

THE VALLEY BRIDGE



April 7, 2015

APRIL 12: 2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 4:32-35; Psalm 133; 1 John 1:1–2:2; John 20:19-31

Fellowship of Prayer:

First Presbyterian Church of Mountain Lake

Commissioned Ruling Elder: Linda Becken

Clerk of Session: Julie Johnson

Custodian: Steve Peters

Treasurer: Charlotte Peters

Ruling Elders: Sandy Melheim, Jay Sheid, Steve Peters, Julie Johnson, Frank Wallert

Prayer Requests: For all church members. For our shut-ins and nursing home residents. For those in the hospital and experiencing illness. For church growth. For all who work at being the hands and feet of Christ.



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Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys
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Willmar MN 56201

320-235-7910

minnesotavalleys.org

Monday-Friday:
8:00-4:30

We're on Facebook, too!

AROUND THE PRESBYTERY

On Sunday, April 12, at the **First Presbyterian Church of Winnebago**, the *Glory to God* hymnals will be the subject of a “show and tell” to give people an opportunity to *hear* some of the old, familiar songs included in the hymnal, to *look* through it during the coffee hour, and to *tell* what they think.

The Session at **Hope Presbyterian Church of Spicer** has recently reviewed the Great Ends of the Church, read scripture, prayed and discussed questions delving into deeper thinking into the meaning of them for Hope Church. Pastor Candace Adams will preach a sermon series on the Great Ends beginning April 19, and the session will spend three to six months determining what Hope Church should be about.

The Worship Committee at the **First Presbyterian Church of Blue Earth** shared some of the acts of kindness shown during their “Share the Love” Project. Each of these random acts of kindness was written on hearts and hung on the tree: drove a friend to the grocery store, paid for person behind me at McD’s, bought flowers for someone, shoveled snow for a neighbor, baked cookies for a neighbor and/or co-workers, left money at concession stand for someone, visited shut-ins, sang at a wedding, gave encouraging words to pastors, shoveled church walk, took bars to a friend and wished her a Happy Birthday, provided new arrangements at the front of the sanctuary, started a car that was stalled in Mankato, took a friend to the doctor, took balloons to someone in the hospital, shared a highlight pen with an encouraging note with Bible Study friends, made sugar cookies and shared them with a friend whose wife is ill with brain cancer, took a meal to a church family, sent greeting cards, planned a special event for a loved one.



Ten youth and three adults from **First Presbyterian Church of Madelia**, **First Presbyterian Church of Saint James**, and **First Presbyterian Church of Mountain Lake** will be going on a mission trip to the Leech Lake Reservation from June 18–July 3.

The **First Presbyterian Churches of Round Lake and Brewster** will gather on Sunday, April 19, in Round Lake to worship together and to celebrate the coming of Spring. A meal will follow worship. Hamburgers and brats, beverages and place settings will be provided. Attendees are invited to bring a dish to share.

THE WORD FROM RICK: “LOST ON THE BACK PAGES”



Last summer in Detroit, beyond the issues of marriage, divestment, and Belhar, the General Assembly commissioners dealt with a myriad of other subjects, some of them routine, some quite significant. For the most part, many of those items got lost on the back pages, and many folks across the church have forgotten that those actions had even taken place.

One of those somewhat “forgotten” topics is the Assembly’s action to reduce the numbers of synods across this denomination. While this issue pales in comparison and significance to the “theological/biblical/social heavyweights,” and is considered by many folks to be nothing more than “rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic”; it is none the less a significant issue for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that will emerge in the years ahead. It is important for us to know how we will do ministry and how our congregations will be supported by the larger church.

For ten months now, the Next Pres Team of this presbytery has been working on a new vision and mission design for our common life and ministry in southwest and west-central Minnesota. Believing in the future of our denomination, as well as in the future of this presbytery, this team has moved forward on the assumption that the boundaries of this presbytery will not change, and what they are seeking to create has been based on that assumption. The team itself has not discussed the issue of reduced or reorganized synods, but at the same time, many of us hold the “what if” questions in the back of our head.

To be honest, we don’t know exactly what the future holds for this synod and its presbyteries. We are one of the strongest and most supportive synods in the denomination. This presbytery benefits greatly from such a strong synod. We know that the Synod of Lakes and Prairies has the resources to stand alone, but “what if” we need to make some boundary and structure changes. What would a bigger or different synod mean for our presbyteries, especially for Minnesota Valleys?

This week, I will be participating in two meetings that will happen simultaneously – our synod’s Executive Presbyter Forum and the Heartland Resource Network gathering. For several years, our synod has been meeting with colleagues from the Synods of Lincoln Trails and Mid-America to look at ways for us to do ministry together. It is at these meetings that I will bring Minnesota Valley’s voice and interests to the table and advocate on behalf of our congregations. It is from these meeting that I hope to gain some clarity to what is happening on the “synod reduction” front.

Currently, there are 16 synods in our denomination. By the 2016 General Assembly, there will need to be a plan offered that will reduce the number of synods to “no more than 12.” At this point it is hoped that the plan will emerge from the synods themselves, rather than from a committee “on high.” It is important for our future to be at that table.

THE WORD FROM RICK: “LOST ON THE BACK PAGES”

In developing a vision for the future of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys, the Next Pres Team intend to design a presbytery that committed to and invested in the nurturing of vital congregations. In order to do that, we need a synod that is committed to helping us make that happen; a synod that knows us and cares about us and for us; a synod that has resources – people, program, and financial – to equip and empower us. I want to be sure that whatever emerges will be in the best interests of our congregations and this presbytery. I will be interested to see what comes out of this week’s meetings and the meetings that lead up to the 222nd General Assembly (2016) in Portland.

Stay tuned . . .

Grace and Peace,

Rick

STEWARDSHIP NUGGETS

In early March, six members of our presbytery attended the Stewardship Kaleidoscope in Kansas City, Missouri. Each of the participants was asked if they would be willing to share their insights with the saints of Minnesota Valleys Presbytery, and most of them agreed to do so.

For the next five, or maybe six, weeks, you will read the reflections of those who attended. This week’s nuggets come from The Reverend Doug Dent, Pastor of the Federated Church in Fergus Falls. These are a few of Doug’s “take aways” from the conference:

- “1. Stewardship is a 'year round' endeavor. When we're not in the annual campaign, we should be reminding people of how their giving is impacting our community and the world. We should also be preaching and teaching about stewardship at least once each quarter.”*
- “2. Endowments are about ensuring the ministry of the congregation will continue in our community. The largest transfer in assets is occurring now, as baby boomers retire and do estate planning. The church does not benefit from this because we do not ask. The Presbyterian Foundation and Texas Presbyterian Foundation are excellent sources for education and assistance with estate planning and endowments.”*
- “3. Narrative budgets are an important way to share the ministries of the congregation - for the non-accountant types, pictures and stories are easier to understand (and buy into) than numbers on spreadsheets. They take thought and work to lay out, but the potential reward is huge as people see their money making a difference.”*

We are certain that Doug, or any of the other participants – Michael Roys, Al Jergenson, Darin Seaman, Genette Carleton, or Rick Carus – would be happy to share more with you or your congregation.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT VII

By Stan Menning

Recently I attended a workshop on Evangelism at Lakeshore Center at Okoboji. It was led by Rev. Robert Houser. Bob is a retired pastor and Presbytery Executive, most recently the EP at Central Nebraska Presbytery. Our conversation for the day included the different phases of evangelism, activating and assimilating new members, hospitality and inactive members. This article is the second of three in our discussion of responding to visitors, also known as hospitality. We will build on the list of hints for welcoming in last week's article.

First time visitors look for quality in the bulletin, the sermon, the sound, lighting and cleanliness. The nice thing about quality is that it is free. We just need to try harder.

WELCOMING CHURCH PRACTICES

Have a trained welcoming team: greeters, ushers, informal greeters, and secret greeters. Train greeters and ushers, and develop a welcome folder or packet

GREETERS AND USHERS

- ❖ Greet at all entrances
- ❖ Introduce visitors to someone else
- ❖ Train them
- ❖ Show them appreciation
- ❖ Put visitors first, and avoid side conversations
- ❖ Communicate genuine welcome to visitors
- ❖ Greet visitors again at the end of the service
- ❖ Seat visitors near warm and friendly people

WHAT TO SAY

Welcome to _____ this morning.

God bless you!

We're glad you are here this morning.

I've not met you yet. Welcome, my name is _____!

BLUNDERS

- ❖ No one says "Hello."
- ❖ Too friendly/smothering
- ❖ Hugs to strangers
- ❖ Unclean bathrooms
- ❖ No follow-up contact
- ❖ No eye contact
- ❖ Asking; is this your first time here?
- ❖ Unsafe nursery

NEWS YOU CAN USE

from "Keeping In Touch" (the e-mail newsletter of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies)

Changes coming to PC(USA) ordination exams

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) committee charged with preparing ordination exams has approved changes to administration procedures for the tests, complying with assignments it was given by the General Assembly. At its annual meeting in March in Atlanta, the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates voted to expand the time parameters for three exam areas and give presbyteries the option to incorporate oral examination components as part of online tests. The changes take effect with July exams. The complete announcement from the Office of the General Assembly can be found at "[Ordination Exams.](#)"

General Assembly vice moderator faces challenge of cancer diagnosis

The Rev. Larissa Kwong Abazia, vice moderator of the 221st General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), has been diagnosed with cancer. "I have learned that I have breast cancer after a series of diagnostic tests in the past several weeks. I will be starting chemotherapy on March 24," she said in a letter to the congregation she serves as pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Forest Hills in Queens, N.Y. "I know many of you have faced cancer or supported those who have gone through cancer. I value all of your prayers at this time." She is writing about her experience at "[Each New Day.](#)"



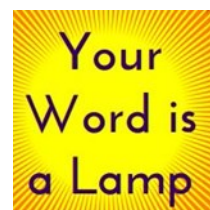
Synod interpretive information available at website

Each year the Synod of Lakes and Prairies prepares documents that provide interpretive information about its ministry and mission. These documents, including a narrative budget and slide presentation of income and expenditures, can help presbyteries and sessions answer questions about the work of the synod. The documents are at: <http://lakesandprairies.org/MinistryandMission>



Wee Kirk conference planned in May at Calvin Crest

The 2015 Great Plains Wee Kirk Conference is planned Wednesday through Friday, May 4-6, at Calvin Crest Camp, Conference & Retreat Center near Fremont, Neb. The event brochure can be found at: <http://www.fellowship.community/wp-content/uploads/GPWK-2015-Broch-FINAL.pdf>



MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

The following Minnesota Valleys congregations continue to be engaged in a search for pastoral leadership. We encourage the saints of our congregations to keep these congregations and their PNCs in their prayers. In addition, if you know of individuals who would be good prospects for these positions, please invite them to check out the Ministry Information Forms on line at the PCUSA's Church Leadership Connections (CLC) – at: <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clc/>

Pastor: Part-Time – First Presbyterian Church, Russell (Grace First Parish) – **ID Number – 03801.AB0**. PNC Chairperson: Pamela Bush ~ pambush@woodstocktel.net

Pastor: Part-Time – Maine Presbyterian Church, Underwood – **ID Number – 03870.AA0**. PNC Chairperson: Jerry Hangartner ~ jerbus@arvig.net

Pastor: Part-Time – First Presbyterian Church, Kasota – **ID Number – 03787.AA0**. PNC Chairperson: Dan Honetschlager ~ dh5449@mnsu.edu

COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER COURSES AT DUBUQUE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Submitted by Richard J. Shaffer Jr., Associate Dean and Assistant Professor of Ministry and Director of Distance Education

The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary is pleased to announce that we will be offering three summer courses for Commissioned Ruling Elders (CLP/CRE), scheduled from **June 1 to August 23, 2015**. We would appreciate it if you would pass on this information to those who might be interested and/or advertise it in your newsletter or other publications.

- Introduction to New Testament – Dr. Annette Huizenga
- Presbyterian Polity – Dr. Scott Nesbitt
- Reformed Theology – Dr. Gary Eller

As always, current students can register by going online at <http://udtslearning.net/mod/page/view.php?id=15076> or by contacting Carla Gibbons, Distance Education Coordinator (CGibbons@dbq.edu or call 563-589-3630 / 1-888-207-8218), to pay by credit card or check. The tuition rate is \$380.00 per course.

New students can apply to our lay ministry program by going to <http://udtslearning.net/> and then click on “CLP Registration Information” for application and course information.

Finally, we encourage you to regularly check our continuing education website (<http://udts.dbq.edu/edu.cfm>) for upcoming events.

CALENDAR

Tuesday, April 7: Pam at the presbytery office

Thursday, April 9: 9:30–12:30 Guatemala Trip Participant Training and Gathering

Sunday, April 12: Rick visits First Presbyterian Church of Maynard

Monday, April 13: 10:00 Staff Meeting



JOHN 20:19-31

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Jesus and Thomas

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

The Purpose of This Book

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.