

THE VALLEY BRIDGE



June 9, 2015

JUNE 14: 3RD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
11TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

1 Samuel 15:34–16:13; *Psalm 20*; 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 (11-13);
Mark 4:26-34

Disability Inclusion

Fellowship of Prayer: First Presbyterian Church of Russell

Pulpit Supply: Steve Quest

Moderator: Lou Perli

Clerk of Session: Jason Buchert

Prayer requests:

- For a smooth transition into one congregation of believers,
- For our Pastor Nominating Committee to find the right pastor for us.



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Presbytery of MN Valleys
4055 Abbott Drive
Willmar MN 56201
320-235-7910

minnesotavalleys.org

Monday-Friday:
8:00-4:30

AROUND THE PRESBYTERY

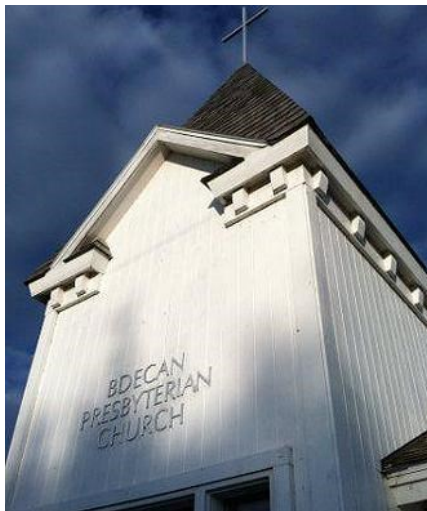
The Men’s Club at the **First Presbyterian Church of Winnebago** operate a summer time burger stand on Wednesdays from 11:00–1:00 in the church parking lot. The funds raised are used to benefit the Men’s Club, the church and the community.



Have you ever played Sermon Bingo? At the **First Presbyterian Church of Lake Crystal**, every child receives a BINGO card with key words—most of which will be used during the sermon. BINGOs get a DQ certificate.

The folks at the **Cambria Presbyterian Church** are planning to visit the Heritage Farms/Seed Savers Exchange near Decorah, Iowa, on September 5 for the Tomato Tasting Festival. The event is free; the bus costs \$50 per person.

The **Ebenezer Presbyterian Church of Renville** and the First Presbyterian Church of Rochester are teaming up for a mission trip to Tokio, North Dakota, and Bdecan Presbyterian Church August 5-9. The group of about 20 youth and adults will lead a three-day community Vacation Bible School and work on repairs to the church building and manse. Bdecan is the only Native American Presbyterian Church in North Dakota, and



Bdecan (pronounced Bah-DAY-Chan) means “Wood Lake” in the Dakota language. The small church in the tiny unincorporated town of Tokio was founded as a mission church in 1879. Today, it continues to reach out to meet the spiritual and physical needs of children, youth and families by offering worship, Sunday School, an ecumenical youth group for middle and high school students, and a Wednesday night program call KICK (Kids in Christ’s Kingdom) that begins with a meal. The church, with help from volunteers and donations from other congregations and presbyteries, also operates a food pantry and a soup kitchen.

PRESBYTERIAN PLANNING CALENDARS

There are ten extra 2015-2016 Presbyterian Planning Calendars available at the presbytery office for \$9.00 each. Contact Virginia at 320-235-7910 or virginia@minnesotavalleys.org. Hurry and order before they disappear!

THE WORD FROM RICK: “TWO HEARTS IN TWO COUNTRIES”



On Saturday, I attended the first meeting of a group of folks that will become known as the Ethiopia-South Sudan Ministry Network (of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys). This Network, which has been created as a sub-group of the Congregational Resource and Development Committee, is intended to give the Ethiopian and South Sudanese Christians in our midst a place where the ministry needs and opportunities of their communities, both here in the Minnesota-South Dakota region and back in Africa, can be addressed.

Saturday's meeting was meant to be organizational, but it became something very different – yes, the group did make some decisions – it became a very teachable moment. It was a time of sharing stories, learning about our African brothers and sisters, talking about ministry efforts of which they are a part, and casting visions of what might be accomplished down the road as we work together. With business taking a back seat, the time focused on the beginning of a journey of understanding.

We learned that there is a sizeable South Sudanese-Ethiopian community in Minnesota, spread across the state in places in our presbytery like Saint Cloud, Mankato, and Worthington, as well as in the Twin Cities and Austin. We were reminded that many people who have come from that part of the world are products of historic Presbyterian mission efforts in partnership with the Christian churches and ministries within their homeland. Each one of our colleagues spoke of how the presence of our mission co-workers had touched their lives and how the Presbyterian Church continues to touch lives, both in Ethiopia and South Sudan, as well as in the United States.

Each one of our colleagues, now U.S. citizens, is involved in working with the immigrants from their homelands who have come to Minnesota, while at the same time working with ministry efforts in Africa. One colleague described it as having “two hearts in two countries.” Reaching South Sudanese and Ethiopians in places like Mankato, Worthington, and Saint Cloud, as well as Sioux Falls and Minneapolis is a priority for these partners, and they are eager to find ways in which that can invite other Presbyterians to join them. At the same time, they refuse to forget those who remain in South Sudan and Ethiopia, and seek ways to engage ministry in those places as well, partnering with their current congregations and other interested individuals to reach out and create an active response.

THE WORD FROM RICK, CONTINUED

As the group's conversations continued through the day, a myriad of thoughts were expressed. We talked about what it was that our South Sudanese and Ethiopian colleagues needed from the presbytery, and we talked about what the presbytery needed from them. It seemed that the greatest need was for understanding and the building of relationships. We are very aware that there are these immigrants among us, but not all that aware of the history, culture, and faith that they bring. We agreed that before we could be good advocates for South Sudanese and Ethiopian people, we had to better understand who they are – not just the Presbyterians within those communities, but the whole community. We need to understand not only their needs, but what it is that they bring to our communities that make us richer. We realized that we needed to do much more talking ... and listening, before we can truly be partners.

So, the conversation will continue, as will the learning. Over the months ahead, it is the Network's desire to have our colleagues share their stories with the presbytery, so that we no longer be strangers, but partners in ministry – both here in Minnesota and beyond!

Grace and Peace,

Rick

NOTE: Participating in the first meeting of this Ministry Network were Peter Mann (Crosslake), Darlene Scherbing (St Cloud), Rob Bellin (Randall), Lee Williams (Mankato), Owar Ojulu (Worthington), Elizabeth Tot (St Cloud), Paul Both (St Cloud and Coon Rapids), Chuol Yat (Mankato), and Rick Carus (Presbytery Staff, Willmar)

Owar Ojulu, at right, is also a Candidate under care of this presbytery, living in Worthington and leading ministry opportunities among the Anuak (Ethiopian) communities in Worthington and Sioux Falls.



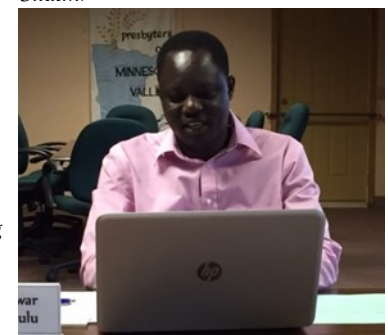
Chuol Yat – Chuol came to the United States from South Sudan. He is from First Presbyterian Church in Mankato and is an Ordained Deacon



Rev. Elizabeth Tot—Elizabeth came from the South Sudan, and works with Sudanese immigrants in St. Cloud.



Paul Both is a Candidate under care of our presbytery. He currently works in Coon Rapids, and is getting ready for six months of missionary service in South Sudan.



“ON THE ROAD WITH RICK: SCENES FROM AMBOY”

This week’s travels took me to Amboy where I had the opportunity to give Pastor Elaine Boyd a bit of a break as I led worship and preached for the good people of First Presbyterian Church. The highlight of the day was the blessing of the church garden. Members of the church have planted potatoes, onions, tomatoes, peppers, and other vegetables in a plot adjacent to the church building. It is anticipated that a good portion of the produce will be used to address local hunger issues!

The following pictures are from the “blessing” ceremony. As members of the congregation gathered around the garden, some of the younger folks sprinkled water on the garden and prayers were offered for an abundant harvest!

NEXT WEEK: “On the Road with Rick” heads to Iona for the celebration of First Presbyterian Church’s Centennial.



SESSION RECORD REVIEWS

Wednesday, June 10 at 6:30 p.m. at the Lake Crystal church

Contact person: Randy Lubbers ° 507-317-9814 ° lubbers85@gmail.com

Wednesday, July 1 at 6:30 p.m. at the Redwood Falls church

Contact person: Patricia Rosa ° 507-336-2433 ° ripafarm@hotmail.com

Wednesday, July 8 at 6:30 p.m. at the Iona church

Contact person: Jim Krapf ° 507-350-1662 ° jwkrampf@knology.net

If you have questions, please contact Session Records Review Chair Randy Lubbers or Stated Clerk Pam Prouty.

HELP WANTED AT THE SYNOD

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies is seeking applications for three positions: stated clerk, director of financial services, and director of leadership development. The searches are underway to fill the void left by the upcoming retirement of two longtime synod employees: Diana Barber, associate executive for leadership development, and Jay Wilkinson, stated clerk and treasurer. The two director positions will be full time while the stated clerk position is part time.

Complete position descriptions, along with information regarding application procedures, can be found on the synod's website at <http://lakesandprairies.org/ServiceOpportunities>.



CHECK OUT THESE MISSION RESOURCES: PREPARE NOW TO PARTNER WITH YOUR LOCAL SCHOOLS THIS FALL

Our local schools provide many opportunities for mission within our own neighborhoods, and increasing numbers of churches support their local schools through ministries large and small. If your congregation is considering a school-focused initiative, visit **“Your Local Schools as Mission”** for resources from the Lewis Center (Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC) and others that can help you take the first steps. <http://www.churchleadership.com/serveyourneighbor/YourLocalSchoolsasMission.asp?id=update20150604>

CHURCH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT XV

By Stan Menning

Way back in January, 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 will be the third in a series about inactive members. Listed below are steps to go through in restoring an inactive member.

ACTIVIATING THE INACTIVE MEMBER

- Continuous intentional long-term contact is most important
- Develop a trusting relationship
- Don't re-invite them to quickly—Gives the impression that the church wants them back but doesn't care about them.
- Letters are least effective—Often cause more harm than good

IN SOME CASES IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE PASTOR TO MAKE THE VISIT

- Can give absolution (forgiveness)
- Is often seen as the official representative of the congregation

ADVANTAGES OF LAY CONTACT

- The inactive might be more open and honest.
- Can't dismiss the contact as only doing their job—Gives the impression they really care

WHY PERSONAL CONTACT

- Treats the inactive as valuable
- Is genuine and caring
- Misunderstandings can be cleared
- Turns inactives into friends

SEVEN STEPS FOR MAKING THE CONTACT

1. Pray
 - a. For the inactive
 - b. For yourself
 - c. For the congregation
2. Decide
 - a. To make this an intentional ministry of the church
 - b. To make this a quality ministry
 - c. To learn how to welcome inactives back

CHURCH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT XV, CONTINUED

3. Plan
 - a. What are your hopes and expectations
 - b. Who will organize
 - c. Who will you recruit and train
 - d. How are you going to train visitors
4. Train
 - A. Because of the sensitive issues you can encounter when dealing with inactives, it is important to have your team trained by someone who is experienced in this area. Two people Bob credited for the material he shared are Ken Haugk and John Savage. Approximately 30 years ago, Minnesota Valleys Presbytery trained a large number of people in Dr. Savage's LEAD program. If you are serious about an inactive ministry, you can Google these two men and find material to use in the training process.
5. Involvement
 - A. Visitors should work with no more than two inactives
6. Support
 - a. Visitors need to get together for
 - i. Support
 - ii. Consultation
 - iii. Affirmation
 - b. Should meet twice a month
7. Support Meetings
 - a. Continuing education, including Bible Study
 - b. Sharing of feelings
 - c. Affirming one another
 - d. "Case History" reports
 - e. Prayer for each other and for inactive members

THE VISIT

- By appointment ONLY—It shows your respect. You want more than a couple of minutes. You owe them time to prepare themselves. You can be certain of seeing someone. The call can begin the process.
- Face to face—Telephone only in special circumstances.
- Expect excuses
- It will take more than one visit—You don't have to get it all done in the first visit.
- Focus on the needs of the inactive
- Don't judge or blame
- Listen, listen, listen!

OCCIDENTE PRESBYTERY MEETING 2015

By Mark Ford

The representatives from Minnesota Valleys Presbytery were fortunate to be in Occidente Presbytery when they held their quarterly presbytery meeting. It was a two-day meeting beginning around noon on the first day and ending around noon on the second day. This gives everyone time to travel to the presbytery location, which this time was held at Mulua, which was also the location where we had our first manse construction project.



The meeting was held in the local municipal auditorium in Mulua with a majority of the churches (51) represented by both pastor and elder. We were invited onto the stage for introductions and welcome. Since Mulua is at the junction of the lowlands and the mountains it was very hot and humid (the lowlands and coastal regions are where much of the fruit and sugar cane is grown), and for me, was almost unbearable.

While I did not understand much of what was happening, those around us explained a bit about what was going on. One of the things that I found most interesting was that if a pastor was not able to attend, their explanation was read and then the presbytery voted to determine if they were excused. It seemed that much of what happened at their presbytery meeting is handled by our COM. For example, a discussion was held on whether a woman preacher could continue to preach while and after going through a divorce. Another discussion centered on a pastor who was thinking about running for the mayor of a town.

In the evening, we were given a meal provided by the people of the local church. It must have been a major undertaking to prepare food for everyone since much of the cooking is done over open fire. But the food was excellent and there was enough for everyone. It gets dark about 6:30 p.m. and the worship service was to begin at 7:00 p.m. The worship begins with music as the people begin to fill the church. At this particular worship service, there were four or five local churches who had musicians, choirs, or the entire congregation prepared to bring music. The worship was not just for the people who were attending presbytery, but also for all the churches in the nearby area. I had been invited to preach, so that was a special honor. With all the music, the service last until 9:00 p.m. After the service, cots were provided for the men who stayed in the meeting hall, and the women were given a place to sleep in the manse. They graciously provided us rooms at an air-conditioned motel!

The second day involved more business. One of the issues was a letter received from a church that wanted to sever relations with the PC(USA) over recent passage of issues related to same-gender marriages. This did bring about lots of discussion. Due to the language barrier, we are not exactly sure what occurred, but it seems that the letter and the issue was to be sent onto the next Synod meeting. When we met with the Executive Council on the following Monday, they expressed their desire to continue in relationship despite difference and concerns.

At the close of the second day of the meeting, another meal was provided and people began to disperse, which for many, meant a long trip home.

CALENDAR

Tuesday, June 9: 10:00-2:30 Council meeting

Wednesday, June 10: 6:30—Session Records Review at Lake Crystal

Friday, June 12: Virginia out of the office

Sunday, June 14: Rick attends First Presbyterian Iona's 100th Anniversary

Monday, June 15: 10:00—Staff Meeting



MARK 4:26-34

The Parable of the Growing Seed

He also said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.'

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'

The Use of Parables

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

