



December 2009

Presbytery of Plains & Peaks

### Presbytery Meeting ~ November 2009

Highlands Camp Financial Update (as of November Presbytery Meeting) - current mortgage balance is \$1,498,575.44 - current draw note balance is \$400,900.00 - total current debt is \$1,898,475.44. With a gift recently received the total indebtedness is currently \$1,847,825.44.

The Nominating Committee has been hard at work and they have two vacancies left to fill. Congregational Leadership Equipping Workgroup is looking for an elder to fill a one year term and the Congregational Vitality Workgroup is looking for an elder to fill a two year term.

The Committee on Preparation on Ministry brought three inquirers to the floor of Presbytery to become candidates - Ashley Birk and Brad Troxell from First Presbyterian Church in Ft. Collins, Colorado and Kevin Starcher from First Presbyterian Church in Boulder, Colorado.

Presbytery VOTED to adopt the 2010 Per Capita budget and the 2010 Mission budget. The per capita for 2010 is \$22.90 for Presbytery, \$6.38 for Synod, and \$6.15 for GA - total \$35.43. This is a reduction (Presbytery portion) of \$.17.

The Council brought two names for service on the Presbytery Nominating Committee. There are still vacancies on the Nominating Committee. If you or someone you know is interested, please contact the Presbytery office.

The Reverend Robert Dooling was granted status of Pastor Emeritus at Mtn. View Presbyterian Church in Loveland, Colorado.

The Reverend Brian Witherspoon was designated Parish Associate at First Presbyterian Church in Sterling, Colorado, effective September 10, 2009 (COM action on behalf of Presbytery).

COM concurred with the session of First Presbyterian Church in Wray, Colorado, in the dissolution of the Stated Supply contract with the Reverend Jennifer Grantham, effective September 15, 2009 (COM action on behalf of Presbytery).

Nathan Soule-Hill was examined on the floor of Presbytery and the examination was sustained. Nathan is a candidate for co-pastor (along with his wife - Jennifer) for Family of Christ Presbyterian Church in Greeley, Colorado.

COM sustained the examination of the Reverend Jennifer Soule-Hill for membership in the Presbytery (COM action on behalf of Presbytery).

Steve Piper was examined on the floor of Presbytery on behalf of the Presbytery of South Dakota, and the examination was sustained. Steve was then dismissed to the Presbytery of South Dakota upon his ordination on December 5, 2009 at Mtn. View Presbyterian Church in Loveland, Colorado.

The Reverend Judy McQuiston was granted status of Honorably Retired beginning October 1, 2009.

The Reverend Wayne Nickerson was granted status of Honorably Retired beginning December 31, 2009.

## Presbytery of Plains & Peaks

7257 W. 4<sup>th</sup> St. - Unit 4  
Greeley, Colorado 80634  
800-257-4583  
[www.plainsandpeaks.org](http://www.plainsandpeaks.org)

Executive Presbyter ~

Dan Saperstein  
[dmsaperstein@gmail.com](mailto:dmsaperstein@gmail.com)

Stated Clerk ~

Lynn Smit  
[lynn@plainsandpeaks.org](mailto:lynn@plainsandpeaks.org)

Treasurer ~

Diane Kenning  
[dkenning@kenningfilter.com](mailto:dkenning@kenningfilter.com)

Office Administrator ~

Bobbi Hoffman  
[bobbi@plainsandpeaks.org](mailto:bobbi@plainsandpeaks.org)

## NEW Presbytery Website

The Presbytery website has a new look and a new host. Please check it out at [www.plainsandpeaks.org](http://www.plainsandpeaks.org).

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## Interesting Church News

First Presbyterian Church in Berthoud, Colorado, will be having two Christmas Eve services this year. Our two services will be a Family Christmas Eve Service at 6:00 pm and a Communion Christmas Eve Service at 8:00 pm. The services will be very similar; both will include traditional Christmas hymns, a short message, and the traditional candle-lighting and passing of the Light of Christ. But there are also a few important differences between the two services: Childcare will only be provided at the 6:00 service. A Children's Sermon will only be given at the 6:00 service. Communion will only be served at the 8:00 service. It is our hope that offering two services will give those who wish to attend greater flexibility and choice as they consider their own schedules and traditions.

First Presbyterian Church in LaSalle, Colorado, will be doing a musical for worship, Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:15 am. Synopsis: "Away From the Manger" We're all familiar with the group of people and animals that visited the manger in Bethlehem. This musical is a humorous introduction to some folks who DIDN'T go. The audience will be challenged to examine its reasons for staying "away from the manger" at Christmas.

Central Presbyterian Church in Longmont, Colorado is happy to announce that the next step in their partnership with Chawama Presbyterian Church in Lusaka, Zambia has been taken. They will receive five members of their congregation on February 2, 2010. We are looking forward to bringing them to the Presbytery meeting at Harmony Presbyterian Church in Ft. Collins, Colorado so you will have the opportunity to get to know them.

Timnath Presbyterian Church in Timnath, Colorado is holding their Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7:00 pm in their "original" sanctuary.

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## Colorado Appeals Court Rules for Presbytery

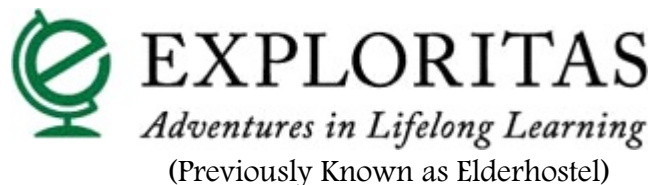
In a decision issued on Thanksgiving Day, the Colorado Court of Appeals has ruled in favor of the Presbytery of Plains and Peaks in its suit against Indian Peaks Community Church (IPCC) and the Rev. Georges Houssney. The unusually quick decision came a mere sixteen days after the hearing on appeal. The decision adheres closely to the Boulder District Court ruling issued in July, 2008. The original suit asserted Presbytery's ownership rights against IPCC and Houssney, who had refused to sign a lease and had altered corporate documents of the former Covenant Presbyterian Church to support a claim of ownership. The district court decision affirmed the Presbytery's ownership of the property following the dissolution of Covenant in 2000.

## Upcoming Events at Highlands Presbyterian Camp and Retreat Center

Middle School Retreat - March 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Cost if registration is received by Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>: \$100/person - Price after February 15<sup>th</sup>: \$115.00/person  
Registration closes on February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

When cabin fever sets in, there is no better place to join over 100 youth for a mid-high retreat than at Highlands! 2010 Retreat Design Team: Reverend Scott Phillips, Reverend Sue Spencer, Rob Cella, Kirsten Achatz, Michelle Pearson.



World Affairs Conference: Reflecting in the Rockies - April 4 - 9, 2010

Emerge Into Spring At Rocky Mountain National Park - May 2 - 7, 2010

Rocky Mountain High: John Denver and Rocky Mountain National Park - June 13 - 17, 2010

An Intergenerational Elderhostel for Grandparents & Grandchildren! Summer Spectacular in the Colorado Rockies - August 8-13, 2010

Summer Action in the Colorado Rockies (Adventure Camp for Grown-ups!) - August 15-20, 2010

Be sure to go to [www.exploritas.org](http://www.exploritas.org) today for more information & to register!



Way-Points is a cooperative program of Presbyterian Retreat Centers with outstanding facilities, providing programs for adult and intergenerational groups! Visit [www.way-points.org](http://www.way-points.org) to see all of the courses offered across the nation!

Storytelling by the Fireside - February 22-25, 2010

Rocky Mountain Fourth of July Family Vacation - July 2-5, 2010

Writing Your Spiritual Memoirs - September 27- 30, 2010

## From the Lions' Den

In Fire Station No. 6 in Livermore, California, a light bulb has made history. Known as the “centennial bulb,” it has been shining continuously since its installation in 1901, except for two brief occasions when it was moved to new fixtures. The Guinness people have declared it “the oldest known working lightbulb.” The hand-blown four-watt bulb originally served as a nightlight over the fire trucks, and turn-of-the-century firefighters would light their kerosene lamps by its glow. It has been featured by every major news network, NPR, the TV show “Mythbusters,” and over thirty newspapers and magazines. The bulb even has its own website: [www.centennialbulb.org](http://www.centennialbulb.org), where you can see it on a live webcam and buy commemorative t-shirts.

Most modern bulbs burn out after about 1000 hours of continuous use. The centennial bulb has been burning for some 950,000 hours and counting. But it, too, will someday burn out. The Gospel of John tells us of an even better record. John writes of the true light of life that has come into the world in Jesus two thousand years ago. This light still “shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (1:5).

In an essay on Christmas, Presbyterian preacher and novelist Frederick Buechner notes that despite all of the commercialism and banality of the season, we have never quite managed to ruin Christmas, which itself is something of a miracle.

Christmas itself is by grace. It could never have survived our own blindness and depredations otherwise... Perhaps it is the very wildness and strangeness of the grace that has led us to try to tame it... We have reduced it to an occasion we feel at home with, at best a touching and beautiful occasion, at worst a trite and cloying one...

The Word become flesh. Ultimate Mystery born with a skull you could crush one-handed. Incarnation. It is not tame. It is not touching. It is not beautiful. It is uninhabitable terror. It is unthinkable darkness riven with unbearable light. Agonized laboring led to it, vast upheavals of intergalactic space, time split apart, a wrenching and rearing of the very sinews of reality itself. You can only cover your eyes and shudder before it, before this: “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God... who for us and our salvation,” as the Nicene Creed puts it, “came down from heaven” [Whistling in the Dark: An ABC Theologized, pp. 28-29].

It is no coincidence that we celebrate Christmas at the time of year when the days are darkest in the northern hemisphere. It helps remind us that even in the darkest hours of our lives, God’s light is always shining to guide our way to life and peace. Unthinkable darkness riven with unbearable light. It is only by grace that we can behold it, by grace that we have it at all. The light still shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. Venite adoremus.



Merry  
Christmas

*From the Presbytery Staff*