

Light of the Northern Plains

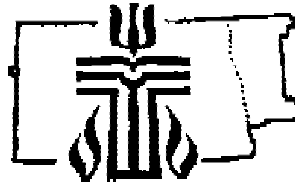
Presbytery of the Northern Plains

July 2009

PRAYER CONCERNS

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

Please keep First Presbyterian Church of Watford City in your prayers as they celebrate 100 years in ministry together and as they discover what the future holds for them as a congregation.



REGIONAL MEET & GREETES

Over the next several weeks the Presbytery will be hosting, with the gracious cooperation of several congregations, a series of regional "meet and greets." You are invited to come and converse with Steve Minnema, Interim Executive Presbyter, in an informal environment to share your hopes and concerns for your congregation and the Presbytery as a whole.

Here are the dates and locations (each event will begin at 7:00 pm and will include light refreshments):

July 15

July 16

July 22

July 29

July 30

First Presbyterian of Bismarck

Towner Presbyterian Church

Gilby Presbyterian Church

Westminster PC of Casselton

Angus-Tabor PC of Angus, MN

Though this time together will not be highly structured, you are encouraged to give thought to the following questions as you prepare for these meetings: How would you describe what you most appreciate about your congregation's life and ministry? As you think about the future of our presbytery, what are your greatest hopes? What are your greatest concerns?

Please RSVP to the Presbytery office ASAP either by e-mail (pnppoffice@gmail.com) or phone (701-772-0783).

GLORY, GROUND, AND CHURCH BETWEEN

By: John G. Gibbs, Presbyterians Restoring Creation

What would it be like if the weather in Texas becomes the norm in Illinois, and Boston's median temperature becomes the same as Raleigh's is today? Are such questions out of bounds in church publications?

For John Calvin the Christian life requires both head and heart. Karl Barth held the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other. Granted: there is plenty of controversy in following both of those precedents. But what alternative is there for a faithful Church that believes "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it"? The gospel is grounded. So must we be.

Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States, a scientific report released on June 16, 2009, sees these impacts in the Midwest by the year 2099: "The climate of Michigan could resemble the climate of Oklahoma and the climate of Illinois could resemble the climate of Texas." In the Great Plains: "Hotter, drier summers will threaten the already overused High Plains aquifer, which irrigates 13 million acres and provides water to 80% of the people in the region. ... Under higher emission scenarios, North and South Dakota, which currently see only a handful of 100-degree days, could see 50 or more days of 100+ temperatures per year."

That's our grandchildren's future. How could we let it happen? How could we "image" God by doing nothing in this matter? Psalm 104, one of the premier texts on the Creation, dramatically brings together "ground" (v. 30) and "glory" (v. 31). "Mountains" figure prominently. So does "the earth," with its "springs," "clouds," "streams," grass "for the cattle," "plants for people," food and wine and olive oil - all provisioned by the harboring care of the Creator. The wide sweep of this cosmic context is clear, for instance, in the poetic observation: "Yonder is the sea, great and wide" (v. 25). No response to global warming is "no option" for a Church that lives between God's glory and this ground that literally "grounds" our life with all humanity and all creatures. Psalm 104 is one of the most important "ecological" texts in scripture.



THE FREEDOM TO ASK QUESTIONS

By: Steve Minnema, Interim Executive Presbyter



As I begin my work as your Interim Executive Presbyter, it strikes me that a big part of my role here – even my *calling* – is to raise the right questions at the right time. Why do we do things

this way? Why do we allow that to happen? What is the history behind that troubled relationship? Why haven't past attempts to address this gone anywhere? Why is she/he involved in that?

Questions are powerful interventions in a relationship and – in the wrong hands – become weapons of injury. Jesus' opponents were always asking him questions, not because they wanted to learn something new but because they were hoping to trip him up. A questioner who already knows the right answer to his question and just wants to see if you do too seeks to put him/herself in a position of power and judgment over the other and not in the position of co-learner.

On the other hand, communities sometimes seek to suppress questions -and questioners. In subtle and not so subtle ways, groups of people find a way of conveying to their members -and to guests who sojourn among them for a time – that certain histories, habits or arrangements are best left unquestioned. In response, members – and guests – may decide that “playing nice” or “going along to get along” is the best approach.

But it isn't – at least not if the community wants to benefit from the variety of perspectives that its members and guests bring to the common table.

Questions are the best way for people to say, “From my perspective something about that is not clear or reasonable or wise or faithful or just or pleasing to the Lord. Help me to understand.” Then in response, the community gets to see itself more clearly, explain itself more completely *and* decide if it wants to continue as it is or to change.

So in our time together you can expect that I will frequently be asking questions. I will try very hard to make sure that my questions are not traps that try to trip you up. I truly want to be a co-learner with you as we seek to understand who we are, why we do what we do and whether we wish to be and do differently. But neither will I give in to the inevitable pressure to settle for the settlements that have been made in this presbytery in the past and not question them. A church called always to be “reformed and reforming” must come to regard tough questions –whether they come from an Interim E.P. or another presbyter - as close to sacred, moments when – just possibly – someone Other than the questioner is intervening in our life together and calling us to a new and better way.

I urge all of us to bear these things in mind as we converse in the months ahead. A question is a quest for clarity and truth. Though it may, at first, awaken anxiety, those of us who believe in the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in our midst will see in such questions – and those who raise them – an opportunity not to be missed nor dismissed.

RASCAL RETREAT: A BOUNTY OF INFORMATION

By: Cathy Bliss and Paul Kuhn, RASCAL Members

RASCAL (Reformed According to the Scriptures: Companions Active in Learning) is happy to report on our inaugural event:

On May 1st and 2nd, 2009, 18 of us gathered in Devils Lake for a 24 hour retreat sponsored by RASCAL and led by Dr. Gary Hansen, professor of the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. Dr. Hansen, guided us through five aspects of Reformed Spirituality, focusing on how we can have:

minds shaped by Holy Scripture,
hands joined in community,
souls known by self-examination,
hearts steeped in the psalms and
rhythm of the Sabbath.

There was a bounty of interesting information presented in an absorbable manner mixed with challenging but realistic suggestions for improving our spiritual lives and maintaining balance with our work lives. During the course of the retreat we sang psalms, wrote short essays, listened to lectures and discussed in small groups. Much was accomplished in a very short period of time.

EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER RECEIVED FROM REV. KIRIMI

REGARDING THE DROUGHT IN KENYA

By: Nancy Emerson, Pastor at
First Presbyterian Church of
Moorhead and Chogoria
Partnership Ministry Team
Member



Dear Sharon (Co-

Moderator of the Chogoria Partnership Ministry Team of the
Presbytery of N. Plains),

I greet in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am indeed
very sorry for taking a very long time to reply to your email.
We were very excited to learn that you are fine and more so
you have been praying for us. The rain came and stopped just
when the beans were maturing and we had to solemnly watch
as the maize started withering. It is yet another difficult time
a head of us. At least we have some beans and we thank God
for this. Learning institutions are hard hit too.

We need to start planting again in September for the rains
to start in October for the beans to mature around January
2010 and maize April 2010. Please continue praying for us...

In the North Presbytery we have very badly affected areas
like Kaare, Makengi and Iruri where some children had left
school due to famine. In Central we have areas such as
Kajiampau and in the South we have Mumbuni. The way to
make every presbytery feel satisfied is share the amount
equally and for sub committees to make sure that the money
goes to the needy in those areas. All the marginal areas will be
in great need for planting materials soon and some children
will need support to go back to school.

May the Good Lord Bless you mightily.

Rev. Joseph Kirimi Mwarania

Moderator Chogoria North presbytery

Chairman- Partnership Board

The Chogoria Partnership Ministry Team (CPMT) of the
Presbytery of Northern Plains responds: The Rev. Joseph
Kirimi sent the above letter to Sharon Secor in response to our
Presbytery's desire to raise some funds for famine relief in the
Chogoria communities. The offering at the April presbytery
meeting was dedicated to famine relief in the Chogoria
Presbyteries. In addition many churches raised money to go
to this effort. On June 23rd, over \$5,000 was wire transferred
to our partners in Kenya to be distributed as described by Rev.
Kirimi. Thanks be to God for the blessings bestowed on all of
us and for the generous hearts of the people of this Presbytery
for responding to our brothers and sisters in Christ of Kenya.
Additional funds may still be raised and the CPMT will see
that it gets sent to Kenya. Simply make checks payable to the
Presbytery of Northern Plains and note that it is for Kenya
Famine Relief.

RESOURCES

Hope in conflict: Discovering wisdom in congregational turmoil (Book)

By: [Sawyer, David](#)

This helpful guide shows pastors how to
look beyond the superficial or most obvious
reasons for a particular conflict within their
own church, find what is hopeful in the
conflict, and reframe the situation, giving
the congregation the strength to change it as
well.

The honest to God church: A pathway to God's grace (Book)

By: [Bixby, Douglas J.](#)

In today's complex and busy world, people
yearn for simpler lives. Bob Sitze offers
Starting Simple to help readers live joyfully
and justly. Because Sitze believes
conversations change us as individuals and
that most important social changes take
place through conversation, he invites us
into heart-to-heart conversations about
simple living.

Serving from the Heart: Leader: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service (Book)

This is a resource to help adults discover
their unique gifts and talents for service, the
inspiration to serve, and a way to connect
with service in your church community. A
4-8 week group study for Sunday school,
small groups or retreats. The leader kit
includes easy-to-follow lesson plans for
either eight 45-minute sessions or four 2-
hour sessions. The enhanced CD-ROM
included in the kit contains overhead slides,
posters, music, and leader training video
segments. Used at SPRC training meetings.

To borrow a 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/>

SUMMER OFFICE HOURS

The Presbytery summer office hours will be Monday thru Thursday 9:00 am to 4:30 pm from Memorial Day weekend until Labor Day weekend. Due to flexible schedules and reduced staffing during the summer, please call before stopping by to make sure someone will be at the office.

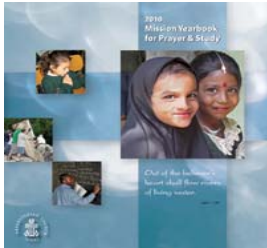
Once again, here is the office contact information:

Address: 5555 South Washington Suite A
Grand Forks, ND 58201
Phone #: 701-772-0783 or 800-243-3532 (Toll Free)
Fax #: 701-775-7599

Additional staff contact information:

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exec.presbyter@gmail.com and 701-213-6712 Cell
Michael Lochow, Stated Clerk: sc.pbynp@gmail.com
Bill Cawley, Treasurer: bcawley@cawleycpa.com
Laurie Elhard, Communication Coordinator
pnpooffice@gmail.com

LET THE PRESBYTERY SAVE YOU MONEY!



Let the Presbytery save you money by placing your 2010 Mission Yearbook order with us. You can order the 2010 Mission Yearbook and 2010 Children's Mission Yearbook for a discounted price.

The Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study inspires thousands of Presbyterians daily as they uphold the mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in intercessory prayer. This everyday practice helps encourage new relationships and enhances those already established between presbyteries and partners overseas. Synod and presbytery maps and mission-partner maps show mission locations around the world. Demographic profiles help readers learn about particular countries where the church has mission partnerships.

We request that you pay with your order; we will charge postage (minimum of \$3.00) if you do not send a check with your order. Thanks!

Please fill out the following form and return to the Presbytery office by August 26, 2009.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Church: _____

Number of Mission Yearbooks _____ X \$ 5.00 = _____

Number of Children's Yearbooks _____ X \$ 6.00 = _____

Mail orders to: **Presbytery of the Northern Plains**

**5555 South Washington Drive Suite A
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58201**

Presbytery's Calendar

July 6	Office Closed
July 9	Personnel Mtg
July 7-15	Mission Trip to Washington DC – Youth & Adult
July 14	Committee on Ministry CC
July 15	Meet & Greet at First Presb Church of Bismarck
July 16	Meet & Greet at Towner Presbyterian Church
July 20	John Calvin's 500 th Birthday Celebration at Community Pres. Church of WF
July 22	Meet & Greet at Gilby Presbyterian Church
July 29	Meet & Greet at Westminster Pres Church of Casselton
July 30	Meet & Greet at Angus-Tabor Presbyterian Church
Aug 7	Budget & Finance Mtg
Aug 27	Council Mtg
Sept 7	Labor Day – Office Closed
Sept 27-29	Synod Meeting
Oct 2-3	Fall Presbytery Meeting at First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck

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 pnpooffice@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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Grand Forks, ND 58201
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pnpooffice@gmail.com