

# Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

January 2009

## PRAYER CONCERNS

Lois Watts, 84, mother of Gary Watts' ministry member of the Presbytery, died Wednesday, Dec. 3, 2008, at Hi-Acres Manor Nursing Center, Jamestown. A private family memorial service was held at United Presbyterian Church, Jamestown. Please keep Gary and his whole family in your prayers during this time.

George Reichman, member of First Presbyterian Church of Mandan, over the past few months has been having health concerns and had surgery at the end of December. Please keep George and his wife, Virginia, in your prayers during this time of recovery.

Chris Bohn, an elder at Grandin Presbyterian Church, was diagnosed in December with acute myeloid leukemia. He is currently undergoing inpatient chemotherapy at MeritCare in Fargo. Once the leukemia is in remission, he will have a bone marrow consult at the U of MN. Please keep Chris and family in your prayers at this time.

Please pray for families who find themselves in hard economic times with the loss of a job, home, or retirement funds.

## A ONE-DAY PRESBYTERY MEETING SET FOR JANUARY 24, 2009 AT MENDENHALL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EAST GRAND FORKS



By: Michael Lochow, Stated Clerk

The 96<sup>th</sup> Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains will be held at Mendenhall Presbyterian Church in East Grand Forks, Minnesota, on Saturday, January 24, 2009. This is a one-day meeting beginning at 10:00 a.m. with adjournment at about 4:00 p.m. This should allow all those in attendance time to get home (weather permitting) at a reasonable hour.

A number of important topics will be on the agenda so, as always, it helps to come prepared. Agenda items to look for include:

- information about the proposed amendments to the Book of Order (copy of proposed amendments enclosed),
- an adjusted budget for 2009,
- a Minot resolution regarding per capita,
- the Council report which will include some personnel issues,
- We will be installing our new moderator, Pat O'Donnell, and vice-moderator, the Rev. Mary Holtey.

Also look for updates from the Interim EP Search Committee. Finally, Bill Weispfenning, our treasurer for the past 6 years, has submitted his resignation. We will take time during the Council report to celebrate Bill's service to the Presbytery.

Much to do, limited time ... so come ready to participate!

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 12, 2009.

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 16, 2009 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)

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**Make sure to check out the Presbytery's newly re-designed website at: [www.northernplainspresbytery.com](http://www.northernplainspresbytery.com)**



Vice-Moderator, Elder Pat O'Donnell with Moderator, the Rev. David Thompson at the 2008 Spring Presbytery Meeting at United Presbyterian Church of Jamestown. Pat will become the new moderator at the Winter Presbytery Meeting on Jan 24, 2009 at Mendenhall Presbyterian Church of East Grand Forks.



Moderator, the Rev. David Thompson presenting a gift on behalf of the Presbytery to the Rev. Dr. Charles Traylor, for his service to the Presbytery as the Executive Presbyter at the Fall Presbytery Meeting at First Presbyterian Church of Moorhead.

## REFLECTING ON THE PAST YEAR

*By: The Rev. David Thompson, Pastor at United Presbyterian Church-Jamestown and Moderator of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains*

As I reflect upon the year I spent as Moderator of the Presbytery of Northern Plains the one word that comes to the forefront is "transition." Not only is our Presbytery going through a time of reprioritizing its mission and reevaluating its purpose, but our Presbytery has witnessed transitions with staff and some of its members.

During this past year Presbytery Council has been reforming its mission and vision statements. As with keeping to good Presbyterian protocol, a taskforce was established to mold and shape these new statements. What came of their work were two statements to help bring new life and energy to our Presbytery by "being a vibrant, informed, Presbyterian community which nourishes ministry and joins in Christ's mission." This will be carried by "knowing more, being more, and doing more." These statements are intended to help motivate churches to continue the vital ministry of sharing the hope and love of Jesus Christ within the church, within the community, and to the end of the earth. I look forward in the coming year to work with Council as these new initiatives are implemented within local congregations.

As a Presbytery we have also seen the coming and going of some of our members. We welcomed several new pastors through services of installation: the Rev. Dan Billings at Midway Parish; The Revs. Marli and Sheri Danielson at Tri-County Parish, and the Rev. Deanna Reikow as she continues her ministry to those in Mandan. It is great to have new pastors join our ministry as they each bring a new set of gifts and experiences. Several new Commissioned Lay Pastors (CLPs) were welcomed as they help to carry out the important work and ministry of Christ. In addition, we welcomed a new fellowship, Korean Hope Presbyterian Fellowship of Grand Forks and the Rev. Tak.

At our October Presbytery meeting we said goodbye to our Executive Presbyter, the Rev. Dr. Chuck Traylor. Chuck accepted a call to serve a church in eastern Tennessee, a move that will bring him closer to family. Over the past five years, Chuck visited many of our congregations and challenged us to "get off Survivor Island." I appreciated Chuck's passion for the Gospel and his desire to see each church realize its full potential.

This next year will bring new challenges and opportunities. An Interim Executive Presbyter will be hired to help us in this time of transition. Together, we must continue to think of ways that will help us to best implement our new mission and vision statements. It is in times like these that we need to step forward and ask, "What can I do to make the Presbytery of the Northern Plains more effective in her ministry?" I encourage you to take an active role in this process, and if we do, this time of transition can be one full of excitement, renewal, and revitalization.

Thank you for entrusting me with the role of Moderator during this past year. I enjoyed serving in this capacity and look forward to continuing to work with many of you in the days ahead.

Blessings in Christ.



## SPIRIT > CREATION > SPIRITUALITY

By: John G. Gibbs, SCE for PNP

Before humanity received “the breath of life” (Gen. 2:7), Creator Spirit swept like a wind through the formless void to reshape it into creation (Gen. 1:1ff). Ever since Spirit brought world into existence, our spirituality depends on the Spirit’s presence in the world. Spiritual life moves from the Spirit through the world to us. That movement empowers restoration of both creation and Church. I suggest that

among the implications of that movement are these five:

*Spirituality is sacramental living, not escape from here and now.* It takes place in the midst of communities: the household of creation, the household of faith, the civic community (of politics, economics, and the common good), and the families into which one was born and which one may choose to build later. Spirituality is not yours or mine to develop or diminish in solitary confinement. We all exist within the Spirit’s movement inside and for the entire world.

There is, for us, nowhere else to be. That is because “creation is a world of grace. God is never neutral concerning our prospects, for God is ‘for’ us. And therefore creation confronts us as ‘benefit.’ ... [The Church] confesses the goodness of the created world.” [W. Stacy Johnson, *The Mystery of God* (WJK, 1997), p. 71, describing Karl Barth’s theology]

*Spirituality learns to recognize the Word of God that is present in the world outside the Church,* and not only inside the Church. “It is *this* world, the world we know, this world just as it is, into which God comes, for which God cares, in which God is with us, in which the Word of God resides.” [William Stringfellow, *A Private and Public Faith* (Eerdmans, 1962), p. 56]

Just as the Spirit moves wherever and whenever, so the Word of God takes us by surprise in all sorts of places and times. If the Church were to become lukewarm (Rev. 3:16), then the Spirit’s work would be done outside the Church - until “the faithful and true witness, the origin of God’s creation” (Rev. 3:14) knocked on the outside of the Church’s door. Then at last we in the surprised Church would, let us hope, open the door to the Spirit’s arrival from out there (Rev. 3:20-22). Opening that door is our mission before we undertake mission trips to others’ doors.

*Spirituality lives, moves, and has its being in the goodness of God. For us that means “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with [our] God” (Micah 6:8).*

“Doing justice” supports relationships: between different peoples, between land and laborers, between rich and poor, between economies and ecologies. “Loving kindness” is the mood of our deeds, the “A=440” in our music-making, the determinant of our life’s rhythms. “Walking humbly with God” makes us fit for human companionship, capable of loving our neighbors (including all neighboring creatures), and open to God’s self-disclosures “wherever and whenever.” These three components of the Good Life bring blessing to “the mountains” and “enduring foundations of the earth,” as prophet Micah knew (Micah 6:1-2).

*Spirituality aims for attunement to the Spirit within creation.* That attunement is the beginning of worship and the fuel of restoration and redemption in the real world. Restoration of the Church to life in the Spirit is prerequisite to the care and restoration of creation. Our senses and sensibilities focus on vibrations of the Spirit within the space/time God gives us.

*Spirituality is service of God, not a means to some other end.* We do not believe because it pays. We believe because God is God, whose love brought creation into being, and who created humanity to sustain its “good” fitness to serve the divine purpose. We live in the faith that “all things hold together” in God’s “beloved Son” (Col. 1:13-17).

## RESOURCES

### **Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith (Book)**

In this book, the author, urges thoughtful adults to assume responsibility for providing strategic mentorship for the young adults in the “twenty-something” years. She reveals also, however, the ways young adults are influenced not only by individual mentors but also by mentoring environments.

### **How to Start and Sustain a Faith-Based Young Adult Group (Book)**

This resource helps leaders design a small group experience that shapes itself specifically to the needs and desires of young adults.

### **Thermostat How Can We Turn Toward Peace in a Time of Fear? (DVD)**

A DVD on war, peace and Christian conscience. 'Thermostat' includes a wide variety of resources: Bible studies, role plays, stories, images, poetry, video clips, rap and drama. A 100- page study guide organizes the three hours of video clips and activities into 33 different study units. The units — which can be used separately — include the themes of peacemaking, imagination, allegiance, security, terrorism, camouflage and nonviolence. 'Thermostat' encourages intergenerational conversation and learning.

To borrow a 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.

## IRS ANNOUNCES 2009 MILEAGE RATES

The Internal Revenue Service issued the 2009 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, 2009, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be:

- 55 cents per mile for business miles driven
- 24 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations

The new rates for business, medical and moving purposes are slightly lower than rates for the second half of 2008 that were raised by a special adjustment mid-year in response to a spike in gasoline prices. The rate for charitable purposes is set by law and is unchanged from 2008.

The business mileage rate was 50.5 cents in the first half of 2008 and 58.5 cents in the second half. The medical and moving rate was 19 cents in the first half and 27 cents in the second half.

The mileage rates for 2009 reflect generally higher transportation costs compared to a year ago, but the rates also factor in the recent reversal of rising gasoline prices. While gasoline is a significant factor in the mileage rate, other fixed and variable costs, such as depreciation, enter the calculation.

At the October 2008 Presbytery meeting, committee and presbytery mileage was set to be 60 % of the IRS business miles driven. The reimbursement for 2008 will be 33 cents per mile for committees and 33 cents per mile for Presbytery's meeting after the first 100 miles.

## I AM THE NEW YEAR

I am the New Year. I am an unspoiled page in your book of time I am your next chance at the art of living.

I am your opportunity to practice what you have learned during the last twelve months about life.

All that you sought the past year and failed to find is hidden in me; I am waiting for you to search it out again with more determination.

All the good you tried to do for others and didn't achieve last year is mine to grant – proved you have fewer selfish and conflicting desires.

In me lies the potential of all you dreamed but didn't dare to do, all that you hoped but did not perform, all that you prayed for but did not yet experience. These dreams slumber lightly, waiting to be awakened by the touch of an enduring purpose.

I am your opportunity to renew your allegiance to the Christ who said: "Behold, I make all things new."

I am a year when you will grow older, the occasion for you to grow newer.

I am the New Year.

*Taken from The Grapevine (Westminster Presbyterian Church of Casselton's newsletter)*

## Presbytery's Calendar

Jan 1	Holiday – Office Closed
Jan 5	Budget and Finance CC
Jan 8	Council Mt at Chieftain, Carrington, ND
Jan 23	RASCAL Meeting
Jan 24	Winter Presbytery Meeting at Mendenhall Presbyterian Church of East Grand Forks
March 12	Council Mt – location TBA
April 4	Spring PW Gathering at United Presbyterian Church of Jamestown
April 17-19	Spring Youth Retreat at Crystal Springs Camp
April 24-25	Spring Presbytery Meeting

CC = Conference Call

VCS = Video Conferencing Sites

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At the October 2008 Presbytery meeting, new vision statement was approved:

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

More information about how the Presbytery will grow into this statement to come.

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How 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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A copy deadline for the Light is the twenty-fifth of the month. Items may be sent to:

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