

THE VALLEY BRIDGE



March 10, 2015

MARCH 15: 4TH SUNDAY IN LENT

Self-Development of People

Numbers 21:4-9; *Psalm* 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

Fellowship of Prayer:

Christ United Presbyterian Church of Marshall

Pastor - Anne Veldhuisen

Pianist - Margaret Greig

Office Administrator - Pam Moat

Janitorial Staff - Kristin Malin

Treasurer - Jennifer Williams

Children Education - Ella Moat, Eileen Shrunk, Mary Swanson

Prayer Concerns:

- Pray for our congregation as we begin walking together with our new pastor.
- Pray for Esther's Kitchen by Loaves and Fishes as they feed the community.



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Presbytery of
Minnesota Valleys
4055 Abbott Drive
Willmar MN 56201

320-235-7910

minnesotavalleys.org

Monday-Friday:
8:00-4:30

We're on Facebook,
too!

AROUND THE PRESBYTERY

On Thursday, April 30, nationally known Christian recording artist Jason Gray will perform at **First Presbyterian Church of Mankato** at 7:30 p.m. Jason started performing in small venues in Mankato and eventually became a full-time artist in 1999. He released four independent records before signing with Centricity Music in 2006.



James and Kristin Fraser from the **First Presbyterian Church of Edgerton** will be participating in a mission trip this fall. Leaving in September, this trip will take them to 11 countries in 11 months.

In his *Why Does Lent Matter* article in the **First Presbyterian Church of Redwood Falls** March newsletter, Pastor Scott Prouty encourages making changes during Lent. Here are a few of the suggestions: Spend more time in prayer—pray throughout the day. Find and use a daily devotional book. Get involved with a mission project. Be a positive encouraging force in your family, neighborhood, school, workplace and church; show God's love to the world. Pick out five people in your church family that are not relatives and send them an Easter card; tell them why they are important to you.

The folks at **Crosslake Presbyterian Church** are analyzing their photovoltaic system in 2015; there is a chart in their newsletter showing 318 kWh produced in January. The church used 22 kWh and sold 296 kWh to the power company, figuring the carbon offset to be six trees and saving \$27.50.

The **First Presbyterian Church of Blue Earth** held a committee workshop in February at which each committee was asked to create a list of their responsibilities. Also, each committee was asked to come up with a scripture verse that represented the purpose of the committee. The whole group reviewed the responsibility lists and had a chance to make suggestions for additions or deletions from those lists. The booklets compiled from this workshop will be available for any committee member or anyone considering joining the committee.

The **First Presbyterian Church of Litchfield** has announced its new website, www.firstpreslitch.org. Some items of interest include links to sermons, newsletters, devotionals, “recommendations from the congregation,” and member resources.

Maine Presbyterian Church of Underwood held its first 2015 “Soup, Bread & Bars” Lenten supper last Wednesday. We had wonderful eats and treats along with the Lenten Bible Lesson from the *Presbyterians Today* magazine and fun “Old Geezer” tests, games, and dialog times. Attendance was excellent and all had a worshipful and fun time!

THE WORD FROM RICK: “LIFE IN OUR VALLEY”



Last week, I had the opportunity to share in two special gatherings in our presbytery.

On Monday, I was with our “Cluster 1” Committee on Ministry liaisons Sherry Borgheiinck (Browns Valley) and Ross Stone (Fergus Falls, Federated) as we met in Ashby with representatives of our congregations in the far-flung northwest region of Minnesota Valleys. Pastors, Clerks of Session, and others, representing seven of the cluster’s eight churches gathered for conversations about life in the area, and what the future might hold for those congregations. The conversation was lively, and

while there were concerns expressed about the future, there was an overriding sense of hope among those gathered.

On Wednesday, I was with two other COM liaisons, Erin Kobs (St James) and Jan Prehn (St Peter), as they hosted a gathering of pastors for lunch in Mankato. Again, the conversation was lively as those gathered shared stories that have grown out of many years of pastoral experiences. The stories shared allowed us to see inside of one another’s experiences, and helped us gain some appreciation for our colleagues in ministry. We also “talked shop,” and again, like the group in Ashby, there were concerns shared, as well as a sense of excitement and hope.

In each of the two gatherings, there was one common thread that emerged, and that was the importance of our connections, and the relationships that we have across this presbytery – not just pastor to pastor, but congregation to congregation. In both settings, I heard stories of support and encouragement that has been shared over the years, and how it helped an individual or a congregation to make it through a particularly trying time. In the midst of the challenges that are being faced by our congregations and their communities, the reason that people are able to have excitement and hope emerges from the support that has come from brothers and sisters in the presbytery. For the folks in Cluster 1, particularly, there was and is a great sense of “we need each other” and the commitment to be there for one another, working together.

Life in our “Valley” at this time in history is interesting and challenging for each one of our congregations. I think that we can be better together, and that is why we need each other as we face the future. In its early work, the Next Pres Team talked about what kind of presbytery we needed to be, and asked folks at the August presbytery meeting to give some input in that direction. The word that the team received was that we needed a relational presbytery, one that was connected, supportive, and encouraging – one that had the potential to be better together because of our commitment to Christ and one another.

THE WORD FROM RICK, CONTINUED

This year, the COM is committing itself to strengthen connections and build relationships with our congregations, their pastors, and sessions. Last week, four COM liaisons, by gathering people together, took a step to help us do more of what we need to be doing, through COM, the presbytery, and as individuals.

I know that there will be more conversations in Cluster 1, and elsewhere. I also know that there will be more opportunities for conversation and fellowship among pastors, elders, and others. Moving forward into whatever God's future will be, our ability to share our lives, our ministries, our challenges, and our visions will need to be an important part of that. Last week was interesting and exciting. I look for more of that.

Grace and Peace,

Rick

VIDEO OF THE WEEK

The Presbyterian Church (USA) Special Offering during the Lenten season is the One Great Hour of Sharing, and one of the ministries that benefits from that offering is Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. As you look for ways to inform your people about how this offering is used in our denomination, please consider using the brief YouTube video that provides an overview of how this ministry brings hope to those impacted by natural or human-caused disasters.

Get this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8CjfRcM_0I

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 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

SCENES FROM THE ROAD



New Beginnings Conversation at First Presbyterian Church of Brainerd with the Assessor Cheryl Ann Elfond from New York.



Pastors Lunch at Mankato – Jan Prehn, Bob Maharry, Andy Davis, Elaine Boyd



Pastors Lunch at Mankato – Dawn Carder, Frank Brown, Randy Lubbers



The man with the biggest feet in our Presbytery – size 78!

CHURCH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT III

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 am 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. I will start with Evangelism. The 202nd 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. That might sound intimidating to most Presbyterians today. Bob provided us with a list of ways people are introduced to the church. It was quite enlightening.

Crusades	0.0001%
Pastor	6-8%
Program	2-3%
Special Needs	3-4%
Sunday School	3-4%
Visitation	1-2%
Walk-in	4-6%
Friends/Relatives	70-80%

Most of these need no explanation. Program is choir or some sort of small group that people became aware of and joined a church. Special need is where individuals have a special need in their life and they find a church that meets that need. Visitation is when a church conducts a door to door campaign. Walk-in is when someone develops an interest in spirituality and seeks out a church to help them explore that interest.



CHURCH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT III, CONTINUED

The statistic that caught my attention was the last one. Seventy to eighty percent of the people in churches are there because a friend or relative brought them or invited them. When we began our discussion we looked at John 1: 35-42. It's the story of Andrew bringing his brother Peter to see Jesus. In verse 41 we hear Andrew say to Peter "we have found the Messiah." And the next verse says He brought him to Jesus.

I was reminded of a story I read in a *Presbyterians Today* magazine. This is a story that happened in 2009 in Chicago. A young lady who had grown up Lutheran was attending college there; and since she didn't have a car, she began attending a Presbyterian Church right across the street from school. Later that year she invited a friend who described herself as a "none." Her dad was atheist and her mom believed in love. **She came to church because her friend invited her.** They joined the choir and became active in the ministry of the church. Because of their presence, the church had a renewed desire to reengage in collegiate ministries.

For a similar story, Pastor Anne Veldhuisen, the new pastor at Christ United Presbyterian Church in Marshall, has given me permission to invite you to ask her how she became a Presbyterian.

While some might find it hard to do evangelism in the way the 202nd General Assembly defined it, how difficult can it be to invite a friend to church?

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

The following Minnesota Valleys congregations continue to be engaged in a search for pastoral leadership. We continue to encourage the saints of our congregations to keep these congregations and their PNCs in their prayers. In addition, if you know of individuals who would be good prospects for these positions, please invite them to check out the Ministry Information Forms on line at the PCUSA's Church Leadership Connections (CLC) - at: <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clc/>

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

CALENDAR

Monday, March 9—Thursday morning, March 12: Rick at Stewardship Kaleidoscope
 Tuesday, March 10: Council meets from 10:00—2:30 at the presbytery office
 Sunday, March 15: Rick visits First Presbyterian Church of Saint Cloud; John McKay visits First Presbyterian Church of Madelia
 Monday, March 16: Pam Prouty in the presbytery office
 Wednesday, March 18: Virginia vacation day



JOHN 3:14-21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

‘Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.’

