

THE VALLEY BRIDGE



February 17, 2015

FEBRUARY 22: 1ST SUNDAY IN LENT

Genesis 9:8-17; *Psalm 25:1-10*; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

Fellowship of Prayer: First Presbyterian Church of Luverne

Teaching Elder: Rev. Jason Cunningham

Visitation Pastor: Rev. Pat Hammond

Clerk of Session: Sarah Kooiker

Administrative Assistant: Becky Sehr

Music Director: Barb Antoine

Custodian: Reneé Sawtelle

Newsletter Editor: Annalisa Cunningham

Head Usher: Pat Weerheim

Ruling Elders: Greg Antoine, Shirley Christianson, Kim Schoneman, Bill Stegemann, Erik Wohnoutka (youth elder), Gloria Rust, Craig Stegenga, Signe Underwood, Phil Voigt, Becky Eeten, Brian Schoneman, Janet Sudenga, Karen Wohnoutka.

Deacons: Linda Gulden, Mike Olson, Missy Verbrugge, Jacob Jarchow (youth deacon), Scott Boelman, Kevin Kraetsch, Sandy Smith, Carol Boelman, Deb Iveland, Buck Underwood.

Prayer Requests: For all churches in the Presbytery as the season of Lent begins that they may have a spiritually nourishing time of reflection and a bold proclamation of Christ's resurrection; For people who have lost friends or family members; For those addressing health challenges; For churches and pastors beginning new relationships together; For missionaries around the world sharing God's Word.



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THE WORD FROM RICK: “UNFINISHED BUSINESS”



Where does the time go? Wasn't it only yesterday that we were singing Christmas carols and celebrating the birth of Lord, Jesus Christ? The atmosphere was filled with the sights, sounds, and smells of such a joyous, festive season ... and the weather felt much warmer!

Now, in the course of about eight weeks, the baby whose birth we celebrated has grown up. We have travelled with the Magi to worship and adore him. We have witnessed his baptism in the Jordan and his temptations in the wilderness. We have stood in the crowd and watched as his ministry unfolded across ancient Judea. This past Sunday, we went with him, Peter, James, and John, to the top of a mountain where a truly transformational moment – in his life and ours – took place; and now he calls us to continue to follow him on an incredible, albeit difficult, journey which will lead us to Jerusalem – where his earthly ministry will come to its end, and his eternal glory will be revealed in the event we know as the resurrection.

Yes, Lent is upon us. With the celebration of Ash Wednesday this week, Jesus – and all those who claim him as Lord and Savior – will, with great resolve, declare their intention to once more follow him to Jerusalem to share in the events that will lead us to Easter. Even though we know how the story comes out, this is a journey that we are committed to take, for it prepares us to face both the Cross and the Empty Tomb.

Over the years, we have come to call this journey Lent. It is a time for those of us in the Christian community to slow down, reflect, and remember the significance of Jesus' life and ministry among us as the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world. Individuals each approach Lent in their own unique way, often times choosing a particular spiritual discipline that helps them to focus on the meaning of the season, and who Jesus Christ is for them. For many, the tradition has been to “give up” something for Lent, with the point being that this personal sacrifice will remind the individual of the significance of what the Son of God gave up to become a human being and then to give himself up in sacrifice for his friends. It is a powerful practice with ancient roots . . . one that will be embraced once more this week as the ashes are placed on the forehead of countless Christians around the world.

THE WORD FROM RICK, CONTINUED

I am not writing this as a reminder to all the saints in Minnesota Valleys that it is time to “give up” something for Lent, but rather as an encouragement for each of us, in our way and in a way that is significant to us, to observe a blessed and holy Lent. May we take these next 40 days to journey with Jesus as he makes his way to Jerusalem. May we ponder deeply this most significant chapter in God’s Salvation History, and may our hearts and minds – our very lives – be transformed by doing so. May you have a blessed and holy Lent!

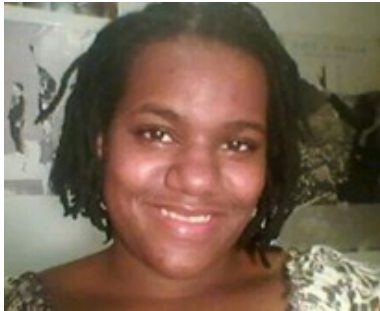
Grace and Peace,

Rick

P.S. In my wanderings across the web, I encountered an interesting Lenten Introduction post from St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, Port Royal, Virginia. I share it with you all. In fact, check out some of the links in the side bar – there are a number of interesting items that might be useful in your journey!

“When We Are Real: A Daily Thought for Lenten Reflection”

<http://www.churchsp.org/lentintro2015>



KENYA’S CORNER

Remember to include our adopted Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Young Adult Volunteer, Kenya Phillips, in your personal and congregational prayers, and remember to check out her blog at <http://kenyatheyav.tumblr.com/>. On the blog site, there are ways for you to learn more about her and the ministry of which she is a part.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

The following Minnesota Valleys congregations are currently seeking pastoral leadership:

Pastor: Part-Time – First Presbyterian Church, Russell (Grace First Parish) – **ID Number** – 03801.AB0. PNC Chairperson: Pamela Bush – pambush@woodstocktel.net

Pastor: Part-Time – Maine Presbyterian Church, Underwood – **ID Number** – 03870.AA0. PNC Chairperson: Jerry Hangartner – jerbus@arvig.net

Pastor: Part-Time – First Presbyterian Church, Kasota – **ID Number** – 03787.AA0. PNC Chairperson: Dan Honetschlager – dh5449@mnsu.edu

NEW PRESBYTERIAN CURRICULUM

Congregations are being invited to sample the new PC(U.S.A.) denominational children's curriculum, *Growing in Grace & Gratitude*, set to launch this fall.

Free samplers—complete with accompanying color resources, a story, and a page for children to use

at home with their families—are [available to order](#). Each sampler includes one session for each age group: Multiage (Ages 5–10), Ages 3–5, Ages 5–7, and Ages 8–10. Sample sessions may also be downloaded at: <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/growinggracegratitude>



Growing in Grace & Gratitude is rooted in the foundation of Presbyterian identity where God's grace and our gratitude are the heartbeat of our faith, life, and worship; extends an invitation to discipleship that inspires children to learn and practice hospitality, generosity, and love; and reaches beyond Sunday morning, encouraging children to live their lives as an expression of God's grace.

Sessions of *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* are grounded in Bible stories that reveal God's grace. Through fun activities, prayer, and singing, children and their leaders will celebrate the meaning of this grace in their lives as they encounter a living God.

You can learn more about *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* by participating in one of the twenty regional workshops scheduled for the coming months. Come experience a curriculum that helps transform the lives of children and those who love them, shaped by grace and gratitude. For more information, contact curriculum@pcusa.org.

FREE LENTEN DEVOTIONAL ONLINE

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary will observe Lent with an online devotional. We invite you to read and listen to daily messages written by members of the Seminary community. We hope you'll follow along daily, be deepened in your faith through the words of your brothers and sisters in Christ, and prepare your heart to celebrate at Easter the new life he made possible for all.

Visit www.pts.edu/devotional. There you may also choose to receive daily emails, follow on Facebook and Twitter, download a free Android or Apple app or request a printed copy.

BOARD OF PENSION MEDICAL DUES ASSISTANCE FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE

At their October meeting, Presbytery approved offering grants to churches with financial difficulty paying the 1.5% medical dues increase from Board of Pension for their teaching elder with dependents in 2015. Synod of Lakes & Prairies has provided the Presbytery with \$6666 for this program and Committee on Ministry could provide additional dollars.

A two-page grant application is available on the Presbytery website under Committee on Ministry forms. Approval from Session is required. While there is no deadline on submitting applications, the first round of applications will be reviewed by the Policy Subcommittee on February 23rd.

For more information, please contact Gloria Vande Brake at 218-820-4197 or gloriavande@hotmail.com.

EVENTS ON THE HORIZON

Here is a calendar of significant leadership development conferences and events for your calendar! Keep your calendars up to date, so that you don't miss out!

March 9-11 [Stewardship Kaleidoscope](#), Kansas City

March 16-18 “[Next Church](#)” Annual Gathering, Chicago

June 18-21 [Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women](#), Minneapolis

July 26-31..... [Synod School](#) at Buena Vista University, Storm Lake (brochure and registration information coming this month!)

REMINDER FROM THE NEXT PRES TEAM

The Next Pres Team reminds all committee and task force church persons that their group's responses to the NPT need to be submitted to Stan Menning - smenning0@gmail.com - no later than February 25.

RULING ELDER TRAINING

Submitted by Stan Menning

The PCUSA makes available a resource for training Ruling Elders to all of our churches. Ruling Elder Ministries is a new focus of the Office of General Assembly with the vision of providing support and training to the office of Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). I have provided a clip from the e-mail reminder I receive monthly, along with a couple of clips from the website. There is a link on the website for joining the network and receiving monthly reminders that the new training has been posted. In addition to the current article, articles from previous months are archived. If there are churches that do not have e-mail, I am sure arrangements can be made to have this mailed to you from the presbytery office.

The February issue of Regarding Ruling Elders (re:RE) has been posted online. This month's focus is on ministry without installed pastoral leadership. As always, links to the current and past issues of re:RE are available on the ruling elder website at www.pcusa.org/rulingelders in addition to a resource that includes ways to use these articles in a variety of settings.

Regarding Ruling Elders: A Monthly Series for Serving Faithfully

Ruling elders are called to ministry in partnership with teaching elders. Within this calling, ruling elders have responsibilities in several areas of the life of the church including exercise in leadership, governance, spiritual discernment, and discipline. This series seeks to lift up the specific responsibilities while also providing an opportunity to reflect upon how they are lived out.

WAYS TO USE REGARDING RULING ELDERS

Articles published as a part of the Regarding Ruling Elders series are meant to benefit ruling elders and other leaders in the church as they serve in ministry throughout the PC (USA). There are many ways these articles might be used:

- Designate one ruling elder or staff person to forward the web link to all ruling elders when new articles are released on the 15th of each month
- Encourage ruling elders to add their contact information to the [Ruling Elder Network](#) to receive a notice when articles are released
- Cut and paste the article in your church or mid council newsletter
- Use the current month's article for discussion at the monthly session meeting
- Compile the articles for use at ruling elder training
- Post the articles and/or a link to the ruling elder website on the church website
- Use the articles in a group of teaching elders to spark discussion about ways of assisting ruling elders in that particular part of their ministry role

When republishing the Regarding Ruling Elders articles, the appropriate attribution of source must be used.

MARCH 1: 2ND SUNDAY IN LENT

Genesis 17:1-17, 15-16; *Psalm* 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38

Fellowship of Prayer: First Presbyterian Church of Madelia

Clerk of Session: Doug Teigum

Treasurer: Jan Ulmen

Custodian: Jessica Holm

Organist: Mona Evers

Pastor: Penny Johnson

Please pray for members who are recovering from surgery and hospitalizations.



MARK 8:31-38

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.’

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.’



CHURCH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Submitted by Stan Menning

Recently I attended a workshop on Evangelism at Lakeshore Center at Okoboji. It was led by Rev. Robert Houser. Bob is a retired pastor and Presbytery Executive, most recently the EP at Central Nebraska Presbytery. Our conversation for the day included the different phases of evangelism, activating and assimilating new members, hospitality and inactive members. I will be writing a series of articles about each of those topics. I will not be providing a lot of commentary on these issues, but rather sharing materials that Bob provided us with that serve as thought provokers and conversation starters.

We started our discussion by talking about the Great Commission. The great commission is the title we give to the last words Jesus shared with his disciples. While the most often quoted version is found in Matthew, the Great Commission is actually found in some form in all four Gospels and in the book of Acts.

Matthew 28:18-20

Mark 16:15-18

Luke 24:49

John 20:21

Acts 1:7-8

GREAT COMMISSION CONSCIENCE QUIZ

1. I see the primary purpose of our church as responding to the Great Commission.
2. I have participated in an outreach training event in the last year.
3. I have invited an unchurched friend or relative to a church event in the past 6 months.
4. I would support a motion to designate at least 10% of our church budget to outreach events and training activities.
5. I would prefer that the pastor call on nonmembers more often than members.
6. I would be willing to take a new member or visitor home for dinner once every 6 months.
7. I have intentionally introduced myself to a new member or visitor in the past three months.
8. I have talked with an unchurched person about my faith in the past 6 months.
9. I have prayed for a specific unchurched person in the past month.
10. I would be willing to be a pioneer in a new group or new church fellowship to help reach new people.

If you agree with 7 or more of these you have a Great Commission Conscience. I would suggest that each session take the time to look at the Great Commission as it is recorded in each of the passages and then take the quiz and talk about it.

ARE YOU TRAVELING TO THE HOLY LAND IN 2015?

Did you know there are Presbyterian mission staff on the ground there? Let them know you are coming, and they would love to meet you! They can even introduce you to local Israeli and Palestinian mission partners of the PC(USA)!

Make your pilgrimage one in which you actually follow in the footsteps of Jesus by walking not only where he did, but as he did—noticing people, hearing their stories, and caring about them. Contact mission coworker Kate Taber at kate.taber@pcusa.org.



Presbyterians Today

Presbyterians Today: Our most popular Presbyterian resources

Guide to Young Adult Ministry: This special issue is a must-read for everyone who wants to better understand young adults and engage them in worship, education, and service.

[Read more](#)

Welcome to the Presbyterian Church! Third edition. This much-acclaimed guidebook is a wonderful introduction to all things Presbyterian.

[Read more](#)

What Presbyterians Believe, vols. 1 and 2: A great collection of *Presbyterians Today*'s most popular articles all about Presbyterian beliefs, worship, and practice.

[Read more, volume 1](#) [Read more, volume 2](#)


CALENDAR

Tuesday, February 17–Wednesday, February 25: Karen on vacation

Thursday, February 19: 9:00 Budget & Finance conference call; 10:00–2:00 Personnel Committee meets at the presbytery office

Monday, February 23–Thursday, February 26: New Beginnings Assessment week

Friday, February 27: Presbytery Book Club discusses Pastrix by Nadia Bolts Weber



MARK 1:9-15



The Baptism of Jesus

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’



The Temptation of Jesus

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.



The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’