

Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

March 2008

Prayer Concerns

Renee Jameson, mother of Mary Jo and mother-in-law of Dixon Moorhead (Council Chair) died the last weekend in February. Funeral services were held for Mrs. Jameson at Community Presbyterian Church of West Fargo, conducted by the Rev. Nancy Emerson. Please keep the Moorhead family in your prayers.

During First Presbyterian Church of Fargo's mission trip to New Orleans, one of the team members, Dellis Schrock, had a massive heart and past a way. In addition to this event, Dell's son, while home in Fargo preparing for his father's funeral, was walking to his mother's home along University Ave, slipped on some ice and was hit by a truck, and killed. The first Fargo congregation and the Schrock family are in shock and really shaken by these tragedies; please keep them in your prayers.

The husband of Sharon Norstog, Supply Pastor for First Presbyterian Church of Watford City, Konrad, recently had surgery to repair/replace three valves in his heart at St. Vincent's Hospital in Billings. Please keep Konrad and the Norstog family in your prayers during this time of recovery.

Dwight Swanson, the son of Minister Commissioner Jerry Swanson, from the Presbytery of Dakota, died unexpectedly. Dwight was a Certified Lay Pastor serving with Dakota Presbytery in Montana, and was currently the Vice-Moderator of the Presbytery. Please keep Jerry, his wife Barbara, and Dwight's wife, Donna, and their extended family and Dwight's friends and colleagues in your prayers.

Cathy Bliss's mother, Louann Arness, had emergency surgery in early February and has been diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer, which is incurable. Cathy is her primary caregiver and, even with lots of help from other family members and friends, finds every day to be full of challenges as the family adapts to living with this serious illness. Your prayers are needed and appreciated.

Jeanne Otterness Hochhalter (daughter of Phyllis Otterness, Clerk of Session of Tower City Presbyterian Church) was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Please keep Jeanne and her whole family in your prayers during this time of uncertainty.

Please lift up in prayer Blair Moorhead, Young Adult Volunteer from our Presbytery serving a year in Kenya.

SPRING YOUTH RETREAT IS COMING APRIL 11-13



All 6-12 grade youth are invited to our Presbytery's annual Spring Youth Retreat at Crystal Springs Camp, located about 40 miles west of Jamestown, the weekend of April 11-13. Featured speaker will be Pastor Bob Edwards from First Presbyterian in Minot and special guest, Mike

Ewoldson, who is considered, pound for pound, to be the strongest man in the world. Both will be sharing about their faith. Our retreat theme is "Cross Training" and we will be talking about how God can help lift the "weights" and burdens we carry.

The retreat will begin with registration at 7:15 on Friday evening and will conclude about noon on Sunday. Music, games, small group discussion, a "ropes" team-building course, great food, and fellowship are in store for those who attend. Retreat brochures and registration forms can be obtained from Laurie at the Presbytery office or from Pastor Dave Thompson in Jamestown. The cost of the weekend is \$70 per participant and includes room, food, and program expenses.

We have set a goal of 125 participants this year. Help us reach our goal by bringing a group from your church. Friends of youth from your congregations are invited to attend. Dave Thompson can be reached at dtompson@daktel.com or at (701) 252-1748.

THE OFFICE MOVE IS FINAL

How many boxes does it take to move the Presbytery of the Northern Plains office from Fargo to all the staffing new location? I don't know, we lost count sometime after 100. However, we're happy to report that the office move is officially completed (still boxes to unpack, but they are all in their proper places).

The new office, housed at First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks, is very functional space and has a wonderful view from four large windows of the open prairie. We are hoping that many of you will stop by and say "hi" over the next couple of months.

Once again, here is the offices new contact information:

Address: 5555 South Washington Suite A
Grand Forks, ND 58201

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Fax #: 701-775-7599

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A letter in response to John Gibbs article "THE BIBLE TOLD US – BUT THE HEAT IS ON" published in the Light of the Northern Plains February edition.

Dear John,

I heartily agree with your position that Christian folk are called to a position of responsible stewardship and care for the creation God has made and provided for our temporal home. It belongs to God. We are only temporary resident aliens here and so have a responsibility to care for this wonderful place of respite on our eternal journey.

This being so, it grieves me to feel compelled in the strongest terms to take issue with your view that only the oil lobby or their dupes question the "science" that proclaims that human activity is the major cause of the present warming of the earth's climate and that human activity is certainly pushing the planet to catastrophic doom.

You cite a consensus of international opinion. There was once a consensus of international opinion that the world was flat. It only takes one scientist to be right. The truly great scientists are those like Newton, Galileo, Pasteur, and others who maintained the right view even when it was against the international consensus. You cite a Newsweek article about the "deniers." The same magazine some years ago trumpeted with great certainty that we were heading for a new ice age. That was the international consensus a few years ago.

Let us all pledge to live modestly, to do as little harm as we can, to live as grateful stewards of God's bounty. But let us not demonize those whose science disagrees with our own. And let us not label as "bad" or "evil" or "stupid" or "greedy" those who continue to work at their own scientific endeavors even if they seem to be at odds with some consensus that may or may not be true.

Paul R. Kuhn, B.S. Purdue University, MDiv and ThM Union Theological Seminary in Virginia

"SEED CORN MUST NOT BE GROUND"

By: John G. Gibbs, SCE for PNP



There is no poetry in the soul without rocks and trees, lakes and tempests, birdsong and seed corn. There is no substantial reality in our mind's eye without mountains and prairies, sequestered villages and targeted millions in vulnerable cities.

We cannot have our faith stripped naked of nature. We cannot imagine the "Kingdom of God" without Jesus' parables spun out of creation's whole-cloth. "The Spacious Firmament on High," that majestic part of the book of nature, bears witness to our Creator, as Joseph Addison claimed.

Exactly twenty years ago this Spring John Knox Press published for the bicentennial of our Church a remarkable collection of poems by James A. Gittings with photographs by Nancy Anne Dawe. Title: Company of Pilgrims and Other Poems. Jim's epic "Company of Pilgrims" concludes (p. 21):

"If we with compass, Book, twin talismen,
Strike out as pilgrims, traversing
The desert of our era's nihilism,
I believe we can become
The Lord's own company of liberators,
Fit to enter a celestial city
With rhythmic creak of leather, clomp of boot,
The light of a New Israel's unity
Blazing in our eyes,
And a Savior
Waiting there."

Presbyterians who want to restore creation know that "Seed Corn Must Not Be Ground." Jim wrote that if we are children or Christians (which are the same, he said): "We will recall/ That miracles come inexorably/ When seed is put to earth/ In spring" (p. 43). He said (back in 1988!) that he would tell his friend in Afghanistan, who claimed that Christians "don't care much anymore": "That I know where the Church wants to go (Down the Kabul road to Western Kentucky); That I know what she wants to do (Arc her body over Seed corn of the world); And I know what She is:/ Faithful the Bride/ Lovely the Bride/ Valiant the Bride/ Of the Lord."

The Statue of Liberty, "Our Lady of the Bay," still stood in Jim's day across from what in our day are ashes of the World Trade Center, "And behind her a people labored,/ And behind her a people prayed,/ For sun on the lilacs of justice,/ For dew on the lilies of peace,/ A southwind for the greening of freedom,/ And ice on all tyrants' graves" (p. 73).

None of us wants to see "America the Beautiful" overwhelmed by garbage dumps and nuclear waste escaping their mortal containers. None of us would lose "amber waves of grain" to global warming's drought. We want "purple mountain majesties" to stand through ages for our children's children "above the fruited plain." That is why Presbyterians for Restoring Creation want all of us to pray and work for the restoration of creation. Another reason, ages older: "the glory about to be revealed to us" enfolds "in hope ... the whole creation" (Rom. 8:18ff.).

What a joy it will be for the earth ("and all that is in it," Psalm 24) when the time comes that the whole Church wants to do this:

"Arc her body over, Seed corn of the world."

Make sure to check out the Presbytery of the Northern Plains website at www.northernplainspresbytery.com

MISSION TRIP: NEW ORLEANS



By Ruth Beachey, First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck

In October, nine members of First Presbyterian Church, Bismarck, traveled to New Orleans for a week long mission trip, led by Associate Pastor Vicki Rucker. None of us knew what to expect. We all had a desire to make a difference in some

way for the people still suffering from the effects of Hurricane Katrina, which occurred over two years ago.

Through our experience we learned a great deal:

1. The need in New Orleans (and in the Gulf Coast region) is still great. In some neighborhoods only 10% of the population has been able to return. It will take years for these neighborhoods to recover. FEMA trailers (temporary housing) still abound.
2. The Presbyterian Church has had an amazing presence. Over 31,000 volunteers have served through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) in the Gulf Coast since Hurricane Katrina. Our own group was coordinated and directed by several young Deltacore workers who collaborate with PDA to organize reconstruction efforts. Our construction leader was with us each day to provide patient leadership and direction.
3. The people of New Orleans are still recovering in many ways, and are very grateful for the support and hope that volunteers bring.
4. We found we were capable of learning new skills, including doing finish work, caulking, installing doors, insulating walls and ceilings, and hanging drywall.
5. We learned to appreciate each other and to recognize the gifts each person brought. We bonded as a group and truly learned to work (and live) together.

We were encouraged to look for God throughout all of our experiences. We saw God in many ways – through the homeowners, the work of PDA and other volunteer organizations, the dedication of the Deltacore staff, in the flowers planted in yards of rebuilt homes, and in each other.

We all came away feeling that we truly did make a difference, and that we shared in the theme of PDA Katrina recovery: “Out of Chaos, Hope.”

We would like to thank the Presbytery of the Northern Plains for the Mission Initiative Grant that enabled us to go to New Orleans. This truly was a life-changing experience. If you would like to participate in an

amazing experience, First Presbyterian is planning another trip to New Orleans October 18-25, 2008. We would love to have other North Dakota Presbyterians join with us.



RESOURCES FOR CULTIVATING SPIRITUAL VITALITY THIS LENT

by Sally Vanderwerf

For Adults:

- *Jesus File: Tracking the Messiah*, two DVDs (104 min. total) published by Films for the Humanities (1998). These programs chart Jesus' life within the context of his times: “Preparing the Way for Jesus,” “From Carpenter to Preacher,” “Jesus Gathers a Following,” “The Last and First Days of Jesus.”
- *Living the Questions 2.0: An Introduction to Progressive Christianity*, three DVDs (seven 20-min. sessions each; three hours total), published by Living the Questions (2007). Creates an environment where participants can explore what's next for Christianity.
- *Saving Jesus*, DVD, readings, and guided discussion (twelve sessions at 90 to 120 hours each) published by Living the Questions (2006). A small-group exploration of Jesus for the third millennium.

For Children:

- *Veggie Tales: An Easter Carol*, 49 min. DVD published by Big Idea (2004). Cavis and Millward (Bob and Larry) and an angel named Hope must convince Ebenezer Nezzar that Easter is about more than candy, explaining why millions of Christians celebrate Easter.

For all ages:

- *Matthew*, two DVDs (120 min. total) published by the International Bible Society (2004). Powerful and entertaining, word for word from the NIV, filmed in Tunisia, Morocco, and South Africa.

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.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

By: *The Rev. Paul R. Kuhn, Presbyterian Church of Rolla & St. John*

A post in the February edition of the PNP newsletter entitled “Muslims don’t worship God, do they?” was misleading and needs to be corrected. In an article seeking to dispel what the writer considers “myths” about the religion of Islam, the first “myth” listed is “Muslims don’t worship God.” There the writer declared, “Facts: Muslims worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob just as Christians and Jews do.” That is incorrect. We Christians worship God the Father through Jesus the Son. Islam rejects the Sonship of Jesus as does Judaism.

The writer goes on to say, “In fact Muslims have a far better understanding of our faith than we do of theirs because they revere Jesus as a high prophet and great teacher.” Jesus said He was the Son of God. As C. S. Lewis pointed out, you can not have it both ways. Jesus is either who He says He is, the unique Son of God or else He is a lunatic or something worse. Islam rejects the Jesus of the Bible and therefore the God of Jesus. Not to accept the divinity of Christ is to misunderstand Christ and the Christian faith altogether!

The fact pointed out by the writer that “most Muslims are far more dedicated to prayer than most Christians” may be true, but is beside the point. To pray 100 times a day to the Hindu god Shiva does not make one more connected to the one true God. While we may admire some Muslims’ dedication to their faith, it is not directed to the same God that Jesus knew as Father. Jesus said “No one comes to the Father but by me.” Islam rejects the notion of the efficacy of Jesus’ death on the cross. Islam does not abide by the Biblical injunction to neither add to nor take away from the Scriptures. The whole Koran, held by Islam as its primary holy text, adds to and takes away from the Scriptures. Muslims do not worship the same God that Christians worship.

The writer of the article in the last PNP Newsletter makes some other points that are more or less difficult to sustain. In fact, I share his concern about truth and his rejection of ignorance and fear. But the first and most important point is that the religion of Islam is not a reliable course to finding peace with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one true God has revealed himself most fully in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is God made flesh, a notion utterly rejected by Islam. Mohammed is not His prophet, but the prophet of some other god. It is in Jesus that the world can find reconciliation with the one true God and the new life in Him.

If we love our neighbors we will tell them about Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life, apart from whom no one comes to the Father.

Presbytery’s Calendar

March 11	Budget and Finance Mt
March 12	Staff Meeting VCS
March 13	GFAC CC
March 18	COM by VCS
March 21-24	Holiday - Office Closed
April 11-13	Youth Retreat
April 12	PW Gathering
April 15	COM by CC
April 25	Staff Meeting
April 25-26	Presbytery Meeting at United Presbyterian Church, Jamestown

CC = Conference Call
VCS = Video Conferencing Sites

Presbytery office information:

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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.


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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A copy deadline for the Light is the twenty fifth of the month. Item maybe sent to:

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