

The Wider Circle



Presbytery of Des Moines 515-276-4991 / February 2009 Vol. 5, Issue 2



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

OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

- *Just Neighbors* Award
- Compañeros Update
- Presbytery F.O.G. Meetings
Scheduled for Feb. 18 & 19

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Come one, Come all GA Stated Clerk's Monthly Column to the Churches



By the Rev. Grady Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the PC(USA)

of the PC(USA)

LOUISVILLE — I will admit it up front: This column is an unabashed promotion for the [Big Tent](#) event, June 11-13, in Atlanta.

The Big Tent will bring together several of our Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) summer conferences in one place at the same time so that participants might experience the breadth and width of the ministries of the PC(USA).

One of the hopes of moving to biennial General Assemblies was to create opportunities for Presbyterians to come together nationally in

non-legislative meetings in non-GA years. As someone once told me, the church needs conversations that aren't required to produce a product at the end. The Big Tent fits that description to a tee.

Ten conferences will be held in conjunction with the Big Tent — National Multicultural Church, Stewardship and
(Continued on page 2)

The *Just Neighbors* Award Goes to...

On January 17, 2009, at the Presbytery meeting in Indiana, the **Social Ministries Task Force** awarded the *Just Neighbors* Award and traveling banner to **United Presbyterian Church of Allerton**. Here's an excerpt from Taskforce Moderator Nancy Lister-Settle's presentation:

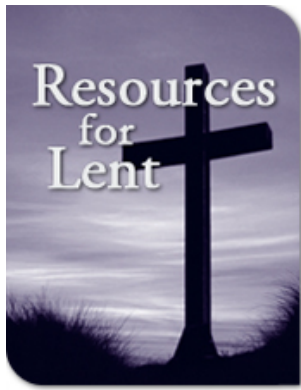
"The congregation receiving the *Just Neighbors* award could offer a tutorial (on community outreach). Just listen to the ways their ministry flows out the doors of the church building and into the community:



(Pictured here left to right: Social Ministries Taskforce Moderator Nancy Lister-Settle, the Rev. Ross Bount, pastor of the Allerton Church and Keith Garber, commissioner from the church.)

"With the other churches in town, they have a procession down Main Street on Palm Sunday and Good Friday. The Presbyterian church takes the

lead in the community's annual Christmas program and community worship services. "Every winter, to stave off the effects of "cabin fever",
(Continued on page 2)



Preparing for Lent?

*The season of Lent provides an opportunity to learn what it means to follow Christ. Planning significant worship for Lent and Easter can be challenging, but you can find just what you need all in one place. This year, Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 25. Begin your plans with the materials on the Resources for Lent Web site (www.pcusa.org/lent), where you will find Bible studies, multilingual resources and a collection of articles from past issues of ideas! magazine that offer help during the Lenten season. You will also find the Lenten devotional *Alive to God in Jesus Christ, the One Great Hour of Sharing Lenten Devotion Guide*, information about responsibly harvested eco-palm branches and more.*

Stated Clerk's Statement continued from page 1

Investment, Evangelism and Church Growth, Healthy Ministry, Peacemaking, Presbyterian Communicators' Network, the Presbyterian Health Education and Welfare Association's Social Justice Biennial, plus the Racial Ethnic Convocation and the New Immigrants Ministries Convocation.

One of the 10, the National Elders Conference, is especially close to my heart. I believe the key to the renewal of our church is reclaiming the vision of elders

as it is described in chapter six of *The Book of Order*.

Theirs is an important spiritual ministry. This will be the second event of its kind and should help folks get ready to fill those important shoes. Participants who come to the Big Tent will be able to attend their usual conference and drop in on parts of other conferences. There'll be shared meals, common worship, and a common workshop time with a broad category of subjects.

Find out more and register [online](#).

As you can tell, I am a big believer in the Big Tent. It will be a unique opportunity to experience the various and exciting ways God is working in the PC(USA) — a real smorgasbord of ministry delights.

So, mark the date and spread the word. Gather a crew and come to Atlanta. It will be the "happening spot" in the PC(USA) in June!

Just Neighbors Award continued from page 1

the community has for almost 30 years had a "dramatic production." With casts of 20-30, all ages are involved and an effort is made to include whole families. As many as 750 people turn out for the two performances. Members of this church have seen this as a way to reach out to others in the community—and indeed, several members came by way of the plays.

"In the past they sponsored a Thai Dam family, helping them with language lessons, job seeking, finding a home, and becoming a part of the community. At present they are giving lessons to a family from Thailand.

"During the farm crisis they worked with other churches to reach out to needy families and individuals, provide financial and technical assistance, form support groups, and advocate for changes in

lending policies and practices.

"They have been active in a county-wide ecumenical program called "COMMUNITY for the Common Good." The purpose was to train and equip church members to be part of a system-of-care to help families move from welfare to self-sufficiency. They provided tutoring and mentoring as good neighbors and with funds from the Presbyterian's Rural Harvest Offering they developed a directory of social services and access to used furniture for the needy.

"More recently the church has been active with the Horizons program. Sponsored by the Northwest Area Foundation of St. Paul, all socio-economic groups have been involved in developing activities and services to alleviate poverty in the community. Church members have been part of the nearly 100 people who have been

involved in study groups, leadership training, planning and action. One specific outcome has been the purchase of the local drug store, to be restored and used for a gathering place for all ages. "The Old Time Soda Fountain" will be a place for a youth and family activity called "Pure High" which will be for all kids and their families, but with special attention to high risk families. Other Horizons projects are garden mentoring, family resources center, and "Friends of Allerton", a 501c3 group to help with funding.

"The **United Presbyterian Church of Allerton** has also been involved in the wider community with their General Mission giving as well as support for our missionary, **Denise England in Egypt**, and financial support for the Sudanese ministry at **Cottage Grove Presbyterian Church in Des Moines.**"

Events Calendar

FEBRUARY 2009

Feb. 18 – Older Adult Ministries Task Force meeting, 1 p.m., Presbytery Office

Feb. 19 – Lunch & Learn Series, *P.O.I.N.T. Tips and Tricks on Christian Education curriculums and VBS*, Noon-1 p.m., Presbytery Office

Feb. 20-27 – **Heartland Presbyterian Church in Clive's** delegation to El Salvador. Dedicating the new school in El Tablon Cerna.

Feb. 22 – DMARC's Soup Supper. Join the Des Moines Area Religious Council's Emergency Food Pantry on Sunday for their third annual soup supper at St. John's Lutheran Church, 600 6th Ave., Des Moines, from 4:30-7 p.m. Questions? Call 515-277-6969.

Mar. 3 – CCD Meeting, 2 p.m. at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines

Mar. 3 – Compañeros Meeting, 6:30 p.m. at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines

Mar. 5 – CROSS Ministries meeting, 7 p.m. at **Cottage Grove Ave. Presbyterian Church, Des Moines**

Mar. 6 – Women Helping Women Luncheon, offered by the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center. Guest Speaker will be the young award-winning Iowa author, Kali VanBaale, *The Space Between*

March 7 – Joining Hands for Egypt Meeting, 10 a.m., Presbytery Office

March 8 – *Living and Leaving a Legacy* is Sunday from 2:30-5 p.m. (one day before the PC(USA)'s Stewardship Conference at the KCI Airport Hilton) at the Covenant Presbyterian Church, 5331 Swope Pkwy in Kansas City Mo. This FREE seminar will focus on how to express our charitable values during and at the end of our (human) lives. Discussions will focus on

wills, bequests, endowments, and gift annuities. Who should consider attending?

Pastors, elders, stewardship committee members, budget committee members, anyone interested in leaving a bequest or gift to a church or charity, anyone interested in leaving a legacy to those who follow them. Discussion

leaders are: James Foster Reese of the Presbyterian Foundation Minister For Specialized Interpretation, and **Walter Oiker**, Presbyterian Foundation Development Officer (Walter and his wife Janice are former members of Heartland Presbyterian Church in Clive and are attendees of Synod School). Need additional info? Call Walter at 888-817-6356 or wjo@fdn.pcusa.org.

March 9-11 – The PC(USA) Stewardship Conference “Stewardship Kaleidoscope” for elders, pastors, presbytery staff, and volunteers is scheduled for Monday through Wednesday, at the



Hilton Hotel at the Kansas City International Airport. Learn about the theological and biblical basis for stewardship and get whole-life, year-round, practical ideas for meaningful congregational and presbytery stewardship programs. For more details, check out the [Heartland Presbytery](http://www.heartlandpby.org/) for workshop details, presenter bios, and conference updates, www.heartlandpby.org/.

March 11 – Personnel Committee, 4 p.m., Presbytery Office

March 13-16 – Ecumenical Advocacy Days, Register online now at: <http://advocacydays.org/>

March 14 – **Winterset, First United Presbyterian Church's** Session Retreat, 10 a.m., Presbytery Office

March 15-21 – **Ankeny Presbyterian Church** delegation goes to El Salvador

March 19 – Lunch & Learn Series, *(Re)Visioning Your Church*, Presbytery Office, Noon-1 p.m.

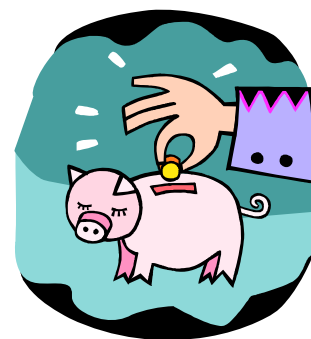
March 27-28 – **Presbytery Women's** Spring Retreat, Jericho Hills, Lucas, Ia.

APRIL 2009

April 2 – CROSS Ministries meeting, 7 p.m., **Cottage Grove Ave. Presbyterian Church in Des Moines**

April 4 – Social Ministries Task Force, 10 a.m., Presbytery Office

April 7 – CCD Meeting, 2 p.m. at **Westminster PC**



Doing More With Less

The National Association of Church Business Administration's Weekly Update e-mail listed the following helpful information about an online survey regarding your church's reduced contributions. This product showcase comes from the ACS Technologies Web site at http://apps.acstechnologies.com/solutions/contact/default.asp?id=3&s=3&l=Email_NACBA_Contributions.

Churches are faced with greatly reduced contribution levels due to the weakened economy. But with wise budgeting, churches can still seek to maximize their ministry areas by doing more with less. For more info and stewardship advice, download the ACS ministry guide Setting the Stage for Good Stewardship.



Celebrating the Birth of John Calvin through "A Year with the Institutes"

As many of you know 2009 marks the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin. In honor of this event Princeton Theological Seminary is sponsoring "A Year with the Institutes." They are encouraging Presbyterians to read through *John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 2009. To participate in this project go to: www2.ptsem.edu/ConEd/Calvin/. Here you will find a variety of options for joining in this project. You can download the reading schedule and read through your own copy of the Institutes again or you can read each day's selection directly on the website.

In addition, you may also listen to an audio version on the website, or download it to your ipod. Check out the Princeton Seminary Web site (www.ptsem.edu) to join in reading or listening to *Calvin's Institutes in 2009*.

PCUSA Update

THE OFFICIAL 2009 MODERATOR'S LENTEN BIBLE STUDY IS AVAILABLE

Alive to God in Jesus Christ is part of the *iBelieve: 40 Daily Readings for the Purposeful Presbyterian Series*. Make this Lenten season a time of renewed faith. *Alive to God in Jesus Christ* includes forty devotional readings and a five-session study guide for groups of any size. The cost of one book is \$12.95.

The following is a review with praises for *Alive to God in Jesus Christ*: "What a rich gift we are given this Lenten season from Joseph D. Small, director, Theology Worship & Education. *Alive to God in Jesus Christ* not only presents an accessible way to nurture our intellectual and spiritual understanding of Jesus Christ, but we are also challenged to explore ways that our faith is lived out in our lives and in the world. Dr. Small brings to life the depth and breadth of our Reformed understanding of Jesus Christ, while touching upon deep social and personal places where God's healing and life-giving presence is yearned for. Whether used as a personal devotional or congregational study guide, I would recommend Dr. Small's Lenten devotional to be part of any spiritual discipline in preparation for Resurrection Day. What a gift to the Church!"

—by Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, Moderator of the 218th General Assembly of the PC (USA).

Alive to God in Jesus Christ can be purchased by calling Presbyterian Distribution Services at 800-524-2612 or go online to: www.pcusa.org/marketplace.

An excerpt from the introduction: *...Christians declare, "Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior." Jesus Christ is God with us, God for us. Thus, the Baptismal profession of faith says something about God, about each of us, and about how we can live God's new Way in the world...*

PDA LAUNCHES HUMANITARIAN AID APPEAL FOR MIDDLE EAST

With Israeli and Hamas forces plunging deeper into violent conflict and the death toll in Gaza steadily mounting, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has launched an appeal to help provide humanitarian relief supplies to the stricken area. PDA is supporting relief efforts as a member of the Geneva-based Action by Churches Together (ACT) International alliance. These are initial efforts and will be expanded later as the situation further unfolds. The PDA-supported efforts have included provision of food – including high-energy biscuits for children – medicine and blankets, as well as the deployment of trauma counselors. To learn more, go online to: www.pcusa.org/pda/.

GAC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ATTENDS INAUGURAL PRAYER SERVICE

LOUISVILLE — On Jan. 20, eyes around the world were focused on Washington, DC, to watch Barack Obama be sworn in as president of the United States.

Two of those eyes belonged to Linda Valentine, executive director of the General Assembly Council. She joined other staff at the PC (USA) Center here to view the broadcast of the inauguration. But her view of the historic events surrounding the transfer of power wasn't limited to the television screen.

On the evening of the inauguration, Valentine headed to Washington to attend the 56th Presidential Inaugural Prayer Service held Jan. 21.

"You could just feel the excitement in the air," she said about the atmosphere in the nation's capital.

"There was just a real celebratory feel in the air."

Watching Obama begin his first day of office with prayer was inspiring, as was the diverse gathering of religious leaders at the service, said Valentine, who represented the PC(USA) along with Gradye Parsons, stated clerk of the General Assembly, and Bruce Reyes-Chow, moderator of the 218th General Assembly.

(Continued on page 5)

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Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu leaders were among those in attendance. Valentine, Parsons and Reyes-Chow had seats in the front row in the transept, and had clear views of Obama and his wife, Michelle, Vice President Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, and Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and her husband, former President Bill Clinton. They also were able to see the religious leaders, who sat together.

"Just to see three or four rows of all these religious leaders from so many religious expressions was really an inspiring sight," Valentine said. "There was just a real sense of reverence."

The complete story and photo are available online:

www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09095.

LAWRENCE NAMED PUBLISHER OF PRESBYTERIANS TODAY

Jeffrey Lawrence, a New Yorker whose working life has taken him from law to real estate to advertising to parish ministry, has been named publisher of *Presbyterians Today* magazine. He began his new work on Jan. 5. "I think I bring a unique perspective to the magazine as a seasoned businessman and Christian minister," Lawrence told the Presbyterian News Service in an interview. "*Presbyterians Today* is a critical mission of Christ's church and I knew as soon

as I applied that this was the right fit for me."

The complete story can be found at www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09028.

WRITERS GUILD SEEKS NEW AUTHORS FOR AWARD

The Presbyterian Writers Guild – online at www.presbywriters.org – is again seeking entries for the James Angell Award to be presented to the best first book published by a Presbyterian author during the calendar year of 2008. The annual award was established by the Guild and the family of James Angell, a prolific and respected Presbyterian writer, as a means to recognize and encourage new writers.

The complete story can be found at: www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09020.

FAITH LEADERS CALL FOR RAISING MINIMUM WAGE

With the U.S. economic crisis deepening and unemployment soaring, a group of 11 denominational and religious organization leaders are among the inaugural signers of a call to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10 in 2010. The signers include the Rev. Gradye Parsons, General Assembly stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Nearly 400 faith leaders from all 50 states have already endorsed "\$10 in 2010," a campaign led by Let Justice Roll, and more are signing on each day. The complete story can be found online at: www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09017.

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PC(USA) OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS TO RURAL MINISTRY CONFERENCE

The PC(USA) is offering a limited number of \$100 scholarships to Presbyterian churches sending a first-time participant to Wartburg Theological Seminary's Rural Ministry Conference planned March 1-3 in Dubuque, Iowa. The awards are based on financial need and limited to one scholarship per church. They will be awarded on a first-come basis to 10 individuals or churches which send in their registration and indicate on their registration "PC(USA) Scholarship Requested." A brochure and registration form can be found at www.ruralministry.com.

HASTINGS COLLEGE, FIRST PRESBYTERIAN PLAN CALVIN TOUR

In recognition of the 500th anniversary this year of John Calvin's birth, Hastings (Neb.) College and First Presbyterian Church of Hastings are presenting "From Paris to Geneva, A Calvin Commemorative Tour," a journey through Europe May 22 to June 2. The trip will begin in France, the country of Calvin's birth, and conclude in Switzerland where Calvin spent most of his ministry. For details, contact the Rev. David McCarthy, chaplain at Hastings College, dmccarthy@hastings.edu; or the Rev. William Nottage-Tracey, pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Hastings, revbill@fpchastings.org.

Synod Update

WINTER SYNOD MEETING WAS HELD JAN. 18-20

The annual meeting of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the PC(USA) was held Jan. 18-20, at Mt. Olivet Conference and Retreat Center, Farmington, Minn. The meeting summary is available from the Presbytery Office at 515-276-4991 or pbysesmoines@presbyteryofdesmoines.org.

KEATON BEGINS CALL IN MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY

The Rev. Kevin S. Keaton began his call as the executive presbyter in the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley Friday, Jan. 16. Keaton joins the presbytery from a pastorate at First Presbyterian Church in Sugar Land, Texas. Keaton will be officially installed Saturday, Jan. 24, at the presbytery's meeting at Bethany Presbyterian Church in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The meeting convenes at 9 a.m. and worship, including Keaton's installation, is the first item on the docket.

NEW MISSION COORDINATOR IN PROSPECT HILL

Jennifer Santer began serving as mission coordinator in the Presbytery of Prospect Hill on Jan. 1. She can be contacted at jsanter@prospecthillpresby.org.

HOMESTEAD CLOSES CHERRY HILL OFFICE, GOES VIRTUAL

Kris Peterson, communication and resource coordinator for Homestead Presbytery, announced last week that the presbytery's office has gone

"virtual." The Homestead Presbytery office on Cherry Hill is closed and the resource center and mail has moved to the new location. Most of the staff is setting up offices in their homes. The new mailing address for the presbytery is: 8300 East Pointe Road, Lincoln, NE 68506. The office phone number remains 402-474-0612. The phone will be covered Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Peterson also noted that the Rev. Hal Rainey, who also serves the Hebron, Neb., congregation, is now serving as the presbytery's stated clerk. Contact information can be found at www.homesteadpres.org.

OMAHA CHURCH HIGHLIGHTED IN OMAHA WORLD HERALD

The following story appeared in *Monday Morning in the Presbytery*, the weekly newsletter of the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley. The newsletter stated, "Diane Plasek at First Presbyterian Church in Omaha reports, 'Eight sermons and 5½ hours later, 2,002 Sudanese men, women and children joyfully left our sanctuary. As reported on the front page of the *Omaha World Herald* on Christmas Day, our church hosted an inter-denominational worship service for the Sudanese communities of western Iowa and eastern Nebraska. With standing room only, the rafters of our church shook with voices

shouting 'Alleluia,' the sounds of drums and multiple choirs. I learned from David, who drove in from Lincoln, that in Africa's refugee camps where he was before coming to the United States, thousands of people celebrate Christ's birth non-stop for four days. The services aren't that long [here], but the Sudanese Christians had a service at another church in Omaha the evening before. It drew over 850 people, and started at 11 p.m. and ended at 2:30 a.m. An exhausted Michael Kuach, the commissioned lay pastor for the Sudanese American Presbyterian Fellowship, said he was sad that the celebration as a Christian community was over on Christmas Day. Besides keeping up with bathroom supplies and drinking water, Greg Lincoln, our weekend custodian, and I had the experience of our lives. The people were so good to us with hugs, handshakes, well wishes for Christmas and total helpfulness from many wonderful men who helped all day. (Must be honest ... we did have water bottles, animal crackers, etc. in the sanctuary which cleaned up just fine.) I thank the leadership of First Presbyterian Church who supported the Sudanese community by granting them a place to worship on Christmas Day and for giving me one of the most memorable Christmases of my life."

CROSS Ministries Update



Walking up the stairs to my second floor office, the little boy's feet made

stomping sounds as each tennis-shoed foot hit the tops of the steps. Mom and Dad hurried him along the way as their faces displayed the worry and anxiety they were experiencing. "Let's not make the lady wait," Mom whispered to him as we rounded the stairway into the balcony above the sanctuary outside my office door. The little boy was that strange combination of bored and anxious all

at the same time. For the last two hours, he had waited in the church library with seven other families who had come to ask for help. He was just four years old and by nightfall he could be homeless.

It is the children who bear the brunt of homelessness. Research tells us that 61% of the homeless are women and children and that 40% of homeless children are under the age of five. And that is why we do what we do at CROSS Ministries.

He walked into my office and immediately set his sights on the table with crayons, markers, and paper just waiting there for little hands to use.

The parents settled into chairs pulling out the paperwork and documentation that would demonstrate their need, while I encouraged the little boy to draw or play with the toys nearby. It was an easy sell. After a quick reassuring nod from Mom, he began to draw while his parents and I started the process of assessing their circumstances. I soon learned that Dad had been laid off from his construction work, and they couldn't make ends meet on Mom's minimum wage income. Besides, her employer had been cutting back on her hours lately because business was so slow.

Polk County General Assistance had denied them

because they had received some financial help one other time during the past 12 months. The rent was due and there wasn't enough money to pay the landlord.

The family's older child was at school that day. Imagine trying to

concentrate on your studies when you don't know where you will sleep that night. How do you listen to the teacher when you keep remembering the worried expressions on your parents' faces as you left for school that morning? If the landlord makes you leave, what will happen to all of your clothes and toys? Where will you eat or do your homework?

Yes, it is hard on the parents, but it is the children who bear the brunt of homelessness. They are powerless to change their situation. They are bewildered about what is happening to them. They are ashamed to tell their friends or their teacher. And that is why we do what we do at CROSS Ministries.

After asking lots of questions and going over the documentation the family provided, I handed the family a check to secure their living situation for 30 days. In exchange, I received a wonderful crayon drawing for my office wall. It showed a house, a tree that had survived a storm, and a brother and sister. And that is why we do what we do at CROSS Ministries.

Thank you to all who make this ministry possible.

— Roberta Victor,
Ph.D., ATR-BC

Synod School 2009



"So many people having so much fun while examining issues related to faith."

July 26–31, 2009

Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, Iowa

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

Building a Culture of Peace



Attend the Foods Resource Bank Gathering, Feb. 21 in Des Moines

Food is Everyone's Mission: We're All in this Together! is the theme for this Foods Resource Bank's (FRB) Christian response to world hunger on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2009, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Plymouth United Church of Christ, 4126 Ingersoll Ave. in Des Moines (42nd St. and Ingersoll, just south of the 42nd St. Exit off I-235). Registration is at 9 a.m. in Waveland Hall. A panel discussion begins at 10 a.m. with Moderator Mark Pearson, Host of IPTV's *Market to Market*. Presenters are: *Successful Farming* Farm Issues Editor Cheryl Tevis; Iowa Farm Bureau President Craig Lang; and Foods Resource Bank President and CEO Marv Baldwin. Lunch is at Noon with break-out sessions beginning at 1 p.m.

Topics include: Building FRB Growing Projects; Success Stories in Smallholder Agricultural Development from Around the World, Local Food Systems with Gary Huber, Practical Farmers of Iowa.

Geez magazine has sermon contest

Winnipeg, Canada – *Geez* magazine is bringing the stodgy old pulpit back from the brink of cultural oblivion with a sermon contest of holy mischief. The dark, wooden bulwark of yesteryear has little currency today, but what if the pulpit was planted closer to the action? What if it was available to anyone who wished the voices of spiritual authority would say less about other-worldly glory and more about the spiritual side of this world's big issues?

Building on last year's "30 Sermons You'd Never Hear in Church Contest", *Geez* magazine's 2009 **Daringly Awkward Sermon Contest** is ushering in a new and – make no mistake – decidedly

different era of proclamation. This contest invites entrants to explore the aspects of social change that make us squirm, things like privilege, right-wing relatives, the drunk stranger in the back pew, guilt feelings, or litter in the poor part of town. Constructing a more fair and compassionate world involves awkward people, pauses and topics, and we want to find the wisdom in the awkwardness. The *Geez* pulpit is set up and waiting for activists, anarchists, atheists and good old fashioned Christians to step up and confront or comfort, pontificate or confess, urge or encourage. The top three sermons will receive \$400 each. The winners plus a selection of other entries will be

published in the Spring 2009 issue of *Geez*. Deadline for entries is Feb. 28, 2009. Word limit is 800. Enter at contest@geezmagazine.org. See www.geezmagazine.org for full details and entry form.

Geez is a quarterly magazine of spirit and social action. It is aimed at over-churched, out-churched and perhaps even unchurchable souls on the North American fringes of faith. In its three years of existence it has been nominated for three Utne Independent Press Awards and won Magazine of the Year at both Canada's Western Magazine Awards and the Canadian Church Press Awards. Contact: Publisher Aiden Enns, 204-942-1058 or aiden@geezmagazine.org.

F.O.G. Meetings to be held February 18 & 19

Our denomination is in a process of studying a proposal to significantly revise the Form of Government section of our *Constitution*. Churches, sessions and presbyteries are being encouraged to take a look at this document and provide responses. Our presbytery will have three such opportunities:

- **Wednesday, Feb. 18, Noon-3 p.m.** at First Presbyterian Church, 405 High Ave., E. in Oskaloosa.
- **Thursday, Feb. 19, 9 a.m.-Noon** at Trinity

United Presbyterian Church, 200 So. Howard St. in Indianola.

- **Thursday, Feb. 19, 2-5 p.m.** at First Presbyterian Church, 102 S.W. Kent St. (Hwy. 92) in Greenfield.

The sessions will be led by **Diana Barber**, Associate Executive for Leadership Development of our Synod of Lakes and Prairies. Diana is a member of the 217th General Assembly's Form of Government (FOG) Task Force and has first hand experience and knowledge about the process and the proposals. To review

this document, go online to: www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/form-of-government.htm (Nov. 05, 2008) or see a Comparison document available at: www.pcusa.org/formofgovernment/pdfs/proposed_fog_to_current_fog_feb_2009.pdf.

Wednesday's session includes lunch, and Thursday's sessions include refreshments. **Please make your reservations by 5 p.m., Feb. 17.** Call the Presbytery Office 515-276-4991 or e-mail pb1@presbyteryofdesmoines.org.

Congregational Connection

INSTALLATION FOR NEW DOUGLAS AVENUE PASTOR

The Presbytery of Des Moines and the Church family of the Douglas Avenue Presbyterian Church in Des Moines, warmly invited you to the installation of The **Rev. Dr. Richard Harbart** as Designated Pastor, Sunday, Feb. 22, 2009, at 1:30 p.m., with refreshments following the service.

NEWTON CHAMBER HONORS SMITH FOR SERVICE

A member of **First Presbyterian Church in Newton** and currently on the Presbytery's Professional Care and Development Committee as

moderator, **Leland Smith** was honored at the Greater Newton Area Chamber of Commerce Dinner in January. Leland received the chamber's Community Service Award for his ongoing work throughout the community. "Newton and Jasper County and Iowa have always been good to me and I have a lot to give back to the community," he said in an article from the *Newton Daily News*.

THE SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP HOLDS ANNUAL DINNER

You are invited to join **South Central Regional Partners** at their Annual Partnership

Dinner on Thursday, Feb. 19, beginning at 6 p.m. at Carpenter Hall, 1200 Court Ave., Chariton, Iowa. The cost will be \$15 per person. The **Rev. Suzanne Gorhau**, pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Centerville, will be speaking on *What Is God Doing in Malawi, Africa?* Suzanne has gone on several mission trips to Malawi. Come hear the story of God's amazing work in Africa. Send reservations by Feb. 12 to the **Rev. Linda O'Connell**, P.O. Box 79, Lucas, IA 50151 or call 641-203-3660 or e-mail revlinda@iowatelecom.net.

UDTS Courses can further your Education

Updates from University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (UDTS) Discernment conference: Twice a year, Dubuque Seminary offers Exploring a Call to Ministry Conference for prospective students. The next conference date is March 18-20, beginning with dinner Wednesday and ending with lunch Friday. For a mere \$25, we provide two nights' lodging and all meals. Participants have the chance to be in a discernment group setting while on campus to worship, attend class, talk one-on-one with a professor, meet other students and their spouses, and much more.

Go to the UDTS Web site to registration at: <http://udts.dbq.edu/ExploreCall.cfm>.

Dubuque Seminary is now accepting applications for Doctor of Ministry Degree. The 2009 emphasis will be Missional Spirituality, with three cohort leaders: Rev. Dr. Beth McCaw, Pastor to students; Rev. Dr. Timothy Slemmons, homiletics professor; and Rev. Tammy Wiens, denominational staff for spiritual formation. Application Deadline has been extended to: March 1, 2009; Residency: May 17 to 29. For more information, go to: <http://udts.dbq.edu/>.

UDTS Second Annual Mission Conference will be held on campus March 10-11, featuring presenters who will address mission from both the Methodist and the Presbyterian perspective:

Rev. Dr. Hunter Farrell is Director of World Missions, PCUSA and Rev. Phil Thrailkill is the Past Chair, Board of Directors of the UMC Mission Society. We will have two days of worship, workshops and discussions.

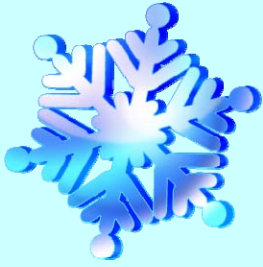
Save the Date for Spring Renewal Conference includes the Berger and Woods Lectureships, and will be held on the University of Dubuque campus April 14-16. We are pleased to host Dr. Luke Timothy Johnson, professor at Candler School of Theology, Emory University and Dr. Miriam Adeney, associate professor at Seattle Pacific University School of Theology.



Planning for the Future

Presbyterian Foundation Regional **Development Officer Karen Krumm** can update church families on rules and options pertaining to remembering the Lord's work when planning how their estate money will be distributed. If this is something you'd like to schedule for your congregation, contact Karen at 815-837-1305 or kak@fdn.pcusa.org.

Another option is to attend the scheduled workshop at the **First Presbyterian Church in LeRoy** on Thursday, Feb. 26 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.; dinner is provided. To RSVP, contact the church office at 641-877-4641 or trinityparish@iowatelecom.net. The program will be helpful and relevant to all ages, especially if you have someone who depends on you. This is a listen and learn opportunity; as this workshop is informational only, there will be no opportunity for decision making at the workshop. Any follow-up is left to your own individual discretion.



Presbytery Youth, join us for Fun in the Snow!

For three hours, we'll be tubing, snowboarding and/or skiing at *Sleepy Hollow Sports Park* in Des Moines, www.sleepyhollowsportspark.com. Youth (grades 6-12) and Youth Leaders are welcome to attend Saturday, Feb. 21, 2009, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The event is sponsored by the Presbytery of Des Moines Camping/Youth Ministries Task Force.

Youth participants must have their parents sign the liability release form in order to participate. Lunch is not provided, plan to bring extra money or a sack lunch.

Snow tubing lift tickets cost:

\$14 (12 and under)

\$16 (13 or older)

(There is an additional fee for snowboarding and skiing tickets.)

For more information, contact **Camping/Youth Ministries Task Force Moderator Dennis Britson** at: 515-988-1360 or dnbritson@aol.com.

Westminster Presents Gifted Young Artists

The Westminster Presbyterian Church in Des Moines

invites you to experience a *Gifted Young Artists Concert*, Saturday, Feb. 28, 2009, at 3:00 p.m. This next event of the Westminster Fine Arts Series will feature three amazing young performers, Chelsea Wang (age 15) on piano, Alan Zhou (14) on violin, and Jeremy Edouard (age 12) on violin. This free, family-friendly concert is the perfect winter afternoon respite for music-lovers of all ages.

Chelsea Wang of West Des Moines will perform Saint Saens' Concerto for Piano and Orchestra. Chelsea began studying piano at the age of four and first performed with an orchestra at age six. She has won awards in numerous piano competitions, has performed on ra-

dio and television, and has appeared in concert all around the state of Iowa and beyond. Chelsea is currently studying with Ksenia Nosikova of the University of Iowa.

Alan Zhou was born in Beijing, China, and moved to the United States with his parents at the age of four. He began private violin lessons at the age of five in Connecticut, before moving to Ankeny in 2002 when he joined the studio Dr. Jonathan Sturm. Alan debuted as a soloist with Oskaloosa Symphony Orchestra when he was ten, and has performed as a soloist with numerous orchestras in the Midwest. Alan will present Wieniawski's Concerto No. 2 for Violin.

Jeremy Edouard will perform Vivaldi's Concerto for Three Violins with Alan Zhou and

Jonathan Sturm. Jeremy has been studying the violin since the age of four, and is a member of the Des Moines Youth Symphony.

The concert will also feature the Westminster Orchestra under the direction of guest conductor Jonathan Sturm, concertmaster of the Des Moines Symphony. Jonathan has performed as concerto soloist in the Midwest and on each coast, and has given solo recitals throughout the United States. His private studio is considered one of the best in Iowa, with his students frequently winning competitions in the region and performing with orchestras in the Midwest.

A reception will follow the performance. Free admission. Childcare provided. This concert is underwritten by Jim Collier in memory of Mary Baker.

Prayers and Concerns

The **Rev. Don and Emily Seeger's (Atlantic, First)** daughter Beth and her husband Paul are members of the Portland Avenue Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Ky., that was recently destroyed by fire. This church provides a wonderful ministry to the community with a food pantry and large clothes closet. They had just voted to begin a fund drive to build on a multi-purpose room to the church.

The **Honorably Retired Rev. Bob Cook** has 'unofficially' adopted five families in El Salvador and one of them is a mother whose name is Elsa and has a five-year-old son Gabriel. Gabriel was recently diagnosed with leukemia. Bob is praying for a cure for Gabriel, and comfort of God's grace and peace for both Elsa and Gabriel.

Note New E-mails

The **Presbytery Office** staff have a new e-mail system. Please keep the staff and our technical advisors in your prayers. Update your e-mail address book with the new e-mails as follows:

Rev. Phil Barrett =

pb1@presbyteryofdesmoines.org

Rev. Goanar Chol = pbysudanese@presbyteryofdesmoines.org

Kim Coulter = pbcommunication@presbyteryofdesmoines.org

Betty Dyer = pbdesmoines@presbyteryofdesmoines.org

Compañeros Update

INDIANOLA DELEGATION TO EL SALVADOR BLOGS ONLINE

A delegation from the **Trinity United Presbyterian Church in Indianola** spent this past week in El Salvador. From Feb. 4-11, Trinity's member Betty Dyer (the Presbytery's Office Manager) blogged online about her adventures with this mission trip/delegation. To read her journal, go to the Presbytery's blog at:

<http://presbyteryofdesmoines.blogspot.com/>.

MISSION CO-WORKER WAS BUSY THIS PAST WEEK

Kathy Mahler, mission co-worker to El Salvador, found time to blog this week about the Indianola delegations' trip:

Feb. 11th — Exhausted! But great!

"So sad. The delegation from Indianola had to leave.

"I really do love my time with delegations. They are a breath of chaos and activity... love and energy... interest and spark.

"And truth be told – without delegations, Bob's and the Pastoral Teams dream of community and church partnerships could not be realized. Together with the people of their communities, they are the lifeblood of this mis-

sion. And what a joy to be able to help strengthen the bonds between the delegates and their brothers and sisters in the cantons.

"And that said... I am EXHAUSTED now! But I feel great..."

You can read the rest of her entry online at:

www.oursisterparish.org/blog/2009/2/12/feb-11th-exhausted-but-great.html

Our Sister Parish



Fiesta Fund-Raiser

Friday, April 24, 2009
from 6:00 to 10:30pm
St Boniface Catholic Church,
Waukee, Iowa

6-7pm -- **Social Hour:**

Silent auction, live music & appetizers

(beer and wine available for free-will donation)

Visit with Kathy and the Pastoral Team live via web cam

7-8pm -- **Gourmet meal & Latin music**

Glazed Pork Loin

Seasoned Long Grain Rice

Fresh Green Salad

Dessert

8-10pm -- **Social time & Silent Auction**

Dancing & music by Party Time DJ

Visit with Kathy live via web cam

10-10:30pm -- **Silent Auction results announced**

Tickets must be purchased in advance - \$20 per person

For tickets or more information, contact one of the following:

Call Betty at (515) 276-4991

- All Proceeds support the work of Our Sister Parish -

Evening sponsored by Compañeros

www.oursisterparish.org

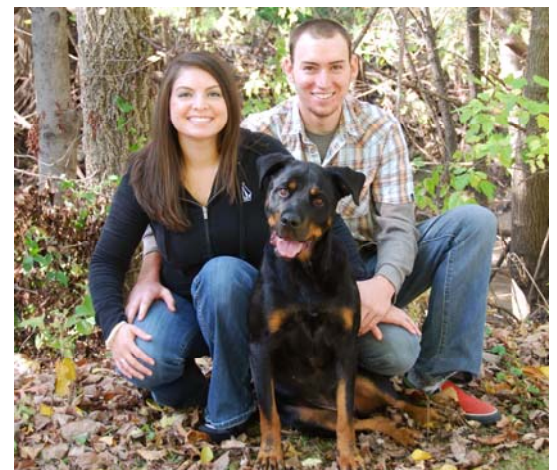
Coffee Coordinator gets married!



Compañeros' new *Don Justo Coffee with Dignity* Coordinator **Kt Marie Scarcello (Des**

Moines, Central) has some great news! She got married January 3! She's picture below with her husband Sean and their dog Atlas.

If your church is interested in selling this fair trade coffee, contact **Kt Marie** at donjustocoffee@gmail.com or 515-266-3737. You can now use credit card or a PayPal account to purchase coffee online. Support fair wages for the farmers when you have your morning coffee!



Presbytery of Des Moines

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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
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
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Thank you from South Louisiana Presbytery

January 20, 2009

To our friends in Iowa:

While you are still recovering from this summer's floods, we are doing the same on the Louisiana coast from hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike. We are making progress on the rebuilding efforts from the 2005 hurricanes Katrina and Rita, but are still involved in the slow home rebuilding efforts.

When many of you came down in '06 to gut, '07 to gut and rebuild, I know the devastation and amount of FEMA trailers was quite a shock. As a city that once had evacu-

ated almost a million of its residents and saw 10 days of standing water leave 167,000 homes uninhabitable three years ago and then try to reoccupy with 140,000 FEMA trailers, you'll be happy to know that almost 90% of our area population has returned and our trailer count is down to 2,000.

Iowans played their part in our recovery from Orange City to Cedar Rapids the teams came and made huge dents in our work load.

We pray for your continuing recovery and, hopefully you'll look forward to another Louisiana mission trip to Lake Charles or later in the spring to Texas City to assist in their efforts. (Need a little encouragement? Our temperature is 55 degrees today.)

— Richard Maag,
Presbytery of South Louisiana
Mission Coordinator
Richard@pslrecovery.org



WE'RE ON THE WEB!

www.presbyteryofdesmoines.org