

The Presbytery office will normally be open Monday thru Friday 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. Due to flexible schedules and vacation time of the staff, please call before stopping by to make sure someone will be at the office.

2008 Presbytery Meeting Schedule

April 25-26, 2008 at Jamestown College
October 3-4, 2008 at TBA

Light of the Northern Plains is published under the Mission Advocacy Ministry Team (MAMT) of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains.

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A copy deadline for the Light is the twenty fifth of the month. Item maybe sent to:
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