



**NOVEMBER 30, 2007**

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### **Synod news, events, activities**

1. **SYNOD SCHOOL BROCHURE AVAILABLE ON WEB SITE**
2. **'CLEARWATER 2008' CONFERENCE SLATES 'REBOOTING'**
3. **SYNOD SEEKS TO REDUCE ITS VIDEO LIBRARY**

### **Presbytery news, events, activities**

4. **RUSHFORD CHURCH OFFERS THANKS FOR ASSISTANCE**
5. **CHURCHES HELP NEEDY WITH ECUMENICAL THRIFT STORE**
6. **PRESBYTERIAN HOMES ANNOUNCES SEVERAL NEW STEPS**
7. **PRESBYTERY OF EAST IOWA FORMS TASK FORCE ON TORTURE**
8. **DES MOINES PRESBYTERY URGES SIGNING 'WELCOMING' PETITION**
9. **TWIN CITIES WORK GROUP LEADS SPIRITUAL FORMATION GROUPS**

### **College, seminary news**

10. **SEMINARY PART OF UNIVERSITY OR VICE VERSA**
11. **HAYTHORN ACCEPTS PRESIDENCY OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FUND**
12. **UNITED THEOLOGICAL OFFERS COMMUNITY NURSE PROGRAM**

### **Board of Pensions updates**

13. **BOARD OF PENSIONS 'PREVENTIVE INCENTIVE' STILL AVAILABLE**

### **Selected training, conferences**

14. **MENNONITE PEACE CENTER SETS MEDIATION TRAINING IN SPRING**
15. **COACHING SKILLS TRAINING FOR PRESBYTERY TEAMS SET**
16. **INTERIM MINISTRY NETWORK CONFERENCE SET IN MAY**

### **National PC(USA) news**

17. **SPEAKERS, LISTENERS PRAISE 'MISSION CHALLENGE '07'**
18. **PC(USA) PRODUCES ABC NETWORK'S CHRISTMAS SPECIAL**
19. **STATED CLERK NOMINATIONS ACCEPTED UNTIL DEC. 23**
20. **MODERATORS CONFERENCE EXPLORES DISCERNMENT**
21. **NATIONAL CAPITAL PRESBY ENDORSES GA MODERATOR CANDIDATE**
22. **PRESBYTERIAN ELDER WRITES STORY ON IMMIGRATION ISSUES**

1. **SYNOD SCHOOL BROCHURE AVAILABLE ON WEB SITE:** Synod School 2008 has adopted the theme, "Coloring Outside the Lines," to look at how the church might move beyond timidity and try new things. In its preliminary brochure, just recently released,

Synod School 2008 introduced its convocation speaker, Scott Nesbitt, who is pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Clinton, Iowa. A Bible study and theology teacher at Synod School, the Rev. Nesbitt recently received his doctorate in historical theology. According to the brochure, Nesbitt will "challenge us to become like little children who can paint a picture with bold colors and call it beautiful even though almost every boundary has been completely disregarded." The Synod School 2008 brochure can be found online at <http://www.lakesandprairies.org/PDFFiles/SYNOD-SCHOOL-BROCHURE-08.pdf>.

**2. 'CLEARWATER 2008' CONFERENCE SLATES 'REBOOTING:'** Titled "Rebooting the Church for the 21st Century," the Clearwater 2008 conference will feature Leonard Sweet as keynote speaker. Sweet, the author of "The Gospel According to Starbucks," has been called one of the 50 most influential Christians in America by The Church Report in both 2006 and 2007. Clearwater 2008 runs April 18-20, 2008, at Presbyterian Clearwater Forest, Deerwood, Minn. Sweet is currently the E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism at Drew Theological School in Madison, N.J., and Visiting Distinguished Professor at George Fox University in Portland, Ore. He is the author of more than 100 articles, 600 published sermons and 30 books. A copy of the conference brochure can be found at <http://www.lakesandprairies.org/PDFFiles/Clearwater%202008%20Brochure%20Large.pdf>.

**3. SYNOD SEEKS TO REDUCE ITS VIDEO LIBRARY:** The Synod of Lakes and Prairies is attempting to reduce its video library by making a number of old VHS recordings available for free on a first-come, first-served basis. The videos and the number available are Footsteps in Faith, 10; Coping with Conflict I, 8; Coping with Conflict II, 6; The Personnel Function of Sessions, 3; The In-Between Times, 3; Leadership Options for Small Congregations, 5; Preparation for Ministry, 1; Financial Campaign Strategies for Your Church, 5; Winds Over Dakota, 2; Closing Your Church's Back Door, 8; and Support of Pastors, 6. To request a copy of a video, write to Jackie Palmer, business manager, at [jpalmer@lakesandprairies.org](mailto:jpalmer@lakesandprairies.org).

**4. RUSHFORD CHURCH OFFERS THANKS FOR ASSISTANCE:** The Rev. Susan Li, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Rushford, Minn., is thanking those who are helping the church and community recover from the floods of August. Li, who is also a synod commissioner, wrote, "On behalf of the congregation ... I want to thank you for your outpouring of care and support in the weeks following the flood. While we are grateful that our sanctuary was spared, our building sustained significant damage from six feet of sewage-tinged water in our lower level. ... We appreciate the volunteers who came to help clean up the sticky, unpleasant mess! It was a true labor of love. Your generous financial support has been an encouragement to us as we develop a plan for rebuilding. We also have used funds from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to meet immediate, ongoing needs for food and hardware supplies for the larger Rushford community." The complete text of Li's letter can be found at <http://www.jknox.org/RushfordThank%20you.doc>.

**5. CHURCHES HELP NEEDY WITH ECUMENICAL THRIFT STORE:** The Presbyterian churches that make up the Forest Larger Parish in Lakewood, Laona and Wabeno, Wis., along with Baptist, Catholic and Lutheran churches in the area, are carrying out a successful ecumenical mission effort with a thrift store – The Christian Thrift Store of Wabeno.

Opened in November 2006 and open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., the thrift store sells second-hand clothing and household items that are donated by local area residents. Proceeds are used to help people in need in areas of the churches.

Lori Brooks, administrative assistant for Forest Larger Parish, described the thrift store, located in a renovated former retail establishment, as doing very well and being very well done. "They have business every day and they have a back room that's just packed full of donations," she said.

The store is staffed by a part-time paid store manager and volunteers. Decisions about how proceeds will be used are determined by the Christian Thrift Store Board of Directors consisting of representatives from each church involved with the thrift store.

The idea to create the thrift store came from Dennis and Wendy Mannering, a husband and wife team who are both commissioned lay pastors serving the parish. They got the idea from First Presbyterian Church in Omro, Wis., which has operated a thrift store for about four years. Omro is located about 100 miles south of Wabeno.

The parish and the church in Omro are both within the Presbytery of Winnebago, which has its offices in Appleton, Wis.

**6. PRESBYTERIAN HOMES ANNOUNCES SEVERAL NEW STEPS:** Presbyterian Homes and Services, which has a covenant relationship with the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, opened its new care center in Williamsburg, Iowa, this month and also dedicated its new facility, Stonecrest, in Woodbury, Minn., according to a memo distributed to board members. The memo also noted that the city council of Eden Prairie, Minn., unanimously approved its 707 unit, mixed-use development, a project several years down the road. Presbyterian Homes and Services states its mission is "to provide a broad continuum of care to older adults. The services provided will be of the highest quality and designed to promote independence, dignity and well-being. The emphasis will be on innovation and leadership in providing compassionate and highly competent care with the inspiration of God's love and word." More information about Presbyterian Homes and Services can be found on its Web site at <http://www.preshomes.org>.

**7. PRESBYTERY OF EAST IOWA FORMS TASK FORCE ON TORTURE:** At the request of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Iowa City, the Presbytery of East Iowa has formed a Special Task Force for Abolishing Torture. The task force's purposes are to promote awareness within the presbytery of the resolution on the subject adopted by the 2006 General Assembly of 2006; support the principles and activities of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), which the PC(USA) endorses; and encourage East Iowa Presbyterians to become actively involved at the local level in denouncing torture.

**8. DES MOINES PRESBYTERY URGES SIGNING 'WELCOMING' PETITION:** The Presbytery of Des Moines has cooperated with The Iowa Interfaith Immigration Coalition in urging people of faith and goodwill to sign its petition for "Creating a Welcoming State" in support of more humane immigration policies. The petition drive, which concluded Nov. 26 intended to show that there are thousands of Iowans who support public policies rooted in fairness, justice and the dignity of all people. The petition and signatures will be presented at a press conference in early December, as well as to all presidential campaigns visiting Iowa. The Iowa Interfaith Immigration Coalition is an ad hoc, statewide coalition of faith and community organizations. The focus of the Coalition is changing the climate in Iowa through education and civic engagement.

**9. TWIN CITIES WORK GROUP LEADS SPIRITUAL FORMATION GROUPS:** The Leadership Development Work Group of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area is leading an effort to create spiritual formation groups within the presbytery. "We want to start spiritual

formation groups with nothing more than our determination to become Christ-like," says the Rev. Scott Stapleton, pastor of Grace-Trinity Community Church here, and a member of the work group. Informational meetings about the effort will be held at Grace-Trinity Church on Dec. 2, 4 and 6.

**10. SEMINARY PART OF UNIVERSITY OR VICE VERSA:** In the last issue of Keeping in Touch, we mentioned that the University of Dubuque, Dubuque, Iowa, is the only Presbyterian-related university with its own Presbyterian seminary – the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. Stuart Baxter responded with the rest of the story. He wrote, "Just a question: Since the beginning of Presbyterian education in Dubuque began when Adrian Van Vliet took three young men into his study to prepare them for ministry, wouldn't it be more fun to say that Dubuque Seminary is the only Presbyterian seminary with its own university?" The University of Dubuque can be found online at <http://www.dbq.edu>.

**11. HAYTHORN ACCEPTS PRESIDENCY OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FUND:** Trace Haythorn, Hastings (Neb.) College assistant professor of religion and director of the Vocation and Values Program, has accepted the position of president of the Fund for Theological Education (FTE) in Atlanta, Ga. His resignation is effective Jan. 14, 2008. Haythorn has served the college since 2004. FTE is a leading ecumenical advocate for excellence and diversity in Christian ministry and theological scholarship. Its work supports the next generation of leaders among pastors and scholars, providing more than \$1.2 million annually in fellowships and other support to gifted young people from all denominations and racial/ethnic backgrounds. More information about FTE can be found at <http://www.thefund.org>.

**12. UNITED THEOLOGICAL OFFERS COMMUNITY NURSE PROGRAM:** United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, New Brighton, Minn., is offering the basic preparation course for registered nurses interested in developing a parish nurse program. The inter-faith course, which runs Tuesday and Thursday evenings Jan. 8 through Feb. 7, will discuss the steps for initiating a parish nurse program, the role of the nurse and impact on a congregation. The course is endorsed by the International Parish Nurse Resource Center. Details and registration information can be found at <http://www.unitedseminary.edu/ce/index.asp#nurse>.

**13. BOARD OF PENSIONS 'PREVENTIVE INCENTIVE' STILL AVAILABLE:** All active Benefit Plan members and spouses, age 50 and older, covered through the Board of Pensions are still eligible to join in the Preventive Incentive, which offers a \$100 incentive if they complete a preventive health examination and appropriate medical tests and screenings before December 31, 2008. The Board of Pensions will evaluate the impact and value of this program and consider expanding it to other plan members if it is successful in encouraging better personal health stewardship. Complete details of the program can be found at <http://www.pensions.org/preventiveincentive/>. The latest issues of The Board Bulletin and EducationTalk have been posted online at [www.pensions.org](http://www.pensions.org).

**14. MENNONITE PEACE CENTER SETS MEDIATION TRAINING IN SPRING:** The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center is offering its "Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders" in the spring at Collegiate Presbyterian Church in Ames, Iowa. The institute runs from March 31 through April 4. This training event has consistently been rated by judicatory leaders and pastors of multiple denominations as "the best continuing education event I've ever attended." One Lutheran Bishop wrote in his evaluation form, after attending the institute: "The best and most thorough model for mediation with individuals

and congregations that I have experienced in more than three decades of ordained ministry." Details about the institute can be found at <http://www.lmpeacecenter.org/MSTI.html>.

**15. COACHING SKILLS TRAINING FOR PRESBYTERY TEAMS SET:** The Office of Congregational Transformation is offering a three- day session on coaching skills for a Presbytery Team consisting of at least two to four people. The purpose is to train the presbytery teams in the use of coaching skills to assist the pastor and the congregation in clarifying specific goals for the health of the congregation. The training is scheduled Jan. 21-24 in Daytona Beach, Fla. The objective is to introduce participants to coaching skills and give them an opportunity to practice these skills using case studies and examples from their congregations and presbyteries. The emphasis is both theoretical and practical. Ministry teams will work together to focus on issues from their settings. Details can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/transformation>.

**16. INTERIM MINISTRY NETWORK CONFERENCE SET IN MAY:** Early registration is open for the 28<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Interim Ministry Network. The conference will take place at the newly renovated Pheasant Run Conference in St. Charles, Ill., May 20-22. Titled "The Engaged Church in Transition," the conference will feature Peter Steinke and Albert L. Winseman as keynote speakers. Registrations received before Dec. 15 will receive a discounted rate. Registration can be made at <http://www.imnedu.org/2008%20Conf%20Reg.htm>.

**17. SPEAKERS, LISTENERS PRAISE 'MISSION CHALLENGE '07':** Between 50,000 and 55,000 Presbyterians attended presentations by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) missionaries during "Mission Challenge '07," according to figures released Nov. 14 by the Presbyterian World Mission program. The mission challenge brought 48 PC(USA) overseas missionaries back to the U.S. during the month of October for itineration in 144 of the denomination's 173 presbyteries. Each missionary spent a week at a time in each of up to four presbyteries, seeking to garner renewed spiritual, communication and financial support from congregations and presbyteries for the PC(USA)'s global mission enterprise. The full story can be seen at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07744.htm>.

**18. PC(USA) PRODUCES ABC NETWORK'S CHRISTMAS SPECIAL:** This year's ABC television network Christmas Eve service will originate from Noroton Presbyterian Church in Darien, Conn. The program, produced by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Media Services office under the auspices of the National Council of Churches of Christ USA (NCC), was taped Nov. 18 for telecast on ABC affiliate stations on Christmas Eve. Greg Kapfhammer, Media Services coordinator, is producer. The one-hour musical program, "The Angels Sing," is based on the traditional "Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols." The full story and photo can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07750.htm>.

**19. STATED CLERK NOMINATIONS ACCEPTED UNTIL DEC. 23:** The Stated Clerk Nomination Committee (SCNC) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has received several applications for the top ecclesiastical post in the 2.3 million-member denomination. Next summer's 218th General Assembly will elect the successor to the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, who announced earlier this year that he will not seek a fourth four-year term. Prospective candidates have until Dec. 23, 2007 — 180 days before the convening of the Assembly in San Jose, Calif., to submit their applications. The complete story can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07757.htm>.

**20. MODERATORS CONFERENCE EXPLORES DISCERNMENT:** Newly elected Synod of the Covenant moderator Deborah Fair understands that discernment is not just "going somewhere and praying for a while." The deeper understanding of discernment was just one of the things Fair said she took away from the recent 2007 Moderators Conference. Held In Louisville Nov. 16-18, the gathering brought together moderators from synods and presbyteries throughout the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) under the theme, "Walking in the Light: Spiritual Leadership for the Church." The complete story can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07774.htm>.

**21. NATIONAL CAPITAL PRESBY ENDORSES GA MODERATOR CANDIDATE:** A desire to "go back to the basics" and help the denomination regain hope is what has propelled the Rev. Bill Teng to stand for the position of moderator of the 218th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). National Capital Presbytery endorsed Teng's candidacy on Nov. 27. Teng served as moderator of the National Capital Presbytery in 2004. The complete story can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07775.htm>.

**22. PRESBYTERIAN ELDER WRITES STORY ON IMMIGRATION ISSUES:** Jim Nedelka, an elder at West Park Presbyterian Church in New York City and a professional journalist for 35 years, produced a long story on immigration issues published recently by Presbyterian News Service. Nedelka's story begins, "It's the American Dream: find a good job, live in a safe neighborhood with good schools and churches, raise a family ... Yes, the American Dream: for North Americans, Central Americans, South Americans and every other country we in the USA — a country founded by immigrants — use to hyphenate ourselves. Yet, in this immigrant nation, immigration is a hot-button issue in 3-D: documentation, denigration, deportation." The complete story can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07752.htm>.