



The Church and Real Life

by **Matthew Robbins-Ghormley**

For the last year or so, I've been meeting weekly with three other pastors of smaller Presbyterian churches here in the Cities. We get together to read the Bible together, specifically the texts we'll be preaching, and to talk together about the common work we're doing. Often we end up talking about the particular challenges and opportunities in the situation we find ourselves in here at the beginning of the 21st century, and how different it is to be church in 2009 than it was in 1959.

Out of our conversations together, we've planned **an event for Saturday, September 19th**

designed for our congregations (and for anyone else who would like to join in) on what we think is an intriguing topic. Our topic is the question: **Does the church have anything to say to real life?** Are we just a nice little group of people who sit in a room together once a week and talk about things that are interesting only to ourselves, or are we a part of something that has something real and compelling to say to the very real questions of our neighbors, co-workers, and friends?

If it's the former, maybe we should just go ahead and close our doors right now. If we really do have something to say, what is it, and what prevents us from saying it? What are the big



What does the church have to say to the 21st century world? Photo by iStockphoto.

In this issue:

More from on the **Church and Real Life.**

Numbers: Details on the **Statistics of the PC(USA)** in its first 25 years.

Torture: Rev. **Neil Craigan** talks about **torture** from a theological perspective.

Tidbits: **Church of All Nations Presbyterian** goes South African, **Arlington Hills** get a new patio courtesy of a good Eagle Scout, **Chain of Lakes** hosts first **Vacation Bible School.**



Great Ends, Continued



“Does the church have anything to say to real life? Are we just a nice little group of people who sit in a room together once a week and talk about things that are interesting only to ourselves, or are we a part of something that has something real and compelling to say to the very real questions of our neighbors, co-workers, and friends?”

-Rev. Matthew Robbins-Ghormley.

questions that people are wrestling with today, and how are we being a community that speaks the hope of the Gospel to those questions?

Our guest for the day is Dr. Andy Root, theologian and professor at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul. The day is intended both for church leaders, and for regular folks too. **It is a day of theological conversation for everyone.** Bring your own questions too.

*The Details: Saturday, September 19th, 2009, 9am - 3pm, Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church, 1620 East 46th Street, Minneapolis MN 55407. Registration Including Lunch: \$20 (Lunch by Pepito's) **Registration is limited.** To register, call Jan at 612-721-4463.*

Put the date on your calendar now.

Hope to see you there.

Matthew Robbins-Ghormley is pastor of Randolph Heights Presbyterian Church in St. Paul. You can download a flyer for the September 19 event by going to EMerge: The Blog at www.presbyterytwincities.org/emergeblog.

Does the CHURCH have anything to say to REAL LIFE?



Has church become an irrelevant institution or an insincere ritual, disconnected from

people's real lives?

Or can the church REALLY enter into suffering, be a place of belonging, and speak of hope in the midst of reality?

A day of theological conversation for church leaders and regular people, from all faith perspectives.

Bring your questions. We'll have donuts.

Registration Including Lunch: \$20 (Lunch by Pepito's)

Registration is limited.

To register, call Jan at 612-721-4463 by September 11.



Dr. Andy Root is a theologian and professor of Youth & Family Ministry at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, and the author of *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, *Relationships Unfiltered*, and the forthcoming

The Promise of Despair: The Way of the Cross as the Way of the Church, which will shape the day's conversation.

Co-hosted by Randolph Heights Presbyterian Church, Edgcombe Presbyterian Church, Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church, and Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church.

'Comparative Statistics 2008' analyzes 25 years of Presbyterian reunion

By Jerry Van Marter, Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — Comparative Statistics, an annual publication of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Research Services, provides a yearly snapshot for tracking denominational trends across a spectrum of statistical measurements.

But the current release — Comparative Statistics 2008 — takes this analysis a step further. For the first time and in one place, the new book gathers comparative data going back to Presbyterian reunion in 1983 on membership, congregations, baptisms, women in ministry, and financial contributions.

In addition, the new publication traces trends in two categories dating back to when data were first reliably collected: attendance (1990), new church developments (1992), and race/ethnicity (1999).

Released this week, Comparative Statistics 2008 features an introductory essay, "The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at 25," by Jack Marcum, coordinator of research services for the General Assembly Mission Council.

Marcum's analysis gives clear markers for many of the related issues of decline that have faced the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) since reunion:

- Membership (from 3,131,228 to 2,140,165, a loss of 31.6 percent or an average of 1.3 percent per year);
- Baptisms (child baptisms declined by 48.9 percent and adult baptisms by 63.0 percent);
- Congregations (from 11,662 in 1983 to 10,751 in 2008, a total decline of 7.8 percent, or an annual average of 0.3 percent);
- New church developments (a "ragged decline" ranging from a high of 45 in 1992 to a low of 16 in 1999, with 20 in 2008);
- Worship attendance (from a weekly estimated 1,360,000 in 1990 to 1,090,000 today, down 19.7 percent); and
- Active ministers (declined by 11.7 percent, while the number of retired ministers has more than doubled).

At the same time, several areas of growth can also be traced:

- Attendance as a percentage of membership (from 47.6 percent to 51 percent);
- Women in ministry (a fourfold increase, from 1,010 in 1983 to 4,253 in 2008);
- Asian membership (from 57,517 in 1999 to 69,912 in 2008);
- Hispanic membership (from 27,800 in 1999 to 29,699 in 2008);



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index.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/wITHERSPOONPRESS/index.htm).**

Great Ends, Continued



"We may not always like what we see, but with such a long time period, we have a clearer sense of where we've come from and where our future as a denomination seems to be headed unless we make intentional changes."

-Jack Marcum.

- and Financial giving (on a per member basis, adjusted for inflation, from \$677 per year to \$1,109 per year.)

"The trends really stand out when we're able to view a quarter century at a glance," says Marcum. "We may not always like what we see, but with such a long time period, we have a clearer sense of where we've come from and where our future as a denomination seems to be headed unless we make intentional changes."

Stats for the PTCA



The Presbytery for the Twin Cities Area showed slight losses in 2008. The Presbytery has 69 congregations

with a total of 25,058 members. The median size of a congregation is 170. The PTCA lost 300 members in 2008 which translated to a 1.2% loss compared to 2007.

Christ Presbyterian Church in Edina, MN is listed as the 3rd largest church in the Presbyterian Church (USA) for 2008 with 5,049 members. Christ gained 245 members over 2007 statistics which was a 5.1% improvement over the prior year. The largest church in the PC (USA) is Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta with just over 8800 members and in second place is Fourth Presbyterian in Chicago with just over 6,000 members.

Thoughts About Evangelism Sunday



By Ray Jones

I love the church! But I struggle with what we've done to the church. The church has to be more than a social club. Yes, church is community, but it is also so much more. The church has to be more than the place in which we learn about good behavior. Of course, we want to be obedient, but what's the point of the obedience? The church has to be more than "getting people into heaven." Again, we want people to experience lasting life, but we also must be concerned about what it means to live and serve now.

What if following Jesus is all about learning how to live our real and lasting lives? What if he is not only the source of our forgiveness, but what if his life is the way into real and lasting life? I am beginning to believe that the church must recover our Jewish roots. In Jesus, the Messiah, all of creation is being restored and set right. When we are part of the body of Christ, we are connected to a spirit-filled body that is enabling us to undergo transformation. In other words, in our life together, we continue to die in our baptism to the old way of life, and we are raised to new life in Christ. We are part of God's rescue plan for creation!

Evangelism Sunday becomes a day for us to be the church in the fullest sense of what it means to be church. The body gathers for celebration and equipping, and then is released for service. In serving we bear witness to the restoring power of God. We are witnesses to the love of God that is changing this world through grace and mercy.

There are hurting people in all our communities. Pray about a place in which to serve. Maybe it's a place in which you are currently serving... Pray about whether to worship where you are serving or to worship in your sanctuary. If you decide to worship in your sanctuary, please consider a plan for serving following the service or later in the week. There is nothing like offering another person the love of God in Jesus Christ that causes us to know that things are working out in our lives and communities. Evangelism is sharing good news. It's bearing witness to the source of life and love through what we do and what we say. It's a lifestyle.

For too long we have allowed the fringe

groups to claim the word "evangelism," and we cringe at all the ways we've experienced the word being misused. But what if it is a lifestyle that comes from following the radical teachings of our rabbi, Jesus? He's promised that the relationship will fit us perfectly (Mt 11:28-30). Evangelism is all about communicating, through words and deeds, where that liberating life is found. There is nothing more life-giving than being able to share life with another person in need.

One of my fondest memories as a pastor was serving with others in a shelter for men struggling with addiction and homelessness. The meal we would serve, and then share together with these men, was a time of experiencing the healing power of Christ. I always left this context of serving others filled up with new life and closer to God. In the serving, I was able to share and talk about the huge difference Jesus has made in my life.

My hope for Evangelism Sunday is that we will experience real and lasting life serving others. Decide where you will serve, and then use the worship resources as a way to be sent into mission. Please take pictures and write about your experiences. We would love to share in them. And remember that if September 27th does not work for you, please plan for this work on another Sunday. May your experience of Evangelism Sunday continue to lead you into ministry that is reaching people and relieving suffering.

Ray Jones is the Coordinator for Evangelism for the Presbyterian Church (USA). He has served the church as a pastor for twenty-five years. This article is found on Ray's blog, Real Lasting Life, which is located at <http://presbyterian.typepad.com/reallastinglife/>.

" Evangelism Sunday becomes a day for us to be the church in the fullest sense of what it means to be church. The body gathers for celebration and equipping, and then is released for service. In serving we bear witness to the restoring power of God. We are witnesses to the love of God that is changing this world through grace and mercy."

-Ray Jones.

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Macalester LEEDs the Way : When [Macalester College](#) decided to invest in a new home for the Institute for Global Citizenship (IGC), a program to educate and engage students to be global citizen-leaders, college leaders knew that it was critical that the building itself be designed and constructed in ways that demonstrate global leadership.

Reflecting that commitment, Markim Hall is the college's first, and only the second higher education facility in the state, to be built with the goal of obtaining the LEED Platinum certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. It is also the first building in St. Paul to be built to these standards.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) emphasizes state-of-the-art strategies for sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality. Platinum is the highest level of certification. Only 12 college campus buildings in the United States have earned platinum-level certification.

Markim Hall will be officially dedicated following a campus-wide convocation Oct. 1. The \$7.5 million, 17,000 square foot facility houses the Institute for Global Citizenship, civic engagement, study abroad and international programs, faculty and staff offices, meeting rooms, and an open atrium for campus events. Donors funded the entire project.

-Compiled by Beth Furkin, Presbyterian News Service

ELCA Assembly Leader Asks Members to Respect Each Other, Allow Time: In final comments to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Rev. Mark S. Hanson, ELCA presiding bishop, pledged to the voting members "to speak well of you and of this church, and I ask you to do the same."

The churchwide assembly, the chief legislative authority of the ELCA, met here Aug. 17-23 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. About 2,000 people participated, including 1,045 ELCA voting members. The theme for the biennial assembly was "God's work. Our hands."

During the week, the voting members adopted, following considerable debate, proposals to direct that changes be made to the ELCA's ministry policies to make it possible for people in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as ELCA associates in ministry, clergy, deaconesses and diaconal ministers.

Hanson, who presided at the assembly, said, "One way I will speak well of you is not to use the word 'fear' to describe those who oppose the actions that prevailed in many of our discussions. It's not helpful to our life together. It's not respectful of deeply held convictions shaped by theology and Scripture and faith."

"I am committed to the ELCA continuing to be a church body where people feel safe to teach, to preach, to lead and to serve in ways that they believe are consistent with the vows one takes in ordination and the promises one makes in the affirmation of Baptism," he told voting members.

The church needs to be a safe place for "rich theological conversation, biblical inquiry and faith expressions and explorations," a quality of the Lutheran Church for 500 years," he said. Hanson said the steps of implementing the actions of the assembly will take time. "My prayer and my plea is that we take that time together rather than separately," he said.

Speaking to members who opposed the church's decisions on ministry policies, Hanson requested that, if they are wondering about their place in the ELCA, "let us be part of that discernment."

"Take time with your decision. Step back and understand the magnitude of the decision if you choose to leave, because we will be diminished by your absence," he said, adding that the capacity for the ELCA to do its work will also be diminished.

The Good News of Jesus Christ "is too good to squander with internal conflicts that will drain our energies when our capacity is to bring the Good News to the world so that all might know Jesus," Hanson continued.

He concluded by thanking the voting members for the week-long assembly, noting that "it's been a challenge, it's been a joy."

David D. Swartling, ELCA secre-



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tary, announced that the 2011 ELCA Church-wide Assembly will be held at the Marriott World Center, Orlando, Fla., Aug. 14-22, 2011.

-*ELCA News Service*

Christian Vocation Sunday: God's call is more than a job — daily service in the world through our jobs, talents and interests is a cornerstone of our lives as Christians. The programmatic emphasis for the Sunday before Labor Day — September 6 — is appropriately, Christian Vocation Sunday.

Cultivate a culture of call in your own congregation by claiming our theological perspective of the priesthood of all believers. Find ways of including this emphasis on call in your congregation's worship and activities. Get help with resources from the office of Christian Vocation, including a call to worship, dramatic reading and a downloadable bulletin insert by going to www.pcusa.org/christianvocation/christianvocationsunday.htm.

New Youth Director at Church of the Apostles: Presbyterian Church of the Apostles in Burnsville has hired Jill Carlson as their new Youth Director. Carlson lives in Burnsville with her husband, Kevin. A life-long resident of the South Metro, she has been involved in Special Olympics, supporting her brother by joining him on his bowling and softball teams.

In summarizing her past youth work, she said her emphases are on "service, social and spiritual work for all who seek enrichment."

She continues, "I think my best qualities include my willingness to take risks and try new things, my flexible personality and my diligent skill to pay attention to the details. I also am capable of baking a really great brownie."

Church of All Nations Heads to South Africa:

Jin Kim, pastor of Church of All Nations in Columbia Heights along with Pastor David Mwia, Immigrant Ministries Pastor at the church

will lead the congregation's 7 full-time pastoral interns, plus Risley and Renisha Prakasim, natives of South Africa, plus Pastor Joo Kim of Knox Pres in St. Paul, a recent graduate of CAN's internship program. The 12 member team will reconnect with and deepen the relationships established with churches in South Africa in 2006. The church website notes this experience will be a life changing moment for the future leaders of the church. "This is the kind of critical learning and missional engagement that will be formative for these future pastors. We hope to bring back what we learn in the historic cities of Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg, Durban, and Cape Town to further equip Church of All Nations in its ministry of reconciliation in the Twin Cities."

Randolph Heights Helps Epilepsy Foundation: Since June a bin has been located in the corner of the St. Paul congregation's parking lot. The bin is from the Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota, where people can donate used clothing and shoes to help the charity. "*Over the past year, over 21,300 pounds of goods have been donated through our bin!* That makes the bin we host one of the highest volume donation sites in the city!" said Pastor Matthew Robbins-Ghormley at the congregation's blog.

He continues: "The donations given go to support the Epilepsy Foundation in their mission to improve the quality of life of those affected by seizures, including sponsoring young people to go to EF's Camp Oz every summer. Thanks to so many neighbors and friends of Randolph Heights who have participated in this great partnership for the common good!"

The donation bin is located at the corner of Hamline and James in St. Paul.

Arlington Hills Dedicates New Patio: A new patio facing Lake Phalen was dedicated at the eastside St. Paul congregation on June 26. The patio was the Eagle Scout project for Tony Yang, a member of Arlington Hills. "The process for achieving the distinction of Eagle Scout includes planning a significant project," according to the Heirloom, Arlington Hills newsletter. "Tony chose the construction of the patio on the north side of our church, which previously was a patch of dirt overgrown with grass and weeds."

Yang received his Eagle Scout badge on May 21.

Supply Pastor Gene Orr's prayer at the dedication asked that this patio be to God's glory and that it be a sign of welcome to community beyond Arlington Hills in East St. Paul.

New Church Start Hosts First Vacation Bible School: Chain of Lakes Presbyterian, a new church start in Lino Lakes,



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hosted its first Vacation Bible School in mid-August. Sixteen children participated in the event, held at a local Catholic church. "Our success at Vacation Bible School just reminded me the importance of children in building a faith community," said Paul Moore, organizing pastor. "Most parents want ministries for their children—even parents who are not connected to a church. The more we can offer quality ministries for children the better chance we have of developing as faith communities."

Moore says the success of VBS has fired his passion for a children's ministry at the new church development. Moore asks for prayers in how to go about building a ministry for children. You can read more at Paul Moore's blog: <http://chainlink-chainoflakesncd.blogspot.com/>.

"Thin Places" turns 10: "Thin Places" an ecumenical newsletter published by the Spiritual Growth Community at Westminster Presbyterian in Minneapolis, celebrates its 10th year of publication. The journal started in 1999 just as Senior Pastor Tim Hart-Andersen was starting his ministry at the downtown Minneapolis congregation. He took the occasion to write an article sharing his own experience of a "thin place," a point where the everyday world and the world of mystery touch and lift up this important ministry. "I had nothing to do with its inception or its publication but drawn to its potential and felt called to encourage and support it," Hart-Andersen writes. "Thin Places emerged from a small group of spiritual pilgrims in the congregation, inspired by the wisdom and energy of Marilyn and Alan Youel, the editors for the last ten years. Those of us who read and use each issue are grateful to both of them for their fruitful efforts."

Hart-Andersen notes that the Minnesota-based journal has had an impact felt not only locally, but around the world. "I am delighted that over its first decade Thin Places has grown to be a respected resource for the contemplative life here in the Twin Cities—and even around the world. More than once I have been at a church gathering somewhere far away when someone has approached me and thanked me for the ministry of Thin Places."

You can read past issues of Thin Places by going online at http://www.ewestminster.org/thin_places.

Presbyterian Peacemaking Program offers new Minute for Mission video to interpret offering: The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program has developed a new minute for mission video to help interpret the Peacemaking Offering to congregations. The theme is "Peace Be With You" and gives over a dozen practical examples of what that means and how gifts to the Offering support activities and resources. In order to share the video with your congregations it can be viewed online or ordered through Presbyterian Distribution Ser-

vice (PDS #12142-09-290). The Peacemaking Offering is typically taken on World Communion Sunday, which this year is Sunday, October 4th.

Each congregation is encouraged to retain 25 percent of the Offering it receives to use for local peacemaking ministries. Twenty-five percent is used by presbyteries and synods, and 50 percent is used by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program and other General Assembly Mission Council Ministries.

The 217th General Assembly (2006) encouraged congregations to consider directly some or all of their share of the Offering as a faithful Christian response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

You can find the Minute for Mission and additional resources online (www.pcusa.org/peacemakingoffering) and information on the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program through their (www.pcusa.org/peacemaking) Web site.

Church World Service Needs Kits: Deb Braun, Field Assistant in the CWS Minn-Kota Regional Office reports that the CWS Emergency Response Office (ERP) is currently working on some large shipments of material aid to Liberia, Moldova and the West Bank. "Once those shipments are completed, we will have greatly depleted our supplies of Hygiene and Baby Kits," Braun says. Donna Derr, Director of the ERP Office, has issued an urgent appeal for the Kits, also noting that our current inventory of Clean-up Buckets is only 1,700, which is a concern as we head into hurricane season. Providing assistance to one major hurricane could easily deplete the current inventory of the Clean-up Buckets, which are heavily used in domestic disaster response.

Braun adds, "we often get calls from our kit donors and denominational partners, asking if there is a particular need for specific kits. As kits are being assembled this summer and fall for denominational meetings, we ask that you keep in mind this



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current urgent need for Hygiene and Baby Kits, Clean-up Buckets, and Shipping & Processing Funds. Monetary donations to cover the cost of kits are also welcome.”

Please contact the Minn-Kota Regional Office (phone: 1-888-297-2767 or dbraun@churchworldservice.org) for more information about these programs, or to request promotional materials. We appreciate your help in supplying these urgently needed resources, and greatly value your partnership.

Completed Kits may be shipped pre-paid to:

Church World Service
Brethren Service Center Annex
601 Main Street
PO Box 188
New Windsor, MD 21776-0188

Kit Funds and Processing/Shipping Funds may be sent directly to CWS, PO Box 968, Elkhart, IN 46515-0968.

Winnebago Presbytery taking steps in going “green”: Winnebago Presbytery is contemplating a "green strategy," according to a note in the July 24 issue of News and Notes, the presbytery's newsletter. The note stated: "An 'interest only' meeting to determine how many people might want to participate in a task group to pursue a green strategy for Winnebago Presbytery and its congregations and what the focus of the group would be is scheduled in the meeting room on the first floor at Neenah First Presbyterian at 1 p.m. Aug. 13." Persons interested in attending the meeting are being asked to notify Sarah Moore-Nokes, associate executive presbyter, at sarah@winnebago-presbytery.org.

Conference Set for Communicators

Are you in charge of the church newsletter or website? Are you interested in acquiring more skills? Do you want to find out how to communicate more effectively while keeping costs low?

Communicators (administrative assistants, communication specialists, pastors, lay leaders, etc.) , and anyone else who might want to attend, are being invited to the second Synod-wide Communicators Conference Wednesday through Friday, Sept. 2-4, at the Hilton Garden Inn, Eagan, Minn. Sarah Moore-Nokes, associate executive presbyter in Winnebago Presbytery, will lead the conference's first session Wednesday evening on Google Tools. Attendees are asked, if possible, to bring their own laptop computer. Shane Whisler, communications director in the Synod of the Sun, will provide details about working with Presbyterian Neighbor News on Thursday morning, and Bethany Furkin will also address the conference about the Presbyterian News Service during that time. There is also a possibility that the executive director for the Committee on Local Arrangements for the 2010 General Assembly will be on hand before Thursday's lunch.

Full registration is \$100 and includes all sessions, accommodations, opening dinner, two breakfasts and a lunch. For those who do not need accommodations, registration is \$40 for all sessions. Registration is easy, simply send an email to Duane Sweep, associate for communications at the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, at dsweep@lakesandprairies.org. The email should include name and position. The registration fee can be mailed to Duane Sweep, Synod of Lakes and Prairies, 2115 Cliff Drive, Eagan, MN 55122.

Positions Available

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

- Interim Pastor– Community Presbyterian, Plainview
- Nursery Attendant, Plymouth Presbyterian, Plymouth
- Pastor, Zion United Church of Christ, LeSeur
- Director of Music, Presbyterian Church of the Way, Shoreview
- Church Business Administrator, North Como Presbyterian Church, Roseville
- Church Administrative Assistant, Peace Presbyterian Church, St. Louis Park
- 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

Do you have a church staff position that needs to be filled? Send in your job announcements to Dennis Sanders at 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 web-page (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.

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
Visit www.mjsw.org
- **WOMEN'S NETWORKING GROUP**
Meets second Tuesday of the month at 6:30PM in the Parlor
Contact: John Wetzel at john.wetzel@right.com
Visit www.mjsw.org

Job Support Group at Lake Nokomis: The South Minneapolis Job Networking Group meets at Lake Nokomis Presbyterian on Fridays at 9am for support, resources and networking. For more information, please contact the congregation at (612) 721-4463.

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@mnchurches.org or 612-230-3236 or visit www.mnchurches.org.

Important News about the Bible Content Exam - The PC(USA)'s Bible Content Examination will now be administered **ONLINE ONLY**. The online Bible Content Examination is a proctored examination administered at seminary testing sites. Test takers will need a computer with internet access in order to take this examination. The examination will be available in English, Korean and Spanish. The exam will be offered twice each year beginning **October 2, 2009**. [Applicants must first read the instructions and explanatory material before visiting the new site](http://www.pcusa.org/exams/bible.htm) (www.pcusa.org/exams/bible.htm) which allows for online registration and payment for the exam.

Synod Communicator Event Set for September: Communicators, and anyone else who might want to attend, are being invited to the second Synod-wide Communicators Conference Wednesday through Friday, Sept. 2-4, at the Hilton Garden Inn, Eagan, Minn. Sarah Moore-Nokes, associate executive presbyter in Winnebago Presbytery, will lead the conference's first session Wednesday evening on Google Tools. Attendees are asked, if possible, to bring their own laptop computer. Shane Whisler, communications director in the Synod of the Sun, will provide details about working with Presbyterian Neighbor News on Thursday morning, and Bethany Furkin will also address the conference about the Presbyterian News Service during that time. There is also a possibility that the executive director for the



Events Calendar

Summer Office Hours @ the Presbytery Office

Committee on Local Arrangements for the 2010 General Assembly will be on hand before Thursday's lunch. Full registration is \$100 and includes all sessions, accommodations, opening dinner, two breakfasts and a lunch. For those who do not need accommodations, registration is \$40 for all sessions. Registration is easy, simply send an email to Duane Sweep, associate for communications at the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, at dsweep@lakesandprairies.org. The email should include name and position. The registration fee can be mailed to Duane Sweep, Synod of Lakes and Prairies, 2115 Cliff Drive, Eagan, MN 55122.

Youth Ministry, Relationships Unfiltered, and the forthcoming *The Promise of Despair: The Way of the Cross as the Way of the Church*.

Co-hosted by Randolph Heights Presbyterian Church, Edgcombe Presbyterian Church, Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church, and Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church.

Workshop on Mental Illness: The Disability Concerns Task Force is sponsoring a workshop called, **Mental Illness: A Challenge to our Churches**, September 19, from 9AM to Noon at Presbyterian Church of the Way in Shoreview. This workshop is open to Parish visitors, pastors, family members of persons who live with mental illness, deacons, elders, anyone who wants to understand mental illness and cares about ministry with the one in five who live with mental illness. To register, find more information and for childcare, please contact Rev. Bebe Baldwin at randbonmarquette@hotmail.com.

Prayer at the Fair: You don't have to miss church to attend the Minnesota State Fair. Once again the Minnesota Council of Churches presents **Prayer at the Fair**, *an ecumenical service of thanksgiving and praise for God's creation on the Sunday mornings of the Fair*. The Minnesota State Fair is a celebration of abundance.

Each year more than a million people come to partake in all that has been created for us - from the miracle of new life in the birthing barn to the silliness of deep fried candy bars on a stick. Join Leslie Ball, Liturgist and Fair Fanatic for a morning of readings, prayer, and choral singing.

Prayer at the Fair takes place at the Bandshell on Sundays, August 30th and September 6 from 9:15 - 9:45am. We even have bulletins on a stick!

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

Friday:
8:30am-12:30pm

A Conversation on the Future of Faith Communities: Saturday, September 19th, 2009, 9am - 3pm, Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church, 1620 East 46th Street, Minneapolis MN 55407. Does the church have anything to say anymore to the big questions in people's lives? if so, what? How can the church be engaged with the questions: What is a lifetime? Why do we live it? We will learn about the loss of identity and loss of belonging that characterize so much of life today, and explore how the church might imagine hope and community with and alongside people. We'll talk about how the church can wrestle with questions, enter into suffering, and speak of hope in reality. We will hear from Andy Root (from his forthcoming book, "The Promise of Despair: The Way of the Cross as the Way of the Church"), and also get into some good theological conversation with one another - from many different churches and perspectives.

This is for church leaders, and for regular folks: **it is a day of theological conversation for everyone.**

Registration Including Lunch: \$20 (Lunch by Pepito's) **Registration is limited.** To register, call Jan at 612-721-4463. Download a flyer at www.ptcaweb.org/News/Root%20Event%20Flyer-4.pdf.

Dr. Andy Root is a theologian and professor of Youth & Family Ministry at Luther Seminary, St. Paul and the author of *Revisiting Relational*

Per Capita for 2010:

General Assembly: \$6.15

Synod: \$4.80

Presbytery: \$19.06

Total=

\$30.01



Events Calendar

Next Presby- tery Meeting:

**Saturday
September 12,
First
Presbyterian,
Shakopee
9AM-3PM**

**Presbytery Packets
will be available in
early September.
Go to
[www.presbyterytwincities.org/
presbyterypacket](http://www.presbyterytwincities.org/presbyterypacket) to
download materi-
als.**

Academy of Vital Christianity: This fall, the Academy for Vital Christianity is offering classes in churches in the metro area as well as Alexandria, Duluth, Mankato, Rochester, and eastern North Dakota. Students will have the opportunity to learn from United's outstanding and dedicated faculty members in classes that will meet for a total of 10 classroom hours in a variety of convenient configurations. For a description of courses or to register, please go to <http://unitedseminary.edu/CommunityPrograms/academy.asp>.

Spirituality Event at St. Thomas, St. John's: The Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning presents:

*Terry Gips on Religion and Sustainability
How Caring for Creation Benefits Our Spiritual
Life, Finances, Business, Community, and
Planet*

Wednesday, September 9, 8:00 p.m.
Stephen B. Humphrey Theater
Saint John's University, Collegeville

Tuesday, September 29, 7:30 p.m.
O'Shaughnessy Educational Center Auditorium
University of St. Thomas, St. Paul

The events are free and open to the public. For more information, please go to the St. Thomas website at www.stthomas.edu/jpc/calendar/default.html.

Scottish Heritage Festival: 11am-5pm, September 12, First Presbyterian, Hudson, WI. Bake Sale, Highlight Games, Scottish Foods and more. For more info, go to First Hudson's website at www.fpchudson.com.

"unChristian" Event at Bethel: Christianity has an image problem. Christians are supposed to represent Christ to the world. But according to the latest Barna Group report card, something has gone terribly wrong. Using descriptions like "hypocritical," "insensitive," and "judgmental," young Americans share an impression of Christians that's nothing short of . . . unChristian.

Find out why these negative perceptions exist, learn how to reverse them in a Christ-like manner, and discover practical examples of how Christians can positively contribute to culture. Enjoy this interactive seminar with an extended Q & A time.

The guest speaker for the event is Gabe Lyons, a coauthor of *unchristian*. The event takes place Friday October 9 from 10am-3:30pm. To register, please go to bethel.edu/church-ministries. To find out more, please email church-ministries@bethel.edu or by phone at 651-638-6301.

Children's Sabbath: October 16-18, 2009. This year's theme, *Create Change for Children Today: Bring Hope and a Better Tomorrow* focuses on children in poverty, children's health care, and the pipeline to prison. In this time of economic hardship, it is more important than ever to insure that our children do not fall through the cracks. Children's Sabbath is a great way to get your congregation aware of and involved in children's issues. Join congregations across the country that will be participating in the National Observation of Children's Sabbath. See the Joint Religious Legislative Council (JRLC) website (<http://jrlc.org>) for more information about Children's Sabbath and to find stories from congregations who have participated in the past.

Ministering to the Missing Generation: October 30, 2009 at United Seminary in New Brighton. An all day event featuring the Rev. Carol Howard Merritt, a Presbyterian pastor and the author of *Tribal Church* and co-host of the God Complex with Moderator Bruce Reyes-Chow. The cost is free to authorized members of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ and \$55 for all other attendees. There is also \$7 charge for lunch. To register, please email Renee Flesner at <mailto:rflsner@unitedseminary.edu> or by phone at 651-255-6138.



Events Calendar

Presbytery @ Prayer

Spiritual Vitality in Turbulent Times – Personal and Corporate Practices – is the theme of the upcoming Minnesota Area Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation. The Academy will be held November 8-13, 2009 at Christ the King Retreat Center in Buffalo, MN.

The focus on corporate practices will be taught by Don Salliers, who was the William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Theology and Worship at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia until his retirement in 2007. Don received his B.A. from Ohio Wesleyan University, and both his B.D. (Bachelor of Divinity) and his Ph.D. from Yale University. An accomplished musician, theologian, and scholar of liturgics, Don is the author of numerous books on the relationship between theology and worship practices. He recently co-authored *A Song to Sing, a Life to Live* with his daughter Emily Salliers, a member of the Indigo Girls.

**Monday-Friday
9:00am-9:30am**

The focus on personal practices will be led by Kathryn Damiano. Kathryn is a Quaker who brings over 20 years of experience as a spiritual director to her ministry. She has a Master of Divinity, a Master of Arts in counseling psychology, and a Ph.D. in spiritual psychology.

The Academy for Spiritual Formation is open to laity and clergy. The total cost is either \$575 for a single room or \$525 for a double. This includes linens, private bath, meals and tuition. To receive a brochure with additional information about the Academy, please email Deb DeMeester, Retreat Leader, at demeesterd@aol.com. To register, click on "Events Registration" at <http://www.minnesotaumc.org/>. The Academy is co-sponsored by The Upper Room and the MN Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Please note that the staff of the PTCA gathers for morning prayer and devotions each day.

New PTCA Website Set to Debut in September

The Presbytery is hard at work in trying to have a brand new website up and running in September of 2009. The new website will be more interactive and more helpful to you and your congregation.

The web address: www.ptcaweb.org, will remain the same, so don't worry about learning a new address.

The target "live" date is Friday, September 11. There might be some potential disruption of the current website as we get ready, so please bear with us during the week of September 7-11.

Also, there will be a brief announcement of the website at the September 12 Presbytery meeting in Shakopee.

Stay tuned for more announcements on this exciting endeavor!

CIA, Torture, and the Sinful Nature



By Neil Craigan

With the declassification of the report on the interrogation of terror suspects there has been much said about the behavior of some CIA operatives, simulated drowning by waterboarding, simulated executions by threatening with guns and drills, even going as far as threatening to kill someone's family if there was another attack on the United States. Many people have cried out and said that such behavior is un-American and not becoming of the way the United States should operate in the world. Others have said that these were necessary actions to help prevent further attacks to Americans and that while some of them may have pushed the envelope of acceptable practice they are justified if they save lives.

What do I make of all this? Simple, I'm deeply saddened but not surprised by it. As a pastor/theologian I understand the nature of humanity is the nature of humanity and is not dependent on someone's national identity. The prophet Jeremiah reminds us that in our fallen nature, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure." The apostle Paul reminds us that unless we have found freedom through Christ and live according to our new spirit-filled nature we are bound under the old sinful nature.

There is not a question in my mind that under certain circumstances people, all people, have the capacity to do great harm to others, particularly if they believe that in doing so a greater good will be served. History bears this out time and time again, where educated smart men and women, do awful things to others, the holocaust, Pol Pot in Cambodia, Rwanda, Darfur, Apartheid in South Africa, the Crusades... We could go on and on. Some might say, 'well we don't do those sorts of things in America.' Really, what about slavery and the Native Americans, how long did it take to give women the right to vote? The truth is that all people have the capacity for great evil. We don't like to think of it like this we prefer to talk about the side of the coin that we have great capacity for good, which with God's help is indeed true but we can do evil all by ourselves.

And that's exactly what we have here, evil. Not necessarily evil people, certainly they are fallen people but then we all are and we all need re-

demption. It is evil actions we are talking about here, and yes there are consequences for such actions, and no they (either those who carried out and/or those who ordered these barbaric methods) should not simply be given amnesty because they were working for the government.

What makes these particular action un-American or un-civilized? The answer I believe is a theological one. It has to do with the rule of law. One of the understandings that the reformer John Calvin had of the law was that it served the purpose of ordering and restraining sinful creation. America is a nation built on the rule of law, it is what prevents us from slipping into anarchy, it is what allows us to have peaceful transitions in government, it is what allows us to respect (even when we disagree) with court decisions. When we see the rule of law being undermined it makes us uneasy, and rightfully so, for it threatens to undo the stability that exists in our governmental structures.

Everyday I pray that God's name would be revered and that God's kingdom would come and will be done on earth in the same way it is being done in heaven.

Then all this nonsensical violence all this evil will be gone. Until then I will continue to serve God and proclaim the peace that is our in Christ so we can become peacemakers in this world.

Neil Craigan is pastor of First Presbyterian Church in White Bear Lake.

"The truth is that all people have the capacity for great evil. We don't like to think of it like this we prefer to talk about the side of the coin that we have great capacity for good, which with God's help is indeed true but we can do evil all by ourselves."

-Rev. Neil Craigan.

Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area

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Presbytery of the
Twin Cities Area



"EMerge," is a biweekly 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** . Usual distribution: Mondays. **Deadline: Thursday (two business days before distribution).**

Pastor Paul and the Children



Pastor Paul Moore, top right, smiles along with the participants of the first Vacation Bible School hosted by Chain of Lakes Presbyterian Church in Lino Lakes a suburb north of Minneapolis. The two day event was held in mid-August at St. Joseph's Catholic Church which is also located in the North Metro.

Chain of Lakes is the newest congregation in the PTCA.

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