

# The Wider Circle



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

## OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

- Celebrate Calvin Jubilee
- Monthly Fasting Information
- Congregational Connection
- Tax Changes for Employees

## A Lenten Letter from our GA Moderator



**By General Assembly Moderator, Bruce Reyes-Chow**

**February 2009**

I was privileged last month to participate in the Congressional Black Caucus inaugural interfaith prayer service as a representative of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). And while the historic nature of the presidential inauguration was certainly important, I was most struck by the constant remembrance of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King's commitment to non-violence in response to the shackles of oppression.

As I sat there, I could not help but wonder what it is that shackles us today. Where are our acts of civil disobedience called for in the world, our communities, and the church? Yes, things have changed much since the days of the greatest tensions of the civil rights movement, but we as human beings must always be vigilant to those places

where we hold each other down, respond to evil with evil, and stay silent when we should speak.

Dr. King talked about the power of non-violence resting in the fact that it does not offer a response in-kind to those who choose violence and intimidation. A non-violent response to violence changes the terms of the relationship. It disarms – maybe not at first, but in the end, the love, power, and spirit of non-violence conquers all.

When it comes to the future of the PC(USA), I think we need to claim and live out words of non-violence. Too many times, I have seen words lofted between people with the sole purpose to cause pain, marginalize, bully, and shackle the other into some rigid characterization not of their making. We use words to hurt or conquer. We use words to flex our muscle, hold onto our power, and, too often, destroy the other.

What if we were to use words of non-violence that do not respond to evil with

evil or exacerbate conflict? What if we were to use words – *challenging, prophetic, and loving* – that are meant to change the ways in which we move through difficult times? What if we were to use words that confuse the status quo of intentional, destructive interactions and, instead, allowed ourselves to be all that God intends – a community of people working to be a model of peace and reconciliation in a world that yearns so desperately to see one?

What if?

What have we got to lose?

This will be my prayer and my commitment this Lenten season.

I hope you will join me,

To read this article online, go to Rev. Reyes-Chow's blog at:

<http://breyeschow.typepad.com/.a/6a00d83451c14469e20111684c6dcc970c-pi>

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## 60-minute Documentary Chronicles John Calvin

Witherspoon Press program includes study guide, PowerPoint supplement

by [Jerry L. Van Marter](#)

Presbyterian News Service  
LOUISVILLE — A new documentary — John Calvin: His Life and Legacy — reexamines the life and thought of the seminal Protestant Reformer as the 500th anniversary of his birth approaches in July of this year.

The documentary — subtitled in English, Korean, German, French, Dutch, and Spanish — also includes a 20-page printable study guide and a 51-page PowerPoint supplement.

For more information, publicity opportunities, or to receive a review copy, please contact Clare Lewis by e-mail [clare.lewis@pcusa.org](mailto:clare.lewis@pcusa.org) or by phone at 888-728-7228, ext. 5032.

To read the complete article, go to: [www.pcusa.org/pnews/2009/09111.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pnews/2009/09111.htm).

## Join Calvin Jubilee Celebration in Geneva

In observance of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John Calvin's birth in 2009, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) [www.warc.ch](http://www.warc.ch), would like to invite pastors and elders of large Presbyterian and Reformed congregations to a special celebration and consultation in Geneva, Switzerland, May 29 – June 3, 2009. Arrivals should be planned for May 29 and departures on June 3 or 4. The events sponsored by WARC will be in English, with no interpretation.

This event will bring together pastors, elders and other prominent leaders from Presbyterian and Reformed churches throughout the world for fellowship and reflection in the city of the Reformed movement from which

we all trace our theological roots. We expect pastors of large churches from Asia, North America, Europe, Latin America, Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean to come, with some bringing an elder or two from their churches.

Attached, you will find a letter inviting you to celebrate the Calvin Jubilee with us in Geneva, the proposed program schedule, and information about accommodations in Geneva. The registration fee is \$500.00 per person. It includes lunches on May 30, June 1 and 2, and dinner on June 2. It also includes a walking tour of Geneva and entrance to the Museum of the Reformation and the Archaeological site at the Cathedral of St. Pierre.

WARC has reserved a block of rooms at the Ibis Hotel Geneva Airport and the Ramada Hotel, also close to the Geneva airport.

WARC will make your hotel reservations based on your specifications. The cost of your hotel

accommodations will be settled directly with the hotel. Both hotels have complimentary airport shuttle service. Major credit cards are also accepted at both hotels.

If you are interested in being a participant in the WARC sponsored Calvin Jubilee Celebration events in Geneva, please contact Kathy Reeves, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Presbyterian Women's Program Associate for Mission. She will be coordinating the event and will send you a registration form. You may reach her at [Katharine.reeves@pcusa.org](mailto:Katharine.reeves@pcusa.org) or by calling her at 888-728-7228 ext. 5402 (U.S.A. and Canada), or 001-502-569-5402.

For more information about plans for the Calvin Jubilee, you can go to the web site, [www.Calvin09.org/EN/event/materialpool/international-consultation](http://www.Calvin09.org/EN/event/materialpool/international-consultation), where you will find biographical information about John Calvin and the Report of the International Consultation held in Geneva in April 2007, *What is the significance of Calvin's legacy for Christians today?* [www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/events/calvinwarc.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/events/calvinwarc.pdf)

*From President  
Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick  
and General Secretary  
Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi*

## Events Calendar

### MARCH 2009

**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 18** – Older Adult Ministry Task Force, 1 p.m., Presbytery Office

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

**March 19** – Khadamat Sudananiya, 4 p.m. at Cottage Grove Ave. Presbyterian Church, Des Moines

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

### APRIL 2009

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

**April 3-4** – *Spring Connection*, 7-3 p.m. at United Presbyterian Church in Lenox, Ia.

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

**April 7** – CCD, 2 p.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines

**April 7** – *Compañeros*, 6:30 p.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines

**April 15** – Older Adult Ministries Task Force, 1 p.m., Presbytery Office

**April 16** – Lunch & Learn Series, *Web Site Writing and Optimization*, Presbytery Office, Noon-1 p.m.

**April 23** – Coordinating Council, 4 p.m., Calvin Community, Des Moines

**April 24** – *Compañeros' Annual Fundraising Dinner*, St. Boniface, Waukee.

**April 25** – PW Spring Gathering, Cottage Grove Ave. Presbyterian Church. Synod of Lakes and Prairies' Mission Matters Co-Ordinator Marilyn Stone is keynote speaker. Come early to visit with CROSS and Sudanese ministries representatives.

### MAY 2009

**May 2** – Social Ministries Task Force, 9 a.m., Presbytery Office

**May 2** – *Joining Hands for Egypt*, 10:30 a.m., Presbytery Office

**May 5** – CCD, 2 p.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines

**May 5** – *Compañeros*, 6:30 p.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines

**May 7** – CROSS Ministries, 7 p.m., Cottage Grove Ave. Presbyterian Church

**May 7-9** – Presbyterian World Mission Advocate training to help Presbytery mission interpreters in their work

**May 19** – Presbytery Stated Meeting at Park Avenue Presbyterian Church, Des Moines, registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

**May 21** – Lunch & Learn Series, *Evaluating your Churches Communications Efforts*, Presbytery Office, Noon-1 p.m.

**May 25** – Memorial Day Holiday, Presbytery office is closed

### JUNE 2009

**June 2** – CCD, 2 p.m., Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines

**June 2** – *Compañeros*, 6:30 p.m. at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines

**June 4** – CROSS Ministries, 7 p.m., Cottage Grove Ave. Presbyterian Church

**June 6** – Social Ministries Task Force, 9 a.m., Presbytery Office

**June 11-13** – The Big Tent Conference, The Hyatt Regency in Atlanta, Georgia. Programs meeting are: CPM/COM Conference; Elders Conference; Evangelism and Church Growth Conference; New Immigrant Groups; Presbyterian Communicators' Network; PHEWA/Social Justice Biennial Conference; Presbyterian Multicultural Conference; Presbyterian Peacemaking Program; Presbyterian Youth Connection; and the Racial Ethnic Convocation, Stewardship Conference.



## National Event Set for Youth, Young Adult Ministry

*The Presbyterian Association for Collegiate and Higher Education Ministries is sponsoring what it calls the "first ever event for people seeking creative ways to be in ministry with young adults and college students."*

*The event, called Young Adult Ministry Jam Conference – or YAM Jam – is slated May 27-30 at Austin (Texas) Presbyterian Seminary. It will provide time for participants to spend time together to "cooperate, encourage and stimulate each other's ministries, a process similar to musicians' 'jam' sessions," according to promotional materials.*

*The conference is open to a limited number of participants.*

*Additional information can be*

*found at [www.pachem.org/](http://www.pachem.org/)*

*[YAMJamConference/](http://YAMJamConference/)*

*[tabid/40218/](http://tabid/40218/).*



## Sharing Resources, Changing Live

Since 1949, Presbyterians have joined with millions of other Christians through *One Great Hour of Sharing* to share God's love with people experiencing need. Our gifts support ministries of disaster response, refugee assistance and resettlement, and community development that help people find safe refuge, start new lives and work together to strengthen their families and communities.

**Where does the money go?** The Presbyterian Hunger Program receives 36% of undesignated *One Great Hour of Sharing* gifts, while Self-Development of People and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance each receive 32%.

**When is the offering received?** Most congregations receive the offering on Easter or Palm Sunday or both, while many receive it throughout Lent.

Promote the *One Great Hour of Sharing* offering in your congregation. Place an ad in your bulletin to raise awareness of the campaign.

Download at:

[www.pcusa.org/oghs/promote.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/oghs/promote.htm)

## PCUSA Update

### PRESBYTERIANS URGED TO DOUBLE GIVING TO OGHS



In just one hour, Presbyterians can help bring water to com-

munities in the Dominican Republic, rally against government corruption in Cameroon and provide support to those still struggling to rebuild on the Gulf Coast.

Through the *One Great Hour of Sharing*

([www.pcusa.org/oghs](http://www.pcusa.org/oghs)),

now in its 60<sup>th</sup> year, the PC (USA) joins with eight other Christian denominations across the country to raise money for refugee assistance, disaster relief and development aid. The offering is usually collected at worship services on Palm Sunday or Easter or throughout Lent. The complete story can be found at

[www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09131](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09131).

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON MEMBERS OF HEIDELBERG CATECHISM COMMITTEE RELEASED

LOUISVILLE — The Office of the General Assembly has released biographical information on the 15 Presbyterians appointed last week to The Special Committee on Correcting Translation Problems of the *Heidelberg Catechism*.

The special committee is mandated by *The Book of Order* after last summer's 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

(2008) proposed changes to the catechism. G-18.0200 calls for a special committee of no less than 15 individuals to be formed when a General Assembly proposes any changes to in *The Book of Confessions*, part of the PC (USA) Constitution.

The special committee, appointed by Moderator Bruce Reyes-Chow will consider the proposed changes to the catechism — which revolve around “translation problems in five responses of the Heidelberg and to add the original Scripture texts of the German *Heidelberg Catechism*” — and will consult with Newark Presbytery, which sent the overture to the Assembly calling for the proposed changes.

The special committee is scheduled to report back to the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010). Any changes to the *Heidelberg Catechism* proposed by that Assembly will then go to the 173 presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote. A two-thirds affirmative vote by two-thirds of the presbyteries is necessary for any proposed changes to take effect.

For a complete list of Bios, go online to: [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09110.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09110.htm).

### 44 PRESBYTERIANS SERVE IN THE NEW U.S. CONGRESS

LOUISVILLE — The 111<sup>th</sup> Congress of the United States includes 44 Presbyterians,

one fewer than the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, according to figures released recently by the Presbyterian Washington Office.

There has been some shifting of Presbyterian members in the new Congress seated in January 2009. There are four new Presbyterian legislators, two Senators and two House members. Some Presbyterian members of the 110th Congress did not return for the 111<sup>th</sup>. Two were defeated and three retired. The complete list of congressional Presbyterians is online at: [www.pcusa.org/washington/presbys.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/washington/presbys.htm).

### BOP HEAD REFLECTS ON ECONOMIC CRISIS

Robert W. Maggs Jr., president and chief executive of the Board of Pensions of the PC(USA), recently wrote about the financial crisis and economic stimulus. He began, “Given the political reactions to the proposed stimulus package and market uncertainty about ‘TARP II,’ the immediate future for the economy is not a rosy one. We might start to feel some benefits from the stimulus in 2010, but the root problems are both too widespread and too complex to handle in legislation that has a ‘little something for everyone.’ Admittedly, some legislation is better than none, but it is far from clear how much immediate benefit there will

(Continued on page 5)

## PCUSA Update continued from page 4

be." The remainder of Maggs' thoughts can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09108](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09108).

### NEW REPORTS, RESOURCE AVAILABLE ON PENSIONS WEB SITE

Two new reports are now available from the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and can be found at [www.pensions.org](http://www.pensions.org). The reports are:

1. *2008 Investment Review, The Board of Pensions Balanced Investment Portfolio* (<http://web.pensions.org/Publications/pensions/Home/Forms%20%26%20Publications/Booklets%20%26%20Brochures/2008%20Investment%20Review.pdf>)
2. *The 2008 Report of Management*, an assessment of the BOPs' response to the opportunities and challenges of 2008 (<http://web.pensions.org/Publications/pensions/Home/Forms%20%26%20Publications/Booklets%20%26%20Brochures/2008%20Report%20of%20Management.pdf>)

In addition to the reports, the BOPs' Tax Resource Center provides key tax tools with an emphasis on tips and advice for ministers, church treasurers and business administrators. It can be found online at [www.pensions.org/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=17678&mode=2](http://www.pensions.org/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=17678&mode=2)

### FOUNDATION GROUP ANNOUNCES VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT PROGRAM

The Presbyterian Foundation and its subsidiary, New Covenant Trust Co., have announced a voluntary early retirement incentive program in an effort to reduce payroll expenses and manage budgets during this challenging economy. To qualify to participate in the voluntary plan employees must be age 55 and older with at least three years of service. Those employees accepting the package would retire effective March 23, 2009. The early retirement incentive program is part of the foundation's ongoing review of its operations and organizational structure. The complete story can be found at [www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09109](http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09109).

### 'BIG TENT' ONLINE REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

Online registration is now open for the "Big Tent" event of the PC(USA) that will be held June 11-13 in Atlanta. "Big Tent" is 10-partner conference with shared worship and some shared meals. Some participants will spend most of their time with the track of one of the 10 conference partners, but the "Big Tent" is designed so that participants can experience aspects of several programs over three days. More information about the event and registration materials are online at: [www.pcusa.org/bigtent](http://www.pcusa.org/bigtent).

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## NetWorkers Mother's Day Project



### Support Malaria Prevention with Mother's Day Cards

The ninth annual NetWorkers Mother's Day Project is underway, offering Presbyterians an opportunity to support malaria prevention activities in Africa as we honor our mothers in a simple and meaningful way on Mother's Day. Coordinated by the International Health Ministries office and carried out in congregations by Presbyterian Women, the Mother's Day Project offers attractive Mother's Day cards in exchange for donations to the NetWorkers Malaria Prevention Program. Donations have provided thousands of mosquito nets and trained scores of African church women as volunteer malaria educators in their communities. [Order yours now \(www.pcusa.org/health/international/networkers-mothers-day09.htm\)](http://www.pcusa.org/health/international/networkers-mothers-day09.htm).

## Facility Usage Agreements—When to Use

[Guidelines](#) are now available from GuideOne's web site ([www.safechurch.com](http://www.safechurch.com)) for churches considering opening their facilities for use by outside groups.

The following are situations most likely to lead to a claim or lawsuit, given either their frequency (repeated events) or their nature (larger numbers or higher risk).

1. Major or significant events in terms of the number of participants – large concerts, musical gatherings, conferences/conventions, etc. that the church agrees to host.
2. Higher-risk activities or events, such as hosting recreational or sports activities.
3. Regular or ongoing relationships, such as renting or leasing space on an ongoing basis to a group or organization.

While it would be ideal to have facility usage agreements and additional insured protection in place every time an outside group comes in to use the church, it is especially important to practice these safeguards in the above three situations. Visit our [Facility Safety page](#) to find information about 'Facility Use by Outside Groups' under the 'Resources' category.

Similarly, churches often have outside contractors work at the church and comparable safeguards, such as a written agreement with indemnity/hold harmless language and having the church named as an additional insured on the contractor's insurance are recommended. In those situations, the question is often asked "do we

have to do this every time a plumber comes out to clear a drain?" While ideal, we recognize that doesn't happen in every instance. But it is very important that churches have these safeguards in place for:

1. For renovation, construction, or demolition projects at the church.
2. For higher-risk activities such as tree trimming, electrical work, roof repairs, or painting.
3. For regular and ongoing relationships, such as the cleaning service and/or the lawn service company.

View the [recommended guidelines](#) and a sample Service/Repair Contract in both [PDF](#) and [Word document](#) formats (from the 'Outside Contractors' section under the 'Resources' category on the 'Facility Safety' page).

## Volunteer & Employment Opportunities

### Summer Directors and Counselors, Calvin Crest, Fremont, Neb.

Calvin Crest Camp in Fremont, Neb., is gearing up for the summer and seeking people to fill paid staff positions, volunteer camp directors and counselors. Volunteer camp positions can be found at [www.calvincrest.org/Volunteer\\_Positions.php](http://www.calvincrest.org/Volunteer_Positions.php), and paid summer positions can be found at [www.calvincrest.org/Paid\\_Summer\\_Staff.php](http://www.calvincrest.org/Paid_Summer_Staff.php).

**Volunteers for Flood Recovery, CIRN, Des Moines, Ia.** The State of Iowa recently released additional funding to assist victims of the 2008 flooding with unmet needs. The Central Iowa Recovery Network (CIRN) is planning to open a 'service center' at a central location in Highland Park/Birdland Park area of Des Moines, for approximately two weeks to assist victims with determining their eligibility and completing the necessary paperwork. Volunteers are needed to staff this ser-

vice center from March 23-April 3, 2009, in 4-hour shifts, Monday through Friday and weekends. People who have done case work are encouraged to apply, however, anyone interested in helping short term will be trained. You will need a comfort level of asking clients personal questions. To volunteer, contact Jessie Alaniz at 515-471-8333 or e-mail at [alanizj@desmoines-redcross.org](mailto:alanizj@desmoines-redcross.org). For those in need of flood recovery assistance, call 211.

# Synod of Lakes and Prairies Update

## LINCOLN CHURCH SLATES ANDRUS APPEARANCE IN APRIL

The Rev. Chip Andrus, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Harrison, Ark., who has been instrumental in the emerging church movement in mainline denominations, will lead a workshop at Heritage Presbyterian Church, Lincoln, Neb., Sunday, April 19. Andrus, who worked in the Office of Theology and Worship of the PC(USA) from 2001 to 2006, will lead a workshop that will "explore ways of reclaiming" the Christian and Reformed tradition. Participants will discuss ways in which sacramental understanding provides meaning to worship, daily prayers and daily living. The workshop is supported in part by a grant from the Congregational Development Committee of Homestead Presbytery. Cost of the workshop is \$25 and includes lunch. Details are available at [www.heritagepres.org](http://www.heritagepres.org).

## SMALL CHURCH PASTORS NEED SOME R&R

The Great Plains Wee Kirk Conference is May 5-7, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The purpose of the Wee Kirk Ministry is to inspire, equip, motivate, encourage and provide rest and refreshment for pastors and elders of small Presbyterian churches. For more information or to register, go to the Presbyterians for Renewal website at [www.pfrenewal.org/ministries/wee-kirk](http://www.pfrenewal.org/ministries/wee-kirk).

## SYNOD'S SDOP COMMITTEE AWARDS \$53,000

The Committee on the Self Development of People of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies awarded \$53,000 this winter to five organizations that are combating racism and poverty. The committee assists the broader church in carrying out its global commitment to help the economically poor, oppressed and disadvantaged people who own, control and benefit directly

from projects that promote long-term change in their lives and communities. Grant funds from the synod committee were distributed in January. The grants list can be found at:

[www.pcusa.org/sdop](http://www.pcusa.org/sdop).

## SDOP IS NOW ON YOUTUBE.COM

The Presbyterian Committee on the Self Development of People of the PC(USA) now operates its own YouTube channel at:

[www.youtube.com/user/selfdevelopment](http://www.youtube.com/user/selfdevelopment).

## SCHOOL FOR PASTORS SLATED IN JULY

The 53<sup>rd</sup> annual Omaha Presbyterian School for Pastors will run July 8-15 at Hastings (Neb.) College. Sponsored by the Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation. Additional information about the School for Pastors can be found at:

[www.omaha-sem-found.org/pdf/PastorsSchool\\_Broch.pdf](http://www.omaha-sem-found.org/pdf/PastorsSchool_Broch.pdf).



## New Resources Added at Iowa Religious Media Services

**Iowa Religious Media Services** has recently added multiple resources for adults and children. Established in 1986, IRMS is a source for more than 7,900 video, audio and book titles, plus other resources, for enhancing Christian education and worship, and for assisting with the ministry and management of churches.

The resource center is supported by the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, and IRMS member churches and their members may borrow materials from its library. It is located at 3116 104<sup>th</sup> Street, Urbandale, Iowa. Additional information can be found at [www.irms.org](http://www.irms.org).

Synod School 2009



Building a Culture of Peace

## Why do they keep returning to Synod School?

- Christian fellowship
- Inspiring worship and song
- Growth in knowledge and faith
- Personal and spiritual renewal
- Fun for families and singles of all ages



July 26–31, 2009

Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, Iowa

Discover Synod School!

Go to [www.lakesandprairies.org/school.html](http://www.lakesandprairies.org/school.html) or phone 1-800-328-1880, ext. 207.

## Upcoming fast focuses on war, hunger and recovery in Sudan

Feb. 12, 2009

### Presbyterian Hunger Program encourages Presbyterians to participate in monthly 40-hour fast

by Bethany Furkin,  
Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — Most Presbyterians in the United States don't know what it means to be hungry. But for one weekend a month, they can get an idea of how more than 850 million people around the world feel every day.

Since October, the [Presbyterian Hunger Program](#) has coordinated a 40-hour fast once a month, beginning on a Friday evening and ending with Communion or a communal meal on Sunday.

Each month features a different theme and country along with corresponding study materials and suggested prayers. The themes reflect factors contributing to the global food crisis.

The next fasting period is Feb. 27-March 1 and will focus on war, hunger and recovery in Sudan. March 1 is the first Sunday of Lent.

Previous fasts have focused on food aid issues in Haiti, the impact of biofuel production on food supplies in Guatemala and the United States, the role rapid population growth makes on hunger in India and how vio-

lence affects hunger issues in Congo.

The year of monthly fasting will end in October 2009, culminating with [World Food Day](#). ([www.worldfooddayusa.org/](http://www.worldfooddayusa.org/))

"The hope is that through fasting, people are going to come up with creative ideas of what to do and they'll understand the global food crisis a little better," said Ruth Farrell, coordinator of the hunger program.

About 230 people in the United States and around the world have formally registered as participants in the fasts, but there are countless others who are fasting but haven't signed up, said Andrew Kang Bartlett, associate for National Hunger Concerns. The hunger program encourages people to fast with another person for support; groups in some congregations are even fasting as a whole.

"It makes a big difference when you know others are fasting with you," Kang Bartlett said.

Although **Nancy Lister-Settle** has been participating in the fasts since October, she has been unable to find a group to fast with. Lister-Settle, the hunger action enabler for the [Presbytery of Des Moines](#), said she hopes the upcoming fast's focus on Sudan will inspire more participants. The presbytery includes a large population of Sudanese, so the topic will hit home for many congregants.

Part of the idea behind the fasts is to allow participants a chance to step back from the overwhelming enormity of the food crisis and look at it piece by piece, Farrell said, adding that finding solutions

will take time.

The food crisis is a result of the interaction of several factors, including higher fuel costs, corruption, environmental disasters and use of agricultural land for biofuel crops.

Fasting and learning more about the food crisis through the provided mate-

rials has helped Lister-Settle with her work. Many of the congregations in the presbytery are made up of rural farmers, and she has been using her experiences to educate them about the global effects of their work.

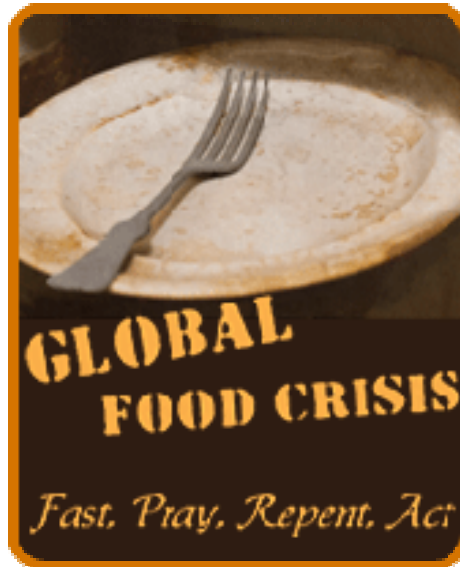
"This has given me a new way to engage people in a way that they can understand the consequences of the decisions they make," she said.

The causes of the crisis lie in problems that need to be fixed in the short term, experts say, as well as larger structural problems that will take longer to solve.

"Nobody has the answers," Farrell said. "This has been brewing for so long, it's created a real storm."

Fasting also helps increase understanding and builds appreciation and community. Fasting is a reminder of how we are all connected to God and depend on God for nourishment, Kang Bartlett said, adding that serving Communion after a fast is a powerful display of God's abundance.

The year of fasting has no predetermined outcome — coordinators have left it up to God, Farrell said. It's possible that solutions will be generated through the network of participants or will come up during the practice of fasting.



## Sudanese Ministries Update

Dear members of the Presbytery of Des Moines,

I am glad that the Presbyterian community is now making more and actually intensifying efforts to support Sudanese.

You will all recall that all Sudanese, both Presbyterians and those who came from various denominations in Sudan, fast in different ways. The most recent was the women fasting and worshipping in the house of **Ekram Komi Keila** on the southeast side of Des Moines near the airport.

The various denominations do this every three months and choose where the next fasting will take place, mainly in the Midwest. Des Moines, Omaha, Neb., Sioux Falls, S.D. and Minneapolis, Minn., are some of the cities that they fast and worship once every three months. They arrive on Friday and fast Saturday, worshipping together on Sunday and then leaving for their respective locations. This began in 1997, and was intended for peace in Sudan. In 2005, a peace treaty was signed in Kenya, east Africa. Kenya, a neighbor of Sudan in the south, devoted much time to see that peace is achieved and the Presbyterian Church pressured the former United States President George W. Bush to pressure both sides of the conflict in Sudan. That is how Sudanese came to peace – they

believe God listens to prayers.

They know this because in the first civil conflict in South Sudan lasted for 17 years, and came to an end as a result of many friends praying daily for the Christians in the South. South Sudanese then believed they were targeted because of their faith in Christianity and so the Islamic world concentrated more resources to defeat Christianity in South Sudan which they called “infidels” and bad Western influence in what they called “Arab County” forgetting that 75% are Africans in the country.

The reason why I think we should continue fasting and worshipping God to keep peace in Sudan is for two main reasons.

The South is supposed to hold a referendum in 2011 and a general election shortly before that or after that I do not recall which one comes first.

Secondly, you know that the western part of the country went to horrific war in 2003 and is continuing with what the world has now recognized as genocide by the Arabs against African ethnic groups in Darfur. This was the same issue we had in the Churches of South Sudan whom tried to inform the world community, but were ignored, which brings surprise in Christian South why they were ignored and now Darfur is recognized

as the only place where genocide is taking place.

This is very much recanted by the People of the South whether they were ignored because of their darker skin color compared to the many Darfur ethnic groups who have light skinned ethnic groups. Those are mixed with the Arabs and intermarried because of Islamic influence. The South rejected Islam and that cause them 1.5 million lives in the first war and 2.2 million in the second.

It is a delight to know that many Christians are supporting the fragile peace in the South including Nuba Mountains and Ingathena areas. Peace is still needed in the south as some high Government Officials in leadership in the south tend to disarm those ethnic communities that they perceived to be bad and allow their communities to kill innocent people without proper investigation just because they are from their own ethnic persons.

This just happened in Jonglei State where the president appointed their own ethnic group as Governor and his ethnic persons kill other ethnic persons even in the hospital in Bor town.

God bless you,

– Rev. Goanar J. Chol  
Sudanese Ministries Coordinator,  
Presbyteries of Des Moines and Missouri River Valley,  
515-276-4991,  
[pbysudanese@presbyteryofdesmoines.org](mailto:pbysudanese@presbyteryofdesmoines.org)

### Are you fasting? We want to hear your story!

Do you know if any of your congregations that have joined with Presbyterians around the country in the monthly 40-hour fasts to help discern ways to respond to the Global Food Crisis? Last summer the General Assembly invited all Presbyterians to join in the spiritual practice of fasting and include discernment and reflection, which we hope will lead to meaningful and coordinated actions to accompany those who are poor and hungry around the world.

Each month the resources that accompany the fast center around a particular country and a specific cause that has contributed to the global food crisis. The fasts typically take place on [the first weekend of every month](#), beginning on Friday evening and ending with Communion or a communal meal on Sunday. It's a powerful way to be in community and contemplate how your life and the life of your community can respond to this devastating situation.

[You can listen to an interview](#) with participant Carol Frame Matthews about the Global Food Crisis, courtesy of WFPL radio, Louisville, Ky., sign up to participate, and get fasting materials at [www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis](http://www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis).



## MUSIC AT MONTREAT

*Church choirs are invited to apply to provide music for worship services at Montreat this summer. The application and more information about the program are available [online](#).*

## MONTREAT 2009 CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

*For all pastors, educators and lay leaders, Montreat wants to serve you. They offer a variety of conferences and retreats for church professionals and lay leaders. Plan rest, renewal and continued education this summer at Montreat. [Check out the following events here.](#)*

## Congregational Connection

**WESTMINSTER FINE ARTS SERIES PRESENT NEW CHILDREN'S THEATER EVENT** "Poppy's Dancing Puppets," a newly created children's event of theater and dance, based on a story by Patricia Lee Gauch will be held at **Westminster Presbyterian Church**, 4114 Allison Ave. in Des Moines on Friday and Saturday, March 13 & 14, at 7 p.m. This event features actor **Mark Gruber**, with Hurley & Dancers and chamber music ensemble Opus 3, directed by **Julie Murphy**.

Attendees are invited to enter the doll-maker's whimsical world and see his latest crea-

tions come to life! Children are encouraged to bring their favorite doll or stuffed animal to place on stage to become a part of the play's magical story. This delightful tale is sure to please the entire family, young and old.

This event is free of charge and is funded in part by a grant from the Iowa Arts Council. Childcare will be provided, and a reception will follow each performance. For more information, contact Westminster Director of Communications **Jan Davison**, phone: 515-274-1534, e-mail: [jdavison@westpres.org](mailto:jdavison@westpres.org).

**ATTEND GRINNELL CONCERT FOR SUDANESE MISSION** The **First Presbyterian Church in Grinnell** is sponsoring a concert to benefit the **Cottage Grove Avenue Presbyterian Church in Des Moines**. Beginning at 3 p.m., Sunday, April 5 at the First Presbyterian Church, 1025 5th Ave. in Grinnell, followed by desserts sold for a donation. Groups performing are: The Four Tones, Grinnell College Christian Student Choir, Damani Phillips and the Grinnell College Jazz Musicians.

## Concerned about your Employment Status?

**MAYBE EVEN UNEMPLOYED?** Now may be the time to start planning for the future by building your job-skills. As technology and computers are prevalent in just about every occupation today, we have partnered with [New Horizons Computer Learning Centers](#) of Des Moines for computer training at a discounted rate. New Horizons' computer classes provide computer skills that can be applied immediately on the job at a fraction of the cost and time of similar programs.

New Horizons courses prepare participants for industry-recognized certifications that can be added to your resume. Training is available for Microsoft Office, web-

design and graphics, hardware, networking and programming. New Horizons has recently added an affordable *SkillBuilder Program* in the evenings and weekends to meet the needs of our members. This program will focus on [Microsoft Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint and Access as well as the Internet](#).



In addition, several sessions will focus on career planning, interviewing and creating a resumé. This program begins Monday, [March 30th through May 18th](#). Classes will be held

Monday and Tuesday evenings as well as Saturday mornings. New Horizons provides accredited training, in partnership with [Baker University](#). Therefore, classes qualify under most Tuition Assistance and Reimbursement programs offered by employers. If you are currently unemployed, New Horizons programs also qualify for WIA and TAA funds. Many displaced workers qualify on average for \$3,000 for retraining under government programs.

To register or to make additional inquiries contact Teri Vos with New Horizons at 515-226-3265 or by e-mail [TeriV@Newhorizonsdm.com](mailto:TeriV@Newhorizonsdm.com).

## Joys and Concerns

Our prayers and compassion to the family of **Hal DeGood**, a member at **Windsor Presbyterian**

**Church in Windsor Heights**, who went to be with the Lord on February 23. Hal was the former

Clerk of Session for the Windsor Church. He will be greatly missed! The funeral was Friday, Feb. 27.

## Presbytery Happenings

### A CLERK REMINDER

Clerks of Session are reminded that it is time to submit the *Biennial Nonprofit Biennial Report* to the State of Iowa. This required report is important to the status of your congregations, so do not delay. The report can be filed online (the easiest way) or on paper. It only takes 5-10 minutes to complete. All

of you should have already received this form, if not, call the office of the Secretary of State at 515-281-5204 or go online to [www.sos.state.ia.us/business/nonprofits/index.html](http://www.sos.state.ia.us/business/nonprofits/index.html). The form is due April 1. If you have questions, please call our Presbytery's Stated Clerk, Rev. Phil Barrett at 515-276-4991.

### PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

**GATHERING: MARCH 27 & 28**  
An overnight retreat for the Presbytery's Presbyterian Women's group will be held on Friday and Saturday, March 27 & 28 at Jericho Hills Camp in Lucas, Ia. The theme is "Re-NEW You" and is following Romans 12:2. Come for a time away for prayer, exercise, study and art.

## Tax Changes for Church Employees

The Internal Revenue Service on Feb. 21, 2009, released new withholding tables that will result in more take-home pay this spring for millions of American workers (including church employees). The new tables incorporate the new Marking Work Pay credit, one of the key tax

provisions included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 that became law earlier this week.

The IRS asks that employers begin using these tables in lieu of the applicable previously published tables as soon as possible, but no later than April 1, 2009.

Employees do not need to fill out a new Form W-4. These new tables have been developed to apply for all employees and to take into account all current tax provisions.

For more details, go online to: [www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=204521,00.html](http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=204521,00.html).



### Attend Peace Conference April 17-18

A Peace Conference will be held, Friday and Saturday, April 17-18, 2009, at Wesley Woods Camp & Retreat Center, 10896 Nixon St., Indianola, Iowa. Beginning Friday evening at 6 p.m. with dinner and going until Saturday after lunch.

The theme is based on the scripture: "They shall hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks." – Micah 4.

Conference Sponsors are: [Iowa Chapter - Methodist Federation for Social Action](http://www.lmcf.org) (MFSA), the Iowa Annual Conference Boards: Board of Church and Society, Board of Global Ministries, Osceola United Methodist Church and **Presbytery of Des Moines**.

Conference Coordinator is the Rev. Hugh R. Stone is pastor of the Osceola United Methodist Church. Conference fee is \$50 per person and includes lodging, Friday dinner, and Saturday breakfast and lunch. To register, call or e-mail Rev. Stone at: 641-414-4876 or [hugh8@juno.com](mailto:hugh8@juno.com).



### Order Eco-Palms for Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday is just around the corner. As you prepare to order your palms, consider ordering Eco-Palms. The Eco-Palms Project, sponsored by the PC(USA), Works jointly with Lutheran World Relief, Catholic Relief Services and our own University of Minnesota, to provide congregations with the option of purchasing palms in a sustainable fashion that also

provide the harvesters with a fair wage. All the palms come from communities in Mexico and Guatemala where workers are only paid fairly, but take part in sustainable harvesting in order to protect the local ecosystem. You can learn more about Eco-Palms or order for your congregation's use, go to: [www.pcusa.org/palms](http://www.pcusa.org/palms).

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## Grow your ministry with video

Interested in putting your sermon videos online? Interested in the other types of videos churches and church organizations are doing? You're not alone. Video is one of the fastest growing ways to communicate your message and your mission. The Presbytery of Des Moines is offering a unique opportunity for each of its member churches to grow their online ministry through video with its partnership with [ourchurchvideos.com](http://ourchurchvideos.com).

Look for more information about this new partnership and the services available in an upcoming edition of the

Presbytery's e-mail newsletter.

Don't want to wait? To learn more about the benefits of building your video ministry and the

[ourchurchvideos.com](http://ourchurchvideos.com)

program, please visit

[www.ourchurchvideos.com](http://www.ourchurchvideos.com).

You are also welcome to contact Jaime Tillman at

334-502-1132, ext. 2 or

[jaime@ourchurchvideos.com](mailto:jaime@ourchurchvideos.com).

The **LeRoy First Presbyterian Church of the United**



**Trinity Parish** is currently using this tool for their ministry with members and community. Check out their weekly sermon or other special recorded events online at: [www.ourchurchvideos.com/50123/cumc/](http://www.ourchurchvideos.com/50123/cumc/).

**WE'RE ON THE WEB!**

[www.presbyteryofdesmoines.org](http://www.presbyteryofdesmoines.org)