



The Grapevine

CONNECTING THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF DETROIT

August 2007

Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism

By The Rev Dr. Allen D. Timm, Executive Presbyter



This fall, Dr. Jack Stewart will be leading the evangelism team event on October 13 at the Novi Church. I hope your church will send a team of members to think about how your church can grow. Last year 20 of our 87 churches grew in their number of members. Seven stayed the same, and the rest lost members.

Jack Stewart recommends a book for sessions or evangelism/church growth teams, **Unbinding the Gospel** by Martha Grace Reese (Chalice Press, St. Louis). It is definitely worth a read.

It helps readers to reflect on what difference their faith makes in their own life, and why they would want to share the difference faith in Christ makes with friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

Part Two of the Book explores the meaning of prayer, the Trinity, how faith applies to real life, what new members want in life, and how the church can help people

find it. The book explores why people visit church, what they hope to find, and why they come a second time.

A major point is that when people meet change in their life, they are open to exploring new ways to look at life, and are looking for a faith that sustains them during life's changes. When people visit a church, they are looking for a way to explore what faith means, a class or meeting.

Membership, then, is more than an invitation to join a church family; it is an opportunity to respond to Christ's invitation to follow him as Lord and Savior. Following Christ brings joy to our lives and demonstrates to the world the love and justice God longs for.

Part Three helps a congregation look at how it reaches out to people in the area. Here Martha Reese gives exercises to reach out to residents, and how to welcome them when they respond. When I attended Novi Presbyterian Church, no fewer than six people welcomed me. They did not know I was visiting as a representative of Presbytery. The final welcome was an invitation to look at a welcome table and talk about the church. The table invited me to a

host of classes and activities the church sponsors. Reese's book ends with a look at how members play a key role in welcoming the stranger.

In my thirty years as a pastor in the local church, I saw many who came for special events, weddings, funerals, etc. Committees looked at ways to invite people into programs or activities that would meet their needs. And when they came, committees looked at how they thanked visitors for attending, and invited them to a five week class to explore the meaning of faith (which I am willing to share electronically with any who ask). I have seen so many come alive in their faith.

This is the reason we want to grow as churches, because our Lord invites us to share our faith with our friends and co-workers. Christ calls us to live our lives as a demonstration of the gospel, but also to invite others to enjoy the same joy in service we do.

I hope each church will send a team to this day of growth in outreach and evangelism, and or, study the book by Reese. It is a blessing!

THE LIFE CELEBRATION OF THE REV. JANET NOBLE-RICHARDSON July 11, 2007

Edited remarks of Rev. Kellie Whitlock

The Lord be with you! What a privilege it is to be here this night to celebrate Janet's life with all of the people she held most dear – all of you. Janet loved life and living it to the fullest. Janet loved to love.

And what an incredible symbol the butterfly is that hangs in this sanctuary to represent her. A sign of resurrection – of new life – eternal life for Janet and a new life for this congregation - all of you who have been steeped in her ministry, love and friendship, inspired by her faith in Christ. It will be a reminder to all of us who knew and

loved her that whether one travels for a time in the deepest of all valleys or on the highest of all mountaintops, God is faithful.

There is a children's book written by Helen Caswell entitled, *God Is Always With Me*, about a little girl who was trying to understand death.. "My grandmother says that we're like caterpillars. They crawl around and think that being caterpillars is the bestest life there could ever be. Then they start to change, and pretty soon they're all wrapped up in gray cocoons and look as though they have died, for days and days. Then guess what? They come out butterflies! A hundred times more beautiful than caterpillars, and they can fly! If they'd gone on and on the way they were, they never would have had those wings. My grandma says that everything has to

change and everything has to die, except one thing. There's one thing that goes on and on forever, and it never changes and it never dies—God's love. When the time comes for people to die, God has another life all ready for them, a hundred times more wonderful than they could ever imagine, because God's love goes on forever."

In the knowledge and faith of God's eternal love, Janet found her strength renewed along her journey, and in so doing, her love of life, her warmth, and her inner spirit spoke to all of us who came in contact with her.

Tonight we give God thanks and praise for allowing us to walk side by side through some of this precious life with Janet. God be with you. Amen

Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant! ~ Celebrating Milestone Anniversary's of Ordained Ministry

AUGUST CELEBRATIONS

Theodore Taylor, II, 45
Larry Austin, 35
Herschel Ele, 25
Peter J. M. Henry, 10

SEPTEMBER CELEBRATIONS

James P. Russell, 35
Roy Langwig, 30
Ellen Acton, 20
Rufus Hatcher, 10
Melodie Jones, 5

THE MODERATOR'S CORNER

Last week I had the opportunity to participate in my 60 something Vacation Bible School. My home church, Rosedale Gardens in Livonia, was listing from side to side as the children learned to

PRAISE THE LORD PSALM 150

1. Praise the Lord! Praise God in his Temple! Praise his strength in heaven!

One hundred forty eight children gathered in God's Temple.
God provided the strength of seventy helpers, mostly teenagers.

2. Praise him for the mighty things he has done. Praise his supreme greatness.

His mighty works were there in the eyes of each child and his supreme greatness glorified in the outstretched arms as they lifted them in song.

3. Praise him with trumpets, Praise him with harps and lyres.
The children praised God with laughter and works of art

4. Praise him with drums and dancing. Praise him with harps and flutes.
God must have smiled, cried and felt the love of these children as they line danced and sang words of worship to him.

5. Praise him with cymbals. Praise him with loud cymbals.
The cymbals were the small hands that waived, clapped and touched each other in kindness.

6. Praise the Lord, all living creatures! Praise the Lord!
All living creatures shall be praised as these children share there experience within their families and communities as they begin a new season – a new season to PRAISE THE LORD!

Dixie J. Elam, Moderator

AN EDITORIAL NOTE (NOT SENT) TO THE POPE
Because of the nature of this note, it is not addressed in a formal fashion. It reflects your editor's thoughts alone, though after communications with many others, reflection on the Stated Clerk of the GA's remarks, and talk with some of strong RCC loyalties.

Dear Pope: Aw Pshaw! You didn't say anything new, certainly nothing very helpful, and your timing is gosh awful. But I will give you this – you were consistent. You are right. You can't claim to lead the true church if you grant legitimacy to any other groups of people who claim loyalty to Christ. I write not to make any fuss at all, but simply to share with you the fact that I don't care. I don't care that you dismiss me and the Protestant, Presbyterian Church of which I am a part. I don't care that you chose a poor time to reassert an historic narrowness of mind, heart and spirit. I don't care, because I do care deeply for you, for your ministry and your leadership of the Roman Catholic Church at this critical time in the history of God's world and God's people. I don't care, because, in spite of what you have said, I care for a vision of Christ's Church that is broader and more Biblically based, and far wider in its inclusive spirit, than the Church you have described. And, along with the poet, I care not to draw circles that cut people out, but circles of Christ-like love that include people in. Pope, phooey on you. But all God's grace and goodness and love in Christ to you, and my care for you, in his name and spirit.
Faithfully, David Robertson

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout. He drew a circle that cut me out. But love and I had the wit to win. We drew a circle that took him in

Faithfully Facing Racism and Dealing with its Costs Fairly

Presbyterians Participate in Bridging the Congregational Divide Interfaith Leadership Forum

By the Rev. Dr. Duke Morrow

Did we define a new kind of *redlining* when we rejected last fall all forms of affirmative action as a principle of fair behavior for a society? Have we as Churches failed one another in the way we have and have not addressed the issue of racism, of how power and privilege are used and abused?

We feel its fair that victims of illegal and unjust practices be entitled to some kind of compensation under the law. Tragically, in the Enron Case and others

like it recently, there was little resource available to compensate those who had been defrauded or cheated out of what was legitimately theirs. But clearly they had a right to claim and expect some kind of recompense for their loss.

The economic losses to minority groups, in particular but not only black residents, are now a documented embarrassing and immoral aspect of life in the United States of America. How we deal with this legacy of legislated unfairness and discrimination, and prejudice in the not so free market place of our society, will be a telling judgment on the true nature of the American experiment.

The 12 Presbyterians gathered at Plymouth Congregational Church in Detroit

on August 1, with representatives from a broad spectrum of religious leaders, learned in new ways that we are called by our faith, by the actions of Jesus and the words of Paul, to continue to strive for a society where the content of one's character counts more than the color of one's skin. More information is available on this issue through the Anti-Racism Team of Presbytery. Contact Duke Morrow, 313-336-7414 or dukemorrow@comcast.net.

Continuing efforts at creating a Detroit Community that honors the ideal of justice and equality of opportunity for all will be the focus of future events being planned by the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion, www.MIroundtable.org.

Interfaith Connections Strengthened within and with the Muslim Community

On May 10, Detroit area Sunni and Shia' imams, under the Council of Islamic Organizations of Michigan, joined together at the Islamic House of Wisdom in Dearborn Heights to sign a Muslim Code of Honor. If the images from Iraq are of seeming irreconcilable conflict between these two Islamic sects, this gathering was to say to the world at large that American Muslims can work together in "a spirit of

peaceful coexistence."

Several of the imams who signed the statement (24 did) are known to members of our presbytery and have joined on many occasions with us to demonstrate their desire to work together for peace

Although the Code is primarily committed to preventing the "tragic sectarianism (in Iraq) from spilling over into our Muslim communities in the United States," this can have a positive influence on the rest of us who work with our Muslim

"sisters and brothers," for interfaith understanding.

We are fortunate to have the interfaith relationship in the Detroit area that is the result of decades of nurturing a part of the peaceable kingdom of God. In these relationships lie the promise of God's faithfulness and help. A copy of the Code is available at the Presbytery office.

~ Bill Gepford, Interfaith Consultant

An Invitation to Sabbath Moments

Sabbath moments invite us to stop and pay attention to the wonder around us. They can be breathers in the day when we pause to become aware of God's grace and to give thanks. Sabbath moments are ways that we, too, can "remember the Sabbath and keep it holy." They are gifts from God that are like re-set buttons when we can step out of the busy world and into the presence of God.

For longer times of Sabbath awareness and practice, you might consider attending one of the monthly presbytery-wide Sabbath retreats held at Skyline Center in Almont, Michigan. This coming year the retreats will be held on September 16-17; October 21-22; November 18-19; December 16-17; January 20-21, 2008; February 17-18; March 16-17 (Holy Week); April 20-21 and May 18-19. Contact the Skyline Office at 248-644-2043 for details. Each retreat offers guidance on a specific practice of prayer and spirituality. Come for a full 24-hour retreat, or come on Mondays from 9-

3:30. Such Sabbath moments can make such a significant difference. These retreats are offered through the Spiritual Formation and Faith Development Ministry Team and through Skyline Center.

What is Spiritual Direction?

Spiritual Directors International is a growing organization of 6000 members. Its brochure describes spiritual direction in this way:

Explore:

Spiritual direction encourages you to explore a closer relationship with God. In the midst of a busy life, many people find it difficult to notice God's action in their daily affairs. Yet at the deepest level, all of us long for a more conscious experience of God's presence and love.

Discern God's Presence:

In spiritual direction, you reflect deeply on the experiences of your daily life. Gradually, as you contemplate, you may begin to recognize God's presence and grace in your life. You may come to realize how God's spirit is truly with you every day and everywhere. You discover that God has been waiting for you to seek this closer

relationship. Spiritual direction is really not about being "directed.": Rather, it is very much about being encouraged to draw closer to God...God seeks you where you are.

Gifts of Spiritual Direction:

You might come to spiritual direction for a variety of reasons, including to

1. Identify and trust your own experiences of God
2. Integrate spirituality into your daily life
3. Discern and make difficult choices.
4. Share your hopes, struggles and losses.
5. Develop a sensitivity for justice and concern for the poor.
6. Live the essence of your spiritual affiliation with integrity.

For more information about Spiritual Directors International, see www.sdiworld.org

We have several trained spiritual directors available here in our presbytery and the list with contact information may be obtained from the Presbytery Office or from **Thoresen, Kate** (PCUSA; 248-643-8373; Thoresen@aol.com)

What is Spiritual Formation?

What do we mean when we talk about "spiritual formation---especially "Christian spiritual formation?" Since this is still a relatively new term, it might be helpful to offer a general definition from our denomination's Office of Spiritual Formation:

Spiritual formation is the activity of the Holy Spirit which molds our lives into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This likeness is one of deep intimacy with God and genuine compassion for all of creation. The Spirit works not only in the lives of individuals but also in the church, shaping it into the Body of Christ.

It helps us pay attention to the presence of God in our lives and ways that the Spirit invites us to respond in authentic ways. Spiritual formation involves our

calling by God as individuals and as communities of faith.

Often such awareness and attentiveness are sparked by certain questions: "Where are we experiencing God at work?" "What is energizing us to action?" "How are we growing in our relationship with Christ?" "What is distracting or hindering us?"

Spiritual formation also involves some tried and true spiritual disciplines which also help to open us to hear and respond to that "still, small voice." - meditation on scriptures, generous listening, awareness raising exercises, contemplation, reflection times, silence, Sabbath keeping, small groups focused on sharing spiritual journeys, and a variety of prayer experiences.

Spiritual Formation and Faith Development Ministry Team of our

presbytery has offered the 'worship work' model for our presbytery meetings as a way for us to attend to God's presence. The team offers a list of trained spiritual directors as well as opportunities for small group spiritual direction and leadership training. Contact Rev. Charlotte Sommers, chair of this team, for more information and resources.

You can also check out our denomination's web site on spiritual formation at : <http://www.pcusa.org/spiritualformation/>. Here you'll find more definitions, resources and books.

This article is by the Rev. Dr. Kate Thoresen, Spiritual Director and Retreat Leader, who can be reached at 248-643-8373 or Thoresen@aol.com

LITTLEFIELD - OUR MISSION - PEACE MAKING

(From the 2008 Mission Year Book Article authored by the Rev. Fran Hayes)

Littlefield Presbyterian Church has struggled over the past four decades to find ways to witness to the love of Jesus Christ and to be agents of reconciliation in their neighborhood, where the majority of residents are Muslim. As the congregation diminished in size and had fewer young people, they had stopped trying to hold programs like vacation Bible school for youth.

In 1997 Elder Doris and Chuck Edwards and Pastor Fran Hayes attended the Presbyterian Peacemaking Conference. On the flight home, Doris shared her dream

of holding a Peace Camp. In July 1998 Littlefield held its first Peace Camp, an interfaith, intergenerational activity. Christian and Muslim children sing songs of peace, build a neighborhood of peace and justice out of big boxes, and learn peace-building skills.

By 2005, a majority of the participants were Muslim children, and the Littlefield helpers were getting older. In 2006 Littlefield invited a youth group from Westminster Church in Ann Arbor to partner with them.

Ann Arbor youth developed friendships with Dearborn youth, several of whom had been in Lebanon visiting family when war broke out there and had been able to return home to Dearborn only days

before Peace Camp. This partnership worked so well that a different youth group was invited to be a partner the next year, to learn together to build peace, to practice respect and love of neighbor, and to grow in our understanding of who our neighbors are.

PRAYER:

We pray for your church in the Presbytery of Detroit. Comfort and sustain those who have lost jobs in the auto industry and families who are food-insecure. Empower all who minister in your name by your Spirit. May their ministries glorify you, O gracious God, as they work to break down walls of hostility and to do justice.

DAY OF PRAYER AND FASTING
SEPTEMBER 15, 2007

A special Task Force of the presbytery will begin working on a resolution concerning the Iraq War.

A day of prayer and fasting has been declared to give strength, understanding, and guidance to the Task Force.

May we become more Christ-like in our thoughts, words, and actions so that we might come together in openness to embrace peace throughout the world. On this special day, a day of Prayer and Fasting, as followers of Jesus Christ, be one in harmony.

Be faithful to the dreams and hopes of those who believed that men and women have a right to live in freedom. Don't let us forget that we are accountable to them, to each other, and to God.

May this day refresh your mind and body.

Peace,
Dixie Elam
Moderator of Presbytery



Synod's \$3,000 grant enabled Lincoln Park to purchase and "baptize" their new projector, laptop, and screen. It was great for VBS--they used it every day, and particularly in the Thursday evening Family Celebration!



Lincoln Park VBS. A neighborhood party the day before brought in 60 children....



The Rev. Elizabeth Carlson, Associate Pastor, Grosse Pointe Woods and Mr. Paul Arakelian were married on August 11, 2007

Mark your calendar now for these coming events:

September 8

Hunger Education Program & Free Salad Luncheon at Trinity Community sponsored by the Hunger Ministries Support Team, 10:00 AM—2:00 PM

September 10

Lunch with Linda Bryant Valentine, Executive Director of General Assembly Council 11:30 AM, location TBD

September 15

Day of Prayer and Fasting

October 13

Evangelism Team building seminar with Jack Stewart at Novi, Faith Community, 10:00 AM—3:00 PM

October 23

Presbytery Meeting at Redford, St. James
Pre-Presbytery #1 "How Churches Can Organize Projects by Collaborating with Local Agencies and Governments" by Roger Myers and the Rev. Paul Bosquette
Pre-Presbytery #2 Immigration Issues by Social Justice & Peacemaking Committee

October 27

Month of Mission Breakfast at Northbrook in Beverly Hills, 9:00 AM—12:00 PM

November 9-11

Alma Youth Mix "Searching for Grace" with Kelly Wiant-Thralls

November 27

Presbytery Meeting at Detroit, Hope

December 8

Men's Advent Communion Breakfast at Roseville, Erin, 8:00 AM

January 11, 2008

2007 Presbytery Books close at 5:00 PM

February 2

Leadership Training Conference, 9:00 AM at Dearborn, First

February 7 - 9

APCE

February 9 - 11

Transitions in Ministry for Clergy in New Calls

June 21 - 28

General Assembly in San Jose, CA

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