



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

Of Special Interest

PC(USA) Loses Members

Per Capita Explained

CE Decorum Lesson

PC(USA) Lost 43,175 Members in '04

By Jerry L. Van Marter
LOUISVILLE — Active membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) declined by 43,175 in 2004, continuing a trend dating to the mid-1960s. At the end of last year, PC(USA) membership stood at 2,362,136. And at the time of Presbyterian reunion in 1983, the denomination had 4.2 million members.

The 2004 membership drop was the second-largest of the past decade. The church lost 46,658

members last year.

However, PC(USA) remains the ninth-largest denomination in the United States.

In a commentary released with the annual statistical report, the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the General Assembly, called the new numbers "a wake-up call."

"We as Presbyterians will only become a growing church if we begin on our knees," he said, "praying for forgiveness for our

timidity in evangelism and seeking God's renewal so that we lose our image as God's 'frozen chosen' and become instead joyful evangelists who actively share the good news of the gospel."

The 2004 statistics reflect declines from last year in most categories: 45 fewer congregations (they now number 11,019); six fewer new churches (25); 2,400 fewer elders (99,000); 700 fewer deacons (67,400); and 1,600 fewer infant baptisms (33,600).

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Phil's Corner



Last week a lot of coverage was given to Billy Graham's last

crusade in New York. I have admired the integrity with which he has carried out his ministry, especially as clergy of various theological positions fall like flies, succumbing to a variety of temptations. A recent column by Dr. Graham caught my eye. It talks

about relations between pastors and congregations, something that gets regular attention in the Presbytery, so I thought I'd share it with you now. Please note that his response refers to a male pastor in the question, so uses masculine pronouns.

"Dr. Graham: I know our pastor isn't perfect, but I get very upset the way some people in our church talk about him and tear him down (usually behind

his back). I know he must get discouraged, but what can I do, if anything?"

"If God brought your pastor to your church, then he is God's choice for that position, and he should be respected as long as God has him there. The Bible tells us "to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord - I Thessalonians 5:12." Gossiping and backbiting will only hurt God's work in a church.



*Crafters are needed for 21st Annual Fall Arts & Craft Sale, Oct. 8, at the **First Presbyterian Church, 3100 Easton Blvd in Des Moines.** This six-hour shopping event is sponsored by Presbyterian Women. For more information or to rent a table, contact Maxine Warner at 515-265-0553.*

Events Calendar

2005

July 10 – The Rudd’s concert, (southern gospel music ministry), 2:30 p.m., at the **Ottumwa First Presbyterian Church**

July 12 – *Music Under the Stars* by the Greater Des Moines Community Band at Calvin Community, 4210 Hickman Rd., Des Moines, 7 p.m.

July 21 – Coordinating Council Meeting, Des Moines

July 24-29 – Synod School, Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, Iowa

July 29-Aug. 4 – Heartland El Salvador Delegation

Aug. 20 – Presbytery Meeting, Mount Ayr Baptist/Presbyterian Church

Phil’s Corner continued

“The most important thing you can do for your pastor is to pray for him – and encourage others to pray also. A praying church is a harmonious church – and the reason is because everyone is seeking God’s will instead of their own. Prayer is essential in God’s work, and most of all we should be praying regularly for our pastors. Paul’s plea could be echoed by almost every pastor: “Finally, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly

and be honored - 2 Thessalonians 3:1.”

“Then encourage your pastor. Go out of your way to thank him for his sermons, remember his birthday or other special occasions, let him know you are praying for him. Encourage him also to strengthen his gifts and grow in his abilities. We all need encouragement, and your pastor is no exception.


“Finally, ask God to help you be a peacemaker in

your church, and urge others to do the same. The Bible says, “There is deceit in the hearts of those who plot evil, but joy for those who promote peace - Proverbs 12:20.”

May these words provoke thought as you enjoy the longer days and different schedule of summer time.

Thanks to each of you for the ways you work to share God’s good news wherever you are.

Peace, Phil



“People having so much fun while examining issues related to faith”

“Wonderful, thoughtful, energetic, fun-loving teachers, staff and leaders.”

“A place where the needs of the entire family are considered.”

“Gives me the incentive to try new things in my church.”

“Best thing is the Christian community we live in for a week.”

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July 24–29, 2005
Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, Iowa

Discover Synod School!
Go to www.lakesandprairies.org/synodschool
or phone 1-800-328-1880, ext. 207.

Coming Home

What is Per Capita?

Every year, each church in the PC(USA) is asked to pay a **per capita** assessment – an amount of money to keep the denomination running.

It has been said that paying per capita is like paying a utility bill. Just as we pay utility bills in order to remain connected to certain services, we pay per capita so that we may benefit from the services of the larger church: General Assembly, the Synod of Lakes and Prairies and our presbytery.

Per capita apportionment is based on a church's prior years' membership (i.e., 2005 per capita is based on 2004 membership.)

For the year 2005, our per capita apportionment is \$22.84 and is split:

General Assembly \$9.14, synod \$4.34, and presbytery \$9.36 (\$0.25 of which makes additional dollars available for new church development redevelopment and revitalization.)

The Des Moines Presbytery per capita dollars are for:

- Presbytery committee, task force and council expenses
- Quarterly Presbytery meetings
- Office and stated clerk expenses
- Legal fees
- Office staff salaries

Section G-9.0404d requires that the presbytery raise per capita funds and for "timely transmission - to their respective synods and General Assembly."

Thus if a church chooses not to pay their per capita monies, the presbytery still does so on their behalf. Non payment not only puts an additional burden on the presbytery budget, but also lessens the amount of receipts for per capita purposes.

Without your contribution, programs such as youth camps, El Salvador mission or CCD Initiative Grants would not be possible.

Peace, Unity and Purity Dialogue Starts

The General Assembly taskforce on Peace, Unity and Purity (PUP) of the Church has asked each presbytery to form its own PUP taskforce. Our presbytery Coordinating Council has called the following to participate:

- **Rev. Tiare Mathison-Bowie, convener**
- **Rev. Hans Cornelder**
- **Mary Kohlsdorf**
- **Batul Chol**
- **Mary Lou Aspengren**
- **Ted Coppock**
- **Rev. George Salnave**
- **Rev. Ross Blount**

The purpose of the group is to engage in deep conversation about theological issues from a variety of perspectives.

Rev. Mathison-Bowie reports they will follow the maxim: If I have listened carefully and heard you well. She explains, "We want to listen deeply to one another as a way to discern the Holy Spirit's voice as we confront tough and enduring topics of controversy like sexuality and ordination."

Mathison-Bowie continues, "Some would say we have done enough talking. Those of us who agreed to serve the

church on this taskforce began to differ – there is a richness and depth of dialogue that awaits our laying down our positions and taking up the cross of Christ. Our hope is to be led into a wide space where we can see God's face."

The group will meet 6 times a year, reading materials in common, sharing insights and praying for one another and our precious church. Periodic reports and presentations will be made to the presbytery as they move further in the open land of grace.

Need info about the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)? Go to:

- **PresbyTel** – Call 800-872-3283 to talk to the "reference desk" for the PC(USA),.
- **VoiceLine** – Listen to recorded messages on over 60 topics at 888-728-7228, ext. 8010 with your touch-tone telephone.
- **PC(USA) Web site** – www.pcusa.org, use "search" to help you find the information you want.
- **Presbyterians Today** – <http://www.pcusa.org/today/>, the PC(USA) magazine.
- **General Assembly Council Mission Policy Guide** – A directory of current mission policies, position statements, strategies, guidelines and actions of the PC(USA). Get this guide in the presbytery office or online at <http://www.pcusa.org/gac/policyguide.htm>.
- **Presbyterian News Service** – <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/download-news.htm>, produces three downloadable resources for news-hungry Presbyterians and their congregations to use in church bulletins or newsletters.



Christmas in July?

The presbytery office is looking for a church to host our annual Christmas luncheon in December. The Presbytery will pay the host church to provide the meal, so this would be a great fundraiser for your congregation! We would need a facility that can hold up to 100 people and a group of volunteers to cook and serve the lunch. If your congregation is interested please contact Presbytery Office Manager, Jennifer Hines, at 515-276-4991 or pbydesmoines@qwest.net, to make arrangements.

Congregational Connection

Presbytery congregations having a reason to celebrate:

- Best wishes upon the July 2 marriage of **Jennifer Hines**, office manager for the presbytery and **Rev. Richard Harbart**, interim pastor at the **Grinnell First Presbyterian Church**.
- **Scott Hamilton, Ankeny Presbyterian Church**, will receive the Celtic Cross Award, July 17. The award sponsored by the National Association of Presbyterian Scouters, is for leading youth in scout programs.
- **Ed Wegele**, completed his candidacy process and is now the Associate Pastor at the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Charleston, S.C.
- The **Newton First Presbyterian Church** will celebrate its 150th anniversary in August.
- **Tracy Edwards**, will be ordained July 24, 3 p.m., at **First Presbyterian Church in Creston**. He begins his call Aug. 1 at the Presbyterian Church in Allardt, Tenn.

Prayer Concerns

Please keep in your prayers the following:

- For all summer Vacation Bible Schools and church camps for our children of the presbytery.
- The Youth mission teams' trips this summer.
- Remember those men and women who are serving our nation in conflicts overseas.
- **Sarah Hopkins, Newton First Presbyterian Church**, is enrolled in the Center/Learn Program through the United Church of Christ, a program for Commissioned Lay Pastors.
- **Brian Diebold, Ottumwa First Presbyterian Church**, in his response to God's call to ordained ministry, is moving to Pittsburgh to continue his theological studies.
- **Adam Magill, Atlantic First Presbyterian Church**, is attending Dubuque Seminary for work on his SPM.
- **Cyndy Ripperger, Creston First Presbyterian Church**, is in the CLP track and has been accepted at Dubuque Seminary.
- **Cindy Ray, Leon First Presbyterian Church**, is a student at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City. Cindy has been doing field education at **Westminster Presbyterian Church in Des Moines**.

Employment Opportunities

Part-time Youth Director – If interested, contact Rev. Lynn Williams, grimespres@hotmail.com, First Presbyterian Church, Grimes, Iowa, 515-986-3720.

Pastor – Westminster Presbyterian Church, Clarinda, Iowa

Pastor/Head of Staff – Faith Presbyterian Church, Sun City, Ariz.

General Presbyter – Presbytery of the Peaks, Va.

Doctor of Ministry Programs and Sabbatical Opportunity for

Professionals in Ministry – United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

Racial/Ethnic Scholarships – Synod of Lakes and Prairies

For more information about these positions, contact the Des Moines Presbytery office.

Demonstrative Lesson on Decorum

**By Joan Boer and
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As a growing church, we have a large number of children who are occasionally disruptive in worship. Particularly bothered were the elderly members; they were used to a church void of youngsters and were disturbed by the activity level and noise generated by the young people.

Here is a fun way to teach children how to behave in church. We did this with our 3-year-olds through high school aged kids. Interestingly, these children went on to instruct their parents on proper decorum.

Have the children meet in the sanctuary at the beginning of Sunday School. Welcome the kids and begin with prayer. Explain that some people have a difficult time concentrating on the sermon and prayers because of other things going on in the sanctuary. Ask them to pretend that they are grown ups who are in church during worship. Have a teenager put on the pastor's robe and take his or her place at the pulpit. The "Pastor" will read from the Bible, we chose John. Occasionally he or she should

lead us in prayer.

From the back of the church enters a leader poised as a parent with two kids (teenagers). They politely smile at their friends and sit down. This "Good" family, follows along during the sermon, looks up verses in the Bible, folds their hands and closes their eyes during prayers and sits quietly.

Enter the "Naughty" family. Remember to act out, "over the top". This parent rushes into church late, dragging the "children" (teenagers) who are holding bags of noisy toys like Gameboys and beeping cars, holding cups of (spilling) water and bags of chips. They sit in the front row.

Throughout the service these "kids" tear up bulletins, fold them into paper airplanes and throw them, noisily open and eat the chips, spill water on each other and complain loudly. They crawl on the floor, punch each other, stand on the seats, turn around and make faces at the congregation, talk and fight loudly. The "parent" is equally disruptive in scolding the children.

Loudly apologizing to the people, the "parent" gets up, grabs the kids, scolding them loudly, ("Stop it right NOW!"). One "kid" is sent

out of the sanctuary alone (the "child" runs around in the narthex, throwing bulletins and running around). The "parent" then drags the screaming "kids" to the nursery.

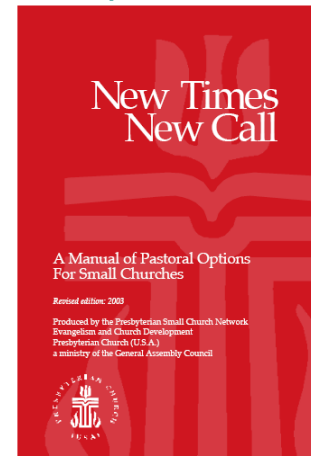
Throughout the play, the children watching will be laughing at times, wide-eyed, shocked, frowning and may plug their ears during parts.

Afterwards, ask the "congregation" of Sunday School children what they thought of the skit. Could they hear the sermon? We asked them what went wrong and they raised their hands to answer, listing off all of the naughty behaviors. Then we listed the behaviors of the "Good" family. The insights from even the 3-year-olds were amazing. They mentioned that the "Naughty" family "drove them crazy", and that they would rather sit with the "Good" family.

This 30 minutes of Decorum Training greatly improved behavior in worship, and subsequently the elderly population has viewed the younger families with much more benevolence.

If we don't teach them the correct way to behave, how will they know?

**Small Church
Ministry Sunday,
is July 10, 2005.**



Order or download free online

(http://www.pcusa.org/evangelism/churchdevelopment/scmn_resources.htm) the

New Times - New Call: A Manual of Pastoral Options for Small Churches. A resource for small church leaders and presbytery committees to use to guide a dialogue about meeting the pastoral leadership needs of small churches. Revised in 2003 by the Office of Evangelism and Church Development.

**Presbytery of Des Moines
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Copy deadlines for The Wider Circle is the last day of the month. Please submit articles in Microsoft Word or compatible format; digital images and photos are both acceptable.

CROSS Ministries Recap

CROSS Ministries is a busy place with record case numbers in June. Community social service agencies are in the same situation and by June 15 only one agency still had money.

Our annual Back-To-School Giveaway will be Aug. 18 - 19. **Kate Nelson** will coordinate the acquisition of supplies. Donations of cash or supplies are needed. Any help is greatly appreciated and if you would like to volunteer let us know.

Dave Winans is near completion with the consulting work. Both mission

and vision statements are in place and we're ready to begin director interviews. The journey has been a positive experience and those involved felt a direct sense of moving forward in a cohesive and spiritual direction for the future of this ministry. The time and dedication given by all provided ideas and information that will prove invaluable to helping form a stronger and more inclusive CROSS Ministries.

One case I saw this month is fairly typical. A young white woman, pregnant and due in 3 weeks, unable to

work because of prenatal health problems and was staying with a friend. She had nothing for the new baby. We were able to give her some baby clothes, diapers, etc. to be ready. The friend, an older black woman living on Social Security, had met her at a food pantry and took her in because she "just helps people sometimes".

Have a wonderful summer and while you are kicking back with a nice tall icy cool drink, count your blessings. You will be amazed at how many you have.

*Peace and God Bless,
Marge Lowry*

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