



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

**MARCH 13, 2009**

You can find the synod online at [www.lakesandprairies.org](http://www.lakesandprairies.org) or on My Space at [www.myspace.com/synodoflakesandprairie](http://www.myspace.com/synodoflakesandprairie)

## News around the synod

- [1. Feltman article runs in Outlook](#)
- [2. Santer discusses 'virtual Sunday school'](#)
- [3. 'Rainbows of Promise' is theme at St. Andrew](#)
- [4. 'Noisy' offerings conducted in some churches](#)
- [5. Reformed spirituality is topic at Devils Lake seminar](#)
- [6. Synod partners in mission program grants](#)
- [7. Clearwater plans pastors canoe trip in August](#)
- [8. IRMS offers Calvin video, wisdom from women resources](#)

## News from schools

- [9. Spring renewal conference set at UDTs](#)
- [10. Iliff School of Theology connects realities with theology](#)

## National news from PC(USA)

- [11. Videos sought for 'Church is Alive' project](#)

### 1. FELTMAN ARTICLE RUNS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK:

The Rev. David Feltman, general presbyter of the Presbytery of North Central, wrote about the future of pastors in the Feb. 22 edition of The Presbyterian Outlook magazine. His article begins, "Many of our presbyteries are giving priority to transformation and the need for new faithfulness in our churches. We applaud the advances being made and offer encouragement for those in the struggle for change and growth. However, I am a realist and feel it is the responsibility of leadership to help folks face reality. I ask, who is thinking about the pastors and future pastors as the decline continues?" The complete article can be found at [www.pres-outlook.org/reports-a-resources/presbyterian-heritage-articles/8487-and-what-about-the-pastors.html](http://www.pres-outlook.org/reports-a-resources/presbyterian-heritage-articles/8487-and-what-about-the-pastors.html). ([Return to top](#))

### 2. SANTER DISCUSSES 'VIRTUAL SUNDAY SCHOOL':

An adult Sunday school class in the Presbytery of Prospect Hill is moving virtual, according to the Rev. Jennifer Santer, the presbytery's mission coordinator, writing in the March 5 edition of the presbytery's newsletter. She wrote, "As we discussed different options for continuing our current events discussion, we came up with the idea of having a virtual Sunday school class." Santer's complete column can be found in the presbytery's newsletter at [www.prospecthillpresby.org/e\\_news/3\\_mar5\\_09.pdf](http://www.prospecthillpresby.org/e_news/3_mar5_09.pdf) and in the presbytery's mission connection blog at [www.pphmissionconnection.blogspot.com](http://www.pphmissionconnection.blogspot.com). ([Return to top](#))



### 3. 'RAINBOWS OF PROMISE' IS THEME AT ST. ANDREW:

"Rainbows of Promise in Unexpected Places," a theme that arose from the collaborative efforts of the Worship Team, is the Lenten/Easter theme at St.

Andrew Presbyterian Church in Iowa City, Iowa. Members of the congregation and visitors are being invited to experience the scriptures through biblical symbols and abstract forms like the streams of colors in the sanctuary show in the photo here. The Rev. Bob David's Feb. 28 sermon, "Rainbows of Promise in the Wilderness," based on Luke 4:1-13, can be found at [www.saintandrew-ic.org/?page\\_id=4564](http://www.saintandrew-ic.org/?page_id=4564). (*The information and photograph came from the March 5 issue of Out and*

- [12.](#) **Membership named to Belhar Confession panel**
  - [13.](#) **Ratification of Amendment B is trailing**
  - [14.](#) **Vice-moderator: What happens when the bush stops burning?**
  - [15.](#) **Parsons column speaks of place where peace abides**
  - [16.](#) **Ordination restoration case sent back to synod PJC**
  - [17.](#) **Valentine, Parsons make invitation to 'Big Tent' event**
  - [18.](#) **Skateboarding ministry revitalizes Cimarron Presbyterian**
  - [19.](#) **MBF seeks continued support from PC(USA)**
- And a few more**
- [20.](#) **Time magazine features rural Minnesota churches, pastors**
  - [21.](#) **Outlook column offers how-to Web guide**
  - [22.](#) **Several blogs noted in Presbyterians Today**

*About, the newsletters of the Presbytery of East Iowa.)* ([Return to top](#))

**4. 'NOISY' OFFERINGS CONDUCTED IN SOME CHURCHES:** From The Valley Bridge, newsletter of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys: "First Presbyterian Church, Willmar, Minn., designated a Sunday in February as Noisy Can Sunday. Each household was invited to take home a decorated coffee can to collect loose change and dollar bills to help with the cost of the junior and senior high 2009 mission trips and other youth events. Cans were returned to the worship service where they made a 'joyful' noise unto the Lord by shaking the cans." First Presbyterian Church in Oskaloosa, Iowa, noted in its January newsletter that it has a "noisy offering" in which children collect spare change from the congregation for use toward church camp. "Heroes" from the congregation agree to match the "noisy offering" and add to it. In Oskaloosa, the offering raised more than \$100 in December. ([Return to top](#))

**5. REFORMED SPIRITUALITY IS TOPIC AT DEVILS LAKE SEMINAR:** A RASCAL seminar - Reformed According to the Scriptures: Companions Active in Learning - is slated at the Fireside Inn and Suites in Devils Lake, N.D., Friday and Saturday, May 1-2, sponsored by the Presbytery of Northern Plains. Led by Gary Hansen, church historian and Calvin scholar at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, the seminar will address a range of topics that have shaped the spiritual lives of individuals and congregations. Additional information about the seminar and registration material can be found at <http://www.northernplainspresbytery.com/RASCALS%20EVENT.pdf>. (This information drawn from the March 4, 2009, edition of the Northern Plains E-News, a weekly newsletter of the Presbytery of Northern Plains.) ([Return to top](#))

**6. SYNOD PARTNERS IN MISSION PROGRAM GRANTS:** The Synod of Lakes and Prairies continues to support church transformation, immigrant ministries and new church development through Mission Program Grants. This year alone the synod is providing more than \$70,000 to support five programs, including the immigrant ministries of Familia de Fe in Bloomington, Minn. ([www.cpconline.org/index.php?content=Familia\\_de\\_Fe](http://www.cpconline.org/index.php?content=Familia_de_Fe)) and Knox Indonesian Ministry in St. Paul, Minn. ([www.knoxpresbyterian.org/KnoxIndonesianMinistry.dsp](http://www.knoxpresbyterian.org/KnoxIndonesianMinistry.dsp)); the new church developments of Sun Prairie (Wis.) Presbyterian Church ([www.sunprairiepresbyterian.org/](http://www.sunprairiepresbyterian.org/)) and Chain of Lakes Presbyterian in Blaine, Minn. ([www.colpres.org](http://www.colpres.org)); and a congregation transformation at Cottage Grove Presbyterian in Des Moines, Iowa ([www.cgpresbyterian.org/](http://www.cgpresbyterian.org/)). The Cottage Grove project extends the church's reach to Sudanese immigrants. These projects also receive financial support from individual presbyteries and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Mission Program Grants provide supplemental, short-term, and start-up funding for new congregations, transforming congregations and congregational-based ministries that reflect the denomination's commitment to inclusiveness, diversity and ecumenicity. Additional information about Mission Program Grants can be found at [www.pcusa.org/missionprogramgrants/](http://www.pcusa.org/missionprogramgrants/). ([Return to top](#))



#### **7. CLEARWATER PLANS PASTORS CANOE TRIP IN**

**AUGUST:** Presbyterian Clearwater Forest is planning a canoe trip for pastors Aug. 23-29 in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in northern Minnesota. The trip opens Sunday, Aug. 23, with orientation on wilderness travel and ethics, and group-building activities. Participants are encouraged to be physically fit and have a supportive, adventurous attitude that is open to simplicity and minimal environmental impact. The camp flyer can be found at

[www.clearwaterforest.org/2009docs/Pastor\\_Boundary\\_Waters.pdf](http://www.clearwaterforest.org/2009docs/Pastor_Boundary_Waters.pdf).  
( [Return to top](#) )

#### **8. IRMS OFFERS CALVIN VIDEO, WISDOM FROM WOMEN**

**RESOURCES:** Iowa Religious Media Services, an ecumenical media resource center and lending library supported by the Synod of Lakes and Prairies and six other covenanting denominations, has added video and a five-week study guide on John Calvin's life and legacy and the latest book by Presbyterian minister Diane Karay Tripp. In this work, Karay Tripp writes about 25 Reformed women whose stories have been discarded or suppressed. IRMS can be contacted at [questions@irms.org](mailto:questions@irms.org) and is on the Web at [www.irms.org](http://www.irms.org). ( [Return to top](#) )



#### **9. SPRING RENEWAL CONFERENCE SET AT UDTS:**

The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary's Spring Renewal Conference is slated on campus Tuesday through Thursday, April 14-16. The conference will include the seminary's Berger and Woods lectureships. Guest lecturers on the schedule are Luke Timothy Johnson, professor at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Ga., and Miriam Adeney, associate professor at Seattle (Wash.) Pacific University School of Theology. Additional conference information can be found at [http://udts.dbq.edu/upcoming\\_events.cfm](http://udts.dbq.edu/upcoming_events.cfm). ( [Return to top](#) )

**10. ILIFF SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY CONNECTS REALITIES WITH THEOLOGY:** As the world's economy continues its volatility, Denver's Iliff School of Theology has found a way to connect theology to the realities most people are living in today through the development of a Web site that helps people answer some of life's most pressing questions - Question to Learn: [www.question2learn.com](http://www.question2learn.com). The Web site focuses on three primary questions: Can I really make a difference? Can all faiths get along? Is this all there is? ( [Return to top](#) )

**11. VIDEOS SOUGHT FOR 'CHURCH IS ALIVE' PROJECT:** The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, moderator of the 218th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), is inviting Presbyterians to share through videos how they are experiencing "The Church is Alive." That one sentence alone is likely generating a few questions. So here, from the FAQ section of "The Church is Alive" site, is at least one answer: "'The Church is Alive' project stems from a belief that the church is more than what some give it credit for. We have heard the worries and anxieties that say that our church is 'dying' or 'already dead,' but believe instead that the church is alive, vibrant and a powerful force for good in the world. We believe that the Holy Spirit is breathing new life into all corners of our denomination, and that our body of believers is rich with stories of giving back, exploring fresh approaches to community, and discovering new ways to worship God." Reyes-Chow's invitation to participate in the program can be found at [www.thechurchisalive.com/about.html](http://www.thechurchisalive.com/about.html). References to "The Church is Alive" can be found in multiple locations on the Web too. The Web site is [www.thechurchisalive.com](http://www.thechurchisalive.com). The blog is at <http://thechurchisalive.com/blog.html> and it's also on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/churchisalive>. (Keeping in Touch was alerted to "The Church is Alive" by The Wider Circle E-News, the weekly newsletter of the Presbytery of Des Moines.) ( [Return to top](#) )

**12. MEMBERSHIP NAMED TO BELHAR CONFESSION PANEL:** The individuals who will serve on the Special Committee to Consider Amending the Confessional Documents of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to Include the Belhar Confession in The Book of Confessions have been announced. The 218th General Assembly of the PC(USA) took action to initiate the process to consider including the Belhar Confession in the church's confessional documents by appointing a committee to study the possible addition. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09194.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09194.htm). Biographical

information on committee members can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09199.html](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09199.html). ([Return to top](#))

**13. RATIFICATION OF AMENDMENT B IS TRAILING:** With nearly two-thirds of the votes in, a hotly-contested proposed amendment to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Constitution is trailing. The amendment - officially dubbed "Amendment B" - would replace the current requirement that church officers live in "fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness" with a new G-6.0106b. As of March 10, the unofficial tally is 42 presbyteries in favor, with 69 opposed. The final tally will be certified and announced by the Office of the General Assembly. The 111 presbyteries that have voted represent 64 percent of the PC(USA)'s 173 presbyteries. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09195.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09195.htm). ([Return to top](#))

**14. VICE-MODERATOR: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE BUSH STOPS BURNING?:** The Rev. Byron Wade, vice-moderator of the 218th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), begins his most-recent monthly column, "I remember very well the day of commencement from Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary. I was graduating with honors. I had a master's degree from Union Theological Seminary-Presbyterian School of Christian Education. I was definitely ready to serve a congregation and was energized to do ministry. The commencement speaker that day was the Rev. Renita Weems, former professor of Old Testament at Vanderbilt Divinity School. Her message was entitled, "What Happens When the Bush Stops Burning?" Wade's complete column can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09172](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09172). ([Return to top](#))

**15. PARSONS' COLUMN SPEAKS OF PLACE WHERE PEACE ABIDES:** The Rev. Gradye Parson, stated clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), began his monthly column, "I traveled recently to Israel/Palestine/Jerusalem on your behalf. ... This was my first trip to the Middle East, and it left me with many impressions." The complete column can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09167](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09167). ([Return to top](#))

**16. ORDINATION RESTORATION CASE SENT BACK TO SYNOD PJC:** The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s highest court has remanded back to a lower church court a case that revolves around Paul Capetz, a former PC(USA) minister and seminary professor who was ordained in 1991 but in 2000 set aside his ordination because of his conscientious objection to G-6.0106b of the church's Book of Order, which requires of church officers "fidelity in marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness." The 2006 General Assembly - upon recommendation of its Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity and Purity of the Church - adopted an "authoritative interpretation" of the Constitution whereby those being ordained could declare a "scruple" or conscientious objection to the PC(USA)'s ordination standards. It was then up to the ordaining body to determine whether any particular scruple does not involve an "essential" of Reformed faith or polity. The complete article can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09169](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09169). ([Return to top](#))



**17. VALENTINE, PARSONS MAKE INVITATION TO 'BIG TENT' EVENT:** Linda Valentine, executive director of the General Assembly Council and Gradye Parsons, stated clerk of the General Assembly, recently sent a message to middle governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) inviting participation in this summer's "Big Tent" event June 11-13 in Atlanta, Ga. Event details can be found at [www.pcusa.org/bigtent](http://www.pcusa.org/bigtent). In addition, bulletin inserts (black and white and color versions) have been posted on the Big Tent Web site for your use: [www.pcusa.org/bigtent/bulletin-bw.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/bigtent/bulletin-bw.pdf) and [www.pcusa.org/bigtent/bulletin-color.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/bigtent/bulletin-color.pdf). ([Return to top](#))

**18. SKATEBOARDING MINISTRY REVITALIZES CIMARRON PRESBYTERY:** Presbyterian News Service note: This is the fifth in a series of stories about congregations engaged in significant outreach and evangelism ministries, reflecting the General Assembly's commitment to "Grow Christ's Church Deep and Wide," [www.pcusa.org/deepandwide](http://www.pcusa.org/deepandwide). Several years ago, unbeknownst to them, the members of First United Presbyterian Church (<http://guthriepresbyterian.com/index.html>) of Guthrie, Okla., had the very group they desired to include in their congregation right in their midst. Members were keenly aware that the church lacked the presence and vitality of young people that it needed to thrive, and they voiced a concern to their new pastor at the time, the Rev. Karen Rogers. The

complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09173](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09173). ([Return to top](#))

**19. MBF SEEKS CONTINUED SUPPORT FROM PC(USA):** Citing the economic crisis, the Medical Benevolence Foundation, a validated mission support organization of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), noted that "new and bold action is needed to ensure this important work in Presbyterian mission continues." The organization is currently trying to inform Presbyterians about its function and need for funds. In an email to the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, the foundation's marketing director, Daniel Strain, wrote, "Amazingly, many Presbyterians are not even aware of MBF, even though it is the key Presbyterian validated organization when it comes to medical health ministries and healing the sick." MBF can be found online at [www.mbfoundation.org](http://www.mbfoundation.org). ([Return to top](#))

**20. TIME MAGAZINE FEATURES RURAL MINNESOTA CHURCHES, PASTORS:** In both writing and video Time magazine looked at declining congregations in northern rural Minnesota. The article opened, "Carol Porter, 63 and no word mincer, sits in her modest kitchen in Euclid, Minn., and recalls the day her 118-year-old church was burned to the ground." The article also highlights the Rev. Daniel Wolpert of First Presbyterian Church, Crookston, Minn. The article can be found at [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1874843,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1874843,00.html) and the video can be found at [www.time.com/time/video/?bcpid=1485842900&bctid=9487537001](http://www.time.com/time/video/?bcpid=1485842900&bctid=9487537001). ([Return to top](#))



**21. OUTLOOK COLUMN OFFERS HOW-TO WEB GUIDE:**

The Presbyterian Outlook's editor's note at the beginning of a column on Web 2.0 notes, "This past year the Outlook Web site, [www.pres-outlook.org](http://www.pres-outlook.org), was

upgraded to include Facebook, blogging, sermon wiki, and the DecentlyAndInOrder DIGG site, to help us Presbyterians enhance our connectionalism with the newest Web 2.0 technologies. This how-to guide helps you get started." The column, written by Lynette Hawkins, begins, "Is your church ready to connect to the net generation? As Presbyterian congregations seek to reach and invite people in their 20s and younger, we must understand who they are. This generation, often referred to as "the net generation," views technology as common as sliced bread and lives in a world with interactive community-building web 2.0 tools like blogs, podcasts, Twitter, Facebook, and other social networks." The complete column can be found at <http://www.pres-outlook.org/reports-a-resources/presbyterian-heritage-articles/8486-are-you-ready-to-get-the-word-out-to-the-net-generation.html>. Note that Hawkins will advise those who intend to delve into Web 2.0 to have a plan - decide what needs to be accomplished and how technology will help. ([Return to top](#))

**22. SEVERAL BLOGS NOTED IN PRESBYTERIANS TODAY:** Jody Harrington, an elder in Houston, Texas, and past moderator of New Covenant Presbytery, has begun writing a regular column in Presbyterians Today focused on Web communications and has been focusing on blogs (short for Web logs). She notes in "Blogging 101," "... Blogs have become so influential that conventional press outlets routinely include them in their news reports, as you probably noticed during the 2008 election season. Many Presbyterians - pastors, elders, deacons and church members - are bloggers." In the current issue, she lists several blogs that are addressing issues that are currently hot topics in the church. Her column can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/today/featured-story2.htm>. "Blogging 101" can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/today/featured-story.htm>. ([Return to top](#))

