



United Church of Christ

“A Global Ministry Church”



Bismarck, North Dakota

May, 2009

Water, Water

April was a month that will long be remembered in North Dakota. As heavy snow pack melted with the coming of warm spring weather, much of the state experienced flooding. At one point 52 of the state's 53 counties were under flood warnings.

In Bismarck and Mandan, we have long assumed that the Garrison Dam would keep us safe from flooding—ice jams proved us wrong. Many people, including many from our congregation, had to evacuate. At one point it appeared that kids from Charles Hall Youth Services would have to move to the church. Even as we struggled with rising waters, evacuees from the Red River Valley came here in search of refuge.

In flood affected areas, an army of volunteers mobilized to fill and place sandbags, thereby preventing massive damage. Most of the volunteers were working to protect, not their own property, but their neighbor's. The waters have mostly subsided, and we are thankful that the damage and dislocations were not worse. We are especially thankful that no lives were lost.

At the same time and on the other side of the globe another water struggle was going on—a well was being drilled near the village school our church helped establish in East Timor. The existing well in the village of Lisadila ran dry several months a year. The secondary water supply was a small pipe laid on top of the ground that brought a limited amount of water from a source miles away. Water supplies have been inadequate and unreliable.

Thanks to the help of our congregation and the support of Church World Service (the CROP Walk folks), a new well has been dug and a water system is under development. It will provide water for the school and the surrounding village. Again, volunteers have come together to deal with serious water issues for the benefit of their neighbors.

Too much water damaged homes and businesses and endangered lives in our own state and community. Too little water in Lisadila threatened to make village life unsustainable. In the midst of both the surplus and the shortage, the response was to graciously extend help. In neither case has personal interest been the driving motive for helping. In both there was a faithful response to others simply because they were in need.

Jesus teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Who is our neighbor? It might be a flood-threatened member of our own community, or a parched villager in East Timor. We give thanks for faithful responses.

Pastor Jim

United Church of Christ Spring 2009 Youth Happenings

May

Sunday 5-17-09 UCY Bowling & Dinner 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Contact: Dawn Archer 751-0712

June

VBS

Monday 6-8-09 to Thursday 6-11-09

PRE. through GR. 4

Friday 6-12-09 to Saturday 6-13-09

GR. 5 & 6

Contact: Dawn Archer 751-0712

Sunday 6-28-09

UCY Bike Ride & Dinner Times to be announced

Contact: Dawn Archer 751-0712

Thanks to everyone who made the UCY pancake breakfast such a success, especially Priscilla Sauer who organized the event!

Summer Travel Scholarships will be available for students currently in grades 7-12. If your student is travelling for camps, etc. this summer, please contact Dawn Archer with their name and destination. 751-0712

UCY : Sunday, May 17, 5-8 p.m. Dinner & Bowling. Please RSVP to Dawn Archer 751-0712.

The last day of Sunday School is Sunday, May 17 — We will celebrate with an Ice-cream Social!

Our THANKS to Cecilia Tolstedt for serving as Sunday School Superintendant and to all of our teachers and helpers for another great year!

Preschool & Kind: Petrea Klein, Jocelynn Sonnenberg & Pam Smokey

1st & 2nd: Shantell Meidinger & Krista Tolstedt

3rd & 4th: Petra Hulms

5th & 6th: Tove Mandigo

Substitute: Emily Archer

Confirmation first year: Paula Rask

Confirmation second year: Jim Moos & Dawn Archer

Christmas program: Jen Weekes

Congratulations to our 2009 Confirmands: Chris Gustin, Brenna Jessen, Erica Nitschke & Adler Scheer!

VBS is fast approaching. Registration sheets will go out in May.

A few brave souls will be needed to help with the 5th & 6th grade sleepover.

We'll need drivers to get to the zoo and swimming pool.

One male is needed to help supervise the boys overnight.

Contact Dawn Archer 751-0712.

We're still looking for donations of grocery store gift cards to purchase food items.

If you have any items at home we may use to decorate the church please contact Dawn.

The theme is Crocodile Dock. We'll be transforming the church into a bayou or swamp!

Think fishing stuff, lanterns, dragon flies, artificial trees, etc.

Thanks to whomever donated the stuffed crocodile to the rummage sale, it has found a new home for VBS!

News and Notes.....



Welcome New Members

On Easter Sunday, we were thankful to receive the following new members into our congregation: Bob and Sheila Lindgren, Kathi Runge, Denise and Devin Miller, and Mike Peterson. Welcome, we're delighted to have you as part of our church family.

Sound System

The Board of Trustees has decided to upgrade the sound system in the sanctuary at a cost of approximately \$3,500. The work will be done soon, and will be paid for out of donations to the Building Fund.

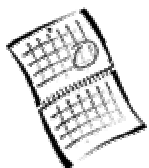


Digital Camcorder

Mayflower Circle is paying to have a digital camcorder installed in the sanctuary. It will be connected to the flat panel TV in the foyer. This will enable us to record services, and to accommodate overflow crowds at special events. Thanks Mayflower Circle!

Mayflower Circle Sale

On Saturday, April 25th, Mayflower Circle held its annual rummage sale. Thanks to everyone to donated, helped with and shopped at the sale! Mayflower Circle meets over lunch at the church the second Tuesday of each month—all women are welcome.



Dawn's Schedule

Dawn Archer is currently serving our church approximately 10 hours per week, working primarily in the areas of youth and Christian Education. She is currently finishing school, and will come on board on a three-quarter time basis beginning in June.

Pastor Jim's Sabbatical

The covenant the church has with Pastor Jim specifies that he be given a 12 week sabbatical every 5 years. Originally scheduled for 2007, he took 4 weeks at that time, and none in 2008 because we didn't have an associate pastor for most of the year. Church Council has decided that he should take another 4 weeks this summer after his trip to East Timor. He anticipates going to East Timor early in July. The time frame for the sabbatical is late July and into August. It is anticipated that the remaining for weeks will be taken in 2010. Tentative plans for this year are to visit Cambodia after his trip to East Timor, and to do research on Wolf Chief—an early church leader on the Ft. Berthold Reservation.



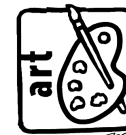


Roughrider Chevrolet Association

Recently we received a \$100 donation from the Roughrider Chevrolet Association for Jack's Place Food Pantry. Audrey and Larry Heinle, and Carol and Harold Gomke are Association member. Thanks for your support!

Art Display

Over the last few years we've enjoyed numerous art displays in our fellowship hall. If you or someone you know would like to provide display material, please contact Joan Durow.

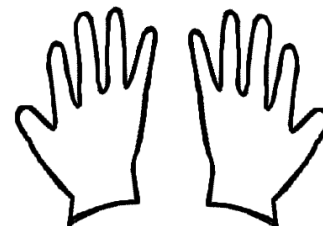


Flood Relief

A number of congregations, families, and towns have needed special prayers and attention during this time of the floods and evacuations. The Northern Plains Conference relief effort invited congregations to respond in two ways: 1. putting together a list of volunteers who can come and help when cleanup starts, 2. by making a donation to the Northern Plains Conference Flood Relief. If you have any questions, please contact the Conference Office at 255-1104.

Helping Hands Provided

During the flood evacuations from Fargo, a group of 32 developmentally disabled adults were brought to Bismarck. Though they had shelter, help with meals was needed. Thanks to generous donations to Jack's Place Food Pantry and the efforts of Priscilla Sauer and Dawn and Emily Archer, our church was able to respond. Thanks much!



Salem Circle Cutlery

Salem Circle has a good supply of cutlery. Those interested in purchasing high-quality kitchen knives should contact Dorothy VanSickle.

Peanut Free Zone

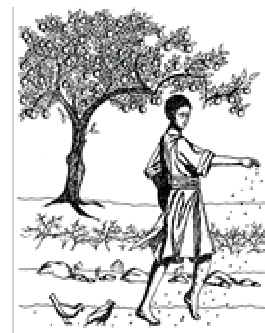
Among the most serious food allergies are those to peanuts. Exposure to any peanut product—including peanut oil and inhaling dust from peanuts—can cause life-threatening reactions. The problem is especially pressing among children. Between 1997 and 2002, the number of children with peanut allergies in this country doubled. Peanut allergies are present among our Sunday School children so please be sensitive to their health needs when serving treats.



Quarterly Financial Report

Our finances for the first quarter of 2009 were strong. Through the end of March, we had a positive cash flow in our General Fund. This was the result of brisk giving, and below budget spending.

We spent less than budgeted largely because we have had Dawn Archer on staff for about 10 hours per week as she finishes school—this is consistent with the agreement we made with Dawn when she came onboard as our Associate. We look forward to her working among us on a three-quarter time basis beginning in June.



While overall spending was low, there were pockets of high expense. Included are snow removal and utility bills, both the unavoidable result of our harsh winter.

Our mortgage payments are made from our General Fund, and the interest rate recently reset at just under 6%. This means that our payments will remain near the current level for the next 5 years. We have, however, received notice that the streets in our neighborhood will be repaved, and our Special Assessments will go up dramatically. We are currently setting funds aside to lessen the budget impact for the first 2 years of the increase.

Benevolence giving is essentially even with where it was at this time last year, with some areas up and others down. Giving to OCWM is modestly up, but our One Great Hour of Sharing offering was lower than the one we took in 2008. We have received more money into our Food Pantry Fund, but less for our work in East Timor. Overall, our benevolence giving for the past three months was a healthy 18% of our General Fund giving.

We continue to receive money into our Building Fund on a regular basis for use in upgrading the facility. The Board of Trustees is currently considering upgrading the sound system in the sanctuary at a cost of approximately \$3,500. Many of the windows in the church are 50 years old, and we hope to replace them in the next year or two.

Thank you to everyone for the many ways in which you support the work of our congregation, not just financially but with your prayers, presence and service. Our faithfulness touches many lives in our community and across the globe. May God grant us wisdom as we seek to be good stewards.

Coming Events.....



Confirmation

Confirmation will be held on Sunday, May 3rd at the 10:30 service. Our confirmands this are Erica Nitschke, Adler Scheer, Brenna Jessen and Chris Gustin. Congratulations to a great group of kids!

Study of Islam

A new 4-week discussion group began on April 27 from 6:30-8 p.m., for those interested in learning about the religion of Islam. The first three Mondays in May (the 4th, 11th and 18th) will involve presentations by practicing Moslems willing to discuss their beliefs with us. Everyone is welcome to come and learn.



Public Forum on Climate Change

A public forum on climate change will be held on Wednesday, May 13 at 7:00 p.m. at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church North Campus (4916 Washington Ave. N.). Polar explorer, educator, writer, and photographer Will Steger will share slides and stories documenting his first-hand observations of dramatic changes occurring in the Arctic and Antarctic. Joining Steger are:



*Dr. Allan Ashworth, Distinguished University Professor, NDSO, presenting on the impact of climate change in the Great Plains.

*Carmen Miller, Pew Environment Group, sharing a range of solutions.

*Fr. Paul Schuster, President of Prairie Climate Stewardship Network, commenting on our faith responsibility to be good stewards of creation.

Harp Performance

Bismarck Mandan Thursday Music Club invites everyone to come hear Gayla Sherman, harp soloist, on Thursday May 14, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. at the Bismarck Veterans Library, Meeting Room A downstairs. Gayla will perform a 20 minute program of favorite selections. Winners of the club's scholarship for piano students and a graduating senior will also perform. Refreshments will be served. All are welcome! For more information, call Mary Hoberg at 223-9413.



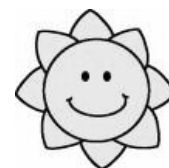
Church Clean-Up



The Board of Trustees has scheduled a church clean-up day on Saturday, May 16th beginning at 9:00 a.m. We will clean up the yard and add much into the flower beds. We will also paint the eaves on the north side of the church, and the ceiling in the nursery where we suffered some water damage. Please bring garden tools and painting equipment.

Summer Worship Schedule

On Sunday, May 24th (Memorial Day weekend), we will begin our summer worship schedule. We will have one Sunday morning worship service at 10:00 a.m.



Strengthen the Church

On Sunday, May 24th we will take a special offering for *Strengthen the Church*, one of four special mission offerings within the United Church of Christ. It enables the church to grow by:

- *Funding [new church](#) starts and invigorating existing congregations
- *Nurturing lay and pastoral leadership
- *Building [youth](#) and [young adult](#) ministries
- *Supporting the [God is Stillspeaking Ministry](#) and its extravagant welcome for all within the United Church of Christ.



All gifts are directed to activities and programs of the Northern Plains Conference as well as the [UCC's national ministries](#).



Conference Annual Meeting & Nominations

The 2009 Annual Meeting of the Northern Plains Conference will be hosted by Congregational UCC of Minot and Hope Congregational UCC of Granville. The dates are June 5-7, the theme of the meeting is "The Joy of Being Bold Disciples." Keynote speakers are David Greenhaw, president of Eden Theological Seminary and Charlene J. Smith of the National Church. Those interested in attending this important and vital gathering should contact Pastor Jim.

If you or someone you know would be interested and qualified to serve on one of the standing committees of the NPCUCC (Church and Ministry, Faith and Nurture, Mission and Outreach) or the Conference Executive positions of Secretary or Treasurer) please complete the nomination form found at <http://www.npcucc.org/html/forms.php> on the NPCUCC web site. Then send it to the Conference Office.

The Northern Plains Conference
United Church of Christ
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Bismarck, ND 58501-1252
Telephone: 701-255-1104
<http://www.npcucc.org>

AWARE

May 2009

As I Look At It:

Brian D. McLaren in his work "Everything Must Change" tries to wrestle with the question "How do the life and teachings of Jesus address the most critical global problems in our world today?" I find McLaren's comments both challenging and bracing. While they call us to look at the world in a new way, they also assure us that we have the means to change the outcomes lying before us that seem so inevitable. At one point in the book, McLaren sketches out the kinds of metaphor Jesus would use today if he were addressing the systems of our time.

McLaren suggests that Jesus might address the global security crisis facing us by speaking of a "Divine Peace Initiative." When a nation is conquered and occupied by another, an insurgent movement may seek to expel the occupiers. These insurgents do not see themselves as criminals or rebels but as freedom fighters seeking to liberate their homeland.

If this world in which we live is the creation of a good, holy, compassionate, wise and just God and if this creation has been conquered and occupied by a destructive, unholy, merciless, tyrannical, stupid and devious system, then Jesus must have stepped forth from the tomb to launch an insurgency to overthrow the occupiers.

The goal would be that a renewed humanity returns to its role as the caretaker of creation and of one another. This seeks the restoring of humanity to the healthy, fruitful harmony God desires. Its tools are not the weapons of the occupiers, but the tools of God. Hence, it becomes a merciful insurgency, a courageous insurgency, a compassionate insurgency, a faithful insurgency and a peace insurgency.

We have to ask ourselves, would we be a part of such a peace insurgency or would we fight for the occupier? On which side of the struggle would we be? Are we Easter people or are we more accurately known as consumers? Do we, using God's gifts of mercy, compassion, courage and faith struggle for a more just, caring and faithful world, or do we allow God's creation to be sacrificed on the altar of human waste and abuse.

Would it not be wonderful if the legacy of Easter 2009 were a people caring more about what they passed on to future generations than what they used up for themselves? Who sought to build bridges spanning the valleys of confusion and misunderstanding rather than hide behind their walls of bias and fear? Who valued justice for all above privilege for some, seeing the gifts of the Earth as gifts of God, humbly receiving them as a sacred trust?

As Easter people let us claim our place in the peace insurgency, letting God's holy vision guide us out of the confusion of this day into the promise of God's tomorrow.

***Grace and Peace
Wade***