

**APRIL 10, 2009**

The synod can be found online at  
[www.lakesandprairies.org](http://www.lakesandprairies.org).

## News around the synod

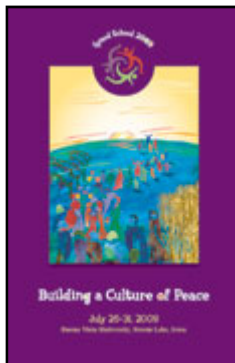
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### 1. FARGO-MOORHEAD AWAITS SECOND CREST:

The cities of Fargo, N.D., and Moorhead, Minn., twin cities along the Red River of the North, are awaiting the second crest of the river this week. According to the latest news reports the river is expected to crest in the coming week at 38 to 40 feet, slightly below the earlier crest. The moderator of Northern Plains Presbytery has appointed a six-member flood response team to "respond to the needs" of the presbytery's communities. Team members are Gretchen Graf, chair, First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks, N.D.; Daniel Wolpert, First Presbyterian Church of Crookston, Minn.; Vicki Rucker, First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck N.D.; George O'Neill, First Presbyterian Church of Moorhead; and Fred MacGregor, First Presbyterian Church of Grand Forks. The team is asking those in the presbytery aware of flood-related concerns to contact Laurie Elhard in the presbytery office by phone at 701.772.0783 or by email at [pnppoffice@gmail.com](mailto:pnppoffice@gmail.com). In the coming weeks it is likely that volunteers will be needed to assist with flood cleanup. Those planning more than a one-day trip to area should register through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance at 866.732.6121. PDA has already issued a \$10,000 grant to provide assistance. Up-to-date news about Red River flooding, and flood response throughout North Dakota and northwest Minnesota can be found at [www.in-forum.com](http://www.in-forum.com) and [www.grandforksherald.com](http://www.grandforksherald.com). ([Return to top](#))



### 2. SYNOD SCHOOL REGISTRATION ON WEB SITE:

Synod School 2009 registration materials can be found online at [www.lakesandprairies.org/school.html](http://www.lakesandprairies.org/school.html). Synod School 2009 runs Sunday through Friday, July 26-31, at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa. This year's theme is "Building a Culture of Peace." ([Return to top](#))

### 3. SYNOD SPRING MEETING SLATED APRIL 26-28:

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies will open its spring meeting Sunday, April 26, at the Mount Olivet Conference and Retreat Center in Farmington, Minn. The meeting will run through Tuesday, April 28. ([Return to top](#))

### 4. MOORHEAD PASTOR MEETS FLOOD,

**HOSPITALIZED SISTER:** The Rev. Nancy Emerson, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Moorhead, Minn., responded to the flood waters of the Red River which forced the evacuation her church. Last week she faced an unexpected challenge when her sister, Cheryl Resnick, was hospitalized in Peoria, Ill. Emerson led services Sunday, April 5, and then flew out Monday to be with her sister, and her sister's family. Sunday evening, Emerson wrote, "Yesterday my sister went to the hospital with symptoms of a severe headache and vomiting. Following a CT scan she was admitted to ICU as she has bleeding from a minor blood vessel in the lining of her brain. ... She

## News around the PC(USA)

[13.](#) Pension fund remains fully funded

[14.](#) Moderator writes of church realities

[15.](#) Parsons writes of 'great loss, great harvest'

[16.](#) Pacific Synod PJC: Examination is proper time for 'scrupling'

[17.](#) Ghost Ranch could become separate corporation

[18.](#) COGA approves revisions to '09-'10 budgets

[19.](#) Calvin celebration encouraged July 12

[20.](#) Foundation announces staff cuts

[21.](#) Plan offered for small churches to be 'house' or fellowship

[22.](#) SDOP online in several places

[23.](#) Bryan heads financial aid

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is conscious but very weak." The news improved quickly when she wrote later Monday, "She had a dye contrast type angiogram of the brain. There are no additional bleeds, no tumors, and the blood from the first bleed is dissipating on its own. Yeah! This is very good news. Her doctor also indicated that there is only a low risk of recurrence. We are all breathing a huge sigh of relief today. ... I know she's feeling better. She asked me to bring the cribbage board." Her sister was scheduled for release from the hospital later in the week. Earlier in the week before her sister was hospitalized, Emerson was interviewed for a story by Minnesota Public Radio. The story opened, "A lot of people in Fargo-Moorhead are worn out. Nearly two weeks of slinging sandbags has exhausted their bodies. But the Red River flood season doesn't just take a physical toll." The complete story is at [Minnesota Public Radio](#). ([Return to top](#))



**5. UNDERWOOD HILLS 'PAWS' SERVICE MAKES USA TODAY:** "As they enter the church, they yip, they lick and they sniff the tail ends of their fellow parishioners. An occasional woof interrupts the piano notes wafting through the sanctuary." That's the beginning of a story by Jeff Martin that appeared in the Tuesday, March 31, edition of the USA Today

newspaper. Martin is describing an every Thursday worship service at Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church, Omaha, Neb. The story continues: "But this is a forgiving audience. It is full of dog lovers, mostly ... " The photograph at left shows dogs in the sanctuary of Underwood Hills Presbyterian. The Rev. Becky Balestri said, "It's like having kids in church." Photograph by Chris Machian for USA Today. The complete story can be found online at [USA Today](#). (*Keeping in Touch thanks the Rev. J. Keith Cook, editor of the Missouri River Valley's newsletter, Monday Morning in the Presbytery, for providing the tip about the article.*) ([Return to top](#))

**6. WEE KIRK MINISTRY CONFERENCE SET IN SIOUX FALLS:** The Wee Kirk Ministry Conference, planned Tuesday through Thursday, May 5-7, in Sioux Falls, S.D., is designed to inspire, equip, motivate, encourage and provide rest and refreshment for pastors, commissioned lay pastors and elders of small Presbyterian churches. The conference is an effort of Presbyterian for Renewal and details can be found at [www.pfrenewal.org/ministries/wee-kirk](http://www.pfrenewal.org/ministries/wee-kirk). ([Return to top](#))

**7. CHURCHES DAMAGED IN IOWA FLOODS SOUGHT:** The Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance is looking for information on religious places damaged by the 2008 floods to help The Partners for Sacred Places, a company based out of Pennsylvania and found online at [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org). The organization goes into communities after a disaster (offices set

up in New Orleans and Galveston) to help fix up and rebuild churches and religious places. This is an important step in a community's recovery efforts and the organization hopes to set up an office in Iowa, but it needs addresses and contacts for religious places that were damaged, according to Don Hampton, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Response Team Member in Iowa. Hampton said the data compiled will be shared with the Rebuild Iowa Office, and with the Partners for Sacred Places so local churches are aware of the benefits that the Partners for Sacred Places can provide. Hampton asks that information on any damaged religious places, along with contact information, be forwarded to him at [dbhampton@att.net](mailto:dbhampton@att.net) or by calling him at 515.961.6808. (*Information The Wider Circle, the newsletter of the Presbytery of Des Moines*) ([Return to top](#))

**8. DISASTER RESPONSE TO 2008 IOWA FLOODING CONTINUES:** The response to the 2008 flood in Iowa continues. Volunteers are still needed and are still being scheduled for the weeks and months ahead. Up-to-date disaster-response information within the Presbytery of East Iowa can be found at [www.pbyeastia.org/tp40/page.asp?ID=155667](http://www.pbyeastia.org/tp40/page.asp?ID=155667). Disaster-relief efforts in the Presbytery of North Central Iowa can be obtained through the presbytery office at 319.233.1747. ([Return to top](#))

**9. STEPHEN MINISTRIES SETS WORKSHOPS IN BISMARCK, ONALASKA:** Stephen Ministries, St. Louis, Mo., plans to conduct Stephen Series Caring Ministry Workshops in May with one in Onalaska, Wis., Saturday May 2, and another in Bismarck, N.D., Saturday, May 9. The four-hour workshops are directed at congregations that currently do not have a Stephen Ministry, according to Cheri Joslin of Stephen Ministries. The workshops will provide practical training and skills, an overview of Stephen Ministry and how to incorporate it into a congregation, and a taste of Stephen Minister training. More information can be found at [www.stephenministries.org](http://www.stephenministries.org). ([Return to top](#))

**10. BUENA VISTA OFFERS ROTC PROGRAM:** Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa, will offer a U.S. Army Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program starting this fall. The ROTC program is expected to have a positive impact on recruitment of new students who have a special interest in a military career, said David Evans, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty. The BVU program will be the only one offered in western Iowa and will be a branch of the ROTC program at Iowa State University. Additional information about the program can be found at [www.bvu.edu/only\\_at\\_bvu/news/detail.dot?inode=93982](http://www.bvu.edu/only_at_bvu/news/detail.dot?inode=93982). ([Return to top](#))

**11. JAMESTOWN COLLEGE AIDS IN FLOOD RELIEF:** The Larson Center gym on the campus of Jamestown College, a Presbyterian-related college in the Presbytery of Northern Plains, was transformed into a Federal Medical Station with the potential to house patients with special medical needs evacuated from Fargo, N.D., due to flooding. Jamestown is located about 100 miles west of Fargo. Student volunteers assisted Central Valley Health District and other medical response agencies in unloading and setting up 250 cots March 28. Subsequent to assisting with flood relief for the Red River Valley, students also filled sandbags to fight flooding of the James River that flows through Jamestown. Additional information related to the Jamestown College effort in response to flooding can be found on the college Web site at [www.jc.edu/campus/campusClips.php](http://www.jc.edu/campus/campusClips.php). ([Return to top](#))

**12. PRES HOUSE HAS BREAK WITH A PURPOSE:** It has been a very full and exciting Spring Semester at Pres House, according to the Rev. Mark Elsdon, executive director of Pres House at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Elsdon wrote, "One of the highlights was our annual 'Break with a Purpose' over spring break. Seventeen people traveled to Heifer Ranch in Arkansas to participate in an active learning experience called Global Passport." A video with images of the trip and with a voice-over from students who participated can be found on the Pres House Web site at [www.preshouse.org/abt.video.bwap.cfm](http://www.preshouse.org/abt.video.bwap.cfm). Students shared about the experience during Pres House worship services. Their comments are at [www.preshouse.org/wor.main.cfm](http://www.preshouse.org/wor.main.cfm) (the March 29, 2009 podcast link). ([Return to top](#))

**13. PENSION FUND REMAINS FULLY FUNDED:** The pension plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Board of Pensions (BOP) remains fully-funded despite investment losses of 28.6 percent in 2008, board members were told at their recent meeting here. From a high of \$7.9 billion in 2007, the board's balanced portfolio declined to \$5.4 billion at the end of 2008, according to Michael F. Fallon Jr., the board's vice president for finance. The complete story is at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09291](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09291). ([Return to top](#))

**14. MODERATOR WRITES OF CHURCH REALITIES, EXPRESSIONS OF BELIEF:** The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, moderator of the 218th General Assembly wrote in his monthly column: "As I write this, we are in the midst of Holy Week and the walk toward the cross. Every year as we enter this time, the church is pushed again to think about the realities and expressions of our belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The covenant made at the last supper, his death on the cross and his resurrection into new life compel us to live in the world in a way that is worthy of the forgiveness given by God." His complete column can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09287](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09287). ([Return to top](#))

**15. PARSONS WRITES OF 'GREAT LOSS, GREAT HARVEST:'** The Rev. Gradye Parsons, stated clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) wrote in his monthly column: "It is my good fortune to teach an adult Sunday school class once a month. A couple of weeks ago, we were discussing Ezekiel 36. I shared an essay by Carlyle Marney entitled 'Years of the Locust' (from *Beggars in Velvet*, Abingdon Press, 1960). The essay draws a parallel between the seasons of discontent and the account of the swarm of locusts in the Old Testament." Parsons' complete column can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09292](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09292). ([Return to top](#))

**16. PACIFIC SYNOD PJC: EXAMINATION IS PROPER TIME FOR 'SCRUPLING:'** The Permanent Judicial Commission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Synod of the Pacific has rescinded a January 2008 decision by San Francisco Presbytery that long-time candidate and open lesbian Lisa Larges is "ready for examination [for ordination] with a departure." The court ruled on March 25 that the presbytery erred by prematurely considering Larges' declaration of a "scruple" (conscientious objection) to G-6.0106b, which requires of church officers "fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness." The court said, "The examination for ordination is the proper time for (the) Presbytery to determine whether or not a candidate's departure constitutes a failure to adhere to the essentials of Reformed faith and polity." The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09252](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09252). ([Return to top](#))

**17. GHOST RANCH COULD BECOME SEPARATE CORPORATION:** The General Assembly Council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is considering separating Ghost Ranch and Ghost Ranch Santa Fe into an independent corporation. The two-location Ghost Ranch is owned and operated by the GAC. The governing board of Ghost Ranch nominates and elects its own members with several GAC members chosen by the GAC. The proposed action would move the properties, programs and governance into a corporation separate from but linked to the PC(USA). On March 27, the GAC approved a five-member study group to examine the proposal and make a recommendation at the GAC's September meeting. The complete story is at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09257](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09257). ([Return to top](#))

**18. COGA APPROVES REVISIONS TO 2009-10 BUDGETS:** The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly approved adjustments of \$400,000 in 2009 and \$800,000 in 2010 to the budgets for the Office of the General Assembly at its meeting March 24-25. The decision to revise the budgets was prompted by the effects of the current global economic crisis, which has resulted in an approximately \$1 million loss to the reserves for OGA through the Presbyterian Foundation. General Assembly policy calls for OGA to maintain 30 percent of its income in reserves. The dramatic drop in investment income leaves reserves right at that percentage. The complete story is at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09264](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09264). ([Return to top](#))

**19. THEOLOGY, WORSHIP ENCOURAGES CALVIN CELEBRATION JULY 12:** The Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is encouraging congregations to observe Sunday, July 12, as the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth. Calvin was born July 10, 1509. Theology and Worship announced that the Rev. John Bush of Decatur, Alabama, has prepared an "excellent" set of liturgical resources after the manner of Calvin's *Form of Church Prayers*, first published in Strasbourg in 1545 and Geneva in 1542, that can be downloaded at [www.pcusa.org/calvinjubilee/pdf/calvinserviceforlordsday.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/calvinjubilee/pdf/calvinserviceforlordsday.pdf). The office also noted that additional musical materials will be posted soon on the Calvin Jubilee Web site at [www.pcusa.org/calvinjubilee/celebrate.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/calvinjubilee/celebrate.htm). ([Return to top](#))

**20. PRESBYTERIAN FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES STAFF CUTS:** The Presbyterian Foundation has announced a reduction in staff affecting one part-time and six full-time employees in its national office and six regional development offices in an effort to reduce payroll expenses and manage budgets during the global financial crisis. Overall, one part-time and 13 full-time positions have been eliminated. The complete story is at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09278](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09278). ([Return to top](#))

**21. PLAN OFFERED FOR SMALL CHURCHES TO BE 'HOUSE' OR FELLOWSHIP:** In a note to middle governing body executives, Jill Hudson, middle governing bodies coordinator, wrote, "A special thanks to Cass Shaw, executive presbyter in Albany Presbytery, for sharing with us their new process for assisting smaller membership congregations no longer able to sustain a congregation to move from chartered status to becoming a house church or fellowship." Titled "Is God Leading Your Congregation to Become a House Church or a Fellowship?" the pamphlet is available online at [www.pcusa.org/mgbconnect/pubs/fellowship-house-manual.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/mgbconnect/pubs/fellowship-house-manual.pdf). ([Return to top](#))

**22. SDOP IS ONLINE IN SEVERAL PLACES:** Clara Nunez, associate for program administration of Self-Development of People in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), is inviting Presbyterians to check out the many places where SDOP can be found online. The story, "Reflections of time spent with the Presbyterian Committee on the Self Development of People," can be found at [www.pcusa.org/sdop](http://www.pcusa.org/sdop). SDOP is also online at [www.youtube.com/user/selfdevelopment](http://www.youtube.com/user/selfdevelopment). On Facebook SDOP can be found by searching

Self Development of People at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). ([Return to top](#))

**23. BRYAN TO HEAD OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID FOR STUDIES:** Laura Bryan, who joined the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s stewardship education team in June 1996 and has most recently served as program assistant for student loans in the Office of Financial Aid for Studies, has been promoted to the position of associate in that office. In her new role, Bryan will have oversight of FAS, which awards more than \$1 million annually to PC(USA) students pursuing undergraduate, graduate and post graduate degrees. Housed in the PC(USA)'s Office of Vocation, a joint ministry of the General Assembly Council and the Office of the General Assembly, staffing for Financial Aid for Studies was reduced from three positions to two as a result of the March 27 meeting of the GAC. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/pressreleases/gac09007](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/pressreleases/gac09007). ([Return to top](#))

**24. FRICK NAMED ASSOCIATE FOR CAMPS, CONFERENCE CENTERS:** Brian Frick of Parkville, Mo., is the new Associate for Camps and Conference Centers for the General Assembly Council. "I'm excited to have Brian on board because he's an out-of-the-box thinker," says Eric Hoey, director of Evangelism and Church Growth. "His leadership in our camps and conference ministry will have great influence upon the whole church." Frick has led several Presbyterian camps and conference centers. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/pressreleases/gac09006](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/pressreleases/gac09006). ([Return to top](#))

**25. RAY JONES NAMED COORDINATOR OF EVANGELISM:** Ray Jones, the founding pastor of the 500-member Macland Presbyterian Church in Powder Springs, Ga., has been named coordinator of evangelism for the Evangelism and Church Growth ministry area in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Jones will oversee the new offices of Personal and Congregational Evangelism, as well as the newly formed Youth and Collegiate Ministries office. He will also provide leadership for camps and conferences and for the Asian-American leadership office. The complete story is at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/pressreleases/gac09008](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/pressreleases/gac09008). ([Return to top](#))