

Light of the Northern Plains

Presbytery of the Northern Plains

September 2011

PRAYER CONCERNS/JOYS

Please pray for those displaced by the floods, those who lost loved ones, and those who will work to offer spiritual and emotional care or help with recovery efforts.

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.

Please hold our Chogoria partners in your prayers.

SEPTEMBER PRESBYTERY MEETING

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

The Fall Presbytery meeting will take place on Saturday, September 24, 2011, at First Presbyterian Church of Mandan. Registration will open at 10:30 a.m. and the meeting will begin with worship and communion at 11:00 a.m.

The morning will continue with information about a presbytery-wide retreat that will be held November 18-19 in Jamestown. The retreat will not be a formal presbytery meeting—no votes will be taken—and it will be open to anyone in the presbytery (not just minister members and elder commissioners). The objectives will be to get a clear picture of our demographics, finances, and mission activities, to review the outcomes of planning work done over the past 18 months, and together discern what God is leading us to be and do. It's been said often but deserves to be repeated: "Presbytery is YOU!" Your voice needs to be heard in order to build a successful future for Presbytery of the Northern Plains. I hope you will take seriously your responsibility and privilege to help chart our course, and make it a priority to join us for this exciting event in November.

Following lunch, business will continue with reports on recommended changes to by-laws and policies, as well as reports from committees and ministry teams. Of particular interest will be a report from the Flood Task

Force, which has been working diligently on the various flooding issues throughout North Dakota. The offering at the presbytery worship service will be donated to flood relief efforts, so please give prayerful consideration to how God is calling you to respond to those needs. If your church or mission committee has been considering making a special offering for flood relief, you might want to send those funds along with your pastor or elder commissioner to be consolidated with that offering.

Meeting materials are posted at www.northernplainspresbytery.com, for congregations/individuals to download. For congregations that do not 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 a.m. on September 19, 2011, to ensure you receive the packet in time.

Child Care will be provided for preschool children of minister members or elder commissioners at no cost to users. Attendees who need child care must contact the Presbytery office no later than September 16, 2011, if they wish to use this service.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Presbytery office at 701-772-0783 or toll free at 1-800-243-3532, or by email at pnpooffice@gmail.com.

UNCERTAINTIES OF LIFE

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

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." – Daniel 3:16-18

This past weekend brought sobering reminders of the uncertainties of life and the inexplicable ways of God. On Saturday, 15 volunteers from our presbytery spent the day in Minot, helping to gut a flood-ravaged home. On Sunday, we marked the 10th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks and remembered the victims and heroes of that day. In view of such overwhelming destruction, many people struggle to hold onto their faith, wondering if God really hears or cares, or is there at all.

Continue on page 2.

When faced with such situations, I often find myself turning to the book of Daniel and rereading the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Space prevents me from including all of it here, so I hope you'll take the time to pick up your Bible and read it again, because I believe it holds some keys to the dilemma of unanswered prayers.

First, it reminds us that true faith leads to obedience, regardless of whether we get the outcome we seek. There is one particular phrase in these verses worth meditating on: "But even if he does not..." These three men had an unshakable belief that, if God chose, God could save them. But they did not make demands of God; they were simply determined to be faithful no matter what.

Second, it reminds us that while we might not be delivered from our fiery (or watery) trials, God will be with us in them. King Nebuchadnezzar was shocked to see four, not three, figures moving around in the furnace, and one of them looked "like a son of the gods." This foreshadowing of the work of Christ, who came to suffer with us in order to save us, never fails to give me goose bumps.

Third, it reminds us that the focus of our prayers should not be our deliverance, but rather that God would be honored. After the trio had been pulled from the furnace unharmed, the king declared, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abdnego...No other god can save in this way."

Yes, these three servants of the Lord miraculously survived their ordeal. But the main theme of this scripture is their firm trust that God is sovereign and worthy of our worship and obedience, whatever our circumstances. May the goal of our prayers always be not a miracle like theirs, but a faith like theirs.

INVIGORATING EXHAUSTION

By: The Rev. Nancy Emerson, Co-Chair of the Flood Task Force

What difference can fifteen volunteers make? Plenty!

On Saturday, September 10, fifteen volunteers from Fargo, Moorhead, Baker-Downer and West Fargo converged on Minot for a one-day blitz of flood recovery. We left West Fargo by coach bus at 4:30 a.m. and arrived at our worksite in Minot at 10 a.m. By quitting time (which varied by volunteer) we had logged 105 hours of volunteer labor gutting a house damaged by the summer floods. At the end of the day, we had removed 70% of the rotten & molding drywall, carpet, plaster, appliances, shelves and other remnants. The studs and base flooring remained with the opportunity to air out and dry to acceptable moisture content before winter. The organizing recovery team, All Hands Volunteers, expected to return the next day with their three site coordinators to finish the remaining work.

What did it cost us to go and do the work? The coach bus rental was \$1,500 but hiring them allowed us to work as hard as we could for an entire day while safely returning to the F/M area. We did not require the increasingly hard-to-find overnight accommodation in Minot and we brought our own sack lunches and bottled water to the work site. In addition we purchased hand tools, air masks and safety glasses for approximately \$300. Was it worth it? Absolutely. Of the supplies, everything except the used air masks can be used another day and they were left for other work groups. Furthermore, every volunteer hour on-site is counted by the city of Minot toward its required 10% contribution toward recovery costs. Valued at \$21 per hour, we provided the city with \$2,200 of sweat equity. Exhaustion never felt so good.

The best part of the day? It was a tie. A neighbor across the street brought out ice-pops late in the afternoon. The sugary frozen treats never tasted so good! The hospitality of the Minot Presbyterian church that provided our evening meal was second to none. We were treated to a feast of Salisbury steak, green beans & bacon bits (real bacon bits), potatoes, fresh fruit salad and a dessert of brownies and ice-cream. A day's worth of labor was worth the price to be on the receiving end of such gracious hospitality.

If you know of a group interested in volunteering in the Minot area, please give me a call. I'd be happy to provide more insights from what we learned and put you in contact with the volunteer organizations helping in the Minot and surrounding areas flood recovery.

ELLENDALE CHURCH SERVES UP MORE THAN A GOOD MEAL

By: the Rev. Paul Henschen, pastor at Presbyterian-United Methodist Church in Ellendale

On July 31st, the Presbyterian-United Methodist Church in Ellendale held a spaghetti supper after worship and invited the whole community. The pasta was obtained as a donation from the Dakota Growers Pasta Company in Carrington, ND. The rest of the meal was prepared by several loving hands in our church, including men and women. Our expectation was that three or four hundred dollars would be raised—and all of it would be sent to help victims of the flood waters in Bismarck and Minot.

The turnout from the community was good. When the number of plates used was counted, there were ninety-two. That was an expected number and we felt good about it. Then the money was counted and we felt even better! People were very gracious, and we counted over \$1300! God is good—and the people responded to God's grace!

This money was divided and half was sent to a Presbyterian church to help some families whose homes were flooded and half to a United Methodist church to help feed people. Amen!

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY COMMISSIONERS

By: *the Rev. Darrel Cory, Chair of the Committee on Nominations*



The time has come to elect an alternate elder commissioner and minister and alternate minister commissioners for the 2012 meeting of General Assembly. According to Presbytery's policy, P-6.0104 III C 1-4, this is a self-referral to the nominating committee requiring a written

statement that describes the desire, qualifications and sense of being called to serve the Presbytery as a commissioner; listing of service in the Presbytery and other governing bodies; and the nominee's availability to report to Presbytery. Please send all information to: Rev. Darrel Cory, Nominating Committee chair, at 1122 Reeves Dr., Grand Forks, ND 58201.

The election of these commissioners will be held at the winter meeting.

MOORHEAD CHURCH REWARDED FOR 10 YEARS OF SUPPORT OF FAIR TRADE



The First Presbyterian Church of Moorhead was recognized for its continuous participation in the Presbyterian Coffee Project for more than ten years. Only 39 PC(USA) congregations have reached this mark.

The Presbyterian Coffee Project has grown to include over 3,000 PC(USA) congregations. By supporting purchase of Equal Exchange - coffee, tea, chocolate and snacks - a congregation helps small farmers to stay on their land, plan for the future, and care for the environment. The total of all fairly traded products purchased by Presbyterians over the past decade was 1,154,725 pounds or 577 tons.

For more information about the Presbyterian Coffee Project, go to: <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/enough/presbyterian-coffee-project/>

COUNCIL UPDATE

By: *Elder Cheryl Biller, Council Moderator*

Grace and peace to you, from your council moderator. In spite of summer days and vacations, your council has continued to meet monthly. We are preparing for the fall meeting of the gathered Presbytery on September 24th in Mandan, at which time we will bring you a proposed timeline and schedule of activities to get us to a decision about the work we care most about as a presbytery, and the staff needed to accomplish that work. We considered the work you have already done with us; and we are hoping you will take a look at some data, help us discern what it adds to our common understanding, and determine with us how it is helpful.

We have begun to review bylaws and policies, both for purposes of ongoing updating and reference, as well as to bring them both in line with the recently ratified new form of government. We hope to have this task completed, not for this fall meeting, but for our next gathering. We are also working on defining ways for us to talk to each other about our differences in the days that come, following ratification of 10A, the amendment that opens the door to greater Presbytery discernment of a person's fitness and compliance with our constitution.

In the midst of the work of council that we bring to you, and the ministry we do together as the Presbytery of Northern Plains, it is important for us to remember that we are ever shaped, directed, and nurtured by scripture in this and all our efforts. We seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and embrace the things in our polity and governance that are affirmed with this wisdom, and to change the things that together we agree need to change. Even as we as individuals continue to grow and learn and realize more fully our potential as children of God, so do we as a Presbytery and a denomination continue to realize our potential to be a witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ. We sometimes falter in our efforts, and at other times make great strides toward manifestation of God's kingdom. But through it all, we can always trust in God's grace and love. And for that, we are blessed and grateful!

RESOURCES

Saving Jesus (DVD)

Ever feel like Jesus has been kidnapped by the Christian Right? Saving Jesus is a revolutionary DVD-based small group exploration of Jesus Christ for the third millennium. Featuring leading religious voices of our day, the 12-week program includes a printable participant reader and a facilitator guide offering discussion questions. The basic format for each weekly 1 – 1 ½ hour session includes conversation around the readings, a 20-minute video segment and guided discussion. Join Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, Matthew Fox, Amy-Jill Levine, James Forbes and a host of others for a conversation around the relevance of Jesus Christ for today. Some of the themes are: Who was Jesus? Featuring Matthew Fox; Teachings of Jesus: Wisdom Tradition Featuring Bernard Brandon Scott; Jesus' Program: The Kingdom of God Featuring John Dominic Crossan; Jesus' Ministry of Compassion; Killing Jesus, Part One: Who Killed Jesus? Featuring Amy-Jill Levine & Helen Prejean; Killing Jesus, Part Two: The Atonement Featuring Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker; The Resurrection of Christ Featuring James Forbes; Why Jesus Is Worth Saving Featuring Marcus Borg.

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

The staff will gladly reserve resources 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/>

NEW MINISTRY FOR TWO CHURCHES



Children were a wonderful addition to the dedication service for the prayer shawls.

The Yoked Parish, Emerado & Arvilla Presbyterian/USA Churches and the Larimore United Methodist Church have begun a new project. We are knitting prayer shawls to be given to those members of our church family who are ill or facing difficulties in their lives. As we knit and work together to complete the shawls, we pray for the person who will receive this gift of love and comfort. The shawls were dedicated in July with the help of the children of

our churches.

Our prayers continue to be lifted for all who have received our prayer shawls.

MINISTRY TEAM HAS BIG PLANS

By: Elder Donna Preston, Chair of the Bdecan Ministry Team

The Bdecan Ministry Team is making big plans for the Bdecan Presbyterian Church at the Spirit Lake Nation. We hope to renovate the manse and hire a full-time Youth and Outreach Coordinator. We have churches outside our presbytery willing to help with the financing of the new Youth and Outreach Director (YOC), but we need and would like for churches in our presbytery to help with this effort as well. The new director will set up a children's ministry, a youth ministry, and coordinate the work of mission teams that come to Bdecan. Many children and youth come to the Bible Schools done by these teams that come, but much more could be done. Several teams come each year and it takes a lot of work planning for them. We hope to put out the job description by early October but we need a commitment of funds before this can happen. If you can help with this important ministry, we would surely appreciate it. Call Pastor Kevin Kauffman at the Devils Lake church.

The church will continue its ministry of a food pantry and many churches in our presbytery have given money and food. Thank you so much for your contributions.

SESSION RECORD REVIEW DATES

Session minutes and church register records of all congregations are required to be reviewed annually. The Session Record Committee has made arrangements for reading opportunities within the presbytery as follows:

- Northwest: **October 2** at First Presbyterian Church of Minot at 9:30 a.m. Worship service at 8:30 a.m. followed by session records review in library.
- Northeast: **October 2** at Mendenhall Presbyterian Ch. of East Grand Fork at 2:00 p.m.
- Southeast: **September 10 or 17** at Westminster Presbyterian Ch. of Casselton at 9:00 a.m.
- Central: **September 10** at Westminster Presbyterian Ch. of Devils Lake at 10:00 a.m.
September 17 at United Presbyterian Ch. of Jamestown at 10:00 a.m.

Forms to be completed for the session reviews are available to download at www.northernplainspresbytery.com under the Clerk's Corner section of the website. If you have any questions, please contact the Presbytery office at 701-772-0783 or pnpooffice@gmail.com

Presbytery's Calendar

- Sept 5 Labor Day – office closed
- Sept 10 Session Records Reading @ Westminster Pres Casselton or Devils Lake
- Sept 10 Clean-Up Day in Minot
- Sept 12 Nominating Committee CC
- Sept 13 Committee on Ministry CC
- Sept 17 Session Records Reading @ United Pres Jamestown or Westminster Pres Casselton
- Sept 24 Fall Presbytery Meeting at First Pres. Ch of Mandan
- Oct 2 Session Records Reading @ First Pres. Minot or Mendenhall Pres EGF
- Nov 3 Council Meeting @ United Presbyterian Church of Jamestown
- Nov 18 & 19 Presbytery Retreat at Jamestown Civic Center
- Dec 3 Winter Presbytery Meeting at all VCS

CC = Conference Call
GTM= GoToMeeting
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.

Contributors: Donna Preston, Paul Henschen, Lorelee Rude, Cheryl Biller, Nancy Emerson, Darrel Cory 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