

The Wider Circle



Presbytery of Des Moines 515-276-4991 / December 2007 Vol. 3, Issue 12



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

OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

- Congregational Connection
- PCUSA Update
- Sudanese Ministries Update
- El Salvador Mission Update
- Stewardship Tips

'Be Still and Know that I Am God' A Message to the PCUSA from the GA Stated Clerk



**by Clifton Kirkpatrick,
General Assembly Stated Clerk**

LOUISVILLE — Happy New Year!

Some of you may think I am a month too early in saying that familiar phrase. However, the Christian year starts with Advent, not on January 1st. It all begins with the joyous expectation that God will enter human history in the form of a child and that the Word will once again be made flesh.

Advent is one of my favorite seasons of the year, both for the gatherings with family and friends and the glitter of the season (I'm hooked!). Even more importantly, it is one of my favorites because of the hope that the promise of Jesus coming into the world anew offers to me, to my family, to this church, and to the world.

I imagine you have many Advent and Christmas traditions that bring you joy. I find great joy through an activity in which I would never have imagined myself participating even a decade ago.

Each year at this time, I join with my colleagues in other communions that hold similar positions to engage in a retreat at the National Cathedral. Twenty-four hours of the retreat is in silence. Most of those who know us best don't believe that we who gather have the capacity to be silent for twenty-four hours! But we do, and what a blessing it has proved to be to each of us, to our group, and to our ministry of leadership in our churches.

After an afternoon of sharing our spiritual autobiographies over the past year, we enter
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Phil's Corner



Excitement. Anticipation. Awe. Wonder. Confusion. Celebration. All of

these words and more can describe the Church season known as Advent. We begin this new Church year thinking about what lies ahead, and, as we do when we cele-

brate a calendar year, we do some looking back. As I look back to experiencing the Church year with all of you, I am basically thankful for all the opportunities to work and worship together. We have met as a Presbytery four times. We have welcomed new folks to our congregations and new pastors to our pulpits. We

have said farewell as folks have moved to other places. We have grieved and celebrated as some special saints have gone to be with their Lord. I have been privileged to share in worship with lots of our congregations this year. In all of our Presbytery experiences, each of us has been touched and has
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Attention: Elders, Educators and Pastors

[Register for the 2008 Association](#)

[of Presbyterian Church Educators](#)

[\(APCE\) Annual Event](#) by Dec. 17,

2007, and save \$50 with the

early registration discount. At the

conference in San Diego, Feb.

13-16, 2008, participants will

explore teaching for transforma-

tion, hear ideas to renew minds,

hearts and bodies, and find ways

to discern God's will for the

church. More than 100 workshop

choices covering children, youth,

young adult, older adult, and

large and small church ministry

will offer learning opportunities

for attendees at every stage of

their educational ministry. Educa-

tors may also enroll in a 30-hour

course to meet PCUSA certifica-

tion requirements

(<http://apcenet.org>)

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the time of silence to pray deeply for one another, our churches, and our world — and to wait upon God.

Twenty-four hours later, we come out of silence in a service of Holy Communion, a wonderful party, and another rich time of sharing.

In the midst of the beauty of the cathedral and all of its sights and sounds during Advent, there is a real sense of the presence of God among us. There is also great joy as we wait for the coming of Christ into our world again.

The retreat enables me the time and space to pray much more widely and intensively than is often possible. I pray by name for so many of you, for your congregations and ministries, and for the mission we share together as Presbyterians. I always leave this retreat with a special sense of gratitude to God for having placed me in such a wonderful community of disciples of Jesus Christ.

While the form may differ, I hope many of you will also find a sense of renewal in prayer and silence before

God this Advent. There really is a special power in the midst of such a busy season to take time to hear the "still small voice of God" (Ps. 46:10).

Finding time to be quiet and be with God is one of the best ways to truly experience the joy of waiting and expectation for the coming of our Lord. I commend it to you!

This story may be seen here:

www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07815.htm

Prayers and Concerns

Please keep in your prayers the following:

Dr. Keith Garber of Corydon is retiring after serving that community in the practice of medicine for 46 years. Keith is a long time active member of the **Allerton Presbyterian Church** and currently serves as Clerk of Session. A retirement open house will be held Dec. 28. Congratulations and prayers of thanksgiving to Dr. Garber's long career of helping others.

The family of **Rev. LeRoy** and **Lois Kelderman**, LeRoy recently served as interim at **Union Park Presbyterian Church in Des Moines**. He and Lois were in an automo-

bile accident on I-80 near Colfax on Nov. 21. Sadly, Lois died and LeRoy is still recovering at the Des Moines Methodist Hospital in the intensive care unit. Lois had also served at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Des Moines for a time.

Here is information from Lois' obituary which was in the *Des Moines Register*:

Lois Kelderman, 61, died on Wednesday, Nov. 21, 2007, in an automobile accident. In the last part of her life, she was most known for her work as a holistic healer through massage therapy and bodywork, helping many people experience greater wellness. She was also

known for her needlework her gifted decorating and was appreciated in the churches her husband served as pastor. Her favorite spiritual phrase was "Be still and know that I am God."

A visitation was held on Nov. 28. Funeral arrangements are pending. Please send condolences to LeRoy and their two sons' families, Chadley and Trev at PMB 121, 2643 Beaver Ave., Des Moines, IA 50310, leelo@surfrees.com.

Ellen Keyser, 12-year-old daughter of Sarah Keyser — prayers for problems with her arthritis. Ellen is also Office Manager Betty Dyer's great niece.

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touched other people of faith. Differences large and small have been made as we are together. Probably the culmination of all this for me, and for many of you as well because you have told me, was the laying of hands on Sara Hopkins as she was commissioned as a Lay Pastor at our last Presbytery Meeting. There was a special feeling, a powerful presence of the Spirit, that moved over, under, around and through us as we filled the center and front aisles of the First Church in Ottumwa.

I'm not sure we stop to think about how lucky we are to have each other, and how blessed we are to be loved by God. When we do stop, all those words with which I began have new meaning. We touch because we have been touched, and yet as we live our daily lives and, at this time of the year, take so much time to plan for the Big Day, we seem to forget the many ways we have received special touches in our

lives. I encourage each of us, as we experience Advent and anticipate celebrating the Birth of Christ, to pause each day to give thanks for those who have touched our lives – angels, if you will.

Another of my favorite Presbyterian poets – Ann Weems – puts it like this:

- Wouldn't it be wonderful if Advent came filled with angels and alleluias?
- Wouldn't it be perfect if we were greeted on these December mornings with a hovering of heavenly hosts tuning their harps and brushing up on their fa-lalas?
- Wouldn't it be incredible if their music filled our waking hours with the promise of peach on earth and if each Advent night we dreamed of nothing but goodwill?
- Wouldn't we be ecstatic if we could take those angels shopping, or trim the tree or have them hold our hands and dance through our houses decorating?

- And, oh, how glorious it would be to sit in church nest to an angel and sing our hark-the-heralds!
- What an Advent that would be!
- What Christmas spirit we could have!
- An angel-filled Advent has so many possibilities!
- But in lieu of that, perhaps we can give thanks for the good earthly joys we have been given and for the earthly "angels" that we know who do such a good job of filling our Advent with alleluias!

Who are the angels in your lives this Advent season? Keep an eye out for them and give thanks.

May this Advent season be filled with angelic awareness, leading to a spectacularly special celebration of Christ's birth. Thank you for being angels in our Presbytery.

– Rev. Phil Barrett,
Stated Clerk and
General Presbyter of the
Presbytery of Des Moines

Simpson College Hosts Clergy Workshop

INDIANOLA, Iowa – Simpson College will host a clergy workshop Jan. 18, featuring special guest Reverend Jeremiah Wright, pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Ill.

The workshop – entitled *How Would Jesus Vote?* – will focus its panel and table discussions around which politi-

cal issues are most directly related to Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom of God and how Christians can remain faithful to their beliefs while engaging in the political process of the United States.

The free workshop will be held in Camp Lounge in Brenton Student Center on Simpson's campus in Indianola,

from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Lunch is provided. Reservations are required and can be e-mailed to shepherd@simpson.edu naming each participant. For more information about the workshop, contact Chris Waddle, chaplain and director of church relations, at 515-961-1684 or chris.waddle@simpson.edu.

Take Faith Community Nurse Course

The United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities is holding an inter-faith course on parish nurse programs. This 2008 course will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6-9 p.m., Jan. 8—Feb. 7.

Class discussion includes the steps in initiating a faith community nurse (parish nurse) program, the role of the faith community nurse, and the impact this ministry offers a congregation.

Endorsed by the International Parish Nurse Resource Center, the Basic Preparation Course is open to registered nurses interested in faith-based community nursing.

The instructors are Vicki Gustafson, MA, RN, PHN, FCN and Barbara Zell, MS, RN, PHN, FCN, and have 20 years of parish nurse practice together and are current faith community nurses.

Cost is \$500.00 with 36 CEUs available. The course will be held in Strobel Room – McMillan 209 on the Seminary campus.

For information, contact Vicki Gustafson, gusty419@comcast.net or 763-315-4909.

Register at www.unitedseminary.edu/ce/index.asp#nurse.

Events Calendar

2007

Dec. 16 – The Interfaith Alliance of Iowa & Action Fund presents *Caucus Training: One Nation. Many Faiths. Vote 2008.* on Sunday from 2-4 p.m. at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Des Moines. This event will help you understand the caucus process. Guest Speaker: Donna Redwing, Senior Advisor of Policy & Development, The Interfaith Alliance (national). Special invited guests: Governor Chet Culver, Senator Charles Grassley & Senator Tom Harkin. Presenters are: Norm Sterzenbach – Political Director, Iowa Democratic Party and Dave Roederer – Iowa Republican Party; former Chief of Staff & Legislative Liaison for Governor Branstad. This is a non-ecumenical event that is free and open to the public. Westminster member, **Joyce Smith** sits on the board for The Interfaith Alliance (TIA).

Dec. 18 – *Positive Side of Ex-offender* (PSOE). This is our first public celebration for all persons who have been successful in their transition from prison for a year or more. PSOE Mission is to recognize and encourage ex-offenders, men and women that are living a productive and positive lifestyle. In addition, this event will recognize the support

persons of ex-offenders, including Parole Officers, Family Members, Mentors, Employers, Clergy and other individuals instrumental in the positive transition into the community. Please join us in celebrating the positive aspect of ex-offenders in our community on Tuesday, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Community of Christ Church, 1645 Pennsylvania Ave., Des Moines, Ia. (located at 62nd & Urbandale). Presidential Candidates and elected officials have been invited to attend. Please RSVP at 515-282-0549, to help us determine amount of food needed.

Dec. 23 – *Christmas Joy Offering*

Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve, Presbytery office is closed through Jan. 2.

Dec. 25 – Nativity of Jesus Christ/Christmas Day.

Dec. 30 – New Church Development Day

2008

Jan. 1 & 2 – New Year's Day, Presbytery office is closed.

Jan. 4-March 7 – A 10-week course on understanding different personality styles, held Fridays from 8:15-9:45 a.m. at the **Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center**, 2929 Westtown Pkwy., Ste. 110, West Des Moines. Cost is \$200 plus optional texts. This course provides 15.00 hours towards the continuing education requirements of the

Iowa Board of Social Work Examiners and the Iowa Board of Behavioral Science Examiners. Registration deadline is Dec. 14. To register, call 515-274-4006 or e-mail info@dmpcc.org. Curtis Rich, M.S.W., L.I.S.W., instructor.

Jan. 6 – Epiphany

Jan. 13 – Baptism of the Lord

Jan. 18 – Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins

Jan. 19 – **Des Moines Presbytery Meeting** at the **Ankeny Presbyterian Church**

Jan. 20 – Race Relations; Partnership in Mission

Jan. 21 – Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday observed, Presbytery office is closed.

Jan. 25-27 – Synod commissioner to lead Faith at Work Workshop: Tom Pappas, from Homestead Presbytery, and his wife, Laurel Van Ham, will be one of three couples leading a workshop, *Being Together: Called as a Couple*, in Chicago. The workshop is being offered by Faith At Work, described in its vision statement as "a leading organization empowering people to explore, discern and act on their many gifts and calls in the complexity of their daily lives for the good of God's world." Couples participating in the workshop can expect "rest, rejuvenation and reconnection to your call as a couple," according to materials in *Faith@Work* magazine.

Registration information can be found at www.faithatwork.com/events/calendar.html.

Jan. 26 – *MANifest: a gathering of Men and Their Fathers*. Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Cost is \$50 and includes lunch at the **Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center**, 2929 Westtown Pkwy., Ste. 110, West Des Moines. To register, call 515-274-4006.

Jan. 27 – Camp & Conference Ministries Sunday

Jan. 28-31 – *2008 Winter Pastors School*, at Hastings College, in Nebraska. Presbyterian pastors from the Great Plains are invited to this annual event sponsored by the presbyteries of Central Nebraska, Homestead, and Missouri River Valley, with support by the Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation. Rev. Dr. Victor L. Hunter iis leader of: *Vital Vocations and Communities: Survival or Revival in Pastoral Ministry in the Postmodern World*. Cost is \$245, includes meals, lodging, and events. Spouses are invited for \$50 fee will cover the cost of meals, lodging, and events for spouses. Send registration and fees by Jan. 16, 2008. Make checks payable to the "Inter-presbytery Committee," and mail to: 2008 Winter Pastors School, c/o Lowell Knauss, Homestead Presbytery, 249 Cherry Hill Blvd, Suite 2-3, Lincoln, Nebraska 68510, 402-474-4486.

Congregational Connection

Save the Date - Jan. 16, 2008

The Iowa Religious Media Services (IRMS) Annual Meeting will be held over the lunch hour on Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2008. This is the first formal meeting held at our new facility at 3116 104th St. in Urbandale. This is a great opportunity to see the *Re: Imaging* of your resource center.

- 11 a.m. - Gathering
- 11:30 - Welcome and re-covenanting service, lunch and annual meeting
- 1 p.m. - Adjourn

A nicely designed invitation will arrive in your mail soon with RSVP information. Everyone involved in the church is invited to attend.



The retired pastors, spouses, guests and Presbytery office staff celebrated Christmas at the home of Rev. Bob and Jeanne Burnett on Dec. 10. After a wonderful meal, they posed for this picture.
Back row (left to right): Darlene Clark (wife of Rev. Harold Butz), Rev. John Beran, Barbara Koskamp, Rev. Aaron Koskamp, Rev. Sara Speer Palmer, Rev. Gus Nelson, Rev. Erasmo Vélez, Rev. Goanar Chol, Kathryn Roblee, Rev. Phil Barrett, Rev. Dick Kiefer, Charlotte Nelson, and Rev. Ray Martin.
Middle row (l to r): Rev. Harold Butz, Rev. Russ and Ruth Tomlinson, Cidalisa Vélez, Shirley Kiefer, and Margery Potter.
Front row (l to r): Kim Coulter, Betty Dyer, Rev. Bob and Jeanne Burnett, and Rev. Dr. Marvin Potter.



On November 16-17, 50 senior high youth and leaders from 10 different churches within our Presbytery gathered at the Community United Presbyterian Church in Hartford to learn about the five love languages.

Gulf Coast Mission Trip Wish List; Room for More

Five presbyteries in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies (**Des Moines**, East Iowa, John Knox, North Central and Minnesota Valley) are coordinating a Gulf Coast Mission Trip January 19-26, 2008. They would like gift cards to Lowes or Home Depot, so that they can purchase materials to rebuild homes. Please consider a year-end contribution in the form of a gift card to **Presbytery of Des Moines** as a way to support the individuals who are going on the mission trip. Gift cards may be purchased online by going to www.homedepot.com or www.lowes.com. (There is no shipping charge for gift cards purchased online.) If you purchase them online or at the store be sure to see that they are delivered no later than Dec. 31 for your year-end contribution. They can be mailed or dropped off to the Presbytery of Des Moines, 2400 86th St., Ste. 20, Urbandale, IA 50322-4306.

ROOM FOR YOU TOO!

There are still spaces available in the group going to Pearlington. If you were hesitating or thinking you had missed the deadline – now is the time. If you're interested in going, contact Betty Dyer, 515-276-4991, pbdesmoines@qwest.net.

PCUSA PRODUCES ABC CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

The Christmas story, as told through song and scripture, will be available to local ABC affiliates for broadcast on Christmas Eve. The program, taped at Noroton Presbyterian Church (www.norotonchurch.org) in Darien, Conn., has been produced under the auspices of the National Council of Churches USA (NCC), and coordinated by PCUSA Media Services Coordinator Greg Kapfhammer.

This program is an "opt in" for local affiliates, they can choose to air the program or not. Please tell your congregation members about the program and encourage them to call their local ABC-TV affiliate with a request that they air the program. The caller may want to let the station know they will assist in promoting the program to Presbyterians and others in your community. The program, *The Angels Sing*, is a one-hour musical program based on the traditional "Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols" and features the church's chamber choir and instrumentalists, performing under the direction of Dwayne Condon. Children, church members and Pastor Rev. Samuel A. Schreiner III, will read scripture.

PCUSA Update

SAN DIEGO FIRESTORM

SAN DIEGO — When a wall of fire rushed toward Patricia Creek's house, all she thought of was getting out safely with her husband, Will, and two young daughters, Amanda and Aerin.

The Creeks, residents of San Diego's Rancho Bernardo suburb with ties to a local Presbyterian church, were among thousands of people to lose their homes in the wildfires that ravaged southern California last month.

"We didn't really get any warning," Patricia Creek told the Presbyterian News Service recently, as she surveyed the charred remnants of her one-story home that had a view of the valley and the mountains beyond.

"We could visually see fire coming up our hillside. There was smoke in our home," she recalled of the pre-dawn blaze that swept through the neighborhood Oct. 22. "I had to wake up my kids going, 'I'm sorry, we have to leave our home. I'm really sorry, sweethearts.'"

The Creek's youngest daughter, Amanda, 5, attends preschool at Rancho Bernardo Community Presbyterian Church where the family occasionally worships. The preschooler has

also attended summer school and Bible school at the church, along with her seven-year-old sister, Aerin.

"We had a big bay window right here in the kitchen," Patricia Creek said, pointing to the blackened spot where the windows once stood. "We looked out and the sky was orange."

Beginning the night of Oct. 20, unusually fierce Santa Ana winds stoked fires that quickly burst into uncontrolled life throughout southern California's dry, hot landscape. By midweek, more than 20 separate blazes formed pockets of fire raging from the Simi Valley northwest of Los Angeles, through San Diego County to the Mexican border.

The flames consumed more than 500,000 acres, destroyed more than 2,000 houses, forced the temporary evacuation of nearly one million people, and have been blamed for at least seven deaths.

In San Diego County, site of the worst fires, it was "extremely scary," Patricia Creek said of the flames, which touched down in some places like tornados — destroying some homes while leaving others standing.

"I was shaking," she said. "The wind was blowing. I could see the fire in the trees and I wasn't sure if it was in the homes."

A few days later, the Creeks, like thousands throughout San Diego County, returned home after mandatory evacuation orders were lifted in various communities. Some found their residences just as they left them, except for a fine layer of soot and the heavy smell of smoke. Others, like the Creeks, were left with only a memory.

That's when the local Presbyterian church stepped in. To read the complete story go to: www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07780.htm.

PRESBYTERY AND SYNOD NEWS

DES MOINES, IA — The **Presbytery of Des Moines** has cooperated with The Iowa Interfaith Immigration Coalition is urging people of faith and goodwill to sign its petition for "Creating a Welcoming State" in support of more humane immigration policies.

The petition drive, which concluded Nov. 26 intended to show that there are thousands of Iowans who support public policies rooted in fairness, justice and the dignity of all people. The petition and signatures will be presented at a press conference in early December, as well as to all presidential campaigns visiting Iowa. The Iowa Interfaith Immigration Coalition is an ad hoc, statewide coalition of

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faith and community organizations.

The focus of the Coalition is changing the climate in Iowa through education and civic engagement.

The complete news may be seen here: www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07779.htm

NOTES ABOUT PEOPLE

The Rev. Gary Torrens, recently retired middle governing body coordinator for the General Assembly Council and the Office of the General Assembly, has flunked retirement.

On Nov. 16, Redwoods Presbytery elected Torrens to a two-year term as interim associate executive presbyter for transformation. Torrens, who will live in Napa, CA, will begin Feb. 1, 2008 working with presbytery committees to develop healthy congregations in the presbytery. More on this story may be seen at: www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07764.htm.

SPEAKERS, LISTENERS PRAISE 'MISSION CHALLENGE '07'

LOUISVILLE — Between 50,000 and 55,000 Presbyterians attended presentations by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) missionaries during "Mission Challenge '07," according to figures released Wednesday (Nov. 14) by the Presbyterian World Mission program area here.

The mission challenge brought 48 PCUSA overseas

missionaries back to the U.S. during the month of October for itineration in 144 of the denomination's 173 presbyteries. Each missionary spent a week at a time in each of up to four presbyteries, seeking to garner renewed spiritual, communication and financial support from congregations and presbyteries for the PCUSA's global mission enterprise.

"Think of it as an election return," said Bruce Whearty, a former missionary to Vanuatu who helped organize "Mission Challenge '07. "With 95% of the precincts reporting, it is reasonable to assume that 'MC'07' reached nearly 900 congregations and 100 other hosts (such as presbytery meetings) for a total of nearly 1000 venues. The 48 speakers made a total of 1,400 presentations and reached 55,000 listeners."

Mean attendance was 47 people per presentation. Median attendance was 24. The largest gathering numbered 460, while the smallest was one person.

Each missionary made an average of nine presentations per week that month.

And the response by both speakers and listeners was almost universally positive, Whearty reported. Based on evaluations submitted by attendees, 68 percent reported "no weaknesses or omissions in the presentations."

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Spiritual Formation Resources

PCUSA's Spiritual Formation has created the following resources for the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany season.

- Hear the Word
- Kneeling in Bethlehem
- Throughout the Day

These titles are components of the Advent resources created for use throughout the church. To view, go to: www.pcusa.org/pastorselders or www.pcusa.org/advent

They have requested to let them know what you found useful, or what they could do to enhance the resources, and also what wasn't so useful.

To find out more about Spiritual Formation, visit their Web site at www.pcusa.org/spiritualformation/

For questions or comments, send an e-mail to: twiens@ctr.pcusa.org, or mail to: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202, phone: 888-728-7228.

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Typically, the presentations included introductory videos to the work of the PCUSA's General Assembly Council and Presbyterian World Mission, personal stories by missionaries about their lives and work, and question-and-answer sessions. Some of the comments submitted by participants, who were guaranteed confidentiality: "This was a way to encourage the small churches to continue to look for ways they can work missions into their budgets and into their corporate lives."

"No one knew that the Presbyterian Church has been in missions for 170 years — what a wonderful heritage!"

"Their slides and interaction with the adult class could not have been more accomplished. They provided a positive, engaging image of Presbyterian mission and missionaries."

"I think the denomination-wide response will be a surge of mission support for the folk we've had the opportunity to meet face-to-face during *Mission Challenge '07*."

"Thank you for the vision and work to put together *Mission Challenge '07*. In my 31 years of parish ministry I have never seen this much excitement and engagement with our PCUSA missionaries. I would strongly recommend a *Mission Challenge '08, '09, etc.*"

"Given the opportunity to contribute to a specific project and/or missionary that folk have met will attract more mission dollars than we can ever expect. Thank you for the vision and effort invested in *Mission Challenge '07*."

"The presentation was theologically positive, carried a strong Biblical theme. (He) also shared openly the challenges for his family living in the mission field as well as the joys for him and his family."

One participant from a church in New York disagreed. "It was a 'paid political plea' for dollars for PCUSA mission."

This was too obvious," the critic wrote. "Both pastors who were present were disappointed that this was a 'slick' Madison Avenue type 'ad campaign' for PCUSA mission funds. The gospel, the work of the people on the mission front and the 'down home' goodness of those served was 'glossed over' by the 'professional' media type plea."

Most of the speakers echoed the overwhelmingly positive response of listeners.

"It was a privilege to be a part of (*Mission Challenge '07*)," wrote one missionary. "It has increased my passion for World Mission and my appreciation for the local congregation. This was a

phenomenal opportunity and I hope that is done again."

"I am humbled that God used me in such a powerful way," wrote another. "Wow!"

This story may be seen here: www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2007/07744.htm

HIGHLIGHTS OF PDA RESPONSES [Northwest Flooding](#)

Back-to-back storms pounded the coastal areas of Washington and Oregon, causing massive flooding that knocked out power, forced the closing of schools and businesses and the evacuation of hundreds of families, and caused the deaths of at least seven people. Washed-out and flooded roads are keeping many coastal communities isolated, limiting rescue and relief operations primarily to helicopters. The governors of both states have declared states of emergency.

PDA has been in contact with Presbyterian middle governing bodies in the affected areas and stands ready to provide whatever assistance is deemed appropriate. Flood waters are just now beginning to recede so that assessment of the damage and need can be determined.

There has not yet been a request for volunteer work teams to help with clean-up and/or recovery efforts. Information on this need will be posted to the PDA web-

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site www.pcusa.org/pda when teams are needed, or you can call the PDA Call Center 866-732-6121 to pre-register your team. Financial gifts can be designated to the U.S. Disaster Response Account number DR000015.

Mexico

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has provided an additional \$20,000 from funds designated for general relief to the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico (INPM) to assist with the purchase of food and cleaning items for families returning home from INPM-supported shelters for the next thirty days. This brings the total response from PDA to \$50,000.

Six of the 24 Presbyterian churches in Mexico that have been sheltering thousands of people displaced by the severe flooding that affected the state of Tabasco in early November continue to serve a large number of families. The INPM cancelled its General Assembly to devote funds to the flood response.

A worldwide ACT appeal of at least \$500,000 to help with reconstruction will be issued soon. An update of the response can be found at: www.pcusa.org/pda/response/latinamerica/mexico-tabascoflooding120507.htm

Bangladesh

PDA continues to support our partners in Bangladesh as they provide emergency as-

sistance to families and people most affected by Cyclone Sidr that hit on Nov. 4, 2007. The humanitarian crisis from the powerful storm that ripped into the southern part of the country three weeks ago is proving to be much worse than previously thought. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has stated that the cyclone destroyed tens of thousands more homes than previously believed and killed twice as many livestock.

PDA is responding through our long-term partner, Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB), and in cooperation with other members of the Action by Churches Together (ACT) alliance in providing basic humanitarian relief to the many families affected.

Personal stories of what this assistance means can be found on the PDA website at www.pcusa.org/pda/response/asia/bangladesh120507.htm.

Alternative Giving

Pre-printed gift cards are available in varying amounts for individuals wishing to give alternative gifts for Christmas. The specific responses for these cards were chosen based on the magnitude of the disaster or ongoing recovery needs.

Photos and text of the cards can be found at www.pcusa.org/pda/tools/alternativegiftmarket/cards.htm.

Cards that can be requested include:

- Jerry cans internationally (\$12 for DR999999)
- Bicycles in Kenya (\$20 for DR000131)
- Rebuilding supplies for Hurricane Katrina (\$50 for DR000174)
- Community tool kits for Nicaragua in response to Hurricane Felix (\$250 for DR000139)

Cards may be ordered by contacting PDA at pda@pcusa.org. Information for mailing donations will be sent with the cards.

Thank you for considering these opportunities to share the gift of God's love.

Please keep the survivors and those working to offer assistance in the affected areas in your prayers.

Information on these responses can be found on the PDA Web site at www.pcusa.org/pda/.

Financial gifts to support these responses can be made through your local PCUSA congregation. Please be sure to reference the Disaster Response giving account number. Gifts can also be made in the following ways: Online by clicking the designated giving URL, by calling PresbyTel at 800-872-3283, or by mailing a check to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202-1396

PCUSA RESEARCH SERVICES OFFERS GLIMPSE INTO YOUR COMMUNITY

Our churches are better equipped to serve our communities if they know what type of people live in the community. The PCUSA Research Services offers an abundance of information – much of it narrowly focused on neighborhood demographics. Encourage your churches to go to

www.pcusa.org/research/demo_instructions.htm.

Once there you can search by zip code, or city/state to find out information such as housing types, education levels, culture ethnicity, age groups and more. This knowledge may help many of our churches in their evangelism efforts. Check it out.

DON'T FORGET OUR ARMED SOLDIERS THIS CHRISTMAS

Please consider making a donation to one of the more than 300 nonprofit organizations dedicated to helping our troops and their families listed on the *America Supports You* website, www.americasupportsyou.mil

Other organizations that offer means of showing your support for our troops or assist wounded service members and their families include:

- www.usocares.org/
- www4.army.mil/ocpa/tooursoldiers/
- www.redcross.org

BOP Regional Rep Review

2008 DUES UPDATES SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the dues updates for 2008:

- The dues percentage for Medical Plan benefits under the Traditional Program will remain the same.
- Medical Plan dues percentages for seminary students will remain the same.
- The monthly medical dues for the Affiliated Benefits Program will increase to \$472 for a member, \$684 for a member with children, \$970 for a member with a spouse, and \$1,233 for a member with a family.
- The renewal rates for the DMO and PPO dental programs will remain the same.
- The dues for Medicare Supplement participants will remain the same.
- The dues for Medicare Supplement participants in the Affiliated Benefits Plan will remain the same in 2008.
- The dues for subscribers in the Medical Continuation Program will increase to \$288 for those enrolled prior to 1987 and to \$490 for those enrolled after 1986.
- The monthly medical dues for the Affiliated Benefits Program Continuation will increase to \$481 for a member, \$698 for a member with children, \$989 for a member with a spouse, and \$1,258 for a member with a family.

- Dues will increase to \$855 for early retiree participants in the Affiliated Benefits Program.
- Pension, Death, and Disability dues percentages will remain the same for the Traditional Program.
- Optional Death Plan dues rates will remain the same.

For the complete dues schedule, visit www.pensions.org.

MAINTENANCE MEDICATION PROGRAM FROM EXPRESS SCRIPTS INTRODUCED

The Board of Pensions is encouraging members to obtain maintenance medications through Express Scripts' Home Delivery service beginning Jan. 1, 2008. Maintenance medications are drugs taken regularly for long-term, chronic conditions.

Under the maintenance medication program, members can fill a 30-day prescription at a local pharmacy up to two times before additional co-payments – \$5 for generic drugs, \$10 for brand formulary drugs, and \$15 for brand non-formulary drugs – are incurred. If you order maintenance medications through Home Delivery, not only can you avoid these additional charges, but you can have a 90-day supply of maintenance drugs delivered directly to your home for less money than you would be charged at retail pharmacies for the same quantity.

Members will find the Home Delivery service to be an effi-

cient and economical means for purchasing prescription drugs. If you have any questions about the maintenance medication program or Home Delivery, you can contact Express Scripts at 800-344-3896.

LATEST ISSUES OF THE BOARD BULLETIN AND EDUCATION TALK AVAILABLE

See the latest issues of *The Board Bulletin* and *EducationTalk*, at

www.pensions.org.

The Board Bulletin is the BOP's publication that reports on the topics discussed and the actions taken at the Board of Directors meetings. The fall 2007 issue reports that the directors:

- Heard a report of the performance of the Investment Portfolio
- Approved a redefinition of effective salary
- Approved an increase in Medical Continuation subscription dues
- Elected Patricia M. Haines as Senior Vice President, Benefits, for the Board of Pensions

For more information about these and other benefits news go online.

EducationTalk celebrates its one-year anniversary this fall. This issue includes useful articles that focus on self-care in the areas of health, finance, and personal life for ministers and church workers, including:

- Retirement planning to-do list

- Home fire and burn prevention
- Eating right without thinking
- Credit card "Change of Terms" provisions
- Sabbath Sabbatical Support Grants

You can read the newsletter in its entirety on

www.pensions.org.



CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING SUPPORTS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The *Christmas Joy Offering* will be received on Dec. 23 this year. The receipts from this annual offering are distributed equally to BOP for assistance programs and to National Ministries of the General Assembly Council to support Presbyterian racial ethnic education. At BOP, the funds are used to support:

- [income supplements](#)
- [housing supplements](#)
- [shared grants](#)
- [emergency assistance grants](#)

Last year, BOP combined the proceeds of the offering with funds from other gifts, bequests, and endowments to provide more than 1,000 grants.

Synod of Lakes and Prairies Update

SYNOD SEEKS TO REDUCE ITS VIDEO LIBRARY

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies is attempting to reduce its video library by making a number of old VHS recordings available for free on a first-come, first-served basis. The videos and the number available are Footsteps in Faith, 10; Coping with Conflict I, 8; Coping with Conflict II, 6; The Personnel Function of Sessions, 3; The In-Between Times, 3; Leadership Options for Small Congregations, 5; Preparation for Ministry, 1; Financial Campaign Strategies for Your Church, 5; Winds Over Dakota, 2; Closing Your Church's Back Door, 8; and

Support of Pastors, 6. To request a copy of a video, write to Business Manager-Jackie Palmer at jpalm@lakesandprairies.org.

PRESBYTERIAN HOMES ANNOUNCES SEVERAL NEW STEPS

Presbyterian Homes and Services, which has a covenant relationship with the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, opened its new care center in Williamsburg, Ia., this month and also dedicated its new facility, Stonecrest, in Woodbury, Minn., according to a memo distributed to board members. The memo also noted that the city council of Eden Prairie, Minn., unanimously approved its 707

unit, mixed-use development, a project several years down the road. Presbyterian Homes and Services states its mission is "to provide a broad continuum of care to older adults. The services provided will be of the highest quality and designed to promote independence, dignity and well-being. The emphasis will be on innovation and leadership in providing compassionate and highly competent care with the inspiration of God's love and word." More information about Presbyterian Homes and Services can be found on its Web site at www.preshomes.org.

WDM School Donates 800 Books to Sudanese

Where is Sudan? What is the difference between a refugee and an immigrant? What obstacles do refugees encounter when they come to the United States? These and many other questions were answered by **Ann McGowan**, an administrative assistant and music and Christian education director at **Cottage Grove Avenue Presbyterian Church in Des Moines**, when she spoke recently to the eighth-grade Odyssey team in **Dennis Moore's** language arts classes at Indian Hills Junior High in Clive (West Des Moines Community School District).

As a community service project, Indian Hills eighth-grade students were encouraged to bring in new or near-new children's books that would be donated to the Sudanese school-aged children at the church. Generous contributions were received from the Odyssey team students, Indian Hills Junior High staff members, personnel at the Learning Resource Center (West Des Moines district administrative building), and Wellspring Christian Resources in Urbandale.

By the end of the book drive, a total of 800 books had been donated. Due to every-

one's generosity, enough books were donated to not only provide a permanent library at the church, but enough so that each child would have several to keep for his/her own. More children will now have access to books that will be used to teach reading skills and to increase their English language literacy.

Dennis Moore is in his 36th year of teaching in the West Des Moines School District and is a Session member and Chair of the Outreach Unit at **Westminster Presbyterian Church in Des Moines**.

Two Rivers Partnership Outing is a Success!

The following pictures are from the **Two Rivers Regional Partnership** trip with the Cottage Grove Sudanese children to Geisler Farms near Bondurant, Sunday, Oct. 28, 2007. There were 53 participants from four of the seven Two Rivers' churches: Cottage Grove Avenue, Highland Park, Park Avenue, and Union Park all in Des Moines.





Teacher Resources are Available

A great Advent, Christmas,

Epiphany tool is

www.pcusa.org/advent. *The*

Web site has devotions, plus

new resources to archived arti-

cles! You will find free patterns

and instructions for festivals

and celebrations. (See Things to

Make and Do.)

Also, Opening Doors to Disciple-

ship, is a free teacher training

resource from Presbyterian

Reformed Educational Partners

*(PREP). Visit: [\[doorstodiscipleship.com\]\(http://doorstodiscipleship.com\), *and*](http://opening</i></p>
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register with the PCUSA. Login

code is 31627. You will find 12

sessions for Course A: Teaching

Skills; with courses B and C

coming in 2008.

Employment Opportunities

Interim Youth Director – Ankeny Presbyterian Church, Ankeny

A part-time, interim Youth Director is needed. With additional responsibilities, the position could become full-time. Please contact **Rev. David Braak**, 515-964-0264, or pastor@ankeny-presbyterian.org for further information.

Summer 2008 Ministry Intern Position – Southwest Regional Partners, Iowa

A student in good standing at seminary or lay pastor in training will have the opportunity to gain experience and enhance skills in many aspects of rural and small town ministry in a diverse, multi-church setting. The six churches and five pastors are located in a four-county area in southwest Iowa and are part of Missouri River Valley and Des Moines presbyteries. The student will experience the full range of pastoral duties, working with churches and pastors in areas of worship, preaching, education, fellowship, pastoral care, evangelism, and community development. We envision a two-week rotation in each of five parishes during the 10-week intern period, which includes 45-50 hours per week, with at least one day off per week. Must have reliable vehicle and valid driver's license. Compensation is \$350 per week, plus benefits like housing, some utilities, mileage, Social

Security (employer's share).

The position is accountable to a council of lay and clergy representatives from the participating churches. If interested, contact: **Rev.**

Tim Maxa, 641-333-4214 (office), 641-333-4208 (home), e-mail: lenoxup_church@frontiernet.net or **Rev. Ken Rummer**, 641-322-4917 (office), 641-322-4152 (home), e-mail: rev.rummer@mchsi.com.

Part-time Job Opportunity – Des Moines Area Religious Council, Des Moines

DMARC is seeking a person to serve part-time as the Red Barrel Coordinator for its Emergency Food Pantry Program. Duties include coordinating volunteers and Red Barrel events, developing relationships with store managers and managing the collection of food donations at the red barrels by volunteers. Ideal candidate must be comfortable working with a wide variety of people such as store managers, businesses, and volunteers from congregations and organizations interested in helping the Red Barrel program. Attention to detail and self-direction are also important attributes. This is a 10- to 20-hour a week position (negotiable) and reliable transportation is required. Contact the Interim Executive Director, John Ayers at execdirector@dmreligious.org or 515-277-6969.

Pastor (Head of Staff) – First Presbyterian Church, Fort Dodge, Ia.

Contact Jean Black about CIF ID#[02514.AC1](http://www.pcusa.org/advent) at 515-463-2224, 515-408-3249 or djblack@wccta.net.

Pastor (Tent Maker/Part-time) – First Presbyterian Church, Greene, Ia.

Contact Jennifer Duffield about CIF ID#[02680.AAO](http://www.pcusa.org/advent) at 641-816-4355 or Jenni.fer.Duffield@Airgas.com.

Interim Support Staff – Cedar Heights Community Presbyterian Church, Cedar Falls, Ia.

The position is for 12 months (10 hours per week). Questions? Contact Rev. Shelly Wood at 319-268-0153. If interested, send resume and references to Scott Klepfer, 2015 Rainbow Dr., Cedar Falls, IA 50613. For church details go online to: www.cedarheights.org.

Job Opening in World Mission – Worldwide

The World Mission program area is seeking a Coordinator for International Evangelism and Frontier Areas. The coordinator will serve as the primary liaison with ecumenical and international partner church programs of frontier mission and evangelism and with PCUSA mission personnel serving in frontier mission areas of the world. Candidates must have five years experience working in programs of evangelism and experience living and working internationally. See a full job description at <http://onedoor.pcusa.org>.

Keep Kids Safe on the Internet

By Bridget Starr

We teach our children to be safe in the real world – to look both ways before crossing a street, not to talk to strangers and other valuable life lessons. Parents also need to teach pre-schoolers, tweens and teenagers how to be safe on the Internet.

“It’s inevitable that young people, especially teens, are going to congregate on the Internet in chat rooms, on message boards and on social networking Web sites. It’s up to us as parents to equip them with the knowledge that will keep them safe online and still allow them to enjoy this technology,” said Edward J. Murray, President and CEO of Faith & Values Media, a non-profit organization that is the nation’s largest coalition of faith groups dedicated to electronic media production

Here are some handy tips to help ensure your child’s safety on the Internet:

- **Monitor computer usage.** You wouldn’t let your kids go out at all hours to places unknown. Apply that same standard to their Web use. Be aware of the sites they visit, at what times, and for how long.
- **Install firewalls and virus protection software,** and consider installing the specialized software that restricts access to inappropriate or pornographic Web sites.
- **Respect your child’s privacy,** but be sure to ask with whom they are exchanging e-mails and instant messages. You don’t need to read their e-mails, but it’s important to know who their cyber buddies are.
- **Making new friends in cyberspace is great,** but children should be taught not to assume people are safe just because they appear nice online. Remind them that people aren’t always who they say they are. Teach children never to meet anybody in person whom they discovered online.
- **Teach them never to share personally identifiable information –** such as their name, address, phone number, passwords, school, etc. – when they are using bulletin boards, chat rooms or social networking sites.
- **If your teen has a personal page on a social networking site like MySpace or Facebook,** visit it to see what they have posted about themselves and their activities. These pages are public and can be viewed by anyone on the Internet.
- **All social networking sites aren’t the same.** Most of these services allow anybody to set up personal pages and create networks of friends they haven’t met in the physical world. Others, such as the new site, YouthRoots.com, offer greater supervision by moderating kids’ activities online. Designed specifically for leaders of faith-based youth groups and their students, YouthRoots.com is a place where real-world friends and groups interact in a secure online environment.
- **Teach kids to be open about sharing their online experiences with you.** If they receive inappropriate e-mails, they need to know not to respond and to share them with you. If they see something on a Web site that upsets or scares them, they need to let you know. Assure them that you will not blame them for having encountered something disturbing in cyberspace.



The Internet is here to stay, so make sure your children know how to use it safely.

extensively in their adult lives. It is a terrific resource that helps them learn about the world around them and when used responsibly it can be a great tool to help them connect with their friends and peers, stressed Murray, whose non-profit Faith & Values Media, founded the YouthRoots.com community site for youth group leaders and their young members.

Youth group leaders and teens can partake in safe community discussions, read and publish original articles, photos and music online, and establish their own online groups at www.YouthRoots.com.

– Bridget Starr, of Lightworks New Media, is Senior Client Relationship Manager for FaithStreams Network Services, which offers congregations a turn-key solution for setting up web-based communities for youth groups at www.YouthRoots.com.

“The Internet will continue to be a central fact of contemporary life. Today’s young people will use it



Stewardship Resources Available Online

As the Church heads into the heart of what is generally considered "Stewardship Season" you should know that the PCUSA Stewardship Web site has a considerable amount of excellent materials available which can help your congregations implement their fall stewardship programs.

This stewardship time also affords your congregations with the opportunity to begin a meaningful year-round stewardship emphasis and these resources may help. Access the Stewardship Web site at:

www.pcusa.org/stewardship.

By exploring this site it is hoped that your congregations can begin the journey of uncovering a wide array of materials that can assist them in not only becoming more generous congregations but to help their members truly grow in their faith. Send questions to RuthAnne Boklage at ruthanne.boklage@pcusa.org.

Presbytery Happenings

TAKE NOTE OF HAPPENINGS AT WESTMINSTER

On Sunday, December 16, **Westminster Presbyterian Church in Des Moines** will present Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, with 8:45 and 11 a.m. services. The Westminster Oratorio Choir, orchestra and youth choirs will join forces to tell the Christmas story. Also available: an *Alternative Gift Mart* which provides an opportunity to purchase life-giving gifts that benefit and empower people in need worldwide; *Heifer International* gifts; the *World of Hope Fair-Trade Gift Shop*; and two art exhibits on display through January 6.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: ANNUAL EASTSIDE CLUSTER CHRISTMAS DINNER, DEC. 25

Come share a meal at our table with us Christmas Day from 11:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. The primary purpose is a family-style sit down meal. It will be served at the St. Joseph's Gym, in Des Moines, Ia., 3300 Easton Boulevard. Eastside shut-ins may call 515-266-5284 for home delivery. This meal is sponsored by the Eastside Cluster of Churches: Capitol Hill Christian Church, **First Presbyterian Church in Des Moines**, Sheridan Park United Methodist Church, St. Joseph Catholic Church and volunteers from various denominations.

ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORTS ARE DUE FEBRUARY 1

The Session Annual Statistical Report workbook was mailed to all clerks of session on Dec. 7, 2007. The deadline for filing the church reports online is Friday, Feb. 1, 2008. Please note, that your session needs to approve the report as early as possible after Dec. 31, 2007. This is a session report and does not require approval at a congregational meeting. Any questions, call **Office Manager Betty Dyer**, 515-276-4991, pbyses-moines@qwest.net.

Stewardship & Mission Interpretation Tips

A few things that may help churches and their stewardship campaigns in years to come:

- In reviewing some of the material after the Transformational Stewardship event **Rev. Dale O'Connell (LeRoy, First)** attended in March 2007. He came across this Web/blog site that is instructive regarding the Presbyterian way of being the emergent church. In Drew Ludwig's post, there was an instructions comparing and instructions of stewardship verses discipleship. The comments to the post were

also interesting. Here's the site. <http://presbymergent.org/>.

- The North Central Iowa Presbytery is offering a great resource tool for churches called *Stewardship in a Box*. Go ahead and recommend this resource wherever you can.
- *The Spirituality of Fundraising* booklet is available from the Henri Nouwen Society. Those who wish to have a free copy of the booklet can go to www.henrinouwen.org follow the link "Fundraising Booklet" to

request a copy. For those who do not have Internet access, you can call, 905-884-0025 or a toll free number, 866-226-2158. Extra copies can be purchased for \$5.00 each plus shipping. Monies received for bulk orders will go towards a third printing of the booklet. If you require extra copies e-mail Susan Travis at booklet@nouwen.net, or stravis@nouwen.net. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

Contact Dale if you have questions: pastordale@lowatelecom.net or 641-766-6577.

El Salvador Update from Mission Co-Worker

Check out the November updates to the Web site:

www.oursisterparish.org, or read the blog of Interim Mission Co-Worker, Kathy Mahler, at: www.heartlandpresbyterian.org/KathysBlog/.

Below is an excerpt from her December 2007 reflection:

“What to tell you... my mind and heart are so full of emotions and thoughts of the past 6 weeks which has been the experience of a lifetime. I thought I knew about life in El Salvador. But nothing can compare to real time. And in reality, seven weeks is not really ‘real’ time. It is still new and very temporary – it is still an ‘adventure’. I am well taken care of and fed three healthy meals daily, with a private room to sleep, office space to work, and the Pastoral Team to love and share conversation, laughter and sadness. I’m living in a friendly town where I can take long walks to sort out my head. I have access to a truck (though I’m limited to where I comfortably can go alone), and people who love me. I am blessed well beyond what I deserve.

“And I am working. I wasn’t sure how productive I’d be since I had LOTS of idle time that first week. It was still the rainy season and literally I was stuck in my office – the rain was relentless – roads impassable and walks prohibitive. So I read, studied, e-mailed folks, tried to talk to

the Team... and felt a little lost and useless.

“But then it dried out. A schedule was set to visit cantons – two a week. Visits are an all day process – leaving before 9 a.m. and returning in the afternoon. And I am chauffer. In the canton, we have a long meeting with the leaders, I take photos and learn. After which, we are often invited for lunch. Then the long drive back home. I always like to take a long walk to relieve the tension of driving canton roads. In the evening, I write the report to the partner church in Iowa. These are full and productive days. So, what to do with the other five days of the week? This is how it adds up:

- 5 graduations in 5 cantons
- 3 fiestas celebrating patron saints
- 1 coffee meeting with the production community
- 3 meetings at the Mayor’s office or NGO’s (non-government organization – there are several: ProVida deals with health issues, InterVida with school issues, CARITAS with environmental issues, etc.).
- 2 meetings in far away cantons for water filter project education
- 3 Pastoral Team meetings
- 3 days to escape ‘alone’ to a neighboring town
- 2 times we fed ‘the multitudes’ attending church meetings (all morning)

- Weekly mass on Sundays followed by the huge market – LOTS of folks come and I usually visit with several canton people.
- Sunday afternoons are quiet. Cecilia calls it vacation.

“And the days with nothing to do... I squeeze in reading, walking, studying of Spanish and writing for the blog. Oh – and my laundry. This is not a quick process – we’re talking one piece at a time, by hand, on a cement slab using water from a large pila (cement cistern full of water) with a hunk of soap and a stiff brush. I skip the brush on my ‘delicate’ shirts. I’ve also sat for hours shucking beans and making pupusas and tortillas.

“Nights are quiet. I am ‘discouraged’ from going out in the evenings, so I usually catch up on my personal writing. Often I go to bed early, and sleep like a baby. I’m up by 5:30 with the rest, doing everyday chores.

“There are always three or four members of the Team at La Casa Pastoral. They work all day, either going with me to the various activities, answering phones, setting up meetings, answering the door bell – which usually involves time spent with someone in need. They each are in charge of different things... for instance, Balmore and Otilia are in charge of the water filter project. And when that goes into action soon,

they will be busy. Blanca, Cecilia and Idalia are heavily working the Bag/placemat/boxer project (Just Choice products). Milagro works with City Hall and attends meetings in support of the women’s groups, the trash disposal problems in Berlin, protests when there is country-wide injustice – like the construction of dams that displace thousands, or the building of a super highway that displaces people. Jesus is working at the church and here at La Casa Pastoral.

“The work here is so important and touches many lives and I get to be a witness. I wish more people had this opportunity.

“I’ll be home in a few days. I’m sad to leave, but excited to see my family and friends – and I know I’m coming back to El Salvador in January for an even longer time. So that makes the leaving a little easier. But I’m a little worried... I know how I am after a week long trip – what will I be like after this time? I’m going to drive my family crazy. Fortunately, the holidays will be very distracting. I think the time will pass quickly. So if I may ask, think good thoughts – pray if you are the praying type... Always keep El Salvador in your hearts.”

– *en fe y solidaridad*
hermana kathy

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Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year to you and your family!



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