

Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

February 2010

PRAYER CONCERNS

Virginia Reichman (77), Elder at First Presbyterian Church of Mandan, died January 30, 2010. Notes of sympathy and support can be sent to her husband George Reichman at 1144 College Drive #102, Bismarck, ND 58501. Please keep the Reichman family in your prayers.

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

Please continue in prayer for all those in Haiti who have who lost friends and families, those who lost homes, and those seeking a sense of security after being affected by this tragic earthquake.

PUTTING ON A NEW SELF, TOGETHER

By: The Rev. Dr. Steve Minnema, Interim Executive Presbyter

“You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, . . . to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self, created according to the likeness of God . . .”

(Ephesians 4:22-24)

It was a beautiful scene to look out on, last Friday at Presbytery, as commissioners huddled in small groups for sometimes earnest but often quite lively discussions about our various ministries and the ways in which our life together in the Presbytery might better serve and support them – and us. I was reminded, for some reason, of the verses quoted above and thus given a strong sense that what we are really about, as a Presbytery in transition, is putting off an old self and putting on a new identity and way of being.

I have always felt that there is a strange tension at the heart of such an enterprise and that the author of Ephesians understood this quite well. On the one hand, the new self is a gift, created by God in Christ and offered to us as a gracious possibility we never could have accessed on our own. But, on the other hand, it appears to be a gift that can be refused *or* embraced. We have some say in whether this gift

will be accepted and appreciated or rejected and spurned.

But there’s another point in the wisdom of Ephesians that is also worth pondering: the “putting on” of the new self requires the “putting away” of the old. (4:22) The new identity is not a window dressing applied to an old way of being; it is a fundamental transformation in who we are and how we then live.

So what must we as a presbytery “put away” before we can “put on” our collective new self? In the weeks and months ahead, as we collate the results of our discussion at presbytery about our priorities and seek to extend that discussion into our sessions and congregations, we will, with the guidance of the Spirit, come to greater clarity about that very question. But one possible and important answer seems, to me at least, already to be appearing.

I heard it loudly and clearly in the presentations made by the four speakers we asked to reflect on our vision statement. One of their powerful messages was that we need to be in closer and more supportive community with one another. And a corollary of that – which all of us and all of our congregations might well ponder long and hard! – is that none of us, none of our ministries and none of our congregations is self-sufficient. We have to put away such a pride-filled illusion so that we can put on the grace-filled community we have been created in Christ to be.

There were lots of ideas about how such a beloved community might take shape among us and we will be exploring many of them in the months ahead. But before we can determine such important questions as how often – or where -we need to meet and how technology is going to serve us, we must first, collectively, put away the old habit we’ve had of “going it alone” and recognize with a new sense of humility and gratitude just how much we need and depend upon our connections with one another in the Body of Christ.

As our conversations continue in this time of transition, I urge all of us to keep on listening for that word of grace and guidance which scripture always supplies in abundance and which, alone, can lead us where we need to go.

GIVE AND PRAY FOR HAITI

On January 12, 2010, a major earthquake struck the country of Haiti. An estimated three million people were affected by the quake. Within hours Presbyterian Church (USA) had released \$100,000 of One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) funds to help in humanitarian efforts. The OGHS and general designated funds are being used to help with basic humanitarian relief in providing temporary shelter, food and health assistance.

The Presbytery's Council is encouraging congregations and individuals to give financial support for relief to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA). The PDA funds will be used in supporting communities in the long struggle to rebuild from this disaster. As of February 9, the Presbytery office has collected \$ 9,843.68 for Haiti relief efforts. You may send PDA Offerings from your congregation to the Presbytery office, please clearly mark checks or transmittal forms for "PDA-Haiti" or DR000064.

Please continue in prayer for all who have who lost friends and families, those who lost homes, and those seeking a sense of security after being affected by this tragic earthquake. Join with others in lifting up the people of Haiti and those seeking to provide aid in this critical time. Special worship material is available on the [Presbyterian Church \(USA\)](http://www.pcusa.org) website.

‘PROJECT OVERTURE’: ON THE ROAD TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PNS reveals two overtures that will be tracked through the legislative process

by Jim Nedelka, Special to the Presbyterian News Service

Seven months from today —the 219th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will have concluded in Minneapolis.

But, in a sense, the commissioners’ work in Minneapolis will simply have been prologue to the work ahead of them in their home presbyteries. Part of this work will include presenting the overtures passed at the assembly that require presbyteries’ approval for potential ratification

On Nov. 5, 2009, the Presbyterian News Service announced [Project Overture](#).

Our plan: to follow, through a series of articles, an overture from conception to the floor of the 219th General Assembly, July 3-10, 2010.

We designed the *Project Overture* articles to be an “education in action” series. Not only is it our hope that this series will help inform the PC(USA) membership of the path of proposed legislation for potential inclusion in the *Book of Order*, but our additional hope is that they can be a useful adjunct to future Sunday School and Confirmation class lesson plans.

And so, the PNS announces the Overture we will be tracking. Actually, we will be tracking a pair of Overtures.

During our selection process, we looked for a proposal that addressed an issue of broad interest within our denomination but would also be a strong enough proposal to engender potential opposition.

After six weeks of review, these two best fit our guidelines:

- an Overture from Foothills Presbytery (Simpsonville, S.C.) to amend G-13.0104 by establishing a new, annual “General Convocation” for the over-arching purpose of building intra-PC(USA) relationships. The Foothills Overture also calls for changing the convening of a General Assembly from the current bi-annual schedule to once every six years.
- an Overture of the Session of Ridgeview Presbyterian Church, Farmers Branch, Texas, through Grace Presbytery (Irving, Texas), to create a potential time-and-cost saving aspect within the search process for pastors and associate pastors by providing a unified system for posting and distributing one sermon video per pastor and seminary graduate for the benefit of PNCs and pastors.

Our decision to track two Overtures became apparent during our selection period. The history of the overture process reveals that not every petition makes it to the GA floor. The circumstances are varied, from the overture ultimately being shown to be redundant to existing language within the *Book of Order*, to its being withdrawn by its sponsor, to its dying in GA committee, to being defeated on the floor of the Assembly.

While these Overtures do not specifically address the liturgical or theological aspects of the PC(USA), they do address concerns about the “how” we — the PC(USA) — spend our monies. These Overtures also raise questions about how these potential modifications to our “operations” will impact the “mechanics” of our denomination.

Join us during the next six months as we seek to give you a window into the thought processes behind these potential answers.

To read full overtures, go to: <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2010/10026.htm>



Eco-Palms and Your Church: Your Role in Supporting Social and Environmental Justice



Photo: Cooperatives provide opportunities for women and men to work, learn leadership skills and take part in decision-making that affects not only the success of their business but the community as a whole. Photo courtesy of Lutheran World Relief.

More than 300 million palm fronds are harvested each year for U.S. consumption alone — most of them for Palm Sunday, but also for floral displays for church-related events. Your congregation's commitment to purchase eco-palms plays an important role in protecting forests, local jobs, and sustainable livelihoods in the harvesting communities.

Eco-palms are purchased directly from the communities at 5 to 6 times the normal payment per frond. Families are able to depend on a more stable source of income and benefit from additional value-added processing that takes place within the community.

Placing your order early ensures the best availability. For additional

information, go to <http://www.pcusa.org/palms/order.htm> or call (612) 624-7418. Palm Sunday falls on March 28, 2010.

Purchasing eco-palms for your congregation helps ensure a market for the palms, which in turn means communities can depend on fair and stable wages and the forests can be protected.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is partnering with [Lutheran World Relief](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#) and the [University of Minnesota](#) to help build support in the U.S. for eco-palms by introducing congregations to this social and environmental justice project. The University of Minnesota Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management has teamed up with the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation to develop a certification program for palms that will ensure the palm harvesters are earning a fair income for their labor and the palms are being harvested in an environmentally sustainable way.

2010 IRS MILEAGE RATE

The Internal Revenue Service issued the 2010 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes. Beginning on Jan 1, 2010, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car will be:

- 50 cents per mile for business miles driven
- 16.5 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations.

RESOURCES

Reimagining Christianity: Reconnect Your Spirit Without Disconnecting Your Mind (Book) by Jones, Alan W.

In this provocative new book, the Dean of the Episcopal Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, Dr. Alan Jones, delivers a resonant message to anyone looking for spiritual solace in today's troubled world. Dr. Alan Jones argues that spiritual seekers should not take faith for granted or blindly accept dogma— that for religion to work on a personal level, people should open the doors, become more inclusive, and embrace spirituality without abandoning questioning or critical reasoning.

Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries (Book) by Parker, T. H. L.

Calvin has always been regarded as one of the greatest biblical commentators in the history of the church. Now again available is this valuable and complete study of his Old Testament expositions - both written commentaries and lectures transcribed verbatim. The book begins by describing the composition and delivery of the expositions, as well as Calvin's preaching on the Old Testament. An explanation and discussion of Calvin's view on the relationship between the two Testaments and on the presence of Christ in the Old Testament follows. The volume concludes by showing how Calvin expounded the Old Testament: its history and narrative, the Law of moral imperative and ceremonial, and the Prophets in regard to both proclamation and apocalyptic.

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To borrow this or a different 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/>

LIVING IN FAST FORWARD

Spring Youth Retreat – April 9-11, 2010

All 6-12 grade youth from our Presbytery are invited to join us for our annual Spring Youth Retreat at Crystal Springs Camp, located about 40 miles west of Jamestown. The theme for this year's retreat will be "Living in Fast Forward" and will focus on how to live as a Christian in this fast paced world. The weekend will include music, large group sessions, small group activities, games, free time, team building activities, and good food. The cost of the retreat is \$75 per participant. Retreat brochures and registration forms posted online at www.northernplainspresbytery.com or you can contact the Presbytery office at 701-772-0783.

2010 EARTH DAY



The National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program distributes an Earth Day resource every year. The 2010 resource, *Sacred Spaces and an Abundant Life*, (www.ncecojustice.org/resources/#earthdaysundayresources) urges congregations to make wise stewardship decisions — both environmental and financial

— regarding their worship space. The goal is for churches to begin to implement changes to honor God and the earth, and then to celebrate these steps on the Sunday before or after Earth Day — April 22, 2010. Visit the National Council of Churches Web site at www.pcusa.org/environment/earthday.htm to download the PC(USA) version of this Earth Day Resource.

If your church has an Earth Day Sunday, please let our Presbyterians for Creation Enabler, Paul Henschen (pumc@drtel.net), know about it and some activities or liturgies you include.

Presbytery Youth Triennium Conference July 19-26, 2010

We will be returning this summer to Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, for the Presbyterian Youth Triennium Conference. Our Presbytery youth delegation (limited to 25 participants) will join over 6,000 youth from around the globe at this special conference that is held every three years. We will be driving to Indiana by bus.

The conference will include large group sessions, small groups, great games, food, skits, energizers, and fellowship. We will be staying in the dorms on campus. It is a great way to meet people from around the world and to hear how God is working in the lives of so many individuals.

This conference is open to all 14-19 year old youth. Costs to all participants will be \$409. Our Presbytery will pay for the transportation and 1/2 of the chaperone's registration fees.

On the return trip, we will be visiting the Sears Tower in Chicago and will be spending a day at Noah's Ark Water Park in Wisconsin Dells, WI. Noah's Ark is the world largest water park!

For more info, please go to:

www.presbyterianyouthtriennium.org. If you have further questions about either of these opportunities, please contact Pastor Dave Thompson at (701) 252-1748 or dthompson@daktel.com.

Presbytery's Calendar

Feb 5	Committee on Preparation for Ministry Mtg
Feb 5-6	Winter Presbytery Mtg at First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks
Feb 10	COM conference call
Feb 16	CLP Task Force Mtg at United (Jamestown)
Feb 17	Staff Mtg by VC
Mar 5	World Day of Prayer
Mar 9	Staff Mtg by VC
Mar 11	Council Mtg at United (Jamestown)
Mar 12-13	COM Retreat at Chieftain Conference Center in Carrington
Apr 2	Good Friday – Office Closed
Apr 9-11	Spring Youth Retreat
Apr 18-19	Reformed & Reforming Workshop at Maryvale Spiritual Life Center in Valley City
Apr 20	Staff Mtg at Presbytery office

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 and request to be put on the electronic newsletter list.

Light of the Northern Plains is published under the Council of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains.

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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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