



## The Wider Circle E-Newsletter

### The Official 2009 Moderator's Lenten Bible Study for the PC(USA) is now 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](http://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...*

February 5, 2009

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



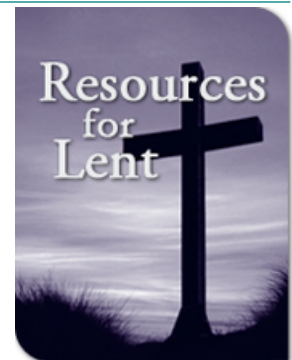
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### This Week's Highlights

Lenten Bible Study is available  
Preparing for Lent  
University of Dubuque Theological Seminary News  
SC Regional Partnership Dinner  
Planning for the Future  
El Salvador Delegation to Blog  
Louisiana Presbytery Thanks You  
Geez Magazine Sermon Contest

### 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](http://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.



### University of Dubuque Theological Seminary News

**Updates from 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 Wed. 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. click here for website registration <http://udts.dbq.edu/ExploreCall.cfm> (also see attached pdf brochure)

**Dubuque Seminary is now accepting applications for Doctor of Ministry Degree.** The 2009 emphasis will be Missional Spirituality, with 3 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, 2009. Click here <http://udts.dbq.edu/> for more.

**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.

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## The South Central Regional Partners hold 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. Please 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](mailto:revlinda@iowatelecom.net).

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## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

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## Indianola Delegation is Blogging

From Feb. 4-11, the **Trinity United Presbyterian Church** delegation are headed to El Salvador for a mission trip at the Our Sister Parish in Berlin. Three women and three men will be learning about the area's culture and history. They'll be updating their church on their sister canton and will learn about how their ministry helps those who have barely a roof over their heads. Blog: <http://presbyteryofdesmoines.blogspot.com/>.



## Thank you from Gulf Coast and the South Louisiana Presbytery

To our friends in Iowa:

January 20, 2009

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 evacuated 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](mailto:Richard@pslrecovery.org)

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## Geez magazine launches awkward 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](mailto:contest@geezmagazine.org). See [www.geezmagazine.org](http://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](mailto:aiden@geezmagazine.org).

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To remove your name from our mailing list, e-mail Kim Coulter [pbycommunication@presbyteryofdesmoines.org](mailto:pbycommunication@presbyteryofdesmoines.org).

Questions or comments? E-mail us at [officeinfo@presbyteryofdesmoines.org](mailto:officeinfo@presbyteryofdesmoines.org) or call 515-276-4991.

Learn more about the Presbytery of Des Moines at: [www.presbyteryofdesmoines.org](http://www.presbyteryofdesmoines.org).