

# Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

June 2010

## PRAYER CONCERNS

Please pray for the people and all of creation that have been affected by the oil spill off the Gulf Coast. Guide those who are called to cope, to clean, and to care for damaged habitat and creatures in that area.

Please hold our Chogoria partners in your prayers.

Please continue to pray for all people in Haiti who have lost friends, families, homes, and relief workers who are providing aid.

## THE SPIRIT AND THE SPIRITS

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



As we prepare for this week's presbytery meeting with its theme of "Discovering the <Creative> Spirit," I've been thinking a lot about the Holy Spirit and the various spirits that, from time to time, take possession of us. Now please don't misunderstand me. I am not going to argue that there should be an

exorcist on the presbytery staff (though, come to think about it, there are times when I am tempted in that direction). The truth is that both individuals and groups do fall under the influence of something like a foreign spirit that can, if allowed, wreak havoc with our lives and our relationships. (Look what happened to King Saul when an evil spirit took hold of him and he threw a spear at David!)

It is no wonder that John urges us to "test the spirits" to see whether they are from God. (I John 4:1). If we want the church or the presbytery to be led and empowered by the creative Holy Spirit, we need to learn how to a) tell the difference between the Holy Spirit and other foreign spirits; b)

get free of lesser spirits and c) be filled with the Holy Spirit. So how might we approach such a challenge, in preparation for the great things God wants to do in and through us?

The presence of an evil spirit seems to me to be marked by three signs:

- 1) It encourages us to put ourselves and our desires at the center of everything. We ought to have things our way because we're so special.
- 2) It hooks us by glittering but ultimately empty promises that we just keep pursuing and pursuing. Nothing is ever enough.
- 3) The only new reality it creates is chaos and destruction. Our relationships become disordered and our lives end in shambles.

In contrast to this, the Holy Spirit:

- 1) Encourages us to put God in Christ at the center of things and thus allows us to know the great glory in being a common and flawed mortal, made in God's image.
- 2) Leads us by promises we can trust because we can trust their Giver and
- 3) Brings order and new life out of chaos, darkness and death.

Freedom from a foreign spirit is a gift that is given to us in our Baptism but one that needs to be reclaimed every day of our lives. It would not be a bad idea if we were to examine ourselves periodically under a question such as: so when have I allowed myself to be under the control of a spirit contrary to God? Recognizing and confessing such moments is essential if we are going to reject the power that such influences can so easily gain over us.

And we could be more specific as we prepare for the presbytery meeting in Jamestown. What is the spirit that I am bringing to this meeting and is it of God?

Finally, the only way I know of to receive the Holy Spirit of God is to trust God's promise to pour that Spirit out on us. As I think about the Jamestown meeting, this speaks loudly to me. If I let myself get all anxious about what is going to happen (or not happen), I will certainly convey that anxiety to others and we will not come together trusting in the Holy Spirit's guidance and power. Under such a scenario, chaos rather than a new creation is the likely result. So let us reject that option and come together with a God-given trust in our hearts and an excitement regarding all that the Holy Spirit can and will do with us through us.



## ***BROADENING THE CALL: NEW RESIDENCY PROGRAM MATCHES NEW PASTORS, SMALL CONGREGATIONS***

By Emily Enders Odom, Mission Communications associate

LOUISVILLE — Just as ministry partners at all levels of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have been working to address the challenges of preparing leaders, the General Assembly Mission Council heard an exciting update on an innovative pastoral residency program.

*For Such a Time as This*, which launched in November 2009, is designed to serve underserved congregations and develop missional pastors.

Named for a reference from the Book of Esther, *For Such a Time as This* is a pilot program that seeks to pair small, underserved congregations with recent seminary graduates who are interested in serving where there is need, specifically in small membership congregations.

The program's name invokes Esther's unexpected rise to leadership in her own day even as the PC(USA) is calling leaders to serve in a rapidly changing and challenging 21st century context — half of the denomination's nearly 11,000 congregations have 100 or fewer members. The concept was inspired in part by Teach For America, which recruits recent college graduates to teach in underserved urban and rural public schools.

Citing the statistic that most Presbyterians are part of larger congregations while most of the leadership positions are in the smaller ones, the Rev. Marcia Clark Myers, director of the PC(USA)'s Office of Vocation, acknowledged the challenge of fostering a culture of mission-driven leadership among today's ministers and candidates.

Of 2,253 ministers or candidates in the Presbyterian call system in 2009, fewer than 10 percent said they would be willing to consider a church of 100 members or less. Only 7 percent were open to service in a rural area.

"So many of our congregations are awaiting pastoral leaders who will answer God's call to serve in places they wouldn't have expected to go," Myers told the GAMC. "It is precisely for that reason that I can talk about this new pastoral residency program almost as readily as I can talk about my own granddaughter. It is so exciting for us to partner with presbyteries and small congregations in this way, helping churches and new pastors grow Christ's church deep and wide."

The presbyteries of [Heartland](#), [St. Andrew](#), [Northern Plains](#) and [South Dakota](#) — the latter two presbyteries working in partnership — were selected as the program's initial group of ministry settings for 2010. In order to qualify as partner presbyteries, each was asked to identify several small churches that would serve as especially good learning settings for first call pastors. The three presbytery clusters in the program's first year will have two to four residency churches each, for a total of seven openings. During their tenure, pastoral residents will be supported and guided by a network of pastor/mentors, presbytery, seminary and national church leaders.

Applications for the first class of seven pastoral residents were evaluated and chosen by the seven members of the PC(USA)'s pastoral residency team. A representative of the anonymous foundation, which has committed a grant of \$450,000 over the four years of the pilot program, also participated in the selection process.

"Our team has worked hard to find the best candidates for the best small churches," said Marilyn Johns, the program's coordinator. "We are hopeful that by the end of the summer, seven small congregations will have excellent, transformative pastoral leadership, and will begin to see higher self-esteem, increased excitement and energy, and, most important, a new vision for ministry in their communities and in the world. The churches and the candidates are ready to get going!"

Among the criteria for selection was a Gallup assessment tool, which each of the applicants took to help to determine their aptitude for transformative leadership. The process yielded an outstanding pool of highly qualified candidates — diverse in gender and racial-ethnic background — whose applications the presbyteries are now reviewing with their small membership congregations.

Once they have been extended a call, the seven pastoral residents in the class of 2010 will be ordained as ministers of the Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA). All of their positions are full-time, designated pastor positions and will be compensated at presbytery minimum salaries. Additionally, pastoral residents will be

enrolled in the PC(USA) [Board of Pensions](#) plan and may qualify for the [Board of Pensions seminary debt assistance program](#).

As the pastoral resident candidates await news of where they will be going, the participating presbyteries are just as eager for the program to get under way.

"For Such a Time as This is for such a presbytery as ours," said the Rev. Steve Minnema, interim executive presbyter of the Presbytery of Northern Plains. "One of our sites, the Rolla/St. John Church in mid-northern North Dakota, is a vital congregation meeting in two communities that – with the right pastor — is poised to grow. When I called the chair of the nominating committee to tell him they could start looking at the people we've been given to consider, he thanked me and said their church had never felt more connected to the presbytery and even to the national church because of the support they were receiving in this program.

"For Such a Time as This is a great example of what we can do when we take the risks involved in working together and doing things differently."

## TWO PNP YOUTH GROUPS SUBMIT VIDEO FOR FOUNDATION VIDEO CHALLENGE

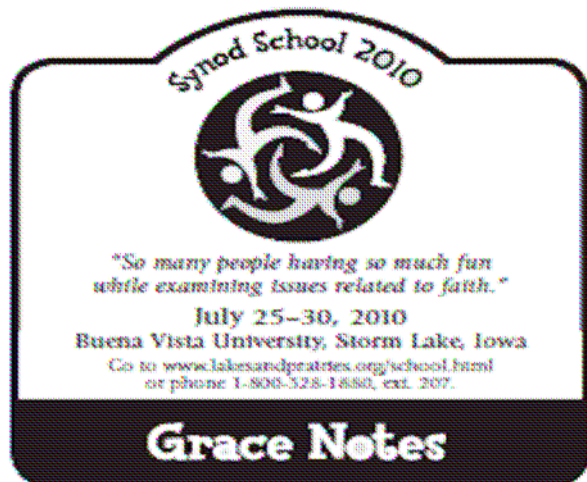


**PRESBYTERIAN  
FOUNDATION GROUP**

Two youth groups from the Presbytery, First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck and First Presbyterian Church of Ellendale, have submitted videos for the Presbyterian Foundation Video Challenge.

The [Video Challenge](#) is pretty simple yet very powerful! Youth groups create a 2-4 minute video interpreting John 7:38 "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water" the theme of the 219th General Assembly. Post the video to the site and let everyone vote for their favorite video. The top 10 videos will make it to the next round of voting. Two videos will be chosen and the Presbyterian Foundation will establish a \$25,000 endowment fund to support the youth ministries at their church.

Both youth groups would love your support. Go to <http://www.ymilive.org/> to watch their entries and vote for your favorite video. You will have to register, it only takes a few minutes. To find both videos, just type in the ND, enjoy the videos and remember to vote!!!



## RESOURCES

### **Creating a Life with God: The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices** (Book)

By: Daniel Wolpert

The purpose of this book is to nourish a deeper, more satisfying prayer life. Wolpert explains 12 prayer practices and introduces the reader to historical figures who best illuminate each practice. You'll discover new ways to pray through: experiencing solace and silence; using your mind and imagination; using your body and creativity; connecting with nature and community. Readers will discover how classical approaches to God can deepen their prayer life today. An appendix offers step-by-step instructions for practicing the Jesus Prayer and the prayer of examine, for walking the labyrinth, and more.

### **No Experience Necessary: On-the-job Training for a Life of Faith** (Book)

A tool for applying the principles of the Bible to one's own spirituality.

### **Paths to Prayer: Finding Your Own Way to the Presence of God** (Book)

With step-by-step instructions for over forty ways to pray, this valuable guide contains a wealth of timeless spiritual prayer practices that Christians have used over the last 2000 years from cultures around the world. Among the prayer practices you'll encounter in this book are the daily office, the prayer shawl, praying with icons, centering prayer, fasting, prayer beads, walking a labyrinth, pilgrimage, anointing for healing, and praying the scriptures.

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To borrow this or a different resource, contact the **Resource Center for Churches** at telephone (888) 293-9901 (toll free) or [info@resourcesforthejourney.org](mailto:info@resourcesforthejourney.org).

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:

**Steve Minnema**, Interim Executive Presbyter  
[exec.presbyter@gmail.com](mailto:exec.presbyter@gmail.com) and 701-213-6712 Cell

**Michael Lochow**, Stated Clerk: [sc.pbynyp@gmail.com](mailto:sc.pbynyp@gmail.com)

**Bill Cawley**, Treasurer: [bcawley@cawleycpa.com](mailto:bcawley@cawleycpa.com)

**Laurie Elhard**, Communication Coordinator  
[pnpooffice@gmail.com](mailto:pnpooffice@gmail.com)

## LET THE PRESBYTERY SAVE YOU MONEY!



Let the Presbytery save you money by placing your 2011 Mission Yearbook order with us. You can order the 2011 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 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 15, 2010.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Mission Yearbooks \_\_\_\_\_ X \$ 8.50 = \_\_\_\_\_

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

**5555 South Washington Drive Suite A**

**Grand Forks, North Dakota 58201**

## Presbytery's Calendar

June 3 & 4	Clergy Retreat (Casselton)
June 11 & 12	Special Presbytery Mtg at Jamestown College
June 18	Technology Task Force CC
June 22	Committee on Ministry CC
July 3 -10	General Assembly in Minneapolis
July 5	Independence Day holiday – office closed
July 19-26	Presbyterian Youth Triennium Conference
Aug 2	Budget & Finance Mtg
Aug 11	Council Mtg
Aug 12	Committee on Ministry Mtg
Sept 6	Labor Day – office closed
Sept 21	International Day of Peace
Sept 23-24	Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) mtg in Jamestown
Sept 24	Committee on Ministry Mtg at Jamestown College
Sept 24-25	Fall Presbytery Mtg at Jamestown College
Oct 3-5	Synod Mtg

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](mailto:pnpooffice@gmail.com) and request to be put on the electronic newsletter list.

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Contributors: Steve Minnema, Emily Enders Odom and Laurie Elhard

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

Laurie Elhard

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

5555 South Washington Street Suite A

Grand Forks, ND 58201

701-772-0783

[pnpooffice@gmail.com](mailto:pnpooffice@gmail.com)