

Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

November 2009

PRAYER CONCERNS

Please keep Reegan Watson, Great Granddaughter of Barb Ault, who was hospitalized with the swine flu and everyone else who is dealing with illness in your prayers.

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

Please hold in your prayers all congregations and members of the Presbytery in Transitions.

- For the Rev. Paul Kuhn who has received a call to Casper, Wyoming.
- For the Presbyterian Church of Rolla/St. John who will now begin the vacancy process.
- For Westminster Presbyterian Church of Casselton who has just called a new pastor.

HAVE YOU HEARD ANY GOOD NEWS LATELY?

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

It has often seemed to me that small doses of bad news, over an extended period of time, have a great power – perhaps because we are not fully aware of their incremental impact on us – to poison our outlook on life. If what you see or hear or learn about daily through the media confronts you with all the bad things that can and do happen *and* the frequency with which we are helpless before them, sooner or later you might just find yourself sinking into despondency or cynicism.

This is true in our personal lives and it is also true of our life in the church. As I travel around the presbytery and visit our various congregations, it is clear to me that there is plenty of bad news at our doorstep. The vast majority of our churches are aging and declining. Many are in communities that are likewise in decline. Those that are not are often struggling to attract, welcome and retain new participants. Finances are a big concern for many of our congregations and troubles related to the exercise of leadership abound.

What strikes me is that in some places where these conditions are present I find, nevertheless, exuberance while in others I find, as I might have expected, demoralization. That discovery leads me to three points that are worth our pondering. First, it is not inevitable that the bad news of our circumstances will infect our spirits. Second, when that is allowed to happen, we quickly get into a downward spiral in



which bad news produces a demoralized community that, in turn, creates more bad news as its waning energy makes it very hard for much that is worth celebrating to happen. So, finally, it is critical that we guard against demoralization in the church even as we are encouraging one another to look squarely at the various realities we are up against.

So how do we do this? The answer should be clear to us but somehow we seem to keep forgetting it! *We must be careful to pay at least as much attention to the good news of God's love for us in Christ as we pay to the bad news in our surroundings.* The gospel has the power to so strengthen our spirits that we will be able to face whatever we have to face with courage and trust and hope.

Take, for example, this good news from Ephesians 2:4: "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved." The life we share in Christ is a gift given to us – who were incapable of producing it on our own - by a God who is rich in mercy. How, if we remember this and keep it in the forefront of our minds, can we be demoralized?

So have you heard any good news lately? Your answer to that question will tell us a lot about your own health and the health and well-being of your congregation. You have heard it said that "where there is no vision, the people perish." It could just as well be said that the absence of good news has the same result. Its presence, on the other hand, gives us all the confidence we could need that God is still alive and at work and ready to do great things with and through us.

WELCOME ADAM COPELAND TO NORTHERN PLAINS

Adam J. Copeland began as the Stated Supply Pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Hallock on September 15th. He's originally from Tallahassee, Florida -- but don't worry, he survived several Minnesota winters as a student at St. Olaf College. While in Northfield, Adam majored in English and Religion, served as Vice President of the Honor Council, studied on the college's Global Semester program, and sang in the St. Olaf Choir.

Adam is a 2009 graduate of Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. There he conducted research for several professors and interned at Decatur Presbyterian Church.

As part of his seminary studies, Adam served for a year as Assistant Minister at St. Columba Church in Ayr, Scotland. There he worked closely with a supervising pastor, preached regularly, and drank countless cups of tea on visits with parishioners. The perspective he gained working with a state church in a country where organized religion is rapidly declining will affect his ministry for years to come.

Adam spent last summer in the beautiful mountains of western North Carolina, employed as the Director for Recreation and Community Life at Montreat Conference Center. He is sort of a Montreat evangelist, so watch out.

Active in both the local and national Presbyterian church, Adam is the past Co-Moderator of the National Youth Committee and currently serves on the Presbyterian Committee on Congregational Song which is developing the next Presbyterian hymnal and accompanying electronic resources (due out in 2013, if all goes well). He is always happy to chat about the hymnal project. For more information go to:

<http://presbyterianhymnal.org> or to Facebook, <http://facebook.com/PCOCS> Adam also has a blog, "A Wee Blether" (<http://adamjcopeland.com>) is sponsored by *The Christian Century* magazine.



Adam and his wife Megan Thorvilson of Adams, North Dakota recently celebrated their third anniversary. Megan is a first year medical student at UND.

An avid reader, Adam particularly indulges in contemporary fiction. He loves sharp cheddar cheese and good strong coffee. He has recently survived running the Siouxland Marathon in Sioux City, Iowa. He enjoys golf and looks forward to taking up cross country skiing -- and maybe even curling.

Generally, as Adam's position is $\frac{3}{4}$ time, he is in Hallock Tuesday through Thursday, and of course Sunday. The rest of the week he's in Grand Forks where he also works part-time at Eddie Bauer. He looks forward to serving God,

with you, in this beautiful corner of creation that is the Presbytery of the Northern Plains.

THANK YOU FOR THE SUPPORT

Dear Friends in Christ,

I personally want to thank the Presbytery of the Northern Plains for your grant of \$3000 for our church mission trip last week to New Orleans, LA.

Your generosity was instrumental in providing transportation, gas and housing during our stay. Our week was spent replacing rotted lumber and installing insulation and sheetrock. In addition, we were honored to attend a "home dedication" which was completely rebuilt by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) volunteers.

Thank you for your assistance in making this mission trip possible and affordable. I returned with far more than I was able to give. I was blessed to have this experience.

God is good – all of the time.

You are invited to a
Service of Commissioning
For Rev. Adam J. Copeland, Pastor
First Presbyterian Church
228 North Ash Avenue
Hallock, MN
Sunday, November 29, 2009
Reception at 2:30 p. m.
Worship Service at 3:00 p.m.

Everyone Welcome!

Sincerely, Kathy Wachter, First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck

YOUTH TRIENNIUM CONFERENCE IN 2010

The Triennium Youth Conference is coming next summer and provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for youth from our Presbytery. A delegation of 26 youth and adults from our Presbytery will be leaving on July 19, 2010 and traveling to Purdue University in Indiana for this 5 day Presbyterian youth conference. While there we will be meeting up with over 6,000 youth from around the world in what is sure to be another amazing Triennium experience. I have led groups to the last two conferences and can't wait for this event-- something that all youth from our Presbytery should experience.

The conference includes great speakers, powerful testimonies, wonderful music, great games and fellowship. I am in the process of putting our delegation together. Because we want youth from as many churches from our Presbytery as possible, we are limiting the number of youth from each church to two. If you have more youth than this who want to go, I will establish a waiting list. If we have remaining spots, youth from the waiting list will be added to the participant list.

This conference is open to all 14-19 year old youth (age as of July, 2010). Costs to all participants will be \$409. Our Presbytery will pay for the transportation and ½ of the chaperones registration fees. We strongly encourage churches to help pay for their youth's registration fees through fund raising or other means

On the return trip, we will be visiting the Sears Tower in Chicago and will be spending a day at Noah's Ark Water Park in Wisconsin Dells, WI. Noah's Ark is the world largest water park! We plan to return home on July 26.

For more info, please go to presbyterianyouthtriennium.org. If interested in attending, please contact the Rev. Dave Thompson at dthompson@daktel.com or at the United Presbyterian Church in Jamestown at (701) 252-1748.

RECOGNIZE THE WORK OF CAREGIVERS



Recent statistics indicate that as many as 50 million people in the United States are providing some amount of care for a family member who is chronically ill, has a disability or is experiencing frailty associated with age.

Celebrate Caregivers Sunday on November 15 and recognize the important work of caregivers. Learn how your congregation can provide needed support and respite through starting a congregational care team. Get suggestions for starting a care team and resources including a Caregiver Sunday liturgy, litany, blessings and prayers and tips for caring for those who give care to others at: <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/networks/phn/caregivers.htm>

RESOURCES

Abundant Harvest (Book)

A collection of essays on rural life and ministry by the Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools.

Adventure In Thanks/Giving A Program of Biblical Stewardship Designed for the Smaller Congregation (Book)

“Adventure...” is designed both to increase the income of the congregation and to expand its local ministry and mission outreach. It is a stewardship emphasis directed by three lay leaders of the congregation working together with the pastor.

A Simple Christmas (Book)

Over a hundred ways to bring Christ and joy back into Christmas, in the spirit of more-with-less.

Angels We Will Hear on High! Stories for Christmas (Book)

A collection of eight Christmas stories written by Pastor Arthur F. Fogartie. These earthy tales are loaded with eccentric characters that do unconventional things but discover the true meaning of Christmas.

Behold I Do a New Thing: Transforming Communities of Faith (Book)

The author invites pastors and lay leaders to “begin a journey that will create the capacity for renewal and revitalization.” A new model for congregational change is introduced and implications are given for leadership, worship, preaching, formation, and religious education.

To borrow this or a different 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/>

FAITH LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE: CREATION CARE AND CLIMATE STEWARDSHIP

You are invited to join the Prairie Climate Stewardship Network's event of Faith Leadership Dialogue on Sunday, November 15, 2009 at St. John's Lutheran Church in Jamestown, from 3:30 pm to 6:30 pm. This event is free and open to the public.

The purpose of this dialogue is to create an opportunity for people of faith to gather and learn about what each of our faith traditions has to say about creation care and climate stewardship; the importance of acting; and what can be done now. This first-ever gathering of ND denomination leaders will highlight: shared theology of the sacredness of creation, what the various Christian traditions bring to creation care, and what we are called to do as people of faith.

Creation care is a responsibility shared by all Christian faith traditions. Our engagement in stewardship of creation signifies our love and respect for God's creation, human and nonhuman, and is a demonstration of our responsibility to all who come after us.

For additional information about this event, please go to: <http://www.prairiestewardship.org/leadershipdialog.html>

PRESBYTERIAN FOR EARTH CARE



By: John G. Gibbs,
Vignettes from PEC's Montreat conference in July: Read scripture through agrarian eyes. Most biblical writers were agrarian theologians. Being a creature means that you need to eat. God says: "till and keep" the Garden and it will support you (Gen.

2). There will never be peace *on* earth until there is peace *with* earth.

Our job is to be faithful today. That's "success." The mother of a starving African family asks "Who makes the rain not come?" The worldwide Church shows that they live in such poverty because we live like we do, literally shortening the agricultural year for them as we contribute to climate change. "Repent, reuse, recycle – lest ye burn."

Check out www.redefiningprogress.org. We need to replace the GDP index (gross domestic product) with a new Happiness Index that correlates health data and environmental data. We need effective messages, urged Howard Frumkin from the National Institutes of Health. His PowerPoint presentation had a split-second photo of MLK, Jr. orating, but the words were changed: "I have a nightmare." Frumkin's point: "I have a dream" is what we need to be feeling and saying.

So: Come away with me along the TN/NC border to a spring atop 6,285' Roan Mtn. Drink of its frigid water cupped in a broad rhododendron leaf, and you will determine to save all that for future generations. Come away with me to Glacier National Park and nearby Lake Louise, take pictures before it's too late, and you will commit to work in your political party *against* further global warming, and *for* "tilling and keeping" what God created. Take me with you to your landscape and show me how you and your church glorify God there. That's my dream.

Presbytery's Calendar

Nov 9	SC Task Force Meeting at 1 st Pres Ch. Of Grand Forks
Nov 10	- Budget & Finance CC - Personnel Meeting at 1 st Pres Ch. Of Grand Forks - Committee on Ministry CC
Nov 15	- Commissioning of Casey Chapman to Commission Lay Pastor - Faith Leadership Dialogue: Creation Care & Climate Stewardship at St. John's Lutheran Church in Jamestown
Nov 19	Council Meeting at JC
Nov 26 & 27	Office Closed – Holiday
Nov 29	Commissioning of the Rev. Adam Copeland
Dec 1	- Staff Meeting by VCS - CLP Task Force Meeting at United Presbyterian Church of Jamestown
Dec 8	Committee on Ministry Training at United Presbyterian Church of Jamestown

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 pnpoffice@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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