



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

SEPTEMBER 12, 2008

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

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1. SEPTEMBER SYNOD MEETING

ANNOUNCED: The stated meeting of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies opens Sunday, Sept. 28, at Mount Olivet Conference and Retreat Center in Farmington, Minn., beginning with dinner at 5:30 p.m. The meeting is scheduled to adjourn Tuesday, Sept. 30, at 11:30 a.m. 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. CHAZ RUARK CALLED TO EXEC POSITION IN TWIN CITIES AREA

CITIES AREA: The nine-member nominating committee for executive presbyter for the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area unanimously selected the Rev. Charles (Chaz) Ruark on its first and only vote among the final candidates interviewed.



Ruark, pictured at right, said he plans to begin fulfilling the call Nov. 1. The Rev. Robert Cuthill, who had been called from retirement in January to the interim executive position, will continue in the executive post until Ruark arrives.

Ruark currently serves as the interim executive presbyter for the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley.

A graduate of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Ruark has served pastorates in Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma.

He is married to the Rev. Janet Ruark, with whom he shares a passion for ministry, and they have two children. Their son Mike is studying architecture at the University of Oklahoma, and their daughter Courtney, also a student at OU, is working on a degree in liberal studies.

Writing in his Personal Information Form, Ruark stated, "We [the church] must continue to work toward the reconciliation of individuals and camps that disagree. Those who are in minority positions must feel they are being heard and respected. Those in majority positions must reach out with compassion rather than simply demanding compliance. As an Executive Presbyter I have worked very hard to get my

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Presbytery to come to terms with their disagreements while not imposing my views. I seek input from all sides encouraging participation from those who may feel marginalized by their peers."

In a note to the Missouri River Valley Presbytery, Ruark wrote, "My time here has been such a joy I cannot express you the gratitude I feel to have served you these past 20 months. We have certainly gone through a lot in a short amount of time. The relationships I have found here will stay with me throughout my life. I am so very proud of PMRV for the model presbytery you have become." ([Return to top](#))

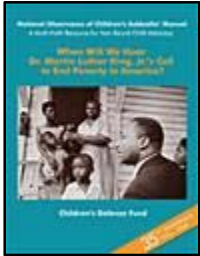
3. VARDEMAN ACCEPTS HURRICANE RESPONSE POST IN GULF: Frank Vardeman, a former associate executive at the Synod of Lakes and Prairies from 1998 to 2002, left the twin cities this week for Gulfport, Miss., to become the manager of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance in the Gulf Coast area. Before serving the synod, Vardeman served as associate executive for the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area from 1995 to 1998. Since leaving the synod, he has been the executive director of Episcopal Community Services, Minneapolis, Minn., the mission of the Diocese of Minnesota. In the PDA post, Vardeman will provide on-site management for PDA in the Gulf Coast region. ([Return to top](#))

4. OUTLOOK CARRIES STORY ON IOWA FLOODS: The Presbyterian Outlook magazine carried a feature story in its Sept. 1 issue on the floods and recovery work in Iowa. Written by Leslie Scanlon, the story began, "The floods in Iowa didn't come in one dramatic, before-and-after moment. The rain kept coming, the water kept rising, and downriver, the trouble passed on from town to town to town." Scanlon's story continued, "The mucking out began, followed shortly by August's hot, humid weather. People are being advised not to start installing drywall until the humidity drops. 'If there's too much moisture, then the mold grows back right away,' said Marue White, associate for communications for the Presbytery of East Iowa. 'They keep saying just wait, wait, wait, wait until the moisture goes down.'" The complete story can be found at <http://www.pres-outlook.org/news-and-analysis/1-news-a-analysis/7839-volunteers-work-on-flooded-iowa-homes-as-winter-approaches.html>. ([Return to top](#))

5. DISASTER RECOVERY EFFORTS CONTINUE IN IOWA: Disaster recovery efforts are continuing in Iowa and the need for volunteers remains. To pick up the latest recovery information from the Presbytery of East Iowa go to www.peia.org. The latest information from the Presbytery of North Central Iowa can be obtained by calling 319.233.1747. ([Return to top](#))

6. MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES PLANS COAT DRIVE: In a few months, many newly-arrived refugees will encounter snow for the first time, unequipped with suitable winter clothing. The answer to this dilemma might be in your closet, according to the Minnesota Council of Churches. The council's Refugee Services is accepting new and gently used coats, hats and mittens in preparation for its fall coat giveaway that will be held in mid-October. Donations can be brought to the Minnesota Church Center at 122 Franklin Ave. W., Minneapolis, MN 55404 at any time during business hours. More information can be obtained from Kristin Zoellner by writing kristen.zoellner@mchurches.org or calling 612.230.3219. ([Return to top](#))

7. BOARD OF PENSIONS RENEWS MAYO'S HEALTH ASSESSMENT: The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has announced that it will continue to offer the Mayo Clinic Health Assessment, a benefit for active Medical Plan members and spouses designed to encourage members and their families to engage in preventive healthcare, thereby improving their overall health and helping contain healthcare costs. This complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08633. ([Return to top](#))



8. CHILDREN'S SABBATH MATERIAL AVAILABLE ON WEB: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Web site contains a variety of information on Children's Sabbath which is observed Oct. 17-19. This year's Children's Sabbath manuals, which focus on the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s call to build and be the blessed community where all children can live out their God-given potential, are now available. The resource can guide a congregation through the development of worship services, education programs, direct service activities and social justice initiatives. These resources can also be used throughout the year and not just for Children's Sabbath. The materials can be found at www.pcusa.org/children/poverty/worship.htm. Additional Children's Sabbath materials can be found through the Minnesota Council of Churches at www.mnchurches.org/ChildAdvocacy.html. ([Return to top](#))

9. UNITED SEMINARY IN TWIN CITIES SETS VITAL CHRISTIANITY

ACADEMY: United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities has announced its inaugural year of the "Academy for Vital Christianity." The purpose of the academy is to energize and equip people to hear more profoundly the voice of God and to make that voice more audible in neighborhoods, nations and world, according to an announcement distributed by the seminary this week. Fall workshops include "[Reimagining the Church for Our Contemporary Time](#)," "[Living a Contemplative Life in a Helter Skelter World](#)," "[Evangelism: Embracing the 'E' Word](#)," and several others. More details and registration information can be found at www.unitedseminary.edu/CommunityPrograms/academy.asp. ([Return to top](#))

10. OKLAHOMA COURT RULES IN FAVOR OF PRESBYTERY: An Oklahoma district court in Tulsa has ruled that the Presbytery of Eastern Oklahoma - www.eokpresbytery.org - of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is the legal owner of the property of breakaway Kirk of the Hills, a 2,600-member congregation that bolted to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in August 2006. In his Sept. 9 ruling, Judge Jefferson Sellers denied Kirk of the Hills petition for a summary judgment and ordered the church to "convey its real and personal property" to the presbytery, as per the decision of the presbytery's administrative commission, which concluded in March 2007 that Kirk of the Hills was "in schism." This complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08659. ([Return to top](#))

11. WASHINGTON OFFICE MISSION STUDY ANNOUNCED: A wide ranging mission study designed to enable the larger church to review the scope and function of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office was announced this month by the Rev. Tom Taylor, General Assembly Council deputy executive director for mission. The mission study comes at a time of transition for the Washington Office, following the 18-year tenure of the Rev. Elenora Giddings Ivory as director. "As with a local congregation following a long pastorate," Taylor said, "the mission and ministry of this important office can be strengthened by a process of reflection and reorientation to current needs and priorities. "The whole church must be served by the Washington Office," Taylor said, "and only a mission study of this scope will allow the divergent opinions and views of our public witness to help shape the future of this vital ministry." This complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08629. ([Return to top](#))



12. PDA PLANS RESPONSES WITH MISSION PARTNERS: According to an announcement it released Thursday afternoon, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance noted that it "has been closely following the recent spate of hurricanes that have destroyed parts of the Caribbean and the U.S. Gulf Coast. A coordinated response with our mission partners and our ecumenical partners is under way for Haiti and Cuba, both of which have been hit by multiple storms including Hurricane Ike." PDA has already been in contact with disaster task forces in Mission and New Covenant presbyteries, both of which lie on the Texas coast, and plans to update responses at www.pcusa.org/pda. The site will also include

opportunities to respond with financial support. ([Return to top](#))

13. PARSONS WRITES 'A VITAL WORD:' In his monthly column, the Rev. Gradye Parsons, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) wrote, "This past month was full of adventure. As many of you know, I traveled to the Cleveland Clinic last month for open-heart surgery to replace a part of my aorta. The surgery was successful and I am quickly recovering at home. Let me first say thank you from the bottom of my new and improved heart. I received emails, letters, cards, and phone calls from people all across the church. They became an important lifeline to the world outside of the hospital." The rest of Parsons' column can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08632. ([Return to top](#))

14. VICE MODERATOR WRITES ABOUT 'MENDING:' The Rev. Byron Wade, vice moderator of the 218th General Assembly, recently wrote a message to the church titled "Mending." It begins, "I don't really listen much to the radio while I'm driving. However, when my six-year-old son Andrew is occupied with his Nintendo DS games in the backseat, I listen to the local affiliate for National Public Radio. One of my favorite broadcasts is 'This I Believe' - three-minute essays in which real, everyday people discuss their core values and beliefs that guide their daily lives. I was particularly struck by the story of Susan Cooke Kittredge, a minister in Vermont. She talked about her grandmother, who was an excellent seamstress. Unlike her grandmother, Susan couldn't sew well, but she enjoyed mending torn clothing." Wade's complete message can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08624. ([Return to top](#))

15. SYNOD OF SUN DISCUSSES 'ELEPHANT' - DENOMINATIONAL RELEVANCE: While 218th General Assembly topics like ordination standards, confessions of faith and Form of Government get a lot of attention, the proverbial elephant in the living room is denominational relevance, according to many who gathered at a Synod of the Sun event Aug. 11-12 called "Next Steps." This complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08646.htm. ([Return to top](#))

16. FARM WORKERS HELP BRING SLAVE BOSSES TO JUSTICE: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)-backed Coalition of Immokalee Workers - www.ciw-online.org - assisted authorities in the investigation and prosecution of one of the largest slavery cases ever in Southwest Florida. Five Immokalee, Fla., residents pleaded guilty in federal court Sept. 2 to charges of enslaving Mexican and Guatemalan workers, brutalizing them and forcing them to work in farm fields. This complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08648. ([Return to top](#))

17. NEW IMMIGRANT MINISTRIES CONSULTATION HELD IN LOUISVILLE: Leaders of new immigrant ministries in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) gathered in Louisville this week with representatives of the church's middle governing bodies to talk about how to extend and strengthen the denomination's outreach to new immigrants. The event opened Thursday with a keynote address by General Assembly Moderator Bruce Reyes-Chow and a cultural celebration, and concludes Saturday. General Assembly Vice-moderator Byron Wade preached Friday morning. This complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08650. ([Return to top](#))

18. PARTICIPANTS SOUGHT FOR 'DEEP AND WIDE' EVANGELISM: Presbyterians who "cannot help but share the Good News because of the song that God has put in your heart" are being encouraged to attend an evangelism consultation Nov. 10-12 at the Stony Point Conference Center outside New York City. The event, co-hosted by former PC(USA) General Assembly moderators Susan Andrews and Rick Ufford-Chase, will attempt to build enthusiasm for "Grow Christ's Church Deep and Wide," - <http://deepandwide.ning.com> - and evangelism initiative enthusiastically endorsed by the recent 218th General Assembly in San Jose, Calif. This complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08642. ([Return to top](#))

19. POPULAR PBS SERIES BEGINS ITS 12TH BROADCAST SEASON: The popular Public Broadcasting System series, "Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly," opened its 12th broadcast season Sept. 5. The weekly public affairs program, anchored by Bob Abernethy, and produced by Thirteen/WNET New York, provides coverage of events and topics of interest to the faith community, both nationally and abroad. Prior to the Nov. 4 election, the program will provide a number of special reports focusing on the complex interaction between politics and religion. The program's newsletter can be found at www.thirteen.org/pressroom/religion.php. ([Return to top](#))

20. OUTLOOK MAGAZINE RUNS EXTRA COPIES OF CHURCH OFFICER ISSUE: The

Sept. 1 edition of The Presbyterian Outlook offers nearly a dozen articles on different aspects of church officers' work. The issue, according to Jack Haberer, editor, was published "in the hope of equipping ... church officers to discern God's will, to reach out in mission, to glorify God in worship, and to express Christian empathy to all." Expecting increased demand for the issue, Haberer said extra copies of the issue have been printed and those copies are available individually or in bulk. While supplies last, prices are \$3 each for 1-2 copies, \$2.50 each for 3-9, \$2.20 each for 10-49, \$2.10 each for 50-99, and \$2 each for 100-plus. Orders can be placed by contacting Gillian Kunkel at 800.466.6008 or through email at gkunkel@pres-outlook.org. ([Return to top](#))