

Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

May 2011

PRAYER CONCERNS/JOYS

Regions throughout the United States continue to be buffeted by a series of storms, tornadoes, floods and wildfires that have caused loss of life and severe damage to homes and property. Please pray that people affected by these events know God is with them.

Rejoice - Deb Burger, Pastor at United Parish in Bottineau, had surgery on April 26th to remove two tumors. Both tumors were removed and determined to be benign, all the remaining tissue is healthy. Deb was able to return to work on May 3rd.

Rejoice - Keaton Bjorn Sorum, grandson of Marilyn Ogden, was born in late April and was placed in the NICU at St. Alex in Bismarck to undergo an antibiotic regimen. He was able to go home and is doing well.

The Rev. Deanna Reikow, pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Mandan, has two family members (her father-in-law and Grandmother Paterson) who suffered back injuries in unrelated accidents in April. Please keep them in your prayers during their time of recovery.

Please keep everyone in your prayers who is dealing with the widespread flooding concerns in our Presbytery.

The people of Japan, the volunteers and advisors and countries who are sending aid following the devastating earthquake, tsunami and radiation concerns.

Please hold our Chogoria partners in your prayers.

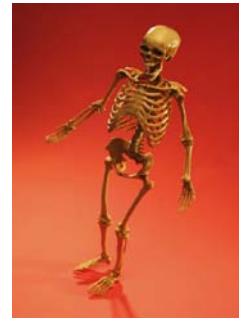
THEM BONES, THEM DRY BONES

By: Elder Lorelee Rude, CLP and Moderator of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.

²He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴Then he said to me,

"Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live."



(Ezekiel 37:1-5)

In 1882, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche published his famous declaration, "God is dead." When we look at the declining attendance and increasing apathy in many segments of the church, it's tempting—even for those of us who believe God is very much alive—to wonder if the church is dying. Can God's people come to life again? This chapter of the book of Ezekiel shows us some of the keys to reviving it.

- 1. We must acknowledge our dependence upon God.** Whether or not the people of God can come to life again is in God's hands alone. We are powerless to make it happen. The sovereignty of God, that bedrock of reformed theology, is the first key to renewal.
- 2. We can do nothing without the Holy Spirit.** The great preacher Charles Spurgeon set forth several methods by which we can open ourselves to the Holy Spirit and be ready to hear when God speaks. First, he said, *we must humble ourselves and empty ourselves of our own selfish desires*, for only then can we know what God desires. Next, *we must steep everything we do in prayer*. Third, *we must align ourselves with God's purposes as they are revealed in Scripture*. At the training event sponsored by the presbytery last month, Dr. Don McKim reminded us that in order to be revived, we must ask ourselves what is the mission of God in the world, rather than what is the mission of the institution. The mission of God in the world has always been to redeem his sinful people and reconcile us to himself so that we may then carry that message of redemption and reconciliation to all. When we get on the same page with God, renewal will happen.
- 3. We must be willing to obey God's command.** Ridiculous as it must have seemed at the time, the prophet Ezekiel was willing to step out in faith and speak life to a jumbled mess of dried-up, ancient bones. Are we willing to take the same chance?

In the words of John Holbert, homiletics professor at Southern

Methodist University, "Though we may often see ourselves as dry bones, without breath, hopeless and despairing, as good as dead, lying in our graves, we need to listen to the prophets among us, who continue to hear the absurd call to prophesy to us bones, to proclaim that our self-imposed graves cannot hold us, that God is among us and is a God of life and hope now and forever."

What better time than this season of Easter to proclaim that message? Christ is risen indeed!



ATTENTION CLERKS AND PASTORS: TIME TO CHECK YOUR CONGREGATION'S BYLAWS

By: Elder Michael Lochow, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains

Why is July 10, 2011, a critical date for all churches? That is the date on which nFOG will become effective if it passes. It is critical for churches because new Form of Government (nFOG) eliminates all minimal quorum requirements for meetings currently found in the Book of Order (Congregations G-7.0305 - not less than 1/10 and Sessions G-10.0202 - 1/3 but not less than 2). After July, 10, 2011, churches without quorum levels in their bylaws will then be subject to the quorum language in Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 10th Edition. This language sets a quorum for meetings at a majority of the members. The practical result is that congregations and sessions will not be able to meet and conduct business unless a majority of the members are present.

Churches need to review their bylaws now to see if they contain quorum language. Failure to update bylaws prior to July 10, 2011, to add quorum provisions may make it more difficult to change after that date as the higher quorum requirements in Robert's Rules will need to be met.

If you have any questions, check with Michael Lochow, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, immediately. If you are not sure of the status of your bylaws, please check them right away.

YOUR PNP COUNCIL WORKING FOR YOU

By: Elder Cheryl Biller, Chair of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains Council

I wish I could assure you it is spring, but the continued threat and presence of snow for many of us makes that seem more wishful than real. What we can count on as real, however, is the promise we have of renewal, the promise that love breaks all barriers and transforms all hearts. God is good, even in the midst of high water, flooding, tornadoes, and washed-out roads. Even in death, God reigns.

And even as all that goes on around us, your Council is busy preparing for another Presbytery assembly. Council meets on May 10 to conduct some interim business and plan for that early June assembly. At the council meeting, we will hear from a group who participated in a consultation with the other 16 presbyteries in our Synod on the future of shared staff support dollars; we will continue the work begun in a joint meeting of the Transition Task Force and the Council; we will get an update on the ongoing work of the Committee on Ministry, who help us stay connected to our clergy and congregations across the Presbytery; and we will put in place steps for you all to give feedback and participate in discerning what God is doing here among Presbyterians on the northern plains and in the communities in which we live and work.

While we did not vote in favor of a new Form of Government, it is looking like our denomination will ratify that amendment. Some of your Council's conversation will also include discussion of what this means for us and how we will live into those changes. Given these circumstances, it would be irresponsible (and not very Presbyterian) of us to avoid looking for the ways in which these changes benefit us and our work. By our June Presbytery assembly, we should have the results of most of the voting, so come find out and be part of the conversation about how we live and work with the changes that come with those votes. There is no better way to have a say and to influence the work of the church than by showing up to participate. Join us in June in Mandan as we come together as a witness to God's great love.

**Next Presbytery Meeting
will be held on Monday,
June 20th at First
Presbyterian Church of
Mandan. More details
coming soon.**

NO ASSISTANCE NEEDED SO FAR – PRAISE GOD

By: the Rev. Gretchen Graf, Chair of Flood Response Task Force

We've all watched water rise and recede around the presbytery this spring. Luckily, the thorough preparation of cities has helped us avoid major flooding in those places. Our prayers are with rural residents who had to cope with significant water around and sometimes in their homes.

The flood task force has not heard from anyone needing assistance with flood response in a church or with church members. We're grateful for that. We realize that the Devils Lake basin is going to continue to flood throughout the summer, and we'll work with residents of that area and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to determine how we can help.

If you have information the flood task force should know, or are in need of assistance, please contact the presbytery office at 701-772-0783. Thank you.





SUMMER OFFICE HOURS

The Presbytery summer office hours will be Monday thru Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. 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:

Michael Lochow, Stated Clerk: sc.pbynyp@gmail.com
or 701-271-4775 (home)

Bill Cawley, Treasurer: bcawley@cawleycpa.com
or 701-352-2020 (office)

Laurie Elhard, Communication Coordinator
pnpooffice@gmail.com or 701-388-9090 (cell)

SEMINARY OF THE PRAIRIE:

Veteran Community Outreach Initiative: Helping Connect Veterans and Families with Services

Seminary on the Prairie is an annual educational event sponsored by Tri-County Ministry that will be held on June 3-4, 2011, at Red Willow Bible Camp - Binford, ND. Chaplain Juliana Leshner of the Chaplain Service Veteran Affairs Medical Center in Fargo will be the keynote speaker. Additional speakers will be Kathryn Benson, ND Community Support Coordinator Army 1Source, and Corean Swart, Veteran Services Officer for Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans. Topics to be covered this year are spiritual health, grief issues, veterans' services, and care giving. This is an ecumenical event, open to all clergy, interns/seminarians, and lay workers.

Registration deadline is May 27; however, early registration is encouraged due to the limited number of overnight rooms at Red Willow Bible Camp. Cost is \$80, which includes a private room Friday evening and all meals (Friday dinner, Saturday breakfast and lunch). If commuting, the cost is \$35.

For more information and for the registration form, go to www.tricountyministry.org or call 701-676-2761.

PNP DIRECTORIES ARE NOW AVAILABLE



The Directory (committee and church information) and Manual of Operation (bylaws and policies) is complete and has been emailed/mailed out. If you have requested a copy (or need to) and have not received it, please contact the Presbytery office at 701-772-0783 or email pnpooffice@gmail.com.

The Manual of Operations is published in its entirety and posted on the website and is also available in hard copy form by request. The website version of both the bylaws and policy section are updated as soon as possible when Presbytery action is taken that impacts either section. To download your copy of either section, go to www.northernplainspresbyter.com

Presbytery's Calendar

May 3	Agenda, Bylaws & Structure CC
May 8	Budget & Finance Mtg at First Pres of Grand Forks
May 10	Council meeting at United Presbyterian Church of Jmst
May 14	Bdecan Ministry Team Mtg at Bdecan Pres.
May 20	Committee on Prep. For Ministry (CPM) meeting at United Presbyterian Church of Jmst
May 30	Memorial Day – office closed
May 31	Summer office hours begin
June 20	Summer Presbytery Meeting at First Presbyterian Church of Mandan
July 4	Independence Day – office closed
Sept 5	Labor Day – office closed
Sept 6	Summer office hours end
Sept 24	Fall Presbytery Meeting at Westminster Presbyterian Church of Casselton

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:

Laurie Elhard

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