

THE VALLEY BRIDGE



February 3, 2015

FEBRUARY 8: 5TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Isaiah 40:21-21; *Psalm* 147:1-11, 20c; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23;
Mark 1:29-39

Fellowship of Prayer: First Presbyterian Church of Lismore

The Pastor: Rev. Thomas Voigt

The Clerk: Lorna Van Der Linden

The Session: Lori Klooster, Dean Knips, Ken Leinen, Dawn McEliece, Jan Vande Kieft, Jim Van Der Linden

Prayer Concerns: Families grieving the loss of loved ones while others are facing health concerns. God is proving to be faithful day by day!



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Presbytery of MN Valleys
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Willmar MN 56201
320-235-7910
minnesotavalleys.org

Monday-Friday: 8:00-4:30

THE WORD FROM RICK: “NEXT STEPS ALONG THE WAY”



When I was called to serve as the Designated Executive Presbyter, one of the responsibilities that I was handed was to work with the Council of the presbytery to review the presbytery’s ministry design and discern what it was that God was calling us to do and be as it moved forward. The Council appointed a task force, now known as the Next Pres Team, to do this work and present a plan that would address the mission design (structure), staffing, and finances of the presbytery, and provide a guide for the future of the presbytery. The goal of the Team was, and still is, to have a design for mission in place beginning January 1, 2016.

To meet that goal the Next Pres Team has been working for nearly eight months. During that time, it has had some very long and insightful discussions about what it was that the presbytery was all about and where it was being called. At one point, four months into its work, the Team found it necessary to step back and refocus its efforts.

Since the beginning, Team members has done a great deal of reading, reflecting, writing, and praying. The Bible and the Book of Order have been the Team’s source of inspiration and, at times, frustration. It is impossible to count the sheets of newsprint that have received the brainstorming and visions of the team. In addition, the Team has gained valuable insight from the presbytery through the conversations we had in August and the response cards received in October. Creating a vision and design for ministry is proving to be a real challenge!

The biggest part of the Team’s challenge in creating a responsive, relational presbytery is discerning exactly what kind of presbytery its congregations need. As we look at the shifting demographics of our congregations and their communities, the Team has searched to find the right questions to ask and to answer. The Team has tried to listen to what you all said to us in August and October and have tried to do its work with those insights before us.

The Next Pres Team has generated an identity statement that gave birth a values statement. For the last few meetings, the Team has sought to declare how it intends the presbytery will live out those values. As part of that conversation, the Team has sought to identify ministry activities that will enable our presbytery and its congregations to fulfill those Intentions or Goals. At this point, nothing is carved in granite . . . it is a work in progress; and to that end, the Team has asked for the input and insights of those currently entrusted with the presbytery’s ministries – its committees and task forces.

Once the Team receives the responses from the presbytery entities, they will be able to flesh out a more complete proposal. It is hoped that the sessions of our congregations will be able to become engaged in helping the Team complete the vision and ministry plan. It is hoped that a first reading of the proposal will come to the presbytery in May, with approval to occur in August. There is much work yet to be done. Your prayers continue to be needed.

THE WORD FROM RICK, CONTINUED

As I pondered this progress report to you, I opened up this morning's e-mail and discovered this week's installment of the Alban Weekly. An American Baptist pastor, Jeffrey Jones, writes an article that I think plays into the work, not only of the Next Pres Team, but also the congregations that are invested in "New Beginnings" and those that are contemplating both their present and future directions. Entitled, "New Questions for a New Day," I found it to be a good read. Check it out - the link follows:

<https://alban.org/2015/01/30/jeffrey-d-jones-new-questions-for-a-new-day/>

See you at this Saturday's Presbytery meeting in Redwood Falls!

Grace and Peace,

Rick

NEW PRESBYTERIAN CURRICULUM



Congregations are being invited to sample the new PC(U.S.A.) denominational children's curriculum, *Growing in Grace & Gratitude*, set to launch this fall.

Free samplers—complete with accompanying color resources, a story, and a page for children to use at home with their families—are [available to order](#). Each sampler includes one session for each age group: Multiage (Ages 5–10), Ages 3–5, Ages 5–7, and Ages 8–10. Sample sessions at: <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/growinggracegratitude>

Growing in Grace & Gratitude is rooted in the foundation of Presbyterian identity where God's grace and our gratitude are the heartbeat of our faith, life, and worship; extends an invitation to discipleship that inspires children to learn and practice hospitality, generosity, and love; and reaches beyond Sunday morning, encouraging children to live their lives as an expression of God's grace.

Sessions of *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* are grounded in Bible stories that reveal God's grace. Through fun activities, prayer, and singing, children and their leaders will celebrate the meaning of this grace in their lives as they encounter a living God.

You can learn more about *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* by participating in one of the twenty regional workshops scheduled for the coming months. Come experience a curriculum that helps transform the lives of children and those who love them, shaped by grace and gratitude. For more information, contact curriculum@pcusa.org

SCENES FROM THE ROAD:
 SYNOD COM/CPM CONFERENCE

Last week, twelve individuals representing our presbytery's Committee on Ministry and Committee on Preparation for Ministry attended the Synod of Lakes and Prairies annual training conference at the Mount Olivet Retreat Center in Farmington, Minn.



Participating from Minnesota Valleys were (from left to right): Le Roy Ennenga (COM), Erin Kobs (COM), Jan Prehn (COM), Rick Carus (Designated EP), Bonnie Sue Roys (CPM), Lou Perli (COM), Pam Prouty (Stated Clerk), Ross Stone (COM), “Louie the Loon” (Minnesota State Bird), Gloria VandeBrake (COM), Sonya Alexander (CPM), and Jason Cunningham (COM). Mark Ford, CPM Chairperson, was also present at the conference, but not available for this photo op!



“Jason and the Ladies”: Table fellowship at Mount Olivet – Bonnie Sue Roys, Erin Kobs, Jason Cunningham, Gloria VandeBrake, Lou Perli, and Sonya Alexander

NEW BEGINNINGS -- ASSESSMENT WEEK IS COMING!

During the week of February 23-27, our nine New Beginnings congregations will be visited by their Assessors. Please keep these congregations in your prayers as they prepare for this important part of their involvement in New Beginnings:

Westminster, Worthington
 Union, Saint Peter
 First, Amboy
 First, Brainerd
 UMC-PCUSA, Browns Valley

First, Windom
 First, Redwood Falls
 First, Mankato
 First, Osakis

We now have leaders for all nine of the congregational gatherings – Erin Kobs, Bob Bartlett, and Chris Conlin, will join Andy Davis and Rick Carus as a part of these gatherings.

SUMMER MISSION OPPORTUNITY IN COLORADO!

The Community Presbyterian Church in Nederland, Colorado is still looking for youth groups to come to the Rockies and share in their Summer Mission Experience.



Here is the lowdown from their web site:

For 2015 we are offering three weeks of service, with work to do on homes for people in need, helping with our summer homeless ministry, starting a firewood bank for elderly folks who can't cut or buy it, and giving time for some community projects like trail maintenance and the community garden. We will offer a curriculum for reflection and Bible study, as well as group activities around campfires and pot lucks. For their free day groups can choose to hike in Rocky Mountain National Park or raft on whitewater. Young people and their adult advisors sleep on your own air mattresses at the church (max 20 people), which has two bathrooms and a small kitchen to prepare some of the meals. Showers are a short drive away.

The fee to participate is low, only \$75 per person. This allows us to get most mission supplies and handle various program costs. To learn more about Nederland the destination, our Community Presbyterian Church, or the Rocky Mountain Mission Project, please call 303-258-3579, or email Pastor Hansen Wendlandt at ncpcpastor@gmail.com

OH, CLERKS OF SESSION, IT'S STAT TIME! STAT TIME!

Stated Clerk Pamela Prouty—pam@minnesotavalleys.org—(507) 627-5486

The due date for the statistical report is February 6. Here are a couple of reminders. The website to use is <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/churchwide-ministries/stats/>. Your password has not changed unless you changed it. The congregation does not need to approve the report, only the Session. And GA is recommending using an internet browser other than Internet Explorer. If you have no idea what this is about, please give me a call or an email.

The Clerk's Annual Questionnaire 2014 link: <http://caq2014.pcusa.org/>. As clerks this is a simply survey and it is optional. The due date for this questionnaire is March 21.

On another note, make sure your corporation gets renewed for 2015.

2015 PER CAPITA

General Assembly	\$ 7.07
Synod of Lakes & Prairies	\$ 5.20
Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys	<u>\$21.16</u>
Total	\$33.43

Recommended 2015 Mission Pledge Percentages:

General Assembly	18%
Synod of Lakes & Prairies	13%
Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys	69%

EVENTS ON THE HORIZON

Here is a calendar of significant leadership development conferences and events for your calendar! Keep your calendars up to date, so that you don't miss out!

February 7 Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys

February 8 3:00 p.m. Rev. Anne Veldhuizen Installation at Christ United
Presbyterian Church of Marshall

March 9-11 [Stewardship Kaleidoscope](#), Kansas City

March 16-18 ["Next Church"](#) Annual Gathering, Chicago

June 18-21 [Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women](#), Minneapolis

July 26-31..... [Synod School](#) at Buena Vista University, Storm Lake (brochure and registration information coming in February!)

AROUND THE PRESBYTERY

The confirmation students at **First Presbyterian Church of Lake Crystal** were asked to weigh in on a few options about what they would like to study during “spring semester” and they voted 8-0 in favor of an in-depth study and practice of prayer! Beginning January 28, they began studying *Space for God* by Don Postema. The in-class exercises, at-home assignments, and readings will, of course, be adapted to ensure it relates to their world (and their schedules and lives), their way of thinking, and the many different ways middle school students learn. We will not just be learning about prayer ... we will be PRAYING! **Pray with us and for us, won't you?**

The folks at **First Presbyterian Church of Osakis** will observe Lent with dinners and the film series, “Tales from the Madhouse.” Here's the storyline: In a Victorian insane asylum, eight people talk of their encounters with Jesus of Nazareth.

“Staying Fed,” from the **Westminster Presbyterian Church of Worthington** newsletter: “how sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103, NRSV). Recently, I was confronted with this question: If you fed yourself with food the way to feed yourself with God's Word, would you still be alive? It gave me pause.

Do I eat *enough* spiritually?—feast regularly enough on Scripture to keep up my energy and the health of my soul? Do I eat enough *nutritiously*—take in a balanced meal of law and gospel, comfort and commandments, prophecy and promise? Do I pass up spiritual *junk food*?—set aside empty calories that lead to disease in order to hunger for what truly gives life? Do I drink enough *Living Water* to avoid faith dehydration? And once in a while, do I *splurge on dessert*?—savor the sweetness and joy of belonging at God's table? What abundance God sets before us. May we never skip a ‘meal’!

“Share the Love” Project at **First Presbyterian Church of Blue Earth**—This year we ask that you choose anyone—from the congregation, from the community, family member, friend, co-worker, or stranger, and do something nice for that person. It can be a random act of kindness—paying for someone's coffee—or perhaps shoveling snow, baking something for a neighbor, maybe it is a card or phone call to someone that you have not talked to in a while, or a relationship that needs mending. We will provide paper hearts for you to write down your act of kindness—no names to be included—and we will hang them on the “Share the Love” tree.

The **Ebenezer Presbyterian Church of Renville** and the United Methodist Church will join together for a series of messages from Genesis call, “Come to the Garden,” This series will challenge you, no matter your age, life stage, or where you are on your journey of faith.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OVERTURES

Submitted by Rev. Mark Ford

On behalf of the commissioners and alternates to the General Assembly, we want to share the procedure we will be using to discuss and vote on the General Assembly Overtures at the February 7th Presbytery meeting in Redwood Falls.

We will open with twenty minutes for questions. During this time presbytery commissioners and others may ask the GA commissioners and presbytery staff clarifying questions. This will not be a time of debate, but will instead be a time to come to an understanding about the nature of the proposed amendment.

Secondly, we will break into small groups of ruling elders or teaching elders. During the forty minutes devoted to small groups, individuals will be able to share their thoughts and stories about the amendments. Again, this is not a time of debate but a chance for each person to voice their opinion. We will be using a method called appreciative inquiry, whereby only one person is allowed to speak at a time while the others practice active listening.

Finally, we will gather back together as the whole of Presbytery to vote on the amendments. Amendments 14-B through 14-E will be placed on a consent agenda; we will vote on these as a group. As always, any item may be removed from the consent agenda by request.

The order for the remaining amendments will be:

Proposed Amendment 14-1

(voting to include the Confession of Belhar in the *Book of Confessions*)

Proposed Amendment 14-A

(voting on an issue of Renunciation of Jurisdiction)

Proposed Amendment 14-F

(voting on expanding or maintaining the definition of marriage)

There will be twenty minutes for discussion on the floor of presbytery for each amendment. This allotted time can be changed by action of the commissioners. Commissioners will be given two minutes to present their point of view for each amendment. The moderator will alternate between those speaking in favor and those speaking in opposition to the proposed amendment.

The amendments will be voted on as presented for either a positive or negative vote. The GA commissioners have not made any recommendations, which will hopefully eliminate confusion.

The commissioners to General Assembly gratefully thank everyone who will be a part of this process and pray that it will be a time of true discernment.

SPIRITUAL SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

Research has found that less than one third of combat veterans with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) obtain needed mental health care, partly due to stigma surrounding asking for help. A key strategy for engaging veterans in needed PTSD treatment is to develop alternative treatment options that they are more willing to use. Spiritual support, such as provided by chaplains, can be a far more socially accepted source of help than traditional mental health services.

Over the past 6 years, Dr. Irene Harris and her research team at the Minneapolis VA Healthcare System have developed a spiritually-integrated, 8-week support group for PTSD called "Building Spiritual Strength" (BSS). Preliminary research demonstrated it holds significant promise in reducing symptoms of PTSD. BSS can be disseminated and provided by trained community providers in faith-based settings

Dr. Harris has received funding from Bristol-Myers Squibb to evaluate this new treatment, and would like your support in letting veterans know about this opportunity. Details include:

- Groups will be at religious and community centers and will last 8 weeks.
- Participants may be assigned to either spiritual or standard support groups.
- Groups will be led by specially trained clergy.
- Participants may be paid up to \$200 for participating in assessments related to this study.

If you have any questions or if you know of a veteran that is interested in the study, please direct them to the project coordinator:

Rachel Dubke

Phone: 612-467-5737



VA | U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

This study is approved by the Minneapolis VA Institutional Review Board (IRB #4502-A).
Principal Investigator, J. Irene Harris, Ph.D., at 612-467-1654

CALENDAR

Wednesday, February 4: Rick out of the office

Saturday, February 7: 10:00 Presbytery meeting at First Presbyterian Church of Redwood Falls

Sunday, February 8: 3:00 p.m. Rev. Anne Veldhuizen Installation at Christ United Presbyterian Church of Marshall

Wednesday, February 11: Rick out of the office

Wednesday, February 18: Rick worships at the Lismore and Edgerton churches



MARK 1:29-39

Jesus Heals Many at Simon's House

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.



That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

A Preaching Tour in Galilee

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.