



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

December 19, 2008

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

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"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with

Mary his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." Luke 2:4-7

EDITOR'S NOTE: Keeping in Touch will not be published during the Christmas and New Year holiday period. The next issue of Keeping in Touch will be published Friday, Jan. 16.

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. COM/CPM TRAINING EVENT SLATED IN JANUARY:

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies' annual training event for members of committees on ministry and the preparation for ministry is scheduled Tuesday through Thursday, Jan. 27-29, at Christ the King Retreat Center in Buffalo, Minn. A 24-hour training event for new committee moderators is slated there Jan. 26-27. The training event for new moderators opens at 3 p.m. Monday, Jan. 26, with registration beginning at 2 p.m. The conference for moderators and other interested committee members begins at 3 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 27, with registration opening at 1 p.m. The theme of this year's event is "New Realities in Church and Culture: Implications for COM and CPM." The Rev. David Moyer, conference minister of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ, will be the conference's keynote speaker. Registration forms for the conference and an agenda can all be found on the synod's website at www.lakesandprairies.org. ([Return to top](#))

3. SYNOD SCHOOL MATERIALS MAILED

13. Pensions site offers new features

Training & Invites

14. 'First responders' interim training set at Ghost Ranch

15. Stewardship event slated in Kansas City in March

16. National Pastors Sabbath event set in Florida

And just 1 more

17. Former media executive drives children's website

THIS WEEK: Synod School 2009 advertisements and bulletin inserts were mailed earlier this week, and in the next couple of weeks the same ads and inserts will be posted on the synod's website –

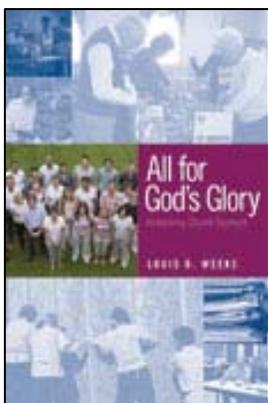
www.lakesandprairies.org. The inserts are designed for Sunday bulletins, but they can also be used as handouts in Christian education classes, LOGOS classes, youth group meetings, Presbyterian Women gatherings and all other possible options. More information about Synod School 2009 can be found at www.lakesandprairies.org/school.html. ([Return to top](#))

4. FELTMAN WRITES ABOUT FOLLOWING JESUS IN VULNERABILITY: The Rev. David Feltman, general presbyter for the Presbytery of North Central Iowa, wrote about vulnerability in a recent presbytery newsletter. He wrote, "Could it be that we are to follow Jesus in vulnerability? This question strikes home as I read Christmas letters. One would get the impression from Christmas letters that America is in excellent shape. The Christmas letters share that 2008 was a pretty darn good year. The business is going well; the vacation was great; all the kids are above average. It is an unusual letter which speaks of struggle or vulnerability. Have you received one which has said, 'We are going bankrupt,' or 'We are sick of being married and struggling to keep the marriage alive,' or 'Our kids are making us pull our hair out.' Could it be Jesus has something to teach us about vulnerability?" Feltman's complete column can be found at <http://presbynciowa.org/stuff/Weekly%20E-News%2012-11-08.pdf> (scroll to the second page of the newsletter). ([Return to top](#))



5. DUBUQUE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY PLANS DISCERNMENT CONFERENCE:

Twice a year the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary offers its "Exploring a Call to Ministry Conference" for prospective students. The next conference date is March 18-20. The conference opens with dinner Wednesday and ends with lunch Friday. For \$25, the seminary provides two nights' lodging and all meals. Participants have the opportunity to be in a discernment group setting while on campus to worship, attend class, talk one-on-one with a professor, and meet students and their spouses. Additional information about the conference and registration materials can be found at <http://udts.dbq.edu/ExploreCall.cfm>. ([Return to top](#))



6. WINTER PASTORS SCHOOL SET AT HASTINGS

COLLEGE: The annual Winter Pastors School runs Monday through Thursday, February 2-5, at Hastings College, Neb., and will feature the Rev. Louis B. Weeks discussing "Administration as Pastoral Care: Redeeming the Scutwork." Weeks is the author of the newly released Alban Institute book, "All for God's Glory: Redeeming Church Scutwork." Book details are available at <http://www.alban.org/bookdetails.aspx?id=6616>. In a 13-minute podcast, available on the Alban Institute website, Weeks describes how faithful church administration, including even the tasks of drudgery, is vital spiritual work that can be thought of in terms of stewardship and pastoral care. The podcast can be found at <http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=6786>.

Registration information for Winter Pastors School can be found at www.centralnepresby.org/2009WinterPastors.pdf. ([Return to top](#))

7. WITHERSPOON PRESS OFFERS DVD ON CALVIN'S LIFE, LEGACY: Witherspoon Press, a publishing imprint of Congregational Ministries Publishing, and the Office of Theology, Worship and Education of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are offering a new DVD, "John Calvin: Life and Legacy," in celebration of the 500th anniversary of the birth of Calvin. A trailer for the video can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/calvin.htm>. Orders can also be placed from the website. ([Return to top](#))



8. NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OFFERS HEALTHY LIVING INFO: The National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program is offering an education and worship resource that gives congregations the tools to help maintain the sanctity of individual bodies and ensure that God's creation remains healthy. Promotional material notes, "The choices we make for our families and the way we care for God's earth are intricately related to human health and the health of all creation. Today, pollutants and toxic chemicals contaminate our water, our land, our personal care products, and our children's toys. These contaminants can cause health problems ranging from asthma to cancer, especially in children." Details resource materials can be ordered at www.nccecojustice.org/resources.html#environmentalhealthresources. ([Return to top](#))

9. PC(USA) PRESENTS GIVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION: The website of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presents numerous giving opportunities, including one for college scholarships. In notes, "In the past, we have been able to award many scholarships to Presbyterian students. Each year as the scholarship funds are depleted, the number of scholarships decline, and in some cases scholarship programs had to be canceled. ... Well, here's your chance. Giving to the Extra Commitment Opportunity fund can help educate Presbyterian leaders for tomorrow. ... The question now is, what will you do about it?" The giving opportunities for the PC(USA) Office of Financial Aid for Studies can be found at www.pcusa.org/financialaid/givingopportunities.htm. ([Return to top](#))



10. 'BIG TENT' WEBSITE LAUNCHED: This summer the Presbyterian Communicators Network national conference will be held in conjunction with the "Big Tent" event

of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) June 11-13 in Atlanta, Ga. In addition to the Communicators Network, conferences slated at the "Big Tent" include New Immigrant Ministries Convocation, National Multicultural Church Conference, the National Elders Conference, the Racial Ethnic Convocation, the Stewardship Conference, the Peacemaking Conference, the Evangelism and Church Growth Conference, the PHEWA Social Justice Biennial Conference, and the Committee of Preparation for Ministry/Committee on Ministry/Seminary Healthy Ministry Conference. The "Big Tent" even has its own spot online at www.pcusa.org/bigtent. ([Return to top](#))

11. PARSONS ENCOURAGES OBAMA TO PUT PEOPLE FIRST: New Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly Stated Clerk Gradye Parsons has written to new U.S. President Barack Obama assuring him that Presbyterians are praying for him and urging him not to let the current economic crisis overshadow "the issues of ordinary people." In his Dec. 1 letter, Parsons told Obama that "offering encouragement is something that Presbyterians have done to each of the 43 Presidents who preceded you." The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08909. ([Return to top](#))

12. MORE THAN 200 TUNE IN TO MODERATOR'S WEBCAST: The second Webcast featuring Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly Moderator Bruce Reyes-Chow drew more than 200 viewers to a lively discussion of a paper entitled "Rebuilding the Presbyterian Establishment" – www.pcusa.org/re-formingministry/papers/rebuilding.pdf -- The one-hour Dec. 9 conversation between Reyes-Chow and the author of the paper – Centre College professor Beau Weston – can be viewed in its entirety at the Ustream site at www.ustream.tv/recorded/938452. The Office of Theology and Worship of the General Assembly Council – which commissioned Weston's paper for its "Occasional Papers" series – issued a statement following the Webcast commending the two. This complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2008/08927. ([Return to top](#))

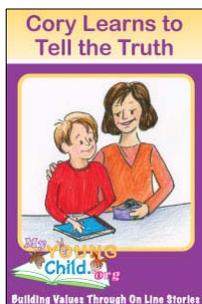
13. PENSIONS SITE OFFERS NEW FEATURES: The Board of Pensions of the

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has announced enhancements to its websites, BenefitsConnect and Pensions.org. One of the developments is the availability of BenefitsConnect -- <https://benefitsconnect.pensions.org/> -- to retirees and surviving spouses. In addition to listing all of the benefits in which they are currently enrolled, BenefitsConnect provides additional information, including the payment history to these members. Increased functionality includes allowing them to request online a change in their direct deposit information. The latest addition to the calculators section is the Taxation of Death Benefit Dues Calculator -- <http://www.pensions.org/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=53687&mode=2> -- which enables church treasurers and business administrators to determine imputed income, if any, that must be reported on members' W-2 forms for death benefits coverage through the Benefits Plan. Finally, the Board has added a Frequently Asked Questions section -- <http://www.pensions.org/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=53743&mode=2> -- to Pensions.org. This section answers the most common questions the Board receives about medical claims, salary changes, dues invoices, service changes, and dependent changes. ([Return to top](#))

14. 'FIRST RESPONDERS' INTERIM TRAINING SET AT GHOST RANCH: First Response Interim Ministry (FRIM) is a new specialty in transition ministry for those trained interim ministers who respond quickly to a congregation which has lost its pastor to death, debilitating illness, or presbytery removal. FRIM training is slated Feb. 22-25 at Ghost Ranch in Santa Fe, N.M. Training will be based on data from presbytery and congregational leaders who have worked in situations of sudden pastor loss. The core content of the course will be shared trauma and grief, group strategies for healing, particularities in congregational life, and self-care of the responder. Participants in this first-ever offering will help design a response system to serve the denomination. Pre-requisites are completion of Interim Ministry Basic Education Weeks One and Two, past or current service in transitional ministry, and signed approval and specific recommendation of one's presbytery. Details can be found at www.ghostranch.org/component/option,com_oscommerce/Itemid,0/osMod,product_info/cPath,10/products_id,842/ ([Return to top](#))

15. STEWARDSHIP EVENT SLATED IN KANSAS CITY IN MARCH: A national Presbyterian stewardship conference, "Stewardship Kaleidoscope," is slated March 9-11 in Kansas City, Mo. According to conference materials, the event is designed for "anyone interested in helping members become more joyful stewards." Speakers slated for the event include Laura Mendenhall, Debra Mumford, Marc Carmichael and Shannon Webster. The conference brochure can be found at <http://www.heartlandpby.org/kaleidoscope/>. ([Return to top](#))

16. NATIONAL PASTORS SABBATH EVENT SET IN FLORIDA: Presbyterian pastors from all over the country will gather in Florida for a time of rest and renewal April 17-20 for National Pastors Sabbath. The weekend will provide time to rest, relax and renew through purposeful worship, biblical-theological reflection and fellowship. Walter Brueggeman will lead the Bible study and reflection on the book of Exodus. Details for the event can be found at www.pcusa.org/pastorsabbath. ([Return to top](#))



17. FORMER MEDIA EXECUTIVE DRIVES CHILDREN'S WEBSITE: Wilbur S. Edwards, a former media executive who is now in his 90s, is the driving force behind a children's website, My Young Child -- www.myyoungchild.org -- featured in the current issue of Quintessential Barrington, a magazine of the Barrington, Ill., a Chicago suburb. The article noted, "Having retired twice from a career in educational media, Wilbur remains devoted to developing young minds." A CBS executive from the heyday of radio through the early days of television, and then a leader for both Britannica and Compton's, Edwards worked with a children's author and illustrator to develop the website filled with ethical lessons for children ages 3 to 7. The website notes, "With so much in the news about dishonesty, corruption and fraud at all levels and in all professions, a child may grow up believing that this behavior is the norm. Teachers, grandparents and others working with children have also noted of late an absence of civility in many children's behavior. [The website] was designed to give parents and caregivers the tools to instill in the minds of children at an early age that a more satisfying life style is possible." The complete story about Edwards can be found at www.qbarrington.com. ([Return to top](#))