



DECEMBER 14, 2007

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1. **GULF COAST MISSION TRIP SEEKS GIFT CARDS:** Presbyterians from Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota are getting together for a Gulf Coast Mission Trip Jan. 19-26. Trip participants are asking Presbyterians to consider a year-end contribution to their respective presbytery in the form of a gift card to The Home Depot or Lowes as a way to support the individuals who are going on the Mission Trip. Gift cards may be purchased online by going to www.homedepot.com or www.lowes.com. There is no shipping charge for gift cards purchased online from either store. *(Information edited from Out and About, the newsletter for the Presbytery of East Iowa)*

2. MINNESOTA NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBE RECEIVES SDOP GRANT: The Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People has approved grants totaling \$495,250 to 21 self-help projects in the United States, including \$20,000 to assist cooperative efforts by the Anishinnabig tribe of the White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota to grow traditional Native American foods. The grant money comes from the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. The White Earth project also includes health education, greenhouse construction and maintenance, and seed preservation. Information about all the SDOP grants can be found at www.pcusa.org/sdop/.

3. HUNGER PROGRAM AWARDS GRANT TO MILWAUKEE CONFERENCE: The Presbyterian Hunger Program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has awarded a \$7,000 grant to the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee to continue the conference's work in housing. The two primary goals of the conference are to oversee the administration of the Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund and to work with congregations and others to form a Waukesha Housing Trust Fund. The Presbyterian Hunger Program receives its funding through the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. (*Information edited from Presbytery Notes, a newsletter for the Presbytery of Milwaukee*)

4. 'FESTIVAL OF HOMILETICS' COMES TO TWIN CITIES IN MAY: The "Festival of Homiletics: Transformational Preaching!" is coming to the Twin Cities May 19-23 at Westminster Presbyterian Church and Central Lutheran Church, both in Minneapolis. The 2007 Festival drew 1,700 pastors from all denominations to Nashville, Tenn. Speakers for this year's Festival is long and distinguished, and the week will include liturgical, blended, and jazz worship. Information regarding the Festival can be found at www.goodpreacher.com/festival.

5. HILLCREST RUNNING 'REFLECTIONS IN THE PARK:' The hills of Louis Murphy Park in Dubuque, Iowa, are alive with the thousands of lights in the 13th annual "Reflections in the Park," a program of Hillcrest Family Services, a nonprofit human services agency associated with the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, that serves more than 16,000 individuals in need each year. The festivities opened in late November and run through Jan. 1. Open to the public, admission is \$7 per vehicle, the same price charged 13 years ago. Proceeds from "Reflections in the Park" help fund Hillcrest's programs and services. More details can be found at www.hillcrest-fs.org/reflections.html.

6. CAMP WYOMING PLANS 'WINTERENTERTAINMENT:' Camp Wyoming, located at Wyoming, Iowa, in the Presbytery of East Iowa, will run its "Wintertainment" program Friday through Sunday, December 28-30, for students in grades 3 to 12. "Wintertainment" features a tubing hill, morning worship, evening campfires and more. The event provides the opportunities to reunite with friends from summer and make new ones. The registration deadline is Dec. 21. Additional information about the event can be found at www.campwyoming.net/November%2007%20Design.pdf. (*Information edited from Out and About, the newsletter for the Presbytery of East Iowa*)

7. WESTMINSTER WOODS DECOMMISSIONING SERVICE SET: A decommissioning service for Westminster Woods Camp, which had been a ministry of the Presbytery of Central Nebraska until it closed this year, has been set Sunday, Jan. 6, at 4 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church in Lexington, Neb. The service will recognize those who have served at the camp. The service will also include a brief history, with accompanying photographs. Camp t-shirts will be available for free during the reception that follows the service.

8. CHARGE TO PASTOR OFFERS IMPORTANT ADVICE: Bill Byrd, interim executive presbyter of the Presbytery of Prospect Hill, included the reconstruction of a charge to the pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Schaller, Iowa. Byrd wrote, "A number of weeks ago I had the privilege to participate in the installation service for Adam Cox. ... Jane Bisenius, representing the pastor nominating committee, read such an inspiring charge to the pastor that several of us requested her notes. Below is the transcription and reconstruction of her talk. Although much of the ad lib humor was lost, I think you will enjoy this nonetheless." In her charge, Bisenius said, "We know you to be a marathon runner. As a marathon runner, you are now embarking on the most exciting marathon of your life." The complete text of the charge can be found by clicking on E-News on the home page of the presbytery, www.prospecthillpresby.org, and then selecting the Dec. 7 issue.

9. TRAGEDY STRIKES OMAHA MALL: Last week a gunman killed eight before taking his own life at Westroads Mall in Omaha, Neb. The morning after the shooting, Chaz Ruark, interim executive presbyter in the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley, sent a note to Presbyterian churches in Omaha. The note also contains a message for all during this season. He wrote, "When senseless tragedy strikes many of us immediately phone loved ones to be sure they are o.k. Consider this our presbytery's phone call. I hope and pray that none of our members or friends are involved. If someone in your church has been impacted, please let us know so that we may remember those persons specifically in our prayers and offer assistance to your ministry. As we react to and reflect on yesterday's senseless shootings, I am reminded that it happened in this Advent season when we find special solace in the words of Matthew: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,' which means, 'God is with us.' Whether in great joy or in the midst of terrible pain, God is with us. May we all feel God's presence and share it with others these days."

10. KANSAS COMMUNITY CONTINUES RECOVERY FROM TORNADO: Bob Houser, executive presbyter in the Presbytery of Central Nebraska, forwarded a note from the Rev. Angela Madden of Pratt (Kan.) Presbyterian Church regarding the recovery efforts in Greensburg, Kan., where a tornado struck last summer. Houser had been a part of the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance response team in Greensburg. Madden wrote: "Thank you for checking in. Progress is going well. Our church has a couple of big mission projects in the works. We adopted several families and will supply one family from Greensburg with their 'Christmas.' Then, we are going to caravan to Greensburg and hand-deliver \$100 Wal-Mart cards and Bibles to 75 families living in the FEMA village. During the month of October, we purchased washers and dryers for six families. The needs are great right now. ... If folks want to contribute we will put their money to good use."

11. PC(USA) OFFERS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS, HASTINGS OFFERS

AWARDS: It's not too early to be thinking about college in the fall. For high school graduates planning to be full-time freshmen at colleges related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), now is the time to apply for a National Presbyterian College Scholarship. The deadline is Jan. 31, 2008. Based on financial need, this award could provide \$250 to \$1,400 toward expenses. Information about the scholarship can be found at www.pcusa.org/financialaid/programs/natpresbycollege.htm. Juniors and seniors attending PC(USA)-related colleges in 2007-2008 should consider the Samuel Robinson Award. The application deadline for this award isn't until April 1, but now is the time to plan for it. Information about this award can be found at www.pcusa.org/financialaid/programs/samuelrobinson.htm. Eligible students will recite the answers to the Westminster Shorter Catechism and write a 2,000-word essay, that addresses the question, "If you were responsible for providing opportunities on your campus

to reach out to students struggling with their faith, what would you do?" Hastings (Neb.) College, one of seven Presbyterian-related colleges across the synod, offers matching funds up to \$500 for students receiving assistance from their Presbyterian churches. For more information, see

www.hastings.edu/igsbase/igstemplate.cfm?SRC=DB&SRCN=&GnavID=16&SnavID=35&TnavID=17. Hastings College also offers a \$2,000 per year scholarship, regardless of financial need, to dependent children of ordained clergy who are actively employed by a PC(USA) congregation or program. Information about that scholarship can be found at www.hastings.edu/igsbase/igstemplate.cfm?SRC=MD006&SRCN=articledetails&GnavID=144&SnavID=194&TnavID=&NewsID=792.

12. HASTINGS COLLEGE GRADUATE RETURNS TO EARTH: After orbiting Earth since June as flight engineer on the International Space Station, Hastings (Neb.) College graduate Clayton C. Anderson returned home aboard the space shuttle Discovery on Nov. 7. The NASA astronaut received a bachelor's degree in physics from Hastings College in 1981 and a master's degree in aerospace engineering from Iowa State University in 1983. Anderson will visit Hastings College on March 2-3. A ceremony honoring him will be held in French Chapel on March 2 at 7:30 p.m. Anderson will visit classes on March 3. For more information about Anderson's space trip, visit the Web site of Hastings College at www.hastings.edu and scroll down on the page.

13. MODERATOR ASKS: WANT TO GIVE GOD JOY?: Joan Gray, moderator of the 217th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), urged Presbyterians to provide gifts to serve God during the Christmas season. She wrote, "'I wish I could send them home with some small thing, even a piece of soap.' These were the words of a pastor in the Cameroon, West Africa. He was telling our Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) delegation visiting Cameroon about the support group his congregation sponsors for people living with HIV/AIDS. The support group is a lifeline for people who are often ostracized because of their disease. The pastor reminds them often that they are loved by God. However, it hurts his soul to have to send these people away with nothing in their hands to remind them of God's love and the church's care. ... Want to give God joy? Then grab hold of some piece of the need of the world and give a sacrificial gift that makes a difference for good. If worldwide mission is your passion, you can find out how to support the work of our missionaries and partner churches by visiting www.pcusa.org/advent/give.htm. ..." Gray's complete message can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07810.htm.

14. KIRKPATRICK OFFERS ADVENT GREETINGS: Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) offered greetings for the Advent season. He wrote, "Happy New Year! Some of you may think I am a month too early in saying that familiar phrase. However, the Christian year starts with Advent, not on Jan. 1. It all begins with the joyous expectation that God will enter human history in the form of a child and that the Word will once again be made flesh. Advent is one of my favorite seasons of the year, both for the gatherings with family and friends and the glitter of the season (I'm hooked!). Even more importantly, it is one of my favorites because of the hope that the promise of Jesus coming into the world anew offers to me, to my family, to this church, and to the world. ..." Kirkpatrick's complete message can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07815.htm.

15. PDA NEW ORLEANS COORDINATOR DIES IN CAR CRASH: Rich Cozzone, volunteer village coordinator for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) died in an automobile accident in New Orleans last week. Cozzone, a retired school administrator from Ohio, came to the Gulf Coast for the first time shortly after

Hurricane Katrina, and instantly became deeply involved in the PC(USA)'s disaster relief efforts. Before being named earlier this year as coordinator of all of PDA's volunteer villages along the Gulf Coast, he was PDA's site coordinator in New Orleans.

16. FORM OF GOVERNMENT TASK FORCE REVISES DOCUMENTS: Based largely on denomination-wide feedback, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Form of Government Task Force (FOGTF) has voted to present the two key parts of its work to the 218th General Assembly (GA) in separate recommendations. The nine-member task force, charged by the 217th General Assembly (2006) with reorganizing the denomination's Form of Government, voted during a meeting here Nov. 29-Dec.1 to recommend that the Book of Order: be amended by striking the text of Chapters I-IV of the current "Form of Government" and inserting a new section entitled, "Foundations of Presbyterian Polity," and be amended by striking the text of Chapters V-XVIII of the current "Form of Government" and inserting a new "Form of Government." The full story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07797.htm.

17. PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER'S MUSIC REVIEWED: An album by Bryan Field McFarland, a Presbyterian minister, song writer, performer and Hunger Action Enabler, was recently reviewed in Presbyterians Today. The review of McFarland's album, "All That Matters," said the album "sets a new standard for independent recordings." McFarland's song, "Enough for Everyone," had been featured on the synod's MySpace page. The complete review can be found at www.pcusa.org/today/media/music.htm. Some of McFarland's music can be found online at www.myspace.com/songsbryanfieldmcfarland. McFarland is also the Hunger Action Enabler in Salem Presbytery. A portion of his music proceeds goes to the Presbyterian Hunger Program, www.pcusa.org/hunger/resources.htm.

18. PRESBYTERIANS PITCH IN AFTER FIRESTORM: When a wall of fire rushed toward Patricia Creek's house, all she thought of was getting out safely with her husband, Will, and two young daughters, Amanda and Aerin. The Creeks, residents of the Rancho Bernardo suburb of San Diego, Calif., with ties to a local Presbyterian church, were among thousands of people to lose their homes in the wildfires that ravaged southern California last month. This full story can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07780.htm>.

19. RIVERSIDE PRESBYTERY PARTNERS WITH JOINING HEARTS & HANDS: Riverside Presbytery, headquartered San Bernardino, Calif., voted at its Nov. 13 meeting to launch a \$500,000 campaign in partnership with the Mission Initiative: Joining Hearts & Hands (MIJHH). MIJHH is the five-year campaign of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to raise \$40 million for new international mission personnel and for church development in the U.S., particularly racial ethnic and immigrant congregations. MIJHH will continue to receive pledges toward its \$40 million goal through the 218th General Assembly (2008), with payments accepted through December 31, 2012. The full story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07803.htm.

20. SOUPER FUND-RAISING EVENTS TAKE A BIT OUT OF HUNGER: Super Bowl Sunday isn't just about football any more. Combine the day with an annual nationwide youth effort called the Souper Bowl of Caring, tapping worshipers for donations, and you've got a great way to help the hungry. This faith-based crusade against hunger, started by a Presbyterian pastor in 1990, has signed up youth groups to collect money and canned goods in soup cauldrons when parishioners leave services on Super Bowl Sunday, which will be Feb. 3. The full story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07796.htm.

21. GOOD BLOGGING INSIGHTS OFFERED BY SLATE EDITOR: David Plotz, deputy editor of Slate magazine, is the mastermind behind the cyberspace hit " Blogging the Bible." The blog provides a summary and Plotz's take on each book of the Old Testament, one by one. Slate, launched in 1996, is the largest online magazine in the world, drawing 10 million different readers every month. Plotz offers a few reasons why his wild idea drew such a vast listening audience. A successful blog does several things, according to Plotz. For one, the blog develops a personal relationship with readers. Plotz said, "I read the Bible and wrote about it in a very casual way. I was just thunderstruck by the response. The readers develop this very personal relationship. It ended up creating a community of people." A good blog also speaks directly to readers in language they can understand and appreciate and draws in diverse groups. Plotz said the blog drew thousands of e-mails from interested readers, as well as passionate comments from both atheists and orthodox individuals. "The atheists asked why I was taking this book so seriously. The fundamentalists thought I wasn't reading it with authority." Finally, a good blog is just plain fun. "Sometimes I tried to be very funny, and very irreverent. People liked the idea that this was a funny response." Plotz is turning the blog into a book. Meanwhile, to visit the blog, go to www.slate.com.
(Information edited from e-Counselor, the newsletter for the Religion Communicators Council)