



Synod of Lakes and Prairies
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Keeping in Touch

An e-newsletter for ministry partners in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies

OCTOBER 24, 2008

You can find the synod online at www.lakesandprairies.org or on My Space at www.myspace.com/synodoflakesandprairies.

News around the synod

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1. FOUNDATION OFFICIAL OFFERS PRAISE FOR CEDAR RAPIDS CHURCH:

Walter Olker, a development officer with the Presbyterian Foundation, recently sent a note to Bob Houser, executive presbyter for the Presbytery of Central Nebraska and a response team member for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, stating, "I just returned from doing PDA flood relief in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, as part of the Presbytery of Northern Kansas. We were housed and coordinated by Christ Presbyterian Church in Cedar Rapids, and I can't say enough about their organization, hospitality and friendship. If you need anyone to share an experience, I'd be happy to." Olker's note, too, is a reminder that the need for workers still remains in the Presbytery of East Iowa. The latest information on recovery efforts can be found at

<http://www.pbtheastia.org/tp40/page.asp?ID=155667>.
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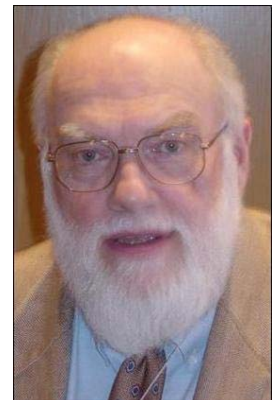
2. CONSTRUCTION PROGRESSES AT OKOBOJI

CAMP: According to announcement in presbytery newsletters this month, construction on the retreat center at Presbyterian Camp on Okoboji, Milford, Iowa, continues to progress. The great room has been framed and metal roofing has been installed. The building is close to being wired and plumbed, and showers and

cooling/heating units for individual rooms are installed. When completed, this building will enable the camp to offer year-round programming. The building will serve family reunions, business conferences, church retreats and more. The camp serves the presbyteries of Prospect Hill, North Central Iowa and Minnesota Valleys. Pictures of the construction progress can be found at http://www.presbycamp.org/Building_the_Future/future-capital.htm. ([Back to top](#))

3. MRV STATED CLERK

ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT: The Rev. Russell Palmer has announced his retirement as stated clerk of the Missouri River Valley Presbytery effective Dec. 31. Palmer has served as stated clerk of the presbytery since 1991. A reception in his honor is planned Sunday, Jan. 11, from 2 to 4 p.m. at Pacific Springs Senior Living Village, 174th and Pacific Streets, Omaha, Neb. ([Back to top](#))



available online

13. Spring classes listed in 'Vital Christianity Academy'

PC(USA) news

14. FOG Task Force creates documents for study

15. PC(USA) releases voting rights, election reform report

16. Researcher studies 'spiritual but not religious'

17. Tulsa church approves buying back property

18. Mother pleads not guilty for leaving child at church

19. Religious leaders issue appeal in response to Iraq killings

20. Festivities set this week for Presbyterian Center anniversary

And just one more

21. Unpacking Christian cable television



4. TRAYLOR LEAVES NORTHERN PLAINS FOR TENNESSEE:

The Rev. Charles (Chuck) Traylor, who has served as executive presbyter for the Presbytery of the Northern Plains for more than four years, will begin serving his call as

pastor of Fairfield Glade Community Church in Fairfield Glade, Tenn., Nov. 1. Traylor wrote about his transition in The Presbyterian Outlook magazine. He asked, "As I make the transition from middle governing body work to service as a pastor in a local congregation, I reflect on my pilgrimage and beyond. How has my service in observing and being a ministry partner to pastors influenced my understanding of the pastoral task? How do presbyteries and congregations nurture the pastors God has called to service in their midst?" His complete comments can be found at <http://www.pres-outlook.com/reports-a-resources/presbyterian-heritage-articles/7947-encouraging-pastors-to-receive-the-gift-of-sabbath.html>. Writing in the October edition of Light of the Northern Plains, the presbytery's newsletter, Traylor commented, "Sarah and I are so grateful for the many expressions of friendship and affection you have shared with us as we move to Tennessee. The 'barbed wire fence around Yahweh's Ranch' cake at the presbytery meeting, commemorative items from various churches, the gorgeous Dave Nix photo of the wild horses of Medora, and a certain smooth libation are each precious memories and at the same time ongoing reminders of our time among you." ([Back to top](#))

5. IOWA CHAPTER OF PRESBYTERIAN SCIENCE GROUP MEETS NOV. 8: The Central Iowa Chapter of the Presbyterian Association on Science, Technology and the Christian Faith will meet Saturday, Nov. 8, from 1:30 to 3:30 pm, in the Social Hall of Collegiate Presbyterian Church, Ames, for a program on "Animal Welfare and Christian Responsibility." Background information for the program is the "Report of the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production," author's pages 60-87, which is available online at www.ncifap.org. The meeting is free and open to the public. The group does encourage those who plan to attend to send an email to wcd@iastate.edu. ([Back to top](#))

6. WINNEBAGO PARTNERSHIP DELEGATION LEAVES FOR COLOMBIA: Winnebago Presbytery Executive Presbyter Lucy Rupe, Elder Nancy Siewert, the Rev. Richard Manny, Elder Anneliese Waggoner, the Rev. Susan Zencka, and Elder Jim Baumbach left the Outagamie County airport early Monday morning heading for Barranquilla, Colombia, where they are visiting the Reformed University and a displaced persons community. They also plan to fly to Apartado in northwest Colombia and spend four days in the area meeting with Winnebago's partner Uraba Presbytery, visiting the Presbyterian-run elementary school and visiting churches. Richard, Susan and Lucy will preach at three churches Sunday. Monday they fly to Medellin for a tour prior to returning home Nov. 4. ([Back to top](#))

7. PASTOR WRITES 'BLEST IN MY DYING:' The Presbytery of Northern Waters forwarded a statement this month from the Rev. Jim Elvig, a honorably retired minister member of the presbytery who is suffering from cancer of the esophagus. Sharon Johnson, executive presbyter, wrote, "May each one of us hold Jim, Margie and their family in our prayers." Johnson noted that Elvig served many of the small churches in the presbytery which are located on the iron range, including Keewatin, the Lawron Church, Bowstring, Riverside, Goodland and Warba, "Keeping in Touch" sought and received permission to pass on Elvig's statement, which is reprinted below.

Blest in My Dying

It appears that my remaining days are brief.

I'm anxious to leave this mortal flesh, to be clothed upon with immortality and the revelation of what awaits all of God's children.

I'm blest in my dying in that God has allowed me sufficient opportunity to put things in order. To get rid of a number of things, like books, tools and to gather photo slides of our early family life scanned onto DVD for my children.

I'm blest in my dying in that my theology has refocused upon the importance of the Cross of Christ. Hymns and scripture verses have helped emphasize this to me:

*"My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, O My Soul."
(Hymn, "It is Well with My Soul")*

"For God so Loved the World that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved," John 3:16-17.

"May you be made strong with all the strength which comes from His glorious power so that you may be able to endure everything with patience and with joy give thanks. At one time you were far away from God – but now by means of the physical death of His Son, God has made you friends, in order to bring you holy, pure and faultless into His presence." Colossians 1:11-12, 21-22.

I'm blest in my dying by being surrounded by a household of love – not only my wife and daughters, but son-in-laws, grandchildren, siblings, extended family and friends expressing their love and care. One could not ask for more.

I'd like to close with a bedtime prayer:

*"Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take."*

May the Holy Spirit convey to you the Peace and Joy of knowing Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Jim Elvig

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8. PENSIONS BOARD ISSUES REMINDER FOR HEALTH ASSESSMENT: The Board of Pensions is asking middle governing bodies to remind their active medical plan members and spouses to take the Mayo Clinic Health Assessment. Preventive care keeps our membership healthier and controls healthcare costs. One useful tool to get members and spouses started on the path to wellness is the secure, online Health Assessment, designed by the experts at Mayo Clinic. The questionnaire reviews members' current health status and provides recommendations on how to make positive changes. Members and spouses can visit www.pensions.org/healthassessment for details and to access the Health Assessment. ([Back to top](#))

9. TAX TIPS FOR MINISTERS, CHURCHES TELECONFERENCE SET DEC. 11: Registration is open for a freeteleconference Dec. 11, from 2-3 p.m. that covers tax tips for ministers and churches. Registration ends Nov. 21. The teleconference is sponsored by the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The teleconference will feature tax expert Richard R. Hammar, who will address recent tax law changes that will affect ministers and churches, eligible deductions that are often overlooked in church and clergy tax returns, the right way to handle the housing allowance, cellphone expenses, church member donations, and more. Registration can be completed online at <http://quest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Info/Summary.aspx?e=8cefc417-4a4f-4d1d-8d67-2ea43aaca747> or by calling 800.355.4487. Hurry, registration ends Nov. 21. ([Back to top](#))

10. SYNOD'S COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES HIGHLIGHTED IN APCU NEWSLETTER: Three Presbyterian colleges and universities within the Synod of Lakes and Prairies were highlighted in the most recent edition of UPDATE, a newsletter of the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities. Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, Iowa, (www.bvu.edu) has a new degree-completion program, Bachelor of Applied Studies. It is designed to meet the needs of graduates of community colleges and other accredited institutions who have earned an associate degree in science, applied science and applied arts. Carroll University, Waukesha, Wis., (www.cc.edu) has received a \$595,000 federal grant to help develop and launch a new physician assistant training program. The program will focus on serving Wisconsin's growing Hispanic population. Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, (www.coe.edu) is preparing to host its sixth annual Coe Playground of Science night for elementary school students and parents. Coe faculty and students lead

hands-on demonstrations designed to show that science can be fun. ([Back to top](#))

11. UDTS WELCOMES 4 NEW FACULTY:The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (<http://udts.dbq.edu/>) welcomed four new faculty members this fall. They are the Rev. Timothy Slemmons, assistant professor of homiletics and worship; the Rev. Amanda Benckhuysen, instructor of Old Testament; the Rev. Annette Bourland Huizenga, instructor of New Testament; and the Rev. Matthew Schlimm, instructor of Old Testament. ([Back to top](#))

12. SCHOLARSHIP APP AVAILABLE FOR HS SENIORS: The National Presbyterian College Scholarship application for the 2009-10 academic year is now available online. The scholarship is open to high school seniors who plan to attend a Presbyterian college or university next fall. The application can be found at www.pcusa.org/financialaid/programs/natpresbycollege.htm. ([Back to top](#))

13. SPRING CLASSES LISTED IN 'ACADEMY FOR VITAL CHRISTIANITY:' The Academy for Vital Christianity of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, New Brighton, Minn., in partnership with the Minnesota Conferences of the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church, offers a wide variety of classes designed for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the Christian tradition. Spring classes are now listed on the seminary's website. Students in the Academy have the opportunity to learn to read the Bible in creative and eye-opening ways, draw on the wisdom of 2000 years to answer questions about God and life, expand skills for leadership in a congregation, and bring faith to bear on the great needs of the world. With the satisfactory completion of five classes, students earn a Certificate in Christian Studies from United Theological Seminary. Spring classes can be found at <http://www.unitedseminary.edu/CommunityPrograms/academy.asp#spring>. ([Back to top](#))



14. FOG TASK FORCE CREATES DOCUMENTS TO AID STUDY, RESPONSE:

Charged by the 218th General Assembly with engaging sessions and presbyteries in a period of study of the new Form of Government documents, the expanded Form of Government Task Force has revised the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and Form of Government documents based on the feedback received through the Assembly, including all of the overtures, advice and counsel memoranda, and Assembly committee comments. These revised documents are available online at www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment. In addition to the revised documents, the Task Force has created several additional documents that are available online, including "What is Missional Ecclesiology?" "Preface to Study Guides," "Individual Preparation Guide," "Group Study Guide," and "Updated Advisory Handbooks for Councils." ([Back to top](#))

15. PC(USA) RELEASES VOTING RIGHTS, ELECTION REFORM REPORT: Adding its voice to the widespread public concern for possible voter disenfranchisement, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy released this week a report entitled, Lift Every Voice: Democracy, Voting Rights, and Electoral Reform. The report – which includes the full text of a policy statement adopted by the 218th General Assembly of the PC(USA) in June in San Jose, Calif. – is being sent to all members of the U.S. Congress, as well as to state election officials and congregations in state capitals that are most likely to contain church members involved in the electoral process. The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08791. ([Back to top](#))

16. PC(USA) RESEARCHER STUDIES 'SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS:' One of the first and most frequent statements Americans hear when conversation turns to religion is "I'm spiritual but not religious?" Growing alienation of young people from organized churches and the general decline in church membership in the country have many denominations scrambling to find new ways to reach out to the unchurched. The Rev. Linda Mercadante, a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) minister who teaches theology at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, has moved beyond speculation and conducted extensive research on what people mean when they say "I'm spiritual but not religious." This complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08779. ([Back to top](#))

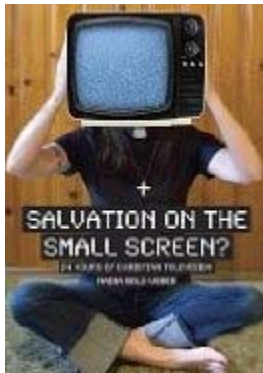
17. TULSA CHURCH APPROVES BUYING BACK ITS PROPERTY: By a narrow margin, members of breakaway Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian Church in Tulsa, Okla., voted Oct. 19 to pay \$1.75 million to Eastern Oklahoma Presbytery for the congregation's land and buildings. Members voted 508 to 483 to pay for the 100,000-square-foot church building, located on nearly 10 acres of prime real estate, instead of continuing legal battles to try and prove Kirk of the Hills already owns it. The 2,600-member Kirk of the Hills congregation, which has until Nov. 15 to pay the presbytery, may now remain in place and continue its ministries in the location it has occupied since the 1970s. The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08775. ([Back to top](#))

18. MOTHER PLEADS NOT GUILTY FOR LEAVING CHILD AT CHURCH: The woman accused of abandoning her baby in the cold outside a Presbyterian church in Washington state has pleaded not guilty to a misdemeanor charge. Sarah M. Christianson, 22, entered her plea Oct. 22 at the Regional Justice Center in Kent, Wash. Christianson left the baby girl on the doorstep of

Steel Lake Presbyterian Church in Federal Way, Wash., at 2:15 a.m. Sept. 28, two hours after she gave birth alone outside of her apartment complex a third of a mile away, court documents state. This complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08787. ([Back to top](#))

19. RELIGIOUS LEADERS ISSUE APPEAL IN RESPONSE TO IRAQ KILLINGS: Religious leaders around the world, including those in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), are asking their members to pray for the Christian community in Iraq and particularly the northern city of Mosul, where more than two dozen Christians have been murdered in recent days by militant Sunnis. Mosul, the second most populous city in Iraq, is the site of the ancient biblical city of Nineveh and home to one of Iraq's five Presbyterian-Reformed congregations. Hundreds of Christians have fled Mosul since the spate of killings began. The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08755.htm. ([Back to top](#))

20. FESTIVITIES THIS WEEK FOR PRESBYTERIAN CENTER ANNIVERSARY: A half day of festivities will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Presbyterian Center in Louisville Oct. 29. The celebration will include a worship service, speeches by Louisville and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) dignitaries, and a ceremony honoring milestone employment anniversaries for some 170 Presbyterian Center employees who have served here from five to 40 years. Twentieth anniversary celebration speakers will include General Assembly Council Executive Director Linda Valentine, General Assembly Stated Clerk Gradye Parsons, and Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson. The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08788. ([Back to top](#))



21. UNPACKING CHRISTIAN CABLE TV – LITTLE GRACE: It's a place where Heavenly Gear Athletic Shoes with gold embroidered praying hands and "God Bless" stitched on the side cost \$49.95 ... where God is presented 'much like a manipulative boyfriend or girlfriend who tests you to see how much you really love him or her' ... and where televangelists preface a point by saying, "The Bible is really clear." Author Nadia Bolz-Weber – who defies anybody to read a book in the Bible "and say everything seemed clear" – has gone on a theological odyssey into the around-the-clock world of Christian television in her new book, "Salvation on the Small Screen." From 5 a.m. Nov. 2 to 5 a.m. Nov. 3, 2007, Nadia watched the Trinity Broadcasting Network for 24 consecutive hours to gain a theological perspective on Christian cable TV – to chronicle its star televangelists, prosperity gospel fare, use (and occasional misuse) of the Bible, and product offerings. Additional information about the book and author can be found at <http://www.amazon.com/Salvation-Small-Screen-Christian-Television/dp/1596270861>. ([Back to top](#))