

Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

September 2009

PRAYER CONCERNS

Please lift up in prayer everyone who is suffering from personal challenges at the present time.

George Reichman, member of First Presbyterian Church of Mandan, has been having health concerns. Please keep George and his wife, Virginia, in your prayers.

FALL PRESBYTERY INFORMATION

By: Elder Michael Lochow, Stated Clerk

The Ninety-Eighth Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains will be hosted by the First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck on Friday and Saturday, October 2-3, 2009. We will be beginning the process of exploring what the Presbytery of the Northern Plains will look like in the future. Saturday morning will feature a presentation looking at the Planning Process for a Presbytery in Transition. Your attendance and participation is important to that process.



The Budget and Finance Committee will present for your approval the budget for 2010. The economy is going through a tough time and this is reflected in some of the proposed actions contained in the budget.

The Committee on Ministry will be presenting revised salary guidelines for ministers. This has generated interesting discussion at past meetings. The fall meeting is also the time to hear the report of the Nominating Committee as they present the slate of officers and committee members for the coming year. A missionary to Sri Lanka will be visiting the Presbytery for about one week and will begin that visit by speaking to the Presbytery on Friday about her experiences.

Elder Casey Chapman of the Bismarck church will be commissioned to several churches in the Bismarck area to assist in their ministry. There will be two Good News segments on the agenda. This will allow those who have received grants from the Presbytery to report on their success. Good News is also a time for you to tell us about the work going on in your church and your life. Think about how you can be part of that time of sharing.

REMINDER: Review the Presbytery materials prior to the meeting. It is important as a commissioner to Presbytery that you come prepared and ready to participate. Following presbytery as a commissioner, you should be prepared to report to your session on the work of the Presbytery and how your church might participate more fully.

Presbytery meeting material will be posted on the Presbytery website at www.northernplainspresbytery.com by noon on September 16, 2009 for congregations/individuals to download. For congregations that don't have internet access, packets can be mailed out to them. **If your congregation needs a packet you must contact the Presbytery office by 9:00 am on September 25, 2009 to ensure you receive the packet in time.**

CHANGING THE CULTURE

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

One hears a lot these days about the challenge frequently faced by organizations to change their "culture." The idea here is simply that unproductive or unhealthy habits often take root in a group and make it hard, if not impossible, for that group to achieve its goals or to provide a satisfying and safe sense of community for its members. Thus, the argument goes, a change in the group's "culture" is needed.

Continued on next page . . .

"You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourself with the new self, created according to the likeness of God, in true righteousness and holiness."

(Ephesians 4:23-24)

Churches and presbyteries are more and more seeing the need for such transformation. It might be that a church starts to recognize that its culture, without any intent to do so, is actually excluding people who might be getting the message that they don't fit in with what the congregation expects of its members. Or it might be that the presbytery begins to recognize that its culture is one in which honest and direct communication is rare and thus participants are afraid to hold others accountable for the commitments they have made.

Whatever might be the precipitating factor, recognizing a need to change a group's culture is always the first step in seeing it happen. This is often a role that leaders can play: naming the problem, posing the challenge and modeling an alternative. It is by no means easy and there are no guarantees of success but, as I hope to suggest next, *as Christians we have a perennial call to be at work with God in changing the culture of the church.*

This is one of the clear messages we find in the Book of Ephesians. Repeatedly, Paul reminds his readers that the conversion they have experienced through the grace of God in Christ is to be ongoing. "You were taught this," he says, "so learn to live it!" We are never done with the call to put away the old self and put on the new. Thus, participating in culture change is not optional for Christians!

Or for presbyters of the Northern Plains. So let me encourage you to think with me about our culture as a presbytery. How does it reflect the new life of joy and peace that results from our reconciliation with God? How does it reflect the world's way of doing things, for instance in always associating with those who agree with us and shunning any real efforts to dialog with those who differ?

Let me also encourage leaders to step forward in this cause, name what must be changed and model something better. Then, at some point, perhaps we can even come to a covenantal agreement that might include a commitment to "putting away falsehood" and "speaking the truth to our neighbor" since "we are members of one another." (Ephesians 4:25)

May God be with you and your congregation as our journey together continues.

Mission Challenge '09

Presbyterians are at work around the world and at our October Presbytery Meeting we will celebrate Mission Challenge '09. During late September and earlier October PC-USA missionaries from around the world are visiting the United States sharing their stories about how God is working in the world.



This year the speakers for World Mission Challenge will emphasize the importance of partnership. It's more than a theme; it's essential and integral to the way Presbyterians do mission.

If you have ever wondered where your mission dollars go or how they are used, this is an incredible opportunity to understand where, what and how Presbyterians do mission. We are fortunate enough to have Chenoa Stock from Sri Lanka to share her stories, insight and pictures with us.

Our missionaries are doing an impressive job communicating the love of Christ through listening to the needs and wants of the people, then working among them to address their concerns or help with key issues. Together as partners with the people, they have been building homes, churches, pre-schools and communities.

Chenoa Stock, in her words . . .

Gratitude is a grounding word in describing my experience in Sri Lanka. Appointed in 2006, I work with non-profits, churches and grassroots organizations representing people from many diverse backgrounds. These organizations address issues of hunger and poverty.

I find that the experience of living in another culture cannot be easily described. I find myself, at times, in humorous situations, such as when I break into a sweat while eating a meal offered as just a "little" spicy. I am at a loss to describe the beauty of my surroundings: palm trees, beaches, tea estates, children and ancient ruins.

Mostly I have found that life in Sri Lanka and working with communities here has enabled me to see myself in a new light. The unfamiliar surroundings and work challenges have helped me hone new skills and I have grown in understanding the world and myself. It is for these opportunities for growth and for living and working alongside Sri Lankans that I find myself most grateful.

WELCOME TO DEB BURGER!

By: The Rev. Deanna Reikow, Committee on Ministry Chair

Congratulations to the United Parish in Bottineau on the installation of their new Presbyterian pastor ~ The Rev. Deborah Burger! She is the first Presbyterian to be installed as pastor to United Parish in Bottineau in over 20 years. Deb's daughter, Maggie, moved with her to the Turtle Mountains where life moves a little more slowly than in California. Deb likes quilting, so she fits in with all the incredible artisans in the area. She is also putting her canning skills to use making pickles ~ apparently it has been a good year for cucumbers which the congregation has been generously sharing with her. Deb is tech savvy, "blogs" and is on facebook so will be an asset to bringing her church and perhaps yours into the present.

I have been to a few installation services in my day, but I do not recall one as nice as this one. People were so welcoming and there was a delicious ham dinner following the festivities. Bag Pipes sound formal, but the way Elder Doug Bremner played the Presbytery Commission in and out of the sanctuary was fun and joyful; it really set the tone for a joyous ceremony. The music in general was fantastic! Their organist is consistently both awesome and adaptable every time I hear her play. Moderator Pat O'Donnell did a great job, her inflection and personal touches to the service made everyone feel at home. Her warm smile and gentle way provides a touch of grace to everything she is involved with. One could hear God's voice and love as The Rev. Paul Kuhn read scripture about our names being inscribed on the palm of God's hands. The Rev.

Nancy Emerson's sermon provided a sense of holiness and depth. She created a picture of God's love and passion for us. She reminded us that a good word is worth repeating. The good word of the day, in my mind, was that just as we are imprinted in the heart of God, we are called to write on the hearts of those we minister with and to. We reflected on what kind of heart prints we would leave on others. My mind has been racing thinking of imprints, fingerprints, footprints and all the ways the concept of "heart prints" (taken from a children's book) can be used. Mix in the new environmental push to work on erasing or lessening our ecological footprints in the world and one received a season full of inspiration to share with others. (Nancy's sermon was better than my summation!)

Everything was done decently and in order; of course, Paul was there so we knew it would! Still, I was most impressed with how genuine the service was, even the Apostles Creed which can sometimes lose its meaning by repetition. I liked that the charge to the pastor was given by an elder and someone who could speak straight to the heart of what every member wants and hopes for in their new minister. The President of their Council, Ray Russell, gave an inspiring and challenging charge to the congregation. He called them to step up and out, to do ministry with Pastor Deb, not just to sit back and watch her do ministry for them.

The service was truly something wonderful. The people of Bottineau and I feel Pastor Deb is a keeper. Thankfully, they have a long history of loving and keeping their pastors. Even though you may have missed this service, I would invite you to take a trip up north and worship with them. I have found them to be warm, sincere, and fun-loving and I cherish the depth of spirit I have encountered each time I was with them. If you need to borrow my boat or snowmobiles to take full advantage of the area, you can call me! Bottineau's the closest thing we have to northern Minnesota or northeastern Wisconsin.

RESOURCES

Beauty Awakening Belief: How the Medieval Worldview Inspires Faith Today (Book)

By: Jon M. Sweeney

What once drove men to construct enormous abbeys and cathedrals, with gargoyles, rounded arches, rose windows, dark recesses, and flying buttresses? In the modern imagination, these structures are believed to tell a series of stories about the meaning of life, but this anachronism would have astounded their medieval creators. As author Jon Sweeney explores two of the finest churches of this period - the Abbey of Mont St-Michel on the Normandy coast, and soaring Chartres Cathedral in the fields of the Loire Valley - he comes to the conclusion that, without faith, they make no sense at all. But within a life of faith, the universe that includes these churches is marvelous, beautiful, mysterious, and tapped into something that secularism cannot fathom. This luminous series of reflections hinges on seven words of Gothic spirituality - space, sanctuary, stone, light, darkness, gargoyles, and flight - and shows us that beauty is not just for admiring, but a key to believing, and reveals how the vision of our medieval forebears can refresh and inspire our faith today.

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 AND 21ST CENTURY CULTURE

By: Cheryl Biller, Transformation Team Leader

Doug Pagitt, co-founder of Emergent Village – a social network of Christians around the world, will be in Grand Forks on Saturday, Oct 17 to lead an interactive workshop on navigating our faith at the intersection of our culture. Fri, Oct 16, and Sat, Oct 17, Doug will also do a Live Occurrence, his book-tour show, billed as part revival, part book reading, part hootenanny, and part community gathering. The Transformation Team is really excited to bring these two opportunities to the presbytery!

Doug is a speaker and consultant for churches, denominations and businesses throughout the United States and around the world on issues of postmodern culture, social systems and Christianity. He seeks to find creative, entrepreneurial, generative ways to join in the hopes, dreams and desires God has for the world; and one of the fruits of that includes Solomon's Porch, a holistic missional Christian community (www.SolomonsPorch.com).

Doug's most recent book, *A Christianity Worth Believing*, is the foundation for his book tour. The book's subtitle advocates "spreading a hope-filled, open-armed, alive and well faith for the left-out, left-behind, and let-down." Doug writes, "It is my hope that this book [can be] an invitation for people to pursue a Christianity that is good for the world, good for their spirits and good for their faith. I want it to be an invitation to a Christianity that makes sense in the world we live in. This book...is for those like me who do not think we need to be afraid of asking tough questions or raising new concerns."

Doug will be in both Grand Forks and Fargo to perform his Live Occurrence book-tour, and in Grand Forks for the workshop. Here is the schedule for his time in the Northern Plains:

Fri, Oct 16 - Live Occurrence at the Loading Dock, UND Memorial Union GF from 7-9 pm

Sat, Oct 17 - Workshop: Faith and Culture at First Pres Ch of GF (5555 S Washington St) from 9 am to 3 pm

Sat, Oct 17 - Live Occurrence at the Depot, 701 Main Ave, Fargo from 7-9 pm

There is no charge for the Live Occurrence events!!

(<http://dougpagitt.com/live/live>) This event is targeted not only at those of us who have a faith community in which we participate, but also at those who wonder what church has to offer. You have 2 opportunities to see this show – Friday in Grand Forks and Saturday in Fargo.

The workshop registration is \$25/person. Groups of three or more register for \$15/person, so find a friend or two and take advantage of this bargain! Register early by contacting Laurie at 701.772.0783, 800.243.3532, or pnppoffice@gmail.com.

Presbytery's Calendar

Sept 3	Personnel Mtg
Sept 7	Labor Day – Office Closed
Sept 8	Committee on Ministry CC
Sept 10	Committee on Preparation for Ministry Mtg Agenda, Bylaws and Structure CC
Sept 12	Session Records Review at 1:00 pm at the following locations: First Pres. Ch of Minot and Mendenhall Pres Ch of EGF
Sept 17	Transformation Team Mtg
Sept 19	Session Records Review at 1:00 pm at the following locations: Westminster Pres Ch of Casselton, United Pres. Ch. Of Jamestown, and First Pres Ch of Mandan
Sept 21	Clearwater Forest Mtg
Sept 29	Staff Mtg at Presbytery Office
Oct 2-3	Fall Presbytery Meeting at First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck
Oct 16-17	Doug Pagitt Event (please see article for details)

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 pnppoffice@gmail.com and request to be put on the electronic newsletter list.

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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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