

**November 7, 2008**

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

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### 1. MONTICELLO CHURCH RECOVERING FROM ARSON:

The following story contains portions of an article that can be found on [www.monti247.com](http://www.monti247.com), a news source for people in the Monticello, Iowa, area.

The complete story can be found at <http://www.monti247.com/montin200810302.html>: On March 8 an arsonist set fire to First Presbyterian Church in Monticello which ultimately destroyed much of the church's interior. The fire may have damaged the inside of the building, but not the spirit of the church's congregation. Since then, the unofficial 'motto' of church members has been, "Our building burned, but the church is fine." Even as the reconstruction of the church moves forward, the church continues to be mission minded and recently held a fundraising event to support the causes close to parishioners' hearts. Pastor Al Polito, says many local residents have asked how the church and congregation are doing after the fire and what progress is being made in the rebuilding project. "Here is a quick update," he shared. "It took us six months to gut the building from basement to bell-tower. It took all summer to seal the rafters and replace our roof. The new floor is installed and walls are going up." ([Return to top](#))



### 2. SYNOD SCHOOL 2009 BUILDS AROUND 'PEACE:'

Next summer's Synod School will explore the theme "Building a Culture of Peace." Sara Lisherness, director of the Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), will be the convocation speaker. Evening worship will be led by "Sweet the Sound," featuring Matt and Liz Myer Boulton, and Burns and Lorraine Stanfield, who are colleagues in ministry in the Boston area. More details concerning Synod School will be posted soon on the synod's website. (Artwork reprinted from *Presbyterian Peacemaking Program*.) ([Return to top](#))

### 3. STEINER RETIRES AS STATED CLERK OF HOMESTEAD:

Don Steiner, who has been the stated clerk in Homestead Presbytery since 1999, has announced that his term will end Dec. 31. In honor of Steiner's service to the presbytery, a celebration is planned Thursday, Nov. 13, during the presbytery's stated meeting at Calvin Crest Camp and Conference Center in Fremont, Neb. Those unable to attend are



winter clothes  
**14. Presbyterian  
pastor portrayed  
in Eastwood film**

encouraged to contact Steiner by writing [dons@homesteadpres.org](mailto:dons@homesteadpres.org). ([Return to top](#))



**4. STREET-STEWART RECEIVES 'ALL MY RELATIONS' AWARD FROM MMEP:** Elona Street-Stewart, associate for racial-ethnic ministries of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, received the Ronald A. McKinley "All My Relations" Award from the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership Inc. The award is issued annually to a volunteer who embodies MMEP's mission of "increasing success for students of color in Minnesota schools, colleges and universities." Street-Stewart serves a chair of the board of MMEP. She was chosen for the award by the MMEP staff, which cited "her tireless work on behalf of racial justice in education and her strong belief in the dignity and potential of all students." Street-Stewart made history as the first American Indian to serve on an urban school district in Minnesota when she was elected to the St. Paul school board and served as the board's chair. ([Return to top](#))

**5. AUTHOR OF 'BLEST IN MY DYING' DIES NOV. 3:** The last issue of Keeping in Touch contained "Blest in My Dying," a short piece written by the Rev. Jim Elvig, a honorably retired minister member of the Presbytery of Northern Waters. He wrote in its opening, "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." This week Elvig's daughter, Nancy, wrote, "Dad died peacefully in his sleep on Nov. 3. Dad's sisters reminded us that this was the same date their Mother died in 1980. It seemed fitting that he died on the same day because Dad had been mentioning how much he was looking forward to seeing his mother." ([Return to top](#))

**6. A-P ELEMENTARY RECEIVES T-SHIRTS FROM UNITED CHURCH, WESTSIDE:** *The story below was submitted by Janine Koch, United Church of Westside, Iowa. She consulted with Kaylene Hoskins, disaster assistance coordinator for the Presbytery of North Central Iowa, after the tornado in Parkersburg, Iowa, about what their church and community could do to help those affected by the disaster. They brainstormed and came up with T-Shirts for the elementary school students. John Butler, a commissioned lay pastor serving First Presbyterian Church, Aplington, met with the group and helped with the shirt distribution. He's shown in the photo below, shortly after T-shirts were delivered to Aplington-Parkersburg school.*

Back in June, the United Church Westside and the United Presbyterian Church of Vail held a joint week of Bible School activities. As a mission project, the Christian Education committees of the two churches decided to collect contributions to assist the residents of Parkersburg, Iowa, which had been devastated by a Memorial Day weekend tornado.

Donations were collected each day of the week as well as during the Sunday morning Vacation Bible School program, and totaled more than \$1,500. Officials at the North Central Iowa Presbytery office in Waterloo conferred with Aplington-Parkersburg school administration, and, since so many families had lost everything in the storm, including their school clothing items, it was decided to furnish each one of the elementary students with a new school shirt.

Phil and Michele Snyder of Westside, owners of Envisions Screen Printing and Embroidery in Carroll, Iowa, volunteered their labor for the project, and 485 t-shirts were purchased utilizing the VBS offerings as well as an additional \$250 donation from the Sunday School and youth accounts of each of the churches.



A shirt was designed which said, "Aplington-Parkersburg Falcons – Still Soaring High – Rebuilding for a Bright Future," and the shirts were very appropriate for the now building-less

high school which has the top-ranked football team in its class.

As delivery date for the shirts drew near, the seventh grade civics class of Kerry Schoessler at Ar-We-Va (Arcadia, Westside, and Vail Community Schools) joined in the effort, collecting winter items that the Parkersburg families would soon need – coats, sweaters, hats, gloves, boots and other cold-weather clothing.

Church members from Carroll as well as other area residents who read about the project in the Westside Observer joined in the collection, and a minivan was packed from floor to ceiling with items.

The T-shirts were delivered to appreciative elementary students October 23. After Principal Amy May made an announcement over the intercom that the T-shirts had arrived, the church members making the delivery received thanks throughout the building.

One young girl told the principal, "I didn't have a Falcon shirt anymore, but now I do."

Principal Amy May sent an appreciative email to Westside Oct. 30, stating, "Today was our first day of parent-teacher conferences for fall, and our entire building wore their t-shirts today. What a heart-warming site to see the sea of white 'Still Soaring High' shirts everywhere. There was such a sense of unity around the building today. It was cool!

"Words cannot express our gratitude for this incredible act of kindness," she continued. "Thank you so very much!"

On delivery day, the next stop for the Westside congregation members was Hope Reformed Church where Pastor Neal Ooms is coordinating the efforts of Parkersburg tornado relief. He has been using his home as a gathering place for everything from clothing to furniture to kitchen items which are then distributed to families who need them as their homes are being rebuilt and are ready to occupy.

The van-full of winter items formed a mound in the pastor's living room, but he assured the delivery crew that a group of women would come in soon to sort through the items and prepare them for the families in need.

Last Wednesday, Oct. 29, the Wednesday Club group at United Church made one final effort to assist the Parkersburg-area residents, designating the collection from their annual "trick or treat" activity to Parkersburg tornado relief. Before their Halloween Party at the church, they divided into groups and canvassed the town, collecting nearly \$200.

Winter items have continued to come in to the United Church from area residents and other congregations. Another delivery of coats and other clothing is being made to Parkersburg by Kenny and Lila Crawford when they travel to North Central Iowa this weekend to visit family. ([Return to top](#))

**7. HASTINGS COLLEGE CELEBRATED NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH:** The Rev. Danelle C. Crawford McKinney (Iyanka Wiyan – Running Woman) preached at chapel services Nov. 5 when the Hastings (Neb.) College Chapel celebrated Native American Heritage Month. Crawford McKinney and her family led music and taught a Dakota-language song to those at the service. She is the first Dakota woman ordained as a Presbyterian minister. She is enrolled in the Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota Oyate, and is a fourth-generation Presbyterian. Her great-grandfather was one of the very first Dakota ministers ordained into the Presbyterian denomination, and she is the daughter of the late Rev. Herbert Crawford. ([Return to top](#))

**8. BOARD OF PENSIONS OFFERS 'TAX TIPS' TELECONFERENCE:** The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is encouraging early registration for its free "Tax Tips for Ministers and Churches" teleconference, scheduled for 3 p.m. on Dec. 11. Registration ends Nov. 21, but space is limited. "Ministers and churches that want to pay less in taxes should join the Board for this annual teleconference," say BOP officials. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08821](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08821). ([Return to top](#))

**9. PENSIONS, BENEFITS SECURE, BOARD OF PENSIONS TOLD:** Despite the collapse of global financial markets and arguably the worst crisis in the U.S. economy since the Great Depression, pensions and benefits for plan members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Board of Pensions are secure, the board's directors were told in Monterey, Calif., Oct. 23-25 during their fall meeting. "We have 17,700 retirees and survivors and every one of them will continue to get their checks every month," said Judy Freyer, BOP senior vice-president, treasurer and chief investment officer. "They don't have to lose sleep over this because I've been losing it all for them." The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08803](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08803). ([Return to top](#))

**10. BOARD OF PENSIONS POSTS NEWSLETTERS ONLINE:** The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has several newsletters online, including "EducationTalk" and "The

Board Bulletin."These newsletters and others provide a wealth of information about Board resources, including health-related issues, tax information, updates on Board policies and procedures, and much more. They are published on a regular basis, and the back issues can also be found on the site. The newsletters can be found at [www.pensions.org/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=34887&mode=2](http://www.pensions.org/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=34887&mode=2). ([Return to top](#))

**11. OGA NAMES NEW DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS:** The Rev. Dr. Thomas D. Hay will begin serving as the director of operations for the Office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in January. The announcement was made this week by the Rev. Gradye Parsons, stated clerk of the PC(USA)'s General Assembly. Hay will fill the position vacated by Parsons when he was elected stated clerk last summer by the denomination's 218th General Assembly in San Jose, Calif. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08826](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08826). ([Return to top](#))

**12. 2009 MISSION YEARBOOK IS NOW AVAILABLE:** One hundred seventeen years and counting. The 2009 edition of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Mission Yearbook for Prayer and Study is hot off the press and, as usual, is flying off the shelves. "The print run is 40,000 and we usually distribute all of those," Yearbook editor Billie Healy told the Presbyterian News Service in a Nov. 4 interview. The scriptural theme of the 2009 book is drawn from the recent 218th General Assembly: "Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). The complete story is available at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08811](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08811). ([Return to top](#))

**13. MISTER ROGERS-INSPIRED EFFORT PROVIDES WINTER CLOTHES:** Inspired by the Rev. Fred (Mister) Rogers, the Presbyterian Media Mission is once again teaming with Presbyterian churches, The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh and United Way in an effort to collect winter clothing for those in need. The "Neighborhood Sweater Drive" is part of a larger campaign — "Come In Out of the Cold" — to entice Pittsburghers to warm their souls while warming the bodies of those less fortunate. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08817.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08817.htm). ([Return to top](#))

**14. PRESBYTERIAN PASTOR PORTRAYED IN EASTWOOD FILM:** John Malkovich plays Presbyterian minister the Rev. Dr. Gustav Briegleb in Clint Eastwood's new film "Changeling." The film tells the story of how in 1928 the minister came to the aid of Christine Collins, a mother who was wrongly imprisoned in a psychiatric ward because she insisted that the boy whom the police had returned to her was not her kidnapped 9-year-old son, Walter. Fearful of being discredited in the eyes of the public, Los Angeles Police Captain J. J. Jones brushed aside Collins' objections as signs of a confused woman out of touch with reality. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08808](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08808). ([Return to top](#))