



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

January 16, 2009

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

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1. WINTER SYNOD MEETING SLATED JAN. 18-20:

The annual meeting of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) runs Sunday through Tuesday, Jan. 18-20, at Mt. Olivet Conference & Retreat Center, Farmington, Minn. The meeting opens with dinner Sunday at 5:30 p.m. and is scheduled to adjourn at 11:30 a.m. Tuesday. The purposes of the meeting are to elect officers, to hear reports, to worship, to grow in fellowship and to take such actions as are necessary. ([Return to top](#))



2. KEATON BEGINS CALL IN MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY:

The Rev. Kevin S. Keaton began his call as the executive presbyter in the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley Friday, Jan. 16. Keaton joins the presbytery from a pastorate at First Presbyterian Church in Sugar Land, Texas. Keaton will be officially installed Saturday, Jan.

24, at the presbytery's meeting at Bethany Presbyterian Church in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The meeting convenes at 9 a.m. and worship, including Keaton's installation, is the first item on the docket. ([Return to top](#))



3. SANTER BEGINS AS MISSION COORDINATOR IN PROSPECT HILL:

Jennifer Santer began serving as mission coordinator in the Presbytery of Prospect Hill on Jan. 1. She can be contacted at jsanter@prospecthillpresby.org

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4. HOMESTEAD CLOSSES CHERRY HILL OFFICE, GOES VIRTUAL:

Kris Peterson, communication and resource coordinator for Homestead Presbytery, announced last week that the presbytery's office has gone "virtual." She wrote, "It is official! The Homestead Presbytery office on Cherry Hill is closing. ... Some of you may be surprised by this information, and some may already know. The staff has been moving to a virtual office for the last year and a half. This simply means most of our work can be accessed and done with our computers. The presbytery has also been focusing on the staff getting out to the congregations more frequently, so we can better provide you with support and resources. With these two adjustments to the staff are allowing us to decentralize the big office, and so we are moving the resource center and our mail to the new location." She added, "The staff is also setting up offices in our homes. Since we're on the go, if you would like to check out some resources or are looking for some assistance, please give us a call and we'd be glad to meet

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you at the office." The new mailing address for the presbytery is 8300 East Pointe Road, Lincoln, NE 68506. The office phone number remains 402.474.0612. The phone will be covered Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Peterson also noted that the Rev. Hal Rainey, who also serves the Hebron, Neb., congregation, is now serving as the presbytery's stated clerk. Contact information can be found at www.homesteadpres.org. ([Return to top](#))

5. NORTHERN WATERS MISSION TEAM

WORKS IN GULFPORT: Forty members of the Presbytery of Northern Waters participated in a mission trip to Gulfport, Miss., Jan. 11-16. Sponsored by the presbytery, the participants represented 10 of the presbytery's churches. A note from the presbytery stated, "Our people will be working on six different sites; some will be working in the Gulfport area and others will be working in Pascagoula. We offer our sincere gratitude to all who have worked so hard to make this trip a reality; we offer our special thanks to the Revs. Barry Boyer and Rich Blood, and elders Paul Rigstad and Cathy Hecht." The Rev. Eric Nielsen, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Eau Claire, Wis., and former synod moderator wrote from trip that cold temperatures – for Mississippi at least – are causing some challenges. He wrote, "We have been down in the mid 20s at night. This is challenging, as we are staying in huts that are basically cardboard, with a light plastic coating to protect from rain. No insulation and no electricity. ... The porta-potties get a little cold at night, too! Our 'bathroom sinks' are outdoors - so we've been brushing teeth and shaving in sub-freezing temps. ... I have come to meet and work with a lot of great people from our presbytery. Bill, Chris and Gloria are all doing well; we are all truly enjoying our work. We are exhausted each day, but enjoying the opportunity to help others and to share the love and compassion of Christ. ... I have discovered muscles I forgot I had; working above your head screwing in drywall, taping and insulating has been exhausting. ... Other groups are working in other homes doing similar things - drywall, flooring, tile, etc. One large crew is having to entirely demolish an older home that has so much mold damage that it is not salvageable. But the family is using the scrap lumber to build some other storage shed to hold their belongings." ([Return to top](#))

6. OMAHA CHURCH HIGHLIGHTED IN OMAHA WORLD HERALD: The following story appeared in Monday Morning in the Presbytery, the weekly newsletter of the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley. The newsletter stated: "Diane Plasek at First Presbyterian Church in Omaha reports, 'Eight sermons and 5½ hours later, 2,002 Sudanese men, women and children joyfully left our sanctuary. As reported on the front page of the Omaha World Herald on Christmas Day, our church hosted an inter-

denominational worship service for the Sudanese communities of western Iowa and eastern Nebraska. With standing room only, the rafters of our church shook with voices shouting 'Alleluia,' the sounds of drums and multiple choirs. I learned from David, who drove in from Lincoln, that in Africa's refugee camps where he was before coming to the United States, thousands of people celebrate Christ's birth non-stop for four days. The services aren't that long [here], but the Sudanese Christians had a service at another church in Omaha the evening before. It drew over 850 people, and started at 11 p.m. and ended at 2:30 a.m. An exhausted Michael Kuach, the commissioned lay pastor for the Sudanese American Presbyterian Fellowship, said he was sad that the celebration as a Christian community was over on Christmas Day. Besides keeping up with bathroom supplies and drinking water, Greg Lincoln, our weekend custodian, and I had the experience of our lives. The people were so good to us with hugs, handshakes, well wishes for Christmas and total helpfulness from many wonderful men who helped all day. (Must be honest ... we did have water bottles, animal crackers, etc. in the sanctuary which cleaned up just fine.) I thank the leadership of First Presbyterian Church who supported the Sudanese community by granting them a place to worship on Christmas Day and for giving me one of the most memorable Christmases of my life." ([Return to top](#))



7. DUBUQUE SEMINARY ACCEPTS APPS FOR MINISTRY DOCTORATE:

The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary is now accepting applications for its Doctor of Ministry degree. The 2009 emphasis will be missional spirituality, with three cohort leaders: the Revs. Beth McCaw, Timothy Slemmons and Tammy Wiens. The application deadline for the program is Feb. 15. Program residency is May 17-29. Additional information about the program can be found at <http://udts.dbq.edu>. ([Return to top](#))



8. CLEARWATER FOREST RELEASES 2009 CATALOG: Presbyterian Clearwater Forest, a camping experience supported by multiple presbyteries and the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, has just published its 2009 program catalog. The catalog can be found online at <http://www.clearwaterforest.org/2009docs/pcf2009catalog.pdf>. Senior High Snow Camp at Clearwater Forest runs Jan. 23-25 and Winter Chrysalis, slated Feb. 20-23, takes place Feb. 20-23. Winter Chrysalis is a program designed to bring women together to nurture body, mind and spirit. This winter's theme is "Cultivating a Mindful Heart." Additional information about events and

registration materials can be found at www.clearwaterforest.org or by calling 218.678.2325. ([Return to top](#))

9. CLEARWATER FOREST RELEASES APPLICATIONS FOR SUMMER STAFF: The Rev. Andy Kennaly, program director at Presbyterian Clearwater Forest, a camp supported by several presbyteries and the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, announced recently that summer staff applications can be found on the camp's Web site, www.clearwaterforest.org. Kennaly wrote, "We tend to look for people with at least one year of college experience to join the ministry team at PCF as we share the good news of Jesus Christ with hundreds of kids. ... Please keep the ministry of Clearwater in your prayers as potential staff apply and are considered, and as we interview and make decisions." ([Return to top](#))

10. CAMP WYOMING SETS CONFIRMATION RETREAT: Confirmation students and their pastors and leaders are being invited to Camp Wyoming, Wyoming, Iowa, for a weekend of creative teaching and learning with an emphasis on communion as the camp offers its Confirmation Retreat. Youth will explore the traditions of the church while experiencing the beauty of God's world. The registration deadline is Feb. 13. Complete information can be found on the camp's Web site at http://www.campwyoming.net/confirmation_retreat.htm. (*Information from Out & About, the newsletter of the Presbytery of East Iowa.*) ([Return to top](#))

11. MINNESOTA VALLEYS CHURCHES PROVIDE IDEAS: The Valley Bridge, the newsletter of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys edited by Bev Raske, a synod commissioner, always contains short items about the activities of a few presbytery churches. Three stood out in the most recent issue. One noted, "A project of the Youth Club at First Presbyterian Church, Redwood Falls, is to help out the Animal Shelter by collecting some essentials. The club placed a dog kennel by the entrance and asked members to help out by bringing some items that are needed such as kitty litter or small litter boxes, old towels, collars or a cash donation." Another reported that "First Presbyterian Church, St. James, urged a 'Pay-it-forward Christmas.' Extra treats from the social hour were packaged for those willing to share the Christmas spirit with someone else. Members wishing to participate were asked to take a bag of goodies along and have coffee with a neighbor, friend, relative – anyone that could use a little company and Christmas cheer." It also contained this note about First Presbyterian Church, Willmar: the congregation "is planning to offer a monthly community meal. This will be a free meal one Sunday evening a month as an expression of their care for the local community. This is a project in which individuals and whole families can participate." ([Return to top](#))

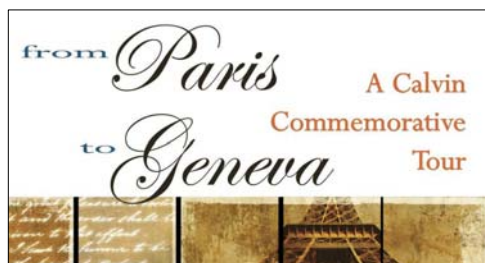
12. NATIONALLY KNOWN GROUP TO PERFORM AT CHURCH OF ALL NATIONS: Cantus, a nationally recognized male vocal ensemble, will perform a benefit concert Saturday, Jan. 24, at Church of All Nations, 4301 Benjamin St. N.E., Columbia Heights, Minn. The concert will raise money for the Kenyan orphanages supported by the church. Tickets, sold at the door, are \$15 for adults, and \$10 for seniors and church members. Children 10 and under are free. The event will be "open seating." Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. Cantus will perform songs from their tour of Cameroon, and from their other

international pieces. Church of All Nations can be found online at www.cando.org. Additional information about Cantus can be found at www.cantusonline.org. ([Return to top](#))

13. NEENAH CHURCH CELEBRATES 160 YEARS: First Presbyterian Church of Neenah, Wis., a member of the Winnebago Presbytery, celebrated its 160th birthday in December. Since December 1848, Neenah Presbyterians have worshipped in five different locations in eight – depending on how you count them – buildings. For three years Neenah Presbyterians worshipped over a general store. (*Information from the Jan. 9 edition of News & Notes, a newsletter of the Winnebago Presbytery.*) ([Return to top](#))

14. IRMS MOVES, HOSTS ANNUAL MEETING JAN. 21: Iowa Religious Media Services has moved to its new location at 3116 104th St. in Urbandale, Iowa, and will conduct its annual meeting there Wednesday, Jan. 21. The meeting opens at 11 a.m., and will include a report on the condition of IRMS and visioning for the future. IRMS can be found online at www.irms.org. ([Return to top](#))

15. PC(USA) OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS TO RURAL MINISTRY CONFERENCE: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is offering a limited number of \$100 scholarships to Presbyterian churches sending a first-time participant to Wartburg Theological Seminary's Rural Ministry Conference planned March 1-3 in Dubuque, Iowa. The awards are based on financial need and limited to one scholarship per church. They will be awarded on a first-come basis to 10 individuals or churches which send in their registration and indicate on their registration "PC(USA) Scholarship Requested." A brochure and registration form can be found at www.ruralministry.com. ([Return to top](#))



16. HASTINGS COLLEGE, FIRST PRESBYTERIAN PLAN CALVIN TOUR: In recognition of the 500th anniversary this year of John Calvin's birth, Hastings (Neb.) College and First Presbyterian Church of Hastings are presenting "From Paris to Geneva, A Calvin Commemorative Tour," a journey through Europe May 22 to June 2. The trip will begin in France, the country of Calvin's birth, and conclude in Switzerland where Calvin spent most of his ministry. Additional information about the tour, including cost and registration, can be obtained by

contacting the Rev. David McCarthy, associate professor of religion and chaplain at Hastings College, at dmccarthy@hastings.edu or the Rev. William Nottage-Tracey, senior pastor and head of staff at First Presbyterian, at revbill@fpchastings.org. ([Return to top](#))



17. PDA LAUNCHES HUMANITARIAN AID APPEAL FOR MIDDLE EAST: With Israeli and Hamas forces plunging deeper into violent conflict and the death toll in Gaza steadily mounting, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has launched an appeal to help

provide humanitarian relief supplies to the stricken area. PDA is supporting relief efforts as a member of the Geneva-based Action by Churches Together (ACT) International alliance www.pcusa.org/pda/response/middleeast/act-activities010909.htm. A bulletin insert and other information on the response can be found on the PDA Web site at www.pcusa.org/pda. The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09021. ([Return to top](#))

18. WARC ISSUES CALL TO PRAYER, ACTION FOR GAZA: Leaders of the Geneva-based World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) have called upon member churches to pray for an immediate cease-fire and for "a lasting peace with justice in this region." "None of the violence is acceptable," said WARC President Clifton Kirkpatrick of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and WARC General Secretary Setri Nyomi, a Ghanaian Presbyterian, in their Jan. 7 statement, entitled "A Call to Prayer and Action to End the Violence in Gaza." The full text of the statement can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09013.htm. ([Return to top](#))

19. PARSONS ISSUES STATEMENT ON GAZA-ISRAEL CRISIS: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly Stated Clerk Gradye Parsons called today (Jan. 7) for an immediate end to the violence in Israel/Palestine and reiterated the church's call for the "two-state solution" endorsed by the Bush administration and the World Council of Churches among many others. In his statement, Parsons outlined the PC(USA)'s position on a long-term solution that was adopted by last summer's 218th General Assembly in San Jose, Calif. Parsons' statement condemned both rocket attacks on Israel launched from Gaza and "the massive destruction of an already crippled Gazan infrastructure ..." by Israeli forces. The complete statement can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09010.htm. ([Return to top](#))

20. CHURCH WORLD SERVICES MAKES APPEAL FOR GAZA CRISIS: Church World Service is supporting efforts as a member of the Action by Churches Together International Alliance. ACT efforts include those of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC)'s Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR), International Orthodox Christian Charities, the Lutheran World Federation and Norwegian Church Aid, all long-time CWS partners. As noted in the initial appeal issued Jan. 7, these are initial efforts and will be expanded later as the situation further unfolds. The full story can be found at www.churchworldservice.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5780&news_iv_ctrl=1221. ([Return to top](#))

21. PRESBYTERIANS WALK FOR JUSTICE: A hardy band of about 75 Presbyterian Center

employees and others from around town braved near-zero temperatures Jan. 15 for a "Justice Walk" to commemorate the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. The three-mile trek took the marchers from the Presbyterian Center to seven historic sites in Louisville's own checkered racial history and concluded at the historic Presbyterian Community Center in the city's predominantly African-American Smoketown neighborhood. The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09036. ([Return to top](#))

22. FAITH LEADERS CALL FOR RAISING MINIMUM WAGE: With the U.S. economic crisis deepening and unemployment soaring, a group of 11 denominational and religious organization leaders are among the inaugural signers of a call to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10 in 2010. The signers include the Rev. Gradye Parsons, General Assembly stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Nearly 400 faith leaders from all 50 states have already endorsed "\$10 in 2010," a campaign led by Let Justice Roll, and more are signing on each day. The complete story can be found online at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09017. ([Return to top](#))

23. AUTHORS OF NEW SOCIAL CREED PRESS AGENDA: Two primary authors of "A Social Creed for the 21st Century" have sent an open letter to President-elect Obama advocating the social policies outlined in the creed. Speaking on behalf of the U.S. churches that have endorsed the creed, the Rev. Christian Iosso, coordinator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, and the Rev. Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, wrote: "... We are ready to help you achieve great deeds that will bring positive change for the people of America and the world." The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09035. ([Return to top](#))

24. GATHERING SET FOR ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE PRESBYTERS: A gathering for associate executive presbyters, titled "Leading from the Second Chair," is scheduled March 30 through April 1 at the Hilton Houston Post Oak in Houston, Texas. Mike Bonem, author of a book by the same title as the gathering, is president of Kingdom Transformation Partners and co-author of "Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey." His work focuses primarily on the facilitation of healthy change, congregational assessment, vision discernment and implementation planning. More information about Bonem and his work can be found at www.secondchairleaders.com. The registration deadline is Feb. 15. ([Return to top](#))

25. WRITERS GUILD SEEKS NEW AUTHORS FOR AWARD: The Presbyterian Writers Guild – online at www.presbywriters.org – is again seeking entries for the James Angell Award to be presented to the best first book published by a Presbyterian author during the calendar year of 2008. The annual award was established by the Guild and the family of James Angell, a prolific and respected Presbyterian writer, as a means to recognize and encourage new writers. The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09020. ([Return to top](#))



26. GHOST RANCH CASA DEL SOL LISTS 2009 SCHEDULE: Just a few years ago Ghost Ranch, a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) retreat center in New Mexico, opened its Casa del Sol, a spirituality and retreat center, as a contemplative space in the high desert. Now Casa del Sol has announced its schedule for 2009 and it's available online at www.ghostranch.org/meetings--retreats/casa-del-sol-spirituality-and-retreat-center.html. ([Return to top](#))

27. LAWRENCE NAMED PUBLISHER OF PRESBYTERIANS TODAY: Jeffrey Lawrence, a New Yorker whose working life has taken him from law to real estate to advertising to parish ministry, has been named publisher of Presbyterians Today magazine. He began his new work on Jan. 5. "I think I bring a unique perspective to the magazine as a seasoned businessman and Christian minister," Lawrence told the Presbyterian News Service in an interview. "Presbyterians Today is a critical mission of Christ's church and I knew as soon as I applied that this was the right fit for me." The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09028. ([Return to top](#))

28. PC(USA) MISSION YEARBOOK LAUNCHED IN NEW FORMATS: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Mission Yearbook for Prayer and Study, which dates back to 1892, is now available in formats never dreamed of by the earlier Presbyterians. In addition to the traditional printed version, the 2009 yearbook is now also available as a podcast, through a Web site, through an RSS feed, or by email. "We've taken the heritage of the book and shaped it for new generations," said Billie Healy, editor. Online access to the Mission Yearbook is found at www.pcusa.org/missionyearbook. The site provides access to daily readings online, to email subscriptions, to podcasts or to subscriptions to RSS. ([Return to top](#))



29. POPULAR PBS PROGRAM ANNOUNCES LATEST NEWSLETTER: The latest edition of the Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly newsletter, a publication of the popular PBS program of the same name, is now available on the program's Web site at www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics. To access the newsletter, site visitors can scroll to the right hand side of the home page and select "Online Pressroom." ([Return to top](#))