

*... All That We Come From*

*... All That We Live For*

# *Heirloom*

*... All That We're Going To Be*



Heirloom  
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Average Attendance

January: 110

February: 133

**Happy Anniversary !!**

**March**

3 Peter and Kelly Oppelt  
8 Russ and Donna Hampton-Maki  
20 Jack and Arlene Cook  
25 Robert and Donna Anderson

**April**

4 Bill and Midge Beck  
21 Paul and Connie Oppelt  
26 Harold and June Hansen

**Happy Birthday!!  
March**

1 Darlene Bergren	23 CeCe Sullivan
2 Larry Anderson	24 Joan Johnson
2 Scott Jutila	24 Parris Ngu
4 Michael Cash	25 Comfort Aloh
11 Donatien Ndiappi Fonji	25 Courage Aloh
12 Becky Lyon	27 Evelyn Picha
16 Kavina Berry	30 Prince Aloh
18 Claire Lutter	30 Alyssa Dugas
20 Janet Jansa	

## *From the Pastor's Desk*



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

What a difference a few weeks make. December was really cold, and our snow plowing bill was getting up there. Our prayers are with so many people who had a fall due to icy conditions. We all to learn to walk like penguins. Melting snow is a good problem to have.

### **Mission Study**

As this goes to print the mission study sub-committee is preparing the mission study report for the Session to review. Once this is submitted to the Committee on Ministry and it is approved, the nominating committee mem-

bers can start their work. They will bring names to the congregation to be elected to serve on your Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC).

Folks will need to be patient and gracious with your PNC. This discernment process can take a while, and you don't want to rush it. The stakes are too high not to have a good match. Once the PNC is formed, my level of engagement in their work is very limited. Ann Allen, your COM liaison will be their primary resource. I will merely serve as a potential reference for prospective candidates.

### **Bereavement Group**

So often people mourn the loss of their loved one in isolation. People seem to think that after a few weeks things will go back to normal. It never does. Many people sense that others will feel uncomfortable hearing about their departed loved one, and how much they are missed. As a faith community, we are called to create sacred spaces where people accompany one another on their journey. One of the shortest verses in the New Testament is "Jesus wept." Jesus knows this valley and he wants his fellow sheep to join others in this life long process of mourning. I will be leading a monthly bereavement support group the first Mon of the month in the Fireside room 7 PM. Please rsvp with Marge in the office.

### **Youth Ministry**

The youth seemed to have enjoyed their time at Snow Camp and the Larson farm for broomball. Children spell love T I M E. It's been meaningful to see so many people stepping up with their time and talents to nurture and mentor our young people. The CE committee has set the date for Summer camp at Clearwater for Junior and Senior High. Please consult with Michelle Cerame, our new camp coordinator.

### **Adult Education**

In these past few months, we have been honoured to have:

Rabbi Shosh Dworsky, the Jewish Chaplain at Carleton College join us to discuss Hannukah.

Professor Reiter, the visiting professor from the University of MN Center for Jewish Studies who shared with us his conflict resolution research in Israel/Palestine.

Rev. Gene Orr, from the James Co. who lead us in a two-part series on stewardship as a spiritual discipline of gratitude.

I continue to be active in the interfaith dialogues hosted by the St Thomas Muslim-Christian Center and the University of MN Center for Jewish Studies.

## Pastor's Desk (Cont)

### Ministry in the larger life of the Church and Community

I have just returned from LA, having completed the first phase of my dissertation project, "Empowering Clergy as Crisis Counselors." Several clergy, law enforcement officers and community stakeholders participated in this consultation at the LAPD Rampart Police Station. There are so many victims of crime families who do not receive adequate emotional and spiritual support after a traumatic act of violence.

I have decided to decrease my level of commitment with the St Paul PD to just the Eastern District. My ongoing doctoral research project will be to replicate the LAPD clergy council model here on the Eastside of St Paul. I will partner with Commander Martinez to reach out to the growing Latino community on the Eastside and their clergy representatives.

In many of our urban communities, there is a pervasive *gangbanger* stigma. In the midst of a parent's grief and bereavement, they experience the pain of feeling blamed for their child's death. "If you were a better parent, your kid would not have been in a gang." Instead of isolation and prejudgments, these parents need to experience grace, compassion and solidarity. Hopefully, our partnership with the Latino clergy will work towards this goal.

As many parents know, sometimes no matter how hard you try, your child still chooses his or her own path. We hold them in the nest as long as we can, but ultimately they have to choose whether to fly, walk, stumble and some times fall. God is gracious and mysterious. We profess and proclaim the glimmer of light we know as God's grace and redemption. No matter how far gone a child may seem, we are never too far from God's reach. Praise God!

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### Pastor Howard's Dissertation Project Empowering Clergy as Crisis Counselors Tues. Feb 24<sup>th</sup> 2-5 PM

Many of our community stakeholders look to their faith community leaders for emotional and spiritual support when tragedy strikes. Far too many Angelenos have endured the hardships of losing a loved one to gang violence without adequate emotional and spiritual support.

There is a significant gap between the average clergy person's counseling training and the common perceptions and expectations in our communities. Most seminarians only receive one course in pastoral care and counseling. Crisis Counseling skills and the common risks factors associated with traumatic acts of violence are not usually in the curriculum.

Agenda:

Crisis Counseling & Pastoral Counseling	Rev. Howard Dotson	
PTSD	Dr. Stephanie McKenny	LAPD Behavioral Sciences
Grief & Bereavement	Dr. Judy Hao	LAPD Behavioral Sciences
Suicide Prevention	Dr. Jay Nagdiman	LAPD Behavioral Sciences

Coordination with other Interdisciplinary Agencies (i.e, Crisis Response Team, the Human Relations Commission & GRYD (Gang Reduction and Youth Development ).

As urban pastors , we need continuing education if we are to serve as effective pastoral counseling resources for the LAPD clergy councils. By attending this consultation and remaining active in your local LAPD Clergy Councils, you will be part of a growing community of faith leaders working together for peace and reconciliation in Los Angeles.

Community Room at the Rampart Community Police Station, 1401 W 6<sup>th</sup> St LA, CA 90017 Parking is available across the street on 6<sup>th</sup> St.

## Mission Committee

### One Great Hour of Sharing

For more than fifty years, Presbyterians have joined with Christians throughout the nation in supporting One Great Hour of Sharing, responding to Christ's love for all people by joyfully sharing that love with people in need. The refugee and the stranger have found food and safe shelter; those stunned by the aftermath of disasters have found relief and help rebuilding; and communities seeking to take control of their future have found partners in development. Presbyterians' gifts support the work of The Presbyterian Committee for the [Self-Development of People](#), [Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#), and the [Presbyterian Hunger Program](#). The hundreds of millions of dollars Presbyterians have given over the last half century have enabled a powerful witness to the love of the One who came that all might have life more abundantly.

**Allocation of gifts to the PC(USA)'s One Great Hour of Sharing offering. After deducting administrative costs (up to 5%) and the costs of creating and distributing promotional materials (roughly 5%), the remaining undesignated gifts are divided among three programs as follows:**

36% Presbyterian Hunger Program for ministries working to alleviate hunger and eliminate its causes, responding with compassion and justice to poor and hungry people in local communities, in the nation, and throughout the world, as well as ministries addressing homelessness and affordable housing.

32% Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for disaster response and ministries with refugees. 32% Self-Development of People for partnerships with groups of people who are oppressed by poverty or social systems, who want to take charge of their own lives, have organized to do something about their own condition, and have decided what they need to do to produce long-term benefits for themselves. For more information about this offering and the nine denominations that receive it, call Mission Interpretation at (502) 569-5168.

### Minnesota Food Share

Needless to say after our economic demise these last couple of months, there has been a 13 percent increase of visitors to Minnesota food shelves, but less than a three percent increase in food donations. In other words; “the need is rising but the donations aren’t keeping up.” However the FoodShare organization is confident that if every Minnesotan gave just two dollars apiece, they would exceed this year’s goal too. It is also a known fact that over half of the food supplied to Minnesota food shelves is raised during this March campaign alone!

With this in mind, our food shelf recipients will include the Department of Indian Work of the St. Paul Area Council of Churches and the Salvation Army on Payne Avenue. Both of these food shelf agencies have long been our mission partners serving the community around us. A list of suggested food items will be included as Bulletin inserts during the month of March, and are considered “culturally appropriate foods” to American Indian families.

The Mission Committee would like to encourage all AHP friends and members to take this list grocery shopping with them and to check out donation possibilities in their own kitchen cupboards and pantries. Finally they’d also like to emphasize during March alone all “donations go even further thanks to incentive grants from Minnesota FoodShare and the Feinstein Foundation.” Thank you and God bless!

## Practicing Acts of Love Through These Forty Days

Our Eastside Ecumenical Lenten services will follow the theme of practicing love both locally and globally. Many of our Lenten messages will interpret how our global community is practicing sacrificial love and confronting the issues of poverty and the related social disparities. As members of the global body of Christ, we join the global diplomatic community in their pledge to significantly reduce poverty-related social problems by 2015. As we walk these forty days of Lent, may our acts of love be known to our neighbors near and far.

### **The United Nations Millennium Campaign**

The [Millennium Campaign](#) was launched in October 2002 to encourage citizens around the world in their efforts to hold governments to account for the promises they made at the September 2000 Millennium Summit. The premise of the Millennium Campaign is simple: we are the first generation that can put an end to extreme poverty around the world, and we refuse to miss this opportunity. Did you know that all 191 member states of the United Nations have pledged to achieve the following by the year 2015:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by reducing by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day and reducing by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
- Achieve universal primary education by ensuring that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.
- Promote gender equality and empower women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and at all levels by 2015.
- Reduce child mortality by reducing by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five.
- Improve maternal health by reducing by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio.
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases by halting and beginning to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- Ensure environmental sustainability by integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs, reversing loss of environmental resources, reducing by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water, and achieving significant improvements in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.
- Develop a global partnership for development.

Source: PC(USA) Hunger Program

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### Eastside Ecumenical Lenten Services Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Preacher</u>
2/25/09 Ash Wednesday	Arlington Hills UMC	Rev. Victor Waters
3/4/09	Christ UMC	Rev. Chip Nielsen
3/11/09	Arlington Hills Presbyterian	Rev. Carol Zaagsma
3/18/09	Wheelock Parkway UMC	Rev. Melba Lewis
3/25/09	Epworth UMC	Rev. Sara Morse
4/1/09	Mounds Park UMC	Rev. Howard Dotson
4/9/09 6:00 soup/7:00 service	Hazel Park UCC	N/A-Service of Communion
4/10/09 7:00 service only	Arlington Hills Presbyterian	N/A - Tenebrae Service

## Christian Education Update

### **AHP Calendar (additions):**

May 17 – Volunteer Recognition Sunday

June 14 – Graduation Sunday

No Vacation Bible School in 2009 – The Christian Education committee has decided AHP will not hold VBS this year in that AHP is without a Children and Family Ministries Coordinator.

**-- VOLUNTEERS NEEDED --**

**Graduation Sunday, June 14** – Your help is needed! The Christian Education (CE) committee needs someone to contact graduates and design a poster displaying the photos of all our high school, college, and professionals graduating this spring, along with names and degrees/certifications. This poster/photo collage will be displayed in the Narthex for two weeks beginning May 24. Our graduates will also be recognized during the Sunday morning service on June 17<sup>th</sup> with a reception following. If YOU are a graduate, please provide a photo of yourself by May 17. All photos will be returned to you promptly. Contact (CE): Betty Brandt Passick, 651-770-6315, [bbpassick@comcast.net](mailto:bbpassick@comcast.net).

**Rally Day Coordinator, Sept. 6** – The Christian Education (CE) committee is looking for someone to coordinate activities for the AHP “Rally Day” on Sunday, September 6. Job responsibilities include: publicity in the Heirloom and Church Family News, and pulpit announcements; collaboration with Deacons (may want picnic and lawn games), collaboration with Youth (flyer distribution in the neighborhood); collaboration with session committee (displays in Fireside Room). If you’ve never taken on this responsibility before, be of GREAT COURAGE: CE will provide you with everything you need in the form of guidance and support to make this event a huge success! Contact (CE): Betty Brandt Passick, 651-770-6315, [bbpassick@comcast.net](mailto:bbpassick@comcast.net).

**“Splash” Coordinator** – Sign up now to help AHP “welcome” new babies and toddlers (birth to 36 months) to our congregation. Your responsibilities include contacting parents and signing them up for the “*Splash*” (birth to three faith formulation) newsletter – at no cost to them. This newsletter is a great resource for parents! Contact (CE): Betty Brandt Passick, 651-770-6315, [bbpassick@comcast.net](mailto:bbpassick@comcast.net).

**Nursery Care and Laundry Coordinators** – Do you have a few minutes to stop by the nursery Sunday mornings before leaving AHP to pick up the soiled crib sheets, then launder and return them by the following Sunday so the nursery has fresh sheets each Sunday? It’s a small opportunity to help, and the Christian Education committee can use your help. Contact (CE): Betty Brandt Passick, 651-770-6315, [bbpassick@comcast.net](mailto:bbpassick@comcast.net).

## *Stewardship Thought*

On Sunday, February 15 we spent time in the sanctuary filling out prayer flags for the season of Lent and mission surveys to discern what God is calling us to do and be. Sitting at my table for the Koinonia afterwards, I was struck by the powerful ideas that come in to being when we pool our collective creative energies and work together to affect change in the world. All three of these acts were acts of Stewardship. Even the meal we shared was an act of stewardship!

At risk of sounding like a broken record, it is never too late to turn in a pledge card for 2009. If you need to change your pledge for 2009 for any reason please don't hesitate to turn in a revised pledge as well. Think especially about ways to contribute time and talents to AHP. There is a matrix which committee chairs have to link people to purpose. There are volunteer opportunities available and the committee chairs can help find a project that you feel passionate about.

I'll close with this stewardship prayer:

*Dear God: Every day you give us opportunities to share our gifts of time, talent and treasure with the world. Open our hearts so that we might find true happiness, joy and peace by putting You first in our lives. Give us wisdom that we may be trustworthy stewards of Your abundant blessings, sharing of our time, talent and treasure with our community. Give us the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that we may use our God given gifts to work for peace and justice in the world. Amen*

Submitted by  
Abbie Stone

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### **Financial Update: January 2009**

General Offerings:	\$9,156
Expenses:	\$19,219

### **Other Receipts: January 2009**

Per Capita:	\$1,107
Kitchen Fund	\$410
Capital Improvement	\$645



## Peacemaking through Interfaith Dialogue

**Monday, March 2, 2009 4:30 PM - 5:30 PM**

*Sufism—Mystical Sect of Islam*

Section 1: Sufism and Its Origin

University of Minnesota 325 Coffman Union Hall bda@umn.edu 612-598 4472

**Wed Mar 18 7 PM**

*The Role of Faith and Reason in Islam and Catholicism*

Keynote speakers: Seyyed Hussein Nasr of George Washington University and Archbishop Migliore, Papal Nuncio, Vatican representative to the U.N.

University of St Thomas Murphy Institute & UST School of Law

O'Shaughnessy Educational Center 651-962-4873

**March 24, 2009 7:00 PM**

*The Bone of Contention: Jerusalem and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process, Current Barriers and Future Prospects*

Yitzhak Reiter, Schusterman Visiting Scholar

Mount Zion Temple 1300 Summit Ave St. Paul, MN 651-698-3881

**Friday, March 27 8:00pm - 9:00pm**

"Rwanda: Doing What Is Right For Us And For Others" with Carl Wilkens

Congregation Shir Tikvah 5000 Girard Avenue South Minneapolis, MN 55419

**April 3-4**

The University of Minnesota Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies is hosting visits by a priest-scholar this spring who is a world-renowned scholar of the Holocaust: Dr. Kevin Spicer, author of "Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism."

Dr. Spicer will speak on Friday, April 3, 12:00-1:15 at University of Minnesota Nolte Education Center; at 7:30 pm, Friday, April 3, at Mt. Zion Temple, 1300 Summit Avenue, St. Paul; and on Saturday, April 4, at 4:00 at the Basilica of St. Mary, 88 North 17th St., Minneapolis. For further information, please contact [chgs@umn.edu](mailto:chgs@umn.edu) or call 612-624-0256.



Don Karwoski

## The Heritage Corner—A Series

In the beginning, on February 16, 1885, Arlington Hills Presbyterian Church began as a mission Sunday School sponsored by the East Presbyterian Church. Nineteen children and adults gathered in a home on Jessamine near Payne Avenue. Why bring this up now? Because I feel that as a member of this church since 1947, we are forgetting our heritage and should be reminded from time to time as the Hebrew people were in Moses' time. Over the next few months I will give a thumbnail sketch of our church over the past 105 plus years.

In 1974 the country was in a severe recession. Unemployment in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the year stood at 5% and increased to 7.2% by the 4th quarter and continued to rise in 1975. OPEC was continuing its oil embargo. Gasoline prices had risen to 55 cents per gallon. President Richard Nixon is impeached and resigns and Vice President Gerald Ford becomes President.

The minutes of the church give no indication of these events but must have had some bearing on the church officers thinking and action during the year. The first meeting of Session was held January 14 with Rev. Polizine moderating and all 15 Session members present : Robert E. Anderson, Richard Benson, Erma Derickson, Don Erickson, John Hanno, June Hansen, Marilyn Hubin, Lois Johnson, Don Karwoski, Robert Kopp. Sun-Kun Kang, Chris Lineer, Frank Martin, Don Rowenhorst and Lee Sanny.

Committee assignment forms was given to each Elder for their committee preference. The assignments to be determined by the Steering Committee subject to acceptance by the Elder.

The year began with a small shortage of less than \$200 in the General Account with shortages of various amounts throughout the year building up to the \$5,000 figure several times with a balance of \$2,498.58 at year end. Session had worked hard to set up an Equipment Maintenance Fund during the year and had succeeded with \$1,000 squirreled away toward emergencies. We had a remaining mortgage balance of \$188,373.48 on the church property.

Stewardship presented a budget of \$84,500 which was approved without comment in the minutes. There was no mention of pledges to cover this amount. During the course of the year it was reported that 100 members had not committed themselves to a pledge. A sizeable number considering our membership of 467.

The pastor was given authority to have direct supervision of the church secretary, music director, organist and youth director. I cannot recall that this authority had been put in writing before. I think that up to this time went through the committee chairs which was time consuming and unwieldy.

During the year a movie projector was purchased through donations, a church brochure was produced and a suggestion box built and placed in the narthex. Wonder what became of the brochure and suggestion box.

A church band was formed in the fall consisting of clarinet, flute, saxophone, French horn, trumpet and percussion plus a combo of guitar, piano, banjo and drums. The group played in several concerts. I do not remember this group at all and approached Ken Latham for confirmation. He does not recall this group either. Church minutes indicate that Ken was now substitute organist.

For congregational activity we the Couples Club ( the youngest group), Spares N Pairs ( mid-50's), and the Fellowship Club ( the old geezers). Jeanne and I now at the mid-century mark were in the Spares N Pairs. Over several years our group would celebrate the year end with a progressive dinner. One of my duties at work was preparing the year-end reports to the state and federal government and our corporation. As a result I would be lucky to just make dessert in time to welcome the new year.

The Deacons were an active group in hospital and shut-in visits, hosting a family camp out at the Kiwanis Camp and assisting the Outreach Committee.



## Parish Nurse Notes

Many of you, even though you may not have children, may have young children visiting your home. It may be grandchildren, nieces, nephews, or friends. If you haven't had small children in your home for awhile then perhaps it's time to child-proof your home.

Research shows that more children die each year from accidents and injuries than from all diseases, and more accidents happen when children are in a new situation.

Lori Johnson To child-proof your home before your young visitors arrive, follow these child safety measures.



- Use outlet covers on all exposed outlets and install drawer and cupboard locks.
- Make sure breakables and plastic bags are out of reach of small children.
- Move any cleaning products stored under your sink or anywhere else children can reach to a safe place.
- Tie up any cords that dangle from shades or blinds-these can be dangerous if children get tangled in them.
- Keep all medicines {prescription and nonprescription} and vitamin and herbal supplements out of reach of children. Don't trust child safety caps.
- Never refer to medicines as candy to make it more desirable.
- Protect kids from toppling furniture or heavy objects. Make sure all T.V. sets are securely positioned and cannot be pulled down by a young child.
- Push table lamps away from furniture edges.
- If you warm infants formula in a microwave, always test it first after waiting a few minutes and shaking it. The bottle may feel slightly warm to the touch but its contents may be scalding hot. Better yet, don't use the microwave for this purpose.
- Keep disposable lighters out of children's reach. They are colorful and may be enticing.
- Be aware of foods that cause choking such as hard candy, nuts, or grapes.
- Don't allow children to play with exercise equipment with gears. Stationary bikes are especially dangerous and can cause hand and finger injuries.
- Check for any electrical equipment near water. Even an appliance that's turned off can cause electrocution if it's plugged in and falls into water.
- If you're driving in your car with young children, always use the correct child car seat and buckle a child into the back seat only. Never hold an infant or toddler in your arms while traveling.
- Set the hot water thermostat for the house no hotter than 120 degrees F. Baby's bath water should be around 100 degrees F.
- Move furniture away from windows to deter young children from access to window covering cords and deter them from climbing onto a window ledge.
- Consider installing window guards on upstairs windows to prevent accidental fall out the window.
- If the young child is mobile, put sturdy safety gates at both the top and bottom of every staircase. Accordion style gates can actually pose a safety hazard as the child may fit his head through the opening.
- Unplug electronic kitchen appliances, i.e. toasters, blenders, and microwaves when not in use.
- Store kitchen utensils-especially knives- in an inaccessible location.
- A toilet lock is a simple and easy way to keep the lid down to prevent a toddler from toppling in.

Even after you've taken these precautions, accidents can still happen. Be ready to act in case of emergency by posting phone numbers of local poison control center[1-800-222-1222] and other emergency services in your community.

Have a healthy and safe March.

## Food for Thought

**Monday, March 2, 2009 5:30 PM**

[The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: An evening with Ann Fadiman](#)

[Coffman Memorial Union](#) Mississippi Room (3rd Floor)

The University of Minnesota's College of Liberal Arts is pleased to host Anne Fadiman, author of "The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down," as our next distinguished speaker in the Magraw-Fuller Lecture Series. Fadiman will speak on the issues addressed in her award-winning book about the two very different worldviews of a Hmong family whose daughter suffers from epilepsy and the American doctors who treat her. The book continues to be taught at universities both as literary journalism and as a casebook for cross-cultural sensitivity in general; it is also widely read by medical practitioners who wish to offer more effective care to patients from other cultures.

Eva Widder: ewidder@umn.edu or (612) 626-5146.

**Thursday, March 5, 2009 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM**

*The Social and Environmental Dimensions of Healing* Van Jones

Van Jones will be the guest speaker on behalf of the University of Minnesota's Center for Spirituality & Healing and its new series of courses called Whole Systems Healing. Van Jones is the founder and president of Green for All ([www.greenforall.org](http://www.greenforall.org)) and author of the recently released *The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems*. U of M Center for Spirituality and Healing. Univ of MN Ted Mann Concert Hall

**Thursday, March 26, 2009**

**4:00 PM - 5:30 PM U of M Nolte Center 125**

["Living on a Shrinking Planet: Challenges and Opportunities for a Sustainable Future": A Presentation by Jonathan Foley](#)

Jonathan Foley is the director of the Institute on the Environment at the University of the Minnesota, where he is also a professor and McKnight Presidential Chair in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior. Foley's work focuses on complex global environmental systems and their interactions with human societies. He and his students have contributed to our understanding of large-scale ecosystem processes, global patterns of land use, the behavior of the planet's climate and water cycles, and the sustainability of our biosphere.

## Narrative Leadership in Changing Times

by Lawrence A. Golemon

The Alban Institute

I recently traveled to a charming clapboard church in the middle of an East Coast city to visit with an interim minister nearing the end of a two-year term. "These are good people," this gifted pastor and preacher told me, "but they are a bit stuck in their way of doing things." When I inquired how, she said, "They have enshrined the past of a long pastorate and live their faith as a form of nostalgia." Contrast that to my visit with a relatively new pastor serving in an urban setting in the Midwest. "This church was long known as the 'community church' but lost that connection as the neighborhood became multicultural and economically challenged," this pastor, a skilled community organizer, recalled. "But you appear to have recaptured that image," I said. "What changed?" His reply revealed an important insight. "We rediscovered being a 'community church' again when we learned to listen to our neighbors' gifts and passions to serve, and joined them."

It dawned on me that these were two different scripts for "being church": nostalgia versus neighborhood. In them I recognized the distinction American social critic Christopher Lasch drew between nostalgia, which idealizes the past as "irretrievably lost" and "frozen in perfection," and true memory, which "draws hope and comfort from the past to enrich the present and face what comes..."

How do congregations make the shift from *nostalgia* to a new story like *neighborhood*? What kind of leadership is needed--by pastors and lay leaders--to move beyond the stuck places of "we've always done it this way" to a new way of listening for "where are we being led?" Gifted pastors, rabbis, and lay leaders who lead well in times of transition are able to guide their congregations in shaping a *new kind of story* based in part on reframing the strengths and obstacles of their past. Great public leaders have been marked by such "narrative leadership," from Lincoln to FDR to Reagan and, as many hope, to Obama. Interim pastors have a lot to teach the rest of us who lead congregations in times of change.

At Alban, we have come to see that each of the "interim tasks" has strong narrative dimensions. *Coming to terms with history* involves "unfreezing" the past by inviting everyone in the church to share their memories and lift up the gifts for ministry they have discovered there. Practices like the congregational timeline, anniversary dramas, and members' *testimony* help loosen and reclaim different versions of the past for the future. Pastoral care and small groups can help people link their own stories with the stories of scripture and tradition in ways that identify redemptive motifs they can live by.

The interim task of *cultivating new leaders* is enhanced as members begin to tell their own faith stories and gifts for ministry in worship and elsewhere. Preachers and lay leaders can model such storytelling in the pulpit, in committee meetings, and in classrooms by identifying how God led them through stuck places in the past.

The task of *reconnecting with denomination and tradition* requires stories of the faith--from scripture and denominational heritage--that speak of the community's resilience in adaptation and God's faithfulness to help them meet what comes. What *The Practicing Congregation* author Diana Butler Bass calls "retraditioning" helps congregations tap the teachings and narratives of the Christian or Jewish faith to forge a new and vibrant "local theology" that they can live by.

The final interim task of *discovering new identity* involves the narrative work of engaging the community's stories with stories of faith (as in the Midwest church above) by listening intently to our neighbors and community partners to discern where God is leading people beyond the church's walls. This practice helps the community discern God's call to a new story for the congregation so that it can forge a new narrative of identity and mission for the coming years.

## **Big Tent Event:**

*10 PC(USA) groups to hold concurrent gatherings in Atlanta in June*

**by Susan Lindsey, Senior Communications Associate**

**SNOWBIRD, UT** — “Join us at the Big Tent!” the General Assembly Council’s director of Evangelism and Church Growth Eric Hoey urged council members at their fall meeting here Sept. 30-Oct. 3. Hoey introduced the event and played a short video promoting it.

“Big Tent” is a first-of-its-kind event scheduled for June 11-13, 2009 in Atlanta, bringing together 10 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) conferences under the common theme, “... and the word became flesh.” The event, which has been characterized as “a denominational happening” and “a big Presbyterian family reunion,” was approved in September 2007 by a joint leadership team of the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council.

In addition to their own conferences, the participating groups will share common worship and some common meals, a shared exhibit hall, some common workshop sessions, and a Saturday evening celebration event in Centennial Park. Participating “Big Tent” groups include:

- Healthy Ministry Conference; Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA) biennial Social Justice Ministries Conference;
- Racial Ethnic Convocation; Presbyterian Communicators Network Conference;
- New Immigrants Ministries Convocation; Stewardship and Investment Conference; Presbyterian Peacemaking Conference; Evangelism and Church Growth Conference; National Multicultural Church Conference; and
- National Elders Conference.

Early Registration closes on March 9<sup>th</sup> 1-888-728-7228 (2417) [gameetingservice@pcusa.org](mailto:gameetingservice@pcusa.org)

# **Hungry Hearts, Hungry Minds**

## **The Quest for a Reformed Spirituality**

### THE PRESENT TIME

There is evidence of a significant hunger among us, a hunger of the heart and mind. To be sure, not everyone senses it. There are those in our congregations whose experience of faith in Jesus Christ is deeply satisfying. There are also communities of faith whose common life is rich and vital. Such persons and communities are hungry only for more of that which they already enjoy.

But for many other individuals and communities, a certain restlessness prevails. That restlessness is not easily described. Some will express it one way, some will express it another, while still others, finding no words at all, content themselves with sighs. It is as if many of us were becoming aware that something is missing from our lives. We may once have enjoyed it, only to lose it. Or perhaps the realization is dawning that, if we are to be whole people, we need something that we have never had before. In either case the result is a longing within us, a yearning for something which could and even should be ours to have and to enjoy.

Perhaps some of us long for companions along life's spiritual journey. Many Christians are lonely. They do not experience the church as a community within which their deepest joys, profoundest hopes, and hardest struggles can be safely shared.

Perhaps some of us long for meaning. Many Christians wonder whether their lives count for anything. They rise early and work hard all day long, but when the night has come they question whether their loves and labors have had any ultimate significance.

Perhaps some of us long for joy. Many Christians find their lives of faith to be little more than dull routine and boring duty. They have always heard that joy is supposed to be a fruit of God's Spirit, but in truth they sometimes leave their services of worship more depressed than when they arrived.

When all is said and done, however, our longings for companions, meaning and joy are only symptoms. The real issue is far deeper, far more serious. In faith we know that a closer relationship to God is our hearts' deepest desire. Our problem, however, is with faith itself. Though we long to be able to entrust our lives to One who cares, some of us find ourselves more persuaded of God's absence than of God's presence. Our hearts remain unconvinced, unconsolated, unconvicted, unconverted. Therefore, though we cannot always express what we are sensing, though we cannot always name what we are seeking, the challenge we face is to grow in our lives of Christian faith. We need more deeply felt and satisfying relationships to God and to one another, and more authentic and fulfilling ways to live out our discipleship in this complex and challenging world.

We dare to believe that if we can only satisfy this hunger of all hungers, every other human longing will be transformed or satisfied in ways which we cannot even foresee.

### LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

It seems apparent that the hungers of our time are present not only in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) but also in the culture at large. Recently these hungers have become evident in a veritable explosion of interest in spirituality. But what is this about which so many are speaking? Surely "spirituality" refers first and foremost to the Holy Spirit of the living God who has drawn near in Jesus Christ. Some persons define the term broadly, regarding spirituality as a virtual synonym for the living of the Christian life. They see it as the process of our being filled and transformed by God's Spirit, living joyfully in God's presence, responding freely to God's grace.

Others define the term more narrowly. They take as their beginning point the conviction that there are certain human practices through which God's Spirit often works to enlighten and renew our hearts and minds. Spirituality, they say, is the intentional, disciplined commitment to those practices by persons who wish to grow in their faith and in their capacity to live as Jesus Christ's obedient disciples.

There is no real need to choose between these two understandings. Our experience confirms that being led by God's Spirit, on the one hand, and seeking the guidance of God's Spirit, on the other, are present as different moments of the Christian life. Each is necessary, and as long as both are present, it makes little difference by what name each is called. Both constitute spirituality.

Presbyterians have their own distinctive contributions to make to the larger discussion about spirituality. One of the greatest is our insistence that the deepest longings of Christians will be satisfied only by a faith which also takes with utter seriousness both our estranged hearts and their need for transformation, and our suffering world and its need for transformation. We believe that God desires our commitment to corporate and individual worship, prayer, and reflection. We also affirm, however, that God desires our faithful discipleship in the world. It is our witness that God's Spirit meets, speaks to, and changes us both "out there" in the world and "in here" in our prayer and worship. This unity of prayer and action in the Christian life is deeply rooted in the Reformed tradition from which our denomination springs.

For far too long, however, we have allowed that unity and the tradition itself to be betrayed by calls to a one-sided allegiance. For instance, while some have insisted that evangelism is the church's only true concern, others have been equally insistent that the church's mission is to work for the transformation of an unjust world. But the drawing of such battle-lines has been deeply destructive. It has both compromised our witness to Jesus Christ and rent asunder the Presbyterian Church.

In the search for an authentic spirituality, one true to our tradition, the scattered people of God may once again discover their essential calling and unity. It is in that quest that those who have forgotten how to pray will be invited to learn to do so once again. And it is in that quest that those who have ignored the suffering of our planet and of its people will be invited to rediscover their call to exercise compassion and to work for justice, for peace, and for the healing of the created order.

## THE THEOLOGY AND WORSHIP MINISTRY UNIT

The reality that so many of us have such hungers is not bad news for the church. On the contrary it is good news, for it means that the wind of God's Spirit is blowing, stirring us to new thoughts, new questions, new visions, and new commitments. Evidence of the Spirit's work in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is the denomination's concern for discipleship and spirituality.

What needs to happen among us may happen as individuals, congregations, presbyteries, and synods dare one by one to make the new commitments to which they are being called. As they do so, the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit offers its support. Part of its work is to offer advice and counsel to the General Assembly Council as that body seeks to "cultivate and promote the spiritual welfare of the whole church." But an even more important part is to serve individual believers and congregations as the Spirit moves among them. It does so by listening to the longings of Presbyterians, by helping them interpret what is happening in their lives of faith, and by fostering communication among persons with similar concerns.

The Unit also encourages new initiatives in congregations, presbyteries, and synods, and serves as a bridge between hungry persons in our own denomination and movements of renewal in the church at large. The resources available to the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit for its efforts in discipleship and spirituality are severely limited. In order to make the best use of those resources in responding to the needs of hungry hearts and minds within the denomination, the Unit both seeks the partnership of other offices of the General Assembly, synods, and presbyteries, and endeavors to apply its efforts to those areas where they will have the greatest effect. It believes that, at the present moment of the church's life, the following eight areas, listed in no order of priority, deserve special attention.

1. Communities of Prayer, Discernment and Action. The Unit encourages the intentional and disciplined gathering of congregations, families, and other communities within the church for prayer, sharing of joys and struggles, study of their context, listening for God's voice speaking through Scripture, efforts to discern the obedience to which they are being called, and engagement in common ministry.
2. Presbytery Programs. The Unit helps presbyteries and synods to consider seriously and respond appropriately to the hungers of those within their bounds.
3. Leadership Training. The Unit contributes to the cultivation within the church of leaders who can help church members both understand their longings for a more fulfilling life of faith and find appropriate ways to satisfy them.
4. Resources. The Unit makes available to the church programs and resources in the area of discipleship and spirituality.
5. Communication. The Unit maintains communication with persons who have ministries related to discipleship and spirituality, in order to encourage conversation among them, foster a common vision, and establish and sustain effective partnerships.
6. Needs of Ministers and Candidates. The Unit works with theological educators and others involved in the training, continuing education, and oversight of candidates and ministers, in order that the church's leadership might both receive the nourishment which it needs and become increasingly able to help a membership which is spiritually hungry.
7. Theological Discernment. The Unit encourages the kind of theological reflection on our current experience of religious hunger which will serve both to clarify that hunger's origins and to point the way toward more fulfilling lives of faith.
8. Gifts of the Larger Church. The Unit helps the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) become aware of and be enriched by the vitality present both within the diversity of its own membership and in various partner churches around the world.

At the recommendation of the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit, the 203rd General Assembly (1991) approved *Hungry Hearts, Hungry Minds: The Quest for a Reformed Discipleship and Spirituality* and called for its programmatic implementation. Since that time, organizational changes have created the Office of Spiritual Formation within the Theology, Worship, and Discipleship Program Area, which has the responsibility for this implementation. For more information, contact the office at 888-728-7228, extension 5306 or through [www.pcusa.org/spiritualformation](http://www.pcusa.org/spiritualformation) . PDS 70 440 97 001

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## Lectionary for March 2009

- 1 **1st Sunday in Lent**  
Gen. 9:8-17; Ps. 25:1-10;  
1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15
  
- 8 **2nd Sunday in Lent**  
Gen. 17:1-7, 15-16; Ps. 29;  
Ps. 22:23-31; Rom. 4:13-25;  
Mark 8:31-38
  
- 15 **3rd Sunday in Lent**  
Exod. 20:1-17; Ps. 19;  
1 Cor. 1:18-25; John 2:13-22
  
- 22 **4th Sunday in Lent**  
Num. 21:4-9; Ps. 107:1-3, 17-22;  
Eph. 2:1-10; John 3:14-21
  
- 29 **5th Sunday in Lent**  
Jer. 31:31-34; Ps. 51:1-12 or  
Ps. 119:9-16; Heb. 5:5-10;  
John 12:20-33

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