



### Standing On the Pews

**By Emily Enders Odom**

Ten years into his nearly 20-year ministry at a thriving Presbyterian church in Edina, Minn., John Crosby observed what he characterized as a “hole” in the congregation’s demographics.

“We were doing a good job with children and youth, and with adults over 35,” Crosby says of 2,200-member Christ Presbyterian Church, “but there was a hole in our young adult population until they returned with children. We wanted to target that group.”

The church’s youth director, Kurt Vickman, challenged him to consider how to retain and deepen the commitment of the hundreds of young Christians that were being reached by Christ Church’s youth group activities and small groups. As he got to know them, Crosby noted two characteristics related to these young adults: their increasing

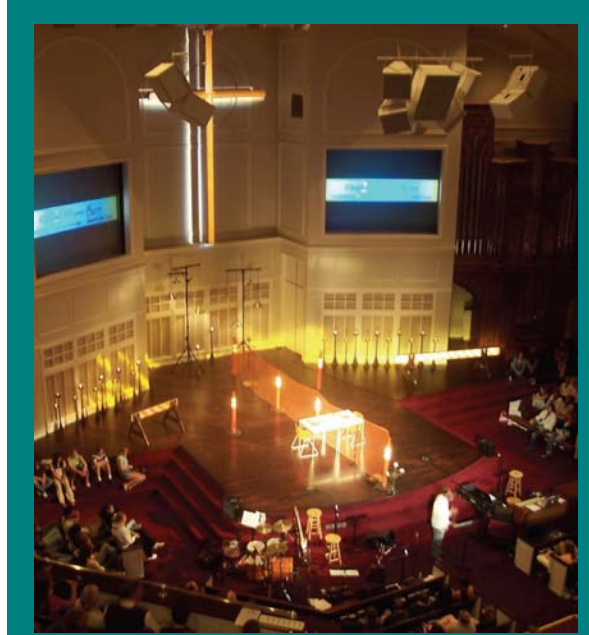
interest in retreats and monthly gatherings, and their disaffected stance toward conventional worship, which few of them were attending.

“Even though our church was growing, young people were not enthused about worship,” Crosby says.

From those observations, the Upper Room community took shape. The ministry began in 2001 as a Sunday evening worship experience twice a month, featuring dramatic lighting, video, art and non-traditional music.

Several months later the Upper Room expanded to weekly gatherings.

“The tremendous appeal of Upper Room lies in its significantly different approach and appearance,” Crosby says. “The sanctuary is completely redone for these services, darkened by drapes and lit with candles and spotlights. A



The Upper Room’s Sunday evening services feature dramatic lighting, video, art and nontraditional music. Drapes over the windows, candles and spotlights transform the sanctuary. Photo courtesy of *Presbyterians Today*.

### In this issue:

**Standing on the Pews :** More on Christ Presbyterian’s attempts to reach out to young adults, including a new venture starting in September 2009.

**Introducing Presbybriefs:** PCUSA Moderator Bruce Reyes Chow takes part in “God Complex,” searching for pastors, Presbyterian Leader, PTCA Candidate Anna Kendig receives prestigious honor, news from Clearwater Forest.

**Events Calendar:** Celebrating Community Together @ North Como; Job Transitions Groups at House of Hope and Christ Presbyterian, Synod School, Conferences on Worship, Music and the Arts.

**Access Sunday:** PTCA Members Bebe Baldwin and Donald Milloy share their hopes for a church that sees the person before their disability.



## Standing on the Pews, Continued



**"We cannot expect God to do a new thing if we keep doing everything the same old way."**

**-John Crosby, Senior**

**Pastor, Christ Presbyterian,**

**Interested about the Upper Room? You can find out more by visiting their website: [www.upperroomcommunity.org](http://www.upperroomcommunity.org)**

temporary stage is mounted in front of the chancel, with the music and the speaking being done from there.

With strong video, drama and arts components, the service is designed to be more visual and experiential, as well as organic to the community."

Attending the gatherings initially was a core group of 300 high-school aged teens and young adults, primarily from the Christ Church congregation.

News spread by word of mouth into the wider community, dramatically increasing the number of worshipers from outside the traditional church fold. Seven years after the original vision, Upper Room now averages 1,600 young adults in two services. More than 500 participate in small groups that meet three times a month for meals, study, personal sharing and mission service projects.

More than 100 young people participate in crosscultural mission trips. Many are involved in HIV/AIDS ministries in Goma, Congo.

Vickman, who is now the director of Upper Room, is not an ordained minister, but Crosby describes him as "a theologically trained, phenomenal young leader."

Crosby describes Upper Room as "a movement of kingdom bringers."

Its founders envisioned the ministry not just as an extension of Christ Church in its original location, he says, but as one that also would start new congregations by spreading the good news of the kingdom of God.

Last September Crosby announced to the Christ Church congregation that the Upper Room community would move to a new site, while a second young-adult ministry is launched on the church's main campus.

"We began the Upper Room with the idea that we wanted to multiply kingdom ministry," he says. "Planting a church is a natural next step."

This kind of risk-taking and innovation comes naturally for Christ Church, a congregation Crosby describes as "entrepreneurial and evangelical."

Still, some of Christ Church's members have been challenged or even offended by Upper Room's approach to worship. Loud rock tunes, even when re-mixing classical hymns of the faith, grate on the ears of some with more traditional musical tastes. The uninhibited singing, dancing and dress of the multi-generational crowd contrasts with more dignified worship patterns.

One elder, a classically trained musician, spoke of attending an Upper Room service against her better judgment.

"I hated the music. I hated to see the kids standing on the pews, and I'm never coming back," she told Crosby.

But despite her own discomfort, this elder acknowledged the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the community. "My granddaughter is not only coming, she's bringing friends," she told Crosby. "If you need any money from me, let me know."

Discomfort is to be expected in following Christ's call to be "kingdom bringers," Crosby contends. "It's a little controversial for church leadership to propound such a vision." Church members may be threatened by different worship styles or by the possibility of losing people and resources to new ministries.

The success of the Upper Room model "is both a threat and an opportunity," Crosby says. "We cannot expect God to do a new thing if we keep doing everything the same old way."

*Emily Enders Odom, an associate for Mission Communications for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), lives in Greensboro, N.C.*

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## “The Table at CPC” Begins in September

By Dennis Sanders

### Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area

As the Upper Room is spun off from Christ Presbyterian, a new alternative worship service will be starting in September.

Called The Table at CPC, this community “is about Christ (following Jesus), Community (loving others), and Cause (living missionally).”

When asked to describe the Table at CPC and how it is different from the Upper Room, Associate Pastor Brad Jackson had this to say:

“The Table will be ‘an alternative environment for worship and discipleship.’ Our goal as a church that desires to reach all generations is to create a place within CPC where 20 and 30-somethings can connect with the gospel and each other. The Table at CPC will be launching our weekly service on September 20th at 6 pm. We will have a Pre-launch Party the week before (9/13) with some bands, a bbq (barbeque) and preview. I think that we are learning the Upper Room was such a great thing that God used around here. Probably the biggest difference will be that The Table at CPC has a different face (myself) leading it. It will look similar in a lot of ways and different as it takes on the personality of its leadership and a new and different group of people who will worship and grow in faith here.”

In the May 20, 2009 edition of the Carillion, the newsletter of Christ Presbyterian, Jackson had this to say about his hope for the Table. “Our goal is to stay integrated with the larger CPC community, while also exploring innovative worship, creative discipleship, and missional outreach,” he said. “We want to see people transformed by Jesus to transform their communities. I get excited about launching The Table at CPC’s worship services in September, but I get most excited about what God will do as we continue to reach out to the emerging generations and see them become a part of our church family. Please join us on this exciting journey.”

## The New Look of EMerge

As you might have noticed, EMerge has gone through a bit of a change. I hope you will enjoy our refreshed print edition. We’ve also decided on changing the publication date to Mondays, after spending a year on Fridays. Please remember that the due date to turn in submitted material is Thursday, two business days before publication.

Speaking of publications, the task of EMerge is to tell the story of ongoing mission in the Presbytery. In this issue we hear stories of how Christ Presbyterian in Edina has tried to reach out to young adults, and Reverends Bebe Baldwin and Donald Milloy, both of whom are heavily involved in the Presbytery’s Disabilities Concerns Task Force, share their stories on making faith communities more hospitable to persons with disabilities.

What is your story of mission taking place in the Presbytery? With 69 church, 2 new church developments, 1 immigrant fellowship and 25,000 members, I have to believe that there are many stories taking place of faith communities trying to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If you have a story to share, please consider sending it my way. Your tale of faithfulness could be a something that another congregation or individual needs to hear. Feel free to send a submission or story idea to [communications@ptcaweb.org](mailto:communications@ptcaweb.org). Godspeed.

-Dennis Sanders, Editor



**“We want to see people transformed by Jesus to transform their communities.”**  
-Brad Jackson,  
Pastor for the  
Table at CPC.

**What is Your Story of Mission taking place in the Presbytery?**

## Presbybriefs: News At A Glance

**Introducing the "God Complex:"** A discussion within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is taking place through online radio. It's at [www.godcomplexradio.com](http://www.godcomplexradio.com) and it takes place Mondays at 11 a.m. CDT, but older programs are still available at the Web site. The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, moderator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), is pastor of a church that recently completed the new church development process in San Francisco. Reyes-Chow is also a blogger at [www.reyes-chow.com](http://www.reyes-chow.com). The Rev. Carol Howard Merritt is a pastor in the District of Columbia, a blogger at [www.tribalchurch.org](http://www.tribalchurch.org), and the author of *Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation*. Their coast-to-coast conversations cover faith, culture, politics and life. The God Complex site notes, "Through their diverse congregational experiences, Bruce and Carol share a deep common yearning to find bridges between tradition and innovation."

**In Search of Pastors:** It's been a popular spring to write about filling the pulpit of Presbyterian churches. The cover story of the June issue of *Presbyterians Today* magazine, written by John A. Bolt, deals with what it calls the "changing face of church leadership." Bolt wrote, "We just can't find a minister. What are we to do? It's a common complaint from congregations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)." The cover article can be found at [www.pcusa.org/today/cover.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/today/cover.htm). In the May 11 issue of *The Presbyterian Outlook* an article addressed discrepancy between available ministers and church needs. Responding to the article, Deborah Hollifield wrote, "As a female minister in her first call to a rural congregation (the nearest large city is 2.5 hours away), where I am their first female pastor, I feel qualified to comment. With regard to the 'first-call shortage,' I believe it would help to amend the PIF and CIF to include the additional category of 'First-call/Second Career.' Those 174 churches unwilling to consider a first-call candidate may actually be uncertain about calling a very young, inexperienced candidate." [Hollifield's complete letter](#) and the [original article](#) to which she refers can be found online.

**PPC launches new online resource for the PC(USA):** June 1, 2009 marks the launch of a brand new online resource center from the [Presbyterian Publishing Corporation](#) (PPC). The new Web site, [The Presbyterian Leader](#) ([www.thepresbyterianleader.com](http://www.thepresbyterianleader.com)), will serve as an important tool for pastors, elders, deacons, educators, worship leaders, musicians, and other PC(USA) leaders who face the often daunting challenge of communicating, sharing, and teaching their faith. Marc Lewis, president and publisher of PPC says, "We are excited to provide this resource for leaders in the Presbyterian Church. We are committed to helping Presbyterian congregations in their ministries, and we feel confident *The Presbyterian Leader* will prove to be an invaluable tool."

As part of PPC's continuing efforts to provide relevant and affordable tools to the Church, the popular *Presbyterian Worship Planner*, upgraded to version 3.0, is now available exclusively online through *The Presbyterian Leader*.

*The Presbyterian Worship Planner* is a comprehensive resource that enables preachers, liturgists, musicians and worship leaders to select and customize a weekly order of worship that can be inserted into a worship bulletin. This new online format will enable ongoing updates to resources while allowing users to download information and products immediately and affordably.

The *Presbyterian Leader* also contains numerous essays and studies on doctrine and belief; catechism materials; social policy summaries; and leadership studies, which include twice-monthly *Leader Reader* bulletins on specific church tasks and issues. "Most studies are meant for groups to read and discuss together,"

describes David Maxwell, Executive Editor of Geneva Press and [The Thoughtful Christian](#). "Each study consists of one to four sessions and each session contains a four-page participant handout and a leader's guide to facilitate a forty-five-minute discussion. Opening and closing prayers, activities, and further recommended resources are provided. The leadership studies help prepare leaders for specific tasks such as teaching or being a church officer even as they encourage reflection on foundational issues such as nourishing one's leadership call and working through conflict as a group. The doctrine and belief studies provide information on the Reformed tradition and specific theological beliefs of the church. Participants learn what the Bible says and what the PC(USA) says, and are encouraged to incorporate the beliefs into their role as leaders in the church."

All site content is available for a low annual subscription fee of just \$99.00, renewable at the discounted rate of \$75.00. Downloadable certificates, bookplates, and other materials are provided free with every subscription. Individual resources are also available for download for a per-item fee to those who choose not to subscribe. "We hope that this site will become an indispensable resource for all leaders in PC (USA) congregations," explains David Dobson, PPC's Executive Director of Publishing and Editorial Director. "For pastors, this new online version of *The Presbyterian Worship Planner* provides quick and easy access to a range of tools to help them plan a wide variety of worship services. There are studies for new-member classes, guides for elders, deacons, and trustees, and reproducible certificates for occasions such as weddings, confirmation, and baptism. And we believe the twice-monthly *Leader Reader* offerings will become a regular part of session meetings in many congregations."

**PTCA Candidate Awarded With Internship:** The Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (PPC) today announced that Anna Kendig has been selected as the Robert W. Bohl Racial Ethnic Intern. Ms. Kendig was selected from a pool of candidates that emerged from a search process that began in early March. Ms. Kendig graduated from McCormick Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree in May and will work with PPC in the coming weeks learning various aspects of religious publishing.

Marc Lewis, PPC President and Publisher, says, "We are proud of the Robert W. Bohl Racial Ethnic Internship and believe the internship provides racial ethnic seminary students and recent graduates with an opportunity to serve the church in a unique manner. We were impressed with the individuals who showed interest in the



## Presbybriefs: News At A Glance

internship and believe that service to the church through work at PPC can be an excellent expression of an individual's ministry. We are excited about Anna's interest in publishing, her keen insights about worship and cultural communities, and her demonstrated commitment to the life and mission of the PC(USA)."

Ms. Kendig will spend much of her time working in the marketing and editorial departments of PPC. The denominational publisher will publish eighty titles by the end of the year and has recently launched The Presbyterian Leader, a new online resource center for all leaders of PC(USA) congregations.

Ms. Kendig says, "I am extremely pleased to be interning with PPC this summer. As a multiracial seminary graduate, I hope to be able to supply a unique perspective while at PPC; as someone new to the publishing world, I hope to learn much. Having benefited greatly from the publications of Westminster John Knox Press and The Thoughtful Christian, I am looking forward to using my training in theology, ministry and global society to contribute to the further blessing of the church through PPC's important work."

A Magna Cum Laude graduate from St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, Ms. Kendig earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Spanish. While studying at St. Olaf College, she received the Spohn Memorial Award for Excellence from the English Department and became a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society. Ms. Kendig served as the pastoral intern at Second Presbyterian Church in Chicago, Illinois, where she preached, lead worship, and assisted in adult education. In addition, she was the worship assistant for special worship at McCormick Theological Seminary, planning and assembling worship teams. Prior to attending McCormick Theological Seminary, Ms. Kendig was a summer intern with Hispanic and Youth Ministries at First Presbyterian Church in Claremont, Minnesota, and a youth ministry coordinator at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis.

### **Friends and Neighbors Day @ Clearwater Forest:**

Friends & Neighbors Day, on Saturday, July 11th, is an annual event hosted by Presbyterian Clearwater Forest. This event provides our friends and neighbors with the opportunity to visit PCF and to see what we are all about. Clearwater Forest invites you to join them for a day in the sun to experience all PCF has to offer; from guided nature hikes, kayaking, canoeing, sailing, high ropes course, live music and great food, you will have the opportunity experience it all. For more information, contact the office at 218-678-2325. Reservations are required for lunch and dinner.

**Lake 2 Lake Bike Tour:** One of the best ways to see Minnesota's Lake Country is on a bicycle. Clearwater Forest invites you to the Lake 2 Lake Scenic Bike Tour. This annual event raises funds that benefit Clearwater Forest Scholarships. Your participation in this tour will help raise money that is used to provide scholarships to campers who may otherwise not be able to experience all PCF has to offer.

There are two rides to match nearly every ability and cycling interest; the Clearwater Family Ride is 30 miles and the Clearwater Challenge is 50 miles. No matter which ride you chose to participate in we are sure you will enjoy the challenge, fellowship and the satisfaction of giving to others.

For more information and registration materials, contact the Clearwater Forest office at 218-678-2325.

**Scholarships for Camp:** As Summer Camp Season 2009 begins, Clearwater Forest has more requests for scholarships than ever before. If you have not made a donation to our scholarship program this year, please consider making one at this time. Your gift will make camp a possibility for a camper in need.

Spending a week at camp is a wonderful opportunity for any child. It provides them with opportunity for growth in so many ways. To be one with God and nature can be a life changing experience for our campers. If you wish to provide a donation to our scholarship program you can contact the camp office at 218-678-2325 for donation materials. Thank you for your continued support of Clearwater Forest.

## Positions Available

For more information on the positions listed below, please go the PTCA website at <http://www.ptcaweb.org/RESOURCES/openpositions.htm>.

- Youth Ministry Director, Associated Church (Presbyterian-UCC), Owatonna
- Youth Ministries Director, First Presbyterian Church, White Bear Lake
- Christian Education Director, First Presbyterian Church, White Bear Lake
- Youth Ministry Coordinator, North Como Presbyterian Church, Roseville
- Children & Family Ministry Coordinator, North Como Presbyterian Church, Roseville
- Minister of Education, First Congregational Church of Minnesota (United Church of Christ), Minneapolis
- Children's Ministry Coordinator, Saint Paul's United Church of Christ, St. Paul
- Christian Education /Youth Leader, Presbyterian Church of the Apostles, Burnsville
- Director of Christian Education, Trinity Presbyterian, Woodbury

*Do you have a church staff position that needs to be filled? Send in your job announcements to Dennis Sanders at [communications@ptcaweb.org](mailto:communications@ptcaweb.org). (Oh, and let us know when you fill the position, so we can remove it from the job listings.)*

The following PTCA Congregations are accepting Personal Information Forms (PIF):

- Associate Pastor– St. Luke Presbyterian, Wayzata
- Pastor– Buffalo Presbyterian, Buffalo
- Pastor– First Presbyterian, Claremont

*To find out more information about these openings, please go the Church Leadership Connection Opportunities webpage ([www.pcusa.org/clc](http://www.pcusa.org/clc)).*

## Events Calendar

**Do you have an event you'd like to publicize? Please send it to Dennis Sanders at [communications@ptcaweb.org](mailto:communications@ptcaweb.org).**

### **Celebrating Community Together at North Como:**

Celebrating Community Together, or CCT, is a Children and Family program for the summer. Through three evening sessions and one afternoon session, the intention of CCT is to bring children and families of North Como together to learn more about what North Como does outside of its walls and celebrate those activities and affiliations. Each evening activity is from 6-7:30 pm, intended to fit just after dinner and just before bed. Activities are geared toward children up through 5th grade, to be done alongside and with parents. There is no fee for the first three sessions, while only a nominal fee for the Twins game!

Wednesday, June 17th: CCT – Mission

With help from the Church and Society Committee, CCT – Mission will have interactive, hands-on experiences that help participants learn more about the NCPCC Mission Partners both in our community and around the world. Activities include Heifer Project Animal Bingo, preparing cards and bags for Meals on Wheels recipients, making quilts with the North Como Quilters, and a peanut butter snack made by your hands – thanks to a grinder from CTI.

Thursday, July 9th: CCT – God's Creation

"God created a wonderful world and told people to take good care of it. Here's your chance! Come help our baby tree, do a little work and have a lot of fun with some "green" activities and games. Members of the Environmental Team will help lead the evening which will include recycling plastics #'s 1, 2, 4, 5, & 6 – plastics NOT collected by curbside recycling. Whether or not you plan to participate in the evening session, be sure to drop off those plastics or send them with a friend. We'll need everyone's support and want to fill up the truck!!"

Wednesday, July 29th: CCT – Creativity

Come and explore ways that we can celebrate community through music! Stations during this event will include bells, puppets, drama, art, and drums! There will be a lot of joyful noise to be made together! Jennifer Anderson and other members of the music ministry program will be helping with the evening.

Saturday, August 15th: CCT – Play!

In celebration of the end of the summer and as a capstone to the CCT series, we will attend a Twins Game on Saturday, August 15th. The game starts at 3 pm, so we will gather at the church to carpool and then enjoy the game together versus the Cleveland Indians. (The cost is \$10 per person, including a ticket, hot dog, and soda!)

We would love to see you there...if you are interested in

attending, please contact the North Como church office by calling 651-488-5581.

. If you have any questions, please contact Bobbie Bigwood, NCPCC Elder serving Education and Nurture, at [gbbigwood@hotmail.com](mailto:gbbigwood@hotmail.com) or by leaving a message at the church office.

**Job Transitions Group at House of Hope:** The House of Hope Job and Career Transitions support group has met monthly since April and will meet next on Sunday, June 21, from 11:15 to 12:30 p.m. in the Church Library. Speakers have addressed issues such as refining job resumés and networking to find new jobs. Light refreshments are served.

Both House of Hope church members and non-members are welcome.

For more information on the program for June 21, please contact Rev. Tom Forster-Smith at [tomf@hohchurch.org](mailto:tomf@hohchurch.org) or 651-223-7553.

**Job Support Groups at Christ Presbyterian:** Christ Presbyterian in Edina offers the following groups to help those in transition:

- CHRIST IN CAREER SUPPORT GROUP\*  
Meets first and third Saturdays of the month from 8:30-10:30AM in Room 316  
Contact: Jack Baloga at 952.944.5194  
\*A ministry of Christ Presbyterian Church
- INDIVIDUAL MENTORING/COACHING\*  
Contact the CPC Lay Care office at 952.920.8515  
\*A ministry of Christ Presbyterian Church
- MINNEAPOLIS JOB SUPPORT WORKSHOP  
Meets every Tuesday at 6:30PM  
Contact: John Wetzel at [john.wetzel@right.com](mailto:john.wetzel@right.com)  
Visit [www.mjsw.org](http://www.mjsw.org)



## Events Calendar

### Summer Office Hours @ the Presbytery Office

**Monday-Thursday:**  
8:30am-4:30pm

**Friday:**  
8:30am-12:30pm

**The Presbytery office will closed Friday, July 3 to observe the Independence Day Holiday.**

- **WOMEN'S NETWORKING GROUP**

Meets second Tuesday of the month at 6:30PM in the Parlor

Contact: John Wetzel at [john.wetzel@right.com](mailto:john.wetzel@right.com)

Visit [www.mjsw.org](http://www.mjsw.org)

**Caring for Persons with Mental Illness:** Statistics suggest that 48 million Americans suffer from some type of diagnosed mental illness. More than likely, the odds favor that one or more of those 48 million will walk through the doors of your church or are already members of your congregation. How will you help them?

The National Associate for Mental Illness-Minnesota is sponsoring two educational events that are open to the public. The June 23 and July 21 sessions at St. Michael Lutheran Church in Bloomington are being hosted by the BeFriender Ministry National Office. For more information on "Ministry and the Mis-Wired Mind" go to <http://www.befrienderministry.org/mmwm.htm> or call 952-767-0244.

**Celebrate the Calvin Jubilee at Montreat:** July 8-11, 2009, Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, N.C. Celebrate the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth by participating in a conference on Calvin's legacy July 8-11 at Montreat Conference Center. We will explore Calvin's continuing influence on Reformed faith and life through lectures, panels, discussion and worship. An expanded bookstore will feature both new and classic publications. To register or to get more information, please go to: [www.pcusa.org/calvinjubilee](http://www.pcusa.org/calvinjubilee).

**Synod School 2009:** Synod School 2009, slated Sunday through Friday, July 26-31, at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa, will convene around the theme, "Building a Culture of Peace." Synod School is an educational ministry of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies.

Synod School offers a welcoming and safe community for people of all ages and interest to learn, to grow spiritually, and to share in fellowship. Special programs for children and youth - infant through grade 12 - allow parents - grandparents, aunts and uncles and more - to attend classes with other adults, knowing that their children are in good care and having a great time.

Sara Lisherness, director of the Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), will be the 2009 convocation speaker.

For more information as well as tools to promote the School, please go to the Synod website at: <http://www.lakesandprairies.org/school.html>.

**Boundaries Training Available:** This training is offered on three different dates in three different regions of Minnesota. All sessions are from 8:30am to 4:30pm. Lunch and materials are included.

- Thursday, October 8th 2009 - Fergus Falls, MN
- Thursday, October 22nd 2009 - Hinckley, MN
- Thursday, November 5th 2009 - Lakeville, MN

For more information or to register contact Aundrea Billings at [aundrea.billings@mnychurches.org](mailto:aundrea.billings@mnychurches.org) or 612-230-3236 or visit [www.mnychurches.org](http://www.mnychurches.org).

**Worship and Music Conference:** June 21-27, June 28-July 4, Montreat Conference Center, North Carolina. Sponsored by the Presbyterian Association of Musicians (PAM), The Presbyterian Association of Musicians (PAM) sponsors two identical Worship and Music Conferences at Montreat Conference Center each summer. PAM conferences seek to model a high standard of worship through the promotion of worthy liturgy, church music, and other arts, providing spiritual enrichment and nurture to children, youth, and adults. The conferences are designed for everyone committed to worship in the church - pastors, musicians, choir members, worship committee members, children, and youth. To register please go to the PAM website, <http://www.presbysmusic.org/ConfMontreat.htm>.

**Worship and the Arts Conference:** July 22-25, Louisville, KY. Sponsored by Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), this four-day event will offer pastors, worship leaders, liturgical artists, church members and seminarians ideas and inspiration for creative approaches to worship planning and leadership. Through lectures, workshops with professional artists and creative worship experiences, participants will explore the biblical, liturgical and theological symbolism of borders in a variety of media: music, dance, drama, writing and visual arts. For more information and to register, please go to the Presbyterian Church (USA) Theology and Worship website, <http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/events/worshipparts2009.htm>.

## Jesus Got It Right!

### Celebrate Access Sunday

Access Sunday, celebrated June 28, calls Presbyterians to celebrate the inclusion, full participation and gifts of persons with disabilities. The 2009 theme reflects the faith, experiences and challenges of writers with disabilities as they encounter Scripture.

The inclusive church values and empowers all of its members for mutual ministry. Find tools in the Access Sunday resource packet to help your congregation become intentional in its welcome and inclusion of people with disabilities. Get suggestions for helping persons with disabilities share their gifts in the PC (USA). Use the worship materials to plan a special Access Sunday service. Go to <http://www.pcusa.org/pheva/networks/pdc/access.htm>.

By Rev. Bebe Baldwin

*Editor's note: The following was written by the Rev. Bebe Baldwin, an Honorably Retired Pastor in the PTCA and also chair of the Disabilities Concerns Task Force. She is also the chairs Presbyterians for Disabilities Concerns.*

Who was the man who lived in the tombs, who was "dead" to his family and community? Had he ever worked, married, nurtured children? What was his name before he became "Legion?"

Who was the woman who defied convention to touch Jesus? What was her life before she became "unclean?" Why was she all alone in the crowd?

You may wonder why I have chosen to link these two stories. The conditions of the two characters were very different. Yet, if we try to step inside the stories, we find that the two persons had much in common. Each was isolated from the community — the man because of mental illness and the woman because of a chronic physical condition. For too many people who live with disabilities, isolation is a way of life.

Let's consider first the story about "Legion." The Gospels relate many healing narratives from Jesus' ministry, but few give us the rich details or describe in so powerful a way the isolation experienced by so many people with disabilities. From the story we learn that he lived among the tombs, that he had broken his chains and shackles, but that he continued to cry out and to harm himself. "Legion," the name he gave to Jesus, was a military term for a company of soldiers. For first century Jews, the soldiers would have been members of the Roman occupying force. The man Jesus met was believed to be the victim of another kind of occupation. In Jesus' culture, people believed that demons caused some illnesses, including mental illness. They believed, and the man himself must have believed, that demons had occupied his body and were controlling him. He was feared, isolated and "dead" to his community.

But Jesus heard the man's cries and felt his pain. We are reminded of the words to Moses from the burning bush, "I have observed the misery of my people ... I have heard their cry ... I know their suffering." (Exodus 3:7) Jesus didn't run away from the man who was so feared. Instead, he spoke to him and asked him his name. For the people of the Bible, names had a special significance. A name expressed the reality of the person.

But, unlike the villagers, Jesus saw the person first, not his illness. The man was more than his name. Jesus knew

that beyond the confusion of voices that had occupied the man's mind, beyond the crying and the violent acts, he was a person loved by God. Jesus knew that the man was more than his illness.

Let's move on to the second story, the account of the woman with the hemorrhage. She was not sent to the tombs but she, too, lived in isolation. Because of her bleeding, she was ritually unclean. The sacred law forbade anyone to touch her or anything she had touched. (Leviticus 15:19-28)


Women went to the ritual bath for purification after each menstrual period. For the woman in the story, however, there could be no ritual bath. She had been bleeding for 12 years.

We can only imagine what "cures" she may have tried, what sacrifices she may have made in order to be healed. She had spent all she had and now, she was alone, shut out of much of the life of the community. She must have thought of Jesus as her last hope. We can picture her pushing her way through the crowd, probably well-covered so that others would not shrink away.

When Jesus felt her touch, he could have reacted with anger. He was a faithful Jew and the woman was "unclean." She may have touched one of the four tassels on his garment that marked him as a religious man, a member of the covenant people. What audacity! What brazenness!

Jesus could have turned on her and accused her of making him "unclean." Instead, he saw the person first, not her condition. He accepted her bold action and the risk she had taken. He told her to go in peace. He recognized her as a person valued by God.

Too often, people with disabilities are seen as "the blind," "the deaf," "the handicapped," etc., etc., not as persons first. As an adult who had to learn to live with a disability (vision loss), I had to come to think of myself as a "person first." It was something like finding a new identity.

I had always loved to read; I had taken great pride in my academic achievement. Facing a life without books was like looking into a black 

## Jesus Got It Right!, Continued



**“Jesus was a boundary breaker. His ministry was a ministry of inclusion, not of isolation. He made it possible for both the people in our stories to be restored to their communities.”**

**-Rev. Bebe Baldwin,  
Chair, Disability  
Concerns Task  
Force.**

hole. Was my love for books to be taken from me? I was terrified.

As I was struggling, a wise friend told me, “Bebe, you are more than a pair of eyes!” Her words helped me to begin my process of healing. They helped me to remember that I was a person of worth, to learn that I could accept my disability as part of who I was instead of being crushed by it. Like the “unclean” woman, we do not have to accept the barriers set by society. We do not have to accept isolation!

Jesus was a boundary breaker. His ministry was a ministry of inclusion, not of isolation. He made it possible for both the people in our stories to be restored to their communities.

The man who had been “Legion” begged Jesus to let him go away with him. His village, in fact, did not want him back. They even begged Jesus to go away. Perhaps they felt safer when the man was kept in the tombs. Nevertheless, Jesus sent him back. Was Jesus, too, rejecting the man? Not at all! He knew that healing was not complete outside the community.

We don’t know how her community felt about the woman who had been “unclean.” Would they accept her after years of isolation? Would they trust the unconventional woman who had dared to reach out to touch a rabbi?

In Jesus’ culture, “healing” meant being restored to the community. This goes way beyond what is commonly thought of as a “cure.” In our “enlightened” culture, we confuse the two.

People in the Bible did not know the kind of individualism that is so prevalent in our society. As Kathy Black wrote, “for first century peoples, it was one’s sense of being in the community that was crucial, and illness or disability interfered with one’s being in the community” (Kathy Black, *A Healing Homiletic*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1996). For Jesus, and for us, “healing” included the whole person, the emotional and the spiritual self within the community.

In our culture it is assumed that anyone with a disability needs to be “cured.” I have a friend who is blind who says, “if someone offered me a ‘cure,’ I’d take it, but I don’t need it.” As a person with a disability, I agree. I will never

be “cured,” but I, like everyone else, am called to be “healed.” We need to recover the Biblical wisdom that “healing” means that persons are included, respected, and able to participate in the community. (Actually, I believe that when persons with disabilities or mental illness are excluded, the community itself needs healing. It is a broken community.)

Our society still treats people with disabilities as “unclean.” We may be shunned or ignored because those who are “able-bodied” (at least temporarily) feel uncomfortable, aren’t sure how to relate to us, or don’t make the effort to accommodate us. Scripture may even be used to “prove” that our disabilities are punishment for our sins or evidence of lack of enough faith!

People who live with mental illness are often especially feared. News stories about violent crimes committed by people living with mental illness add to these fears. Actually, people with mental illness are more likely to be victims than perpetrators of crime.

Perhaps the most concrete example of isolation to the “tombs” is the huge population of people who are homeless. A recent survey in my own state found that more than 80 percent of people living in the streets had at least one disability. Most live with multiple challenges. One half of the people in the study were living with mental illness. One in four homeless men was a veteran, many of whom have post traumatic stress disorder. (*Overview of Homelessness in Minnesota*, March 2007. Wilder Research, St. Paul, Minn.) In his remarkable stories of people living in the streets because of mental illness, Craig Rennebohm makes the point, again and again, that each person needs a circle of support, a caring community and an end to isolation (Craig Rennebohm with David Paul, *Souls In the Hands of a Tender God*. Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 2008).

Even in good economic times, the rate of unemployment among people with disabilities is very high. Many of our friendships begin or are centered around our places of work. When employment is denied, persons face not only financial stress but can also be cut off from interpersonal relationships. The result is isolation. →

## Jesus Got It Right!, Continued



Above is the artwork for Access Sunday designed by Kirsten Berry, a member of Hope Presbyterian Church in Richfield, MN. The words in the circle are from Galatians 3:28: "For all are one in Christ Jesus."

**"People with 'disabilities' are people with abilities. Those of us who live with disabilities want to serve our churches and our communities. "**

**-Rev. Bebe Baldwin,  
Chair, Disability  
Concerns Task  
Force.**

So how about the church? Are we breaking down the walls of isolation? Or, are we mirroring the culture with its lack of understanding, its fears, or its prejudice? We are told that 90 percent of people with disabilities do not attend church. Is this because of lack of interest in the spiritual life? Certainly not! But, churches that are inaccessible and do not welcome people with disabilities into full participation — and leadership — could just as well be screaming, "unclean!"

I recently was told of a family that was barred from church because of a child who has autism. I know of a young man who could not be considered for church membership because he has mental retardation. In another church, parents had to fight for adequate parking space because the usual "handicapped parking" did not serve the needs of their children.

In each of these cases, and in many more, churches are imposing isolation on persons with disabilities, and often, upon their families. Families, too, need circles of care because of the extraordinary energy and time that may be required in support and advocacy with or for a family member who has a disability. When there is secrecy or shame because of a disability, as is often the case with mental illness, the result is isolation.

So what can and should the church do? We can follow Jesus' example. He saw the person first, not the disability. He knew that healing took place within the community. But there is something else we should not miss in the story of "Legion." Jesus would not let the new disciple go away with him, but the story says that "Legion" began to tell his own story of what Jesus had done for him. He used the gifts God had given him. What wonderful gifts, what wonderful stories the church is missing because we have not been willing to value the gifts and to listen! Perhaps in breaking the isolation the last point is not important. People with "disabilities" are people with abilities. Those of us who live with disabilities want to serve our churches and our communities. When I was struggling with vision loss, I was terrified that I would not be able to continue the work I loved. A wise colleague told me, "you'll do everything you've been doing; you'll just do it differently!" Is there any better way to break the boundaries of isolation than to accept, respect and use the gifts of people with disabilities?

Who was the man who lived among the tombs? Who was the woman who was "unclean?" They are among us today. They are the persons who are feared, shunned, stereotyped, shamed, thrown away, ignored or devalued because of a physical disability, a developmental disability or mental illness. Jesus offered the way to restoration, inclusion and participation. He broke the barriers. He got it right. When will the church and when will our communities follow his leading?

### Acknowledgment

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**"EMerge,"** is a weekly publication from the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area (PTCA). The mission is to share brief highlights with links to resources and news. Recipients include congregations, minister members, other members, committees, and friends. Please send submissions and e-mail corrections to **Dennis Sanders, editor, at [communications@ptcaweb.org](mailto:communications@ptcaweb.org)** . Usual distribution: Mondays. **Deadline: Thursday (two business days before distribution).**

## An Affirmation

by **The Rev. Donald S. Milloy**

*Editor's Note: Donald Milloy is an Honorably Retired Member of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area and is actively involved on the Disabilities Concerns Task Force.*

*Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image..." (Genesis 1:26a)*

We are those who are called "disabled." We are those who are challenged, physically or mentally. We may hobble; we may not have voice, song, sight or sound. We may not be in control of our muscles or minds. Yet, we join together with each other, in and with our communities, as God's daughters and sons.

We bear witness that we are made in the image of our parent-God and capable of being God-self to the world. We raise our voices and our bodies even though we may be incapable of doing so "perfectly." We praise and proclaim the holiness of our parent-God who has proclaimed us holy by dwelling in us.

May we get beyond the stereotypes to be who we truly are, the presence of God's Spirit in and for the world, a voice that speaks as clearly and as powerfully as any others and a reflection of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ.

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