

# THE VALLEY BRIDGE



March 3, 2015

## MARCH 8: 3RD SUNDAY IN LENT

Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

*International Women's Day; Celebrate the Gifts of Women*  
Daylight savings time begins

### **Fellowship of Prayer: First Presbyterian Church of Mankato**

Teaching Elder - Chris Conlin; Clerk of Session - Doug Otopalik; Deacon's Moderator - April Austin; Christian Education and Youth - Hugh Henry; Administrative Secretary - Kimberly Moore; Treasurer - Jamie Goulson; Music Director and Organist - Christine Phelps; Sanctuary Choir - Grace Stromer; Children's Choirs - Jodie Eggert; Bell Choirs - Cheryl Holicky; Custodian - George Johnson; Nile Christian Hope - Chuol Yat

### Prayer Requests

Those who are dealing with cancer and other illnesses

Those who are facing transitions in their lives: moving, loss of jobs, retiring, memory loss, physical challenges, graduating, learning to live without a loved one

Our congregation as we engage the New Beginnings process and seek guidance and courage

Our brothers and sisters in South Sudan as they struggle for peace



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Presbytery of MN Valleys  
4055 Abbott Drive  
Willmar MN 56201  
320-235-7910  
[minnesotavalleys.org](http://minnesotavalleys.org)

Monday-Friday: 8:00-4:30

We're on Facebook, too!

## THE WORD FROM RICK: “WHAT’S NEW?”



Last week was a busy, energizing week for me as I was privileged to spend four evenings out on the road, working with the members of four of our presbytery’s congregations. My week’s travels took me to Browns Valley on Monday, Osakis on Tuesday, Windom on Wednesday, and finally, Brainerd on Thursday. Each night was a new adventure as I worked side by side with the Assessors who had been assigned by the “New Beginnings” initiative to work with these participating congregations.

During the day, the Assessors spent time gathering information and insights about the congregations to whom they were assigned. Already in possession of a significant packet of information about the church, the Assessors took a good hard look at the church facility, as well as the surrounding community. They spent time talking with the pastor, clerk of session, and other key leaders, and reviewed the churches’ activities and financial documents. By the time the evening came, they had more data to analyze for their reports, and there was more to come.

Each evening, the “New Beginnings” members of the congregations gathered for an “Appreciative Inquiry” session that was led by someone other than the Assessor or the pastor of that congregation. Each night, while I was out on the road, other Minnesota Valleys pastors were doing the same thing that I was doing. Andy Davis travelled to Amboy and Mankato; Erin Kobs visited Redwood Falls; Chris Conlin led at Saint Peter; and Bob Bartlett presided at Worthington. I greatly appreciate these colleagues as they gave their time and energy to lead gatherings, and I thank them for their work as part of this initiative.

During the congregational gatherings, those of us who served as facilitators invited the participants to respond to a series of 12 questions. The Assessor recorded the answers, while the pastors quietly observed. I found the experience to be interesting. They were lively – there was considerable give and take, and a lot of laughter. I felt that I got to know my four congregations just a little bit better and understand the challenges and the hopes that they have for their church. I saw a blend of optimism and fear, which is understandable in this particular times. The one common piece was that everyone that I met was passionate about their church and are willing to do whatever it takes to help their church move forward.

### THE WORD FROM RICK, CONTINUED

Someone asked me why I was doing so many of these visits. My response is three-fold: first, I believe that “New Beginnings” will give these nine congregations a chance to see who they are and what they can become, as well as tools for their discernment; and I want them to know, through my participation, that Minnesota Valleys Presbytery is there with them as they work to discern God’s future for them. Second, I was one of the prime advocates for this initiative and felt it crucial to back my words with my presence. Finally, I wanted these congregations to see me in a setting other than Sunday morning and get to know me.

It was a great week, and I believe the best is yet to come. In April, representatives of the nine congregations will gather in order to be trained for the next phase of the initiative. I look forward to sharing in this event, and can’t wait to see what emerges from the work that will follow. Please continue to pray for the nine “New Beginnings” congregations as they take the next steps into the future God has for them!


Grace and Peace,

Rick

### 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



**Synod School 2015**

**A Future with Hope**

**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

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**July 26–31, 2015**

**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.

## 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](mailto: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](http://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.

## 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 sharing 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 check points and conversation starters.

The 202<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly defined evangelism as: joyfully sharing the good news of the sovereign love of God and calling people to repentance, to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, to active membership in the church and to obedient service in the world.

Today, I want to share with you the three stages of evangelism as Bob presented them.

### Invitation

- It's not about me.
- It's not about the church.
- It's all about Jesus.

### Hospitality

- How does a visitor see us?
- Understand the visitor mindset.
- Communicate genuine welcome.

### Assimilation and Integration

- Clear member expectations
- Small group involvement
- Nurture in their spiritual life

I will be providing more information about each of these in the coming weeks. I would encourage sessions and congregations to talk about any thoughts that this list might generate.



## **PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

**OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE**

### PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE RESPONDS TO RECORD-SETTING STORMS IN THE NORTHEAST

New Englanders are still digging out from a series of powerful winter storms that have dumped more than 100 inches of snow within a 30-day period. Coupled with frigid temperatures, the weather has created significant challenges for Presbyterian congregations in Boston and northern New England.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) is responding to the Synod of the Northeast's request for \$300,000 and disaster support services to provide emergency relief and long-term recovery in the affected presbyteries. The support will help congregations remove snow from strained roofs and parking lots, seek alternative worship locations during the weather crisis, and support pastors and congregations to pay heating and utility bills.

Members of the PDA National Response Team will be sent to assess the damage to buildings, assist congregations with insurance questions, and determine how volunteers can contribute to long-term recovery.

In this season of Lent, when congregations throughout the denomination receive the One Great Hour of Sharing offering, it is an extraordinary blessing to leverage the collective power of our church's generosity to respond to the urgent needs of affected congregations and the communities they serve.

**Give:** Your faithful and generous support of [OGHS](#) makes an immediate response possible. Supporting the 2015 offering is crucial. Additional gifts to [DR000015](#) (Disaster Relief - USA Disasters & Emergencies) will help with the long-term recovery and rebuilding efforts.

**Act:** Learn about congregational care of vulnerable people in cold weather. Prepare now to assemble Gift of the Heart Cleanup Buckets that are often needed following flooding conditions. [Like us](#) on Facebook to stay informed and receive updates to share with your congregation. Click [here](#) for a bulletin insert (PDF).

**Pray:** Pray for the congregations, pastors, and families impacted by the storms and cold temperatures. Pray for strength for those offering assistance and those who will participate in the recovery efforts in days and months to come.





ALBAN  
AT DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL

## ONLINE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FROM THE CHURCH NETWORK IN ASSOCIATION WITH ALBAN

We have heard from many congregational leaders that reductions in continuing education funding and the rising costs of travel make it difficult for them to participate in the sorts of face-to-face learning experiences that they want and need.

In response, the Church Network, in association with Alban, is bringing the classroom to you ~ making access to quality courses as easy as logging on to your computer.

Our monthly webinars are designed to meet the learning needs of today's congregational leader...

- How do you set strategy and ministry priorities?
- How do you adapt to a changing culture?
- How does a congregation form faithful people today?
- How do you keep your soul alive amidst the pressures of congregational life?

Each month, you can learn practical skills from a recognized expert ~ be it a seminary faculty member, a former Alban consultant, an Alban author or an experienced congregational leader.

If your schedule precludes your participation at the time of the webinar, don't worry! The Church Network maintains a complete catalog of past webinars that are available on-demand.

We look forward to seeing you online and learning with you!

### **Upcoming Webinars**

March 3 - The Adaptive Leader with Susan Beaumont

April 7 - Using Teams to Mobilize Ministry with John Wimberly

May 5 - Governance and Ministry with Dan Hotchkiss



## HIGHMARK MEMBER RECORDS POTENTIALLY COMPROMISED BY DATA BREACH AT ANTHEM

As you may have heard from recent news reports, a late-January cyberattack on Anthem Inc. compromised the data of as many as 80 million Anthem plan members. The Board of Pensions has learned that some **Highmark member data on Anthem's systems** may also be at risk.

Highmark Blue Cross (the Board of Pensions' service provider for the Medical Plan) participates in the national Blue Cross BlueCard network, sharing certain member information with local Blue Cross plans, including Anthem Blue Cross, to pay providers and process claims locally. The information compromised during the attack on Anthem's systems includes names, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers of Medical Plan members who have, or may have had, claims for services with providers participating in Anthem Blue Cross.

Within the next few weeks, as Anthem and the FBI continue their investigations, **Anthem will send a letter by U.S. mail** to current and former Highmark and Anthem plan members whose data may have been compromised. The letter will offer free credit monitoring and identity protection services. The Board of Pensions encourages you to accept these services if you receive a letter.

**Important Note:** Anthem will *not* contact members by phone or email and will *not* request credit card or Social Security numbers. They will contact members by mail only.

The letter from Anthem will provide further details, including additional contact information. Benefits Plan members with questions may call Anthem toll-free at [877-263-7995](tel:877-263-7995), visit the website [anthemfacts.com](http://anthemfacts.com), or read their [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

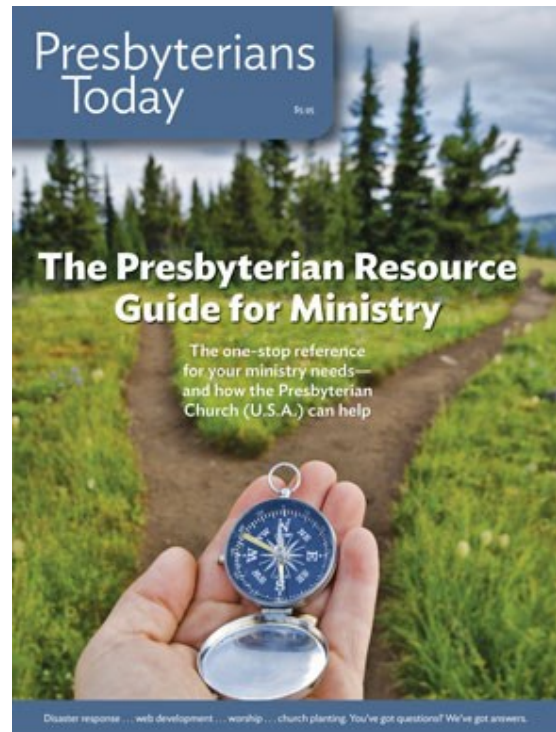
In addition, Highmark is keeping the Board informed of developments; as additional information becomes available, the Board will share it with you. Remember, you may also call the Board at [800-773-7752](tel:800-773-7752) (800-PRESPLAN) to speak with a member service representative.



## PRESBYTERIAN RESOURCE GUIDE FOR MINISTRY

*A comprehensive reference handbook for congregations*

At last, here's an easy-to-read, in-depth guidebook that puts loads of vital ministry information at your fingertips. The Resource Guide covers dozens of subjects, including disaster response, fundraising and stewardship, the ins and outs of building a website and using social media, children's/youth/collegiate/young adult ministry, church planting, grant and scholarship sources, evangelism, worship... and much more. Packed with practical and useful tips, stories, articles, and contacts, this comprehensive, one-stop reference is an essential asset for congregations, presbyteries, and individual Presbyterians looking for creative ways to improve their ministry.



Top 14 ways the Presbyterian Mission Agency can help: Being part of a connected church with international resources and relationships means you never have to be alone as you strive to grow spiritually, put your faith into action, and witness to the gospel. [Read more](#)

'The perpetual rule of love': Pursuing justice for our communities and creating effective, lasting social change are difficult. Here's how you can get started. [Read more](#)

Children's sixth sense: New approaches promise to deepen children's faith and broaden congregational mission. [Read more](#)

Coming together: To fulfill the command to love our neighbors, we don't need to be experts in every religious tradition and history. All we need is curiosity, a love of people, a willingness to listen, and a commitment to Christian witness. Here are some fresh approaches to interfaith ministry. [Read more](#)

'Lifestyles of generosity': In thousands of congregations, fall is the only time of year that financial stewardship gets high visibility with budget meetings, stewardship sermons, and pledge cards. Imagine instead making stewardship a year-round discipline. Here's how. [Read more](#)

'I will tell you a story': From pitching a story to posting on Facebook to designing a church website, we share our faith by sharing our news. [Read more](#)

## CALENDAR

Tuesday, March 3: 8:30 a.m. Next Pres Team conference call

Tuesday, March 3–Friday, March 6: Virginia on vacation

Sunday, March 8: Rick preaches at First Presbyterian Church of Blue Earth; John McKay at Union Presbyterian Church of St. Peter

Monday, March 9–Wednesday, March 11: Rick at Stewardship Kaleidoscope in Kansas City

Tuesday, March 10: Council meets from 10:00–2:30 at the presbytery office



## JOHN 2:13-22

## Jesus Cleanses the Temple

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

