

# Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

January 2010

## PRAYER CONCERNS

Over the past month, many faithful leaders who have served our congregations and the Presbytery have passed away:

- June McKay, Elder from Milton Presbyterian Church
- Rev. Edwin A. Gruneich, who served First Presbyterian Church of Buffalo, Ayr Presbyterian Church, Tower City Presbyterian Church, First Presbyterian Church of Hunter, First Presbyterian Church of Red Lake Falls, Plummer Presbyterian Church, and Grandin Presbyterian Church
- The Rev. Arabella Meadows Rogers, who served our presbytery as its executive and the congregations of First Presbyterian Church of Hunter and Grandin Presbyterian Church
- The Rev. Mark Bayert, former pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck

Please keep the McKay, Gruneich, Meadows-Roger, and Bayert families in your prayers.

## WINTER PRESBYTERY MEETING MATERIALS TO BE POSTED



The next Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains takes place on February 5 & 6, 2010 at First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks.

Presbytery packets are no longer mailed out to congregations. Instead, all Presbytery meeting materials will be posted on the Presbytery website for congregations/individuals to download. Meeting material will be posted on the Presbytery website at [www.northernplainspresbytery.com](http://www.northernplainspresbytery.com) by noon on January 20, 2010.

For congregations that don't have internet access, packets can be mailed out to them. **If your congregation needs a packet you must contact the Presbytery office by 9:00 am on January 29, 2010 to ensure you receive the packet in time.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Laurie at 701-772-0783, or toll free at 800-243-3532, or by email at [pnpooffice@gmail.com](mailto:pnpooffice@gmail.com)

## PRESBYTERY AS "LEARNING COMMUNITY"

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

Among the recent arrivals in my hard mail box is an issue of *Windows*, the newsletter of Austin Seminary. The cover article is called "Support Systems" and it tells an intriguing story. It seems that Austin Seminary, along with numerous religious institutions from many different denominations, has been participating for years in an initiative funded by the Lily Endowment called *Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE)*. The program began as a response to widespread reports about pastoral burn-out and fatigue. It provided funding aimed at forming a wide variety of peer learning groups shaped by

participants to create small communities where they could come together in an environment of freedom and trust to explore the issues that concerned them and to seek new insights. Recently, Austin received additional funding from Lily to conduct a large survey evaluating the effectiveness of the entire initiative.

What they found should come as no surprise but should also prompt us as a presbytery to ask some important questions of ourselves. In short, the overwhelming majority of participants in these peer learning groups reported that the benefits they received easily justified the heavy investment of time that the groups required. Their confidence in their calling was renewed, their stress levels were lowered, their thirst to learn and grow was satisfied, their patience with conflict was strengthened and all these positive impacts on pastors resulted in positive impacts on the congregations they served with many even reporting increased attendance in worship.

So what questions might this story lead us to ask of ourselves as a presbytery? I can think of three such questions and would invite you to ponder them with me:

- What is the current morale of the ministers among us? (And I use the term "minister" to include everyone who is seeking to be intentional about serving God through serving the church and its community.)

Continued on next page . . .

- Where are the ministers among us currently finding the kind of support and opportunities for learning and growing that the participants in the SPE program found so helpful?
- How might the presbytery do a better job of creating such opportunities for those who need them?

My guess, in response to the first question, is that the morale of our ministers varies widely from person to person, with some feeling quite anxious, weary and isolated while others remain energized and enthused. I also doubt that there are very many who would say that they have no need at all for additional opportunities for support, learning and growth.

The second question is hard for me to answer. I know of a few situations in which our ministers have found or created support communities but I am sure there are others. I am also sure that more are needed.

So that leads to the last and most important question: how might the presbytery help those who are feeling a need for some kind of peer learning community to fill that need? And to that question, as I am basically a preacher accustomed to three point sermons, I have three responses. First, the presbytery needs to get feedback from our ministers about the state of their morale and their felt need for more support. Second, we need to find ways to make sure that all of our various meetings have a learning/growing/supporting component to them. And, finally, we need to encourage and resource the creation of new support groups where there is a clear desire on the part of enough people to form them and make them work.

Our biggest problem, I suspect, is our strong tendency to deny two very basic truths: 1) we need to take care of ourselves if we are going to be of use to others and 2) in order to take care of ourselves; we need nurturing relationships with peers. Maybe we need to remember the promise we made at ordination when we committed ourselves to being friends with our colleagues in ministry. It takes time, of course, but it is, invariably, time well spent.



## OUTREACH PANTRY PROGRAM FOR RURAL AREAS

Great Plains Food Bank is proud to offer a new program, Outreach Pantry Program, which is a quick and easy way for communities that don't have a food pantry to provide food assistance for low-income families, children and seniors. Great Plains Food Bank pre-packs food boxes and delivers them to a community which then takes responsibility of storing and distributing them to those in need.

### How do you qualify?

Do you have a need for food assistance in your community?

Are you in a rural area?

Do you have a location to safely store food boxes?

Is someone willing to distribute the boxes to those in need?

If you answered yes to the above questions—you qualify!

### Your responsibilities:

Ensuring food boxes are stored properly and safely

Meeting the delivery truck at the designated time

Distributing food boxes to people in need; and

Completing and turning in a tracking form.

### Your cost:

Nothing. Great Plains provides the food. You would be responsible for picking up the boxes at a distribution site. You will need to mail or fax in your tracking form.

### Getting started:

Short application to fill out and agreement to sign.

Determine where to store boxes, how to distribute, with help from Melissa Sobolik through a site visit.

Contact Melissa Sobolik at Great Plains, Director of Member and Client Services. [msobolik@lssnd.org](mailto:msobolik@lssnd.org) or 701-232-6219. 1720 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. N, Fargo, ND 58102.

Food boxes weigh about 40 pounds and contain a variety of shelf stable items like soup, canned vegetables/fruit, pasta and sauce, cereal, juice and crackers.



## PNS ANNOUNCES 'PROJECT OVERTURE'

Series of articles will track an overture from rough draft to floor of GA219  
By Jim Nedelka, Special to the Presbyterian News Service

The 219th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) doesn't convene in Minneapolis until July 3, 2010. While this may seem a long way off, ask anyone who has ever put together a large gathering — religious *or* secular — and Opening Day sometimes seems a mere 10 minutes away.

Along with national level planning, there is also General Assembly planning at the local level. This planning includes the development and submission of overtures to the General Assembly.

Each Assembly, dozens of presbyteries submit overtures on a wide variety of issues and concerns as well as proposed amendments to the PC(USA) Constitution.

Most Americans know how our Federal laws are made: a need for a law becomes apparent to a group of citizens who makes their local Representative or Senator aware of this need. The legislator then drafts a Bill and introduces it in the House or Senate, which assign it to the appropriate committee. If the Bill survives in committee, and receives a majority of "yes" votes in both the House and Senate, it moves down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House for the President's signature ... a process inspired by the founding fathers' knowledge of Presbyterian polity.

Most Presbyterians are less familiar with how an idea generated by an individual, session or presbytery makes its way through the Presbyterian legislative system to become law or policy for the PC(USA).

And so the Presbyterian News Service announces *Project Overture*.

Through a series of upcoming articles, PNS will track a selected overture from inception in a local governing body (session or presbytery) to action on the floor of next summer's 219th General Assembly in Minneapolis.

"We hope this series will be a 'Presbyterians 101'-type teaching and learning tool that will have value for all Presbyterians, from the youngest Sunday Schoolers to the most veteran of veteran elders and ministers," said PNS Coordinator Jerry Van Marter.

## 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

### **How to Worship as a Presbyterian** (Book)

This book teaches worship participants how to go about experiencing God in worship. Chapman believes worship should not be treated as a spectator sport, but rather a divine vocation, a "holy work" that summons the energies of all who are present. Too often worshipers expect to be entertained by God, and the moment for divine communion is transformed into something like a theme park attraction.

### **Between Millennia: What Presbyterians Believe about the Coming of Christ** (Book)

This booklet discusses Presbyterians' beliefs about the second coming of Christ, end times, the rapture, and the millennium. Included are confessional statements and bibliographic resources.

### **Dancing in the Dark: Lessons in Facing Life's Challenges with Courage and Creativity** (Book)

A collection of brief but uplifting stories of real people facing adversity to meet life's challenges with creativity, persistence, and hope.

### **Gift of Listening** (Book)

A guide to teach people how to listen to another to be able to help your church create a listening ministry.

### **God A Brief History** (Book)

This brief tour through three thousand years of religious history shows how the Christian doctrine of God evolved in response to tensions within the insights of monotheism. The very personal, changeable, and involved God of the Hebrew Bible transformed decisively in its encounter with Greek metaphysical concepts and with the emerging trinitarian notions of the early Christian period. The author skillfully traces this history and shows how the tensions thus created are with us still.

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To borrow this or a different resource, contact the **Resource Center for Churches** at [info@resourcesforthejourney.org](mailto: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/>

**REFORMED AND REFORMING:  
NURTURING A PRESBYTERIAN IDENTITY  
IN OUR CONGREGATIONS**



A workshop for Pastors and Commissioned Lay Pastors (Presbyterian and otherwise) serving Presbyterian congregations will be held on April 18-19, 2010 at the Maryvale Spiritual Life Center in Valley City, ND.

The goal is to provide a high quality training and support experience for pastors and commissioned lay pastors serving churches on the Great Plains that seek to strengthen their identity as congregations in the Reformed/Presbyterian Family. To accomplish this the workshop will focus on two areas:

1. What are the distinctive marks of a Presbyterian congregation in its:
  - Worship life
  - Ways of governing itself
  - Practices of Christian nurture
  - Mission Beyond Itself
  - Relationship to the Larger Church
2. What strategies can church leaders employ to develop and maintain these marks?

The keynote speaker will be Dr. Gary Neal Hansen is an ordained minister in the PC(USA), currently serving as Assistant Professor of Church History at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. Prior to receiving his PhD from Princeton in 1998, Dr. Hansen served for five years as the redevelopment pastor of a small church in New Jersey. He has been on the Dubuque faculty since 1999, teaching courses in topics such as "Presbyterian History and Confessions," "Worship in the Reformed Tradition," and "The Theology of John Calvin."

The cost is \$60 which includes: Sunday evening meal, overnight lodging, all Monday meals and a copy, to be sent to participants upon registration, of Donald McKim's *Presbyterian Questions: Presbyterian Answers.*)

If you are interested, please contact the Presbytery office at 701-772-0783 or email [pnppoffice@gmail.com](mailto:pnppoffice@gmail.com).

**SEMINARY ON THE PRAIRIE**

**Preaching? Me? Up front?**

January 30-31, 2010

**Lay leaders and pastors are invited** to Red Willow to explore the joys and struggles of writing sermons. If you have ever wondered how a sermon is put together or you've ever wanted to try your hand at writing a sermon, this event is for you! Pastors will share their insights on what works and what doesn't work in the sermon writing process. Participants will also work on a scripture text and prepare an actual sermon.

For more information, go to: [http://www.tricountyministry.org/news\\_articles/view/seminary\\_on\\_the\\_prairie/](http://www.tricountyministry.org/news_articles/view/seminary_on_the_prairie/)

**Presbytery's Calendar**

Jan 1	Office Closed
Jan 9	Budget & Finance Mtg
Jan 10	Mark, Frueh, Marv Wierenga, Jr. & Donna Marsland recommissioning at First Presbyterian Church of Minot
Jan 14	Council Mtg
Jan 17	Westminster Presbyterian Church of Casselton installation of the Rev. Richard Kargard at 4:00 pm
Jan 19	Staff Mtg
Jan 25-29	COM/CPM Synod Training
Feb 5	Committee on Preparation for Ministry Mtg
Feb 5-6	Winter Presbytery Mtg at First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks
Mar 12-13	COM Retreat at Chieftain Conference Center in Carrington
Apr 18-19	Reformed & Reforming Workshop at Maryvale Spiritual Life Center in Valley City

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 [pnppoffice@gmail.com](mailto:pnppoffice@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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