

Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

January 2008

Prayer Concerns

Former Executive Presbyter, Arabella Meadows-Rogers, has been diagnosed with pancreatic/liver cancer. It is not curable. It is treatable and she will begin intensive chemo treatments very soon. If you would like to send cards, her current address is: 70 Haven Avenue, #2C NYC, NY 10032. Please keep Arabella and her entire family in your prayers during this time.

On Dec 27th Kenya held a national election. The two major candidates were Mwai Kibaki seeking re-election and his opposition Raila Odinga.

The election results were very close but due to some unknown technical or record keeping difficulties the results were not completely transparent. The opposition under Odinga, who lost by a slim margin, has called for a recount and fraud investigation. He has also begun to set up a sort of parallel government. This has led to looting and riots in the Nairobi slums and many other areas of the country. This has the potential to spread further and become an extremely serious situation.

Please lift up in prayer Blair Moorhead, Young Adult Volunteer from our Presbytery in Kenya for a year of service, and all our all brother and sisters in Kenya.

Ann Traylor, step-mother of Chuck Traylor (EP), was in a serious car accident on December 20. She is in an Atlanta area hospital. Please keep the whole Traylor family, especially Ann and Grady (Chuck's father) in your prayers during this time of uncertainty and healing.

On Jan 5, George Reichman fell and broke his wrist. He had to have surgery in addition to the 10 stitches above his eye where he got cut when he fell. Please keep George in your prayers during this time of healing.

Former Pembina County Larger Parish Pastor Harold Wylie is dealing with prostate cancer. He is having radiation seeds implanted this month. Please keep Harold and Hazel in your prayers.

Presbytery Meeting Reminder



The Presbytery of the Northern Plains will meet on Friday, January 25, 2008, via video conference. This will be the first Presbytery meeting held by video conference.

The Presbytery has four difference video conferencing locations. They are: First

Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks, First Presbyterian Church of Minot, Community Presbyterian Church of West Fargo, and United Presbyterian Church of Jamestown. You will need to travel to one of the four sites. Each site will have a facilitator who will conduct a brief orientation prior to the start of the meeting and to handle any questions during the meeting.

The meeting is scheduled to start at 10:00 a.m. with an opening worship service which will include Communion. There will be an hour break for lunch at 12:30 pm. Each site will be serving lunch. We hope to adjourn [technology willing] between 3:00 - 3:30 p.m.

At this meeting:

- We will be installing our new moderator, the Rev. David Thompson, and vice-moderator, Pat O'Donnell.
- Things are happening at the Presbytery office! Council will be reporting about those changes involving Laurie and how Chuck and Mike will be working in the future.
- The Visioning Task Force will be giving you an update on their work as they discern the future of the Presbytery
- And much, much more.

Presbytery packets will no longer be 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 by noon on January 9, 2008.

For congregations that don't have internet access, packets can be mailed out to them. **We are asking for those congregations to contact the office by 9:00 a.m. on January 16, 2008 to insure you receive your packets in time.** Please call the office at 800-243-3532 or (local) 476-1690 and leave a message for Laurie Elhard, Communication Coordinator.

Plan to join the rest of the Presbytery in experiencing this new technology venture and then tell us what you think.



Mission Initiative Grant supports Kids in Need Ministry

By: Jeri Hird Dutcher, Member of First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks

You're in trouble at school. You're in trouble with the law. Your parents have pretty much given up on you, except as a babysitter for your little brother at home, and there's not much to eat there. When you go out with your friends, they want to fight, and that's what got you in trouble in the first place. Now, the court has ordered you to attend Day Report, a Lutheran Social Services daily program for middle and high school students in the Juvenile Justice System. Did I mention you're just 14?

Now, there's a little more hope to turn this young life around.

Two agencies have teamed up at the request of the Kids in Need (KIN) ministry of First Presbyterian Church, Grand Forks, and the Presbytery is supporting them with a \$3,000 Mission Initiative Grant. The funds will enable the Conflict Resolution Center at the University of North Dakota to produce a teacher's manual for a curriculum teaching conflict resolution and nonviolent communication skills to youth in the Juvenile Justice System, specifically those mandated to attend the Day Report program.

"KIN connects people who care about young people with youth in our community in particular need of an adult friend," Elder Pat O'Donnell said. KIN began with a sense that troubled youth needed positive attention, so O'Donnell interviewed service providers, such as juvenile detention staff and Lutheran Social Services, about the needs of youth and the needs of the providers for support and encouragement. "That was in 2004," she said. "Since then, we gathered a team of interested church members and began the KIN ministry."

The initial focus of KIN has been to work with the Day Report program of Lutheran Social Services. Day Report is an after-school and early evening program that provides supervision and development of important life skills to youth 14-17 in the Grand Forks area. Youth referred to the program through juvenile court or the Division of Juvenile Services are currently on probation or in custody, need additional supervision and structure, or those who could benefit from "competency building," the development of relational, emotional, coping, job, and other skills. A special emphasis is placed on youth who are returning from a correctional placement or those who are at great risk for future placement.

The KIN program provides positive reinforcement to youth at Day Report, primarily through a monthly fun activity which allows adults to interact with youth in encouraging ways. KIN has taken Day Report youth rock climbing, fishing, and out to eat at an upscale restaurant (for many youth, their first such experience). Day Report plants a garden each summer at First Presbyterian, and youth learn gardening skills by caring for it. Through making and flying kites, exploring art activities, or making dream collages, youth have a chance to see themselves as the KIN adults see them – as gifted and important human beings. The KIN ministry is funded through donations and fund-raising events at First Presbyterian Church.

In 2006, the KIN team asked the staff at the nationally recognized Conflict Resolution Center (CRC) at UND to develop a way to teach conflict and anger management skills to the Day Report youth and to assist them in developing effective communication skills. This program was envisioned as a supplement to the skills training provided by staff and reinforces the concepts the Day Report program lives by.

The Conflict Resolution Center donated time to develop and pilot an eight-week (16 sessions) course in the basic experience of conflict and in nonviolent communication skills suitable to the target audience (troubled youth). Now, the CRC is writing teaching resources and a training manual so that the program can be used in other similar programs.

Because CRC is a nonprofit entity, the work could not continue without some reimbursement to staff for the time needed to develop and produce materials and to coordinate volunteer teachers. The 2007 Mission Initiative Funds provided them the resources to continue.

"We're very grateful to the Presbytery for responding to the needs of our kids," O'Donnell said. "We're also excited to see the collaboration of the CRC and Day Report staff on this course that could prove to be so important in these young lives. It's exactly the kind of cooperation we had in mind when we formed KIN."

Empowering Leaders: Becoming a Learning Organization

By: Steven Toshio Yamaguchi

Learning is necessary in an environment of flux and uncertainty. A maxim commonly uttered by biologists goes something like: “all living organisms have only three options—move, adapt, or die.” This is often not taken seriously by traditional denominational religious organizations—both churches and judicatories—and so many die or are dying. Peter Senge, in *The Fifth Discipline*, gives insight to religious organizations for becoming a well adapting and generative organization. Adaptive learning and generative learning are both necessary for organizations today. Adaptive learning is about responding to the changing environment, and generative learning is about being creative rather than static (or tacitly deteriorating).

In *Leadership Without Easy Answers* Ronald Heifetz argues that the work of adaptive learning is what the leader must help their organization accomplish so that it may successfully face its adaptive challenge. Heifetz makes the distinction between technical challenges and adaptive challenges. Technical challenges are problems that can be fixed with technical answers and resources. They are relatively simple to fix and an expert (or a lucky person) can give the right answer that will solve the problem.

Adaptive challenges are those for which no simple answer exists. They present when “our deeply held beliefs are challenged, when the values that made us successful become less relevant, and when legitimate yet competing perspectives emerge.”

Heifetz identifies the need for the leader facing an adaptive challenge to create a holding environment. This is a safe place in which diverse groups can talk together about the challenges they face, “to frame and debate issues, and to clarify the assumptions behind competing perspectives and values.” Using the analogy of a pressure cooker, Heifetz refers to the need to apply just enough heat; if there’s not enough heat then nothing happens, but too much heat will let things burn up. To offer or prescribe solutions from on high in order to alleviate the discomfort of the heat would preclude the people from being able to authentically engage and respond to the adaptive challenge.

A temptation for leaders can be to offer technical solutions to adaptive problems before the problem is ready to be solved—especially when the people look to the leader for the solution “from on high” and even plead for or demand a solution. The disciplined, humble leader will not yield to this temptation or pressure. This desire for an answer from a higher or external human authority is what Heifetz calls a “flight to authority.” Facing adaptive change is hard work in a

discomforting environment. When either the burden or the anxiety becomes too threatening it is perfectly understandable that the people facing the need to learn would prefer the comfort of a leader simply telling them what to do. And there can be great immediate emotional reward for the leader who gives the easy answer. People can be comforted by a so-called strong leader. But there is another kind of strength that serves the organization better.

A good leader must have the strength to endure the disappointment of the people as the leader disappoints the people’s expectations. The good leader must disappoint people’s expectations at a rate at which they can stand. Heifetz says that leaders must “regulate distress.” If there is not enough distress or pressure, then nothing happens. Leaders should allow the people to

feel the “pinch of reality.” If there is too much distress from disappointed expectations, the people can give up on or reject the leader. All of this regulated distress is in service to the end of helping create a learning organization.

Both Senge and Heifetz affirm that the role of the leader for leading through adaptive change is dramatically different from the charismatic leader who provides

solutions to problems. The leader for change must be a learner who demonstrates an openness to learn and who can help the organization become a learning organization, not a commander in chief that cracks the whip so that the troops fall in line to take directions.

The practice Heifetz describes as walking “a razor’s edge” is a leadership discernment of how to regulate distress in the organization. Cultivating spiritual connections among leaders and between leaders and God is at the heart of the discernment process for the Christian ministry of the presbytery. In the life of the church this is a spiritual discernment, or discerning where the Spirit of God is at work, leading, calling, prodding or halting.

Prayer and spiritual attention in the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition is rightly focused on listening because prayer is initiated by God speaking first. In a presbytery seeking to discern God’s direction for mission, it is therefore essential to spend time listening for God’s voice uttering the word of call. My goal is to build a new expectation: that the presbytery comes as partners and allies to help us discern the dynamic work of the Spirit of God.

The current challenges and opportunities of the presbytery’s extremely diverse regional mission context require collaborative learning. We do not need a plan

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for the next technical and programmatic steps as much as we need a plan for learning how to learn so that we can change continually, constantly adapting to the changing mission environment that surrounds us. And this is a spiritual work of attentiveness, a work of discerning the blowing of God's Spirit and the mind of Christ.

The Presbytery needs to develop a new way of being and working so that it can discover appropriate new organizational models to help it evolve into a learning organization continually being reformed as it discerns the movement and call of God's Spirit and Word.

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Outreach Cinema Is Coming To First - Minot's !!!

By: Mark Frueh, Outreach and Discipleship Director of First Presbyterian Church of Minot

First Presbyterian Church in Minot is now an official licensee for Outreach Cinema! Outreach Cinema will help us reach our church and local community by providing a turnkey feature film experience that is easy to host, ministry focused and potentially life transforming. The stories Outreach Cinema selects for us will inspire and touch as well as make us laugh and cry. Every film will maintain high standards in relationship to entertainment values for the family. They are committed to the tenet that the quality of the production should enhance the story of each film, never detract from it. Every film will utilize state of the art equipment, technology and personnel to

effectively emulate studio quality. Outreach Cinema's values are rooted in America's Judeo-Christian heritage. Every film will contain value lessons unobtrusively embedded in and consistent with the story. Every film will also be "safe" for a family audience. All films will be targeted for a broad faith-based market. Specifically, these films will appeal to parents and their children (or grandparents and their grandchildren).

Coming attractions include:

The Cross and the Towers September 11, 2001 – *A day that will never be forgotten. A day when ordinary men and women would face the unbelievable, and experience what few ever dreamed or thought possible: A terrorist attack in the heart of New York City claiming nearly 3,000 lives and leaving a scene of incomprehensible destruction. Yet in the midst of the devastation an amazing discovery would bring hope when it was needed most. Some called it a mere phenomenon, others saw it as miraculous. Three days after the towers fell, a cross of steel was discovered buried beneath the wreckage. The media noted its appearance. Newspaper and television reporters sought to see it for themselves. Follow the lives of seven individuals who were changed forever, not only by the horrific day of September 11, but by the stunning symbol of hope they found buried beneath the rubble of Ground Zero. Witness through firsthand accounts this stunning story of hope, a story that has never been told.*

The Wager *Michael Steel (Randy Travis) is ten days from the biggest night of his life... walking the red carpet as a Best Actor nominee. Just when it seems that he has overcome industry blacklisting and persecution for his beliefs, Michael finds himself fighting for his life in a supernatural wager between God and Satan. THE WAGER unfolds as Satan tests Michael's faith by destroying his reputation, marriage and career. Michael seeks refuge with his sister Annie (Nancy Stafford, "Matlock") while his manager Kenny (Jude Ciccolella, "24") fights to save the falling star. Confronted with temptations by his seductive co-star, Cassandra (Candace Cameron Bure, "Full House") and scandalous deceptions by reporter Peter Barrett (Doug Jones, "Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer"), Michael is faced with the most important choice of his life. Is Michael strong enough to live the truth no matter the consequences?*

For more information on how your church can participate contact:

www.outreachcinema.com

Presbytery's Calendar

Jan 15	COM Meeting – VCS
Jan 21-23	Synod Meeting
Jan 25	Presbytery Meeting - VCS

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

January 25, 2008 at video conferencing sites.
 April 25-26, 2008 at Jamestown College
 October 3-4, 2008 at First Presbyterian Church of Minot

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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