

The Wider Circle



Presbytery of Des Moines 515-276-4991 / April 2007 Vol. 3, Issue 4



*Equipping pastors and congregations
with the tools to carry on God's awesome love.*

OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

- PC(USA) Moderator's Message
- Phil's Corner
- Synod Update
- Presbytery Happenings

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Beyond Polity: A Message to the PC(USA) from the Moderator

March 7, 2007

by the Rev. Joan S. Gray,
Moderator, 217th General
Assembly (2006)

ATLANTA – One of my treasures is a small volume titled, *The Book of Church Order* 1925, Revised Edition. This book is six inches high, three and one-half inches wide, and one-half inch thick, with big print and lots of white space. Our current *Book of Order* measures nine inches high, six inches wide, and is one inch thick, with much smaller print.

Recognizing that the *Book of Order* had gotten somewhat cumbersome, the last two

General Assemblies set into motion processes for shortening our current book and making it more user-friendly. The idea is to remove some of the material that is currently in the book and put that material in manuals to be used by groups such as committees on ministry, committees on preparation for ministry, and so forth.

While the wisdom of specific changes may be debatable, the overall notion of revising our current *Book of Order* seems good to me. What comes to mind is the story about Jesus' disciples

plucking grain to eat on the Sabbath. When criticized about this, Jesus replied, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Likewise, the *Book of Order* exists to serve the church's life and mission, not the other way around. As the church moves into a time of new challenges and mission opportunities, it makes sense that our polity should follow suit, holding firmly to the things that are crucial to our Presbyterian identity, while giving some freedom in the details.

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Phil's Corner



By the time you read this, one of the highest holy days for Christians –

Easter – will have passed. Easter bunnies, candies, eggs and cards will all be put away until next year, and most of us will go back

to the "routine" of following our religion, or at least its practices. Sounds pretty mundane and boring, doesn't it? The reality is that religion today is neither mundane nor boring as divisions crop almost everywhere, name calling, disparaging remarks, hatred and killing – all in the name of religion – occur on a daily

basis. Then we wonder why more people aren't drawn to religion in general and our churches in particular. This divisive fighting isn't a very pretty picture publicly, and many of us grieve.

One of these grieverers was Giles Card, an honorably retired minister member of our Presbytery who most

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April is Child Abuse Awareness Month

Child abuse is usually not just one physical attack or a single instance of failure to meet a child's most basic needs, although it may be. Usually it is a pattern of behavior taking place over a period of time. It involves intentional acts committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust who threatens to harm or harms a child's physical or emotional welfare.

Child abuse and neglect cut across all ages, races, genders, creeds and socioeconomic groups. It is a violation of the covenant that we have to care for the "least of these." To learn more about this important issue, go online to:

www.pcusa.org/phewa/childabuseawareness.htm

PC(USA) Moderator's Message continued from page 1

Having said this, it is important to realize that one reason the 1925 book was so short is that trust in the denominational system was fairly high. Rules tend to proliferate when trust declines. Along with working on the *Book of Order*, we must find ways to nurture relationships of trust in our denomination, especially across theological divides.

This is spiritual work. It involves claiming by faith our essential unity as members of

Christ's body in spite of theological differences, then working humbly and fearlessly to live into that unity. Jesus called his followers to this work before he died: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

We cannot create this kind of unifying love. It comes to us as a gift of the Holy Spirit when we repent of our hardness of heart and open ourselves to receive it. And when it comes, it is a powerful wit-

ness to the world that Jesus is still alive in and beyond the church.

I love Presbyterian polity. I also stand by what I said on the night I was elected moderator of the 217th General Assembly: Polity will not save us. Only God can make a way forward for us, and God is ready and able to do that right now. Are we ready to receive it?

*The Rev. Joan S. Gray,
Moderator of the 217th
General Assembly (2006.)*

Visits by the Moderator and Vice-Moderator

The Moderator's Office began a limited process of coordinating visits through synods in 2000. Each year we added the number of synods that would, in consultation with the presbyteries, provide an itineration within their bounds for an

eight- to 10-day period. With the visits of the Moderator and/or Vice-Moderator of the 217th General Assembly, we will be moving fully into this process.

Visits to and with synods, presbyteries and congrega-

tions will be coordinated through the Moderatorial Staff Services. If you wish to have a visit scheduled by the Moderator and/or Vice-moderator, contact Valerie Small, Manager for Moderatorial Staff Services at vsmall@ctr.pcusa.org.

Prayer Retreat with the Moderator: May 20

Come and relax into the abundance of God May 20-22 at a retreat with newly elected PC(USA) Moderator Rev. Joan S. Gray. *Broadening Hospitality, Deepening Vocation* is designed to allow those of us who are always meeting the needs of others time to let our own needs be met – a time to allow ourselves to be gathered into a deeper experience of Christ through prayer, meditation on scrip-

ture, worship and fellowship. "Be still and know that I am God" is a promise, not a command.

Rev. Gray has been in ministry in various settings in the Greater Atlanta Presbytery since 1978. After 20 years of installed pastorates, in 1999 she moved into a new ministry as a trained interim pastor, often working with churches in conflict. She received her seminary training at Columbia Theological Semi-

nary (M.Div.), and at General Theological Seminary in New York City.

Brochures and registration forms for this program can be downloaded at: www.stonypointcenter.org.

For more information on these or other Stony Point programs, contact Rev. Charles Ryu, Program Director, Stony Point Center, N.Y., 800-253-4285, ext. 111 or cryu@stonypointcenter.org.

Phil's Corner continued from page 1

recently was serving the Centerville Church. Those who attended the January Presbytery Meeting will remember Giles as he walked to the front of the sanctuary in the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas Center, even with a cane he moved with that stubborn dignity that was Giles. He then made some powerful and positive remarks about how we had conducted ourselves in dealing with a difficult situation. Giles lost his battle with cancer a couple of weeks ago, and he will be missed. But that's not why I bring up his name now.

I came across an old column he wrote for the Centerville newsletter, and I wanted to pass it on to you as I found it both challenging and helpful. Here's what he had to say:

"In my despair regarding the divisiveness of religion, I made a statement to a ruling elder that 'I wish I had never heard of religion.' The elder replied, 'Yes, but it's too late.' It is too late to be rid of religion because it has been a part of my life for over 60 years. But as I watch religion function in this country and around the world, rather than experiencing hope, there is a great deal of disappointment.

"Everybody is right. So many religious people, including Christians, hold their viewpoint as the one and only right one and hold it as absolute. Even though I know all

the religious terminology that is so commonly used, I will refrain. Perhaps we need to look at ourselves in more simple and basic terms, terms that even the non-religious can comprehend.

"The most divisive and damaging attitude is our insistence on being right. It is a global disaster and a local malady. Major religions are at odds, denominations have split, and locals can't talk graciously with each other. Why? Because we insist that we have the right answers to reality.

"Human beings are simply not privy to absolute truth. Oh yes, many will say that we have absolute truth in the revelations in which we believe, but these are merely articles of faith and we all hold them dearly. But the manner in which we hold them does not make for the unity of the Church or peace on earth. I believe that this is the greatest problem that people of faith and the church at large face today.

"Televangelists make millions simply lying to people. Reading the news and seeing what religious people do to people is astounding. The problems within our denomination aren't because of perfect revelation, but because our egos are dividing us from each other. Egotism is probably the greatest manifestation of alienation from God. Egotism is an exercise in the

'great I.' Anyone who exhibits arrogance is offensive to others. We seem to be making our religious expressions in arrogant fashion and the unity of the church is destroyed. The Presbyterian Church is now undergoing such destructive divisions.

"Further, city neighborhoods and small town communities find pockets of people who will not associate with others because of the difference between being 'right' and 'wrong.'

Families are split because of the 'God and I' attitude and we cannot speak to each other with civility.

"If the Spirit of God, through any religion, is to make humans gracious, then the attitude of being right paralyzes that function. To hold a personal, absolute position on matters of faith is to miss the point.

"This does not mean that you cannot stick to what you believe. Just don't push it as a universal and absolute truth."

If I may add one line I read in a Lenten book, Andre Gide warned, "Believe those who are seeking the truth; doubt those who find it."

May this time of following the One who is the Truth be stimulating, thoughtful, and yes, even fun.

*Peace, Phil
Stated Clerk and
General Presbyter of the
Presbytery of Des Moines*



Earth Day Sunday, April 22

On a Sunday, April 22 or another dedicated Sunday, with worship experiences, educational programs and other activities emphasizing environmental stewardship. Congregations can use various workshop materials which are available on the Worship Resources site:

- The 2007 Earth Day Sunday Resource from the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Task Force
- "Our Daily Bread: Harvesters of Hope and the Garden of Eden." www.nccecojustice.org/faithharvestworship.html
- Through the Eye of a Hurricane: Rebuilding Just Communities — 2006 Earth Day Sunday Resource www.nccecojustice.org/EarthDay/2006/index.html
- Sacred Oceans and Seas — 2005 Earth Day Sunday Resource www.toad.net/~cassandra/oceanhome.htm
- A Reflection for Earth Day www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/worship/earthday.pdf



Rural Churches, It's Time to Celebrate!

The Presbyterian Church

(U.S.A.) has set aside April 29, 2007 as Rural Life Sunday to celebrate the ministry and mission of congregations serving rural communities. While we often think of agricultural issues as rural issues, we are increasingly aware that they are everyone's issues. To celebrate Rural Life Sunday, worship resources and scripture readings have been provided, focusing on the Good Shepherd. Go online to: www.pcusa.org/smallchurch/ruralsunday.htm.

Let us join together in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and the good news of our rural congregations and communities.

Events Calendar

April 20-21 – *Amazing Freedom*, 2007 Women of Faith Conference, Wells Fargo Arena, Iowa Events Center, 730 Third St., Des Moines, Iowa. Starts Friday, 5:30 - 9:45 p.m. and Saturday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. America's largest women's conference. Cost is \$65-85. To learn more, go online to: www.womenoffaith.com, or call 888-94-FAITH.

April 21 – *CORE 2007: Helping Hurting Kids*, sponsored by Youth Specialties, **Ankeny Presbyterian Church**, 317 S.E. Trilein Dr., Ankeny, Ia. Program is from 8:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. (checkin at 8:15 a.m.) Speaker Dave Ambrose has been working with students for more than 15 years. Check the website for up-to-date information at www.youthspecialties.com/thecore or call 888-346-4179.

April 23-27 – *Regional Training for Interim Ministry*, Mercy Center, St. Louis, Mo., sponsored by Synod of Mid-America and Synod of Lincoln Trails. For details, contact Kristi Miller at: Kristi@lincolntrails.org, or Mary Sue Thomas at: maryst@synodma.org.

April 27-28 – *Spirituality in the 21st Century*, Prairiewoods presents a two-day conference at St. Pius X Church in Cedar Rapids, Ia.

Dr. Marcus Borg will present two lectures, Friday, 7-9 p.m., *A Tale of Two Christianities*. Tickets are \$15-20. Saturday's lecture, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. on *The Church in the 21st Century: Seeing Christianity Again*. Tickets are \$40-50 and includes lunch. To register, contact Prairiewoods at 319-395-6700 or go to www.prairiewoods.org. Full conference fee is \$65. At the door for both events: \$70

April 28 – *The Body at Worship: Reclaiming and Renewing Our Living Tradition*, presented by The Drumheller Spirituality Forum, Saturday, 9 a.m. to Noon at Plymouth Congregational Church, 4126 Ingersoll Ave., Des Moines. In this morning retreat, composer and worship leader Marty Haugen Eagan, Minnesota, and preacher and worship leader Susan Briehl a Lutheran pastor from Spokane, Wa., will lead an exploration of our living worship traditions. Fee: \$25. Space is limited. Call Marta Hawkins at 515-255-3149. The retreat will consist of two sessions: *The Heart of the Matter* and *Singing Down the Bones*.

May 1-3 – Great Plains Wee Kirk Conference, '07 Theme: *Here I Am Lord* (Isaiah 6:8-9) to be held at the Holiday Inn Sioux Falls

City Centre, 100 West 8th St., Sioux Falls, S.D. Speakers: Paul Detterman 'Hearing the Voice' and 'Speaking the Word'; Joan Gaines 'Giving the Life'; and Tammy Letts 'Bearing the Light'. Worship/Music Leadership: Tom Letts and Michele Smith. Cost is reduced for smaller membership PC (USA) churches: \$50-110. For registration brochures, contact Claudia Krogmann at claudiak@earthlink.net.

May 6-8 – *Synod Assembly Meeting*, of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, Sunday-Tuesday at the Mount Olivet Conference and Retreat Center in Farmington, Minn. (See details on page 6, Synod Update, of this Wider Circle.)

May 10 – *Survivor – The Real Story* (Stages of the grief journey) at Sheraton West, 1800 50th St., West Des Moines, Ia., Sponsored by the Hospice of Central Iowa Institute, this conference is for healthcare professionals working with individuals nearing the end-of-life. Starts Thursday, 8 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Early-bird cost is \$90. Go to www.hospiceofcentraliowa.org or contact Norma Haskins, Institute Coordinator at: 515-271-1336 nhaskins@hospiceofcentraliowa.org.

Diploma in Lay Pastoral Ministry

The Weyerhaeuser Center for Christian Faith and Learning, Whitworth College, is announcing a new ministry program with an information meetings on June 11-15 and 18-22, 2007.

This non-degree program is especially designed for people who live at a distance from Whitworth College and can only study in larger blocks of time. The program can be completed in as little as two years of study (attending two weeks during two successive summers), or it can be lengthened, depending upon the needs of the student.

The program is open to all interested participants regardless of ministry experience and educational/denominational background.

Program Schedule

Courses meet from 9 a.m.-noon and from 2-5 p.m. Monday-Friday each week. During the months between summer sessions, students will do required reading and work on papers or projects.

Program Costs

Tuition for each course is \$250. Room and board on campus is approximately \$300 per week (Sunday-Friday). Books and materials are extra.

Whitworth College's Diploma in Lay Pastoral Ministry Program is designed to help train, equip, and support lay men and women to serve more effectively as commissioned lay pastors and lay ministers and in other paid and unpaid lay-leadership positions in the Presbyterian Church (USA), as well as in other denominations. For more information please contact Rev. Tim Dolan at tdolan@whitworth.edu, or 509-777-1000, or visit the Website at: www.whitworth.edu/FaithCenter/ClergyLay/Certificates/LayMinistryDiploma.htm.

Employment Opportunities

Pastor – First Presbyterian Church of Skagway, Alaska

This congregation is calling the pastor who feels God's call to become a part of our church family, our community, and our lives. If you think you may know who that pastor, please encourage them to contact us. and the full CIF may be viewed at: www.pcusa.org/clc, under opportunities. CIF ID #08923.AC0; Church ID is #08923. To learn more about the church, go to: www.skagwaypresbyterian.org. To apply, contact Jan Marie Tronrud, PNC, Chair, at First Presbyterian Church of Skagway, P.O. Box 513, Skagway, AK 99840; or call

907-983-9000; Fax: 907-983-9010; or e-mail white-hse@aptalaska.net.

Technology and Communication Specialist – Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area (PTCA), Minneapolis, Minn.

Design and implement the components of a communications and technology strategy that will insure timely, transparent, and congregation-enabling communication throughout the Presbytery.

Office Administrator – PTCA

Manage the general office operations of the PTCA and support the work of the Committee on Ministry, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, and the Stated Clerk in a way that will support the life of the Presbytery.

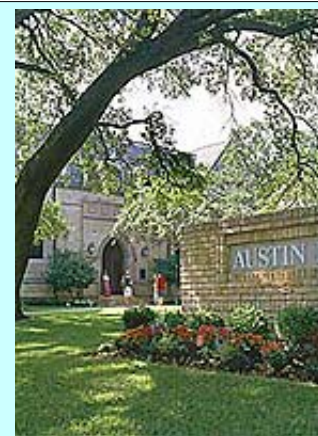
Part-time Events Registrar – PTCA

PTCA seeks a person who loves working with people and details to be part-time events Registrar. Events include Presbyterian Youth Triennium (PYT), Presbyfest, and others. The position is volunteer, but you will receive a stipend.

For more information or a complete description of these three positions, go to:

www.ptcaweb.org/RESOURCES/openpositions.htm.

To apply, contact the Interim Executive Presbyter, Rev. Sarai Schnucker Beck, at ep@ptcaweb.org, or 612-871-7281, ext. 12 (toll free at 888-323-4714).



Austin Seminary Offers Internship Matching Grants

The Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Texas, invites interested congregations to apply for a matching-funds grant, which would fund a yearlong internship for a theological student interested in local social service and outreach. The internship would emphasize both the acquisition of the essential skills for congregational ministry and strategies for social and community outreach. Churches with established mission/outreach programs, or partnerships with independent social service agencies, are especially encouraged to apply.

The grant is being provided by Austin seminary in partnership with the Independent Presbyterian Church Foundation of Birmingham, Ala. Deadline is Sept. 30 and the internship would commence no later than September 2008. Details can be found on the seminary Web site at:

www.austinseminary.edu.

See Dead Sea Scrolls

Discover the wonders of a 2,000-year-old mystery. Don't miss your chance to see the Dead Sea Scrolls in person at the Union Station in Kansas City, Feb. 8-May 13, 2007. The exhibit includes fragments of these incredible documents as well as artifacts from the ancient community of Qumran. Tickets can be purchased online at: unionstation.org or by calling 816-460-2020.

Synod of Lakes and Prairies Update

SYNOD MEETING SLATED MAY 6-8

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies next meets Sunday through Tuesday, May 6-8, at the Mount Olivet Conference and Retreat Center in Farmington, Minn. In the announcement, **Phil Brown**, synod executive, addressed an "unscripted and conversational sermon" and cited the Gospel of Matthew: "Enter through the

narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life and there are few who find it" – 7:13-14. The full text of the memo can be found at www.lakesandprairies.org/PDFFiles/MAY2007MEMO.pdf.

DOOLEY RESIGNS AS SYNOD MODERATOR; STEVEN PROPOSED

The Rev. Kate Dooley, who had been elected moderator of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies at its January meeting, has resigned as moderator to concentrate on other personal matters. Because the vice moderator, Ward Sessing, will begin soon to serve as moderator of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, the synod's steering committee is proposing that the synod assembly set aside its by-laws and elect Donna Steven of the Presbytery of North Central Iowa as moderator to fill the unexpired moderator's term.

SYNOD REMOVED FROM COVENANT NETWORK AFFIRMATION

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies recently learned that it was listed among those congregations and governing bodies that endorsed the Covenant Network's "call to covenant

community." Synod staff researched the minutes for an action by the assembly to make such an endorsement and also sought confirmation of the action from Covenant Network. No record of an action was found. In his memo regarding the May meeting, Phil Brown, synod executive, wrote, "We believe the endorsement was the result of a communication from a previous staff person easily interpreted to be an action of the synod. We believe there are many around the synod who do endorse the mission of the Covenant Network and we intend no criticism towards them. We believe also that it would be inappropriate for the synod to make such an endorsement, claiming to hold one position for its 164,000 constituent members." The Covenant Network Web site is

www.covenantnetwork.org.

SYNOD SCHOOL CATALOG POSTED ONLINE

The 2007 Synod School catalog has been posted to the synod's Web site along with registration forms. Take the time to check out the catalog at www.lakesandprairies.org/PDFFiles/SScat07.pdf. The registration forms are at www.lakesandprairies.org/events.html. At the publi-



Synod School, an annual midsummer ministry of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), is for laity, clergy, families, and singles. It's fun and mind-stretching courses, worship and singing you'll long remember, and times for both fellowship and private reflection. Discover Synod School and you'll know why so many people keep returning.

Choose among 50+ courses. Examples include Bible studies: *Reading Luke's Gospel together*, *Give Us This Day*, and *Obscure but Crucial Characters in the Bible*; body and mind renewal classes: *Tie-Dyeing*, *Baskets*, and *Yoga*; classes for living faithfully in the world: *The Church's Response to Mental Illness*, *Being Community in an Individualistic World*, and *Forum on Ethics and Public Policy*; classes for leader development: *Generational Thinking*, *How to Play Well with Others*, and *Distinctly Presbyterian*.

Daily convocation speaker Carol Bochtal is Professor of Old Testament at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, MI and author of and will teach the 2007-2008 PW Bible Study *Above and Beyond: Hearing God's Call in Jonah and Ruth*. Her love of music is evident in curricula she developed for Handel's *Messiah* and Brahms' *Requiem*. During convocation Carol will highlight five biblical themes—creation, call, health, heaven, and steadfast love—that God gives us to face the challenges of the days ahead.

July 22–27, 2007

Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, Iowa

Discover Synod School!

Go to www.lakesandprairies.org/events.html
or phone 1-800-328-1880, ext. 207

Five Smooth Stones
Biblical Themes for Life & Ministry

(Continued on page 7)

Synod Update continued from page 6

cation time of this newsletter registrations for this summer's Synod School are running at a record pace.

JULY PW SYNOD GATHERING

Presbyterian Women in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies will be gathering for *Celebrating the Patchwork of Life*, July 11-14, at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa.

Participants will participate in workshops, mission projects and are invited to bring a quilt, made in their

presbytery, for display. Participants will also be able to rent a space to sell church cookbooks and other items.

Gathering speakers include Sylvia Washer, executive presbyter of Mission Presbytery, San Antonio, Texas, and church educator and author; Mary Tatum, quilter and author of *The Quilt of Life*, *Beautiful Threads* and *The Quilt of Hope*; and Charlotte Johnstone, creator of *Forbearance Church* and Danelle Crawford McKinney.

Cost for the four-day event is: \$240 – \$225 and includes meals. For registration, contact Virginia Dietz at: gvdietz@earthlink.net.

Scholarships are available for Presbytery of Des Moines church members. If you are interested in the \$100 scholarship offer, contact the **Presbytery's PW Treasurer Kate Dukelow**, at 515-334-9441, or kdukelo@msn.com by May 1.



Plan for Serious Mental Illness Awareness Sunday

Become a congregation of care.

Serious Mental Illness Awareness Sunday on May 6, reminds

us to provide a loving and wel-

coming place for persons who

face rejection by so many oth-

ers. On this day or another in

your congregational life, re-

member our challenge to be in

ministry with persons who have

mental illness, their families and

friends. Learn more, go to:

[www.pcusa.org/phewa/mental-](http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/mental-illness-sunday.htm)

[illness-sunday.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/mental-illness-sunday.htm).

The butterfly is a symbol often

used in the mental health field

to represent gaining freedom

from the stigma of mental ill-

ness.

Attend Older Adult Ministry Workshop

A workshop for those interested in Older Adult Ministry will be held at **Douglas Avenue Presbyterian Church** on April 21 in conjunction with the Annual PW Spring Gathering.

Coordinator for the Older Adult Ministry at **First Presbyterian Church in**

Oskaloosa, Darlene Shepherd, will be available for questions and general advice. She will have resource books available for your review as well.

The following book is a good choice when contemplating involvement in Older Adult Ministry. *Older Adult Ministry*

- *A Resource for Program Development*, is from the Presbyterian Publishing House in Atlanta, Ga. and the cost is only \$5.95.

For more information and the exact time of the workshop, contact Darlene Shepherd at: dshep@mahaska.org.

National Jewish Leader to Speak at Interfaith Alliance Dinner

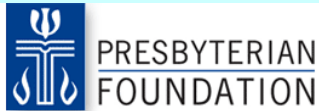
VILSACK TO RECEIVE INTERFAITH AWARD

Rabbi Jack Moline, a national leader in the Conservative Jewish tradition, will provide the keynote speech for **The Interfaith Alliance of Iowa's Annual Award Dinner** on Thursday, May 17 at 6 p.m. at the Olmsted Center at Drake University.

The 2007 Interfaith Award will be presented to former Governor Tom Vilsack dur-

ing the dinner in honor of his efforts to protect all children with anti-bullying legislation, to expand the Iowa Civil Rights Code to include sexual orientation and gender identity, and his commitment to maintain the separation of church and state during his two terms as Iowa's governor. Rabbi Jack Moline is the current chairperson of The National Interfaith Alliance and has been the rabbi at the Agudas Achim Congregation in

Alexandria, Virginia since 1987. He is an adjunct faculty member of the Virginia Theological Seminary and serves on the Program Board of the Cathedral College of the Washington National (Episcopal) Cathedral. Reservations are required. Tickets are \$50 per person. Contact The Interfaith Alliance of Iowa at 515-279-8715 or tjaiowa@dwx.com to make reservations.



PRESBYTERIAN
FOUNDATION

PC(USA) Foundation has Record-Breaking 2006

According to the numbers, 2006 was a good year for the PC(USA) Foundation.

The foundation, a ministry of the PC(USA), reported \$78.5 million available for mission in 2006, an increase of \$6.3 million from 2005. The gain reflects an overall return on the foundation's investments of "more than 10%," according to Robert Leech, president and chief executive officer for the foundation. The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07173.htm.

New Foundation Contact for Presbytery of Des Moines

The PC(USA) Foundation works in partnership with churches and Presbyteries to provide: professional money management for churches and their members and Presbyteries; education for members to include the church in their Estate planning and charitable giving. Contact **Karen Krum**, Regional Development Representative for the Foundation at: 410 S. Stanton St., Shannon, IL 61078, 888-751-9222-toll free or kak@fdn.pcusa.org.

PC(USA) Update

Special Note for Presbytery of Des Moines Pastors

The Board of Pensions and Fidelity recently sent out a mailing asking members who do not participate in the Retirement Savings Plan (403(b) plan) to go to a website and log in with their Social Security Number. This mailing was sent in error, so if you received this mailing, simply shred the notice.

BOP GRANTS 3.7% 'EXPERIENCE APPORTIONMENT'

Buoyed by across-the-board positive financial results for 2006, the PC(USA)'s Board of Pensions voted unanimously March 3 to grant a 3.7% "experience apportionment" to the church's Pension Plan members.

The apportionment means a 3.7% increase in pensions for retired church workers in the plan, and a 3.7% increase in the pension credits of active church workers in the plan. The apportionments – and a 4% increase in the disability benefit – go into effect July 1 of this year.

The disability benefit increase will be applied using a new method approved by the board last fall. Historically, increases were calculated on the member's gross disability benefit. Under the new rubric, the net benefit paid after reductions for Social Security or other disability benefits will provide the bases for calculating the increase.

"This is 10 pages of good news," Vice President for Finance and Accounting Mike

Fallon told the BOP as he presented the 2006 financial report. "And it even extends to the medical plans," he added, referring to health care cost rises that have forced the BOP to raise dues 3% in the last 4 years.

Overall, the board's assets increased almost \$760 million last year – to \$7.75 billion – helped by an investment return of 14%. The pension fund increased by 10% to \$6.75 billion; the death and disability plan increased by 12% to \$574 million; and the assistance plan increased by 9% to \$97 million.

Reserve levels in the BOP's Medical and Medicare Supplement plans also increased – the Medical Plan from \$47.3 million to \$65.8 million and the Medicare Supplement Plan from \$8.5 to \$10.8 million, both well above the board's target reserve levels.

The board also:

- Raised the maximum income level for eligibility for housing supplements for low-income retired plan members.
- Added medical coverage for disabled dependents be-

tween the ages 21-25 who are full-time students.

- Increased eligible monthly housing costs for individuals in retirement communities.
- Re-elected officers for 2007-08
- Heard a report on the BOP's new "Stewardship of Self" campaign.

For details on this story go to: www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07137.htm.

PDA SENDING \$20,000 SOUTH AFTER STORMS LEAVE PATH OF DESTRUCTION

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) is sending \$20,000 in initial assistance to two presbyteries after a violent storm swept through the Midwest and Southeast Thursday, leaving two communities in Alabama and Georgia with serious damage and at least 20 people dead across three states.

South Alabama and Flint River presbyteries will receive \$10,000 each in support of their response efforts in Enterprise, Ala., and Americus, Ga., according to a situation report issued by PDA on Friday (March 2).

The money, from the *One Great Hour of Sharing* offering, "is to do whatever is necessary" in immediate response, PDA Coordinator Susan Ryan said.

(Continued on page 9)

Prayers and Concerns

Please keep in your prayers the following:

Many of you have asked about how **Rev. Melvin Roblee, HR**, interim pastor of **First Presbyterian Church in Guthrie Center**, is doing. A tumor was discovered on Mel's brain, so he had surgery to remove it. The surgery went well and Mel is now at home recuperating. The prognosis is not as good, however. This kind of can-

cer can hide in other parts of the brain and can return rapidly. Treatment can only slow its growth, not prevent it. This word adds extra importance to our prayers for Mel and Kathryn, as do special touches such as cards, notes and other thoughtful-nesses.

Rev. Giles Card, First Presbyterian Church of Centerville, passed away on March 17 after a suffering from respiratory illness after a fall. Memorials are being accepted through the **First Presbyterian churches in Knoxville and Centerville**. Funeral services were held at the Knoxville church on March 22. His wife, **Glennice**, and their family need our prayers.

Please send condolences to Glennice and their family at: 618 E. Competine, Knoxville, IA 50138.

Please keep 11-year-old, **Ellen Keyser** in your prayers. She is the daughter of **Sarah and Todd Keyser of Indianola**. Ellen has a severe case of Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis and has been having a rough time in the past few months as they struggle to find medication to ease the pain and discomfort. Her mom, Sarah is a CLP, on the pulpit supply list for the Presbytery and has been preaching in many of our churches in the past few years. Sarah's aunt and Ellen's great-aunt is our **Presbytery's Office Manager Betty Dyer**.

Des Moines Area Community College's (DMACC's) Urban Campus, DMACC's Diversity Commission and statewide Iowa Public Television are cosponsoring a free screening and panel discussion on the struggles Ethiopian coffee growers are having in making a profit.

BLACK GOLD



**1-3:30 p.m.
Saturday, April 14**

**DMACC Urban Campus
Building One/Rooms 124-126**

Following the screening of the 77-minute documentary, DMACC Anthropology Instructor Lee Searles will moderate a panel discussion on fair trade within the coffee industry.

PANELISTS INCLUDE:

- ▶ **Tim Hintz**, former barista and now coffee roaster for Friedrich's Coffee
- ▶ **Kathy Mahler**, project coordinator of Don Justo Coffee with Dignity
- ▶ **Julie McGuire**, owner of Zanibar's Coffee Adventure
- ▶ **Tim Mooney** of Global Building Group, a nonprofit organization selling Ugandan coffee to raise money to build a girls' school in Uganda
- ▶ **Christine McNunn**, owner of Fair World Gallery, a Valley Junction business specializing in fair trade and earth-friendly items

Free coffee samples will be served.

BLACK GOLD will be broadcast at 10:30 p.m. Sunday, April 22 on IPTV

Iowa Public Television 

DMACC
DES MOINES AREA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

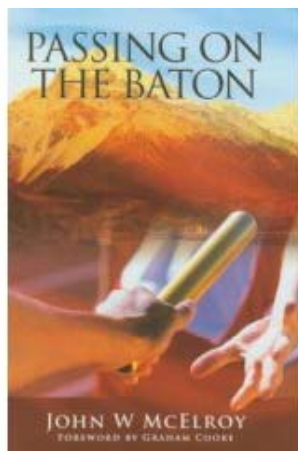
Congregational Connection

Spring break is a time when many youth relax and rest, but not the young musicians from **First Presbyterian Church in Ottumwa**. The youth vocal ensemble, *Prais-ing*, and the youth handbell choir, *ReBELLion*, spent five days of their spring break touring Iowa. They presented concerts to Presbyterian churches in Battle Creek, **Winterset, Lenox, Windsor Heights and Ankeny**. A few days after returning home, they presented their concert to their home church.

They began rehearsing and memorizing music for their tour last fall. Church Director of Music Gail Masinda chose the music. "When we spend this much time with a song, it is important that it clearly expresses what we believe", she says. The youth included: **Megan Brock, Thomas Goering, Kelsey Granneman, Melanie Hance, Adrienne Kaiser and Ashley Kaiser**. They were accompanied by **Kim Goering, Karen Kaiser, and Gail Masinda**.

Book Reviews: Des Moines Presbytery Authors

Two books are now available from authors in our Presbytery.



PASSING ON THE BATON

With the curse of lawlessness on the increase and a culture steeped in selfishness, the Church is losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the next generation. Something has got to change! God is pouring out grace to release spiritual fathers and mothers into the Body of Christ. These are ordinary men and women who are willing to build into spiritual sons and daughters and model a 'counter culture' of selflessness. Their goal is to see the testimony of Jesus passed from generation to generation. Join those who have a vision of the church as family, who see beyond their own needs and desires, and who refuse to take their mantles to the grave!

Presbytery of Des Moines member and author, **Rev. John McElroy**

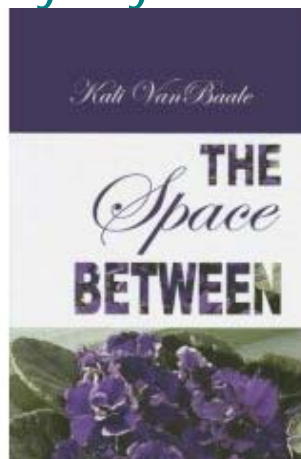
lives in Perth, Western Australia, with his wife Alaine, and son and daughter, Toby and Holly. He is Senior Pastor of Churchlands Christian Fellowship and Director of Southern Cross Association of Churches. This Association is a network of relationships comprising over 100 ministries spanning the Southern Hemisphere.

After researching online, the Amazon Books reviewers had this to say about his book:

"John McElroy is a man with a passion to see 'heaven on earth'... He skillfully takes us through numerous relational scenarios, each of which must be radically practiced if we are to see the Presence of God in our midst." – Graham Cooke

"In life there are pioneers and builders. Rarely do we find individuals who are both reaching for the frontiers of God's glory while also establishing foundational and relational order. John McElroy is one such man, and his book Passing On the Baton provides groundbreaking truth for our times." – Francis Frangipane

Cost of the book is \$12.95 and can be purchased at a book store or online at: www.amazon.com.



THE SPACE BETWEEN

The second book is written by a member of the **Westminster Presbyterian Church in Des Moines, Kali Van Baale**. The *Space Between* is the story of Judith Elliott, an ordinary wife and mother struggling to keep her family together after her son commits a shooting at his suburban high school.

Kali is the recipient of the 2006 Fred Bonnie Memorial Award for Best First Novel for her work of fiction, *The Space Between*, published through River City Publishing out of Montgomery, Ala. Kali will also have a short story entitled *Behind Lace Curtains* published in the anthology *The Healing Project: Voices of Alzheimer's* (LaChance Media) in the Spring of 2007. She leads a creative writing critique group twice a month at her church.

Kali grew up on a dairy farm in rural southern Iowa

and is an alumnus of Indian Hills Community College and Upper Iowa University. *The Space Between* is her first novel, and she lives on an acreage outside Des Moines with her husband and two children.

Reviews at www.Amazon.com say:

"Our book club chose The Space Between just as it was being published and made available to the public. I thought the writing was excellent and the story engaging. We had a lively book club discussion and were fortunate to have Kali Van Baale with us for the meeting."

"Wonderful read! As a mother of a teen, my heart went out to the main character. It made you think how you would react if you were the parent of any of the kids involved."

"Emotional and thought provoking. It really makes you think. When something like this happens, it is easy to condemn the parents. But you read this book and recognize yourself and wonder if you're as good a parent as you think you are. Parts of the book are agonizingly difficult to read because they are so real."

To learn more about these books, go online and search www.Google.com.



'Artsy Evening' Set for CROSS Ministries: April 21

A Silent Art Auction will be held on Saturday, April 21, from 7-9 p.m., at Central Presbyterian Church, 3829 Grand Ave., in Des Moines. Artwork for the silent auction will come from local and national artisans. Some of the items that will be available include: sketches, paintings, photography, jewelry, glass items, wood artistry, pottery, handmade paper, Quilts and Other Fabric Arts. The event will also have decadent desserts and delicious coffees for sale. All proceeds will directly assist families in crisis in Des Moines area communities. For more information, contact Roberta Victor, Director of CROSS Ministries at 515-279-8877 or 515-279-9998 or by e-mail at rjvictor@msn.com.

PC(USA) Missionary to be in Iowa

Nancy Collins, facilitates our Presbytery's partner Joining Hands network in Egypt, and is doing her itineration this summer based out of Ames. The Presbytery and our congregations have a GOLDEN opportunity to have her visit – not just on Sundays but for anything they might have going on (i.e., VBS, anniversaries, etc.)

Nancy will be available June 16-July 16 and is already booked at **Trinity United Presbyterian Church in Indianola** for June 24. Not only is she connected to the Joining Hands program, but she also works (and has worked for 8 years or so) at CEOSS, (Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services) an important

Presbyterian mission partner in Egypt. (To learn more, go to: www.ceoss.org.eg/.)

To learn more about Nancy's mission go to the PC(USA) "Mission Connections" webpage. She also has a newsletter out this month. If you're interested in bringing Nancy to speak to your group you can contact her at: **Nancy Collins**, 14



Sheik Muhammed El Mahdi St., Apt 1, Ard El Golf, Cairo, Egypt, e-mail: Nancy.Collins

In her most recent newsletter she states, "My son Charles will be 14 this month. Although he sometimes has trouble concentrating in class, he has done well with his studies, especially Arabic and history."

"Charles and I will spend the summer in the United States. Charles will participate in a variety of activities with his extended family. I will speak in churches. I am especially targeting the Presbyteries of Des Moines and of Southern New England. Let me know if you would like to hear from me."

Presbytery Happenings

KNOX UNITED CELEBRATED 60TH ANNIVERSARY

The Knox United Presbyterian Church in Des Moines, celebrated their 60th anniversary on March 25 during regular worship service. The observance included messages from former pastors and members from as far away as California, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Illinois. A lunch followed the service. Congratulations!

YOU'RE INVITED TO THE OTTUMWA WOMEN'S RETREAT IN OSKALOOSA Sponsored by the **First Presbyterian Church in Ottumwa**, a Spring

Women's Retreat is being held April 27-28, at America's Best Value Inn, 1315 A Ave., E. in Oskaloosa. This event will begin, Friday at 6:30 p.m. and end, Saturday at 6:30 p.m. Topics to be discussed include: Can we trust Jesus? God's Graces is Extravagant! Celebrate God's Grace and don't forget the Chocolate Boutique! Cost for the overnight event is \$59 -\$73, depending on the room size. For registration forms, contact the Ottumwa Church's Director of Education and Outreach **Peggy**

Brock at 641-684-5465 or pbrock@ottumwafirstpresby.org.

DES MOINES PW TO MEET APRIL 21

It's Spring Gathering time for the **Presbyterian Women in the Des Moines Presbytery** and you're invited! The group will meet on April 21 at **Douglas Avenue Presbyterian Church in Des Moines**, hosts for the annual event, and **St. Paul Presbyterian Church of Johnston** will be co-hosts.

(Continued on page 13)

Presbytery Happenings continued from page 12

This year's theme is *Walking Together in Love and Hope* with guest speaker Gina Gustavson, Global Exchange participant to Brazil. Registration starts at 8:45 a.m. Meal cost is \$5. Make your reservations by April 16 to **June Balch** at: 515-225-4450.

A special music concert will be provided by the youth choir *PraiSing* from **First Presbyterian Church in Ottumwa**. Workshops topics include:

- Don Justo Coffee with Dignity Program and Our Sister Parish – **Kathy Mahler, (Clive, Heartland)**
- CIPO School in Brazil – recipient of Birthday Offering money – **Gil and Virginia Dietz**
- Older Adult Ministries – **Darlene Shepherd, (Oskaloosa, First)**

MONMOUTH COLLEGE CHOIR TO SING AT WEST DES MOINES CHURCH

A special vocal music concert on Sunday, April 22 at 7 p.m. at **Covenant Presbyterian Church**, 1025 28th St. in **West Des Moines**. The Monmouth College Chorale is a highly selective, auditioned, mixed choral ensemble, directed by Dr. Sarah J. Graham. Monmouth College is a nationally-ranked liberal arts college affiliated with the PC(USA), and is located in Illinois. For details, contact Covenant Presbyterian Church Director of Music Ministries, **Julianne Lawrence** at 515-250-3078, or julianne_lawrence@hotmail.com.

YOU'RE INVITED BECAUSE 90 YEARS IS A LONG TIME! Union Park Presbyterian Church in Des Moines is celebrating their 90th Anniversary with a special worship service on Sunday, April 22 at 10 a.m. Five former pastors will be recognized during worship and lunch will follow the service. To RSVP, contact

Joanne Page at 515-244-2678 or **Joan Mahaffey** at 515-965-1229.

There will also be an all-church birthday party on June 24 after the church service. The Urbandale Swing Band will play and cake and ice cream will be served.

RUSSIAN MISSION TRIP SCHEDULED

First Presbyterian Church in Creston has scheduled a mission trip April 24 through May 4. Seven people will be flying to St. Petersburg, Russia where they will spend three days visiting with the Pastor and some of the orphans that they have worked with on past trips. They will then leave St. Petersburg by train and travel to Moscow where they will work in the Pushkino Orphanage the next week remodeling a room for the children and spreading the message of the Gospel to the children and the men and women who care for these forgotten children. This will be the second mission to this particular orphanage.

The mission team includes **Troy and Rachel Foreman, John and Theresa Carter, Dick and Peg Anderson, and Kim Walter**, all members of First Presbyterian Church in Creston along with two others from a Florida church. Of these people, three of

(Continued on page 14)



Presbytery P.O.I.N.T. Update

Sandi Stuckey, Director of Christian Education at **Westminster Presbyterian Church** and the Presbytery's designated P.O.I.N.T. person encourages churches to make time for web-based seminars from Augsburg Fortress highlighting Akaloo, a reformed curriculum.). These webinars will explore the benefits of Akaloo life-long faith formation resource. Each session gives an overview and a walk-through of the Web resources for leaders and learners. Depending on your needs and involvement, these FREE, hour-long, webinars are available in three "types":

- **Akaloo Intro Webinars:** Overview of Akaloo for prospective Akaloo members
- **Akaloo 101 Webinars:** Resource training for current Akaloo members
- **Akaloo Network Webinars:** Resource updates for [Akaloo Network](http://www.akaloo.org) members only

To learn more, go online to: www.akaloo.org/webinars.

Attend Rummage Sale in Des Moines

Park Avenue Presbyterian Church, 3120 S.W. 9th St. in **Des Moines**, is holding a Spring Rummage Sale on Thursday, May 3, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Friday, May 4, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Items to be sold include: clothing, household goods, toys, books, collectibles, and much more. There will also be lunch available from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Entrees will be sold a la carte. Bring your friends, shop and eat lunch with us!



PYT Delegation has New Openings for Youth

Summer is just around the corner and the Presbytery of Des Moines' delegation is nearing the end of the registration process. Currently, we have 20 youth and three adult advisors who will attend the premier youth conference event of the PC(USA). Presbyterian Youth Triennium (PYT), held at Purdue University on July 17-22, is an extraordinary opportunity for youth and adults to witness faith in Jesus Christ, worship, learn and fellowship with others from our "global backyard." The cost for the five-day event is \$399 which includes dorm room and board, event fees, supplies, T-shirt

and souvenir. Information about the PYT can be found on www.presbyterianyouthtriennium.org.

The Camping/Youth Ministries Task Force is pleased to announce that the initial registration period for 15- to 19-year-olds has been extended. We stand at an even mix of urban/suburban/rural applicants. **Registration is still open and youth that are just under/over the traditional age guidelines are now invited to apply. Contact the following task force members for the presbytery application and the PYT registration instructions:**

Lisa Whitmarsh Peterson
Presbytery of Des Moines,
PYT Registrar
Lefty-Lizard@juno.com
515-287-1288

Dennis Britson
Presbytery of Des Moines
CYMTF Moderator
dnbritson@aol.com
515-988-1360
FAX: 515-282-9139

NOTE: Final registration must be done in May! Payments need to be completed by:

- **April 30** for Individual/Families
- **May 10** for Church/Regional Partnership



Summer Camp Reminders:



PRESBYTERY OF DES MOINES SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION IS OPEN
The Presbytery of Des Moines and the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa are again teaming up to offer summer camps for 2007. Registration materials are available online at: www.presbyteryofdesmoines.org/SummerCamps.pdf, or call 515-276-4991.

NEW! WALK BY FAITH BROCHURE IS AVAILABLE
Summer camp brochures and applications are now available from the **Presbyterian Camp on Okoboji** Summer 2007 Directors, Jason and Melissa McDuffie. You can contact them at: www.presbycamp.org, or by e-mailing: presbycamp@iowaone.net, or call them at 712-337-3313. Remember, summer camp is for preschoolers through prime timers!

Governor Culver Signs SF361

Governor Chet Culver signed Senate File 361 on Thursday, April 5, making Iowa the 8th state to enact targeted Sudan divestment. SF 361 is a targeted divestment bill requiring the state to divest from companies that support the government of Sudan, which has been accused of genocide by the United States Government. The bill passed the House with overwhelming support and passed the Senate with unanimous consent late last month.

In the Darfur region of Africa's largest country, Sudan, the government has attempted to eliminate its non-Arab population. In a historic move, the United States gov-

ernment declared the crisis in Darfur to be genocide, marking the first time the U.S. government has taken such action while a massacre was still occurring. To date, over 400,000 have been killed and over 2.5 million have been displaced. The government of Sudan relies heavily on foreign investment to fund its military, making divestment an effective strategic move against the crisis. In addition, Sudan has historically responded to economic pressure. The bill's targeted approach will maximize the impact of divestment on the Sudanese government while minimizing potential harm to

both innocent Sudanese civilians and investment returns. Iowa is the first state to pass divestment legislation in 2007, and the eighth state to divest overall. Eighteen other states are currently considering a targeted divestment model.

"We are thrilled that the state of Iowa is joining the nationwide campaign to target specific companies known to support the genocide in Darfur, Sudan. Iowans should continue their success and make sure all the presidential candidates know that we will not stand by in the face of genocide," state Mark Hanis, director of the Genocide Intervention Network.

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 Designated Missionary
 to Egypt: Denise England

The Wider Circle is published monthly by the Presbytery of Des Moines, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). To learn more about the Presbytery of Des Moines, contact the office or go online to www.presbyteryofdesmoines.org. Copy deadline is the last day of the month. Please submit articles in Microsoft Word or compatible format; digital images and photos are both acceptable.

PRESBYTERY OF DES MOINES
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 Urbandale, IA 50322-4306

Dubuque Seminary Receives Grant

Gary Neal Hansen, assistant professor of church history at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, has received a \$40,000 grant from The Louisville Institute's Christian Faith and Life Grant Program.

The funding will support a project titled *Doing the Work of God: Historical Models of Christian Prayer*. The nine-month Christian Faith and Life Grant will fund the development of a two-book project on 10 historical models of Christian prayer, intended to help Christians experience prayer in richer

ways and to equip ministers and priests to be more effective spiritual directors.

Funds from the grant will support Hansen's research and writing at the University of

Iowa, where he will be a visiting scholar in the Department of Religious Studies.

In October 2007 he will present a paper on portions of this research at the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference in Minneapolis, Minn.

The Christian Faith and Life Grant program supports re-



search projects by academics and pastors designed to make more accessible to religious believers the themes of Christian faith in relation to the realities of their contemporary lives.

For more information about this grant, go to: <http://udts.dbq.edu/>.

WE'RE ON THE WEB:

www.presbyteryofdesmoines.org